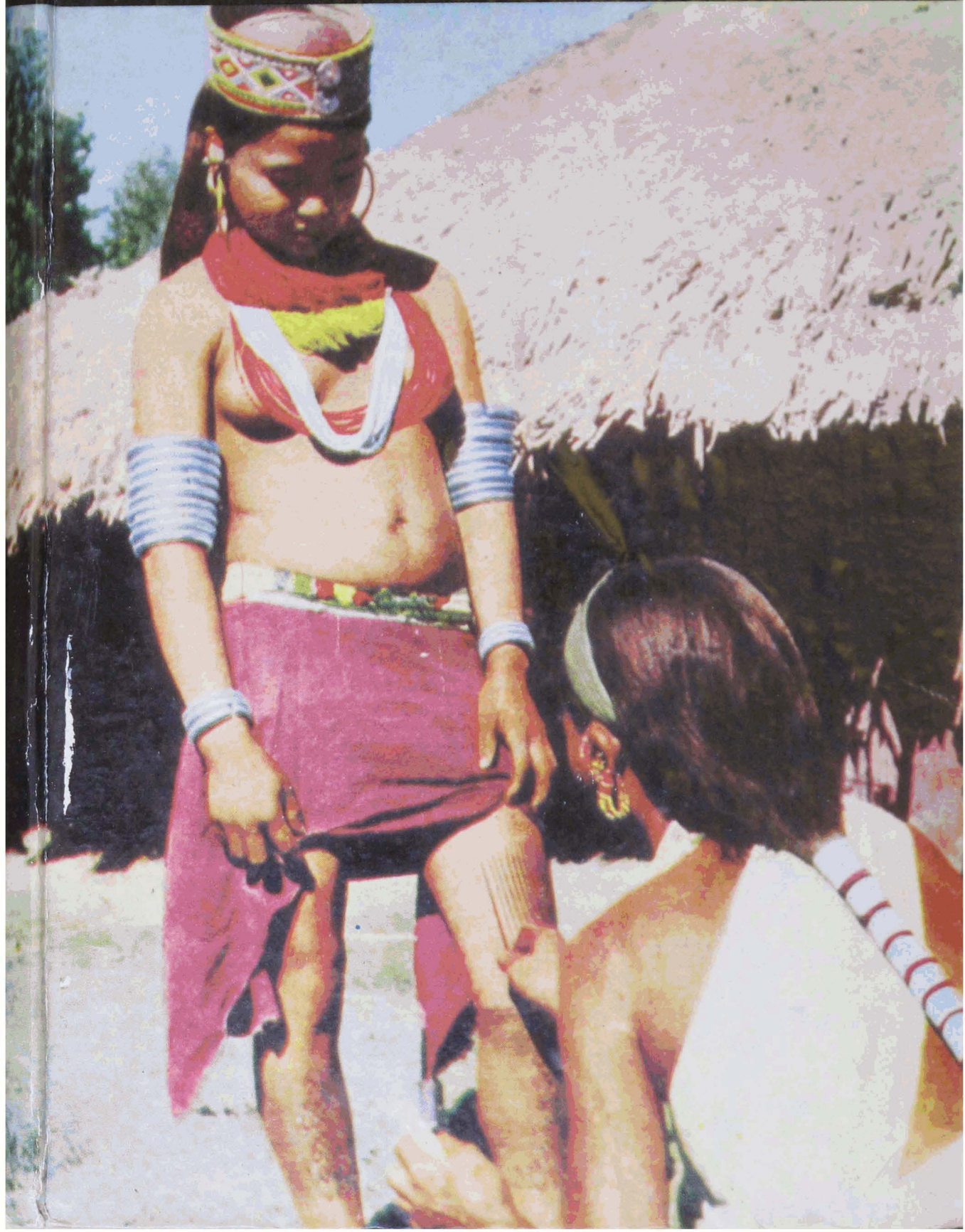


ARUNACHAL PANORAMA



J. N. CHOWDHURY



ARUNACHAL PANORAMA

By

J. N. CHOWDHURY

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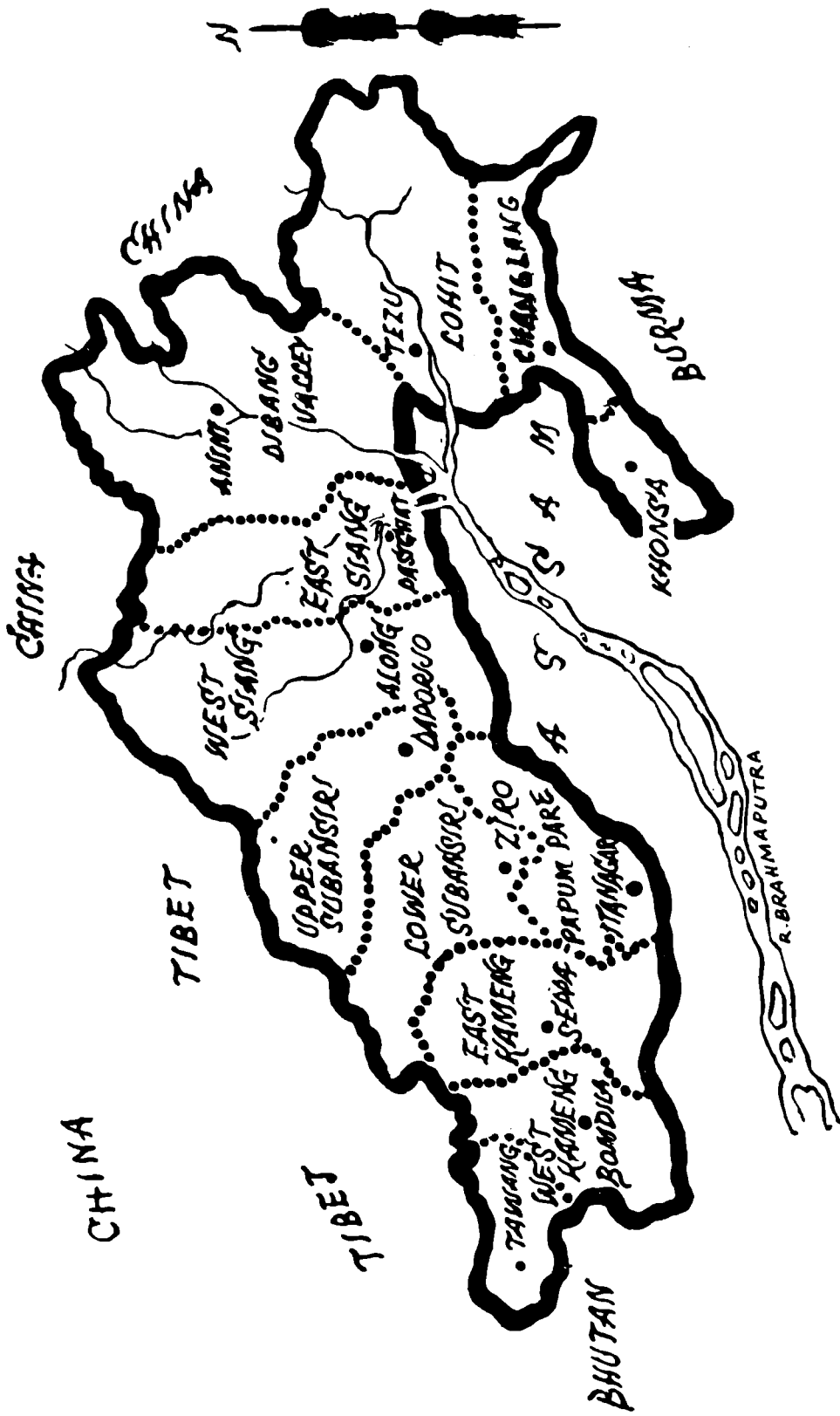
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*To
my colleagues,
past and present,
of the Research Directorate,
Arunachal Pradesh Administration*



ARUNACHAL PRADESH

Political Map of Arunachal Pradesh after recent delimitation of the Districts

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The present edition of Arunachal Panorama is practically a reprint of the original edition published by the author himself in 1973. As it has been explained by the author, his purpose in writing the book was 'to present a profile of the traditional culture of the major tribal groups of Arunachal Pradesh'. In the process of momentous development activities stretching over more than three decades since Indian Independence, the tribal societies have inevitably undergone changes in almost all sphere of life, including the traditional mores of these societies. For instance, before Independence, the tribal societies in Arunachal were essentially pre-literate. Since then, the people of Arunachal have taken spectacularly rapid strides in education with 20.09% literacy (provisional figure) according to 1981 Census compared to 11.29% in 1971. A proper evaluation of all these far-reaching changes should be attempted in a separate publication by competent research scholars than aimed at in this book. However, in order to give the readers some idea of the tremendous changes already brought about in the quality of life of the people, particularly in political, constitutional, and socio-economic spheres, the last chapter of the book has been revised and rewritten by the author. The chapter has now been captioned, Epilogue: The March of Time. This chapter will enhance the importance of the book for those curious readers wishing to have a quick inside into the Union Territory of Arunachal Pradesh.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO THE REPRINT

The present edition of *Arunachal Panorama* is for all purposes a reprint of the original publication except for the last chapter, *The March of Time*, which has been thoroughly revised and rewritten. This has been done in order to acquaint the prospective readers of this book with the progress achieved by Arunachal Pradesh in different spheres including political and economic. The chief burden of the book however has been left unchanged purposefully as it delineates the traditional culture of the major tribal groups of Arunachal. It goes without saying that the impact of developmental activities in various fields, spread over more than three decades since independence, has certainly been noticeable in the socio-economic life of the people but the present author feels that a proper evaluation of these momentous changes should form the subject of a separate book by competent research scholars.

The other minor change made in this reprint in the dedication as the author took the opportunity to acknowledge his indebtedness to two of his very intimate and valued friends. Professor Amaresh Dutta, an eminently successful and reputed teacher of English is both a friend and a relative. Mr. L. N. Chakravarty and the present author grew up together to their manhood in Shillong, and later worked as colleagues in the Research Department of Arunachal Government, M. Chakravorty having retired as its Director.

It may as well be mentioned here that the two population chart given at the end of the Epilogue have to be in accordance with the 1971 Census as the tribe-wise break-up of population according to 1981 Census has not yet been released. We have, however, the provisional population figures for Arunachal

according to 1981 Census which is 6,28,050. Districtwise distribution of populations is as follows:

1. WestKameng	...	62,946
2. East Kameng	...	42,722
3. Lower Subansiri	...	1,13,300
4. Upper Subansiri	...	39,406
5. West Siang	...	74,151
6. East Siang	...	70,274
7. Dibang Valley	...	27,716
8. Lohit	...	69,400
9. Tirap	...	1,28,135
		<hr/>
Total		6,28,050
		<hr/>

Out of the above total, male population counts 3,35,941 and female 2,92,109.

The density of population has been calculated at 7 persons per sq. km., which is the lowest in India. In the field of education the progress of literacy has been maintained; indeed, it has taken a rapid stride. According to 1981 Census, the literary rate stands at 20.09% as compared to 11.29% in 1971 Census.

The population table according to 1961 Census, as given in the original edition, has been retained in this reprint for comparative reference.

The author is particularly obliged to the Government of Arunachal Pradesh for purchasing the copy right and arranging to bring out reprint of the book. The author also wishes to record here his grateful acknowledgement to Dr. Parul Dutta, M.Sc., LL.B., Ph.D., the present Director of Research, Government of Arunachal Pradesh, for his keen interest in seeing through the reprint.

FOREWORD

SO FAR AS I am aware, the extent of literature about the land and people of the present Arunachal Pradesh is very limited. Though much had been written by administrators who were also scholars about the tribes on the south-bank of the Brahmaputra, comparatively little attention had been paid to the hill people living close to our international borders in the north. I naturally have in view the excellent monographs on the Nagas, the Kacharis, the Mikirs, the Kukis, the Lakhers, the Garos, Lushais, the Khasis etc., Whatever information, however, were available about the tribesmen of the north were beyond the reach of the general public, contained in a few reports and tour diaries of government officials and occasional accounts and short notices in learned journals. It will be correct to say that the formidable heights and the impossibly difficult terrain of India's north-eastern frontiers failed to attract the attention of very many explorers, and administration of these regions during the British rule was also rather lax, and of an indirect nature. It is no wonder, therefore, that the frontier tribes of India's north-east corner remained largely unknown to the people both in this country and outside.

The National Government on taking over the administration of this region after Independence realized the urgency of acquiring correct knowledge about the way of life and culture of the people living in deep gorge-like valleys and mountain slopes of Arunachal Pradesh. In the year 1956, a Research Department was set up by the Government under the inspiring guidance of the reputed anthropologist, the late Dr Verrier Elwin. Our research officers have since then been carrying on scientific investigations among the people in different parts of Arunachal Pradesh, and have produced several useful monographs on the various tribes. These monographs are no doubt helpful and

contribute to our knowledge of the people. But a condensed and handy popular account of the land and people, the historical background and geographical perspective of the entire region as also the ways of life of the discrete communities has been a pressing and long-felt need.

I am glad that Shri J. N. Chowdhury had undertaken this task of compilation and has succeeded in producing the present book. It is the first attempt of its nature to bring together scattered information from various sources and contain them within the scope of a single volume. It will obviously serve a useful purpose for those interested in having a quick glance at Arunachal Pradesh. I wish success to the endeavours of the author, and hope that the book will be accepted by all those who wish to know about the exhilarating heights of Arunachal Pradesh and the people who have lived here down through the centuries.

Shillong,
May 8, 1972.

K. A. A. RAJA
Chief Commissioner
Arunachal Pradesh

PREFACE

MY INTRODUCTION to the 'golden heights' of erstwhile NEFA, now Arunachal Pradesh, dates back to 1957 when for the first time I flew one winter afternoon over the humps of mighty mountain ridges to the celebrated Apa Tani plateau from Rowrah near Jorhat in Assam. The flight hardly took half an hour but the change in scene, both physical and human, was beyond my wildest expectations. My sense of wonderment increased infinitely when I saw for myself the exotic but dignified figures of the sturdy hill men with their hair tied into top-knots over the forehead and long brass skewers stuck through them. Ropes of cane circling round in innumerable spirals guarded their waists. Long features of horn bill, fixed to wickerwork helmets, seemed to emphasize their stature and lend an aura of fairy land mystery to their appearance. I could have hardly believed that such people existed at all, who were so near but seemed so remote, and above all who appeared to care little for all the progress and speed of modern civilization.

Many years have since passed. My interest and admiration for the people, inhabiting one of the world's most difficult terrains along the south face of the easternmost Himalayas, never flagged for a moment and I tried to learn as much as I could about them from the scanty literature and reports, I succeeded in laying my hands on. Fortunately, real opportunities came to me later in course of my official visits of observing these hill people in their natural surroundings from close range.

I may, perhaps, truly say that I have also been an witness to the vast changes which have come over Arunachal Pradesh within the rather short period of my first introduction to its heights. In 1957, the only means of reaching even the district and sub-divisional headquarters of Arunachal was to be airborne.

Alternatively, one had to undertake long and arduous march for many days from the foothills across the north bank of the Brahmaputra over steep mountain sides and down deep gorges, stretching and bending one's leg muscles to the utmost limit of their endurance. Food had to be air-dropped for the government staff and local people in the interior and isolated outposts several days' march away from the nearest headquarters. Today one can drive in reasonable comfort to remote Tawang, situated at an altitude of 3040 meters from the sea level. All the district and most of the sub-divisional headquarters are now connected with one another and the rest of the country by a network of spacious all-weather roads.

There will no doubt be many who will repent the passing of the aborigines—I use the expression here in the sense of their apprehension that the tribals will lose their pristine simplicity. But we cannot afford to be ignorant of the fact that the apparent romanticism of the primitive society is an illusion. Sooner or later it has to give way to the forces of change which constantly threaten to engulf a moribund and static society. An understanding acceptance and well-determined adjustments to inevitable changes are, therefore, the only way to survival in the context of present-day technological advancement.

I should like to state here in all humility that my task in producing this book has been actually that of a compiler. It is far for me to lay claim to having done original research among the tribes. I had often come across curious readers who were anxious to know about the people of Arunachal but who neither had the time nor the inclinations to plod through separate and scattered literature available on them. I had, therefore, in this book set myself the task of collecting together and incorporating available important information and chief social and cultural traits of the main tribal groups of Arunachal within the compass of a single volume. If, therefore, the present book succeeds in contributing to a knowledge, however limited, of the land and the people of Arunachal among common readers, I shall deem my labour to have been amply rewarded. I am, however, aware that I have not been able to devote the same length of space to all the tribal groups due mainly to the fact that there still exists

a real gap in our knowledge as well as in availability of materials on every individual tribe.

Finally, I may take the opportunity of mentioning that I have thought it proper to dedicate this book to my colleagues of the Research Directorate of Arunachal Pradesh Administration because I have immensely benefitted from my association with them and I have liberally taken help of their published books and reports in the preparation of this book. I have also made due acknowledgements to other sources of my information both in the course of the narrative and also in the bibliography appended to this volume.

I am deeply indebted to Shri K. A. A. Raja, Chief Commissioner, Arunachal Pradesh, for having shown personal interest in the progress of the book, and for having graciously blessed it with a foreword.

I am particularly grateful to Shri L. N. Chakravarty, Deputy Director of Research (History), Arunachal Pradesh, who ungrudgingly guided me with advice at every stage of the making of the book. Shri T. P. Khound, the Director of Information and Public Relations, Arunachal Pradesh, made helpful suggestions. I am also obliged to Shri Parul Dutta, Deputy Director of Research (Culture), Arunachal Pradesh, for his active support to my project of writing this book and directing my attention to some important sources of information. I shall be guilty of gross omission if I do not mention Shri B. Das Shastri, Director of Research, Arunachal Pradesh, who has always been a source of inspiration to me and for whose scholarship I have the greatest admiration.

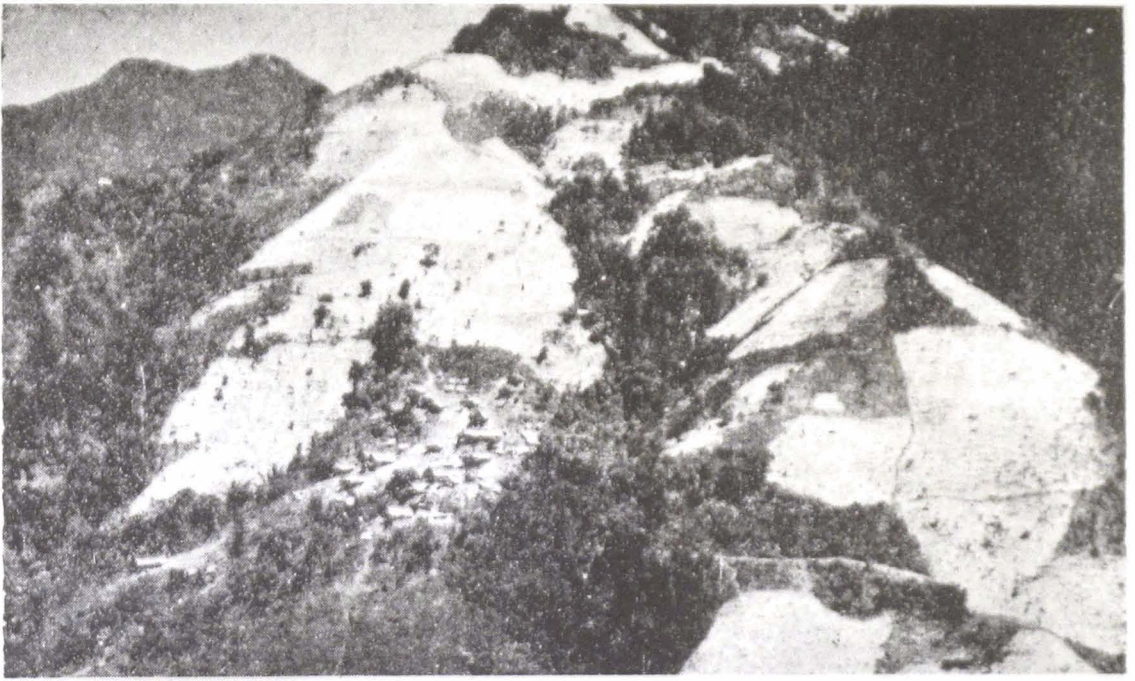
My friend and colleague, Shri R. N. Bagchi, Art Expert, Arunachal Pradesh, from the very beginning urged me on with my project of writing the present book. A fromal acknowledgement of all help, I received from him, particularly for designing and executing the jacket for this book and making out a sketch map showing distribution of tribal population in Arunachal is only a small measure of my gratefulness to him.

With very great pleasure, I acknowledge my debt to Shri Priyatosh Dutta, who never spared pains and energy in quickly typing out, and making the manuscript ready for the press.

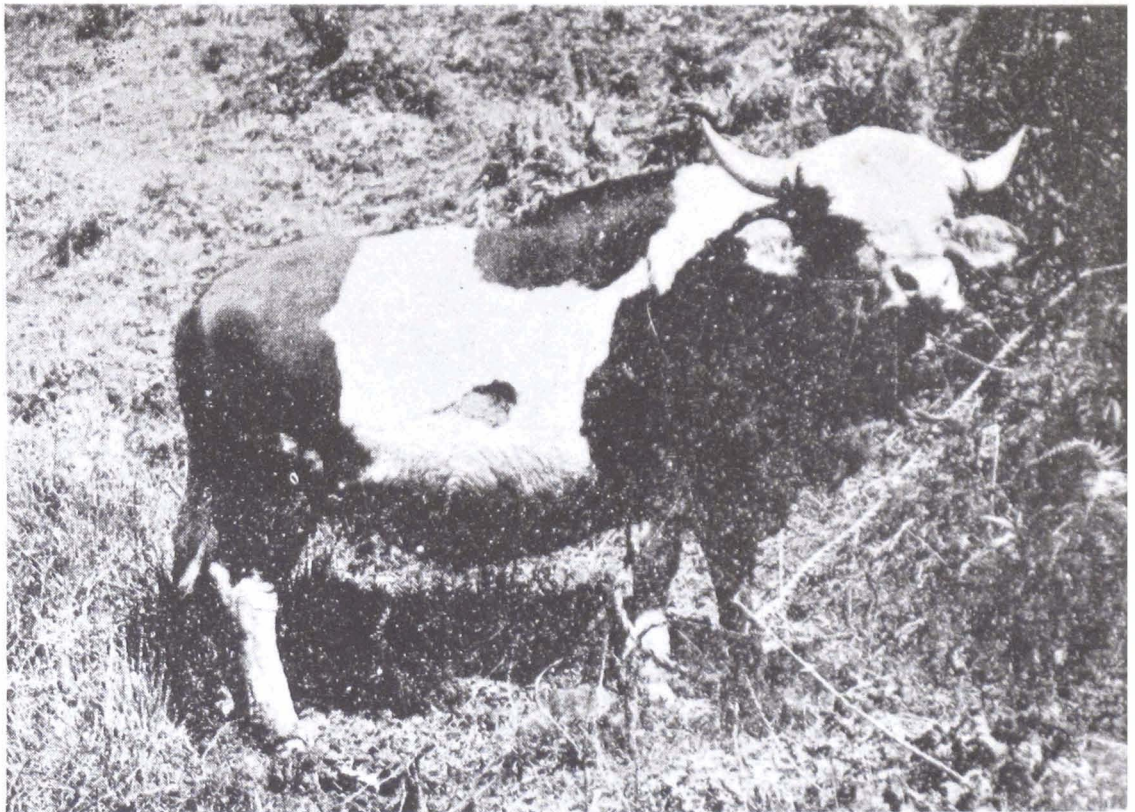


The Snowy heights of Arunachal

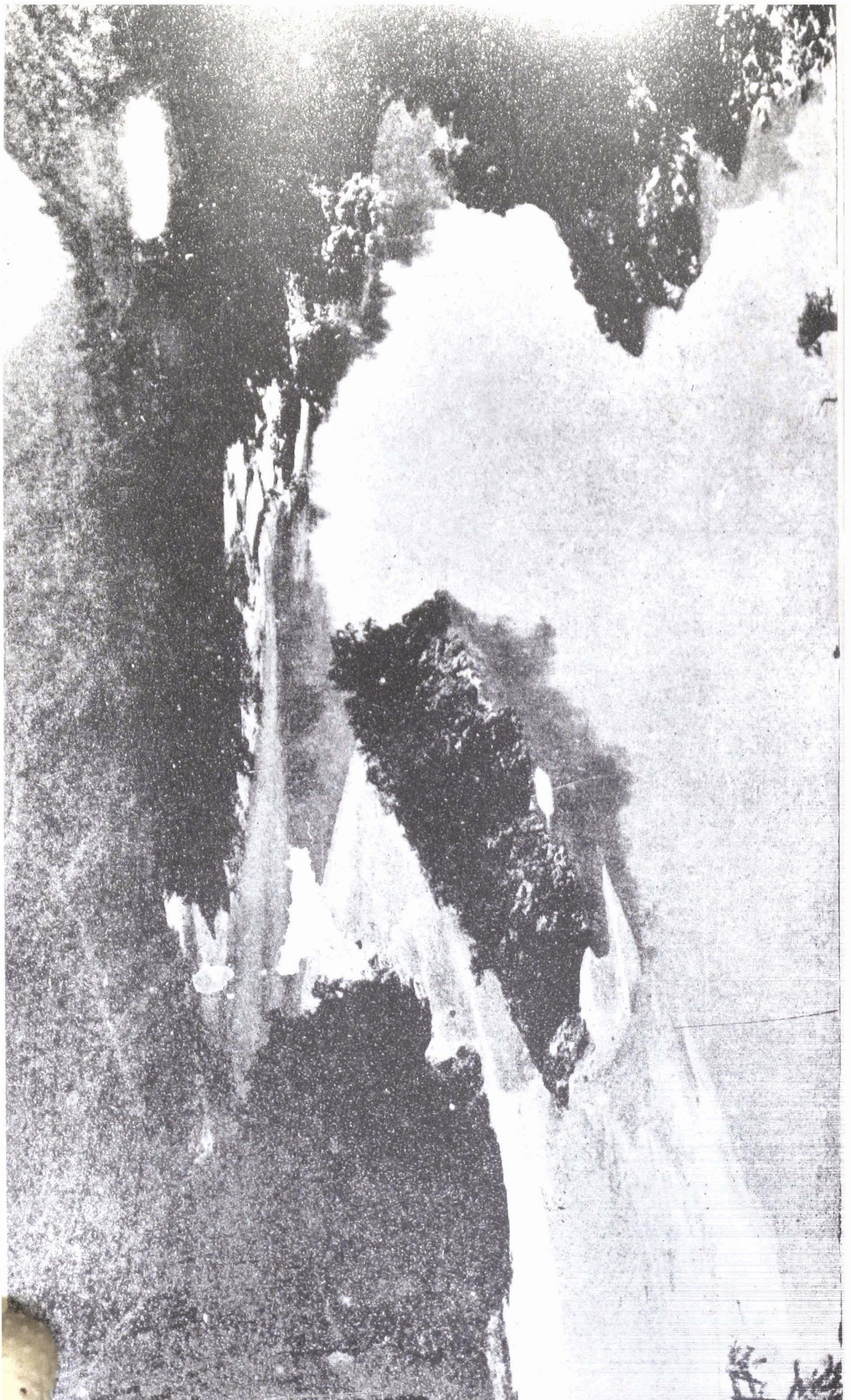




The picture shows patches of *jhum* cultivation—the typical pattern of agriculture in Arunachal—on mountain slope with a settlement in the middle.



A mithan (*Bos frontalis*), the most valued cattle among the people of Arunachal. It has a great demand for the purpose of sacrifice, meat and payment of bride-price.



Introduction

THE ARUNACHAL PRADESH, a new name, added to the political map of India, comprises the territory which was included under the erstwhile North-East Frontier Agency. The North-East Frontier Agency, as the name implied, existed as a convenient administrative arrangement under the direct stewardship of the Central Government though within the constitutional framework of the state of Assam. The new nomenclature is not a mere change of name but also signifies its present higher political status carrying a promise of future statehood, perhaps, in not too distant time. The old-style North-East Frontier Agency—more popularly NEFA for the sake of brevity—had become so widely known in India and outside since the Chinese thrust across our northern borders in 1962 that it would take time for the common people to get used to the change of name. The beginning of the North-East Frontier Agency went back to the British rulers in India who also constituted a similar administrative set-up under almost an identical nomenclature of North-West Frontier Agency at the extreme north-west of undivided India. The verbal parallel of nomenclature, however, did not extend to the material,

ethnic and cultural situation of the two wings, occupying two extremities of India's northern border, separated by thousands of kilometres. In fact, they differed in every possible way. While north-west frontiers captured the limelight of public attention because of the daring raids and open challenge by the Pathan tribesmen to the then British power, the hill people, who lived sequestered in the deep river-valleys and steep mountain slopes of India's north-east corner, were almost blissfully oblivious of the Government of the day. There was pertinent reason in the geo-political context of the frontier diplomacy of the time that the north-west frontiers commanded exclusive attention of the British rulers whose policies were greatly influenced by the rise of the Russian spectre in Central Asia. Obviously, they considered the north-east frontiers as very much less vulnerable to approach by any big foreign power across Tibet and over the Himalayas. •

It is no wonder, therefore, that, in the beginning and throughout the greater part of the nineteenth century, the British did not seriously attempt to consolidate their administration over the region and broadly remained content with maintaining a loose control over the discrete tribal groups inhabiting world's one of the most difficult terrains in India's north-east. The tribes here, shut off from one another by high mountain ridges and deep gorge-like valleys, had little opportunities of coming together and forming an united threat to the British hegemony in the plains of Assam. Besides, in view of their situation, the tribes were not too friendly to each other either, torn apart as they were by frequent tribal feuds.

The territory of the Arunachal Pradesh is spread along the south face of the eastern Himalayas imme-

diately below the water-divide between Tibet on the one hand and India on the other and the waterdivide between Burma and India along the crest of the Patkoi hills coming round to the south-east and south of the easternmost tip of the Brahmaputra valley. The whole area towers above the plains of upper Assam in the shape of a horse-shoe—to borrow the expression from a writer about the present Arunachal Pradesh. The mighty Brahmaputra, flowing from the south-east end of the region, divides Assam into two halves along its entire length. Assam, as it well known, is a major producer of tea in the world and had been the only source of petroleum wealth in the country during the pre-independence years. Besides, it is known to be rich in still untapped mineral deposits, forest produce and wild life.

International Frontiers and Terrain

QUITE A SIZABLE AREA—almost half that of Orissa—constituting the present Arunachal Pradesh measures about 83,578 sq. km. of highly jagged and wild territory, rising in mighty convolutions of mountain ridges and spurs from the foothills across the north bank of the Brahmaputra. It is a tangle of deep gorge-like valleys, densely wooded mountain slopes, dissected by numerous torrents and rivers, deep river valleys and a belt of tropical rain forest about 80 km. broad along the lower reaches particularly in the eastern section.

Forming India's international frontier with the Chinese-occupied Tibet along the snowline in the extreme north, the territory extends from its meeting point with Bhutan to the west for approximately 1,030 km. in an easterly direction and then taking a turn to the southeast, it delineates our border with Burma for about 441 km. following the crest of the Patkoi. India has 157 km. of border with Bhutan, cutting across almost from north to south and forming the western limit of the Arunachal Pradesh. At the end of the line in the extreme east, the borders of India, China and Burma meet to form the

famous trijunction, celebrated in the writings of so many explorers.

The heights, gained by mountain peaks, as one follows the crestline from the western end to the easternmost corner, show a great variation, ranging from 6,400 metres to 1,829 metres. From the uppermost point of India's border with Bhutan to Longju in Subansiri, the peaks range between 5,486 and 6,400 metres. Proceeding further east upto the point where the Dihang or Siang cuts across India's frontier at Korbo near Gelling in the Siang district, the crests come down slightly, varying between 4,877 and 5,182 metres. Between the Dihang and the Lohit rivers a great variation of altitudes becomes suddenly noticeable. The peaks range between 2,743 and 5,791 metres. Then, as one crosses the Lohit into the Tirap district, drained by the Tirap and the Namchik rivers and stretching along the slopes of the Patkoi hills, the crestline descends from 4,572 to a general average of 1,829 metres. Here the frontier, as already noted above, runs along the crest of the Patkoi hills describing a great bend from the south-east to the south of the Tirap district.

The general alignment of the mountain ridges and spurs, making up the highly dissected terrains of the Arunachal Pradesh, takes almost always an approximate north-south direction. Exception is to be noticed only in the Kameng district in the farthest west where the prominent ridges run parallel to each other from east to west. Ascending from the foothills, one first encounters the Bomdi La ridge rising to a height of 2,743 metres; then one sharply descends to the valley where the picturesque Dirang stands at a height of 914 metres; here begins the steep climb to the Se La pass shooting upto 4,419 metres, though the pass itself is situated a

little lower at a height of 4,267 metres ; lastly the Thag La ridge towers over the north as a great bulwark of mountain fastness. At the foot of the Thag La ridge, at an altitude of about 3,048 metres, the great lamasery of Tawang, the biggest in India, comes to the view of a weary traveller, either on foot or horse-back, from fifteen miles away, 'standing like a fort on its hillside'.

The McMahon Line

A FEW WORDS here might be appropriate about India's international frontier with the Chinese-occupied Tibet, marching concurrently with the northern border of the Arunachal Pradesh for about 1,030 km. This frontier which has long since become famous as the McMahon Line, now called into question by China, actually extends from the east of Bhutan to the Isu Razzi Pass situated at the trijunction of India, Tibet and Burma referred to above. The alignment of the frontier which was agreed to and ratified in a tripartite conference in 1914 was determined on the principle of watershed, widely acknowledged in international practice as most suitable in inaccessible mountainous terrain. As a result of necessary adjustments, the frontier line, which ultimately emerged after careful deliberations and common agreement, was summed up by one author as 'a combination of ridge, watershed and highest crest'. In other words, the watershed, wherever possible, was the guiding principle. Incidentally, the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890 which determined the Sikkim-Tibet frontier was guided by the same principle and the boundary line was drawn along 'the crest of the mountain range

separating waters flowing into the Sikkim Teesta and its effluents from the waters flowing into the Tibetan Mochu and northwards into other rivers of Tibet'.

It will be wearisome to recount here in great details the background history of the McMahon line but a few lines on the legal position of this international border may be in place. The Mc Mahon line which came into being formally in 1914 following the Simla Conference was an accepted fact, and was never challenged until as late as 1959 when the Communist China took up a belligerent attitude towards India. The later history of Sino-Indian confrontation in 1962 is too well-known to need recapitulation.

The British rulers of India did not feel called upon to seek a formal delimitation of India's northern frontiers with Tibet until after the Young-husband Mission of 1904 to Lhasa. The penetration of the Younghusband Mission to Lhasa and conclusion of a bilateral treaty with the Dalai Lama's Government activated the Chinese into embarking upon an expansionist policy in Tibet, Nepal and Bhutan. Under the ruthless leadership of Chao Erh-feng, China initiated a vigorous forward policy with a view to imposing her will and authority on the states across India's border, over which she claimed hegemony. Chao Erh-feng with his troops forced his way into Lhasa on February, 1910, putting the Dalai Lama into flight to India. Having laid Tibet under their heels, Chao's troops now marched close to the border of Sikkim. In May 1910, the then Government of East Bengal and Assam was alerted about the reported appearance of Chinese troops at Rima at the head of the Mishmi hills. It was natural, therefore, that the British Government of the day was alarmed at the turn of events on the borders. Things moved very

fast in the meantime, ultimately resulting in the victory of the republican forces in China itself. Taking advantage of the situation, the remnants of Chinese officials and soldiers were, driven out of the country by the Tibetans and Chao Erh-feng himself was murdered. The Dalai Lama returned to Tibet from exile in India, and took up the reins of his government.

Before the political turmoil in Tibet had settled down, the confusion was aggravated afresh by a declaration of the President of the new Chinese Republic, Yuan Shi-Kai, proposing to place Tibet on the same footing as that of other provinces of China. The declaration was made in April, 1912. The British Government lodged a protest immediately, making abundantly clear that they had never agreed to such a definition of the 'Political Status of Tibet'. Under these intriguing political circumstances, the British Government called for a tripartite conference with the express purpose of formally fixing the international frontier of its Indian empire with Tibet.

The Chinese Government of the day procrastinated but ultimately notified her willingness to participate in a tripartite conference, scheduled to be held in Simla. China also recognized Tibet's right to send her representative to the conference with the same plenipotentiary powers as that of her own representative. The conference accordingly began deliberations on October 13, 1913, under the chairmanship of Sir Henry McMahon, the British plenipotentiary, with China and Tibet represented by Ivan Chen and Lonchen Shatra respectively. To cut a long a story short, the conference initially agreed to divide Tibet into two zones for the purpose of delimitations of frontiers, namely the Outer and Inner Tibet. The Sino-Tibetan boundary was com-

prised under Inner Tibet while the Outer Tibet continued in the direction of the Indian frontier in the north-east of India. Without any open hitch, the plenipotentiaries to the conference agreed on the delimitation of the Indo-Tibetan frontier drawn along the present McMahon Line though China expressed her reservations on the proposed Sino-Tibetan boundary falling under Inner Tibet. However, the convention was ultimately adopted on April 27, 1914. The mutually agreed Indo-Tibetan boundary has since been called the McMahon Line.

The argument, put forward by Communist China in 1959 in rejecting the McMahon Line, was based on the ground that the agreement between the British and Tibetan representatives was unknown to the Chinese representative. This was simply not true because the appended map to the convention was duly signed by the Chinese plenipotentiary. It is important to remember here that, when China raised objections to the delineation of the Sino-Tibetan boundary coming within the Inner Tibet zone, the explanatory map submitted by the Chinese themselves retained unaltered the red line showing the alignment of the Indo-Tibetan frontier. It was evidence enough, if any evidence was needed, that China at no stage of the progress of the convention made any reservation with regard to the Indo-Tibetan boundary since known as the McMahon Line.

Flora and Fauna

THE VEGETATION of the whole of the Arunachal Pradesh, as it should be expected, varies greatly along with the altitude of each separate region. It ranges from a belt of swampy rain-forests at the foothills and lowlying areas, particularly in the eastern section, to the tropical and sub-tropical upto an height of approximately 2,134 metres. This region of luxuriant vegetation is distinguished by trees of great size, both in stand and flora, plentiful climbers and abundant undergrowths. Of the climbers, cane is the most noticeable. Orchids of numerous varieties are in abundance here. To quote from the report of the Botanical Survey, Eastern Circle, pertaining to the Siang district alone:

‘From a general running collection in the region orchid species numbering to 40 and representing 16 genera have been collected. . . . From these collections one species is new to the Himalayan region and one Malayan species of *Coelogyne Carneae* Hook f. is recorded from India for the first time’.

Among big trees, ‘forming especially dense stand’, most common and well represented, particularly in the Siang and Lohit districts are simul, hollock, bola, kho-

kan and makahi. Bamboo of different varieties and stand is found in great abundance upto an height of 2,743 metres.

Beyond 2,134 and upto 2,743 metres, we come to the area of deciduous and mixed deciduous forests composed mainly of walnut, oak, chestnut, pine, spruce, and rhododendron.

Further up and continuing upto an altitude of 3,658 metres, the wide stretch of area is generally claimed by conifers. Going still further up, the flora yields to plentiful rhododendrons of rather dwarfish stature and wild strawberry bushes. Beyond 4,877 metres and right upto the snowline, one enters the region of alpine meadow.

Most of the areas in the Arunachal Pradesh coming within the range of 1,524 metre altitude experience some snowfall and alternate rainfall showers. November to March is the period when snowfall commonly takes place but both its duration and density is determined by location and respective heights of different regions. As one writer has noted, the eastern Himalaya generally do not come under as heavy snowfall as the western Himalaya; the passes of corresponding heights here remain closed only for a few days at a stretch even in winter. But cold gorge-wind constantly passes through the valleys and a blanket of heavy mists envelops them particularly in the morning hours. It is no wonder, therefore, that humidity is very high in the valley floors almost through the year round.

Generally speaking, the Arunachal Pradesh is included within the regions of heaviest rainfall in India. But then the incidence and condition of precipitation varies from one part to the other, depending on great contrast in temperature between the lowlying areas and regions of higher altitude; between sheltered valleys and ex-

posed mountain slopes in the north. The river valleys nearer to and opening out to the plains of Assam receive the moisture-laden monsoon clouds by a natural process of suction into great depths of the regions. The Dihang, Dibang and Lohit valleys, therefore, experience the heaviest rainfall in the whole of the Arunachal Pradesh. The sheltered areas are generally less subject to heavy rainfall compared to the exposed parts. The broad belt running along the central part of the Arunachal Pradesh, with the exception of the Tirap district, is exposed to heavy rainfall as much as 200" annually. The months of the heaviest rain are said to be June and July. But rain starts from April, continuing almost upto the end of September. Respite is known only during the months from October to the first half of March. It is, therefore, not surprising that Dr Elwin was prompted to say that 'the rain comes down all through the year, breaking the usual Indian rule of hot, cold and rainy seasons'. The influence of rain on the people, living here, is tremendous. It was one of the factors which for centuries shut off one group of people from another. They always construct their houses on stilts high above the damp ground. The eaves of the houses come down so low as to almost cover the none-too-high side walls. The houses, therefore, from a distance look all roofs and no walls. We, however, postpone the discussion of the life and cultural pattern of the people further on to subsequent sections of the book.

Like the flora, the deeply wooded terrains of the Arunachal Pradesh are no less rich in fauna. Among the great variety of wild life, the most commonly noticed are tiger, black panther, black deer, leopard, wild elephant, barking deer, musk deer (particularly in the Lohit district), monkey and langur, wild buffalo and

wild goat, flying fox or fruit-bat etc. In order, however, to escape the prying eyes and deadly weapons of the hunters, the animals have migrated to higher regions, and have taken refuge in remote and inaccessible valleys of the interior. It might be of interest to mention that a strange creature, called takin (*Budorcas*), can still be seen in northern regions of the Siang district. Of the takins which are becoming increasingly rare in the world, we get the following description of their look and habitations :

‘Both sexes bear identical horns which are almost like those of buffalo. There are several races of takins that inhabit a considerable area of mountainous territory from the eastern Himalayas through Assam and north of Burma to east Tibet, and Szechuan, Kansu and Shensi provinces of China. . . . They are ungainly in movement and amble along with their bloated nose close to the ground like hounds tracking but they navigate roughest terrain on a steady and surprising pace and they are adept climbers’.¹

The takins actually belong to the ox-goat species but they are not truly montane animals as they prefer thick woods and giant bamboo forests, descending regularly to the valleys, of course at considerable heights, to feed on swamp vegetation. The dwindling number of this race of animals makes it a precious possession of the Arunachal Pradesh fauna.

Sanderson, Ivan T, *Living Mammals of the World* (London, 1955)

Kiratas (Indo-Mongoloids)

THE RACIAL AFFILIATION of the people of the Arunachal Pradesh has been variously described by scholars as mongoloid, paleo-mongoloid, protomongoloid and so on. Others apply to them a racio-cultural term, namely Indo-mongoloid, which seems to describe their situation more correctly as they have been settled for centuries within the frontiers of India and Indian culture. Their contributions to the heritage of Indian civilization and culture have also been widely acknowledged by scholars. It is, therefore, appropriate to inquire on the evidence of history, legend, mythology and extant ancient literature of the country about the possible date of their advent and settlement in areas where they are found today.

It is common knowledge that the so-called mongoloid race at one time covered a very wide area of our globe as it is evident from their existence in distant Mexico, Central America and the Andes. It is little wonder that the question of their original home from where they dispersed over the face of the earth should remain a matter of great controversy. For our purpose, however, we need not go into the details of this controversy here.

It is naturally of interest to us to have an idea of the movement of the mongoloid people within the frontiers of India. From historical, literary and other evidences, there is little scope for doubt that they entered India in very remote past and it might be as early as the time when the so-called Aryans entered India from the north-west. At least it appears that, by the time the Vedas were compiled, groups of mongoloid people were already settled along the slopes of the great Himalayan range from the north-eastern limits of India. It is also highly probable that the mongoloid race of people were known in ancient India by the generic term *Kirata*.

It was Sylvan Levi who first drew attention to the fact that the most unambiguous reference to the association of the name *Kirata* with the Indo-mongoloids occurred in the Mahabharata. The Mahabharata mentions the king of ancient Pragjyotisha or western Assam who joined the battle of Kurukshetra on the side of Duryodhana, surrounded by his army of *Kiratas* and *Chinas*.

‘Sa kirātaiśca cīnaiśca vṛtaḥ
prāgjyotiṣo bhavat’

It is to be noted particularly that the *Kiratas* and *Cinas* were mentioned separately and not collectively.

Dr Bani Kanta Kakati in his book, *The Mother Goddess Kamakhya*, observed after F. E. Pargiter that the Mahabharata placed Pragjyotisha in the northern region but it was at the same time considered to be in the east. North of the Pragjyotisha seemingly lay tracts called Antagiri, Vahirgiri and Upagiri which indicated the lower slopes of the Himalayas and the Terai. It was close to the mountains, for Bhagadatta has been called in the Mahabharata parvatapati and sailalaya raja. It

was definitely stated that Pragjyotisha bordered on the *Kiratas*.

The mention of the *Kiratas* is, however, to be found even earlier than the Mahabharata. Dr Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, in his *Kirāta-Jana-Kṛti*, refers to the fact that, from the time of the Yajurveda onward, the mountainous regions of north-eastern India, particularly the Himalayas, were known as the home of the *Kiratas*. Reconstructing the picture of the *Kiratas* or early mongoloid movement on the soil of India right down to the beginning of the Christian era, he observes that they probably entered the country through Assam, and their advent in the east might have been as old as that of the Aryans in the west at some time before 1,000 B.C. He conjectures that by that time they might have already pushed along the Himalayan slopes as far west as the eastern Punjab hills. The passages in the Yajurveda and the Atharvaveda, mentioning the *Kiratas*, are at least as old as that period.

We may quote Dr Chatterjee here :

‘When the Mahabharata and the Ramayana were taking shape, between 500 B.C. to 400 A.D., particularly in the pre-Christian centuries, they had occupied the southern tract of the Himalayas and the whole of north-eastern India, north Bihar contiguous to Nepal and to the north of the Ganges, the greater part of Bengal and Assam, including areas through which the Ganges (the Padma or Padda of the present day) passed into the sea’.

Coming down to the Christian era, the Periplus, a work of the first century A.D., makes clear reference to the hill people to the east of the Ganges, whom it called ‘kirrhadaï’ as a race of men with rather short and flat nose.

Before we pass on, we may incidentally take notice

of the very significant remark of Dr Chatterjee with regard to the river Brahmaputra which as it has been already noted, traverses the entire length of Assam flowing from its eastern extremity. We prefer to quote :

‘The Brahmaputra river also came to be better known in the Hindu world outside Assam as Lauhitya, which would appear to be an Aryanization, in Sanskrit, of the Indo-mongoloid (old Bodo) name Luhit which is still the easternmost branch of the river, now flanked by Mishmi (North-Assamese), Singpho or Kachin (Burmese-Kuki-Lolo) and Khamti (Siamese-Chinese) speakers’.

Mythological Associations and Archaeological Ruins

THE LATE Dr Verrier Elwin put it in his inimitable style that 'the history of what is known as the North-East Frontier Agency (Arunachal Pradesh) ascends for hundreds of years into the mist of tradition and mythology'. The hill people, who have been settled since time immemorial in the river valleys and mountain slopes of the most formidable terrain, comprised by the present Arunachal Pradesh, namely the Monpas, Sherdukpens, Daflas (Nishis), Hill-Miris, Apa Tains, Adis (former Abors), Mishmis, Noctes, Singhphos, Khamtis etc., naturally came within the influence of the main stream of Indian culture and civilization. There can be little room for doubt that this stream reached out to the farthest corner of India's north-east in the dim past and it has only now begun to yield its secrets before the spade of archaeologists. But much of it is still undoubtedly shrouded in the mist of legends and mythology.

It is, however, understandable that participation of the Indo-mongoloids in the evolution of Indian culture in areas where they lived, was not an one-way traffic.

As Dr Chatterjee again puts it, it was not a case of one-sided influence or absorption only. 'It was case of the Indo-mongoloid speeches and ideologies, cults and customs being engrafted on the stock of Hindu (i.e., Indo-Aryan-cum-Austrian and Dravidian) speech and ideology and cults and customs'.¹ It has been acknowledged by scholars that the mongoloid races of the North-East were responsible for the rise of the Tantric cults in the cis-Himalayan regions. It was particularly noticeable in the ascendancy of the cult of the Mother Goddess accompanied at one time by human sacrifice and other magical rites in this area.

We shall note in course of the brief account given below that this area is no less rich in ancient lore and mythological associations preserved by local traditions. Though naturally authentic historicity cannot be claimed for mainly oral traditions, handed down from generation to generation, they do nevertheless point to the fact that this remote eastern region was never outside the pale of the great Indian Culture. All along the region, particularly along the lower reaches and the terrai, beginning from the west to the farthest east, traces of numerous ruins are scattered. These archaeological ruins are strangely associated in popular minds with stories and myths related in the Mahabharata and the Puranas. It is only natural to anticipate that, when real historical connections of these ruins are established, they will shed great light on the history of the area itself and the various groups of the hill people, who lived around these ruins since time beyond reckoning, will, perhaps, be found to form a part of that history.

Bhalukpung ruins: On the western banks of the river

¹ Chatterjee, Suniti Kumar (Dr), *Kirāta-Jana-Kṛti* (Calcutta, 1951).

Bhareli immediately beyond the Inner Line is a place called Bhalukpung in the present Kameng district of the Arunachal Pradesh. The ruins of an ancient fort is to be noticed here but little has so far been done to carry out real excavations around this place. The Akas, who live not far from the ruins, connect them with their mythical ancestor Bhaluka, grandson of Raja Bana. According to the Bhagavata and Vishnu Purana, the king named Bali ruled over Sonitpur, the city of blood, popularly identified with the present Tezpur. His son Bana, who succeeded him to the throne, was said to be a contemporary of Naraka, king of ancient Pragjyotisha. The kingdom of Raja Bana might have included the whole of Darrang and North-Lakhimpur. One conjecture is that the Akas might really be 'the remains of a people who once ruled in the plains and were driven into the hills by some more powerful tribes'.

Ita ruins: Within the jurisdiction of the present Subansiri district at the foothills areas, not far from Doimukh, the well-known ruins of Ita can still be noticed. *Ita* has been identified by some scholars with Mayapur of Ramachandra, a king of the Jitari dynasty. This dynasty was founded by Dharmapala in the 11th century A.D. A succession of kings followed Dharmapala. Ramachandra in the 13th century A.D. had a large kingdom extending from Bhalukpung to Majuli, and made Ratnapur in Majuli his capital. Later he founded a second capital at Mayapur in the north-east corner of his kingdom. Mayapur, it is claimed, was actually named after him as he was also known as Mayamatta. It is also said that Rmachandra had ultimately to take shelter in his second capital, Mayapur. The Daflas (Nishi), a turbulent hill tribe of Subansiri, called him refugee king for this reason. Dr Elwin, however,

thought that he was a Kalita king. About the Kalitas, the scholars have not yet reached an agreement as to who they were and where their kingdom was actually located. According to one account noted by Dr Bani Kanta Kakati in his *Mother Goddess Kamakhya*, the country to the eastward of Bhot and northward of Sadiya, extending to the plains beyond the mountains, was said to have been possessed by a powerful people called Kalitas or Kultas. They were known to have attained a high degree of advancement and civilization.

Malinithan: A great heap of ruins, known to the local people as Ghagrathan or Malinithan, can be seen at the foothills areas of the Siang district, very close to Likabali. The 'Than', dedicated to the goddess Durga, is situated on high grounds and, as one climbs up the side of the hill, one notices huge blocks of carved stones lying all about the place. Only during recent years, excavation on this site has been undertaken by the Arunachal Pradesh Administration in right earnest. The excavation has already yielded many important and valuable finds which are sure to throw great light on the history of this area. The most remarkable fact about the ruins at Malini Than is that what was possibly once a massive temple was constructed of huge blocks of stones, marking a deviation from the general rule about other ruins in this region which are made up of baked bricks. Several stone pillars with carved lotus motif on them and images of popular gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon lie scattered about everywhere, mostly in broken portions. A particularly fine image of Dashabhuj Durga, apparently of great age, has been found.

The local mythological legend connected with Malini Than may as well be related here. Lord Krishna, when he was carrying away Rukmini, daughter of king Bhis-

mak, on the eve of her settled marriage with Shishupal, king of Chedi, was invited to make a brief halt at this place where Mahadeva with his consort Pravati was staying at the time. Parvati, who welcomed Krishna and Rukmini with garlands, acquired the title of Malini since that celebrated occasion.

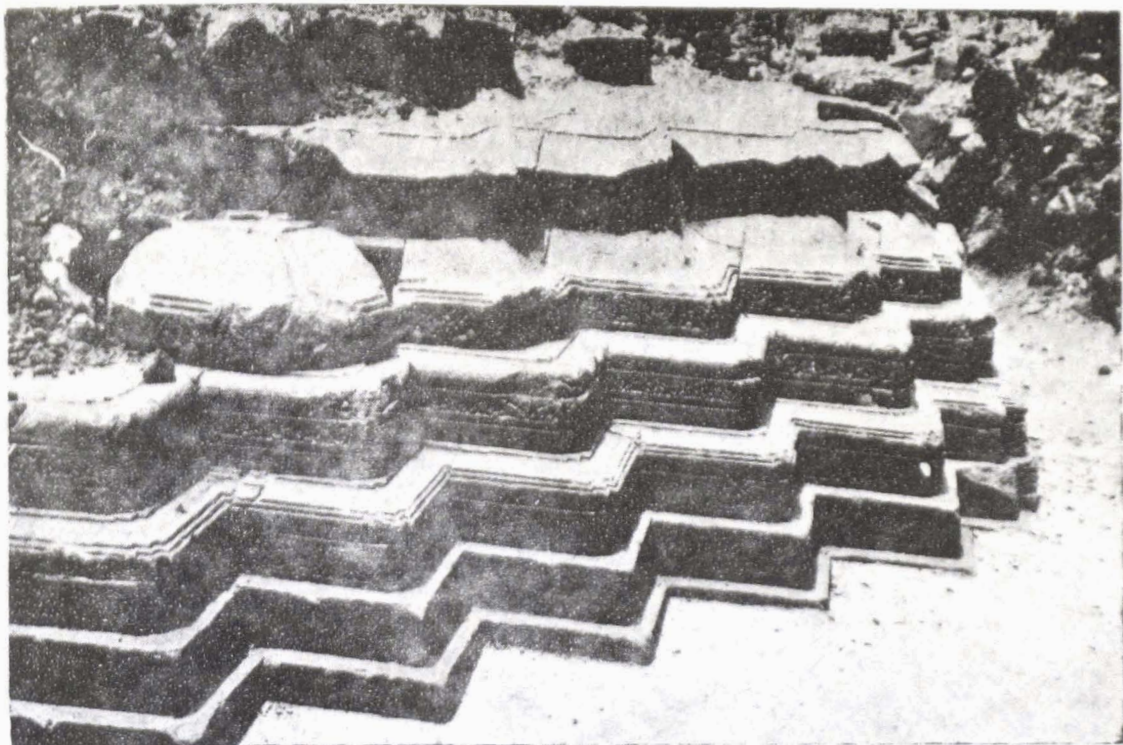
Among the great wealth of stone-carved images, being unearthed here, figures of *Kinnaris* (celestial damsels) in dancing pose or playing the drum in Konarak style, mithuns in copulation, images of the gods such as Ganesha and Kartikeya have been noticed. A stone figure in the round of Nandi (bull), the sacred mount of Lord Siva, has been excavated. It is of considerable size. Curiously enough, a profusely bearded figure, resembling the traditional Dvarapala, has been unearthed from the site. The carved images of the gods and goddesses along with their celestial attendants, both in style and execution, hark back to the extant historical evidence of temple sculpture in other parts of the country, particularly in Orissa. There is at least one instance of recorded history that an Ahom Raja secured the services of a sculptor from Orissa for carving an image of Durga for his worship. We may note, in passing, that other archaeological ruins, recently brought to light at other places in this eastern part, more particularly at Ambari near Gauhati, were possibly not unconnected, and are sure to push back the history of this area centuries back confirming the close cultural link which definitely existed between this region and the rest of the country since remote past.

Tamresvari: A notable archaeological site on the right bank of a small stream, named Dewulpani, eight miles east of present Sunpura, also within the Arunachal Pradesh, is regarded to represent the remains of

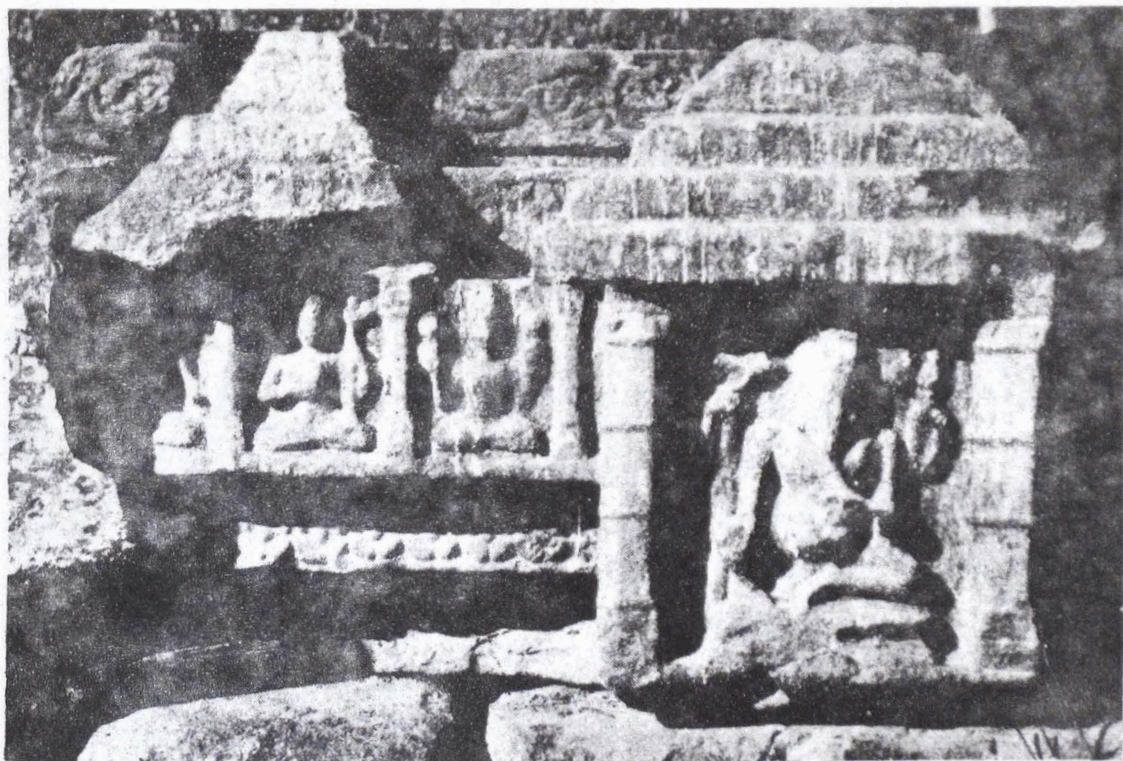
the famous temple of Devi Tamresvari, celebrated both in legends and ancient literature. We are told that the temple had a copper roof. But the explanation, recorded by Dr Bani Kanta Kakati, is at variance with this tradition. He pointed out that Yogini Tantra took notice of a small pitha in the north-east region called *Hayata-mra*. This might have been a parallel formation of Ratna-Pitha, diverse localities. According to tradition, a magic book, called *Tamraksari*, was in the possession of the Bara-Bhuiyas of North-Lakhimpur who were shaktas. It was said to have contained all kinds of potent magic formulas for propitiation of the goddess. Dr Kakati, therefore, conjectured that the goddess might have been locally known as Tamresvari, the presiding divinity of the Haya-Tamra Pitha and also the divinity whose worship was extolled in the book called *Tamraksari*. 'The copper temple must have been a later addition to suit her epithet'.

According to Dr Kakati again, the Chutiyas, a mongoloid tribe, who were reigning at Sadiya at the beginning of the thirteenth century, brought the goddess into 'awful prominence'. The temple acquired such wide fame that it came to be looked upon as a centre of worship for all hill tribes of the north-east frontier. Human sacrifices were yearly offered until the Ahom King, Gaurinath Singh, stopped the cruel practice.

Eminent scholars believe on strong grounds that the cult of the mother goddess Shakti in her fearful aspect grew into prominence in this northeast region of India. A combined cult of Shiva-with-Shakti struck deep roots and in course of time came to be accepted as popular form of religion among all sections of people of the north-east. The contributions of Indo-mongoloid races to the rise of the Shakti cult or the worship of the



A portion of the foundation of what apparently was a temple excavated at Malini Than



Figures of Ganesha and other gods from the Malini Than excavation site.



A broken image provisionally identified as that of Kartikeya excavated at Malini Than.



A huge stone block with lotus motif inscribed on it at Malini Than.

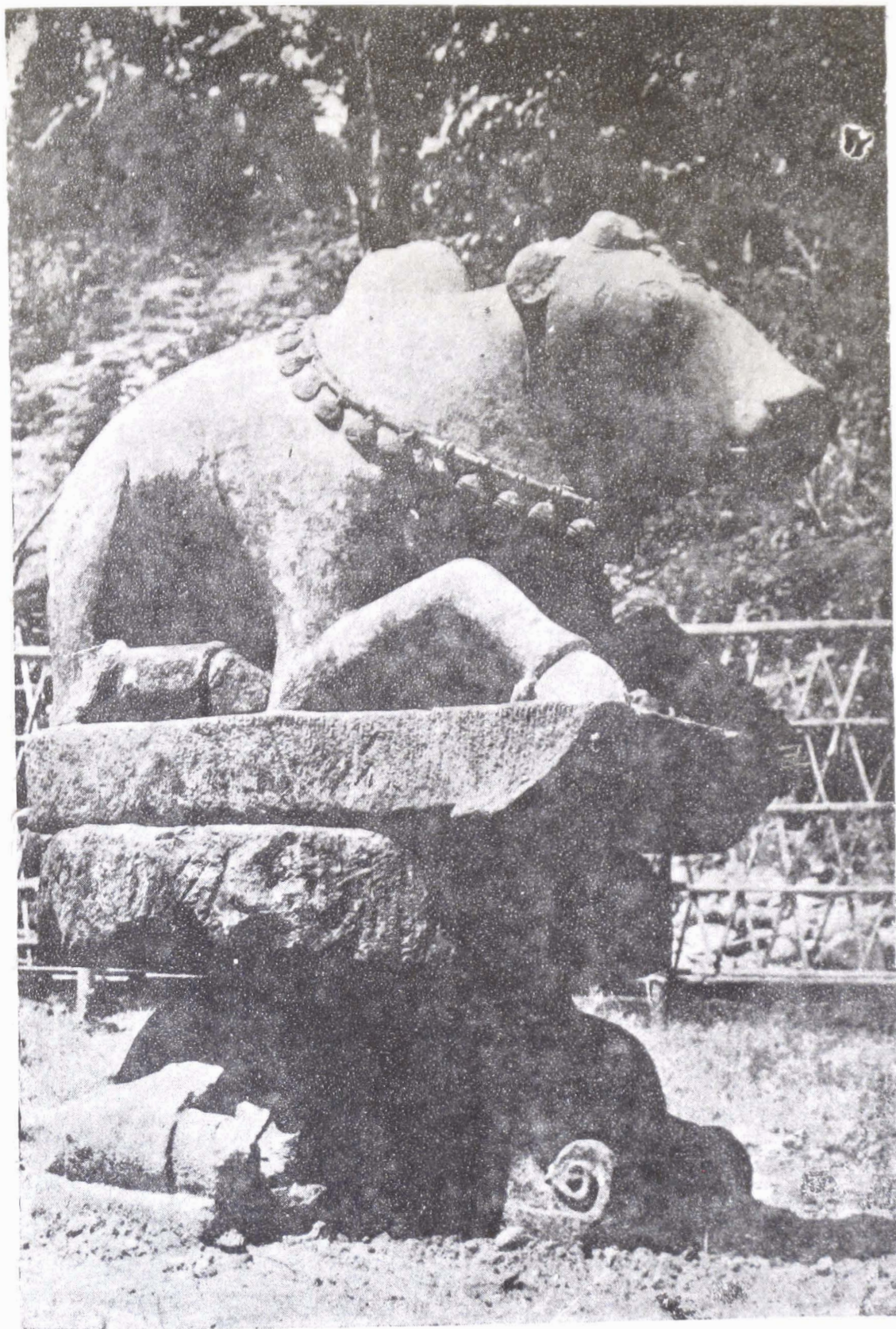
The sculptured figure of
all Apśara unearthed at
Malini Than.



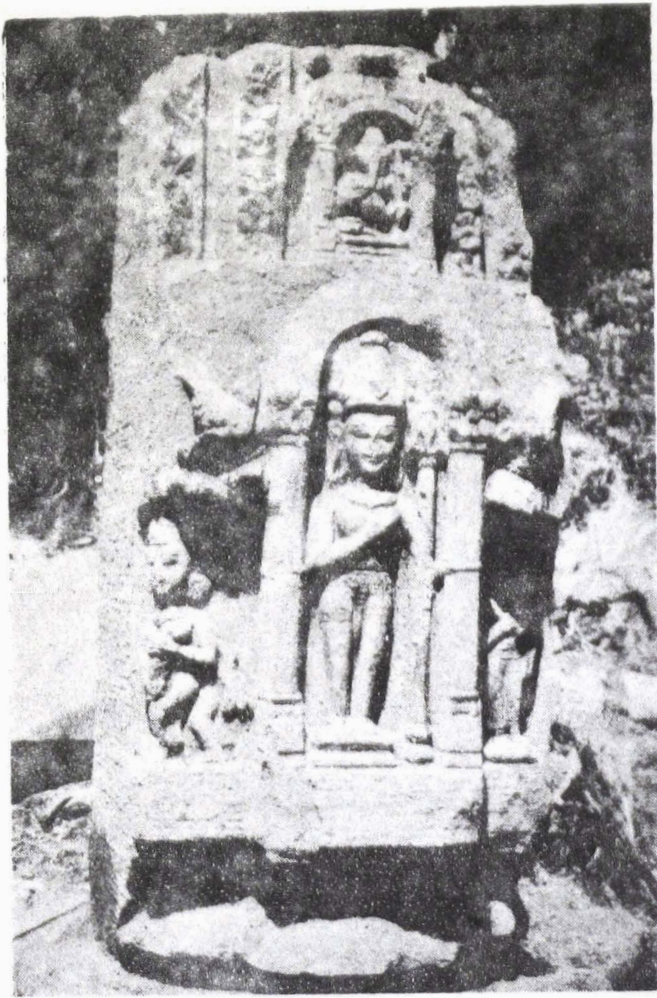
A lion sitting on a vanquished elephant, a common enough motif
in Indian temple sculpture, excavated at Malini Than.



The figure of a goddess, not yet identified, unearthed at Malini
Than. Could it be the image of Parvati as Malini ?



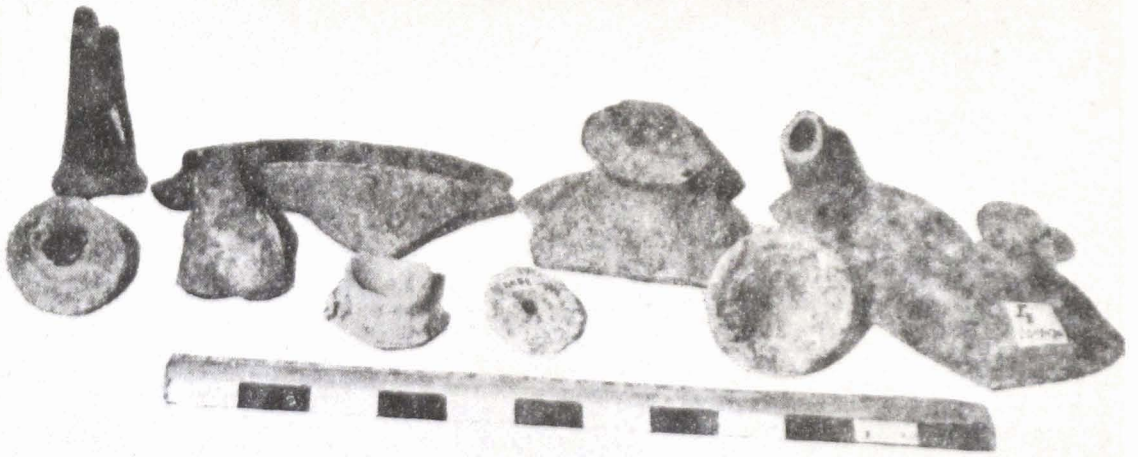
The round figure of Nandi (bull), Lord Śiva's mount, excavated at Malini Than.



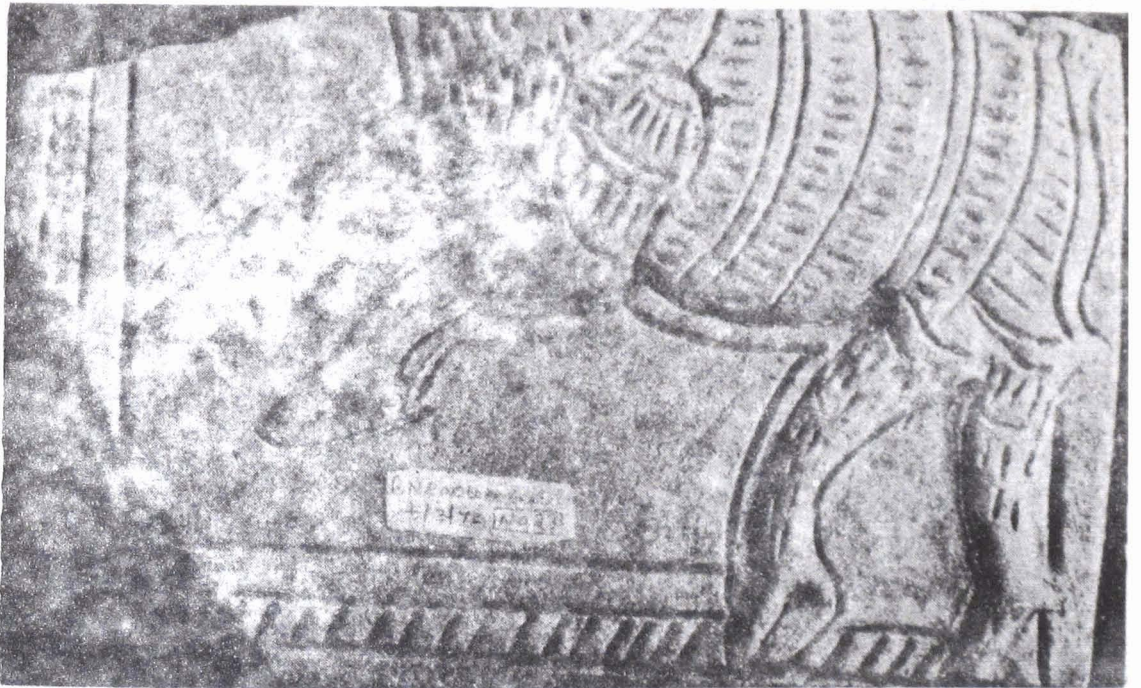
A decorated column excavated at Malini Than. The top figure is obviously that of Ganesha.



A portion of the rampart of what was possibly a fort excavated at Bhisak Nagar in the Lohit district. Note the big trees which have grown the top of the ruins.



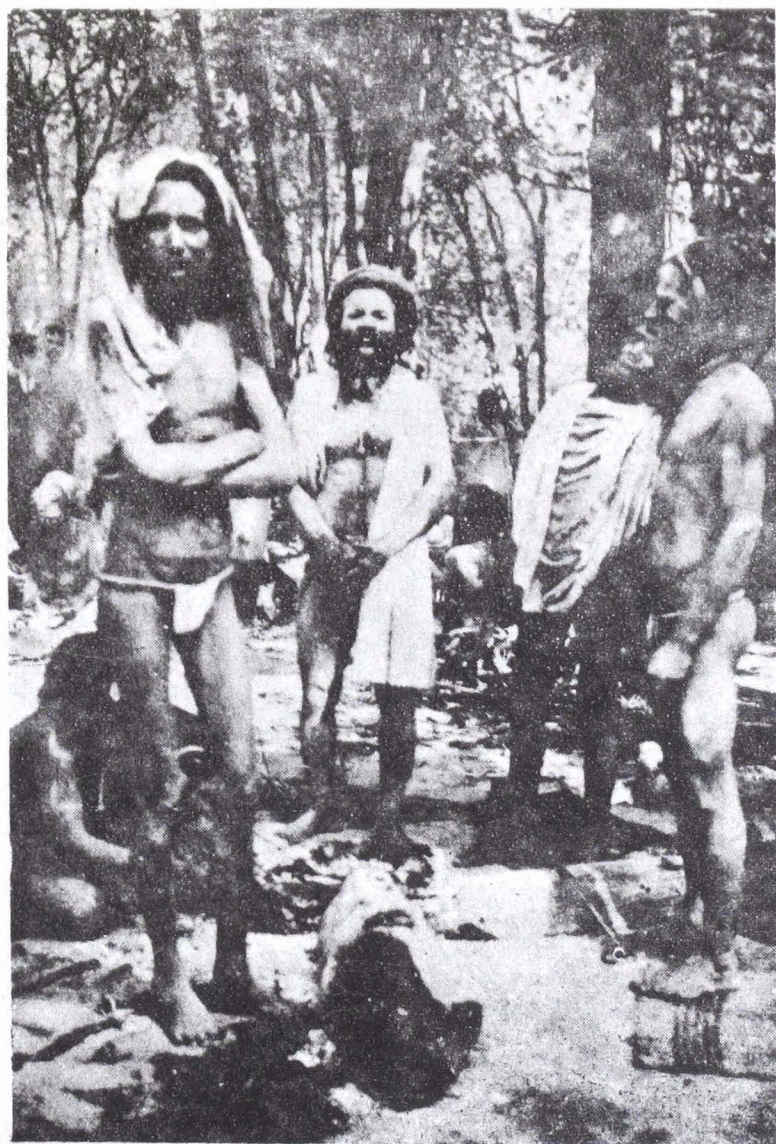
Some archaeological finds unearthed at Bhisrnak Nagar excavation site.



An archaeological find from Bhisrnak Nagar—a crude and stylized figure of possibly a deer.



A view of Parashuram Kund which attracts pilgrims from all corners of India for a holy deep during the Makar Sangkranti.



A group of sadhus who congregate every year at Parashuram Kund during the Makar Sangkranti.

mother goddess in the Tantric form have been acknowledged by scholars. The ruins of the Tamresvari temple in this area still survive as a pointer. The recent discovery of the ruins of a brick-built temple with a phallic symbol of Lord Siva in the vicinity of Tamresvari temple only lends additional support to the extant tradition of the eminence of Shiva-Shakti cult in this region at one time.

We may again refer to Dr Bani Kanta Kakati who observed that the dominant religion in the north-east frontier was a gross form of Shaivism associated with wine and flesh. The aryanized conquerors held this religion, which attracted the attention of the aboriginal *Kiratas*, in great disdain and placed it under a ban. 'At the same time to secure easy recognition by the aboriginal people they brought to prominence another local cult—the cult of the Mother Goddess'.

If the Kalika Purana is to be believed, there used to be a Vishnu Pitha, presided over by Lord Vasudeva, in that same locality. We are told that some form of Hinduism had at one time spread among the hill tribes around this region. In the biography of the Vaisnavite saint Vamsi Gopala Deva, there is reference to 'Mishmi Brahmanas' who often supplied him with food and drink when he lay in trance in caves, reciting the name of Hari.

The Yogini Tantra mentions the existence of one Kolva Pitha in the north-eastern region 'where moral and secular laws framed by the tribesmen themselves were followed'.

Bhismak Nagar: At the foot of the mountains, about 24 miles north of Sadiya, between the Dikrang and the Dibang rivers, archaeological ruins of an ancient fort

can still be seen. Local traditions regarded the country Sadiya as the ancient Vidarbha Desha where once the king Bhisma ruled. It is related in Bhagavata and Mahabharata that he had a daughter of unsurpassed beauty named Rukmini. It was all arranged to give her away in marriage to Shishupal, king of Chedi, but she was carried away by Lord Krishna himself on the eve of her marriage. Popular legends and traditions identify the ruins, mentioned above, as the site of the capital of Raja Bhisma. Indeed, the Idu Mishmis, who live close to the site, are very strongly attached to this legend, and believe that Raja Bhisma and Rukmini belonged to their hills. There is no dearth, however, of beautiful women among the Mishmis.

Though the ruins at Bhisma Nagar was first sighted by H. Vetch, Political Agent, Upper Assam, in 1846 and a report by S. F. Hanney, who had accompanied him, appeared in the Journal of Asiatic Society in 1848 and a further account by T. Bloch in 1906-7, real excavation at the site was undertaken by the present administration only in the year 1967 under the direction of Sri L. N. Chakravarty, then the Historical Research Officer. It was through his pioneering efforts, the first clear idea of the ground-plan of what was possibly a fort or, perhaps, a palace, occupying a plinth area of 20,000 sq. ft. emerged. Excavation at the site has since been taken over by Dr. Y. A. Raikar who has brought to light many new finds, and is currently engaged in researches on the historical connections of the ruins. Sri Chakravarty is now busy digging at Malinithan already referred to above.

The identification of ancient Virdarbha with the country around Sadiya is very curious indeed as we know that reputed historians have identified it with the

present Berar. Strangely enough, according to Bhagavata, Bhishmak had his capital at *Kundin* and the fact that a river flowing by Sadiya is called *Kundil* makes the whole question very intriguing.

We are of course aware that migration of place names along with migration of people is a well recorded historical phenomenon. For instance, after the Hindu epic Ramayana had struck deep roots in Java in Indonesia, many local places there came to be associated with place names described in the great epic. It is conceivable, therefore, that Aryan migrations, possibly in small waves, to India's far east took place in prehistoric times. The new settlers in this area naturally had carried with them the place names and history of their original homeland and, after they failed to return to their own country due to various reasons (e. g. want of easy communication between their original home and the adopted country, discontinuance of further migration and consequent loss of contact with their home-country) applied the place-names to their new locations and preserved the traditions and legends which they had brought with them. Such types of migration in small groups, spread over great distances of time, might plausibly have helped in originating local traditions which appear to be duplications of similar traditions in other parts of the country.

Brahmakund: Another place of great sanctity is the Brahmakund situated in the lower reaches of the Lohit river well inside the present district of Lohit. According to a mythological tradition, Parashuram opened a passage here for the river through the hills with a mighty blow of his axe. The Kund draws thousands of Hindu pilgrims every year from all corners of India. The Digaru Mishmis who inhabit nearby hills act as

traditional guides to the pilgrims, and hold the kund equally in reverence.

The mythological legend, as recounted in *The Mother Goddess Kamakhya* after *Kalikapurana*, goes as follows: The saint Vasistha was engaged in doing penances to Shiva on the Sandhyachala hill. The hosts of Shiva, however, became so bold that Ugratara laid her hands on the saint, even though he was meditating on Shiva himself, in order to expell him from Kamrupa. The saint pronounced a curse not only on Ugratara but also on Shiva as he was so eager to see him off. Brahma had to find means to put the curse into effect. 'He caused the descent of the river Brahmaputra (born of Amogha, Santanu's wife through himself) by strokes of Parashurama's axe'. The Brahmaputra spread out in deluge over the entire Kamarupa and, washing off all the sacred places, flowed towards the sea. Henceforth it became impossible to recognize the individual tirthas. Any one, desiring to earn the merits of a particular tirtha, has now to take a plunge in Brahmaputra with the thought of that tirtha in mind.

The place where Parashuram opened a passage through the hills became known as Brahmakund, a place of great sanctity. It is possible that the legend preserves an actual historical tradition of a struggle for supremacy among various religious cults in the remote past, with Shaivism taking an aggressive part. The legendary deluge could also be a vague recollection of an actual flooding in the dim past of the areas through which Lohit or the Brahmaputra passed due to some natural calamities in the hills. The Adi (former Abor) mythology, according to Dr Elwin, preserves the tradition of a great deluge in the beginning of time. There,

however, seems to exist some difference of opinion as to the exact location of the Brahmakund.

Parashuramkund: Close to the Brahmakund, there is the famous Parashuramkund which attracts pilgrims from all over India for a plunge in it during the Makar Samkranti. The *Kalika purana* repeats the well-known story how Parashuram at the command of his father, Rishi Jamadagni, severed the head of his mother, Renuka, with a blow of his axe. As a result of the crime of matricide the axe got stuck to his hand. His father was extremely pleased with his devotion and faithfulness and wanted to grant him boons. Parashuram first asked that his mother be restored to life and also asked of his father how to get rid of the sin of matricide. The Rishi advised him to visit holy places. Parashuram accordingly did a round of all holy places in India and ultimately came to Brahmakund. He made a passage for the water by cutting the bank of the Brahmakund with his famous axe. He then took a plunge in the second kund thus created and, lo and behold ! the axe came off his hand and dropped into the kund. The kund disappeared as a result of the great earthquake in 1950 but the tradition still lives. Pilgrims in their thousands still continue to visit the spot every year.

Ruins at Roing: Also in the Lohit district, a few miles away from the road leading to Roing, brick-laid ruins of some tanks are noticeable. The tanks had bathing 'ghats' with brick-built steps and stone pillars. One of the tanks still have all the four sides down to the bed nicely laid with bricks. Every season, the tanks become covered with lotus flowers, though lotus flowers are not generally seen in this locality. Besides the tanks, traces of broad and high alis (highways) are also noticed about this area. Very little is known yet as to who were

responsible for the construction of the tanks and the *alis* which bear ample evidence of the high standard of their achievements. The tribal population who now live in the nearby Abor Jiya village affirm that the tanks and *alis* were already there when their fathers settled in the area in the beginning of the present century. The ruins could possibly be connected with the Chutiyas who before the advent of the Ahoms ruled over this region. Extensive explorations might lead to further discoveries of historical importance. An authentic and substantial history of the northeast frontiers still remains to be written.

Genesis and Evolution of Administration in Arunachal Pradesh

BEFORE WE PASS on to describe the cultural profile of the Arunachal Pradesh, it is, perhaps, necessary to make a brief survey of the origin and development of administration in this remote part of tribal settlement. The British rulers in India realized very early that the territories under tribal occupation had their specific problems which needed special administrative approach than obtaining in areas under regular administration. Enforcement of laws unsuited to the primitive conditions and 'contrary to the spirit of their customs and religion' spread disaffection among the tribal population, leading to sporadic uprisings. The British soon found themselves under obligation and necessity to take positive measures for the reconciliation of the tribal people. The mutinies of the Hos of Singbhum in 1831, the Khond uprising in 1846, and the Santal rebellion of 1885 made it necessary to form these regions into specially Non-Regulation Tracts to be administered by simpler codes directly by Deputy Commissioners. A

similar system was introduced in the Madras Presidency in 1839. In Bombay, tribal area was excluded and special rules framed for its administration in 1856.

The experience of the British rulers in Assam was not different. After the Burmese were finally expelled in 1826, the British took over the administration of Assam, but made over Upper Assam with the exception of Sadiya and Muttuk to Purander Singh, the last of the Ahom kings. But unfortunately the chaos that set in with the break down of the Ahom authority in the wake of the Burmese invasion of Assam could not be checked and the situation only became worse confounded. The British now finally annexed the whole of Assam in 1838 and made it into a Non-Regulation Province of the British Empire in India. Even before the advent of the British, unrestricted intercourse existed between the tribal population in the mountains and the plains people of the valley of the Brahmaputra. Sometimes frictions arose as a result of great competition among the plains people bordering on the hills for the forest produce which the tribes carried down, particularly rubber, mishmi tita, deer mask etc. Besides, the prevailing chaotic condition immediately following collapse of Ahom authority encouraged some turbulent and warlike tribes to encroach and participate in general depredations in the plains areas.

To start with, the British rulers were obliged to send out several expeditions into the tribal territories. Naturally, they could not rest content with sending out periodical expeditions as specific occasions demanded, but also had to adopt definite measures in order to regulate relations between the tribes and the plains population. Accordingly, the already existing power of summary legislation for backward tracts was extended

to Assam. In terms of the provisions of this power, regulation authorised the Lt Governor to prescribe a line to be called the Inner Line in each or any of the districts affected 'beyond which no British subjects of certain classes or foreign residents can pass without a license'. This regulation also stipulated rules regarding trade, possession of land beyond the line, and other related matters.

Thus came into existence the Inner Line Regulation of 1873 which laid down such lines 'in the districts of Kamrup and Goalpara towards Bhutan ; in Darang towards the Bhutiyas, Akas and Daflas ; in the Lakhimpur toward the Daflas, Miris, Abors, Mishmis, Khamtis, Singphos and Nagas ; in Sibsagar towards the Nagas'.

At the same time other specific administrative measures were initiated with a view to gathering knowledge about, and cultivating better relations with hill tribes of India's north-east frontiers. The post of a Political Officer with headquarters at Sadiya was created in 1881-82. Mr Needham was appointed as the first Assistant Political Officer who left very valuable reports about the people and the region. He was succeeded by Mr Williamson who followed in the footsteps of Mr Needham. Unfortunately, Williamson with his colleague Dr Gregorson and a few others met with a premature end under very tragic circumstances.

The year 1912-13 marked further progress in the history of frontier administration of the province. Attention was chiefly directed to the North-East Frontier and several important measures were introduced. To quote :

'A separate district was formed comprising the tribal area of the frontier east of the Subansiri-Syom divide, and consisting of two sections, East and Central, under

the control of a Political Officer working directly under the Chief Commissioner. Survey operations and road constructions on an extensive scale were undertaken. Sanction was also accorded to the appointment of a Political Officer to have charge of the section of the frontier west of the Subansiri-Syom divide, and effect was given to the orders since the close of the year'.

The year 1914 saw still further advance and consolidation of administration in the frontier territories. In this year, the Government of India, (Foreign and Political Departments) by a Notification extended the jurisdiction of the Assam Frontier Tracts Regulation of 1880 to the hills 'inhabited or frequented by Abors, Miris, Mishmis, Singphos, Nagas, Khamptis, Bhutiyas, Akas and Daflas'.

The same fateful year saw the birth of a separate administrative unit, the Lakhimpur Frontier Tract, concurrently under the charge of the Deputy Commissioner of Lakhimpur. Steps were also taken during 1914-15 to demarcate areas of administrative units:

- (i) The Central and Eastern Section
- (ii) The Lakhimpur Frontier Tract
- (iii) The Western Section

The southern boundaries of the Eastern, Central and Western sections as well as the Lakhimpur Frontier Tract were formally defined, and rules were enunciated for specific administration of the areas. The first two sections, namely the Central and Eastern sections, were placed under one Political Officer with headquarters at Sadiya and the Western section under another Political Officer with headquarters at Charduar. In 1919, on the recommendations of Sri Beatson Bell, the then Chief Commissioner of Assam, the title of the Western section

was changed to Balipara Frontier Tract and the Central and Eastern section to Sadiya Frontier Tract.

It has to be mentioned here that the Government of India Act, 1935, which granted some measure of provincial autonomy and introduced certain constitutional reforms, kept the Frontier Tracts out of its purview. On the other hand, the Government of India Act, 1935, proposed special provisions for the administration of tribal areas whereby these were reconstituted as Excluded Areas or Partially Excluded Areas. The administration of these areas actually vested in the Governor of Assam, acting in his discretion. The office of a Secretary to the Governor of Assam was created for assisting the Governor in 1937. The expenditure for what came to be known as the Governor's Secretariat was made chargeable to the Assam Budget though the Government of India contributed some funds for special administration and development of the areas.

Later in 1943, it was considered necessary to create the additional post of an Adviser to the Governor of Assam and it was mainly concerned with the administration of the North-East Frontier Tracts. The Adviser was appointed directly by the Government of India which also bore the expenditure of the office of the Adviser to the Governor of Assam. The appointment of the Adviser actually set the pattern for the administration of the erstwhile North-East Frontier Agency until it was granted the status of an Union Territory only very recently. The Governor of Assam, assisted by the Adviser, first acted as the agent to the Governor-General and later to the President of India.

In the year 1943, a new administrative division, called the Tirap Frontier Tract, was created out of some areas of the Lakhimpur Frontier Tract and the Sadiya

Frontier Tract with the headquarters at Margherita. The Balipara Frontier Tract was again divided into the Se-la Sub-Agency and the Subansiri Area in 1946. After Independence, in 1948, the remaining portion of the Sadiya Frontier Tract was further divided into two divisions, the Abor Hills and the Mishmi Hills. Then in 1954, the Frontier Tracts were again renamed the Kameng Frontier Division, Subansiri Frontier Division, Siang Frontier Division, Lohit Frontier Division, Tirap Frontier Division and Tuensang Frontier under the North-East Frontier Agency.

At the end of 1957, Tuensang was separated and attached to the Naga Hills District. As recently as 1964, the above frontier divisions were redesignated as districts, namely Kameng District, Subansiri District, Siang District, Lohit District and Tirap District and the designations of the administrative heads of the districts were changed to that of Deputy Commissioners. Finally, January 20, 1972, saw the birth of the new Arunachal Pradesh with the status of an Union Territory out of what was North-East Frontier Agency or NEFA for short.

The people of Arunachal pradesh

DR B. S. GUHA, in 1951, divided the tribal population of India into three zones, namely: (1) North-Eastern Zone, (2) Central Zone, and (3) Southern Zone. Under the first group, i.e. the North-Eastern Zone, are included the tribes, scattered over a large area in the sub-Himalayan region and the mountainous areas of Assam and North-Eastern India. Dr Guha also referred to the chief characteristics, both ethnic and cultural, which distinguish the hill tribes of the North-Eastern Zone from the other two zones.

In the North-Eastern Zone, the tribes speak languages belonging to the Tibeto-Burman group with, perhaps, the solitary exception of the Khasis. Dr Guha observed: 'In this group there is no tribe which is purely in the hunting or food-gathering stage'. *Jhumming* is widely practised. From the point of view of racial affinity, the tribes here have been variously described as Indo-mongoloid, paleo-mongoloid and so on. In this zone, 'hereditary priestly shamanism' is wide spread. Pile-dwelling is prevalent with the institution of bachelors' dormitories among many tribes. Thus we have here in nutshell the main drifts and characteristics of

the North-Eastern Zone of tribal settlement in India.

We, however, need hardly point out that the Arunachal Pradesh is identified with only a portion of the North-Eastern Zone of tribal settlement whose limits we have already described above. Now, having noted the nature of the terrain as well as the ethnic group of people who form the population of the Arunachal Pradesh, we may proceed to describe the mode of life and culture of each separate tribal group in the context of its location under the present divisions of administrative districts.

KAMENG DISTRICT

MONPAS

To the north of Darrang, the stretch of mountainous country, comprising the present Kameng district of the Arunachal Pradesh, is the home of the Monpas, Sherdukpens, Akas, Khoas and the Mijis. Dr Verrier Elwin described the Monpas as 'quiet gentle, friendly, courteous, industrious, good to animals, good to children... ..' Ethnically they form along with the Sherdukpens of Shergaon and Rupa a distinct group, having affinity with the Bhutanese to the west and the tribes across the northern borders. The Monpas occupy the valleys to the north of Bomdi La lying at the foot of a 4,267 metre spur of the Thagla Ridge. They are Buddhist by religion with, perhaps, an admixture of their original animist-shamanist beliefs. The cultural and religious life of the Monpas centre around the Tawang Monastery. Dr Elwin said that they might have little theology but have a great deal of religion. Indeed, judging from their gentle temperament and extremely good and courteous manners, it is evident, they take their religion very sincerely.

The altitude of the valleys occupied by the Monpas vary greatly from 914 to about 3,658 metres. It is, therefore, extremely cold out there. The people live in houses constructed of stones with wooden planks, usually double storeyed.

According to Capt Kennedy, the Monpas, though apparently have affinities with the racial group to their west and across the northern borders, seem to form 'a distinct sub-tribe of thier own'. He expressed the view that the Monpas, who were settled around Kalaktang and Moshing areas, showed 'distinct traces of admixture with, if not actual descent from a primitive Eastern Himalayan hill tribe'. Formerly, all the Monpas to the south-east of Se La range were known as Sherchokpas while the small group of people, concentrated in the villages of Shergoan and Dukpen (Rupa) were called Sherdukpens.

We may as well take note of another tradition, recorded by L. N. Chakravarty, Deputy Director of Research, Arunachal Pradesh, that the Monpas of Tawang originally migrated from Sikkim and Phari. The Monpas, however, do not at present preserve any tradition about the cause of their original migration from these areas, nor are they in a position to offer any satisfactory explanation as to how a large scale migration could take place across Bhutan and Chumbi.

From the account of Kennedy, it appears that, at one time, a tribe called Lopa, who were either Miji or Aka, occupied the Dirang valley and lived on amicable terms with the Monpas who were later immigrants to the same locality. Eventually, a serious dispute developed and the Lopas were forced out. The Monpas then built the *Zong* or fort at Dirang and garrisoned it as a means of defence against the inroads of the Mijis.

One other conjecture claims that the whole area south of Se La was occupied by the Sherdukpens who were gradually pushed back. Even now a dialectal variation of the Sherdukpen language is spoken as far north as Rabung, Khudum, Khoina and But.

There appears to exist some difference in the spoken language between the Monpas of Tawang and that in the valleys south of Se La range. The language spoken all over the Tawang valley is known as Tawang Mon-Ke and that spoken in the valley of Dirang is Mon-Ke ('Ke' meaning language). The Dirang Mon-Ke is said to be closer to the language of 'adjoining portion of Eastern Bhutan'.

The main concentration of the Monpas is around Tawang where the great lamasery, founded over 350 years ago, stands as the centre of spiritual and cultural life of the people. It is by far the biggest Buddhist monastery in India at an altitude of about 3,048 metres from the sea level, capable of housing 500 lamas.

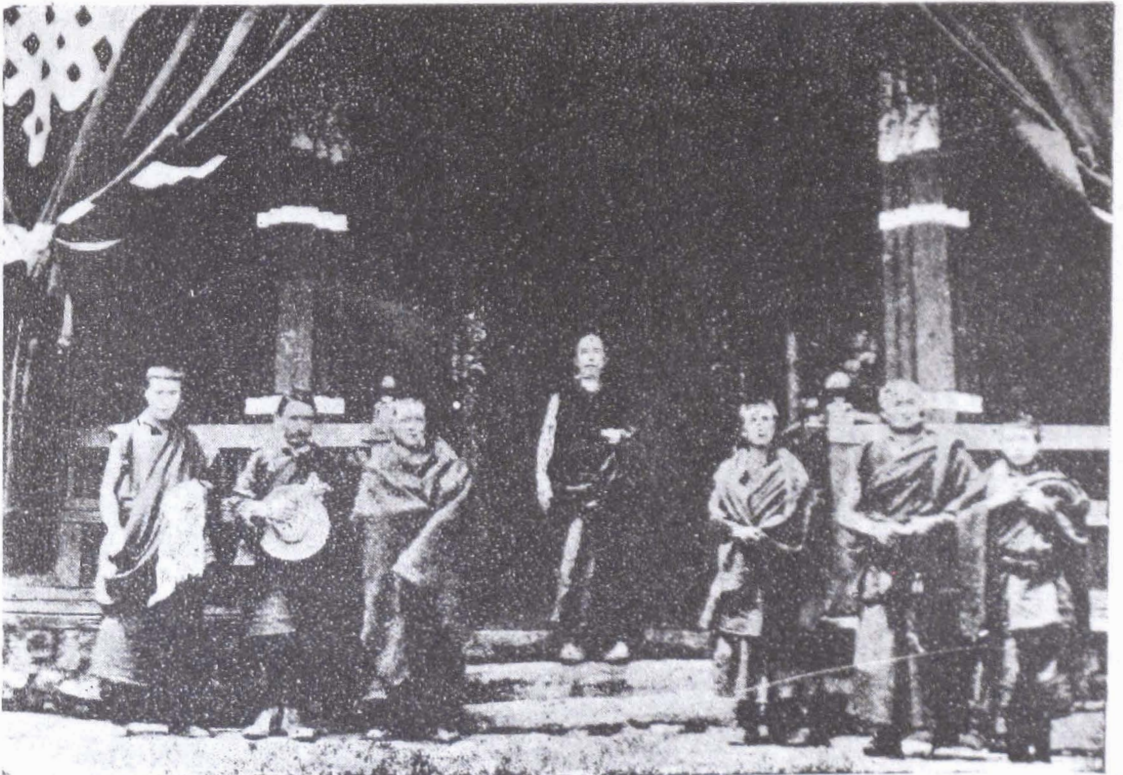
We cannot naturally improve upon the description of the famous lamasery left by Dr Elwin who wrote as follows:

'The monastery itself reminded me of a mediaeval Italian town on in many ways of Oxford. Here was the typical old Oxford jumble of little streets lined with tall house; here was the gentle casual atmosphere which concealed so much formality and protocol. Here was the College Chapel, the Library, the Senior Common Room, the quad; even the kitchens were on a similar scale and had a similar ambience'.

The form of Buddhism practised by the Monpas is broadly of the lamaist Mahayana School. The founding of the monastery is associated with the name of one



A welcoming band of Monpa musicians. They blow their extraordinarily long trumpets in welcoming honoured guests and visitors.



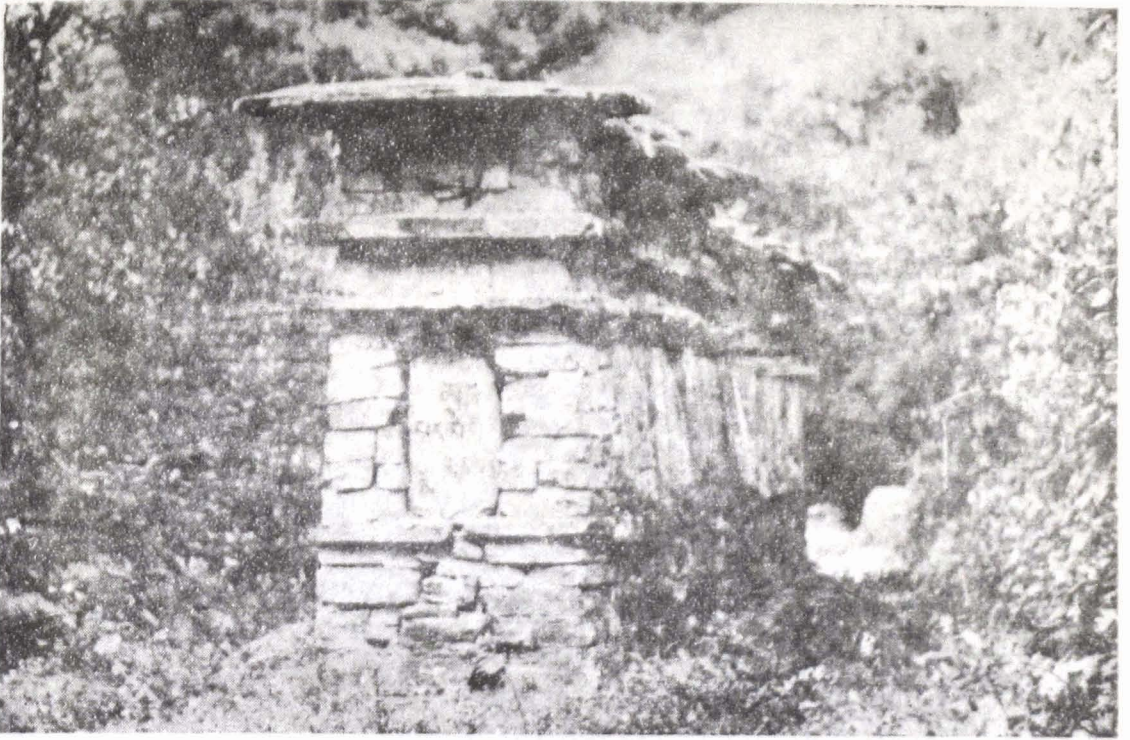
A group of lamas at the entrance of the main chapel of the Tawang monastery.



A Monpa Couple.



A stupa *chorten*. See text at page 42.



A *mané*. See text at page 42.



Monpa women weave colourful carpets with exquisite designs on them.

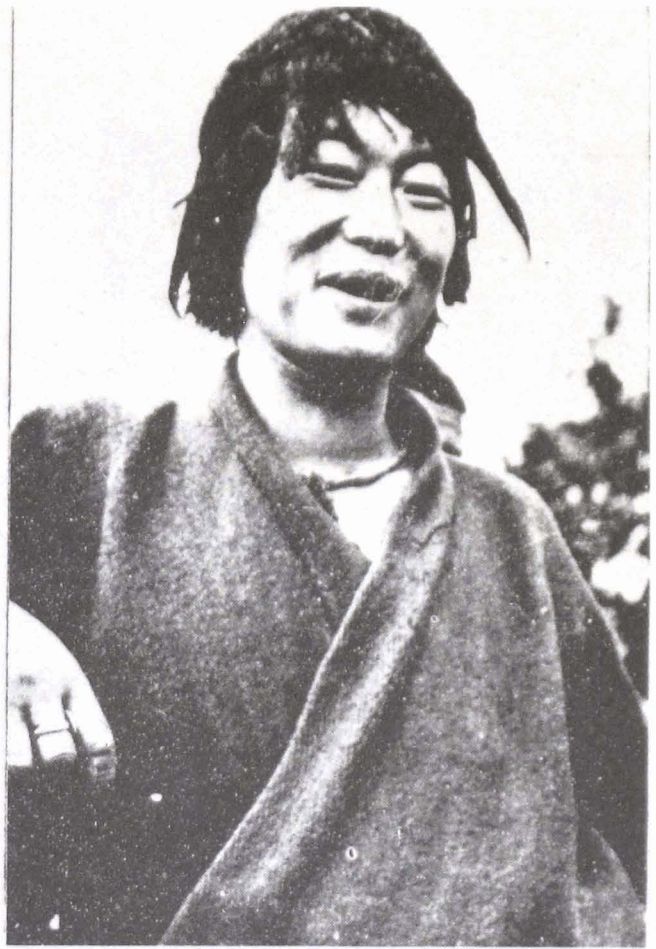


Two vivacious Monpa girls in full dress.



A Monpa girl at her loom

A Sherdukpen man. The skull-cap on his head, made from yak's hair, is called *gurdam*. It has tassel-like projections from the sides.



The Sherdukpens are fond of dance and pantomime. The most famous is the *ajilamu* dance.



An Aka youth. Note his ring-cap of bamboo, called *musgara*, on his head. The small sachel, suspended from his neck, is meant for carrying his provision of tobacco.



A group of Aka musicians and dancers. The Aka women are very fond of ornaments. Note the 'fillet of silver chain work' decorating the heads of the girls and 'vase-shaped' ear-rings, called *rombin*. The cloth gaiters, worn by the girls, are also slightly visible.

Mera Lama who was reported to have lived in the time of the 5th Dalai Lama of Tibet. At the time of laying the foundation of the monastery, the lama performed a great ritual ceremony in honour of Tamding, the God of horses (Ta meaning horse), and the area around came to be known as Tawang from that time on. There are also other conjectures with regard to the origin of the name. One of them says that the word means a 'stable for horses' and yet another relates it to a great lama of bygone days who got down from his horse here and blessed the place around, having been apparently charmed by the surroundings (ta = horse ; wong = blessings).

Similarly, the meaning of the word, Monpa, signifying the people, is explained as 'man of the lower country' (Mon = lower country ; Pa = belonging to). The Tawang area broadly falls into three popular divisions, namely Cha-chum, Thakpa and Pangchen.

The Monpa dress consists of a '*chuba*' or cloak, made of coarse woollen stuff dyed red with madder and reaching some way below the hips, and short loose drawers of the same material. In case of man, the hair is cut in a straight line just above the eyes and at the level of the nape of his neck behind. He wears a dome-shaped hat of coarse felt with edges of fur. Sometimes the hat is of great workmanship. Usually he wears boots of indigenous manufacture, reaching someway up the legs. A short sword in a wooden scabbard is almost an invariable part of his outfit.

The Monpa woman has for her dress a length of blue or striped or white cotton cloth, wrapped round her body and coming down below the knees, and a jacket made of the same woollen stuff as that of the man's '*chuba*' reaching to the waist. She wears her hair

long either tied into bun or twisted into a plait behind. On the head, she puts on a round cap.

The monpas are a simple, well-meaning, and industrious people who largely submit to the guidance of their headman, and follow a simple code of life enjoined by their religion under the supervision of the lama-priests. As already mentioned the Monpas are Buddhists and are devoutly attached to their religion. Scattered about the country side, particularly at the turn of a road, one can notice curious stone shrines known as '*mane*' and '*chorten*'.

A *mane* is raised in the shape of a stone wall, some 10 to 20 feet long, two to three feet wide, and six to eight feet high. The sacred formula, 'Om Mani Peme Hum' (literally meaning 'Jewel in the Lotus') is carved on stone tablets and are ranged on small shelves cut into the walls. Some tablets might also have lotus flowers or the figures of the Buddha carved on them. These shrines are usually raised to ward off evil spirits. It is also regarded as an act of piety to put up a *mane* during one's life-time or one might be raised in memory of a rich person after his death. It is the usual rule for a traveller to walk past a *mane* always keeping it to his right.

A *chorten* is actually a stupa-shaped structure where prayers are conducted occasionally. The lama leads the prayer after which the devotees walk round it three times.

The other religious establishment among the Monpas is the *gompa* which is a temple to house the image of the Buddha and also religious books. One or more officiating lamas are attached to a *gompa*. Every *gompa* has several prayer flags planted in its vicinity so that from quite a distance a weary traveller catches sight of

them and feels spiritually lifted. Apart from the above visible symbols of religious devotion, every convenient stream is harnessed to turn huge prayer wheels with the mystic formula, 'Om Mani Peme Hum', written all over them, perhaps, several thousand times.

The Monpas are good cultivators and understand the importance of manuring. They practise a mixed type of agriculture comprising of both shifting form of cultivation as well as permanent cultivation according to the lie of different plots of land. Their principal crops are barley, maize, chilli, a little wheat and oat, bean, pea, millet, onion, garlic, radish, pumkin and 'where possible, rice is traced on irrigated fields'. The Monpas south of Se La know the use of plough which is slightly different from the ploughs used by the plains people of Assam. Their chief item of trade is chilli.

The Monpas are very good at their looms and, apart from their own garments, the Monpa women weave colourful carpets with exquisite designs on them. Monpa men on the other hand are expert wood-carvers and turn out varieties of masks with both human and animal faces for their many religious dances of which they are very fond.

In the past, the Monpas might have been polyandrous but they are no longer so. Monogamy appears to be the prevailing form of marriage amongst them. My attention has, however, been drawn by Sri L. N. Chakravarty on the basis of investigations carried out by him that, as late as 1952, there were some men in Tawang having more than two wives and some women having more than two husbands.

The marriageable age among the Monpas generally ranges from 10 to 25 years. Both the boy and the girl might be of the same age; there is also nothing to be

said against the girl being older in age than the boy. Marriage is usually negotiated by parents. There is no bar against the remarriage of a widow. Divorce is permissible but the heavy compensation to be paid by either side depending on who wants it first acts as a practical deterrent.

The Monpas strongly desire a child to be born in the house of its father. It is considered inauspicious should the child be born under the roof of its maternal uncle's home.

Two interesting customs connected with birth in a family might be recounted here. According to one custom, immediately after the birth of the child, it is to be given a hot-bath along with the mother and the child is then carried out in the open to see the sky and the earth, and to receive the blessings of the gods. The child is also given a name at that time.

The other custom requires the child to be taken out after three nights. A lama is invited to perform appropriate rituals to purify the house, the mother and the child. The lama also gives a name to the child and casts its horoscope.

It is interesting to note that the Monpas make abundant use of various products of milk for which other tribes of this region seem to have a natural aversion. Dr Elwin observed:

'Although milk is popular among the Buddhist tribes, who make it into butter and ghee, it is tabooed by the majority of the people of NEFA (Arunachal Pradesh) who in this resemble their tribal brethren in Africa and other parts of the world'.

The favourite beverage of the Monpas is tea which they drink with salt and butter. They have devised a kind of cylindrical churner to do the mixing.

Regarding disposal of dead bodies, Captain Kennedy noted:

'They burn the corpses of the rich ; those of poor people they bury in the winter and throw into the rivers in the rainy season'. However it might have been in old days, the method of burial is coming into greater use.

I am again indebted to Shri L. N. Chakravarty for the following information regarding disposal of dead bodies by the Monpas based on investigations which he carried out in 1952.

There are four different methods of disposal of the dead body mainly according to the status of the dead.

(1) When a rich man dies, the body is carried to a place called Kharpochang indicated to be beyond Bum La. It is placed on a piece of big stone. A fire is lighted nearby burning incense. This is an invitation to vultures which usually come down to feed upon the dead body. The head is severed and kept separately, and offered up to the vultures last of all. When the vultures fail to come down, the body is burnt.

(2) In winter, however, when no one dares out to Kharpochang, the dead body of a rich person has to be burnt.

(3) The corpse of a common man is taken out to the nearest river, cut into 108 pieces, and then thrown into the water, perhaps, for the fishes.

(4) The body of a dead person, dying of any contagious disease, is invariably buried.

However, as we have already noted above, from all appearances, the prevailing tendency turns round more and more to burial as a common method of disposal of the dead.

In the seventh week following death, a lama performs

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In the seventh week following death, a lama performs

a ritual exactly on the same day on which the man died, for the benefit of the departed soul. While this is obligatory for all, the rich continue to perform rituals throughout the first week after death and in addition offer food and drink to nearby nunneries and monasteries. They set up prayer wheels and prayer flags, and also raise '*mane*' and '*chorten*' in the name of the dead.

After the death of the father the property is divided equally between all the sons. The living house goes either to the eldest or the youngest son. The unmarried girls and the wife of the deceased usually live with the son getting the living house. But the expenditure for marriage of the sisters is to be shared by all the brothers.

LISHPA AND CHUGPA

Within a radius of four to five miles of Dirang, two very small groups of people are found. They are called Lishpa and Chugpa. In most respects, they are akin to the Monpas, having a similar culture and religion. Strangely enough, they speak a language, markedly different and distinct from the Monpa language. Such philological puzzles are not rare in this north-east region of India. For reason not obvious, the Monpas regard the Lishpa and Chugpa people as socially inferior to themselves, and are unwilling to give away their daughters in marriage to them. It is commonly believed that they are descended from an early wave of migrants from Bhutan.

SHERDUKPENS

South of the Bomdi La Range, in the valleys of the Tengapani river, are found the Sherdukpens, and close to them, the Thebengia Bhutias. They are similarly

Buddhist by religion having cultural affinities with the Monpas.

The main concentration of the Sherdukpens is spread over three important villages of Rupa, Jigaon and Shergaon, occupying the south-western part of the Kameng district. The strip of land, inhabited by the Sherdukpens, is a long and narrow valley at the foot of the Bomdi La Range, traversed by many streams all of which are not perennial. Some of them spring to life and start flowing with strong swift currents with the onset of monsoon. The important river draining the area is Daphla Kho which 'flows into the basin of the Bhorelli', the largest of the rivers in Kameng. The altitude of the valley ranges between 1,524 and 1,981 metres above sea-level.

Besides the three important villages noted above, there are a few hamlets, locally called *pams*, sited on sunny mountain slopes, never far away from water and cultivable lands. The grouping of houses in a village does not follow a definite pattern. The houses do not face the same direction and their construction simply follows the contours of the land. Winding passages run between houses but no regular roads exist to suggest a definite pattern. Public gatherings are held usually in front of the house of the village headman who invariably occupies an elevated position in relation to others. Otherwise, any convenient open space between the houses is good enough for a public meeting.

The Sherdukpen dwellings are substantial houses standing on stone foundations five to seven feet high. The basement serves as a veritable stable for goats and other domestic animals. The house-owner with his family lives on the upper floor laid up with thick wooden planks. The roofing is done 'with light planks, bamboo

matting and occasionally grass-thatch, weighed down by heavy stones'. The lower half of the wall is fitted with wooden planks and the upper part covered with bamboo matting. The shelf-like flat and open space between the ceiling and the roof is used as a store-room and granary. The Sherdukpens do not put up separate granaries. The interior of the house is ill-lighted due to lack of windows or any other opening.

A typical house has two compartments with a portico in front. The room next to the portico is used commonly as kitchen, dining room and living room. Important household belongings are stored in the only other compartment which might occasionally be used for performance of religious rites or laying up an extra bed.

The stories related by Sherdukpens regarding their migration to their present habitat belongs to the realm of legends whose historicity cannot be vouchsafed. The story, however, goes back to one Japtang Bura, a kind of a chief, who with his followers first came to But and Khoina. He found that the neighbouring tribes, the Akas and the Mijis, were constantly at war. He purchased their good-will and peace by promising to pay tributes in kind such as salt, cloth and cattle to the Aka and the Miji chiefs. After some time he shifted his capital from But to Rupa.

According to tradition, the descendants of Bura now form into a class by themselves, known as Thongs, while the descendants of his retinue are called Chhaos enjoying a slightly inferior social status. It is claimed that the villages of But, Rahung, Khudum and Khoina are inhabited entirely by Chhaos. Whether there is any truth in the story or not, the villagers of But, Rahung, Khudum and Khoina are said to have marked affinity with the Sherdukpens in many ways such as physical

features, marriage customs and so on. According to Capt Kennedy, the Sherdukpens speak a different language from the Monpas. It might be of some interest to quote Kennedy here:

‘This extraordinary diversity of language in a country where the people live in harmony amongst themselves is an interesting philological puzzle. I believe that Eastern Bhutan is a polyglot country, and it may be that each of the above mentioned languages is sprung from a prototype in Bhutan’.

Thus from the evidence of language alone one might be led to believe that significant migration had occurred in the past from the direction of Bhutan.

For dress, a Sherdukpen man first wears a piece of cloth, called *sapo*, diagonally covering the upper part of the body. Two ends of the cloth are then secured on the shoulders. A full-sleeved jacket, reaching below the hip, is worn over the *sapo*. It is open in front. For nether garment, he usually wears a loin cloth. Those, who can afford, put on short coats over the jacket or a long one, and loose trousers in winter.

The Sherdukpen man cuts his hair short and puts on a skull-cap made from yak’s hair. For decoration, it might have a colourful band round the brim and white cockade at one side. This cap, locally called *gurdam*, has also short tassel-like projections jutting down from the sides. A colourful sash, about six to eight feet long, is worn round the waist. To complete the outfit, a Sherdukpen sports a sword in a scabbard tucked in his waistband.

The woman puts on a loose sleeveless shirt hanging down to her knees and, similar to man, warps round the waist a coloured sash. She also wears sometimes a short full-sleeved coat made of mill-cloth. As protec-

tion against *dimdams*, a kind of stinging pest very common in this region, she straps round the calves of her legs two lengths of cloth, each about 20 inches long and 12 inches wide, with the two ends sewn together. These look like cylindrical coverings, the upper end reaching just below the knees and the lower end hanging loose over the ankles.

With regard to the hair style of the Sherdukpen women, we may quote from the book, *The Sherdukpens* by R. R. P. Sharma, who was a former research officer:

'Young girls cut their hair round the head. When, however, they grow a little older, they let it grow long and fall over their so as to act as a sort of veil. This is thought to be very attractive. After marriage or after the birth of a child, girls tie up their hair at the back of the head in loose bun, just above the nape of the neck.

Usually, women do not cover their heads. On festive occasions, however, they may put on small round caps like Monpa women.

Both Sherdukpen man and woman generally go barefooted. But a Sherdukpen gentleman occasionally likes to put on a Monpa boot.

Tattooing is unknown among the Sherdukpens. Women and children, however, apply a sticky substance, obtained from pine resin and mixed with charcoal dust, to their lips and also draw geometrical designs on the cheeks. Besides enhancing beauty, it is believed to protect the skin.

Men and women alike wear necklaces and silver or brass rings round their fingers. Women love to wear silver bangles, lockets and bracelets obtained from the plans. They at one time used to manufacture their own ornaments by melting rupee coins and to some extent do so even now. As among other people, orna-

ments are symbols of wealth and status, and are specially worn on festive occasions or while visiting neighbours.

The Sherdukpen women possess considerable skill in weaving which they do on their simple, light, and portable looms. They usually obtain yarns from the plains and weave strips of cloth with various designs to be later made into bags. They also produce yarns locally from the bark of two species of plants known as *hong-chong* and *hongcho*. The bark is first soaked in boiling water and washed several times until it becomes pulpy. The fibre is then extracted with much care. During the whole process, women who do the job warp up their hands with thick cloth because the bark is said to be poisonous.

Carpentry has a certain vogue among the Sherdukpens who possess some skill in smithy also.

We have already noted above that the Sherdukpen society is primarily divided into two classes, the Thongs and the Chhaos. There is yet a third group called the Yanlo. The Yanlor are concentrated in one village of Jigaon Adu. They are supposed to have emigrated from Bhutan several generations ago. They now speak Sherdukpen language and are noted for their skill in carpentry and smithy. These classes are mutually exogamous. Each clan is again divided into a number of sub-clans. The Thongs enjoy a higher social status though, in course of ordinary dealings, no marked difference exists. In the matter of dress or general physical features, they all look alike. There is no restriction or interdining or social mixing otherwise. The Thongs are, however, said to be comparatively well off in relation to the Chhaos and Yanlos.

The distinction of status comes out to the surface on

certain special occasions. For instance, it is a taboo for a Thong to touch a deadbody. It is the duty of the members of a particular Chhao clan, attached to the deceased, to make all connected arrangements either for burial or cremation of the corpse. They wash the corpse, wrap it up with a piece of new cloth and carry it. They are, however, paid for their services with a token gift and a feast.

The family structure is patriarchal, descent partilineal and the form of marriage Patrilocal. A greater share of inheritance devolves on the eldest son. Monogamy is the prevailing form of marriage among the Sherdukpens.

It appears that no regular traditional system of bachelor's dormitory existed in the old days but a loose form of dormitory system does exist now. Boys and girls of the same age group form into separate clubs and start sleeping together in batches in some convenient houses. Separate establishments for dormitories are absent. Any small family, having surplus accommodation, might be inclined to allow a batch of boys or girls to make use of it as a common sleeping apartment. It has been conjectured that a loose form of boys' dormitory developed among the Sherdukpens during the troubled days when they had constantly to be on defence against the Dammais (Mijis) and Hrussos (Akas).

Emotional attachments are formed during this time of common living leading to engagements and ultimately to marriage. When a young boy forms a permanent attachment for a particular girl and the girl for the boy, they exchange their sashes as an indication of their engagement. The wishes of the boys and girls are usually respected. Both junior and senior forms of levirate exist among the Sherdukpens. No particular ceremony is, however, prescribed for such marriages

and no question of bride-price arises. Similarly, sororate, i.e. marriage of a man with his wife's sister after the death of the wife prevails both in its senior and junior form. Widow-marriage is permissible and socially respectable. However, monogamy is the rule at present. A second marriage while the first wife is living, is not countenanced. Open concubinage is a social offence. Premarital relation is not always frowned upon as it is expected to lead to future marriage.

The Sherdukpen society is basically democratic. In each important village, there is a village council called *jung*. It is presided over by the *gaonbura* who enjoys a special position nowadays due to his stand with the Administration. The other members are the *jung mo* who usually are the elders elected by the villagers, and the *kachung* and the *chowkidar*. The primary duty of a *kachung* is to keep the villagers informed of the place and time of the meeting of the council and he also acts as a messenger in all important matters. There might be more than one *kachung* depending on the magnitude of a village. The position of the *gaonbura* in principle is an elective one. The villagers submit the name to the Government initially. The office is not hereditary but a brother or a son of the *gaonbura* stands a good chance of being selected by the villagers, provided he can prove his initiative and pluck.

The council considers and dispenses all petty cases such as individual disputes, theft, partition of property, adultery and other socially repugnant offences. The final award rests with the *gaonbura* who in principle is expected to be guided by the majority decision of the council. Only in cases of serious import or crimes which require the intervention of Administration do the people turn to Government for legal settlement.

It might be noted that the method of trial by ordeal once prevailed when the process of normal persuasion failed. For obvious reasons, we cannot describe here the various forms of ordeal which the Sherdukpens practised and, perhaps, to some extent, do even now.

The religion of the Sherdukpens is 'a curious blend of Buddhism and local beliefs'. All the religious establishments as noted for the Monpas exist among the Sherdukpens. Lord Buddha is worshipped in the *gom-pas* and, though literacy is till now extremely limited, they have great veneration for sacred books revered and preserved in the *gompas*. But, side by side, old shamanistic practices continue to have their spell on the people. They believe in witchcraft and evil spirits. The services of a class of priests, called *jijis*, are requisitioned for counteracting the evil influence of malevolent spirits. Vaticination is practised widely. The *jijis* obtain initiation into their profession after a series of visions and have to rely for efficacy on their individual tutelary spirits.

The Sherdukpens practise both shifting and permanent types of cultivation but they are rather poor agriculturists. The fields are rocky with thin layer of sandy soil and they till small plots of land. They have besides to contend against various odds such as occasional heavy frost, paucity of water, and depredations by wild animals. They, however, made use of a primitive type of plough drawn by bullocks. Sherdukpens suffer from a chronic deficiency of food which they have to make good by trade and other means. The diet is simple consisting chiefly of cereals, fish, vegetables and beer brewed from maize and millet. Like the Monpas they grow abundant chilli. They have a special predilection for various products of milk and rear cows and goats.

But due to Buddhist influence, they abhor beef, pork, fowl or goat-meat. They, however, trap fish and occasionally take meat of nondomestic animals such as deer and certain birds.

The winter is rather severe in the Sherdukpen valley. The cold spell lasts from the middle of December to the middle of March. All agricultural activities have to be suspended during these months. The villagers usually migrate down to the plains for trade and barter. They return from their winter camp at Doimara to their hills towards the end of March and take up their cultivation in right earnest. The periodical migration down to the plains forms an outstanding feature of the Sherdukpen society.

We cannot, however, complete this brief account of the Sherdukpens without making a reference to their great love for dance and pantomime. The most popular are the Deer dance, Ajilamu dance and Eagle dance. These dances in which they use masks are symbolic, depicting some old legends or mythology.

AKAS

The term 'Aka' literally means painted. It is obviously an Assamese word which might have been originally applied to the tribal group, calling themselves Hrusso, because 'of their custom of smearing their faces with black resin'. 'Both men and women smear their cheeks with a mixture of the resin obtained from the *pinus excelsus* and charcoal'. As early as 1914, Kennedy noted that the Akas were divided into eleven clans or sub-clans. The two most important are the *Kutsun* and *Kovatsun* who figured in early British accounts as *Hazarikhowa* and *Kapaschor* respectively, also Assamese words. These terms have been variously translated

as 'eaters at thousand hearths' and 'thieves who lurk amid the cotton plants' or again as 'breakfast-eater' (Hazarikhowa) and 'cotton-thieves' (Kapaschor). Macgreger, writing in 1884, suggested that the two terms should better be translated as 'eaters of a thousand hearth', and 'thieves of cotton' respectively. It, however, appears that the history of the sobriquets has not been explained anywhere.

The Akas are spread over several villages, sometimes called after the names of separate clans such as *Karangania* and *Diiungania*. The main concentration of the Akas is to be now found in the three important villages of *Dijungania*, *Jamiri* and *Buragaon*.

The area inhabited by the Akas lies to the east of the Sherdukpens as far as the Khari-Dikarai river, measuring roughly a hundred and twenty square miles. It is bounded on the west by the land of the Sherdukpens, on the east by the Bangnis, on the north by the Mijis and, on the south, by the Darrang district of Assam. In common with other areas of this sub-Himalayan regions, the Aka territory is a mountainous tract, intersected by a number of streams. The important ones are Bichom, Tengapani and the Kheyang. For greater part of the year, they are fordable. The Akas put temporary suspension bridges for the crossing of these rivers during the rainy season. The villages are located both in the valleys as well as on high grounds on tops of the hills. The elevation of the area ranges between 91 and 183 metres. The climate has been described as 'mildly cold' with annual average rainfall ranging between 40 to 50 inches.

The vegetation is sub-tropical abounding in broad-leaved trees, bamboos and wild plantains.

The racial memory of the Akas with regard to their

migration is extremely limited and does not go beyond legends and mythology. Little serious historical investigation has been done so far to throw light on this question. The common belief among the Akas is that they were originally inhabitants of the plains and that 'their ancestors were driven out from Partabgor on the banks of the Giladhari river, north of Bishnath, by Krishna and Boloram'. They are said to have settled originally in the neighbourhood of Bhalukpung on the right bank of the Bhoreli river. We may quote here after Kennedy, at some length, an interesting legend related by the Akas about their origin :

'Long long ago all men descended from heaven to earth by means of ladders. There were several kinds of ladders, and each race had its special ladder appointed to it. The Assamese (Ahoms) and Akas of the royal blood came down by a golden ladder ; the remaining Akas had a silver ladder ; the Tibetans and Monpas were given a ladder of iron ; the Daflas and Abors had to be satisfied with a bamboo ladder ; whilst the Cacharis and Khoas shared a plaintain ladder'.

It has also been noted that the Akas claim that 'the Cacharis were their kinsfolk, but that they offended in some way or other and so the Akas cut off their hair and drove them away to fend for themselves'. We have noticed earlier that, according to one conjecture, the Akas might really be 'the remains of a people who once ruled in the plains and were driven into the hills by some more powerful tribes'. Kennedy was also inclined to think that the Akas were probably descended from a comparatively advanced people.

Whatever little notice has been taken of the Aka language seems to add to the confusion as to the original source of their migration. Hesselmeier was in-

clined to trace the affinity of the Aka language with that of 'the valleys south of the Patkoi, joining the Shan and Manipuri countries than with (language of) Dafla and the Abor tribes'. Linguistic Survey of India Report (1909), compiled by G. A. Grierson, also noted the difference between Aka language and the dialects of the group which it designated as North-Assam Group and frankly admitted that 'under influence of strange and radical phonetical laws Aka has assumed a peculiar appearance and it is often difficult to compare its vocabulary with that of other Tibeto-Burman forms of speech'.

In the above context, we are reminded of another mythical story of the Akas which was recorded by Kennedy:

'All these people arrived on earth on a hill called Longkapur in the Lohit valley, whence they scattered in search of land. The Assamese were the first to start, and chose the plains as their country. The Akas delayed some time at Longkapur, resting and drinking beer, and so had to squeeze in as best they could amongst the other people.'

It can be seen from the above account that the question about the original home of the Akas and the possible cause of their migration to their present home remain largely unresolved. It is, however, fairly certain that they originally settled in the neighbourhood of Bhalukpong on the right bank of the Bhoreli river.

The Akas are decidedly of Mongoloid appearance with yellowish brown skin. They often look quite brown due to habitual exposure to the sun. Kennedy described their facial feature as 'platyoprosopic' or flat-faced. They are not of great stature. The men stand about 5'4" while the women are rather under 5

A man's attire consists of a long piece of coarse cotton cloth wrapped round the body and pinned over the shoulders. A sash or a 'kummerbund' is then wound round the waist so that the lower part of the garment has the appearance of a short skirt, reaching a little below the knees. A jacket, sometimes with sleeves and sometimes without sleeves, is worn over it, coming down to the hips. At other times, merely a blanket or a piece of cloth is worn over the shoulders. Both Aka man and woman cover their legs with what Kennedy described as 'cloth gaiters' as protection against *dam-dim* flies (*Simulium indicum*). These protective gaiters are pieces of cloth which are wound round the legs and fastened below the knee 'with strings of blue beads'. The Aka male keeps long hair gathered into a knot on the top of the head.

Men usually do not put on any head-cover. On special occasions, they wear a kind of ring-cap of bamboo, called *musgera*. Kennedy described this head-dress as 'a peculiar pill-box like that made of split bamboo wood'. In front of the hat, plumes of cock's tail or bamboo leaves are fixed as decorations. Aka men have their ear-lobes pierced and generally bamboo tubes are inserted into the holes and sometimes they wear earrings like the women. A man almost invariably carries a dao or a sword, either stuck in his belt or slung from one shoulder. He also usually carries a bow in his hand or clung across his back and a quiver.

The Aka man as much as their women are fond of wearing bead necklaces, usually made up of several strings of large blue and other coloured beads. Under the influence of neighbouring Buddhist tribes, they also wear charm boxes of silver and other metal. An Aka is, however, never without his small sachel suspended from

his neck, in which he carries his provision of betel, pipe and tobacco.

The Aka woman's dress is very much the same as that of Aka man. It consists of a large piece of cloth, wrapped round the body and held round the waist by a sash. The only notable difference is that it reaches almost to the ankles. She also puts on a jacket 'rather longer than man's jacket'. Her long hair is tied at the back of the head.

The Aka woman wears a number of silver ornaments, obtained from the plains, as well as numerous bead necklaces. In her ears, she wears large 'vase-shaped' silver ear-rings which are very distinctive of Aka women. These ear-bulbs are called *rombin*. Other silver ornaments are *melu*—a roundish and flat-shaped ornament—worn as a central piece in a necklace over the chest, and *gejju*, wristlet. Round the head, a well-to-do Aka woman wears 'very striking and pretty fillet of silver chain-work'. Several bracelets of Assamese patterns also adorn her wrists. As already mentioned, she covers her legs with pieces of cloth, 'sewn into cylindrical shape', leaving only the feet bare. Tattooing is common for Aka woman who inscribes a straight line on her face, 'running from below the forehead to the chin where it bifurcates'. This is done in very young age when the skin is still tender by means of thorns and resin.

Knowledge of weaving is very limited among the Akas who can only produce colourful bags. They naturally have to depend on the plains for supply of cloth. It appears that, in olden times, the Akas made use of a 'profusion of silk cloth' obtained from the plains of Assam. The Aka women were particularly fond of silk. But the fashion has long since undergone a

change, giving place to a preference for cotton stuff.

The Akas, however, possess considerable proficiency in the art of basketry in which particularly the menfolk engage during their leisure hours. They make baskets of different shapes and sizes with bamboo which is plentiful in this region. There are different names for these baskets used for different purposes.

Wood-carving is almost absent among the Akas but they love to make designs and simple stylized drawings on wooden frames, combs and tobacco pipes. It appears that symbolic drawings having socio-religious import are executed on special occasions on wooden frames at the entrance of a house.

The Aka houses are well-made structures of wood and bamboo, standing generally about six feet off the ground on stout wooden and bamboo piles. The space between the floor and the ground serves as an enclosure or shed for domestic animals such as pigs and goats. Kennedy noted that the walls and flooring in the houses of poorer persons were made of split bamboos. Wealthy persons make use of rough planks for the walls and flooring of their houses. All houses are roofed with thatch. The usual measurement of a house as given by Kennedy, is 60-80 yards long by some, 6-7 yards wide. The four walls are usually high. A house is divided into three or four rooms with a verandah at either end. The occupants of a house usually are three or four connected families, each family living in a separate room.

Sinha, a former research officer, however, mentions that it is rather unusual for the Akas to favour joint-family living. Wherever families of two brothers live together, they occupy two sides of the main living apartment, called *uluri*, without any partition. Each family, however, has its own hearth. The small com-

partment, opening to the verandah in front, is at all times reserved for guests and is known as *thumona*. It is customary for the Akas to exchange visits with friends and relatives in distant villages. Next to the guest-room is a small enclosure, called *nemkhor*i, which actually serves as an entrance to the main living room, *uluri*. To one side of the house, a small cell is built in to serve as a store-room for house-hold belongings. This is known as *rin*. On the other side, contiguous to the main room, a small enclosure, called *zejourin*, is set up for storing firewood.

A small granary, known as *nechi*, stands separately a few yards off from the main house. Each household has thus a separate granary for storing food-grains for the year. Except in Dijungania, the villages are not compact ; the houses are scattered.

The political unit among the Akas is the village. The society is organized more or less on democratic principles. All important matters, affecting the village community, become subject to decision by the village council. It also acts as a court of justice, guided by the traditional tribal usage and customs, for offences committed against individuals or the community. The village council in the local language is called *melley* but the Akas now have a preference for the Assamese word *raiz*, signifying the people. The council is presided over by the *gaonbura* or headman who now a days has a standing with the Government. The position of the *gaonbura* is in principle elective to which the Administration accords approval by conferment of the red coat, or the insignia of his standing with the Government. There are two other functionaries, called the *borah* and the *gibba* respectively, who are also members of the council and who assist the *gaonbura* in the discharge

of his responsibilities. The primary duty of the *borah* is to keep the *gaonbura* informed of local activities as well as important happenings in the village such as commission of crimes, cases of dispute and so on. He presides over the council in the absence of the *gaonbura*. The *gibba* similarly keeps watch over the people and their activities, habitual bad characters, or any happening likely to disturb the peace of the community.

Apart from these three top functionaries, all adult persons of the village are automatically members of the council and can participate in its deliberations. As a matter of fact, however, only influential members of the community by virtue of experience, age and social position guide the proceedings of the council. The decision is as a principle by common consensus.

Usually, meeting of the village council is held in any available open space. In the Jamiri village, a public platform exists; there are also a few bamboo benches. Besides, there are a number of stone seats for the common village members. These traditional seats have acquired some sanctity in the eyes of the community. Any attempt to tamper with or dislodge them is frowned upon, and is definitely regarded as 'bad omen'.

Justice is dispensed according to customary laws and usages, depending on the gravity of situations or crimes committed. Murder is regarded as a height of antisocial act. The council decides upon the manner of punishment to be awarded to the accused who is, however, given a chance to cite extenuating circumstances in his favour. In case of proved guilt, he has usually to make amends by way of adequate compensation to the victim's family. Amount of compensation varies in proportion to the importance and social standing of the victim. In case of failure to make proper amends or

deliberate intransigence on the part of culprit, he might be handed over to the custody of the victim's family who may hold him prisoner until he relents to pay the penalty. His life is then at the mercy of the people against whom he has offended.

Elopement of a married woman with another person comes within the purview of the village council, if a formal complaint is lodged before it. The lover is usually made to pay the bride-price originally incurred by the offended husband and also some additional penalty, should he want to retain her. The woman is otherwise restored to the husband and forced to live with him. If a woman makes away with a person of a different village, the village council may try to get her back or recover the bride-price from her lover. In case of failure to obtain redress, the village council in old days even embarked upon raids against the village of the offending person. Such occurrences, however, have become almost obsolete now.

Trial by ordeal was known amongst the Akas. The common method, as it used to be practised, was to ask the accused person, who continued to protest his innocence, to thrust his hands into boiling water. This was applicable in case of murder or accusation of black magic.

We have already noted that the Akas are divided into a number of clans and sub-clans. According to Kennedy, all Akas call themselves Hrusso with the exception of the exception of the Miri Akas. The only difference between the Miri Akas and other Akas is 'one of language or dialect'. Sinha also confirms that 'difference, if any, lies in their language'. Next to Kutsun and Kovatsun, the Miri-Akas are said to be the most numerous. In early accounts, they were referred to as Angka-

Miris. It appears, they are also known as Khromes. The Miri-Akas live 'on the side of the Kaya river and nearer to the Bangnis'.

Like other groups of people living in closed societies, the Akas are also distinguished by the dual principle of clan-exogamy and tribal endogamy. They also combine clan-exogamy with village exogamy under the belief that different clans in the same village had originally branched out from a common ancestor.

The form of marriage among the Akas is partrilocal and the descent of inheritance is in the male line. Marriage by negotiation is the common way though the more romantic method of marriage by elopement or capture is socially acknowledged in certain approved circumstances. In the latter case, the parents of the girl are not debarred from claiming bride-price which usually is settled amicably through the good office of the village council.

The senior form of levirate which permits a man to inherit the widow of his elder brother is quite common among the Akas. She might, however, be allowed to live with another person of her choice from among the community, provided that person agrees to return the bride-price to the brother of the deceased husband.

Incest taboos are very strong. Overt reference to sex in conversation between prohibited degrees of kinship is a bad form, and socially reprehensible.

Slavery at one time formed a prominent feature of the Aka society due mainly to economic considerations. The slaves, known as *khula*, constituted a class by themselves. Sinha reports that the slaves were usually recruited from the Sulungs whom the Akas acquired from their neighbours, the Bangnis. The principle was once a slave for ever a slave. The descendants of slaves

were automatically slaves. The treatment of slaves was, however, always humane and considerate. The institution of slavery has fallen into disuse with the general rise in the well-being of the people and with the active interest of the Administration in bringing about an end to this social evil.

Women enjoy a respectable status in the society inspite of other handicaps. It is clearly borne out by the fact that the two most important Aka villages, Jamiri and Hushigaon, have a rani each. The local term for rani is *nugun* though the former has a current vogue due apparently to the influence of the Assamese language. The ranis are said to have descended from former royal families and still enjoy special status and dignity. It will be remembered that the Aka society, though basically democratic, was at one time organized under chiefs or kings. According to their legendary belief, as quoted by Kennedy, they originally settled on the right bank of the Bhoreli river under two chiefs, Natapura and Bayu, who built their respective capitals at two seperate places, 'that of the former being some distance up stream from Bayu's capital'.

The form of agriculture among the Akas is mainly *jhum* or shifting cultivation. Other subsidiary means of economy depend on collection of forest produce, fishing and hunting. Kennedy noted in 1941 that, influenced by the example of the plains people, some attempt had been made at permanent cultivation at the village of Jamiri. But this made no enduring impact on the traditional method of *jhuming* due, perhaps, mainly to the nature of the terrain. The Akas have no use for ploughs but turn up the soil with small iron hoes. Their principal crops are Indian corn, millet, 'matikalai', sweet

potatoes, tobacco, some quantities of chilli, rice, and mustard.

Kennedy made the significant remark: 'The Akas take life very leisurely, most of their cultivation is done by the Khoas, whilst the Akas lounge home and drink beer to which they are very partial.' This might have been true once but they have been inspired now by new energy and activity with the introduction of various development schemes 'under the auspices of the Administration.

Kennedy described the Aka religion as 'shamanistic animist'. He also noted that, due to their proximity to Buddhist neighbours, they were influenced to an appreciable extent by Buddhism. Some of the villages had '*chortens*' and prayer flags. Buddhism, however, did not make a lasting impact on them and they were wont to deny having anything to do with Buddhism. Recently, they were showing an inclination towards Vaishnavism of the saints of Assam.

Shaman is an important person in every village because his services are sought after on every possible occasion. He is distinguished from the laity by the fact that he wears 'a yak's tail on his back and his pill-box hat is covered with tiger or leopard skin'. Any young person, who is noted for his supernatural powers, may become a priest or shaman.

Apart from believing in a host of benevolent and malevolent spirits, common to all shamanistic cults, the Akas have conceptualized a few deities mostly identified with the major forces of nature such as the sky, the mountain, the earth and the water. The qualifying address of 'father' or 'mother' indicates the sex of the deity. *Metz Au* is Father Sky: *Phu Au* is Father Moun-

tain, *No Ain* is Mother Earth and *Hu Ain* is Mother Water.

There is a fifth and very powerful god, called *Sikchi*, who reigns in the underworld where presumably all disembodied soul-substances repair after death.

The Akas also have the conception of a deity, who stands above all. He is *Tcharo*, 'who is the benign ruler of the human as well an animal kingdom'. To him supplication is mostly made for earthly well-being and blessings. There is no fixed time for the ritual though usually it is performed in the months of April-May after the clearing of *jhum* fields has been completed. The duration of the rite depends on the nature of the sacrifice made. If a mithan (*Bos frontalis*) is sacrificed, the ceremony may last for about ten days. The individual performing the rite has to observe a number of taboos for a certain period of time.

KHOAS

The Khoas are a very small group of people living among the Akas but in separate villages. From the point of view of ethnic and cultural affinity, they are hardly distinguished from the Akas. The Khoas tend to be darker in complexion due to constant exposure to the sun while working in the fields. They call themselves Buguns in their own language, and are a hard-working lot, labouring for the Akas as well as in their own fields. The Khoas live in their own villages under their own headmen and own land for cultivation independently of the Akas. The Akas, however, claim that the Khoas are their serfs and are destined to toil for them in their fields. As a matter of fact, they voluntarily work for the Akas for regular wages. But, as Kennedy pointed out,

it is nevertheless 'an established custom that the Khoas should work for the Akas'

Kennedy claimed that the anthropometrical measurements of the Akas and Khoas, which he undertook, showed on remarkable difference. The dress, manners and customs of the Khoas also largely correspond with those of the Akas and, in matter of religious beliefs, there seems to be hardly any difference. It, therefore, calls for a thorough investigation by research scholars to determine the basic reasons, whatever they are, constituting a sense of separation in them.

Kennedy, however, offered a conjecture that the Khoas were possibly the descendants of a people, who originally occupied the hills prior to the advent of the Akas, and had become gradually assimilated to the Akas in many ways except in language. Their separate identity is now dependent on the distinctiveness of their language. It therefore, remains a philological puzzle how the language, spoken by a small group of people, could resist being engulfed in spite of close proximity to another group, who are more numerous.

The Khoas are at present spread over seven villages, each having a name in their own language such as Bredo-thop, Hako-Dnu-a-thop, Khujundun-a-thop etc. They seem to think that the Sherdukpens came to the area first, then the forefathers of the Khoas themselves, and lastly the Akas from the north. They, however, have no memory or tradition about the land of their origin whence they migrated to their present home. They had originally no knowledge of weaving, nor were they used to going down to the plains for their necessities. As a result, they mostly had to depend on the Sherdukpens even for such daily need as salt. The

Khoas paid for these in kind, preferably by personal labour for their neighbours.

They, however, as we have already noticed, are good cultivators traditionally and labour for the Akas in addition to working in their own fields. The process of cultivation followed is *jhuming*. It used to be the custom to work a plot of land for one year, leaving it fallow for the next five to seven years. The traditional implement for sowing seeds was a wooden hook. In spite of *jhuming*, ownership of individual plot is recognized. If under pressure of circumstances, there should be need to fall upon somebody else's plot, simple permission would be enough and nothing was demanded in return.

Main crops raised by the Khoas are maize, millet, wheat, potato, and variety of vegetables. Rich people might set up separate granaries, but other usually store grains on the overhead *changs* of the living houses. The Khoas traditionally enjoy self-sufficiency in food and have always some surplus to share with others. They seem to consider it a disgrace to be dependent on others for food grains.

In the field of handicraft, their knowledge is confined to limited use of bamboo and cane. The Khoas construct their houses very similar in pattern to that of the Sherdukpens, but use only bamboo, cane and wooden posts. Stones for walls or small planks for roof, which are distinctive of the Sherdukpen house, have no use for the Khoas. The house like that of the Sherdukpens is double storeyed, the ground floor being reserved for the cattle. It was customary for the Khoas to construct houses for their neighbours also for no benefit at all but this unjust practice has since been stopped. The Khoas are now free to demand wages for undertaking such work for their Aka neighbours.

Of cattle, they keep mithan, goat, pig and fowl. Mithan is used as currency for paying bride-price and its meat is eaten on all great occasions or feasts. Strangely enough, the Khoas do not partake of goat meat and their women are forbidden to eat the meat of sheep and fowl though men take them freely. The Khoas have no explicit explanation for their abhorrence of goat meat nor can they assign any reason for denial of the flesh of sheep and fowl to their women. They, however, make extensive use of goats as a medium of barter exchange.

Some form of caste hierarchy exists among the Khoas but it does not stand in the way of free social mixing or even marriage.

Child marriage once used to be very common among them. Polygamy was much in vogue, a man having as many wives as he could pay for. Parents take the initiative in negotiating marriage for their sons. When a bride is in view, the '*deori*' or priest takes augury on the liver of a sacrificed chicken. Marriage terms are then settled between the parents of the bridegroom and the bride. On the occasion of actual marriage, exchange of gifts takes place but whatever gifts comprising animals and other articles are given by bridegroom's father are treated as bride-price. Marriage tie between paternal cousins is forbidden. There seems to be no fixed idea as to what the difference in age between the bride and the bridegroom should be but the general consensus favours that the boy and the girl should be of the same age. The elder or younger brother may take the wives of his deceased brother but any widow will be free to choose some one else, if the brother should decline to accept her.

All the brothers get equal shares of the property left

behind by their father. Unmarried girls are entitled to receive only ornaments in the family. The brothers have the obligation to look after them, and bring about their marriage. The property goes to the brother of the deceased, if he should leave behind no male issue.

Disposal of the dead body is by burial. The body is carried away some distance from the house and buried there. It is customary to put inside the grave whatever articles were used personally by the dead during his life time. After the grave has been filled up with earth, big stones are placed over it and again covered with earth, making up a mound. Sometimes a shed is put up over the grave and eatables are daily placed on it for five consecutive days. On the fifth day, a feast is arranged for friends and relatives who feast, drink and dance through the night.

The religion is broadly animistic, consisting of sacrifices to various spirits. The nature of the sacrifice involving pig, fowl, cow, sheep etc. is determined by the *deori* in relation to the spirit invoked. Appropriate rituals mark the beginning of the agricultural cycle and the commencement of harvesting.

All the spirits are not necessarily malevolent. The Khoas have the conception also of an all-powerful and benevolent deity or spirit known as *Chamram*. In the month of Jaunary, after the harvest has been brought in, they invoke him and the ceremony lasts for five days. It is remarkable of this ceremony about *Chamram* that he has a partiality for everything white including the animal to be sacrificed to him. No villager goes out of the village during the festival nor any outsider is permitted to come in. The ceremony is conducted on a communal basis and the occasion is celebrated by much dancing, singing, feasting and drinking.

MIJIS

The Mijis live in the valley of the Bichom river, immediately north of the Akas. They are a small group of people, differing very little from the Akas anthropometrically.

Kennedy, however, remarked that, compared with the Akas, the Mijis have a higher nasal index. The obliquity of eyes tends to be a little more marked in the Mijis. The Miji women show still greater affinity with the Aka women. Kennedy attributed this fact to the prevalence of inter-marriage between the Mijis and Akas and the system for the bride going to live in the village of the bridegroom.

With regard to dress, manners and customs, no remarkable difference exists. 'The more important Mijis are fond of wearing a cross belt of bear skin faced with *cowri* shells arranged in crosses'. The cloth gaiters are not constantly worn as the area occupied by the Mijis is comparatively free from the *dam-dim* pest.

In their own language, the Mijis call themselves Dammai though the term Miji, apparently given by the plains people, has become attached to them. They are scattered over 25 villages. The area under the occupation of the Mijis is surrounded on the north and the east by the Daflas, on the south by the Akas, and on the west by the Monpas.

According to their own tradition, they had originally lived in the plains and even claim connections with the Ahom kings who ruled over Assam. They, however, do not retain any tradition or legend at present as to how and when they were pushed up the hills.

The Mijis are almost exclusively *jhum* cultivators, if we should rule out small kitchen gardens which they maintain attached to their holdings. Their only imple-

ment used to be either a bamboo or a wooden stick but they have since learned the use of iron hoes. Usually they do not cultivate the same plot of land for more than one year unless the soil is exceptionally good. The period during which a plot lies fallow may extend from six to twelve years. The Mijis raise two crops in the same year. The first crop, consisting mainly of wheat and barley, is sown around November, and harvested in the month of May. The sowing for the summer crop starts almost immediately. The variety of crops, they raise are wheat, barley, maize, millet, paddy, chilli, buck-wheat, potato, sweet potato and kinds of yam and tuber.

Individual plots are well indicated but, pressed by circumstances, one may cultivate land belonging to another person with permission. In that event, term for such temporary use has to be settled first and it has been customary to pay the price in kind. The selection of seeds for the next harvest is done at the time of each harvest and seeds are stowed away in big earthen jars.

The Mijis, like the Monpas, make use of oak leaves for manure and also human excreta in their kitchen gardens.

The cattle wealth of the Mijis consists of mithans, pigs, goats and fowls. Like the Khoas again, the Mijis have an unexplained aversion for goat meat. These domestic cattle excepting mithan are pounded on the ground floor immediately below the platform of the living house. The mithans are left loose, as is the custom in this region, to roam about in a state of semi-wildness. They are captured and brought in only when a bride-price has to be paid or a sacrifice to be offered. But they generally do not stray away very far. It is the custom among the Mijis to feed their mithans with salt

once a week and the animals always turn up for their allotted quota of salt every week.

The knowledge of crafts is confined to limited use of bamboo and cane, producing small baskets. They have practically no art of weaving, and have consequently to depend on their neighbours or the plains market for the supply of their needs.

They are specially fond of beads, and use necklaces of multi-coloured beads. Just below the knees, chains of small beads are fastened round the legs. These look like decorated garters. Both men and women keep their hair long. The woman keeps it hanging down the back while man ties it up and makes it into a bun on the top of the head very much in the manner of the Akas. Silver bracelets and necklaces are common among women. Bamboo tubes are inserted through pierced ear-lobes. The rich, who can afford, use ear-rings instead.

A Miji stalwart usually carries three swords of different sizes—one shaped liked a small knife, another of medium size suspended from the neck and the third one of big size worn like a sword on right side of the waist, hanging from the neck. All these are encased in sheaths. The Mijis themselves, however, do not know the art of smelting iron or forging swords. Their neighbours, particularly the Monpas and the Shardukpens, supply them with these weapons. The Mijis also use bow and arrow, the latter being with or without poisoned tip.

The Miji society appears to be vertically divided into two classes of castes, namely Nyubbu and Nyullu. These are again divided into several sub-castes. Thus Nyubbu has three sub-castes, Sangcha-zu, Kimzu-zu, and Phangdang-zu. Nyullu has as many as twenty. Some of these are Changkhang-de-pyiang, Lubyiang-

du-chang, Sang-zu, Cummani-ya-zu etc. Marriage is confined to sub-castes under each major caste.

From all appearances, Nyullus are treated as social inferiors. They have to carry loads for Nyubbu but never otherwise. Though interdining is permitted, separate utensils are used for cooking food for each caste. This curious custom, however, appears to be due to a further fact that while the Nyubbus are forbidden from taking the head, liver and legs of the slaughtered cow or pig, Nyullus are free to eat these parts. Consequently, in a community feast, rice for both the castes can be cooked in the same pot but other delicacies, appropriate to each caste, are cooked separately in separate pots.

The system of slavery was in existence among the Mijis. Naturally, the slaves were recruited from the inferior caste. The slaves were more usually than not treated with kindness, and were provided with all necessities of life. They lived in the same houses with the masters and dressed quite in the same fashion, there being little difference in outward appearance. It was the implicit obligation on the part of the masters to arrange for the marriage of their slaves and pay the bride-price for them. A slave continued to live under the same roof with his master even after marriage.

As it is a common practice for all the tribes of the Arunachal Pradesh, the Miji houses are built on platforms. The sides are covered with spliced bamboo, which is abundant in the area, and the roof with thatch. A house may ordinarily measure 30 to 70 feet long and 12 to 20 feet broad with a verandah-like projection at one end. The comparatively small room with a fire place opening off to the verandah is usually reserved for guests. A passage in between divides it from the main

room which is a longish hall with several hearths. The ceiling or inner roof of this room is used for storing grains and also other valuables, for the Mijis do not put up separate granaries. A wealthy person, however, might and does put up a separate granary now and then.

Over the hearths, already mentioned, bamboo racks are suspended from the ceiling and these are used as cupboards for storing food provisions like fish and meat requiring to be thoroughly smoked. The Mijis do not seem to care much for privacy for quite a few families with their children live in the same dormitory-like room. At one time, the house hold slaves also occupied the same room. The interior is, however, perennially dark for the absence of any openings by way of windows.

Negotiation is the usual process of contracting marriage. The father of the boy takes the initiative in sending out an intermediary when he has a girl in view. Given good will on both sides, terms for bride-price etc are settled amicably. On the appointed day, earlier fixed as specially auspicious, the father of the bridegroom along with friends and relatives proceeds to the house of the bride's father. They take along with them two mithans, meat of two pigs and other victuals. The mithans are killed on reaching the bride's place and all the provisions are made over to the bride's father for holding a feast for his villagers and, needless to say, for the bridegroom's party as well. Other presents, comprising of Assamese endi cloths etc., are given to the parents and brothers of the bride. When a man can afford, even the villagers may get small presents. The bridegroom gives new clothes to the bride on this occasion.

This is also the occasion when the bride's father gives

a dao, some utensils and a silver cup to the bridegroom. Other members of the party receive a return gift of the flesh of a mithan and pig. On the third day the party returns to its own village. But before that the question relating to the manner of payment of bride-price is settled. This may be paid in instalments but a major portion of it is actually paid off when the bride is escorted to the bridegroom's house.

As a general practice, the bride is brought to her new home after a period of one year. On this occasion again, exchange of gifts on a little smaller scale takes place. The bridegroom takes two mithans along with him, and goes there accompanied by a *kataki*. He spends about a week or ten days there. He then returns with the bride who is usually accompanied by her parents, a few friends and relatives. They stay on for two days.

It may be mentioned that polygamy is very common among the Mijis.

During confinement, the expectant mother is kept in a separate shed constructed for the purpose. The mother is allowed to come out on the 4th day when a name is given to the new-born baby. We are told that such isolation wards—whatever might the belief connected with them—are to be seen in every Miji village.

Burial is the common method for disposal of dead bodies. There are separate burial grounds for the Nyubbus and the Nyullus, the two separate castes already mentioned. The corpse is wrapped up in a piece of cloth and is carried in a sitting posture by the near relatives to the burial place. The body is placed in a sidewise position inside the grave with the hands and feet gathered to the chest. Some eatables and a small dao are put in the grave and on the top of it are placed his bow and arrows, dao, his cap etc. Before earth is

shoved in to cover the grave, wooden planks are arranged all around the body and above it. Bamboo sticks pointed like arrows are planted on the grave. The villagers usually abstain from work on that day and attend the funeral after which they are fed by the relatives of the deceased.

On the fifth day, following death, a feast is held for the villagers and a share of the food is suspended over the grave in a wooden plate.

All the sons get equal shares of the property left by the father. The living house falls to the lot of the eldest son but the rest are otherwise compensated for this. Unmarried daughters live with their brothers who are responsible for giving them away in marriage.

It now remains to take note of the religious beliefs of the Mijis. In principle, their religion might be termed 'animistic' as the idea of spirits predominate. *Jang-lang-nui* is the most powerful of all of them, approximating, perhaps, the conception of a high god. But further investigation is needed into the character of this deity as well as the extent of his creative powers. A festival is observed in his honour in the month of October. Each village has a *deori* or priest who officiates in the ritual. A new shed is put up for *Jang-lang-nui* every year in a selected spot. On the first day a cow is sacrificed in the morning and a pig at night. Any villager can perform the sacrifice of the cow but the pig is killed by the *deori* himself. The villagers celebrate the occasion by feasting, dancing, singing etc for seven days.

SUBANSIRI DISTRICT

The stretch of country lying between the Kameng and the Subansiri rivers corresponds approximately with

the present Subansiri district. The first European to have set foot, in 1890, on the 'hidden land' of Subansiri was H. M. Crowe, who was a tea-planter from the plains of Assam, imbued with a spirit of adventure. We are, however, indebted for our first extensive and intimate knowledge of the area to the report prepared by the Miri Mission which visited the large tracts of the Subansiri in 1911-12. It remained for a long time our only authentic source of knowledge of the vast areas drained by the Subansiri. The tract, deriving its name from its chief river system, which cuts across the entire length of the territory from north-west to the south-east, is a complex of wooded hills, high mountain ridges and deep valleys. The ground rises in tiers from the deeply forested foothills, where the vegetation is tropical, to the dizzy heights of the snow-line in the extreme north.

Besides the Subansiri, the whole area is drained by a network of rivers, the chief of which are Kamla, Khru, Sipi, Palin, Panior, Poma, Popum and Par. All these turbulent rivers ultimately augment the Subansiri. The two main tributaries, the Kamla and Khru, join the Subansiri on its right bank, having taken their rise from the southern slopes of the Himalayan range. Only the Subansiri has a long career, coming as it does across the northern frontier, and falling into the mighty Brahmaputra far down in the district of Lakhimpur.

The heights of the area varies greatly. While in the central portion it reaches upto 2743 metres, grand heights are attained in the extreme north, shooting sometimes upto 6096 metres. As it is, therefore, to be expected, the climate of the entire region undergoes quick variations as it gains in ever higher altitude from the swampy rain-forests at the foot hills to the crest-line in the north. The present district of Subansiri is the



A Daffa (Nishi) stalwart. Note the typical hair-knot (*podum*) protruding from his forehead. The *podum* signifies the coming of age. A boy starts wearing *podum* at the age of about sixteen.



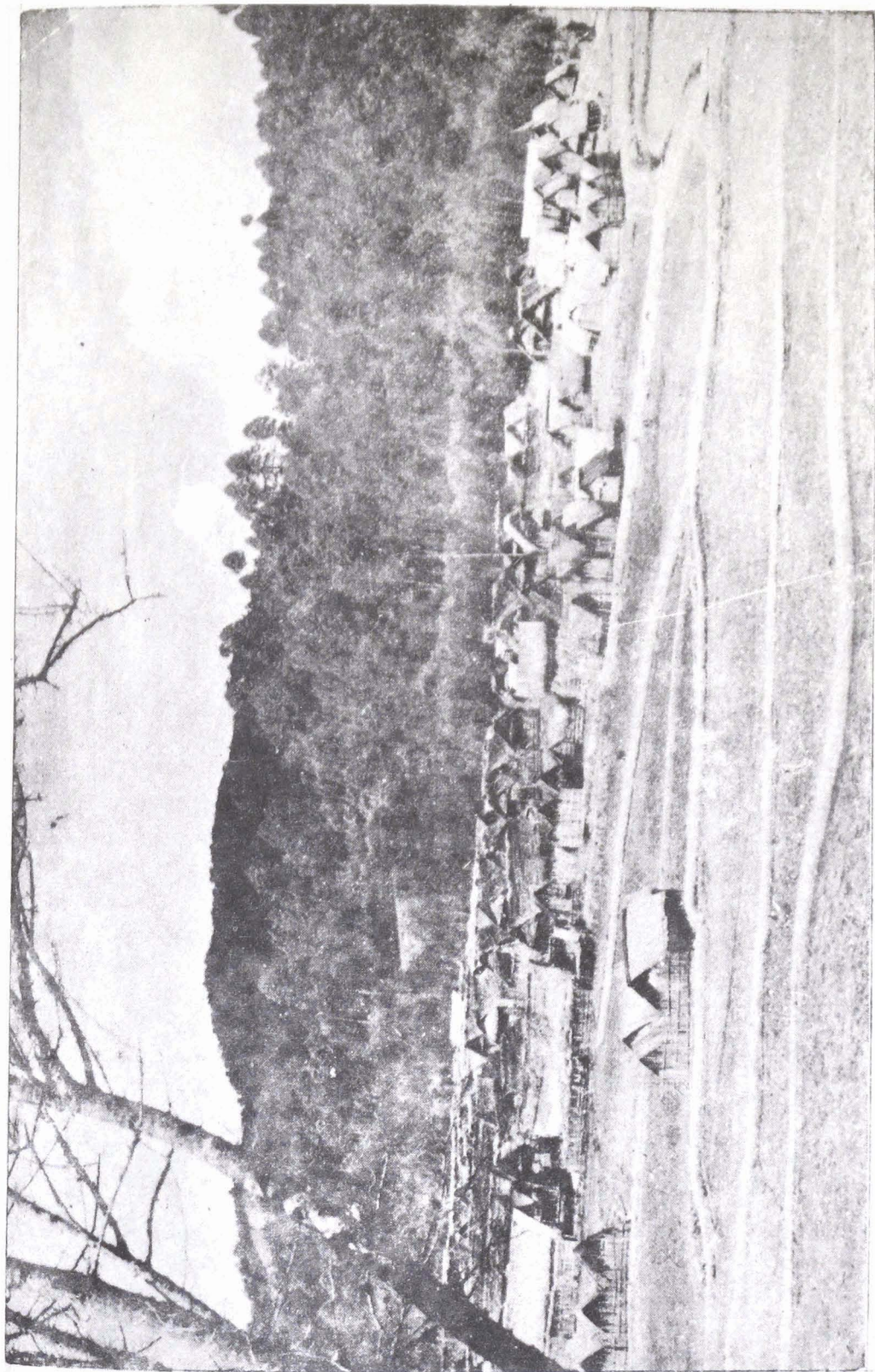
A Daffa youngman wearing his fibre rain-coat. He is never without it while travelling.



An Apa Tani youth in traditional dress.



An Apa Tani couple. Note the hair-knot with the brass skewer stuck through it on the top of the man's forehead and the nose-plugs of his wife. The typical patterns of tattooing are also visible on the faces of the man and the woman.



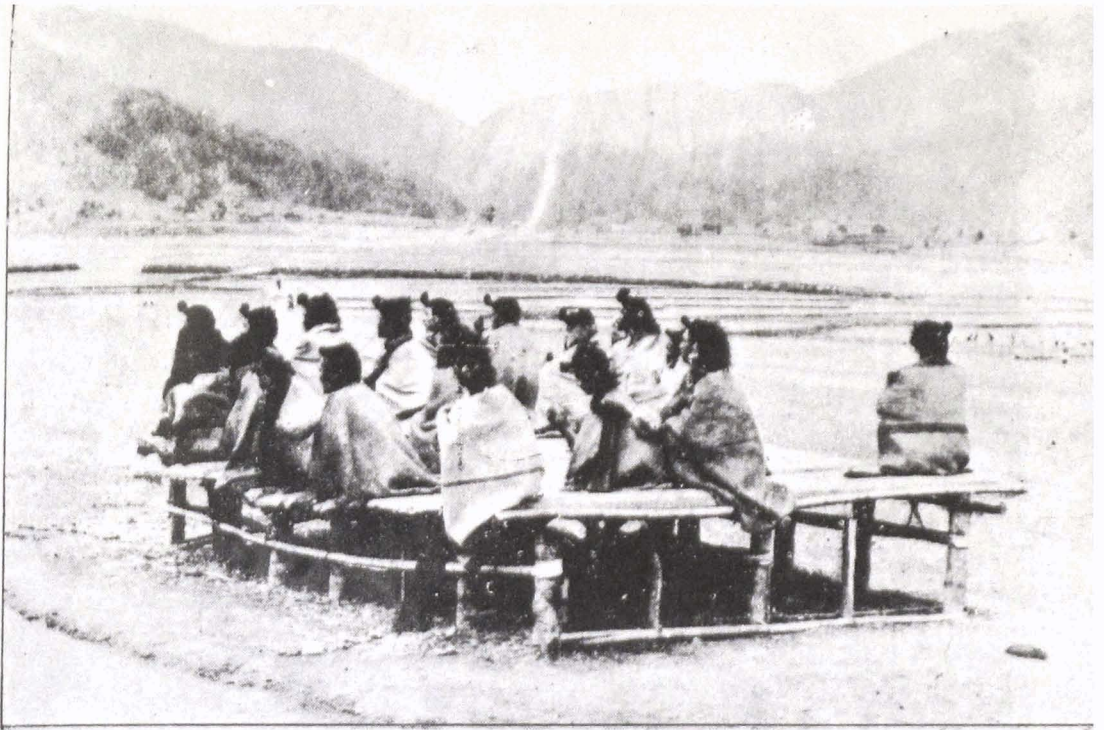
A view of Apa Tani village from a distance. The small structures on the right and in front are the granaries. A forest of bamboo and pine trees provides the background.



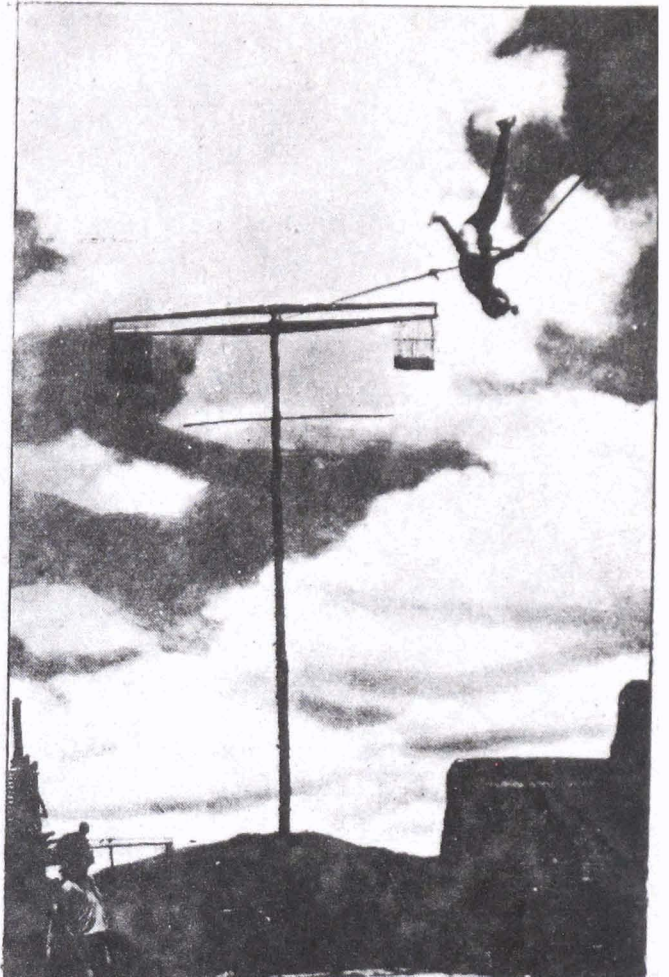
Apa Tani women transplanting rice-seedlings.



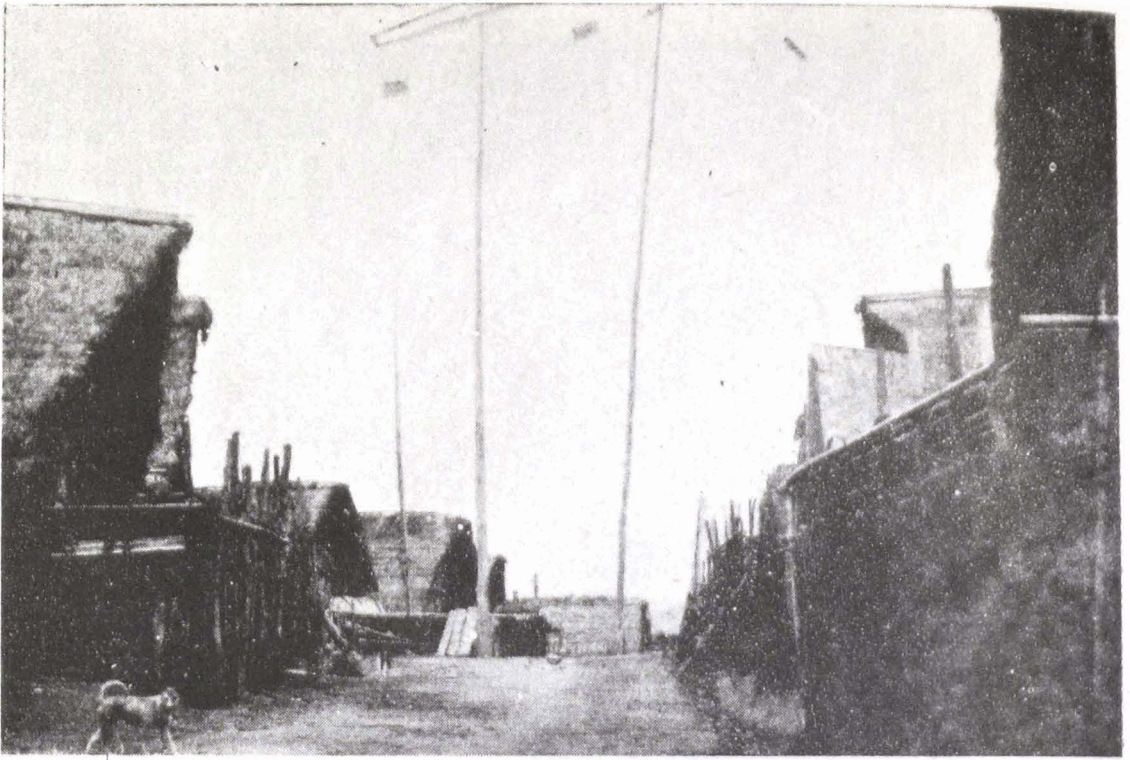
Apa Tani women engaged in weeding their rice-fields.



An Apa Tani gathering on the public platform called *lapang*. The *buliang* or village council always holds its session on the *lapang*.



The *bobo* sport among the Apa Tanis. Note the man performing acrobatics while suspended in the void.



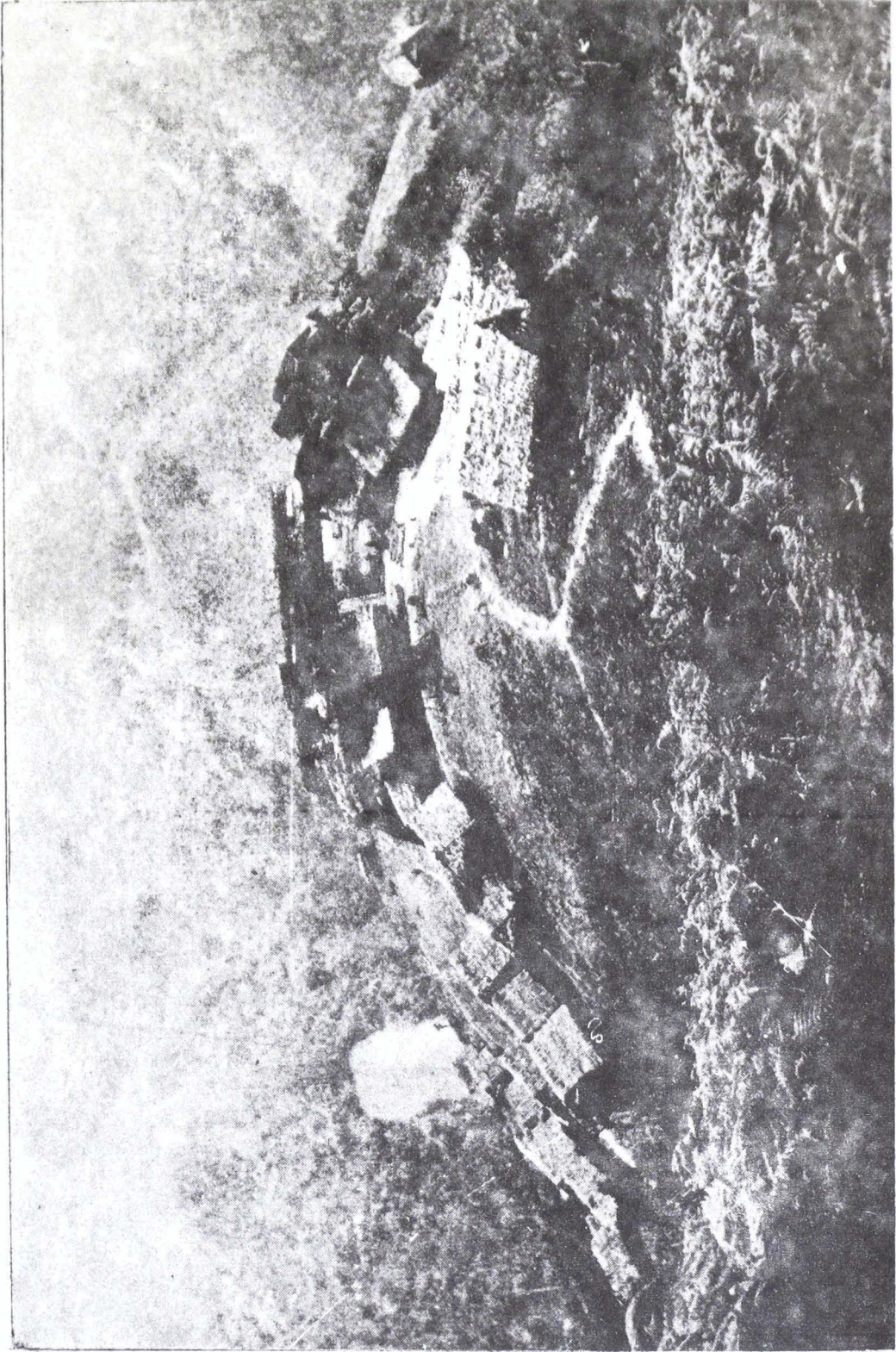
Inside an Apa Tani village. Note the *bobo* poles planted at the meeting of roads in the background.



A Hill Miri youth.



A Miri hunter.



A typical Hill Miri village perched on a hill-top.

traditional home of the Daflas (Nishi), Apa Tanis, Hill-Miris and Sulungs.

DAFLAS (Nishi)*

The area contiguous to north-eastern Kameng extending to the Miri country in the east and south of the Subansiri is inhabited by the Daflas, a sturdy hill-people, who were rather turbulent not so very long ago. It was, perhaps, largely due to the fact that the Daflas were not blessed with as bountiful lands as their neighbours, the Apa Tanis. They eked out a precarious living from the unyielding mountain slopes. It appears that a distinction is made between two branches of the Daflas, based mainly on a difference of dialect. Haimendorf has noted that the eastern Daflas, who are more numerous, call themselves Nisu. But both the eastern and western branches of the Daflas acknowledge a common ancestor and seem to be divided into three main clans, Dopum, Dodum and Dol. Haimendorf tells us that the Daflas are less homogenous than many other hill tribes in that part. They are distinguished by two pronounced and divergent types. The more frequent type is made up of those 'having round, flat face with a broad snub-nose, prominent cheek-bones, eyes lying in flat sockets, and a small weak chin'. The other type is characterised by 'an oblong face, a prominent often hooked nose with a narrow bridge, deepset eyes, a well-hooked nose with a narrow bridge, deepset eyes, a well

* The so-called *Daflas* have completely discarded the name as both foreign and derogatory, and insist on being called 'Nishi', a term said to be a native to the tribe. Though in the present book (which is a reprint) the term has been retained, we must take note of the feelings of the people, and pay due deference to their wishes here. Wherever the term *Dafla* occurs in the text above it should be understood as *Nishi*.

pronounced chin, ruddy complexion, comparatively high stature and athletic build'.

The question of the origin and migration of the Daflas to their present home is shrouded in the mist of antiquity and, therefore, remains largely a matter of conjecture. They naturally do not have any written tradition and the stories they relate, is a compound of myths and, perhaps, only vague remembrance of the places their forbears passed through in course of their migration. On being questioned, the Daflas give out a legend as recorded by B. K. Shukla in his book on the tribe. 'We received our share of the skin', they say, 'on which was written the wisdom of the world ; but we ate it up in hunger while the people of the plains preserved it'. Strangely tough, they think, everything is 'remembered in the belly' and passed on from one generation to the other.

The Daflas trace their descent from Abo Teni, the mythical first man. This legend of a common ancestor they share with the Apa Tanis, the Sulungs, the Miris, the Tagins and the Bangrus, though these tribes seem to differ from them in other respects such as dress, social institutions and culture generally. They believe that, in the dim past, their forefathers lived at a place called Supung which lay far to the east. They first came to a place which they remembered as Narba and, later passing through Begi, Bolo and Yalang, they crossed the Shinit or Subansiri river and ultimately went over to the other side of Kumme or Kamla river. They gradually spread over the tract lying between the Kamla and Khru rivers and pushed far up to the Palin and the Panior hills.

Shukla has noted that this myth has some significance in as much as it seems to throw some light on the origin

of the tribe and its pattern of migration. 'The various places mentioned in the above myth are narrated in the *id* songs, which are sung during marriage and the *yulo* ceremonies'. If any conclusion is justified in the context of these mainly legendary stories, it seems to place the original home of the Daflas somewhere in remote eastern Himalayas, and also points to the fact that migrations took place by successive waves.

The most distinctive part of the dress of a Dafla in his wicker work helmet, surmounted by the red-dyed beak of horn bill. It might also have the additional decoration of horn bill feathers stuck to it. Just below the helmet, pushed a little backward, the bun of plaited hair, called *podum*, protrudes over the forehead. A piece of yellow strap is wound round the *podum* and a thin band of woven cane studded with tiny metal bells is passed around the head. A brass skewer is then stuck through the *podum* horizontally. The decorated helmet with the *podum* protruding in front lends an exotic dignity to the appearance of a Dafla stalwart.

The lower garment consists of a loin cloth reaching halfway to the thighs. A mantle of cotton or wool is thrown over the shoulders, secured in front by means of iron or bamboo pins. Around the neck is worn numerous strings of multicoloured beads. A number of cane rings are passed round the waist, and worn round the arms and legs. A knapsack of wickwork usually dangles on the back and a small basket of similar workmanship might also be carried, slung on the left side. But the whole outfit is not complete without the sword, hung from the neck by a piece of string.

The Dafla woman gathers her hair in a bun at the back of the head or parts it in the middle with a simple bamboo comb, to be plaited round the head in a familiar

style very common in other parts of India. Grease or any kind of fat is never used for dressing the hair.

The traditional nether garment of the Dafla woman is a skirt of woven fibre 'with green border or stripe design. The same type of blanket, as worn by man, is used, falling upto the knee and tucked over the right shoulder and tied at the waist by the *jusopus* ribbon. The waist is decked with cane belt, decorated with *hoofi* or metal discs. For ornament, a *tage* or chain with a number of flat square metal pieces and blue bead strings is worn round the neck. The ankles are encased in tightfitting cane garters.

The Daflas do not live in village communities as their neighbours do. But a number of families, bound by kinship ties, live together in unusually long houses. A single long-house might shelter sometimes upward of 20 families with their slaves and servants. Each family occupies a separate compartment with its own hearth in the middle, over which is suspended a shelf from the roof, containing the earthly possessions of the family, foodreserve, and fuel. Both in length and construction, the Dafla houses resemble the long-houses of the Borneo people far away in another part of the world. Though rarely several such houses might be found in one neighbourhood, the feeling of one-village-community is conspicuously absent. In the past, war of houses prevailed, and individual families often shifted their houses.

It is worthwhile to quote Dr Elwin here who summed up the situation of the Daflas in a few terse sentences:

The Daflas have been known as independent and turbulent since the days of Aurangzeb and, although majority of them have settled down to a life of peace under an ordered administration, their appearance, with

the hair tied in a knot above the forehead, remains proud and dignified. In the past they kept many slaves who were generally prisoners of war, and in Subansiri they used to raid the Apa Tani villages. Today, however, they live in close economic symbiosis with the Apa Tanis, whom they supply with cotton and other goods in exchange for cloth and rice. Although the Daflas live in villages, the real social unit is the house which is often very large and accommodates an entire joint family. The Daflas have few dances and, apart from a little weaving and excellent cane work, are not proficient in the arts'.

Here, we may to take notice in brief of the broad features of the social life of the Daflas. As we have already mentioned above, all the Daflas trace descent from a common mythical ancestor and in that sense they are related to each other as children of a common ancestor 'Abo Teni'. Abo Teni's descendant is said to be Atu Nyah and Atu Nyah's son was Herin. Ringdo, who in his turn was son of Herin, had three sons, Dodum, Dol and Dopum who were the progenitors of all the different branches of the Dafla tribe. The Daflas are now divided into three main divisions, of which Dodum and Dol comprise the large majority of phratries and clans. Dopum Daflas are said to be very few in number. According to Shukla these major groups are both endogamous and exogamous. In other words, a Dafla is free to marry within his own group and also outside it. Tribal endogamy is, however, the rule. Though these divisions cut across and seem to have little significance otherwise, the phratries and clans exercise some influence in the patterning of the social bond. It is close between phratries and clans. In fact, the organisation of

the society is that of division into a number of exogamous phratries comprising in turn of a number of clans.

The tribes of the north-east frontier are mostly non-totemistic as Shukla puts it, and the Daflas are no exception. Each clan consist of 'a few lineages or groups of men and women' tracing or claiming descent in the patrilineal line from a common ancestor. The members of the same clan accordingly consider themselves as brothers and sisters. Hence follows the rule of clan exogamy. The relationship between clans within the same phratry is however said to be loose but the rule of marriage exogamy nevertheless holds good as between consanguineous kins.

The most striking feature of the Dafla society is that of a group of lineally related families living in a single homestead which is extraordinarily long and marked into compartments. Polygyny is most common. A family consists of the father, his wives, and unmarried children living under the same roof. The eldest wife seems to enjoy a special status in so far as the husband, as a general rule, lives with her. Each wife has a separate hearth and also a separate plot of land which she cultivates. She might have a poultry of her own and possess pigs and goats. In the scheme of things, she is the chief provider of food for her own children. It is important to note that she is not obliged to offer food to her husband every day. Actually she has no obligations at all in this regard, except perhaps as a matter of form and courtesy. She usually treats him to home-brewed beer on every visit.

As already indicated brothers and cousins with their wives and children often live in a single long-house. Each family is, however, independent of the other, and is not subservient to the patriarch of the house though

as a rule he commands respect. Each family possesses its own clearing for production of food and, therefore, has exclusive right to its own produce. This is, however, not to say that economic and blood ties do not hold them together or that no bonds or mutual obligations operates between members of the same house. According to their unwritten tribal laws, the members living under one roof are obliged to work in each others' clearings by turn whenever required. They also join together in hunting and fishing and participate jointly in social and religious festivities.

Rights of women are not explicitly recognised in the Dafla customary law. The very fact that bride-price has to be paid for obtaining a wife bestows on the husband, in principle, almost absolute right over her person. There was a time when he could even forfeit her life, if she would be guilty of gross misconduct such as adultery. Her kinsmen had no claim to legal redress. The husband might have agreed to a divorce, only if some one would be ready to compensate him by paying off with mithans. Participation of women in religious functions is confined to preparing beer for ceremonial use. In other words, direct participation is denied to a woman. The above facts, however, do not detract from her real importance in the sphere of the household. She wields a very real power in the domain of her own house where she is the chief provider of food.

A possible explanation might be in place here to account for the cause of polygyny in the Dafla society. Whatever other reasons might be enumerated by way of variations, the main reason seems to be economic. In the Dafla society, women have to bear the main brunt of growing food, drudging in the field as well as

doing her household chores, while a few rich males can even afford to be idle. The other source of polygyny is no doubt inheritance of widows. Every person has a claim to inherit widows on the death of the father or a brother except of course his own mother. Barrenness in women is considered a great misfortune, impelling a person to seek a second wife. An old man, who was outlived his social utility, has sometimes a better sense of security, having many wives.

As sons have largely to depend on their fathers for the payment of bride-price, it naturally follows that arranging marriage is primarily a parental responsibility. The use of intermediaries is quite common. When a girl is in view, the father of the boy may mention the subject to some of his friends who might indirectly sound the views of the girl's father on the proposal. As a result, the boy's father knows in advance the likely reaction of the girl's father to a concrete proposal. The next step in the move is a formal visit by the boy's father to the prospective bride's father with presents. This is followed by negotiations with regard to bride-price. This having been settled after hard bargaining on either side, the boy's father returns home to take omen on chicken livers.

When the proposed match is confirmed by augury, groom's father repeats his visit to the bride's father with further presents, including among other things a mithan. This time he goes in the company of his kinsmen who carry the articles of present. It is now the turn of the bride's father to take omen. He indicates acceptance of the bride-price by smearing the mithan's horns with paste of rice flour and beer. He is then obliged to appropriately entertain the guests who might prolong their stay upto three nights. In addition to feasting, songs

called *id* are sung every night. The priests on either side try to outdo and outwit one another in this contest of singing with special compositions of their own.

The actual marriage is not marked by any formal ceremony, except that the bride and the groom are dressed in new clothes and ornaments. According to the rules of patrilocal residence, the bride proceeds in the company of the bridal party to the groom's home, carrying presents given by her father. At the point of entering the village, their approach is barred by bamboo arches. Here they make offerings to the spirits (*wiyus*) of the jungle, entreating them to return and not follow them any farther. The only ceremony worth mentioning is *Yulo* in which a mithan is sacrificed. This is followed by the kinsmen and relatives joining in feasting and merry-making.

Though the ideal marriage is negotiated marriage, other forms of marriage are also known. A boy and girl forming an attachment may decide to elope. In such an eventuality, the girl's parents may make an initial attempt at finding their daughter and getting her back. When, however, this becomes an established fact, the society reconciles itself to such a marriage and the bride-price is settled. Elopement thus does not necessarily cancel out bride-price. Complication arises when a married girl elopes with a lover. Contractual obligations derived from payment of bride-price leave no choice to the parents of the girl other than trying to restore her back to her rightful husband or compensating him with the return of bride-price. They may sometimes get it from their daughter's lover.

How important and binding is the obligation imposed by bride-price can be judged from the fact that a husband is permitted by custom to claim back the bride-

price when a girl dies within a few years of marriage without any children. The death deprives the husband of the services of the wife and lack of children only aggravates the loss.

Marriage with maternal uncle's daughter is permissible among the Daflas. What is very interesting is that one calls his mother's father *atu*, a term applicable also to his wife's father, i.e. father-in-law. This is in consonance with the permissible principle of marriage with one's mother's sister. But the term *atu* is not applicable to mother's brother who is called *kei*. Though this does not strictly conform to logic as mother's brother should have been called *atu*, it finds some justification in the fact that mother's brothers is also a prospective brother-in-law. It goes without saying that wife's brother is always *kei*. By the same method of reckoning, mother's sister and mother's brother's daughter are all *meysi*. It is important to note that a wife's sister is also a *meysi*, indicating prevalence of sororal marriage among the Daflas.

Another widely used term in the system of classificatory terminology among the Daflas is *nyahang* which has its own peculiar significance. Within this term are included one's father's wives (barring one's own mother) and one's own brother's wives. *Nyahang*, as a matter of fact, broadly applies to all women who can be regarded as possible mates. Father's brother's wives are also *nyahang*. The importance of the term is seen in the fact that inheritance of widows, included within this terminology, is an accepted principle in the Dafla society. By the same rule, it is permissible for a Dafla to keep as wife his own daughter-in-law who is, therefore, a *nyahang*. The upshot of this whole principle is that all these classes of widows are treated in the same category

as if they were sisters. An extension of this rule also goes to confirm levirate as an accepted form of marriage among the Daflas.

We may mention here that no formal ceremonies mark the attainment of puberty by Dafla girls at a rather early age of twelve or so and few taboos surround a menstruating woman. She is prohibited from touching the horns of mithans or skulls of pigs hung on the walls of the main house nor she should touch any of the ceremonial structures dedicated to spirits (*wiyus*). Otherwise she is free to move about, do household works, brew beer and engage in work in the *jhums*.

A few facts about the political organization of the Daflas may be noticed here. As already noted in the beginning, the Daflas are essentially very individualistic and lack a central authority capable of enforcing its decision. There are no chiefs nor councils of elders. Retaliation for a wrong suffered was primarily the responsibility of the individual concerned. The offended person was free to ambush and carry away the wrong-doer, and hold him prisoner for a ransom. The captive was kept in stock, and watched against possible escape. The ransom agreed upon mainly through the services of intermediaries had to be paid on the spot and it involved mithans, beads, daos, pieces of cloth etc. A person, not ransomed by his relatives and kinsmen, could be kept as *nyra* or slave for the rest of his life.

Shukla mentions a curious ritual connected with the disposal of the dead body of the victim of a raid when tribal feud was quite in vogue. It was first cut into three pieces at the neck and the waist, and left behind to be recovered by the relatives of the unfortunate dead. The warrior, who actually killed the victim, would then cut off his left palm and his *podum*, the hair-knot. The

raiders then quickly made off for their village with the palm suspended on the shield of the killer. On reaching the village, they did not enter their houses at once, but sat near some ceremonial structure made of wood and bamboo and freshly decked with *kra* leaves. This was called *basar yuging*. After appropriate ceremony which involved incantation by the priest and a dance with spears and daos by the victors around the structure, the palm was carried and fixed to a tree. Such trees, which could once be noticed in Dafla villages were called *nila senge*. Numerous arrows were then shot at the palm and every one then returned to the village. The ritual, however, did not end there. A little later, a dog was chased out of the village and killed with a spear. It was meant as a sacrifice to *Sotung Wiyu* in order to guard against subsequent witchcraft. Finally, a mithan was killed and the raiders with their friends joined in a feast. The sacrifice of the mithan was preceded by the taking of augury. The sacrifice itself was known as *Ropi Tamu* and it had to be made in honour of the *wiyus* (spirits) who were supposed to have aided the raiders.

Though tribal feud was quite common at one time, they had also other means of resolving disputes. The traditional method of restoring normal relations between two warring sides was to agree to perform a sacrifice to *Poter Met Wiyu*. The sacrifice involved a mithan or a pig. This ceremony, which restored mutual peace and friendship, was called *pali*. In case of long drawn vendetta which took a toll of many lives, the opposing parties, worn out by such wasteful process over long years, often decided to perform the *dapo*. A *dapo* in fact was a treaty of mutual non-aggression and once

performed was hardly ever violated. The *dapo* as in *pali* involved sacrifice of mithans and pigs to *Poter Met*.

In view of the very limited scope of our narrative, we cannot enter into great details of the religious ideas of the Daflas. Needless to say, a strong belief in different categories of spirits dominates their spiritual world. Each spirit has an assigned habitation, and is instrumental in causing a certain kind of disease or misfortune to its unfortunate victim. The most dreaded spirits of the jungle, for instance, are *Dojing* and *Yahom*. They take a great toll of human lives by making people fall ill. Their favour has to be bought with appropriate sacrifice of mithans and pigs. If a man's crops should not waste and wither, *Parte Rinte Wiyus* have to be kept in good humour by sacrifice. The spirits bent on doing harm to mankind are too numerous to mention.

The benevolent principle behind the world, standing on a higher level and symbolizing everything good behind the creation is represented by *Ane Duini*, the Sun-mother. She is the supreme mother overflowing with kindness. Everything grows and survives at her will. But in a manner of speaking, she keeps aloof, having set the world in motion. The evil spirits, taking advantage of her apparent indifference, dominate the life of human beings and other animals. She is remembered on rare occasions such as marriage, and the *Yulo*. Offering of mithans is then made and her name is sung. But it is always the malevolent spirits, who cause distress and misfortune, hold the active imagination of their possible victims.

The idea of death among the Daflas differs little from that of other tribes inhabiting the north-eastern region. Death due to old age is attributed to a natural withering of the life-material inherent in the bones, called *lochang*.

Premature death due to sickness or accident is considered abnormal, and invariably thought to be due to machinations by unappeased evil spirits.

The Daflas believe that, after death, the soul substance, called *orum*, repairs to the land of the dead, located somewhere below the earth. The mysteries of this underworld, known as *neli nyoku*, are known only to the shamans who can vividly describe it. Life in this other world is not very different from that known in this side of existence. The *orums* live there in houses, cultivate lands and carry on all other activities until they die a second time. It is to be noted that the idea of transmigration of soul never occurred to the tribes here. The Daflas are, however, never bothered by the need to explain what happens to the soul after it dies a second time. The priests can only say that it goes to another world called *orum kyulu*. It may return to this world from there sometimes in the form of a beautiful butterfly.

The common method of disposal of dead bodies among the Daflas is by burial. It is customary to offer grave-goods for the last journey of the departed soul. Ceremonies attending on burial may vary in details, depending on the status of the dead person. In other words, ceremonies for a wealthy dead might be more elaborate compared to a poor man. A rich person, for instance, who in life owned large number of cattle heads will be entitled to more mithans and pigs being sacrificed at his burial.

A variation with regard to the method of burial of small children may be noted. When a child dies within a fortnight of its birth, a wooden coffin is made for it. Two separate pieces of log are first hollowed out and the body of the dead child is put inside them. The two

hollowed out pieces are then secured, one on the top of the other, with cane rope and the joints are pasted with wet clay to prevent leakage. The long end of the coffin is inserted into the earth, leaving the rest of it actually containing the body above ground. The coffin is secured to the ground in such a way that the body stands upright. In some places, we are told, the coffin is tied to the roof of a house while, in others, it is placed on 'two forked posts'.

HILL MIRIS

The next tribal group to the east of the Daflas is the Hill Miris who occupy the area on both sides of the Kamla river east of its confluence with the Khru and as far as its junction with the Subansiri. I have devoted a small book to this tribe published by the Arunachal Pradesh Administration.

The earliest mention of the Hill Miris is, perhaps, to be found in E. T. Dalton's 'Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal' (1872), noting that Miri is actually an Assamese word. Many years later, the Miri Mission (1911-12), which visited the upper reaches of the Subansiri and undertook the first ever extensive survey of the area also noted as follows:

'The name Miri is purely an Assamese word originally used by the Assamese to denote all the hill people between the Daflas of the Runga valley and the people of the Dihang whom we call Abors'.

Even long before Dalton, Capt Neufville, who had travelled among the Miris in 1825, reported on the Miris but this report was, however, not available as a public document. In passing, we may as well note that G. W. Dunn, who was supposed to be the author of the 'Preliminary Notes On The Miris (1897)' attempted to give

a precise description of the location of the Hill Miris in the following manner :

‘The Miris are bounded on the south-east by the Dirjimo river, which separates them from the Abors inhabiting the low hills north of Dibrugarh ; on the north-east by a low range of hills forming the southern boundary of the Dihang valley ; on the south by the sub-division of North Lakhimpur ; on the south-west by the hills to the east of the Ranga river which separates them from the Daphlas’—

The Miri Mission, already mentioned, defined the area almost in identical terms. The Subansiri river divides the Miri Hills into two almost equal parts east and west, while its principal tributaries from the east and west, viz. the Sidan and the Kamla, divide the hills north and south.

The country of the Hill Miris is covered with dense jungle from the high water level of the Kamla to the top of the highest hills. The jungle is mainly high tree jungles with masses of creepers and thick undergrowth. There is abundance of soft wood trees, but first class trees valued for their timber, such as Nahor, Sal, Tita, Poma, and fine Toon trees are also there in sufficiently good number. A great variety of bamboo is found upto an altitude of 2286 metres and cane upto 1219 metres. Beyond 2134 metres and upto 3048 metres, the trees are mostly oak and rhododendron. The Miri Mission also reported noticing some rubber trees in lower regions and vegetations yielding various dyes.

It may be mentioned here that, as a general rule and with very few exceptions in fact, the Hill Miri villages lie between the altitudes of 914 metres and 1219 metres. The Hill Miris do not at present preserve any racial memory as to the cause of their migration to their present

home. They simply say that 'they were made for the hills and appointed to dwell there, and that they were originally much further north, but discovered Assam by following flights of birds, and found it to their advantage to settle on its borders'. Dalton also noted long ago that Hill Miris did their utmost to deter the people of the wild clans to the north from visiting the plains, but the northmen occasionally came down bearing heavy loads of mujista, and beyond looking more savage and unkempt, they were hardly distinguishable from the poorer clans of Miris.

It is to be noted here that, writing in 1947, Haimendorf objected to the distinction, made officially and popularly, between the Daflas and the Hill Miris as separate tribal groups. According to him, they form part of the Dol group which embraces also many of the Dafla clans located in the Panior, Kiyi, and Khru valleys. He has, however, acknowledged that at least there is a group of people (whom he has called Gungu) who regard themselves as a separate group. On the other hand, they have been recognized as a separate tribal group by Dalton, Dr Grierson and several administrative officers who had served in the Hill Miri country. In short, the position we have taken in this controversy is that, pending more thorough investigations on scientific basis into the physical and cultural traits of the Miris, it would be safer and correct to treat them as a separate cultural group.

According to Haimendorf, the group of people, called Gungu (Hill Miris), is divided into a number of phratries. Each group of clans, included in one phratry, is sometimes known to the outside world by a comprehensive term. The villages, in which the particular clans

are settled, are usually called by the clan names, such as Bini, Biku, Gocham, Taya and so on.

Besides the division of the Hill Miris into phratries and clans, they have also long since been divided into different broad groups according to popular conception and these groupings had been clearly recorded in the 'Preliminary Notes On The Miris' in 1897 with geographical location of each group.

The Ghyghasi Miris inhabit the country to the west of the Dirjemo and to the north of the Sissi Subdivision of the North Lakhimpur.

The Ghasi Miris live between the Dhol river and the Subansiri.

The Sarak Miris live in the outer range between the Subansiri and the Ranga. It is to be noted that the Ghyghasi and Ghasi Miris may be considered as one clan and they are regarded so by other Miris.

The Panibotia and Tarbotia groups live in the hills to the west of the Subansiri. The Tarbotias have their villages on the southern bank of the Kamla river, and consequently do not need to travel by water to reach the plains; hence the origin of their name. The Panibotias have an obvious connection with water since they make use of the waterways for their movement.

Both Dalton's description and that of Preliminary Notes agreed that the Ghyghasis were rather meanly clad, badly fed, ill-looking, and were rather of stunted growth. The Ghasis were no better, their whole outfit consisting of a loin cloth and a sleeveless flannel coat.

The Ghasis of the Sew river were perfectly naked up to the loins, but wore a sort of woollen mantle for cover. Both these people had their hair cut square. The Panibotias received closer attention from Dalton who described them as possessed of fine muscular figures;

many of them were tall, standing over five feet eight inches. The Panibotias and the Tarbotias dressed much the same way as the Daflas. They gathered the hair in front of their forehead and, having made a bushy knot of it, passed a bodkin through it. Round the head they wore a fillet of leather studded with copper knobs. A girdle of cane sustained the loin cloth.

On the shoulders they wore a knapsack of a square size, made of cane and covered by a kind of short cavalry cloak made from palm-tree fibre. They also sported a cane helmet resembling the Dafla helmet but added a piece of tiger or bear skin as a cover with the tail still attached. Their arms were long straight daos, bows and arrows, and, among the tribes north of the Kamla, long spears.

It is needless to say that, with the ever increasing impact of the outside world, the dress, particularly among the young people, is yielding to new ideas and new fashion in consonance with the march of time. The old guards, however, still continue to dress much in the same fashion as their forefathers did.

Like men, the women of the different groups of the Hill Miri are also found to dress differently. The Ghyghasi women, as it had been noted by Dalton long ago, wear a small petticoat made of filaments of cane woven together. It is about a foot in breadth and fits so tightly round the loins that it compels them to move in short steps. The women wear their hair long.

The female costume of the Panibotia Miris is rather elaborate, and, in many respects, peculiarly contrasted with the neighbouring tribes. It consists of a short petticoat extending from the loins to the knees, and is secured to a broad belt of leather often ornamented with brass bosses. Outside this they wear a crinoline of

canework. The upper garment consists of a band of plaited canework girding the body close under the arms, and from this is front a fragment of cloth suspends and covers the breasts. Their usual working dress is, however, more simple. It often consists of a large pieces of cloth, which might be obtained from their neighbours or imported from the plains, and is worn over the shoulders, secured in front with a pin like a shawl.

The women have bracelets of silver or copper and anklets of finely plaited cane or bamboo. Their hair is adjusted with neatness, parted in the centre and hanging down the back in two carefully plaited tails. In the ears they wear most fantastic ornaments of silver. A simple spiral screw of this metal, winding snake-like round the extended lobe of the ear is rather common amongst unmarried girls but this is only an adjunct of the more complicated ear ornaments worn by married ladies. They wear round their necks an enormous quantity of large turquoise-like beads made apparently of fine porcelain, beads of agate, cornelian and onyx as well as ordinary glass beads of all colours. As in the case of men, the progressive among women are already tuned for a change of fashion with the importation of new ideas.

As noted earlier, the Hill Miri village, with few exceptions, are located at altitudes between 914 and 1219 metres. Narrow and rough tracks, meandering up hills and down dales, connect the villages with one another. The villages are usually very small consisting sometimes of no more than one or two households, but, perhaps, never exceeding 20 houses. The average size of a village may be safely set down 8 or 9 houses.

The Hill Miris generally select the slopes of hills for siting their villages as a measure of natural protection.

Otherwise, the villages are without any extra defensive device such as some other hill tribes raise around their villages. It is the chief of a village who has to take upon himself the responsibility of looking after the safety of his village as best as he can. The Miri village does not have a *morung* or bachelors' dormitory such as a Naga or Adi village has. In olden time, when the sense of security was not as strong as now, the Miris were very careful not to display their property that they had. They used at one time to bury their valuables at a place thought safe from prying eyes.

An average Hill Miri house may be 60 to 70 feet long, standing on stilts and thatched with leaves. The houses lie very close to each other whenever a village is of any size. The granaries are located some distance away from the living houses so that they might not be involved in case of a large fire breaking out in the village.

In his 'Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal', already mentioned, Dalton recorded an accurate description of a typical Miri house.

'It is 70 feet long ; the flooring is of split bamboos on a very substantial framework of timbers raised several feet from the ground ; the roof has gable ends, and is thatched with leaves ; under the gable a cross sloping roof covers an open balcony, one at each end. The interior consists of one long apartment 60 feet by 16, from which a passage at one side extending the entire length, is partitioned off in the large apartment down the centre ; four fires burn on hearths of earth'.

Dalton also noticed that, along the long passage, a row of conical baskets with plantain leaves were lying against the wall. These baskets contained grain in a process of fermentation and the liquor, thus extracted,

percolated into earthen vessels placed under the baskets.

The Preliminary Notes pointed out that as many as 40 people might live in one house. The house is divided into recognized compartments by triangular trays slung from the roof over earthen fire-places.

The Hill Miris confine their cultivation to whatever stretches of cultivable land are available around their village. The availability of land is naturally limited, more so because of their practice of leaving considerable part of their land to lie fallow for a long period of time.

As it had been noted by Dalton, they actually cultivate a patch of land for two successive years and then allow it to lie fallow for next four to five years. They usually take up for cultivation a piece of land that has lain fallow the longest.

Dalton made reference to an interesting custom to which the Hill Miris adhered scrupulously. They had like the Adis a superstition which deterred them breaking up fresh ground so long as their available fallow was sufficient ; a dread of offending the spirits of wood by unnecessarily cutting down tress.

The crops raised by the Hill Miris are rice, millet, Indian corn, yam, sweet potato, small quantity of tobacco, and red pepper. The availability of land on the slopes of the hills being extremely restricted, the amount of rice and other crops raised by them is hardly sufficient to carry them through the whole year. For lean times, they stock dried meat and fish. They are fairly good at trapping small animals and fish.

There is not much to say about the cattle wealth of the Miris who are rather poor in this respect. Mention sould, however, be made about mithans first, which for the Hill Miris, as for most other tribes of this region,

symbolize wealth and prosperity.. They are still looked upon as a standard of wealth and, at one time, could be exchanged for wives and slaves. Mithans served as medium of exchange. Next to mithans, pigs are regarded as most valuable possession both by the rich and the poor. They are billeted immediately below the stilt-houses, and are village scavengers par excellence.

We have already noticed that the Hill Miris are divided into many phratries, each comprising several clans. The descent is counted in the male line. The Hill Miris are reputed for their fairly accurate memory of their family geneologies. Like many other tribes, they love to trace their geneology as far back as their mythical ancestor, Abo Tani.

Various forms of marriage are recognized among the Hill Miris. The first in sanctity and importance comes the *nyida* marriage. *Nyida* is primarily an arranged marriage in which the boy's father makes the initial move. When a particular girl is in view, omen is taken on the liver of a chicken and the father of the boy goes on a visit to the father of the girl with suitable presents. The proposal, however, is not mooted immediately or directly; the conversation is carried on in symbolic language. The father of the boy starts by saying that he has come in search of *tattum bilam* or *sikam beedum*, both are some kinds of nuts symbolizing womanly virtues. If the father of the girl should wish to signify his unwillingness to the proposed match, he answer would, saying that his house is bereft of such things. He may nevertheless show courtesy by expressing his willingness for a lasting friendship and offering presents in return. In case he is agreeable, he will proceed to take omen in his turn before the match is finally decided on.

The *nyida* form of marriage is quite expensive and

is the privilege only of the rich people who can afford it. If a *nyida* wife should run away with another man, the husband will consider it a great affront. He may refuse to be compensated with the return of mere bride-price alone. The Hill Miris believe that selling away *nyida* wife will incite the wrath of gods who may send misfortunes.

Next to *nyida* form of marriage in sanctity and importance is *tado hale*. It requires payment of one or two mithans as bride-price, but there is no question of dowry or return payment of gifts by the bride's father.

There is yet another way a man may get a wife for himself. He may persuade a girl to elope with him without the knowledge of her parents. They may later live as husband and wife with implicit approval of the society. This form of marriage is called *nimmoli*. Sometimes a girl may simply go to live with a man of her choice. The society later usually gives its approval to such an arrangement. Such marriage is called *nimo kedna*. The form of marriage is predominantly patrilocal. Dalton referred to occasional polyandry among the Hill Miris. This observation might or might not have been true in the past but it certainly has no vogue at the present day.

The disposal of the dead body among the Hill Miris is by burial. A peculiar custom associated with the process of burial is to be noticed among the Miris. According to Dr Elwin, women lower the body into the grave when the deceased is male, and, in case of a dead woman, men perform this last rite. Bits of provision, rice-beer, and personal belongings of the dead are placed inside the grave. Next, pieces of wood are placed upon the body, then some stones are shoved in, and finally the grave is covered with earth.

A stone is set up about the place where the chest of the buried corpse is supposed to be. This is done with the idea of restricting the movement of the ghost. We are not sure whether this stone can rightly be called a *menhir* as Dr Elwin did. An improvised shed is erected over the stone, and the whole area is fenced in. In front of the shed, a platform is sometimes put up and, upon it, stand even upto five stuffed monkeys with arms stretched out. On the back of each is a small basket containing small packets of food, and tiny tubes filled with rice-beer. In a very realistic fashion, these stuffed monkeys often carry tobacco pipes in their mouths. They are the permanent porters provided for the dead man.

According to Hill Miris, death is often attributable to *wiyus* (spirits). A similar belief can be found among many tribes who seem to be incapable of conceptualizing a natural cause of death. The Hill Miris believe that, when a person dies, his *yalo* or soul is carried away by the *wiyu*, responsible for the death, and is kept a slave by it for a certain period of time. Later on, the *yalo* passes on to the land of the dead called *reli* somewhere below the earth. All the Hill Miris agree that the *yalo* escapes through the shoulders, but there is difference of opinion as to the form in which it leaves the body.

In common with many other tribes in this north-east region of India, the Hill Miris believe in a host of spirits, both benevolent and malevolent. They also believe in the Sun-Moon God, whose influence on the daily course of man's existence is rather negligible. They are ordinarily not involved and no special sacrifices are offered to them. The most powerful deity or spirit is the *yapom*, the spirit of forests. He may assume many forms.

Sometimes he may appear in human form but it may not always augur well for a man to see him. Failure of crop is attributed to the wrath of this deity who is to be specially propitiated with sacrifice and offerings.

The Hill Miris believe in various magical cures for several kinds of illness. When the ailment is, however, of a serious nature and not responsive to magical and other kinds of cure, it is inevitably laid at the doors of some malignant spirit.

RAU

Haimendorf mentions another small group of people in the valleys to the north and north-east. They actually occupy the areas comprising the valleys of the Sipi and the Mongo rivers which drain into the Subansiri. This group is called Rau, a term simply meaning 'northerners'. Dr Elwin was inclined to think that they spoke a language which was a dialect of the Gallong.

RISHI-MASHI

Towards farther north, occupying areas between the Kamla and the Subansiri, which actually form the southern face of a 3658 metre range, there is yet another group called Rishi-Mashi. They are said to have 'mongoloid features of a more delicate and progressive type'.

NIDU-MORA

A tribal group, having marital relations with the Rishi-Mashi but maintaining a separate identity, is known as Nidu-Mora. This group is located in the Upper Subansiri valley.

CHIKUM-DUI

A small population in the Singi valley is called Chikum-Dui. Dr Elwin considered them a branch of the

Callongs to the east of the Subansiri. They seemed to lie beyond 'the social orbit' of the other tribal groups of the region.

SULUNGS

Another distinct group, though small and scattered, is the Sulungs, occupying the northern and more inaccessible areas of the upper reaches of the Par river. Haimendorf thinks that they were the earliest migrants who came before the other tribal groups in the region. They looked a more 'primitive racial type', distinguished by a 'pronounced prognathism'. They did not seem to know much of agriculture. At one time, they lived in a semi-nomadic manner, roaming the forests in search of wild games and jungle produce. Strangely enough, however, they made good blacksmiths and brass founders, and taught the craft to the neighbouring tribes.

The Sulungs, also sometimes known as Sulus, remained unnoticed for a long time because numerically they were insignificant and often lived interspersed among the Daflas who dominated them. But both linguistically and also from the point of view of cultural traits, they constitute a distinct tribal group. They first came to the notice of military missions which visited the vast tracts of the Subansiri during the early part of the present century, and were virtually rediscovered by Haimendorf who gave first accounts of their way of life in 1947. The credit for having studied them more closely, however, goes to C. R. Stonor who visited them on a number of occasions between 1945-1948. When Stonor first came to know them, he concluded that they were a dwindling race.

Compared to their number, the Sulungs are spread over a wide area from the border of Bhutan to the re-

gions of the Subansiri in the east. Their habitat varies between the altitude of 914 metre and 2134 metre, involving naturally a variation in the nature of vegetation. The population is said to be more numerous in the upper regions beyond the sub-tropical. The reason for their dispersal over wide areas could possibly be due to their nomadic habits.

The general physical stature of the Sulungs is said to be slightly lower than that of the other neighbouring tribes though without any tendency towards dwarfism. The trait of 'prognathism' in them, first noticed by Haimendorf, is by no means universal. From the side of physical characteristics, the Sulungs show marked difference from the eastern branch of the Dafla race though they are closer to its western branch. They are, however, nearest to the Khoas or Buguns of the Kameng district to the west of the Daflas, and are even known to claim kinship with them. We learn on the authority of Stonor that the Sulungs at one time claimed a common origin with the far more advanced Apa Tanis and he was inclined to the view that the Apa Tanis might have absorbed an element of the Sulungs into the lower strata of their society.

In the matter of dress and other worldly possessions, the Sulungs differ but little from the Daflas. A single piece of cloth, worn in the Dafla fashion and the wicker-work helmet of the Daflas adorn their body and head respectively. In the past, cloth was woven at home from nettle fibre and sometimes obtained from the plains of Assam through the Daflas. The Sulungs also use almost all the weapons and tools as are used by the Daflas. They are likewise armed with bow and arrows though they have little use for the long spear of the Daflas. The arrows are fixed with either iron or fire-

hardened bamboo heads. Vegetable poison prepared from aconite and some species of fungus is applied to the arrow heads which are then used with fatal effect on preys during hunts.

The housetype of the Sulungs resembles almost precisely that of the Daflas although built on a much smaller scale. The house is usually sited on a slope so that one end of the roofed verandah is barely above the ground while the other end, also roofed, stands several feet off the ground, and is reached by a notched ladder. Palm or plantain leaves, growing wild in their area, are used for thatching. The entire frame-work is of course constructed of bamboo. Similar to the Daflas again, it is a communal house shared by two or more connected families. Though the single room in the house is not divided into compartments, each family maintains a separate hearth. One or two metal cooking-pots are all that a family possesses by way of household utensils.

Temperamentally the Sulungs are said to be more congenial and given to ready laughter in marked contrast to the Daflas who are rather boastful and haughty. The Sulungs are also rated higher in the scale of native intelligence and capacity for learning. The Daflas, we are told, are not averse to admitting this superiority of the Sulungs though otherwise they exercise a sort of control over them. This curious relationship between the Daflas and the Sulungs is of great interest and will be described later.

We have already noted in the beginning that, according to Haimendorf, the Sulungs represent a more primitive type and had possibly preceded other tribes in the regions of the Subansiri. The Sulungs in fact might have been in possession of the whole area, where other later migrants, such as the Dafla, the Apa Tani and the

Hill Miri settled in course of time and forced them to withdraw into much smaller radius. The Sulungs appear to have lost any racial memory of their original home besides indicating that they had come from the north. What makes the question of their origin very intriguing is their distinctive language. In spite of their close proximity to the Daflas, they preserve their language which is said to be totally different from any spoken either by the eastern or western branch of the Dafla tribe. Both the Daflas and the Sulungs are also wont to deny any common bond of descent between them. On the other hand, as we have already noted, the Sulungs claim kinship with the Khoas or Buguns to the west of the Daflas. According to one legendary account, they once occupied the same territory with the Buguns in the Tenga valley but later on went up to the north because of breach of faith by the Buguns. Whatever historical connection could be posited behind such stories, the fact remains that the languages spoken both by the Khoas (Buguns) and the Sulungs are mutually understandable.

The Sulungs are said to be still very much attached to their food-gathering habits, and are all nomads at heart. Agriculture is quite important now and they have acquired the technique of *jhum* cultivation from their neighbours. But even where there is no shortage of cultivable land and they can with some exertions keep themselves reasonably supplied with food, they will nevertheless indulge in periodical food-gathering expeditions. At best, it can, perhaps, be said that they are in a transitional state between a stationary way of life and their pristine nomadic existence based on food-gathering and hunting.

As indicated above, the Sulungs now follow the cyclic

method of agriculture after the example of their neighbours, particularly the Daflas. Patches of land, wrested from the forest on hillsides, are cleared in winter by 'the slash-and-burn' method so that they are ready for sowing in the spring. They also follow the same division of labour so far as it relates to different stages of cultivation. Sowing and weeding are the allotted tasks for women whose only tools used to be dibble-stick and the general-purpose long knife. They also used a kind of small hoe, made from split bamboo twisted into the shape of a shovel.

The Sulungs grow two types of rice which constitutes at present their main staple. The late ripening variety, sown in April and harvested in November, forms the bulk of their grain reserve stored in granaries not far from the dwelling house. Maize and millet are also grown and they know some varieties of vegetable common to this area. Animal husbandry is almost unknown or restricted by the fact that the Sulungs periodically move out on hunting and food-gathering expeditions. A few domestic fowls, needed for sacrifice during sickness and a few dogs, employed in hunting or kept as watch dogs, are all that they care for.

We may now describe the food-gathering expeditions which still form the most distinctive feature of the Sulung way of life. As remarked already, even if there be no dearth of cultivable lands around, the Sulungs still venture out on these expeditions, such is the irresistible attraction of nomadic habits to which they have been tuned down through the ages. Now, these food-gathering expeditions are almost exclusively devoted to the collection of wild sago. The source of supply of sago is said to be a kind of drarf palm common to the sub-Himalayan regions of the north-east India. The view

has even been hazarded that, before rice was known, wild sago might have constituted the chief diet for all the tribes here in very remote past. In some areas where the supply of sago has become naturally depleted due to wanton cutting down of palm trees, the Sulungs have often to undertake journey to long distances from home in search of sago. In other places again, they even deliberately cultivate some sago palms nearer their settlements, transplanting seedlings from closeby forests.

The extraction of sago and the process to which it is subjected in order to render it fit for consumption are rather elaborate. First, the short trunk of the palm tree is chopped off into pieces and the pith inside is then extracted after splitting the trunk. This part of the job requires the exertion of male muscles. The pith has now to be pounded on a stone with a wooden baton. The resultant crushed matter is then made over to women wash it in a pot and spread it out on a mat. This cleansing process has to be repeated several times until the coarser fibres are eliminated. The next part of the operation consists in straining the substance through a cane-woven strainer, made into the shape of a sand-bag, at least for three times. The ultimate product is rather a coarse yellowish flour, dried in the sun. Before eating, it is baked into a sort of 'rubbery pancake'.

When palms are not available and there is positive scarcity of grain, sago is extracted from the pith of some kinds of tree-fern. Three varieties are said to be known but only one can be used. The technique of preparation of sago from fern is virtually the same. This particular kind of sago-producing fern was once looked upon as a famine crop by many tribal groups in the north-east regions of India.

A number of households might start out together on food-gathering expeditions or, as it might be truly said, in search of sago but, non reaching the grounds, they split up into separate family units. Each family puts up a temporary quarter near seemingly good hunting grounds. The women members usually stay behind, looking after the children and searching for wild roots and vegetables, on their own, in the vicinity of their camps. Such expeditions last as long as sago is available.

Hunting expeditions, on the other hand, have now become a very tame affair due to the scarcity of big game in the hills around. The Sulungs have often to remain content with no larger animals than squirrel, frog, mice and even insects for supply of animo-protein. We have also to take notice of the fact here that, now as the Sulungs have taken to agriculture, they have often to cut short their food-gathering and hunting expeditions in order to return to their fields. Then again, labour in the field is likely to be interrupted by the exacting demands of their Dafla overlords for porters and labourers. A Sulung has thus to divide his time between many loyalties. The last indicated relation existing between the Sulungs and the Daflas constitutes the most significant aspect of their social situation, which we have to take notice of next.

While in the far north there are said to be Sulung villages living independent existence without any extraneous allegiance, most of the Sulung villages, scattered over the greater part of the hills in the lower reaches, are located very close to Dafla villages, and are socially and traditionally dependent on them. This dependence in modern political terminology may, perhaps, be said to be a cross between protectorate and

feudal overlordship. A Sulung settlement, in close proximity to a Dafla village, may not exceed a dozen souls while the population of the latter may even run to two thousand. What is most interesting and significant is not that a Sulung village or family is attached to a Dafla village or family but that it is found to be in fact linked with one or more of the dominant Dafla clan in that village. The social dependence of the members of the Sulung village on particular clan or clans of the Dafla village is almost complete. But while this is so, the Sulungs have never been fully integrated with their Dafla overlords. They maintain their separate entity and self-respect intact ; they never marry outside their own group. And, as we have already seen, they retain their linguistic identity inspite of their closeness to the Daflas.

It has been conjectured that the Sulungs had found it politically and economically expedient and to their definite advantage to have placed themselves under subservience to the Dafla overlords. The Daflas themselves derive no small benefits from this arrangement which is almost in the nature of a mutually worked out economic relation.

We cannot positively assign any reason as to how particular Sulung families or even villages came to be linked with particular Dafla clans. One reason could possibly be surmised. It often happened that a family unit in a communal Dafla household broke away and shifted its place of residence. Some Sulungs, who had been living within the orbit of its influence, might also have followed it to its new place of settlement. Stonor had even recorded instances where a particular Sulung family had been transferred by a Dafla family to their relatives in another village several days march away.

In theory at least, it appears that Sulungs are treated as serfs by the Daflas who can always make demand upon their services. The Sulungs of a village, for instance, are not at liberty to leave it without the permission of their Dafla masters, and were also liable to be sold or exchanged. In the past, such was the implicit right of the Dafla feudal lords over their Sulung serfs. But even then, it was unusual for a Sulung to be sold away or moved against his will. On the other hand, it was obligatory on the Dafla master to produce the brideprice for a Sulung intending to marry but, on the same implied principle, he also received a share of the brideprice paid for a Sulung girl living under his care. This was presumably based on the age-old tradition, obtaining among the tribal people, of payment of compensation for loss of services when a girl was given away in marriage.

Now, the above relation of dependence of the Sulungs on their Dafla overlords reminds us of the similar relation of the Khoas (Buguns) with the Akas to the west of the Daflas. The Akas traditionally treat the Khoas as their serfs but the Khoas nevertheless maintain their racial and linguistic identity. We are also reminded here of the relation existing between the *mura* and *mite* classes in the Apa Tani society. The *mura* class is traditionally subservient to the *mite* class. The members of a *mura* class, socially dependent on a *mite* clan, not only use the same *nago* shrine as used by the members of the master clan but also adopt the clan name of their *mite* masters. In some way, this is reminiscent of the Hindu caste system where other castes adopt the clan names of their traditional priest classes.

This, however, leaves the question open whether the present weaker section of the Apa Tani society or the

now-dependent racial groups such as the Sulungs and the Khoas are not the descendants of the earlier or original inhabitants of the area, who were either absorbed or later dominated by more powerful migrants who subsequently entered the same regions. We have been even told that two separate strains of racial and physical characters had been noticed by experts, for instance, among the Apa Tanis, the Dafla and also the Adis. If the Sulungs had not been completely assimilated by the Daflas who were definitely more powerful and numerous, it could be due to the fact that the Dafla themselves did not possess a sufficiently integrated social organization of their own and that there was enough room and cultivable land for both. The Sulungs, on the other hand, found it to their advantage to submit to the Daflas, prompted by a strong sense of self-preservation.

We may now make a brief reference to the religious practices of the Sulungs. If the Sulungs had possessed religious beliefs and rituals of their own, they have lost them. At present they practically follow the same rituals and hold similar beliefs as the Daflas. The dead are buried not far from the house. A palisade is built around the place and it is customary to hang on a post the personal belongings of the dead inside the enclosure.

Some interesting food taboos have been noted among the Sulungs. Animals killed during the hunting expeditions should not be eaten by a man's mother, sister and in fact, any near female relatives, excepting his own daughter. There is also said to be a taboo on the eating of domestic fowls by young girls.

The research data on the Sulungs are still very limited and incomplete. Naturally, we have to await results of further intensive investigations among them.

NGA

Haimendorf refers to another small group of people, known as Nga, immediately below 'the Great Himalayan Range who are said to breed sheep, wear woollen clothes and build houses of stone'. Very little investigation has so far been done about them.

APA TANI

Of all the groups of tribes referred to above, the best known to the world outside are the Apa Tanis, thanks to the very excellent accounts of them found in Haimendorf's 'Himalayan Barbary', Ursula Graham Bower's 'Hidden Land' and R. Izzard's 'Hunt for the Buru', a book rather rare to come by now.

The Apa Tanis occupy a 26 sq. km stretch of valley in the central region of Subansiri at an altitude of approximately 1524 metres. The valley lies roughly midway between the Panior and the Kamla rivers. Steep mountain ridges, gaining heights of 2438 metres, enclose the valley on all sides. It has been appropriately called 'the rice bowl' of the Apa Tanis who practise wet rice agriculture with expert knowledge in contrast to the other tribes in the whole region. Early explorers left romantic descriptions of the Apa Tani plateau which has changed very little all these years. We might, perhaps, quote at some length from a report (1897) of R. B. McCabe:

'The sight is one I shall never forget, as we suddenly emerged on a magnificent plateau some ten miles in length, laid out in highly cultivated and artificially irrigated terraces well watered by the Kali river, a sluggish stream some 45 to 60 feet in breadth, with low alluvial banks. The valley was dotted with isolated hillocks, and low pine-clad spurs ran here and there into the

valley from the eastern ranges. No crops were on the ground, but the stalks gave ample evidence of the beautiful character of the recent paddy harvest. Our hearts warmed at the sight of primroses, violets, wild currants, strawberries and raspberries, and I felt disposed to almost believe some of the wonderful stories we had heard of the fabulous wealth of this country'.

The Apa Tanis now constitute a population of little over 10,000 souls, concentrated in a few crowded villages, as in the past, in the midst of their rice fields. There appeared to have prevailed at one time a great confusion over the nomenclature of the tribe. It had variously been called Anka, Auk, Apa Tanang, Auka Meri and Tenae. The name Apa Tani has now become attached to them after Haimendorf has made the tribe so wellknown to the world outside under this nomenclature through his book, *Himalayan Barbary*.

The Apa Tanis are distinguished by very regular features in marked contrast to other neighbouring tribes. To quote Haimendorf:

'They are tall, of slender build with delicate long hands ; their features are progressive, the face long, the nose narrow, and often elegantly curved, the light eyes are comparatively large and deep-set ; indeed some men could pass for Europoids, were it not for the ruddy brown of their skin'.

There has so far been no attempt to explain scientifically the incidence of such deviations in a people, set amidst predominantly mongoloid tribes, who lived in isolation for long in their sequestered valley.

The Apa Tani dress has resemblance, in many respects, to that of the Daflas who are their neighbours. Like the Daflas, the Apa Tanis wear cane helmet of the same shape and tie up their hair in a knot just on the

top of the forehead with a brass skewer stuck horizontally through it. But the Apa Tanis make a finer work of it, and tie black hair round the knot. The Daflas, however, use a yellow strand of cloth to tie round the *podum* or knot of hair. This has been noticed as a mark of distinction between the two.

The most distinguishing feature of the Apa Tani dress, however, is the famous Apa Tani tail. E. T. Dalton noted in 1845:

‘The men do not rejoice in much drapery ; they wear a girdle of canework painted red, which hangs down behind in a long bushy tail’.

Haimendorf has described the tail as ‘an extension of his broad tight belt.....made of many strands of spliced cane’ dyed ‘a vivid red’. There had been many conjectures about the utility of this appendage. One was that it served as a portable seat. Besides the cane belt with the tail, men wear multiple rings of the same red-dyed cane. As to their drapery, they put on large cloaks of greyish cloth and, according to occasion, a peculiar kind of rain-shield made of black fibre.

As the tail is the distinctive part of the male dress, so the nose plugs are peculiar to the Apa Tani women. Haimendorf has remarked that it is the ambition of every woman to be able to wear the largest possible nose-plug.

The other marks of distinction about the appearance of the Apa Tanis are the tattoos on the face of both male and female. In 1897 R. B. MacCabe described the different designs of tattoo as seen on the face of the Apa Tani man and woman, and the description still remains true to types :

‘The male Apa Tanangs have only tattoos below their mouth ; a horizontal line is drawn across the underlip,

and a straight line is drawn downward from it to the point of the chin. The women are tattooed with broad blue lines from the top of the forehead to the tip of the nose and from the lower lip to the base of the chin'.

The Apa Tani woman wears a skirt of the same gray cloth as the man, with broad bluish borders, reaching below the knees and a jacket of the same stuff of their own manufacture.

Women gather up their hair from all sides, and tie them up on the top of the head. They have fewer strings of coloured beads round their necks, compared to their neighbours, the Daflas and the Miris.

The Apa Tani society lacks any institution of centralized authority which could claim absolute allegiance from all its members. In practice, however, the village affairs are guided by what may be described as an informal village council called *buliang*. A *buliang* consists of members who are selected for their individual character and ability. Usually, rich families of prominent lineage, noted for their wealth and traditional status, are entitled to provide one or two members for the *buliang*.

There are three categories of *buliang* members—the *aka buliang*, the *ajang buliang* and the *yapa buliang*. The *aka buliangs* are prominent persons of the society who are regarded as permanent members, for their wisdom, experience and age. The most active are the *yapa buliangs* who are usually responsible for public decisions. The *aka buliangs* are, however, invariably consulted on all occasions in their role as advisers. The *ajang buliangs* are members of the younger generation noted for their leadership. They in fact are spokesmen of the younger section of the community and assist the *yapa buliangs* and act as their messengers. The hier-

archy is not, however, fixed and immutable. A young *ajang buliang* member, who makes his mark in public affairs, becomes eligible in course of time for promotion to the *yapa buliang*.

Session of the *buliangs* always takes place on public platforms called *lapang*. A *lapang* or assembly platform is constructed of spacious wooden planks loosely thrown over a framework of stilts. Haimendorf has described it as a 'visual symbol of the social cohesion of the individual clan'. The *lapangs* are generally centrally situated in each of the clan quarters. It becomes the focal centre of social activity for the members of each clan within a certain radius.

Other concrete symbols of unity and cohesion among the Apa Tanis are the many seasonal ceremonies to which they look forward with expectant longings. The most important ones are the *morom* and *mloko* ceremonies naturally connected with their agricultural activities.

As it has been noted by Haimendorf, there is reason to believe that the *morom* ceremony is actually a fertility rite having close link with agriculture. It is performed in winter after the rice crop has been harvested, and is the signal for the beginning of a fresh agricultural cycle. Haimendorf noted that the villages of Bela, Hari, and Hang gave the lead to the performance of *morom* in the months of December-January. The Haja-Duta group of villages follow it up in the months of February and March.

An important feature of the *morom* consists in processions of young people and boys going from village to village, led by the village priest. The priest, as he goes along, waves a fan and throws handfuls of husked rice grains on either side of the rice fields. During the

morom young people are known to perform symbolic dances, sporting huge bamboo phalli. The lends credence to the belief that *morom* is actually associated with agriculture and fertility. While the ceremony continues, individual rich households may perform feasts of merit. Anyone wishing to rise in the scale of social prestige would choose the occasion for performance of one of the two kinds of feast known as *un-pedo* and *padu-latu*. Sometimes indirect social pressure is also brought to bear upon wealthy families to perform the feasts.

Un-pedo, which is more expensive, calls for sacrifice and slaughter of at least five or six mithans. In this case, the whole Apa Tani valley comes in for a share of the meat. On the eve of the feast, the exact number of households in each village is collected from the representatives of respective villages. Persons of more limited means will, however, elect to perform *padu-latu* which can be celebrated with sacrifice of two or three mithans. The recipients of meat-share in this ceremony are members of the donor's own village. It should be stated that performance of this feast of merit does not entitle a person to extra privileges; it merely gives a boost to his social prestige.

The other most important celebration, having a far reaching social import and rightly regarded as a great cohesive force, is connected with the *mloko*. In an agricultural community, all celebrations are in some way or other connected with agricultural activities other than those, of course, which are performed by individuals as propitiatory rites. *Mloko* is celebrated each year at the beginning of the agricultural cycle corresponding to the months of March and April. Its character of a spring festival is further emphasised by the fact that the priest

conducts the ritual at the clan altar inside a garden within the village. Domestic animals such as mithan, pig, and also dog are sacrificed. Invocations are offered up to *Kilo*, *Kiru* and *Kirliyari*, the last connected with the earth.

The performance of *mloko*, apart from its ritualistic character, also assumes the nature of a social obligation, following a fixed pattern of observance determined from time immemorial. It is rotatory in nature and confined to a single group of villages each year. The cycle is supposed to begin with village of Hang, passing on to other villages year after year in turn until it comes round the full cycle:

Feverish activities, lasting for a few weeks, prelude the actual ceremony. Sacrificial animals are bought from the neighbouring tribes as the Apa Tanis themselves are not experts at breeding animals. Fire-wood is collected, rice grains are husked and stored for the feasts, and oblong plates for serving food are hewn out of blocks of wood.

It has to be noted that ceremonial exchange of gifts takes place during the *mloko* between the buliangs of different villages according to implied ties of reciprocity. The celebration of *mloko* is also the occasion for visits of friends from other villages to the performing village and guests are entertained on a large scale. Haimendorf has pointed out that what is lacking in central authority in the Apa Tani social organization is more than compensated by the ceremonial bonds which unite them into a system of close social dependence. The disputes, which arise between villages from time to time, are easily resolved within a fixed pattern of social behaviour, and move, in course of their solution, along the same channels of social exchanges as in the case of ex-

change of ceremonial gifts. In other words, the *buliang* of a village takes up a disputed issue first with its counterpart in the opposing village.

A description of the *mloko* ceremony is, however, incomplete without a reference to the most popular sport associated with it. It is known as *bobo*. Tall bamboo poles are set up in open spaces within every village during the *mloko* season and long cane ropes are attached to the heads of these poles. Young boys, girls and even older persons, participating in the game, pull very hard at the cane rope and, with the swing of the pole, propel themselves into the air to perform acrobatics while still suspended in the void. The *bobo* poles, carried by the boys and their elders from different quarters of the village, are usually planted near *lapangs*. It is, however, not yet explained how and when this sport has come to be associated with the *mloko*.

The general peaceful character of the Apa Tani community is reflected in their strict adherence to rules guiding their social behaviour. This particularly illustrated by a peculiar custom, called *gambu*, which had vogue in the Apa Tani society of the past, but has become obsolete now. It was a method of retrieving slighted honour or supposed injury suffered by an individual or individuals at the hands of members from another village. We may describe in brief here the procedure of a *gambu*. Sometimes, though rather rarely, quarrel between members of two villages assumed such a proportion that whole villages were ranged on either side, ultimately leading to a sort of mock war. When this happened, it used to be customary for supporters of either party to challenge the opposing party to what was called a *gambu sodu*. It was thus an openly de-

clared armed contest, fought out between two contending parties and their supporters strictly according to rules at a fixed place and time. The persons, directly involved in the quarrel, did not themselves fight. But the partisans on either side faced each other armed with bows, arrows, spears and even swords. The actual fight consisted in long-distance throwing of spears and shooting of arrows. The fight was not, however, allowed to drag on, but called off immediately after serious and sometimes fatal injuries were inflicted on one or two contestants on either side. If any person succumbed to his injuries, the party on whose side he fought was deemed morally and socially bound to compensate the family of the deceased for the loss of his life. A *gambu* was thus an honourable procedure like the European duel. Like the duel again a shot in excess of what was fixed was not allowed to be fired.

We should also refer in this context to another curious custom found in the Apa Tani society which has no parallel among other tribes in this region. This institution, called *lisudu*, which we shall describe presently, emphasises the rather affluent state of the Apa Tani society. In every respect, it resembles the *potlatch* rites of the Kwakiutl Indians of North-West America. An Apa Tani of high standing and means only can resort to this method of vindication of his personal prestige when supposed to have been trampled on by another person. The individual, deciding on *lisudu*, challenges his opponent to a competition of wealth which strangely enough consisted in its ceremonial destruction. The challenger would take along one or two mithans and slaughter them in front of his house. He would not care to collect the meat but leave it on the spot for other villagers to feast upon. Should the challenge be ac-

cepted, his opponent would proceed to destroy an equal number of mithans. But the matters would not end there. The latter would proceed to slaughter even a greater number of mithans than his challenger had originally started with. It was also customary once, though not obligatory, for the kinsmen of either party to the contest to come to his aid, and provide him with necessary mithans. Other valuables were also sometimes added to this wanton destruction. Haimendorf has pointed out that, in theory, the person, who holds out to the last, is entitled to the rest of the movable and immovable wealth of his contestant. But here again, a *lisudu* is never allowed to run its logical course. The *buliangs* will invariably intervene in time to save both the parties from loss of face as well as ruination.

It had been noted in 1946 by Haimendorf that the Apa Tani villages ranged in size from 180 to even over a thousand houses. The Apa Tani villages are still the most close-knit and congested in the whole region, not excluding the plains of Assam. The society is divided into two broad divisions of population, namely the upper class of the *mite* and the lower class of the *mura**. This division is rigid in the sense that the two are endogamous classes and interchange of position from one class to another is virtually impossible. Social mobility is thus rigidly regulated by both usage and tradition. A *mite* will not engage in any calling which is not sanctioned by the tradition of his class. As pointed out by Haimendorf, a *mura*, whatever his material

* There seems to be some controversy over the use of the terms *mite* or *mura* (first used by Haimendorf) to denote broad classification of the Apa Tani Society into two social classes. Haimendorf has now generally accepted the contention of educated Apa Tanis that more comprehensive terms are *guth* and *guchi* (Haimendorf: A Himalayan Tribe, 1980, page 87).

circumstances, 'stands still in a plebeian family which involves certain obligations on ceremonial occasions'.

Broadly speaking, the class of the *mite* is the landed aristocracy and the *mura* constitutes the large body of landless labour which at one time used to include slaves, both hereditary and acquired. This division of classes, in many respects, resembles the Hindu caste system, involving as it does an elaborate and intricate system of reciprocal social, religious and ceremonial obligations and duties.

The Apa Tani village is not just a conglomeration of houses, but reveals a definite pattern of arrangement. Each village is divided into separate quarters occupied by specific clans. In a large village like Bela, the clan quarters are actually referred to as 'villages' (*lemba*) and they are really villages within a greater village with their frontiers clearly marked off. Where the clan quarters are distinctly separate, they in many respects constitute separate political units, resembling the *khels* of the Naga villages. In smaller villages, the clan quarters are not always clearly marked and the boundaries of different clan groups actually run into each other imperceptively.

Within the village, social life and activities move around two focal points, namely *nago* and *lapang*. The former serves as a shrine and is the centre of ritual meetings of the clan quarters within the village. All important rites are performed there and, at one time, when tribal feuds were not altogether infrequent, war trophies, such as the severed hands of vanquished foes, were kept and displayed in the *nago* shrines. Such bloody feuds are, however, now things of the past. Even in olden days the Apa Tanis had the reputation of being on the whole peacefully disposed.

The Apa Tanis practise intensive cultivation and utilise every possible bit of land for laying a rice terrace. It must be so because they are concentrated over a strictly circumscribed area of natural depression or valley, hemmed in on all sides by high mountains. Rice is the main staple but other dry crops such as millet are grown on the mountain slopes. The Apa Tanis have to exert themselves to the utmost limit of their ingenuity to extract maximum yield from their rice lands, fertile but in short supply.

Strangely enough, until comparatively recently, the Apa Tanis had not even seen a plough. They were dependent through the ages entirely on human muscle for cultivation of their lands. As Haimendorf had noticed not so very long ago, 'the field work is done entirely with iron hoes, digging-sticks and wooden batons'.

The Apa Tanis prepare the fields for cultivation very meticulously and possess expert knowledge of manuring in marked contrast to other tribes in this region. They make extensive use of irrigation channels to keep their lands under different states of submersion. Haimendorf puts it thus: 'Every one of the larger streams rising on the wooded heights that ring the Apa Tani country is tapped soon after it emerges from the forest'

According to the lie of the lands and their separate states of submersion under water, they raise different varieties of rice crop: the early ripening varieties known as *plare*, *plate* and *plaping*, and the late ripening varieties, *empu*, *elang* and *rado* collectively called *emo*. *Emo* forms the bulk of the harvest and constitutes their chief food reserve.

The agricultural operation follows a well marked division of labour. Men generally take care of work requiring hard masculine labour such as building dams

terraces, cutting irrigation channels, removing earth and planting trees, while women look after nurseries and gardens. They are also responsible for transplanting seedlings and weeding fields. There is yet another kind of labour group of which we will have to take notice briefly. The boys and girls of the same age group form themselves into a kind of communal labourgang called *patang*. Ordinarily, the members of a *patang* belong to the same clan group. *Patang* members are always ready to help in each other's fields and dams according to the principle of reciprocity. Usually a man ceases to be a member of his *patang* group when he sets up a household of his own after marriage. But he can still rely on the willing help of his *patang* friends in times of need. There are besides landless people in the Apa Tani society whose services are always available on payment of wages.

It is to be noted that, in the Apa Tani society, both capitalistic trend and communal cooperation exist side by side. On the one hand it recognizes private possession of land and accumulation of wealth in individual hands and, on the other hand, group alliance involving communal cooperation, ruled by traditionalism as in rituals and festivities, is also present.

Nuclear family is the basic social unit in the Apa Tani social organization unlike among the Daflas who live in long houses accommodating several families under one roof. The Apa Tani family made up of parents and usually unmarried sons and daughters. At one time not long ago, a wealthy family had to accommodate also a slave or two who were absolutely dependent on it. Though in theory the Apa Tani society is not averse to polygamy, it has never been very much in vogue. Should a man take a second wife while the first wife is

still living, his wife's kinsfolk would consider it an affront; they might even be prepared to avenge the wrong done to their sense of prestige. Polygamy is, however, permitted and considered honourable under some special circumstances, as when a marriage is childless.

There are few restrictions on marriage alliances apart from the very strict rule of clan exogamy. Besides, as we have already noticed, the Apa Tanis have a class-ridden society and, therefore, class endogamy is the general rule. The preferential cross-cousin marriage, prevalent in certain societies, is absent amongst the Apa Tanis. Neither patrilineal nor matrilineal cross-cousins are free to marry, except for the choice of a girl of one's mother's clan far removed from the main lineage. A man is not debarred from marrying his wife's elder or younger sister. He may also take his younger brother's widow unto his wife.

An Apa Tani youth after marriage will usually set up a separate household. The parents consider it their bounden duty to see their adult married sons well established in their new homes. Those who have enough of land will set apart plots for their sons to build their new homes on, when they marry. A father, having the means, will go to the extent of buying extra land for house sites as well as for cultivation for his sons. A rich person may even divide his land equally among his sons during his life-time, keeping a share for himself. In that event, the youngest son, who usually continues to live with the father and till his land, is entitled to receive his father's share after his death.

The Apa Tanis are generally an uninhibited community, enjoying a great latitude in matters of sex. This is, however, not to say that they are free to offend

against the good form and decorum which the society expects of them. Though the sex taboo is rather lax and premarital relations are known to have a certain vogue, conceptions rarely occur. And this is so inspite of the fact that contraceptives are unknwon. The Apa Tanis, it appears, had no clear idea of the connection between the sex act and reproduction. They believed that conception could not take place unless it was willed by God. The low fertility, attending on juvenile sex relations among the Apa Tanis, may provide a matter for interesting and profitable inquiry by experts. But girls out of luck are not absolutely rare. The child of an unmarried mother, known as *hpiā*, is, however, no great problem. When a man marries a girl with an illegitimate child, he will usually adopt it who will then be regarded as of his own clan.

The religious beliefs of the Apa Tanis belong to the denomination known as 'animist-shamanist'. Like all other tribes, they also invented stories about their mythical world in order to explain the creation of the earth, the firmament, the sun and the moon, the advent of first man, and death which baffled them. They call the soul *yalo* which is released from the body at the time of death. All men who die natural death go to the home of the dead called *nelli*. It resembles in every way an Apa Tani village. Life there is not very much different from that lived on this side of existence, and is actually a continuation of the same way of the life under slightly different conditions. Every new comer to the land of the dead is subjected to questionings at the entrance by the guardian spirit, Nelkiri, about his earthly exploits. His position and status are determined with reference to the earthly possessions he had before he came to the land of the dead. 'As an Apa Tani lived on this earth so

he will live in *nelli*'. He will be given back all the cattle he had sacrificed when alive, and also those he left behind. He will even be given back the same number of slaves he had in the land of the living.

Every woman is united in the land of the dead with her first husband. Those, who leave the world unmarried, can marry and even beget children. *Nelli* is supposed to be located somewhere under the earth but, as we have noted, is not an unpleasant place to live in after all.

Nelli is also the abode of many gods and spirits. They are always on the lookout to catch the straying and unsuspecting souls of living men, and carry them away to their domain. This happens when a man falls ill, or is asleep, or loses consciousness. Only shamans (*nyubu*), who can establish rapport with the spirit world, can set free the souls from the clutches of these spirits (*wiyu*) by promising appropriate sacrifices. If the spirit, responsible for carrying away a soul, accepts the ransom offered, the soul of the sick man returns to him and he regains consciousness or health.

The Apa Tanis believe that all those, who die an inauspicious or violent death, repair to a different world of the dead, called *talimoko*, situated somewhere in the sky. The souls of dead persons are often attracted towards the habitations of the living but the mortals are ever in fear of their contaminations.

SIANG DISTRICT

The whole of the Siang District is divided into two distinct parts, corresponding to the watershed between the Subansiri and the Dihang rivers on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the water-divided between the Dihang and the Dibang rivers marking roughly the

eastern boundary of the district. The Dihang or the Siang river from which the district derives its name, coming across the Himalayan range, enters the northern border at Korbo near Gelling. The main tributaries, namely the Yang Sang Chu and Yamne rivers, which originate within the district, join the Dihang on the left bank. The other important river in the region, the Siyom, joins it on the right.

The physical contour of the area is generally precipitous. The alignments of the mountain spurs run almost north to south. The valley of the Dihang lies for the most part at heights of 1219 metres and at places even less, while the mountain ridges around shoot up from 3048 to 4267 metres in the central part of the district.

Siang is the home of several tribal groups, but predominantly of the Adis, until a few years back called Abor. Along the northern borders are the Tagins, Membas and Khambas. Dr Elwin described the Tagin area in the following lines to which we can add very little ;

TAGINS

'I myself have been to the north among the Tagins, and across the wild tangle of hills separating the Sipi from the lower Kamla valley. It was the most formidable, the most desolate, in a way the least rewarding country I have visited..... The climate is abominable ; the people are undernourished and tormented by diseases of the skin ; the tracks are impossible'.

The things have, however, changed greatly for the good of the people since an administrative centre has been established in the heart of the area with roads connecting it with the rest of the district. The life of the whole community now moves round the subdivisional headquarters of Daporijo, which in recent years

has been transferred from the Subansiri district, and placed under the administrative jurisdiction of the Siang district.

Reference to the Tagins as a separate tribal group is hardly to be found in old records, particularly in the 19th century reports about the North-East Frontier regions. Mackenzie had noted in his book on the North-East Frontiers of Bengal that Daflas living on the border of North Lakhimpur were known as Tagin-Daflas. It is gathered that the Bangnis, a western branch of the Dafla tribe, occupying wild terrains in the east of Kameng and west of Subansiri, call the Daflas across the frontiers of the Kameng district Tagins. Here the term 'Tagin' implies the sense of being an eastern people.

Shukla has remarked that it is not until 1872-73 that we hear about the so-called Tagin Daflas. They figured in the Administrative report of the same year prepared by Sir G. Campbell. Shukla, however, has commented that the Tagins are an entirely separate group of people inhabiting the north-eastern Subansiri. Their concentration is mainly in the upper course of the Kamla river, and in the areas around Taliha and Limeking Administrative centres.

The Assam Census Report of 1881 strangely records that the Daflas called the Miris 'Bodo' and the Abors 'Tagin' but observes at the same time that 'this last word seems to be merely the name of a tribe common to the Abors and Daflas'. This, however, does not openly solve the question whether the Tagins are a separate tribal group or not. As a matter of fact, the Tagins occupy an area lying between the Daflas and the Adis. According to present estimate, the Tagin population comprises 24,524 souls of which 227 are in Kameng

and the rest in Subansiri after the readjustment of the district. The Daporijo subdivision, which has the largest concentration of the Tagins, has since been separated and placed under the jurisdiction of the Siang district.

The survey of the dreary and difficult terrains under the occupation of the Tagins was first carried out by a Military Survey party in 1911, and after that very little was heard of them until the Achinmori massacre of 1953. In that year, a group of Tagins ambushed an official party, killing 47 out of the 165 members including officials and porters. Since then, however, they have experienced the advantages of good government, realized their past folly, and settled down to the peaceful life of law-abiding citizens.

They seem to have a mixed culture, having leaned alternately towards the Adis to the east and Daflas to the west. Dr Elwin noted: 'Tagin religion is also, in its general pattern, of the Adi type. There is a pantheon of gods headed by Daini-Pol, the Sun-Moon, who has below him a number of Wiyus' On the other hand, they seem to lack the strong social and political organizations of the Adis. In this respect, they have a closer similarity with the condition of the Daflas who live in scattered and isolated villages. The institution of bachelors' dormitory, an outstanding feature of the Padam-Minyong society, is absent among the Tagins. They are again not an agricultural community in the sense the Adis are. They do not also have a regular and strongly organized council of elders or *kebang* which so prominently distinguishes the socio-political life of the Adis.

Sachin Roy has noted in his book, 'Aspects of Padam-Minyong Culture', that 'the Tagins are believed to have

migrated from Penzi, a village in Tibet, to Tadadege region. Shukla in his report on the Tagins refers to another tradition. The country of the Tagins stretches from a little beyond the junction of the Sipi with the Subansiri and along the banks of the former. They believe that their ancestors came from a place called Pui Pudu farther beyond the source of the Sipi. They have no clear remembrance as to where the place was exactly located but believe that it was across the frontier, in the land of Nimme or Tibet. From Pui Pudu they came to Pumta and from there to Dibeh. The first to come was their mythical ancestor Abo Teni who reached a place called Nide Lanking and died there.

The followers of Abo Teni pursued the course of migration from Dibeh to Nari and from Nari to Nalo which is another name of the present village of Siggen. It appears that a Tagin village has two names, one of these after the original dominant clan of the village, as in the case of Nale. They retain the memory that, in course of movement, their ancestors had crossed Chhnik (Subansiri) and Kuru (Khru).

A Tagin village is sited on the slope and under the shadow of a hill, offering it some natural protection from surprise attack by enemies. From the nature of the terrain, it is scattered over a large area. A village can be as small as Mosi with only two houses or as big as Dasi or Hangam, having ten to fifteen houses. In the past, the rule was probably a single clan village but it is no longer so.

A Tagin house is usually an enormous structure much on the same pattern as that of a Dafla or Apa Tani house. But it has its special features also. It rises steeply from the ground. While one end of it may be at a height of three feet with the eaves almost touching the



A Memba mask dancer. The Membas are Buddhists, who live close to India's international border in the Siang district. They are very fond of their many dances.



A Bori couple from north Siang



A Bori youth.



An Adi hunter from north Siang. Note the feather decoration of his cap of mithan hide.



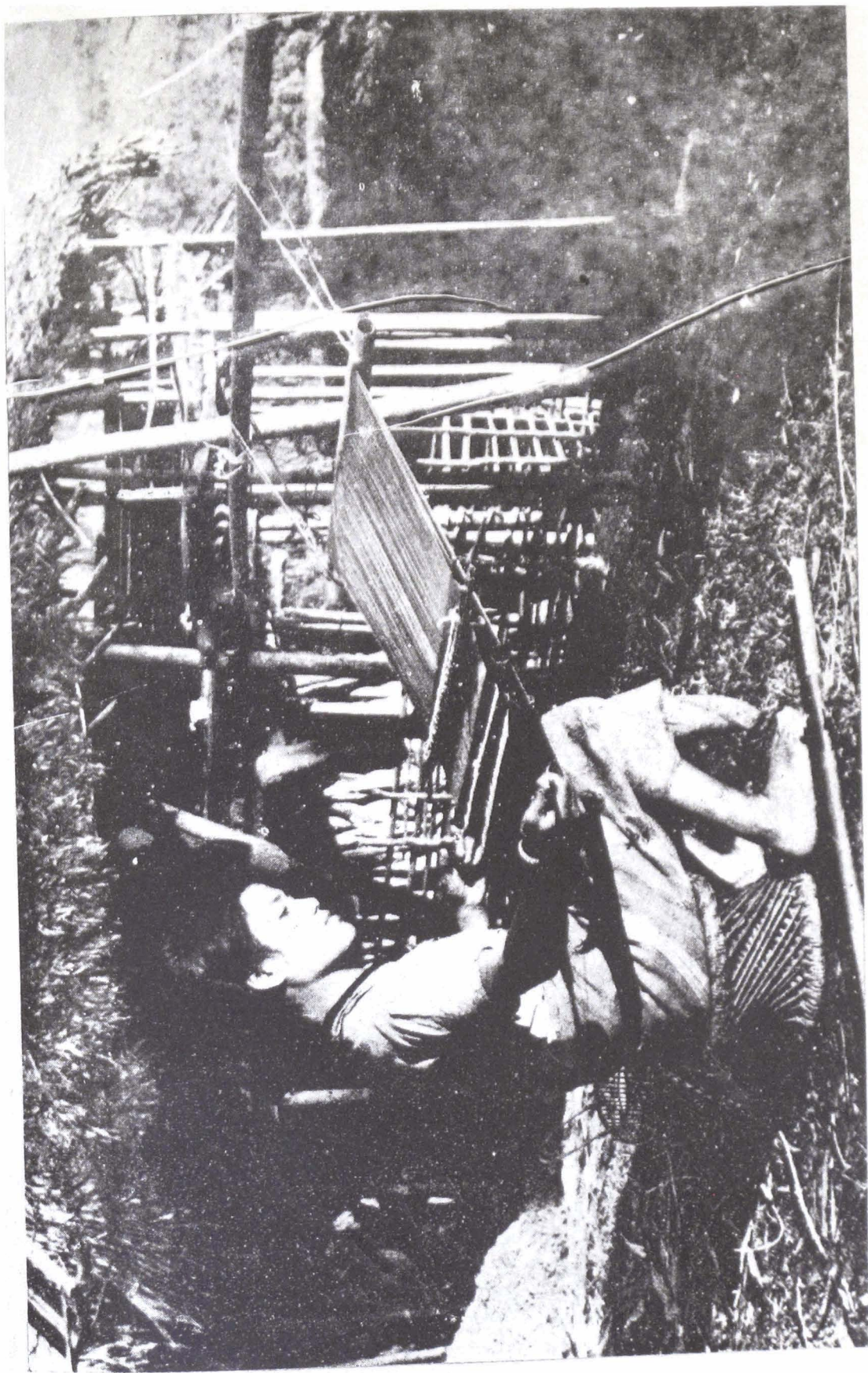
An Adi couple. Note the *beyop* plate girdle of the woman.



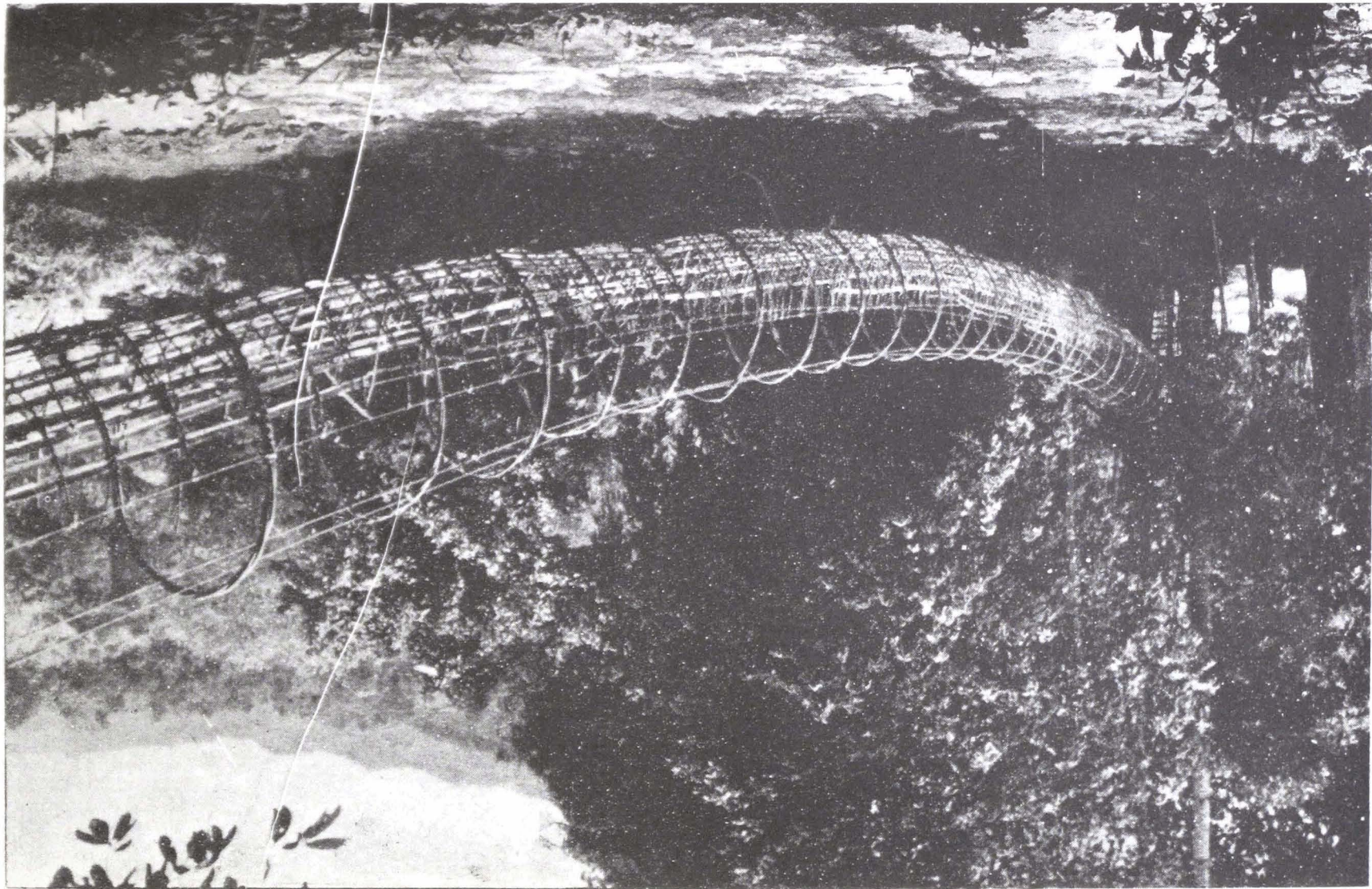
A *ponung* dance in progress. The man in the foreground is a *miri*. He leads the chorus and rhythmically rattles the sword, he holds aloft by the blade.



Adi men performing a dance. Note their wickerwork hats decorated with tusks of boars, and beaks and feathers of the Great Indian Hornbill.



An Adi girl at her portable loom.



ground, the other end may reach a height of over 20 feet from the ground. In marked contrast to Apa Tani, Dafla, or Miri houses, a Tagin house has two or three doors along one side. In case of Apa Tani, Dafla and Miri house, the entrance is always from the side of balconies or raised platforms at either end. Lastly the Tagin house does not have a big inner chamber but is divided into several apartments with, however, open passages from one to the other. Each compartment has a separate hearth.

Here it is to be noted that a Tagin family may be called a joint family in the sense that several unit families, claiming descent from one common ancestor, often live under the roof of one long house. The situation becomes further complicated when any one has more wives than one as polygamy is permitted. The wife migrates to her husband's house, and is adopted into her husband's clan after marriage. In other words, patrilocal residence is the rule. The seniormost member is regarded as the head of the family.

The Tagins are not fond of dress very much. Whether this could be attributed to the absence of the art of weaving among them is a matter for conjecture. The Apa Tanis are the only people in this region, except of course the Adis, who have developed the art of weaving. When a Tagin chooses to dress up, a piece of *endi* or a Tibetan blanket, wrapped over the body, is all he needs. As for the lower part of the body, he wears practically nothing but a sort of cover fashioned out of a piece of wood, of bamboo or metal. It is fastened to a cane belt, and serves to hide the pudenda almost completely.

In the past, Tibetan blankets used to be imported into the area by the Tagins of the upper regions. The

blankets were available in different colours—white, maroon and sometimes in coloured check design. The exchange value of the blankets depended on their quality and durability, ranging from three to five pigs in terms of barter.

The Tagins of the lower regions below Dasi import sleeveless black coats from Siang and also sometimes wear a kind of white cotton blanket with strips on both ends.

Tagin women have no special dress but use the same woollen blanket. The white cotton blanket with stripes is often preferred due to cheapness. They sometimes, particularly young unmarried girls, like to put on their heads Tibetan style round woollen caps of maroon colour. For lower garment, the traditional dress for women is *bekar* which is a grass skirt. The use of *bekar* of late has gone down and Tagin women are increasingly imitating their neighbours. Mill-made bazar cloths also are coming into fashion. It is not absolutely uncommon at present to find that sarees with floral designs are cut into pieces and conveniently worn by women and sometimes even by men. Tagin taste for dress is obviously in a transitory stage.

As headgear, Tagin men use *botung* which is a cane-woven hat. Alternatively, leather hats fashioned out of mithan hide or deer skin are also common. Such a hat often protrudes at the back with a separate piece of hide attached to it to serve as an extra covering. The usefulness of such an appendage during tribal raid or feud, which was not infrequent in the past, is obvious.

The Tagins do not like to make a knot of the hair on the forehead but, like the Pailibos and the Boris, let it grow to its full length. They apparently have not mastered the technique of caring for hair. In consequence,

they often feel obliged to cut it off when infested by lice or *tayek*. In such eventuality, men, women, and children get their heads completely shaved. Only in case of younger children, a tuft of hair (*dumi-muchum*) is left standing on the forehead.

Men and women are equally fond of beads which might be of different colours, though with a marked preference for white, blue and dark-blue. These beads at one time percolated down from Tibet.

Young boys are in the habit of using ear-rings made of deer's hair. Women use metal rings and sometimes ear-plugs looking like a pair of miniature silver flower vases.

Women of all ages love to put on metal bangles. *Kote*, which is usually a bangle of copper-like metal, is highly prized and kept for special occasions.

Tagin stalwarts cover the forepart of their right hands with cane-woven bands about a foot long. This band is called *lagbuith* which is sometimes decorated with animal hair. This is essentially a part of warrior's dress and obviously intended as a protection against sudden thrust of the enemy's sword.

Both Tagin men and women, as in other tribes in this region such as the Dafla, Miri and Apa Tani, wear rings of cane round the waist. In addition, belts, decorated with cowrie shells, are proud possession for men. A Tagin man is seldom without his belt when he ventures out of his village. This belt, called *tayen*, is a piece of skin decorated with rows of cowrie shells with the mouths upturned. Women too have additional decorations for the waists. In their case, this piece of ornament consists of a garland of small metal plates suspended from a belt.

We may mention that the Tagins discard even the little clothing they have and revert almost to a state of

nature while engaged in their fields. Women simply put on their grass skirts. But both men and women, when working in the fields, carry a small basket, known as *mah*, tagged on to their waist belts. It is woven out of cane and bamboo. A little fire is kept alive inside it. This fire appears to provide two advantages. In the first place, the smoke emanating from it helps keep away the damdim pests, a kind of almost microscopic stinging insects which are such a nuisance in this area. Secondly, one has a ready fire from which to light his *tedu* or smoking pipe from time to time. Besides the basket containing a living fire, a Tagin, while in his field, carries a leather pouch suspended on the buttocks. This seems to serve a double purpose. While it contains a provision of tobacco, it also provides him with a portable seat.

We have mentioned in the beginning that the Tagins are not an agricultural community in the sense in which the Apa Tanis or the Adis are. For almost six months in a year, they have to subsist on wild roots and small game.

This situation is attributable to the outstanding fact that the soil at the high altitude of their settlements is very unproductive. The small quantity of agricultural produce they obtain by *jhuming* on the mountain slopes is incommensurate with their need. This produce consists mostly of rice and maize.

It is no wonder that the Tagins distinguish different kinds of soil in the order of fertility. They recognize four grades and have a name for each :

- | | | | |
|-----------------|-----|-----|---------------------|
| (1) <i>Deka</i> | ... | ... | Black soil |
| (2) <i>Deli</i> | ... | ... | Red soil |
| (3) <i>Depu</i> | ... | ... | White or brown soil |

- (4) *Deje* Soil largely interspersed with stones

The first three kinds of soil, though not very fertile, are considered equally good for cultivation but the varieties of soil indicated above are distributed over particular areas. The third kind, namely *deje*, is the worst, yielding a meagre return when cultivated, and then only maize.

The main crops in the the Sipi valley, we are told, are paddy and maize. Among paddy (*am*), the Tagins know a few varieties. The variety commonly called *marua* is particularly good for brewing *opong* or bēer. Along the edges of the *jhum* clearings they also grow a number tuberous plants supplement their food. Among vegetables, some varieties are known such as *perin* (beans), *talap* (onion), *bayam* (brinjal), *tape* (pumpkin-gourd), *gey-yang* (a leafy vegetable) etc. The last named, rather easily grown, is very popular. *Juluk* (chilli) and *take* (ginger) are also grown, and are taken as spices with boiled rice. But every Tagin is seriously attached to his smoking pipe and must, therefore, grow some *du* or tobacco.

Certain other crops are grown more for their cultural and ceremonial value rather than as food. During lean times when food is scarce, they make use of the bark of certain trees as food. But they subject them to an elaborate process of preparation before they are rendered fit for human consumption. Even so, these have a damaging effect on their health.

The Tagins are said to be expert hunters and they have to depend a great deal on their skill in hunting for securing additional food supply. In their pursuit of game, they use poisoned arrows. This poison, produced indigenously, is known as *amyoh*. The nuts of a tree,

called in their language *deka pangme*, are first smashed into powder and soaked in water. The resultant substance is next poured into a gourd some distance away from house. The pasty substance, which originally looks white, gradually turns reddish. If it does so within ten days, it is regarded as good omen, and portends successful chase. The reddish paste is then applied to the iron arrowhead and a little on the shaft just below. When the arrowhead dries up in the sun or from being kept over fire, it is ready for use with fatal effect on the prey.

The Tagin society is divided into distinct classes. A man's status is determined by the class, he belongs to. The classes are arranged in a hierarchical order. Reckoned from the top downward, they are *nibu*, or the priest, *nite* or the rich, *open* or the poor, and *nyira* or slave. A middle class, going by the term *jetor*, is also recognized. But the term is not much in currency owing, perhaps, to the confusion as to the persons who can properly be included under this category. *Nibus*, who command universal respect and influence, are the repository of traditional myths and lore. They are the shamans par excellence with the knowledge and power of negotiating with the spirit world. Their services are sought after during sickness or other misfortunes, when they prescribe the necessary rites or sacrifices for propitiating the 'inimical spirits or *orams*'.

The *nite* or the rich class comprises people who own considerable property in the form of mithans and pigs, Tibetan swords, and deo-ghantis. A *nite* has to establish his position by sacrificing mithans during the *Yulo* ceremony. Mostly, the rich can afford to do this. Social mobility is greatly restricted by the circumstances in which the poor people find themselves. A poor man,

for instance, cannot hope to marry above his station for he cannot afford to pay the brideprice. The *open* or the poor class is the the most numerous. They practically starve or at best earn a precarious living. An expert hunter, known by the term *nigom*, enjoys a separate status but his place in the hierarchy of classes does not seem to be clearly determined.

We have already noticed above that there is a definite class of *nyira* or slaves. Though it goes without saying that a *nyira* is at the bottom of the ladder, his lot is not necessarily altogether miserable. In the past, any one captured in course of inter-tribal raid or feud was made into a slave. The other means of securing slaves was by outright purchase. Under changed circumstances following establishment of regular civil administration in their midst, the institution of slavery, as everywhere else in Arunachal, is dying a natural death. Among the Tagins, a slave, who has lived very long with his master and where a deep attachment has grown between them, will address him as father (*abo*) or brother (*achi*). The ordinary term of address is, however, *ato* corresponding to father's father. A slave is never asked to perform a job which an average Tagin would not be expected to do. The greatest drawback from which a slave has perforce to suffer is that he cannot marry unless and until he can find a girl, a slave like himself, and at the same time the requisite brideprice to be paid to her master. Fortune may sometimes, though rarely, smile a slave when he inherits the property of his master dying without an issue. On the top of it, he also inherits his master's wife, should she prefer him or had she been in love with him.

Selling of land is a taboo among the Tagins. They believe that Gida Taru, the presiding spirit over lands,

gets annoyed over transactions involving land. Even a new migrant, accepted into a village, is offered free land by the villagers both for cultivation and for construction of living house. He may accept free gifts of land ceded by the villagers or make fresh clearings for himself on unclaimed lands.

The ideal form of marriage among the Tagins is negotiated marriage. The parents of the bride and bridegroom may employ intermediaries. They help in reaching an agreement over the brideprice to be paid to the father of the girl. The marriageable age for boys, as a general rule, is 16 or 17 and for girls 14 or 15.

Polygamy in practice is the privilege of a few rich as others cannot afford the brideprice for many wives. Due to this practical limitation, monogamous marriages are more numerous in proportion to polygamous marriages.

It is of importance to note that preferential cross-cousin marriage with maternal uncle's daughter and paternal aunt's daughter is not only accepted, but can be claimed as a right. Senior levirate on the one hand and junior sororate on the other have social sanction. It is not uncommon for a younger brother to have sexual access to elder brother's wife, if she is not repugnant to it. Similarly, a husband might take liberties with his wife's younger sister. After father's death, son inherits his stepmothers.

Tagin conception of the supernatural is not different from that of other tribes in this region. Religious practices are mainly shamanistic. Malignant spirits preponderate over the good ones, and receive attention most. Propitiation of these spirits (*wiyus*) seems to be the main concern of their religious practices. It is these spirits which cause accident and disease unless timely appeased, and their favour is purchased by sacrifices prescrib-

ed by the shamans. *Yalos* (souls of dead men) are considered a source of potential danger, and are always dreaded and avoided.

At the apex, having unlimited power, is Daini-Pol or Sun-Moon God. They are, of course, benevolent with goodwill towards men. Daini (Sun) is believed to be female and Pol (Moon) male. They are often regarded as a compound deity. Their share in sacrifices is limited to only a few special occasions. The *yulo* ceremony after marriage is one such occasion. Oath taken in Daini's name is considered most sacred and binding. It is Daini who decides and writes in the heart of a child as to what he shall be in later life. But, if it is Pol alone who writes, it is believed, the child will die young.

Other essentially benevolent spirits, though lower in the hierarchy, are Bago, Yabu and Pakya. In various ways they look after the welfare of men, and are actually guardian family spirits. They are not prone to take offence easily but, once displeased, may cause mortal injury to those incurring their wrath by some serious transgressions. Other lesser spirits (*wiyus*) may cause prolonged sickness, but cannot take away the *yalo* (soul) of any person, thereby causing death, unless permitted by Bago, Yabu and Pakya. It appears that different *wiyus* are responsible for causing different diseases. Done, for instance, is responsible for goitre, a disease quite common among the Tagins.

It has been referred to above that it is mainly Daini (Sun) who decides the destiny of a new-born child. He is supposed to write in the heart (*apuk*) of each child its destiny, using certain mystic symbols or signs. A *nibu*, who is divinely inspired, can read these signs, and reproduce them on plates of bamboo. Tagins, like their neighbours, the Miris, bury their dead near the house.

MEMBAS AND KHAMBAS

Close to the northern borders of Siang live the Membas and Khambas who like the Monpas of the Kameng are Buddhist by religion. They are markedly different both ethnically and culturally from the Adis to their south. Though, perhaps, inferior to the Monpas culturally and economically, they are equally attached to their religion. The Khambas are inhabitants of the Yang Sang Chu valley and are famous for their colourful dances. The Membas are found around Gelling where, as already mentioned, the Dihang or the Siang river cuts across the Himalayan range and enters the frontiers of our country. They too retain their dances.

ADIS

The dominant people of the Siang district are the Adis who figured not so very long ago as Abors in the administrative history of the area as well as in reports of early explorers. They have since spurned the term, attached to them from outside, implying a derogatory meaning. Of their own choice and, with the approval of the Administration, they now call themselves Adi meaning 'hillman'. Amongst all the tribes in the neighbouring areas of the Arunachal Pradesh, they are, perhaps, the most forward-looking, and a people of very independent character. They invited a number of punitive expeditions into their mountain fastness by defying the British during the early days of their rule.

Though quite a number of tribal groups, scattered over a fairly large area, are designated as Adis, they are bound together by a common language with dialectal variations of no great importance. A similarity of culture and temperamental affinity also run through all these groups. The Adis fall into two broad divisions—

the first comprises Padams, Minyongs, Pasis, Panggis, Shimongs, Boris, Ashings and Tangams and the second, Gallongs, Ramos, Bokars and Pailibos. The division is almost regional, if a line is drawn through the middle of the district from north to south. Of these, the Padam, Minyong and Shimong are said to be more numerous. To put it in another way, the Gallong sub-group occupies the territory between the Subansiri and the Siang with the Siyom marking its northern extremity; the other sub-group, dominated by the Padam-Minyong by virtue of their numbers, occupies the rest of the valley of the Siang.

The Adis are rather short-statured with 'inverted oval faces' and 'medium thick lips'. Majority of them have straight medium-opening eyeslit with a trace of the Mongoloid fold in case of men. However, in women, the Mongoloid fold is a little more pronounced. They have dark brown eyes and clear black hair a tendency to being straight. The nose is neither too short nor too flat, but not pronounced either as in the Apa Tanis. With regard to the colour of the skin, majority of the Adis come under 'the dark brown group with a gradual tendency towards the lighter shades'. The physical characteristics of the Adis have been finally summed up in the following words:

'The somatometric measurements and somatoscopic observation of the different groups of Adis agree with the characters of Dr Guha's classification of 'the Dolichocephalic Mongoloid type'.

The Minyongs, Padams and Shimongs have their hair cropped and the Gallongs 'cut about two inches of their hair round the head and make it pointed towards the nape of neck. Gallong women wear their hair long, parting it in the middle and making a roll on the neck'.

Some of the northern tribes such as the Ashings, Tangams, Boris and Bokars like to wear it long. This hair style is almost a distinguishing feature of the two groups though it does not strictly conform to the line. Of the Padam hair style, Father Krick noted in 1853: 'Neither women nor men are fond of long hair, they do not allow it to grow beyond two or three inches in length'.

Dalton also described the indigenous process of dressing the hair; 'The hair of both males and females is close cropped; this is done by lifting it on the blade of a knife and chopping it with a stick all round'.

The most striking feature of the Adi society is its highly organized political institution represented by the *kebang* or village council. It seems to exercise a centralized authority over every important matter, affecting the life of the community. Dr Elwin summed up the functions of the *kebang* thus: 'The *kebang* still settles administrative matters, such as when and where to clear the forests and sow the seed, when to go on hunting or fishing expeditions, when and in what manner a festival will be performed and sacrifice offered. They have judicial powers and offenders of all kinds are brought before them and sentenced to various types of punishment.'

The Adi *kebang* is largely an informal body and any person, who matters or has influence, automatically becomes a member. Dr Elwin thought that it was originally dominated by priests and shamans, and derived its authority from supernatural sanction. The British policy of giving recognition to village gams or headmen precipitated its transformation into a secular body.

Another important feature of the Adi social organization is the 'dormitory-club' for boys and men, called *moshup*. Some places have separate clubs for girls

called *rasheng*. The dormitory is not only the meeting place of the youth of a village, but is also used for deliberations of the *kebang*.

The place of *moshup* in the social organization of the Adis is a point of great house importance. The *moshup* is a common sleeping house or dormitory used by all young men of a village from the age of ten until they marry. Here it is to be noted that this institution is known by different names among different sections. It is known as *dere* to the *Minyongs*. The Padams call it *moshup* while the Milangs and allied groups term it *ngapte*k. The Boris and Ashings again call it *byango*.

The *moshup* usually occupies a central location in the village, commanding an unobstructed view over different approaches to it. It is somewhat larger and longish though constructed on the same general plan as that of dwelling houses, and usually without any compartments. The *moshup* building is open on three sides with only the back side covered with wooden planks as a measure of protection against cold wind. In some villages, we are told, *moshups* are covered on all sides but leaving numerous exits. The walls, the floors, and partitions, where there are any, are made of loose fitting and rough hewn wooden planks. Notched wooden ladders serve as staircases and they are as many as leading to different sections of *merums* in a *moshup*. The *merums* are fireplaces, whether partitioned off or not, representing the number of sections in a village. Each *merum* is approached by a separate entrance, and has a platformlike shelf where the belongings of its members are kept. Over each *merum* hangs a tray from the roof for holding trophies of heads of animals killed during community hunts. We need not, however, go

here into the mythological association of the origin of *moshup*.

As we have already noticed, the *moshup* serves as a dormitory for boys over the age of ten and they group around each *merum* representing a particular section of the village. A senior boy is in charge of a *merum*, having the responsibility for maintenance of discipline, and is empowered to punish a recalcitrant member. Besides the *merums*, every *moshup* has a separate hearth, called *romsom*, round which the old and infirm male members of the village gather during the day, and may even sleep at night.

Apart from the main function as a dormitory, the *moshup* is also used as meeting place for *kebangs*, more specially *those* deciding on war and communal hunt. It sometimes serves as a venue for feasts and festivals. On such occasions, girls are permitted inside and they take part in dancing.

The *moshup* stands in the very centre of the community life of the Adis and has, perhaps, the greatest influence on moulding the personality structure of the Adi society. It breeds the spirit of cooperation among its members and it is here that they take lessons in concerted action for the good of the whole community.

The *rasheng* is built on the same principle as *moshup*. But it usually a small hut with a fireplace in the centre.

The adolescent and unmarried girls of a village gather and sleep in their respective clan *rashengs*. They remain unoccupied during the day time. The inmates come in after their night meals, and carry on spinning and weaving until they retire to bed. Here they learn lessons in discipline and obedience to their seniors. Here for the first time they get their initiation into secrets and romance of life. Boys from different *moshups*

are at liberty to visit them in the *rashengs* and naturally attachments grow between them leading to future partnerships in life. As it is only to be expected, attachments due to incompatibility of temperaments also often break down, leading to new alliances being formed. When such an experiment succeeds, it is sought to be placed on a permanent footing.

Even though the wishes of the prospective partners are generally respected, actual negotiation for matrimony as a rule moves through the parents. Either the boy directly tells his parents of his choice, or makes his desire known to them through his friends. Subject to the approval of the parents, the stage is now set for the beginning of formal negotiations. The mother of the boy specially brews some quantity of *apong* (rice beer) and goes on a visit to the girl's house with other presents such as smoked squirrels and ginger paste. If the presents are accepted, the proposal is deemed to have found favour with the parents of the girl, and the boy and the girl are looked upon as formally engaged. The girl starts wearing a particular cane appendage as a mark of her new status. In the beginning of the engagement, the boy spends the evening in the girl's house and repairs to the *moshup* for the night. At a subsequent stage, with agreement on the part of the girl, he might stay with her for the night also under the same roof.

The boy now as a proof of his attachment to the girl presents *apong* and meat from time to time to his prospective parents-in-law. The *ettor* festival signals the beginning of exchange of presents known as *lungkang*. From the girl's side *apong*, meat, and food are sent to the boy's home. The boy reciprocates by killing a pig and sending it to the bride's parents. This formality continues till such time as the girl lives with her parents.

The procedure described above is found among the Padams.

The Minyongs have a different method of marriage negotiation. The parents of the boy have to notify the elders of the clan when their son expresses his desire to marry. If the elders look favourably on the proposed match, an elderly woman is employed as *arebina* or intermediary. She starts on a visit to the parents of the girl in view, carrying presents of *apong*, squirrels and meat, known as *apong kadung*. The formal proposal is mooted in the traditional formula. She begins by saying that she has come looking for *oying kadung* (vegetable). The proposal having been agreed on, the formal exchange of presents, called *apong kadung*, might continue for another month. If everything goes well in the meantime, the final stage, known as *reying apong* (literally meaning the *apong* that cools the heart) is reached. The bridegroom's mother now carries plentiful presents of meat and other eatables, and of course *apong*, to the girl's house. All the matrons of the clan to which the girl belongs are invited to a feast and the boy's mother entertains them with food flavoured with salt and ginger-paste, but no chilly. Each woman is presented with a smoked squirrel. This marks the end of formalities and the engaged pair is declared as duly married.

The bride after marriage usually continues to live with her parents till the birth of the first child. It is expected that the boy in the meantime will be able to start a house of his own. It is to be noted here that the family property continues to be in the name of the father as long as remains alive. The maximum period during which the wife can be allowed to stay with her parents without inviting criticism or opprobrium is till

after the third child is born. Even then the girl may be reluctant to leave her parental house and there seems to be no legal sanction strong enough to compel her to do so. Neolocal residence is permissible in Adi society. Roy points out that cases have been known where the wife joined her husband in his own house after as many as twenty years after marriage.

During the time the wife continues to live in her parental home, the status of the husband is indicated by the term *magbo*. In this state of a visiting husband, if it should be appropriate to call him so he is required by convention, if not so much by rule, to perform a ceremony called *yegling*. A pig is sacrificed and the portion between its neck and the lower ribs with one foreleg intact is offered to the parent-in-law. The other foreleg ceremonially goes to the sister of the bridegroom. The heart, liver and intestines are offered to the clansmen. After the first *yegling*, whenever there is a sacrifice in the family of the bridegroom, the chest portion of the sacrificed animal should be offered to the parents-in-law.

In the above context, it is important to note that the payment of lump-sum brideprice at a time is not considered enough in the Adi society. The economic loss suffered by the family by giving away the girl in marriage should continue to be compensated over long years. It actually takes the shape of continued presentations of gifts by the husband and his relatives to the parents of the wife. There is also a fixed procedure and measure regulating such formal presentations. The husband has to give his entire share of fish caught in communal fishing, and half his catch by trap or rod to his parents-in-law. The girl claims the whole share of her husband in community hunting and she might then let

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him have one hind leg of the game killed. The father-in-law comes in for the share of the upper part of a mithan sacrificed by his son-in-law.

While still on the subject, we may refer to the system of marriage by exchange which has some currency. Two families having marriageable daughters may agree to exchange them in order particularly to get over the difficulty of payment of brideprice. If one side should however fail to honour the agreement, the brideprice which becomes due to the other side should be paid.

Descent is traced through the father and the property devolves on the male line. The children belong to the father's clan. A child born of extramarital relations, if a boy, belongs to the father's clan and, if a girl, to the mother's. The older sons generally set up their separate households even while the father is alive and, though in principle, they have equal shares in the parental house, they do not dispute it with the youngest brother who stays last with the father and comes to its inheritance by common consent as it were. The widowed mother is considered a special responsibility of the eldest son but, in practice, she prefers to live with youngest under the roof of her deceased husband's home.

The Adis possess great native ingenuity in constructing different types of bridges to span mountain torrents and rivers. Dr Elwin described these bridges as 'marvels of untutored engineering skill'. Another early explorer, W. Robinson, paid great compliments to the inventive skill of the Adis in building bridges:

'The skill as well as the labour shown in the construction of these bridges is really surprising, and is such as would not do discredit to more civilized nations'.

The Adis make cantilever bridges of bamboo, sus-

pension bridges with rigid bamboo footways, trestle bridges, and combination of both types. Their ingenuity and skill, however, come out prominently in the construction of cane suspension bridges. When constructed, such a bridge would look like a tube of cane work secured to strong frames of logs of wood, growing trees, bamboo clumps or rocks on either side of a river. Foot-rests of about ten to twelve inches width, attached to the bottom of elliptical coils of cane, run from end to end. We are told that the length of a bridge can at times be as great as 786 feet across.

The Adis show their sense of artistry and proficiency mainly in weaving. To quote from Dr Elwin :

‘Adi art is almost entirely confined to the decoration of their own persons, that is to say it is expressed in the weaving of fabrics ; the making of hats and the forging of ornaments’.

Their aesthetic sense is amply reflected in the matching of colour, arrangements of innumerable designs, mainly geometrical, such as coloured stripes and bands, triangles and ‘chevrons on broad vertical bands’. The Gallongs once lost their tradition of weaving which happily now is showing unmistakable sign of revival.

The excellence of Adi canework is mainly devoted to the making of variety of hats. Dr Elwin pointed out that the typical Aid hat used to serve formerly as ‘a sort of crash helmet for use in war and this has meant that on the whole it is rather too heavy for the days of peace’. They now experiment with making lighter hats while conforming to the general shape. To quote once again from Dr Elwin :

‘At ordinary times, the hats are worn as they are, but for dances and special occasions, they are still decorated very much in the manner described by Krick and Dal-

ton. They are often magnificent with the tusks of boars, the feathers and beaks of the Great Indian Hornbill, serow horns, tufts of goats' hair dyed red, and stiff palm fibres coloured black. In his ceremonial hat the Adi expresses his sense of colour and design'.

They are rather deficient in wood-carving and do not practise it very much.

They have considerable proficiency in blacksmithy. It mainly consists in forging knives, daos, swords, spears and arrow heads, metal pipes, charms, brass bracelets, girdle discs or *beyop* plates.

Pottery is also known to some extent.

The Gallongs practise a sort of polyandry, an institution peculiar to them, and unknown to other tribes in this region excepting, perhaps, the Monpas as already noted.

The Adis, in a manner of speaking, have strong sense of history. The elders, endowed with prodigious memory, recite genealogies tracing the origin of the Adis to the mythical first man. The recitations usually take the form of rhapsodies, known as *abang*. During festivities and social dancing *abang* songs, relating myths of creation, origins of social institutions, of corns and mithans, the original history of the people are sung by the leader of the group called *miri*. Another form of oral literature of the Adis is the *nyitom* which derives its themes from the *abangs*. The *miri* sings the *nyitoms* and the girls, standing in a row, follow him in chorus, and dance to the tune. The people are fond of dancing, which is called *ponung*, and it is invariably accompanied by singing of *nyitom* songs.

The conception of the supernatural among the Adis is of the same order as that of other tribes strung along the central belt of Arunachal Pradesh. They believe in

numerous spirits who are to be propitiated first with appropriate sacrifices. If displeased they are capable of playing havoc with nature and all creatures. It is understandable that Adi outlook on life and nature had been greatly influenced by environment. They had lived for long in constant dread of natural calamities threatening to engulf their life with sudden misfortunes. They had been obsessed with a perennial fear of loss of their subsistence. Against sickness they had no easy remedy nor could they understand the cause of sickness. It is no wonder, therefore, that they populated nature with hosts of unseen evil spirits bent on doing harm to mankind.

A predominant and important feature of the Adi religion is the place accorded to sacrifice. The culmination of all religious rites is almost invariably associated with some kind of sacrifice. The Adis having to depend preponderingly on agriculture, all festivals and rituals are directly or otherwise linked with 'the agricultural cycle'.

The first of these major rituals begins with *aran* or *pombi*. According to Haimendorf, it is held in late February, 'a time when the clearing of the jungle has been more or less completed'. The entire village celebrating *aran*, it is said, abstains from all work on the field for five days. The rite is marked by the sacrifice of a pig and a chicken. The pig is sacrificed by suffocation and the chicken by the cutting of the throat. It is important to note that, on the occasion of this rite, a prayer is chanted, calling upon Doing Bote, Kine Nane, and Sidkin-Kede, the deities of sky and earth, as witnesses to the ceremony. A promise is made in the chanting by the priest that the *pombi* feast will be repeated

year after year, with the explicit intention of winning the divine favour.

The *aran* is followed by *mopun*, which appears to be a showing rite, and is generally not done until about ten days of completion of most of the showing. Haimendorf makes reference to another ceremony connected with the fencing-in of fields, called *ettor*. The Adis, however, believe that construction of fences is not enough but that offerings to Agam, lord of the animals, are necessary to ensure safety of the fields. 'On this occasion too pigs and fowls are sacrificed.'

The climax to Adi ceremonies appears to be *luttorsolung*. It is said to be meant for the prosperity of the cattle. The ceremony takes place before the final weeding 'when the rice plants are about ten inches high'. Though set into a definite phase of the agricultural cycle, the rites seem to illustrate the importance of the breeding of mithan (*bos frontalis*). The families possessing mithans collect them from the jungle, bring them together into the yard in front of their houses and tie them to posts. A significant feature of the *solung* festival is the importance attached to the posts to which the mithans are tied. A fine of one mithan is imposed for wilfully damaging one of the posts. This, perhaps, shows that erection of the posts is not merely utilitarian. A point of interest that arises here is whether this aspect of the ritual and the sacrifice made is not parallel to the 'increase ceremony' performed by some tribes such as the Karedjari tribe of Australia.

Another great religious rite, connected with the agricultural activity, is to be noted among the Gallongs. The rite is called *mopin* which should be celebrated during the local months of Lumi and Luki corresponding to March-April-May. *Mopin* is performed during a

season when the people have any reason to apprehend that the harvest might not be favourable. Even then omens are consulted for signs whether Mopin (apparently the god of harvest) would be inclined to come down and accept offerings. Positive omens are, therefore, the signal for going ahead with the preparations for the ceremony. The culmination of the ceremony is of course the sacrifice of mithan, cow, pig and fowl.

Needless to say, during the whole celebration, much dancing, recitations of religious lore by the *nyibo* (priest), and feasting take place. The funfare in which every one applies liberally the powdered-rice paste to each other's face forms an essential part of the *mopin* ceremony.

The propitiation of malignant spirits, however, does not exhaust the religious apparatus of the Adis. They also seem to have made some advance towards metaphysical abstraction as when personifying or glorifying natural forces as definite characters of their pantheon. They even imagined a first cause of all creations and identified it with an undefined and enigmatic spirit whom they called Keyum. The Adis also believe in a hierarchy of powerful deities under Keyum, who were actually responsible for the creation and sustenance of the moral order of things. Doying-Angong, for instance, is credited with the power of granting good harvest and other boons. He is at the same time the moral governor who keeps watch over the doings of men. Doying-Angong is often addressed as 'Doying-Bote' which according to Haimendorf is the real name and Doying-Angong is only a manner of addressing the sky god, the term *angong* meaning 'friend'.

We cannot naturally go into details of all the spirits in the hierarchy and there seems to exist a confusion

with regard to the identification of these spirits. However, the first concrete being to materialize out of the womb of the undefined spirit Keyum, already referred to, appears to be Sedi-Melo. This compound deity is identified with the earth and the sky. The beginning of creation is traced back to the first incestuous relation between these deities who are otherwise looked upon as a dual deity. Another great name to be reckoned with is that of Pedong-Ane who appears to stand last in the line of creators. Pedong-Ane, also sometimes called Pedong-Name, is said to be 'the living rock from whom *wiyus* (spirits), men and animals were born'. But the central position in Adi religious conception is now occupied by Donyi-Polo or Sun-Moon god. This compound deity is regarded as the 'eye of the world'. It is the upholder of moral laws ; it beholds all and from its prying eyes nothing can be hidden.

LOHIT DISTRICT

Crossing now the eastern boundary of the Siang district, running almost parallel with the water-divide of the Dibang, we enter into the drainage basin of the same river. Taking its rise from the 'southern flank of the great Himalayan range' where it turns a bend, it flows down to meet the Brahmaputra far below near Sadiya. Its main tributaries are the Dri and the Ithun. By far the most famous river, however, giving its name to the whole district, is the Lohit in the farther east which runs nearly parallel to the Dibang. It is the same river 'Lauhitya' of Mahabharata fame, and better known to the rest of India because of its mythological association. Numerous other streams, ultimately pouring their waters into the Lohit, originate in the snowy heights of the mountain ridges and spurs, making up

the highly dissected terrain of the Lohit valley. To name some of the important tributaries, they are Kamlang, Digaru, Tidding, Delai, Kallung, Dichu etc. There are still other smaller mountain torrents, such as Kayon, Tavshit, Lati, Katso, Anyei, Tewani, Yapok etc., which are hardly noticed in winter but which become turbulent and uncrossable during the monsoon season.

The terrain, comprised by the present Lohit district of Arunachal Pradesh, with the exception of a few scattered areas at the foothills, is said to be the most formidable in the whole of India. The peaks surrounding the valley range between 610 metres on the one hand and 5182 metres on the other. The terrain lying between the Lohit and the Dibang is even more forbidding, made up of a labyrinth of precipitously steep hills skirting around deep and narrow gorges. A few verdant valleys, enclosed between towering hills, gradually open up on reaching the foothills, descending step by step in undulating plateaus to the water edges.

This easternmost limit of the Himalayas is also remarkable for the highly unstable condition of its terrain. Earth tremors are very frequent occurrences. The greatest devastation that overtook the whole region within living memory took place on the 15th August, 1950. The epicentre of the earth-quake was located close to Rima just beyond the northern borders. The impact of the shock as it occurred on that fateful day, followed by intermittant tremors for several days together, was so tremendous that it left glaring white scars on the chain of mountain slopes where the earth collapsed, bringing down wide areas of lush vegetation. The scars, marking the hillsides, loom large and, as though still fresh, before the eyes of visitors approaching the land from far distance.

The eastern part of the Arunachal Pradesh, particularly in the valleys of the Lohit and the Dibang, is subject to very high precipitation of rainfall. The heaviest rainfall occurs between mid-April and mid-July though it is true to say that rain clouds form with occasional showers through the whole year. In the upper region, the incidence of rainfall amounts to an annual average of 60 inches but the normal record for the lower reaches opening out to the plains of Assam is as high as 200 inches. The climate, as is only to be expected, is very humid. Temperature varies with ever increasing altitude. Thick veils of mist often obliterate visibility, hiding even the highest peaks from sight. Areas standing at an altitude of more 1219 metres not uncommonly experience heavy frost.

The rain-swept lower valleys of the Lohit and Dibang upto an altitude of 1067 metres is naturally claimed by evergreen sub-tropical forests where broad-leaved trees of particularly dense stand grow in profusion. We may not enumerate here all the varieties of plants that grow but mention has to be made of the medicinal plant, *coptis teeta*, thriving at the altitude between 2134 and 2438 metres.

Animal life is also said to be plentiful in the Lohit district. Elephants, tigers and panthers are commonly noticed in foothills region while leopards live comparatively higher up. Special mention has to be made of the ox-goat species, takin (*budorcas*), inhabiting still higher region. But the most precious of all animals, the musk deer, is confined to the snow level.

The Lohit district is the home of the Mishmis, the Khamtis and the Siagphos. From the point of view of language which has affinities with Kachin, Chin and Lepcha, it might be reasonably conjectured that the

Mishmis had come across Burma in course of their migration in some remote past. They fall into three main groups, namely the Chulikata or Idu, Miju or Kaman and Digaru or Taraon. There is besides a sub-tribe of the Chulikata known as Bebejiya. In the extreme north of the Lohit valley, two small groups by the names of Meyor and Zakhring live in small settlements. Their culture is said to be more akin to that of the Mishmis than to the Tibetans.

The Mishmis would have us believe that the Meyors and the Zakhrings had come from the direction of Khamti-Long in northern Burma, entering through the Kronjang pass and settled in the areas about the confluence of the Kallung and Lohit. They later went further up the north. In fact, they were pursued, harassed and pushed about from place to place by the Mishmis. About half the Meyor population are today settled in six villages close to the Mishmis in the north in a state of subjugation to them and under their protection.

The Idu Mishmis or the Chulikatas inhabit the Dibang valley lying between the Siang district in the west and the valley of the Lohit in the east. In the north the international border running along the crest of the Himalayan range marks the limit while in the south, the land of Idu Mishmis extends upto the confluence of the Lohit and the Dibang rivers. The Idus have a curious custom of naming different branches of their groups after the names of rivers near which they live. The Midris are the people of the river Dri, and the Mithuns take their name from the river Ithun, the prefix *mi* simply signifying 'man'. The Idus have also names in their own language for the rivers, flowing down their country, different from those presumably given by the people of the plains. Dibang is Tallan, Lohit is Du,

Ejjen stands for Deo-pani and the confluence of the Lohit and the Dibang is Ilyutholruru.

The Digarus (Taraon) and the Miju (Kaman) occupy a wide stretch of country in the valleys of the Lohit and its tributaries including Kamlang. Across the northern frontier lies Tibet; the wild regions of northern Burma are across the border in the north-east and east, and to the south-east live the two other important groups of people, the Khamtis and the Singphos. Still further south lies the Tirap district of Arunachal Pradesh. The plains of Sadiya in Assam marks the south-western limits of the Mishmi hills and of course as already noted, the Idus or the Chulikatas occupy lands to the west of the Digaru and Miju Mishmis.

As in the case of other tribes in India's northeast, the popular nomenclatures of the three sections of the Mishmi population, namely the Chulikata, the Digaru and the Miju are obviously of extraneous origin, derived probably from the Assamese or other languages. There, for instance, does not appear to exist any single term in their own language to designate the whole Mishmi tribe collectively. Each separate section has a different name for the other in its own dialect. The Digarus call themselves Taraon but designate the Chulikatas and the Mijus as Dai and Jev respectively. The Mijus on the other hand call themselves Kaman but refer to the Chulikatas and the Digarus as Mindauv and Chimon respectively. We need not, however, enter here into the confusion of names. It may only be noted in passing that there is a plausible explanation for the origin of the term Mishmi, which now commonly designates all the branches going by that name, but could at best be a conjecture only in the circumstances. We prefer to quote:

'It is striking to note that the Mishmis of the Upper Dalai valley call their brethren of the foothills as 'Shiya-mi'. *Mi* prefixed to 'Shiya-mi' amounts to 'Mi-Shiya-mi', which could have been abbreviated to Mish-mi. If so, the origin of the word, Mishmi, takes on an altogether local flavour'.

The other conjecture, as we have already noted, is that the term Mishmi is derived from possibly an Assamese root-word which has now been lost.

The terrain of the eastern-most Himalaya falling within the administrative jurisdiction of the present Lohit district always posed a great challenge, and, therefore, attracted explorers from the very beginning of the 19th century. They were of all kinds, surveyors, botanists, missionaries, and of course administrators. We have detailed records and reports about the country and the people, left by these explorers. Lt Burlton, it has been reported, was the first British officer who went into the Mishmi hills in 1825. He had 'a mission to explore the upper courses of the Brahmaputra'. He was closely followed by Lt R. Wilcox, a surveyor, in 1827, who proceeded as far up as Minzong 'but only by a timely retreat could save himself and his party from an attack by the Mijus. Dr Griffith, a botanist, visited the Digaru or Taraon area in 1836, but could not proceed farther up the valley due to the opposition and unfriendly attitude of the Mijus.

Sometimes the Mishmis, who lived deep in the heart of the mountain valleys and slopes, grew suspicious of the intentions of visitors, and perpetrated crimes which gave them a bad reputation. For instance, father Krick, referred to earlier in connection with his visit to the former Abor hills, and another French missionary, were

killed by the Mishmis on their return journey through their country from Tibet.

It is, however, a great pity that the early explorers left highly distorted, prejudiced, and unsympathetic reports about the manners and customs of the Mishmis. In many cases, if not all, they did not deserve the opprobrium, and certainly merited better understanding. Dr Elwin on his first glimpse of the people and their land was surprised by the lack of understanding which most early explorers exhibited. We quote him:

‘Within a few days I discovered the curious fact that these old botanists, administrators, and traders seemed to have something wrong with their eye-sight. Not one of them had ever bothered to say that the Mishmis were beautiful. And I was not entirely prepared for the wealth and beauty of their weaving designs, for their sense of colour and pattern, for the bright clean faces of the children.....the friendly hospitality of everyone and of quite wonderful coiffure of the Taraon and Kaman women which would not disgrace a Parisian lady of fashion’.

MISHMIS

It appears that the different branches of the Mishmi people entered the hills around the Lohit in successive waves. According J. P. Mills and others, the Chulikata Mishmis (Idus), found in the north and west of the Lohit valley, were the first to come from Burma. They were followed by the ancestors of the Digaru (Taraons) a little over 500 years ago. It is possible that the Digaru Mishmis had come in small batches over the passes, following the courses of Dibang and its tributaries, and had lived as close neighbours of the Chulikatas for a long time. The Digaru language is said to be almost

identical with that of the Chulikatas, which in turn has clear affinity with the Adi language to the west of the region. The Mijus (Kamans), who came last preserves the tradition of having migrated from the direction of 'Hakamti Long' or the Kachin country. A strong affiliation of the Miju language with the that of Kachin, Chin and Lepcha had been noticed by experts long back. Culturally and also linguistically, the Mijus and Digarus are closer while the Chulikatas seem to stand a little apart. Intermarriage between the Digarus and Mijus is said to be more frequent. It is believed that the ancestors of the Mishmis must have found the hills and valleys around Lohit already populated by some 'aboriginals' with comparatively advanced culture. What could be more reasonable than to suppose that the Mishmis, numerically small as they were, imbibed many cultural traits, traditions and beliefs from established culture of the region ! It is, on the other hand, probable that the existing culture was also influenced and modified to no small extent by the immigrants who hailed from across the frontiers.

The Mishmis like other tribal groups are divided into clans and larger clans are again divided into sub-clans. These sub-clans are actually exogamous. Mills noted that 'clans are almost invariably named after places' but some at least of the clans have derived their names from rivers near which they are settled. Mishmis are not divided into castes or classes except, perhaps, for the natural division into weaker and more powerful sections of the people. T. K. M. Baruah, who studied the Idu Mishmis, also confirms the above findings of Mills. The only difference in social status, he noticed, is that between a free man and a slave. A slave is debarred from seeking a bride from a free man's family.

We learn from Baruah that so far as the Idus are concerned, the territory under their occupation is now only nominally divided into clan areas. This traditional division of clan areas, or as he puts it, the 'one-clan-one-village' system is no longer operative. This has been brought about by the growth of population, leading ultimately to insufficiency of cultivable lands within specified clan areas. People are sometimes obliged to migrate in search of lands and found new settlements where they may be joined by others belonging to different clans.

A distinguishing trait about the Mishmis is the 'the way they do their hair'. There might be other differences also but not fundamental to disrupt the basic affinity that binds them together culturally and ethnically. The Chulikatas (Idus), who occupy the Dibang valley, have earned the name because they cut their hair round the forehead. The Taraon and the Kaman women like to wear thin silver plates round the forehead and large 'trumpet shaped' ornaments in their ears.

The Mishmis are rather short-statured and have very pronounced Mongoloid features. The people of the northern and north-eastern regions near the frontiers are said to be rarer and taller, and 'more energetic physically and mentally than those living in the lower regions'. E. T. Dalton described the physical characters of the Mishmis in the following manner:

'Their features are in fact of a coarse Mongoloid type. The faces flat and broad, the nostrils wide and round, the eyes small and oblique but these characteristics, though stronger in the Midhi (Idu) than the Tain Mishmi (Taraon), are less marked in the former than they are in the faces of their neighbours—the Abors (Adis)'.

The Mishmis are distinguished by their 'colourful and

picturesque' dress. Among the Tاراons and Kamans, the male dress consists of a coat of black or maroon colour with ornamental borders, and 'a carefully woven cane hat'. The Idus have a kind of war coat, made of nettle fibre, cotton and human hair, strong enough to resist the thrust of an arrow.

Tاراon women wear black shirt, often with coloured stripes, embroidered bodice and shawl. Dr Elwin praised their sense of colour combination as 'never loud or vulgar'. They too have an admirable sense of pattern and design. The Kaman Mishmis explain how their first weaver drew inspiration, and imbibed designs and patterns 'by watching waves and ripples on the surface of streams, by looking up at the patterns woven by the branches of trees and leaves of the bamboo, or by observing the designs on the wings of butterflies, the markings of snakes and the scales of fish'.

Like the Adi, the Mishmi women are expert weaver, but unfortunately Mishmi men took a fancy for cheap and glamorous bazar materials. With, however, growing confidence and pride in their own gifts and active encouragement from the Administration, there has been of late a revival of the art of weaving among them.

Like the Daflas, the Mishmis live in long houses, scattered over wide areas, the distance between two houses being 'as much as half a mile away from each other'. No wonder that, as among the Daflas, the village community has acquired little importance. Sometimes a village might consist of solitary long house, thus by itself forming a unit. The houses are often very long and large. A rich man's house might be a hundred feet long and fifteen or more broad. A passage runs from one end of the house to the other with a number of small compartments opening 'off it rather like a small corridor train'.

J. P. Mills also noted the lack of strong social cohesion among the Mishmis, arising mainly from the 'unimportance of the village'. By striking contrast with Naga and other tribes, a Mishmi village was merely 'a scattered collection of houses'. A village of more than a dozen houses was seldom to be seen and some consisted of only one or two. The true social unit was actually a typical long house. A house could be as long as 100 yards, if the owner had been rich, with many wives and descendants.

At either end of the house there is an open but roofed veranda. Immediately behind the veranda at the front end, a common room exists for receiving and entertaining guests. Mills referred to a curious custom to be observed by a guest. 'It is etiquette, incidentally, for a stranger when he first enters a house to sit in complete silence by the fire'. The fire in the hearth which is square in shape and made of clay, is constantly fed with logs which are gradually pushed in as they burn away. Each cubicle has a separate hearth. If it should at all be necessary to have artificial light apart from the glow of the smouldering logs, pinewood splinters are burned.

A high bamboo palisade often surrounds a house and this becomes more evident when an epidemic breaks out. The palisade of spiked bamboo, permitting entrance through a 'lift-up door', is supposed to keep the evil spirits at bay. Skulls of animals killed during hunts are exhibited along the passage which runs down on one side of the house. Cooper who entered the Mishmi hills in 1869 stated that skulls of animals displayed in houses were used as currency. It was the custom among the Mishmis to reckon each article of barter as a 'head'. But, as everywhere in this north-east region, mithans and other domestic cattle were the most readily accep-

table currency for barter as well as for payment of brideprice even a few years back.

The Mishmis, both men and women, are inveterate smokers, and are seldom seen without the ubiquitous long silver or brass tobacco pipes held between the lips. The Kamans and Taraons were at one time great addicts to opium and used to grow poppy. The habit is on the wane now and it is only a matter of time for it to die out completely. The Idus of the Dibang basin were somehow always free from this, and were physically stouter and hardier.

Like the Adis, the Mishmis also construct bridges across streams and rivers. But one, who has personal knowledge, shudders to think of indigenous Mishmi bridge. In the words of Dr Elwin: 'One of the most exciting aspects of travel in this area, besides of course the little tracks along the precipices, the landslides and earthquakes, are the bridges suspended high above the river beds. The typical Mishmi bridge is a rope of cane stretched from tree to tree across the water. Round this are large cane rings in which the traveller is tied. He slides head first down the cable to the bottom of its sag and then pulls himself up the other side'.

Mill's description of Mishmi bridges also makes interesting reading at this distance of time: 'A round pebble was tied to a string of split cane, whirled round the head and hurled across to an assistant on the other bank, who hauled across three lengths of cane about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch in diameter and secured them firmly. Large cane rings were then made round the cables and attached to a string so that a traveller can haul them across if they are on the wrong end. To cross, a man ties his body firmly into a ring and sometimes rests the back of his neck in another. He then slides head first and upside

down to the bottom of the sag and hauls himself up the other half of the crossing. Even cattle are said to be carried across in these loops'.

Mills considered the Mishmi agriculture the most primitive in the whole of Assam. He accordingly postulated that Mishmis were possibly foodgatherers not very long since. It has to be reckoned that the Mishmis are not blessed with fertile soil, a fact which obliged them to shift their villages continually from place to place. A household may own land within the territorial boundary of the village or clan land. It has been noted that the division of land is not always simultaneous with the break-up of a family or a clan into several households. It is likely to remain joint for a generation or two. As recorded by Mills and also confirmed by Baruah later, the distinction between private land and clan land is not sharp. This is attributed to the fact that households belonging to the same clan and same village were descended from a common ancestor not very far back. But as long as a man continues to use the land, reclaimed by him, it cannot be taken away from him. Lands closer to a village are often put under permanent cultivation but shifting cultivation is mostly resorted to higher up the hills. The Idus are said to be invariably *jhum* cultivators. The lands, available to them in the Dibang valley, are mostly strewn with boulders.

The tools, used by the Mishmis in their agricultural operation, even a few years back, were only a few iron hoes brought up from the plains but consisted mostly of dibble sticks or 'dog's leg hoe made from a single piece of wood' and 'bamboo tie-hoe for weeding'. Most of the work in the fields are carried on by women and children, except for the felling and burning of the jungle on newly cleared lands. Slaves, when available, were

employed formerly. Maize and buckwheat are the staple crops. Still higher up the hills, barley and wheat form the main harvest. Except in the foothills, rice is generally unimportant. In case of Idus, the main items of diet are rice and millet. The Mishmis have a liking for tea but they hardly take the trouble to grow it. Mills had recorded the important information that, when physical fitness was counted as most important in the days of tribal feuds, addiction to opium was not universal. The Idus were always free from this malady.

Although slavery was known even a few years back, it was never rampant. The number of slaves was necessarily kept down by the strict injunction against any slave taking a free woman for wife. If a free man ever sold himself away to slavery, his descendants became slaves in theory for ever. The slaves were otherwise treated well and suffered from a few disadvantages. Cooper mentioned that rich men kept 'half-wit slaves as jestors'.

The Mishmis lack a strong political organization. There are no chiefs nor tribal councils. Only the Idus seem to have a loose form of tribal council, known as *abbala*, but then its jurisdiction is limited. As it happens everywhere, men of wealth and wisdom acquire considerable influence over the people, and are asked to arbitrate in serious cases of dispute. The usual method of awarding punishment for offence against individual and society is to require the wrong-doer to pay compensation. The seriousness of offence by their own standard determines the extent of compensation imposed. Adultery is regarded a serious social offence, sometimes punishable by a compensation ranging from two to seven heads of cattle. In case of quarrels between two clans, justice used to take a more direct course.

Any member of the opposing clan could be captured and kept in stocks until ransomed by his kinsmen.

The process of marriage negotiations appears to be almost the same for all the branches. Like the Adis to their west, employment of a mediator initially in order to find out whether a proposal has any chance of succeeding is a common factor for all. According to Mill's report, no girl is married against her will and he also referred to the role of a female go-between who was employed to ascertain the feelings of the girl, when a suitable bride was found by a youngman or for him by his father. Baruah also confirms that the will of the girl is invariably respected. With the first move over, the brideprice, called *yaku-bri* among the Idus, is fixed either through the mediator or any elderly man of the bride groom's family. This may be quite high for a rich man's daughter. Polygamy though permissible, few can afford to have very many wives. Griffith noted that a girl from a rich house often used to bring a dowry of slaves. Baruah also mentions that it is customary for the parents in case of the Idus to confer a sizeable dowry on their daughters. He notes that there can be no question of the bride proceeding to her husband's home until the final instalment of brideprice has been paid off. Mills, however, recorded that the husband could visit his wife in her parents' house as soon as the first instalment of the brideprice had been paid. As with the Adis, the wife can postpone her departure for her husband's home almost indefinitely even after the last instalment of the brideprice has been paid.

Marriage within the same clan is ruled out of question. Baruah tells us that, in case of the Idus, a man cannot marry a girl, if she is within 13 degrees of descent from the maternal grandfather in the male line.

When a man dies, his widows are inherited by his sons. A woman, however, is never given to her own son. Mills noted that this distribution could even take place before the death of the father, if he was old and infirm.

Inheritance of property devolves in the male line. Brothers inherit in the event of a man dying without any male issue. The inheritance of property by a rightful heir is also to be conditional upon his performing certain rites connected with the death of the father.

Mills had referred to the custom of putting up a separate shed for a woman about to give birth to a child. This custom also exists among the Mijis of the Kameng district. Mills further noted that a woman was confined to the temporarily set-up shed for 10 days after the birth of a son and eight days after the birth of a daughter. Only female relations were allowed to attend on her during the days of her uncleanness. Baruah does not mention having noticed the custom of putting up separate shed for expectant mother among the Idus. He, however, confirms that a woman in labour is attended only by her female relatives. The husband should not be present.

The Idus at least are said to be not aware of the connection between procreation and sexual relations. A woman can never conceive unless so willed by the gods. Similar idea is also present among the Apa Tanis of Subansiri. A woman has to perform a special ceremony, called *abu-irru*, to dispel barrenness. Baruah notes that, among the Idus, a pregnant woman should be careful not to touch any of the antlers fixed on the walls of her house. The husband should refrain from eating venison during the wife's pregnancy.

The religion, practised by the Mishmis, broadly be-

longs to the same category as that described for other tribes of the region who are their close neighbours. Though Mills noticed some Tibetan influence on the externals of the Mishmi religion, it has no essential link with it. The similarity consists only in the practice of putting up flags while crossing a high pass.

The pantheon of gods and spirits is rather elaborate. Few are favourably disposed and the malignant spirits, who far outnumber the good ones, actively hold their imagination. Naturally, therefore, the evil spirits are to be constantly propitiated with sacrifices. The priests or shamans, who are credited with supernatural powers, in all cases, prescribe proper sacrifice. Fans made from the tail of a kind of pheasant and rattles form the paraphernalia of priestly profession. Passes, lakes, and wild fig trees are associated with gods and spirits as their favourite abodes. While passing them proper respects should be shown, lest the spirits are offended by too loud noise and any other disturbance. Baruah tells us that the Idus have the conception of a supreme god whom they call Inni. Inni did not take part in actual creation but the god Anya created human beings and all are at his command.

Funeral ceremonies are regarded as most important and their observance is invariably insisted on. The spirit of a dead man is never at peace until funeral rites are duly performed. Unless the spirit is set at rest and peace, it may turn into a dangerous fiend. The dead body is not immediately buried but is watched over for sometimes as long as five days before the relatives arrive. Children are buried at once. Following death, a shaman is called in to find out the cause. It is important to know whether any evil spirit is primarily responsible for it. The suspicion is always present when

death is premature or due to accidents and unnatural circumstances. Mills reported that the poor were simply buried but cremation was followed for the rich. This information is rather interesting. The rich dead are, however, kept buried for as long as the preparations for the final feast and cremation are not complete. The remains are then cremated on uncultivated land not far away from the house. Baruah, however, tells us that the Idus always bury their dead.

We have to take account of two other important groups of people living in the Lohit district. They are the Singphos and the Khamtis, both Buddhist. The Singphos have to some extent been influenced by a belief in witchcraft and sorcery. They occupy the lower regions of the Lohit valley and, due to closer touch with the plains, are more sophisticated than all the other tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. The Khamtis are the only people to possess a script of their own in this region and, as a result, are more advanced educationally. They subscribe to the Hinayana school of Buddhism. We have to reckon here with a very interesting fact of history. The Mahayana school of Buddhism, which came to be collectively known as the Northern Buddhism, entered Tibet possibly from Kashmir in the 7th century, and again found its way back to India among the Monpas and the Sherdukpens of the Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh probably via Bhutan. On the other hand, the Hinayana School, later called the Southern Buddhism, which had originally migrated to Burma from Ceylon, was carried back to India by the Khamtis and the Singphos.

The Khamtis and the Singphos are comparatively late comers to where they are found settled today. Their

migration to India's north-east corner dates back only to the later part of the eighteenth century.

KHAMTI

About the Khahtis, Dalton noted in 1872 that they emigrated to Assam from a country known as Bor-Khamti near the sources of the Irrawady. They crossed over to Assam from their original home as a result of tribal feud between different clans. Alexander Mackenzie referred to the Bor-Khamti area as 'the mountainous region which interposes between the eastern extremity of Assam and the valley of the Irrawady'.

As Mackenzie observed long back, they are not strictly a hill tribe. They occupy the low lands in the south-east part of the Lohit district beyond Kamlang next to the Mishmis. They are of Shan extraction and devoutly Buddhist by religion. The possession of a script derived from the Tai language has imparted a progressive outlook to the Khamtis who certainly stand on a higher level of cultural achievement. The role played by them in the frontier history of India's extreme north-eastern region and the resistance they offered to the British rulers during the early days of the annexation of Assam, marked them out for special attention in the administrative history of the area.

When they first entered Assam, they settled on the bank of the river called Tengapani with the permission of the Ahom king, but in 1794 during the uncertain days of the civil war which marked the reign of Raja Gaurinath Singh, they were possibly pushed out from Tengapani by the Singphos. They evidently crossed the Brahmaputra, drove away the Ahom administrator at Sadiya, known as Sadiya-khowa Gohain, the Khamti chief having usurped the title and the dignity of the

office and reduced the peasantry in the area to virtual submission. When the British took over the administration of Assam, they found the Khamtis actually controlling the Sadiya tract. They even thought it expedient to give recognition to the office usurped by the Khamti chief and David Scott, the Governor General's agent, went to the extent of recommending that the areas inhabited by the Khamtis along with Muttuck should be kept apart in the event of making over the administration of Upper Assam to an Ahom Raja. This recommendation was acted upon. And it was only in 1831 that the whole of Assam was annexed.

During the early days of the extension of British rule in Assam, their policy was much influenced by the apprehension of fresh attack by the Burmese and they came largely to lean on the Khamtis for what Mackenzie described as 'a cheap and effective barrier against future invasion from Burma'. But suspicion now arose about the loyalty of the Khamtis and the attitude of the Sadiyakhowa Gohain further confounded the situation. Events in the meantime forced the British to remove him from office. But he soon cultivated favour with the British by protesting his loyalty and submission. At last in January 1839, he conspired with other Khamti chiefs and, aided by the Singphos, made a surprise attack on Col White, the British officer in command at Sadiya, killing him with 80 of his men. As a consequence of this, the rebel Khamtis were expelled from the Sadiya region and forced to live as fugitives first among the Mishmis of the Dibang valley. Not long after, they made their submission and about 1844 they were allowed to return and settle down peacefully in separate settlements. As Dr Elwin put it, 'they are now peaceful cultivators and enterprising traders'. Khamti temples

are said to be 'wonderful examples of local wood carving'.

As late as 1850, a new band of emigrants, consisting of about four hundred individuals, led by a young chief, crossed over to Assam from Bor-Khamti.

About their physiognomy, Dalton recorded: 'They are of rather darker complexion than the other Shans, and of coarser feature; the Mongoloid peculiarities being more strongly developed in them than their reputed brethren'. Later on, considerable admixture of blood with the plains people had marked effect in the 'softening and improving' of the features.

The traditional dress of the Khamtis as described by Dalton remains largely true to this day. The dress of the Khamti males consists of tight fitting jacket of cotton, usually dyed blue, and a white turban, The upper classes put on the Burmese *patse*, a piece of multi-coloured silk. The top knots of their long hair, however, remain exposed through openings in the turbans. 'The nether garment is of coloured cotton of a chequered pattern or of silk. A Khamti is seldom without his indigenous sword hanging in its sheath by a sling of split rattan. Of late, they showed a preference for fire-arms. Even a few years back, they would have carried in addition to sword a round shield of buffalo hide.

Dalton described the hair style and costume of Khamti women:

'They wear their hair drawn up from the back and sides in one massive roll, which rises four or five inches, so much in front as to form a continuation of the frontal bone, This gives an appearance of height to figures that require an artificial addition. The roll is encircled by an embroidered band, the fringed and tasseled ends of which hang down behind; the lower garment, generally

of dark coloured cotton cloth, is folded over the breasts under the arms and reaches to the foot.....The Khamti women wear in addition a coloured silk scarf round the waist, and a long sleeved jacket'. The above description can almost pass for the dress-up pattern of a Burmese woman.

The main ornaments are cylindrical pieces of bright ambers inserted into the lobes of the ears and other bead necklaces.

The priests among the Khamtis have completely shaven heads, wear sombre-coloured garments and carry rosaries.

The Khamti priests are good at carving figures of snakes, dragons and other monsters, forming into an unity of graceful designs, in wood, bone and ivory. They work in gold, silver and iron and also manufactured embossed shields of buffalo or rhinoceros hide.

Dalton reported that the Khamtis continued to build their houses precisely on the same pattern as was noticed by Wilcox during his visit to Bor Khamti in Upper Burma in 1826. The houses are strongly built with stout timber frame on raised platform and thatched roofs. A house might be 80 or 100 feet in length and 18 to 20 feet in breadth. The interior is divided into chambers, private and for reception separately, and there is in front a railed open balcony. It is actually an extension of the raised platform beyond the roof. The eaves come down so low on the sides that the walls are hardly visible. The residence of a chief might consist of two large contiguous houses joined together by a wooden trough passed under the junction of two roofs making a passage for the rain-water. The public store-houses are constructed near water sources for fear of accidental fire. These public store-houses, where the

grain-reserve for a whole community is stocked, is a notable feature of the Khamti social organization.

The Khamtis are good agriculturists. The whole community joins together in cultivating lands on a communal basis. The chief in principle owns the entire land around but in fact has only a portion allotted to him and it used to be tilled by slaves. They grow very good quality rice and are conversant with varieties of vegetable including potato.

Animal husbandry is quite advanced among the Khamtis. They keep buffaloes and oxen both for tillage of land and for barter trade. Apart from the Monpas of Kameng, the Khamtis have known the use plough since very long.

The women have proficiency in weaving and embroidery.

The Khamtis have a natural inclination towards trade. Grain, ornaments, and products of various handicrafts make up their stock in trade. On their frequent trading trips, they make use of their indigenous rafts for negotiating rivers.

The society is divided into classes signifying distinct status in the social hierarchy. The chiefs naturally occupy the highest position, followed by the priests who wield very considerable influence over all ranks. The class of common free men form the bulk of the population. In the past the slaves constituted the lowest rank. The wealthy section of the people did not participate in manual work but largely left it to the slaves. When the British took over the administration of Assam, the Khamti chiefs came into direct clash with the Administration over the question of release of slaves.

Polygamy is socially sanctioned though only the rich could afford many wives. The first wife is always ac-

corded the position of authority in the family over other cowives.

The Khamtis profess the Hinayana form of Buddhism but do not abstain from meat. Two great celebrations are held in commemoration of the birth and death of Gautama Buddha. They take out religious processions with the idol of the Buddha.

The method of disposal of the dead is by burial. The body is placed in a coffin with presents usually left on the outside. Over the grave, a conical mound of earth is put up, rising upward in a series of steps.

SINGPHO

The Singphos are reported to have made their first appearance about 1793 during the troubled time of the Moamaria rebellion in the reign of Raja Gaurinath and settled without any opposition on the Buri Dihing in the Namrup region and on the Tenga pani, east of Sadiya.

They also came across Burma from their original settlements near the sources of the Irrawady. They are said to be a branch of the Kachins of Upper Burma. They were of a race called Ka khyen or Kaku by the Burmese, and were contiguous to the Kunungs with whom they had affinity in language. They, however, claim that they assumed the name, Singpho, meaning in their language 'man', only after they had settled in the valley of the Brahmaputra.

Alexander Mackenzie had recorded about the Kakhyens that, after the breakup of the northern Shan kingdom, 'the Kakhyens entered on a career of aggression and conquest, which practically placed in their hands the whole of the country lying between Upper Assam and Bhamo' It is also interesting to note that the Singphos of Assam would by no means allow themselves to

be classed as Kakus or Kakhyens though in fact they called their eastern and southern branches by that name and also maintained the same titles and clan divisions as prevailed among their remoter branches living across the borders in Burma.

The principal clans were (1) Tesan, (2) Mirip, (3) Lophae, (4) Lutong and (5) Mayring. There is scope for doubt as to the claim that they assumed the name, Singpho only after they had settled in the valley of the Brahmaputra. The Kachins of which the Singphos are a branch are called 'Chinpaw' which is not very different from Singpho.

When the Singphos made their first appearance during the troubles time of Moamaria rebellion, the peasantry about the Buri Dihing and Tengapani actually welcomed them as they helped under their chief in restoring some semblance of peace to the land ravaged by the rebels. The Singphos also drove away the Khamtis from the lowlands under the Patkoi hills and established their influence in the regions of the Buri Dihing and Tenga pani. They actually came to the notice of British rulers in 1825 when a fresh wave of the tribe made its appearance from beyond the Patkoi.

After, however, the Burmese had been expelled and Upper Assam passed under the British rule, the Singpho chiefs gave an understanding that they would abide by the laws of the country and settle down peacefully. But they were a proud race and were averse to all kind of manual labour. They depended wholly on their slaves for the cultivation of their lands and their economy, therefore, very largely rested on the retention of slaves. The British Government on other hand took an uncompromising attitude on this question and misunderstanding soon arose over the release of slaves, leading to a

collusion of the Singphos with the Khamtis in their attack on the British outpost at Sadiya in 1839. Several punitive expeditions were sent out by the British with the specific purpose of obtaining the release of slaves but it will be wearisome to relate those historic proceedings here. However, after 1942, no further occasion arose for a breach of peace by the Singphos.

The Singpho villages are located on strategic positions, consisting of sixty or more houses. The house type is more or less similar to that of the Khamtis. A house might be as long as eighty or a hundred feet and twenty feet broad. It has an open balcony at the end where the ladies 'sit and spin, weave and embroider'. A long passage runs through the middle from end to end with several apartments opening off it on either side.

They have typical Mongoloid features with 'very oblique eyes and eyebrows, mouths wide, cheek bones high and heavy square jawbones'. The colour of the skin ranges from tawny yellow to dark brown.

Dalton described them as generally possessed of fine athletic figures, stading over ordinary standard heights. But their energies were used to be greatly drained by addiction to opium and alcohol. The menfolk tie their hair in a large knot on the crown of the head. Their dress is made up of a coloured jacket of cotton and checqured undergarment of cotton or silk. The chiefs sometimes love to dress up in the Shan or Burmese style.

The outfit of the women consists of a piece of coloured cotton cloth, 'often in large broad horizontal bands of red and blue' fastened round the waist, a jacket and a scarf. The married women gather up their hair which is said to be abundant, in a large knot on the crown of the head, secured by 'silver bodkins with chains and

tussels'. The maidens wear their hair differently. It rests on the back of the neck, gathered in a roll, and also similarly secured by silver chains and tussels. For ornaments, they wear bright pieces of amber insterted into the earlobes in the same style as of the Khamti women. They are also fond of a particular kind of enamelled beads known as 'deo mani'. 'The men tattoo their limbs slightly and all the married women are tattooed on both legs from the ankle to the knee in broad parallel bands'.

They are divided into several clans or small communities, each under a chief. The authority of the chief, however, depends on his own personal ability to carry with him his people, more particularly the council of elders under him. The elders are usually men of great personal influence. So should a chief prove a weakling, the elders become all powerful and exerices their separate jurisdictions. Theoretically, the chief is the master of all lands within his territory but in fact individual rights in land are recognized and respected. No transactions of land, however, can take place without the chief's knowledge and permission. All that the chief used to receive formerly by way of revenue was a basket or two of rice from each house. He could also prefer his claim to a leg of all the animals killed for meat within his jurisdiction.

In other respects the distinction between the chief and his people is not apparent on the surface as the chief has also to earn his living. There is, however, one notable privilege which the chief enjoys. During jungle clearing, sowing, weeding and harvest time, the whole village has to render one day's free labour on the chief's allotted plot. The chief has only to offer them food and drink in return.

Strangely enough the chief does not act as judge in disputes nor does the responsibility for keeping peace rest on him. The power of arbitration is exercised by the elders but it is more usual for a dispute to be referred to the elders of a different village. In the past, when the award given in any dispute was not acceptable to the contesting parties, they decided to follow the natural law of reprisal. Neither the chief nor the elders felt called upon to intervene unless their own relations were involved. Inter-community and inter-tribal quarrels always followed the course of reprisals in which the chief had to take the lead.

Chieftainship in theory at least is hereditary but the youngest son succeeds to the title of his father and a greater share of his father's property. He is entitled to two shares of the movable property which consisted formerly of cattle and slaves. Other brothers receive one share each. The parental home falls to the share of the youngest son and he may also rightfully claim his father's wives (excepting of course his own mother) in the absence of his father's brothers. The elder brothers are not obliged to leave the parental homestead but it is usual for them to set up their own households separately. The same law of inheritance is also said to hold good for the commoners.

In case of ordinary disputes, a Singhpho would employ an intermediary to take the complaint first to the opposing party who may then seek the assistance of the elders of his own village, but not infrequently that of another village, for an amicable settlement. Failing an agreement, it was customary for him in the past to take resort to reprisal which took the form of lifting cattle, ambushing, raiding etc. It naturally used to be a long

drawn affair until both parties to the game tired out and ultimately submitted to arbitration.

For blood feud or *punglat*, it was more usual in the past for the aggrieved party to insist on vengeance. The vengeance consisted in the taking of life in recompense for life lost. Each party would abide by its chance of taking a member, just any one, of the other party by surprise and killing him. When such *punglat* took a serious turn, it was not infrequent for each party to declare a five-generation blood-feud against each other.

If a *punglat* was submitted to arbitration and compensation was decided upon, the scale of recompense varied according to the status of the aggrieved party. It was a common saying that a chief's called for a hundred articles to be paid but fifty for a commoner's.

A distinction of kinds and degrees was made with regard to *punglat*. A *punglat* proper comprised murder and culpable homicide. Death of woman in child-birth or of a girl dying before marriage was also considered as *punglat*. Then there was the *punglat* when death resulted from any accident. In such an instance, the employer was considered liable to compensate the family of the hired servant for loss of his life. A servant, for example, had been hired for felling a tree and he accidentally got crushed and killed; the employer would be considered liable to pay compensation.

It might have again happened that a person was engaged to drive home some cattle and he was attacked and killed on the road by robbers. There would be two alternatives open to the employer to make good the loss of life. He could either pay compensation demanded by the deceased's family, or arrange to kill a member of the murderer's family to obtain satisfaction by taking vengeance on the murderers at his own expense. That

would have meant organising a raid on the culprits. If on the other hand, an employee died a natural death, the employer was obliged only to pay compensation in kind, such as a buffalo, a gong and a piece of cloth. It was also considered a *punglat* or cause for blood-feud, if a person was seized and sold into slavery.

There were fixed scales of compensation which had been agreed to whenever a case of *punglat* was submitted to arbitration, as for instance in a case of murder without sufficient cause. Some items of compensation relative of the different parts of the body of the victim may be cited as the pattern of justice acceptable to the Singphos: Cowries for the teeth and nails, swords for the fingers and toes, guns for the arms, slaves for the legs, gongs for the head and mouth, and other articles for other parts of the body were invariably demanded as terms for amicable settlement of *punglat* proper. Besides these, cattle was demanded for sacrifice to *nats* or spirits.

It might appear that the Singphos were unable to think in abstraction. It was only after different items of compensation had been determined in relation to each separate part of the body that he would ultimately agree to accept payment in cash decided as equivalent to each article calculated separately.

Other socially determined crimes are insult, rape, adultery and theft. The seriousness attending on each of the above offences also varies according to circumstances. Rape on a married woman is considered a serious crime which in the past often culminated in the death of the offender, if apprehended by the husband of the woman or his relatives. The compensation demanded for a settlement of such crime nearly equalled that of a *punglat*. If, on the other hand, an unmarried

woman was involved, the seriousness of the crime was rated lower and the scale of compensation demanded would be consequently much less. It could have involved payment of a bullock or buffalo, a gong, a blanket, a jacket and a quantity of liquor. In case of adultery, the scale of reparation was estimated at about half of that in a *punglat*.

The status of the person also mattered in the determination of the scale of compensation. For instance, in a case of theft, the sommoner is supposed to receive double the value of the stolen article whereas the chief would not be satisfied with anything less than five times the value of the stolen good.

No dispute is considered as settled for all purposes until the *nat* or spirit, presiding over jealousy, envy and hatred, is duly propitiated with sacrifice by the defendant. Only this *nat* can reconcile the parties and forge a lasting understanding between them.

The Singphos know the technique of melting iron and, with very simple implements, manufacture *daos* which are highly prized for their finish and durability in this area. They also produce spears with short shafts and crossbows with bamboo arrows. Out of buffalo hide, they can fashion big shields, decorated with boar's tusks.

The women are expert weavers at their indigenous looms and use their own dyes. They usually manufacture their own wearing apparel dyed to their taste.

Polygamy is an accepted institution but a girl has to be bought with a price. Only the chiefs, however, can afford to have many wives.

According to their mythology they enjoyed immortality and unsullied happiness in the land of their origin ; fall from grace resulted from the original sin of

having bathed in forbidden water. On coming down to the plains, they have become mortal, and fallen from their pristine belief in one Supreme Being.

The Singphos, as they live in close proximity to the Khamtis, had evidently influenced by them and imbibed many cultural traits and the Buddhist faith from them. They, however, never fully discarded their belief in *nats* or spirits which they carried with them and which still continues to hold their imagination.

TIRAP DISTRICT

As we proceed across the Lohit towards south-east and enter the narrow strip of mountainous country, lying along the Burma border, the great heights of the crest line, as seen in the north, become gradually subdued. Over the most part of this area, constituting the Tirap District along the slopes of the Patkoi Range, the average heights, gained by hills, do not exceed 1829 metres. At the foothills region, the altitude averages merely 152 metres. A number of streams and mountain torrents rush down through the undulating country either augmenting the Tirap river, from which the district derives its name or falling directly into the Brahmaputra. The other most notable river in this area is Namchik which has an independent course. Parul Dutta, who has written about the Tangsas, an important tribal group occupying the valleys between the Tirap and the Namchik, picturesquely describes the river system :

‘The Namchik and the Tirap constitute the main arteries of these areas. Numerous mountain torrents and murmuring streams drain the hillsides into these, which flow with swift current over hills and through jungles into the Red River of Assam’.

We have another very graphic description of the terrain and the rivers, flowing through Tirap, from Col. Shakespear, worthy of being reproduced here :

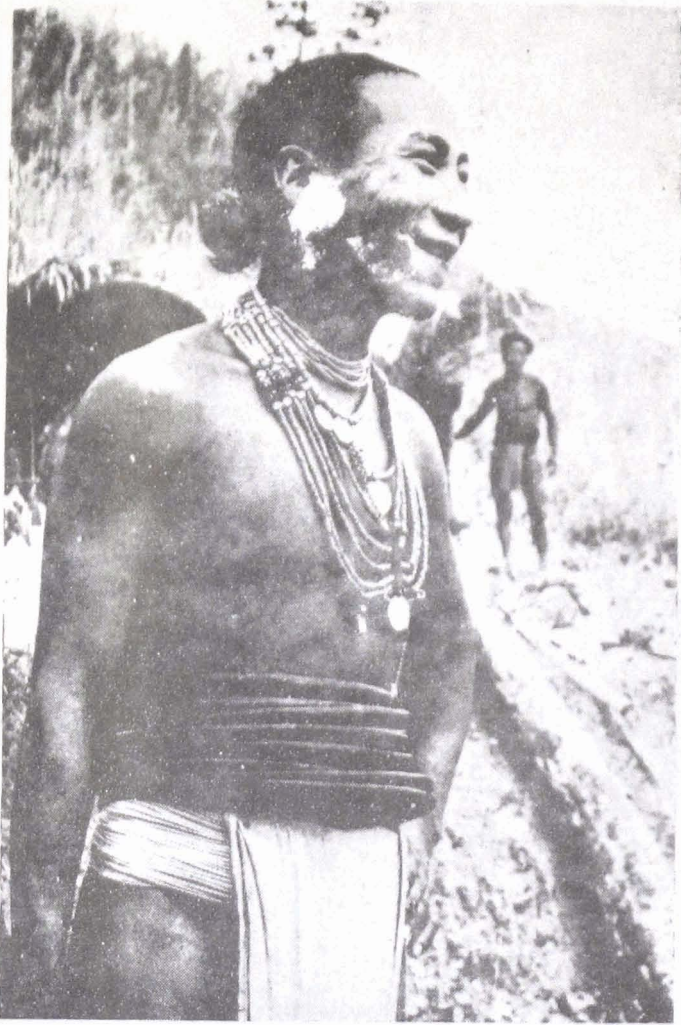
‘The hills rise in successive and parallel ranges from the plains to the Burmese watershed, and the rivers naturally flowing between them take the same north-east or the south-west direction, breaking out through the ranges to empty themselves after crossing the plain into the Brahmaputra, the only exception of any note being the southern branch of the Dikkhu, which drains a long valley between high ranges of hills.....and directly northwards’.

The district is rich in flora and fauna. The forests abound in varieties of valuable timber trees, besides the ubiquitous bamboo, such as Nahor, Hulong, Holok, Gondhsoroi etc. In the valley of the Namchik, wild elephants roam about in plenty. Though otherwise a menace, they constitute ‘the pride and wealth of the country’.

The main groups of people, constituting the population, are the Wancho, the Nocte, the Tangsa, and the Singpho who, allied to their kinspeople in Lohit, occupy ‘fairly level forest areas near the plains’.

NOCTE

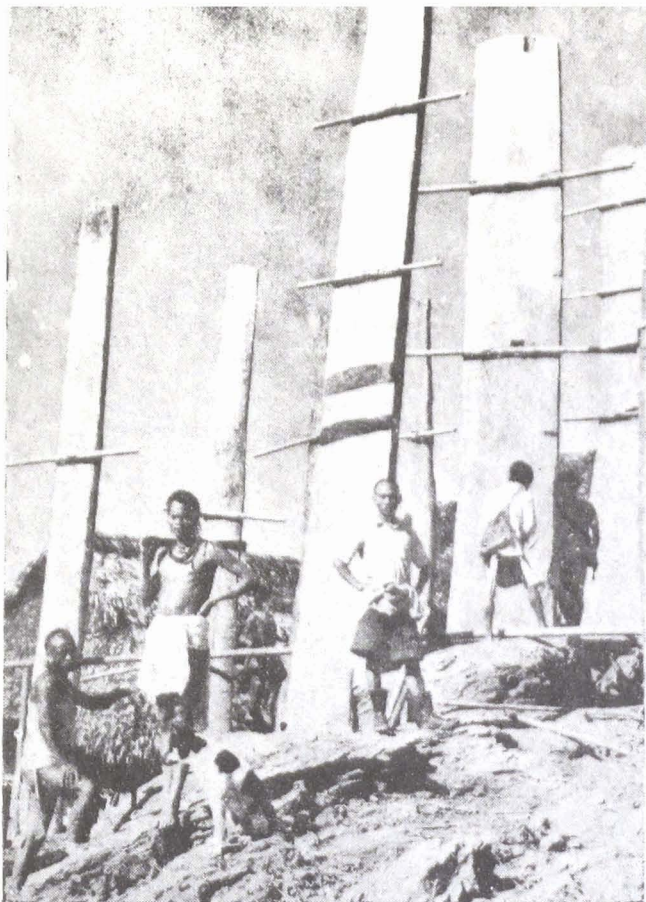
Extant literature on the tribes of Tirap are remarkably few, compared to what we have on the other parts of Arunachal Pradesh. The Noctes, however, have been generally most well known since the days of the Ahom kings as they maintained closer contact with the plains. The contact extended not only to trade but also involved a meeting of minds on social and cultural matters. To this day, the Noctes practise a form of Vaishnavism



A Nocte man. Note his hair style with the shaven front and thick tuft tied into a knot over the nape of the neck. Numerous cane rings guard his waist.



A Nocte boy sporting a gun. The Noctes are fond of wearing thick rings often fashioned out of ivory round their upper arms for decoration.



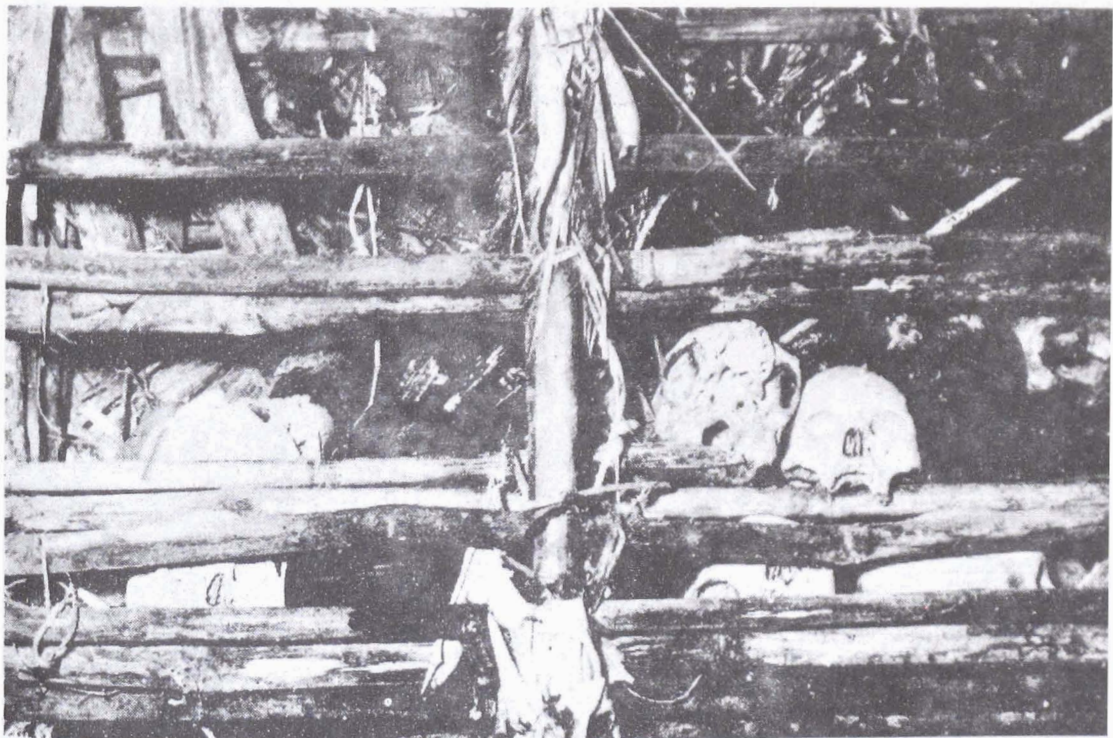
The house of a Nocte chief under construction.



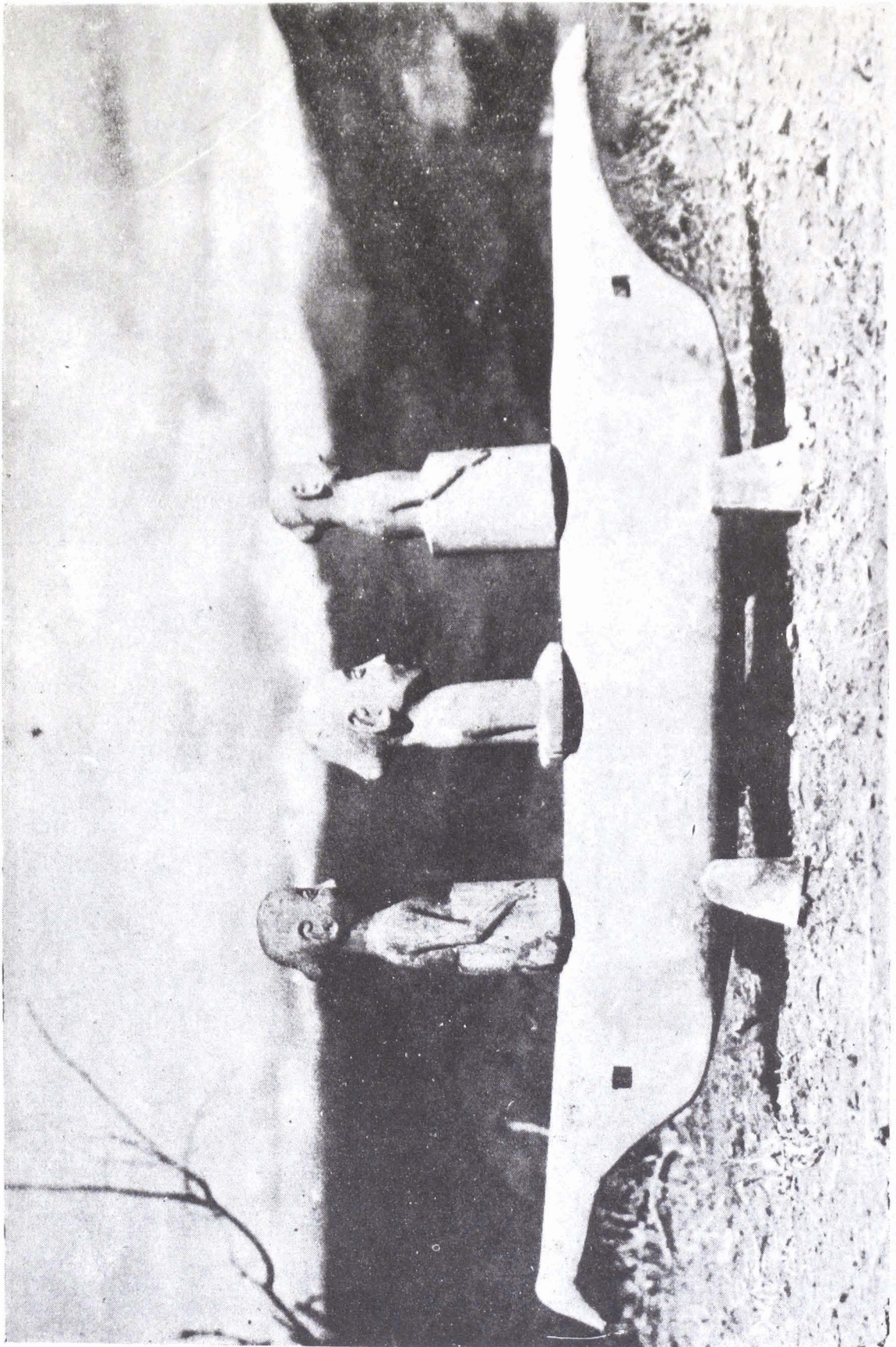
A Nocte girl carrying water in bamboo tubes.



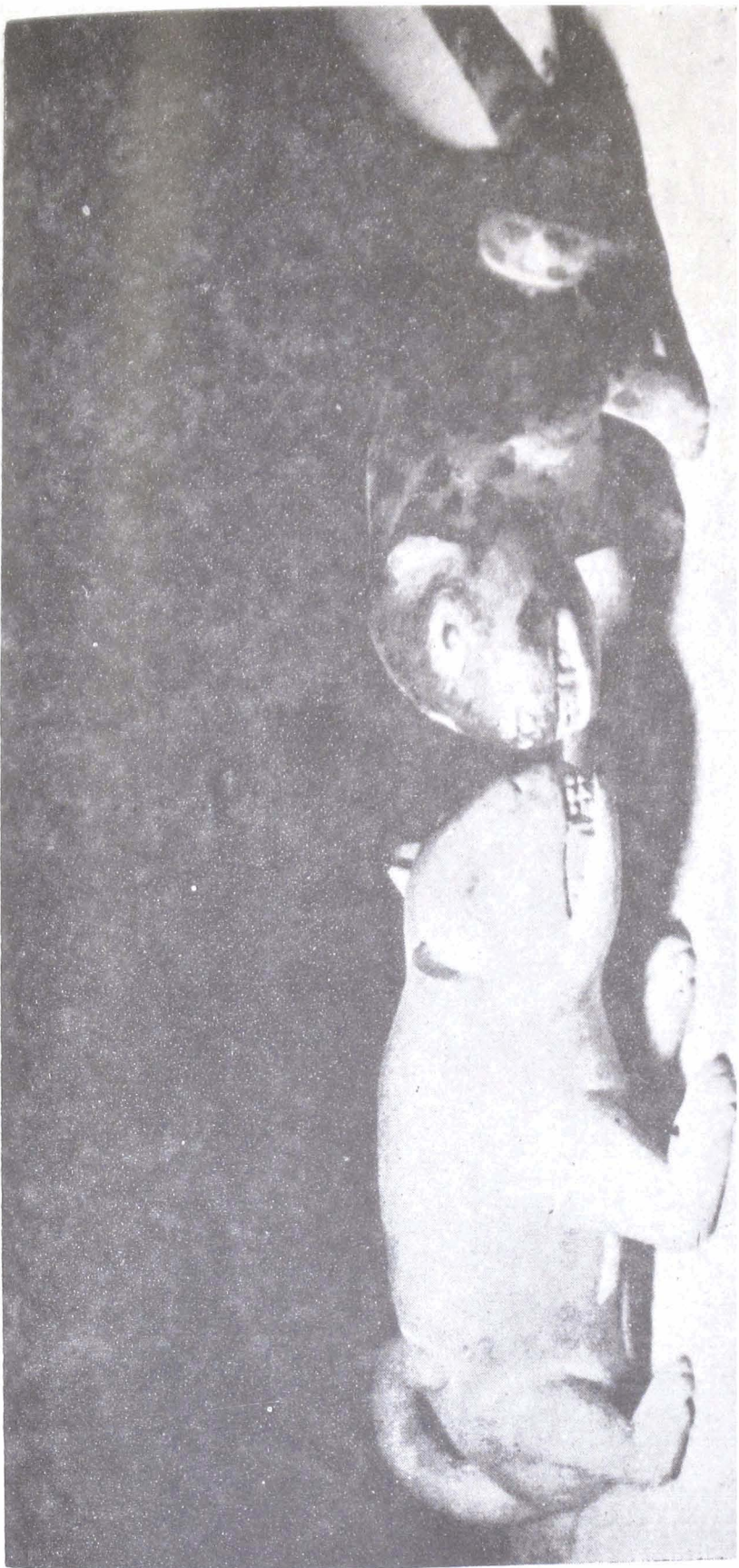
Wancho youngmen beating the log drum made of the hollowed-out trunk of a tree.



Human skulls can still be seen in Nocte and Wancho dormitories as a reminder of their head-hunting tradition now a thing of the past.



Nocte wood carving : A replica of log drum provide the pedestal for carved human busts.

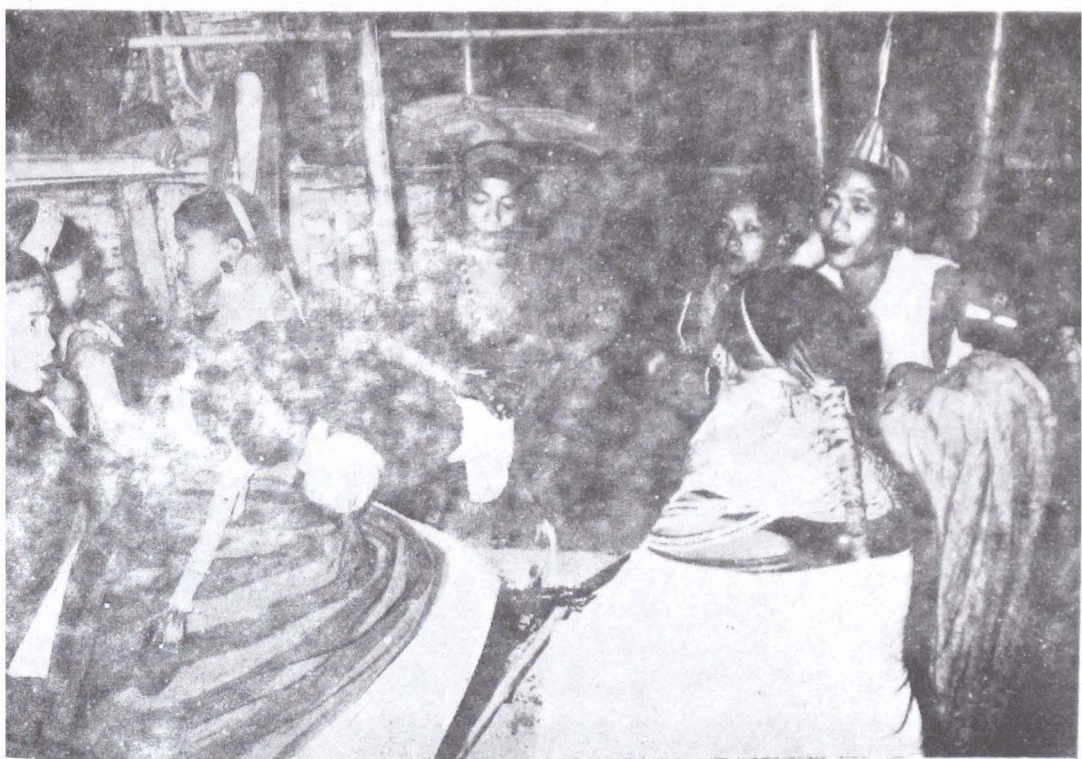




A Wancho chief. The garland of human heads, made of brass, reminds of the past tradition of head-hunting.



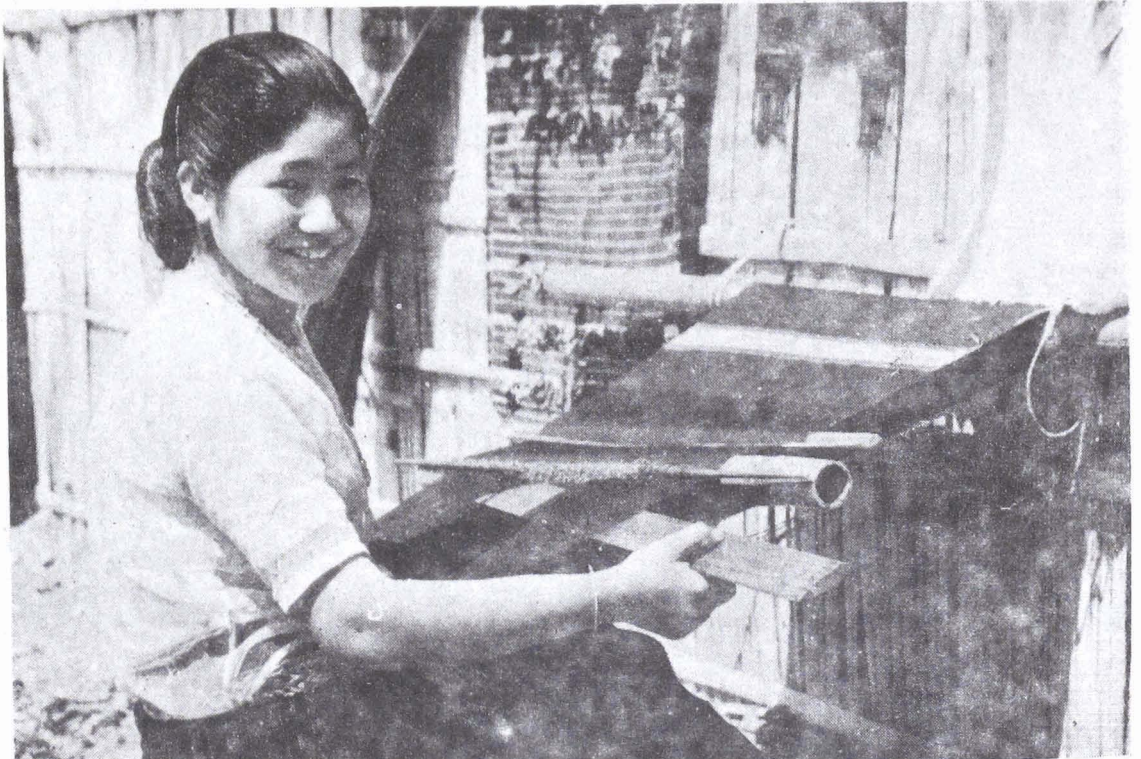
A dancing session among the Wanchos.



The Wanchos have separate dormitories for boys and girls. The picture shows two Wancho youths visiting their girl friends in the dormitory of the latter.



A Tangsa couple.



A Tangsa woman at her traditional loom.

which they imbibed from the many vashnava Satras of Assam.

The intimate connection, which the Noctes had with the people of the plains from the ancient days, has been reflected in one of their myths recorded by Dr Verrier Elwin :

‘The Noctes and the Assamese were born of the same parents, but as time went by they forgot this.

In the hills there were salt springs. One day three Noctes were collecting salt near a river and they filled a boat with it. They had no oars and when the boat was full they let it drift down the river to the plains. There the people drew it to the shore and the Noctes gave them salt which they were very glad to have. In return they gave the Noctes red, blue and yellow cloth and they became friends. The Assamese asked the Noctes to come to the plains whenever they needed anything.

But as a result of the Noctes giving salt to the people of the plains, the latter gained possession of all the salt in the world, and now the Noctes, to whom it once belonged, have to go and buy it from them’.

The above myth throws light on the process of myth making as it goes on in the mind of a simple and unlettered people. Incidentally, we may mention that extraction of salt from several springs located in the Nocte areas used to be an indigenous industry with them.

The Noctes occupy the central part of the Tirap district to the north-east of the Wanchos. Borduria and Namsang are the two important villages and are the focal centres of the main concentration.

The society is not caste-ridden as such but they have the institution of chieftainship, the chief having great influence over the people. The society is organized

under the chiefs, who enjoy very high prestige and status. Each chief has control over a number of villages which pay tribute to him.

The society among the Noctes is actually divided into two broad classes but the division is not as complicated as among the Wanchos. The chief and his descendants form a separate class called *lowangjat* and the commoners are regarded as one class known as *sanajat*. In Laju area, the commoner class is called *pansajat*. The chief may appoint commoners to some minor posts attached to the council of elders. Persons belonging to the higher class of *lowangjat* enjoy the privileges of their status and lord over the commoners.

In ordinary course of life, however, the division of the society into two distinct classes does not make obvious difference so far as outward appearance, dress and the way of life are concerned. But the difference comes to the surface during social functions, feasts and festivities, ritual observances etc. We may take the instance of the Laju group to illustrate the point. The chief's clan here is called *kepi* and the commoners constitute the class known as *tangmo*. Marriage between the classes is prohibited but the chief can always take a commoner girl for his wife except the first who must belong to the higher class. In the regulation of certain social norms and behaviour the distinction is clearly recognized. For instance, when the *kepi* class kills a buffalo for community feast, the meat from the head portion cannot be taken by the *tangmos*. This rule also holds good in the reverse. The members of the two classes do not sit together or in the same row during social feasts.

The two classes are again divided into many clans, making up each class, called *ku* or *ru*, but the terms may

vary in different groups or villages. Tribal endogamy and clan exogamy are the general rules of marriage. Here a curious feature of the village organization of the Noctes has to be taken into account. A village is broadly divided into many clan quarters, called *chum*, though the divisions are not in every case co-extensive with single clans. This might have been, however, the rule in the long past. Borduria may serve as a model.

Boduria has four divisions or *chums*; these are *lothong chum*, *kheti chum*, *mongsang chum* and *mati chum*. Each division contains more than one clan which are said to have originated with a common ancestor in very long past. Marriage is not possible between the clans and also between certain *chums* because the separate clans constituting the *chums* are sometimes considered as having a common origin in long forgotten past. In our present instance, marriage is forbidden between *kheti chum* and *lothong chum*. The *lothong chum* has five clans and the *kheti chum* four. The *mati chum* provides an interesting exception. It is constituted by as many as eight clans. The names of some of these clans are *mate-ku*, *ramba-ku*, *dodong-ku*, *heng-khe-ku* and so on. Now, amongst these clans, marriage is permitted between *mate-ku* and *lokhu-ku* because these two clans are said to have originally hailed from different places in course of their migration, and forced to live together under the same *chum* by some unexplained circumstances. Besides, the clans constituting the *mati chum* are regarded as low. The other three groups or *chums* claim superiority over them.

It may be incidentally mentioned in this context that incidence of monogamous marriage far exceeds that of polygamous marriage for the simple reason that the latter is too expensive for most people. Only the chiefs

and a few rich can afford the luxury. Preferential cross-cousin marriage has a place among the Noctes. Marriage with the maternal uncle's daughter is most favoured and, in fact, she is considered as a potential wife of the father's sister's son. Similarly mother's brother's son is the prospective husband for the father's sister's daughter.

The house style is of the usual *chang* pattern. They are built on stilts high above the ground. The Noctes, as a variation, however, make use of huge blocks of wood and wooden pillars, sometimes with carved designs on them, as the framework for the house. Toko leaves, which are abundant in the forests around, are used for thatching. The eaves come down so low on the sides that the walls are scarcely visible. The roofless projection of the platform serves as a verandah. There is a fairly spacious room in the front part of the house, used as a kind of reception room, while the ladies' apartments are at the back. The chiefs have very large and spacious houses, probably the largest in whole of Arunachal Pradesh according to Dr Elwin. There had never been any class of bond slaves among the Noctes.

The original dress of the men consists of numerous cane belts round the waist, a strip of cloth worn in the fashion of *lenghuti* with the rear end hanging and bamboo rings worn round the legs and arms. They shave off the front part of their heads, keeping a thick tuft of hair at the back gathered into a knot over the nape of the neck, much in the same fashion as that of south-Indian Brahmins of a particular sect.

The women wear round the waist a piece of cloth, usually of white or black colour, reaching down to the knee. Widows, when they are unwilling to remarry, cut their hair short. They now prefer short blouses for

the upper part of the body and, in common with women of other tribes in this region, have a fascination for coloured beads.

In the past, head-hunting was known and tattooing of special designs, connected with it, was common.

When conditions in the hills were far from peaceful, attempts at subjugation of one tribal group by another or even one village by another resulted in perpetual conflict. It has been said that none of the villages unless they belonged to the same dialect or language group was on friendly terms with each other. In the Nocte territory the additional cause for bad blood was the existence of salt springs in the area. Claims of ownership and protection of rights over these salt springs gave enough cause of action which led to head-hunting. Belief in the magical powers of human heads, particularly in connection with fertility cults aggravated the situation further and inspired the Noctes to embark upon head-hunting raids.

The Noctes sometimes tell stories to explain how the practice of head-hunting first arose. One of such stories goes as follows: In the beginning, human beings and other animals lived together. After a long time human population increased greatly but not proportionately. There were more men than women. So conflict developed amongst them for possession of women. One day a man named Patei was killed by another in a quarrel over a woman. His brother was then very young. Some time long after, when the brother grew up, one day he went into the jungle and was bitten by a bee (*nyalang*). The intense pain he felt reminded him of how his brother must have felt when he was killed. He became very angry and killed the man who had killed his brother. Thereupon feud arose and fighting

broke out between the relatives of both the parties, every one trying to take revenge on the other. Thus the practice of head-hunting first started among men.

The common method of head-hunting raids consisted in surprise attacks by one village against another. The Noctes had also known the practice of open declaration of hostility or challenge to war. The procedure in this case was indeed very interesting. Challenge was sent through a messenger who carried two bamboo sticks tied together to the village these were intended for. One stick was cut to a fine point at one end and the other was left blunt at both ends. The blunt stick signified the intention of the challenging party to take heads ; in other words, it was a challenge to war. Should the village to which the challenge was offered have accepted it, it would make both the sticks blunt and return them through the messenger. If, however, the challenged village desired peace, it would return the sticks as they were or might also cut the blunt stick to a fine point and send back both the sticks through the messenger. This gesture would have naturally meant submission.

When the head-hunters returned from a raid successful and victorious, they indulged in dancing, singing, much shouting and firing guns all along the way and, on reaching their own village, they played on the log drums kept in *morungs*. That was the manner of proclaiming victory to the whole village. In the event of a defeat, they returned quietly and unnoticed. After having played on the log drums long enough, the raiders used to make a round of the village, dancing their way and dragging the enemy heads on the ground. Later on the heads were collected in one place, and the priest mixed powdered rice and egg and sprinkled the mixture over

the heads. This was done with the idea of exorcising the spirits of the dead persons. The heads were next hung from a tree inside the village.

But that was not the end of the rituals yet. When the new harvest was brought in, the head-hunters got themselves tattooed for a festival called *khotang*. The festival was observed with great pomp and merriment and every one contributed liberally to the arrangement for a community feast, each family providing a pig. The heads were boiled, cleansed thoroughly, and put together in one place. A share of the feast was then ceremonially offered to the heads. The head-hunters next danced around the heads and, at the end of the festival, these were carried and deposited in their final resting place in the *morung*.

After this, during the harvest festival every year, food offerings were made to the heads by the priest. This part of the ceremony probably brought out its significance and connection with fertility cult relating to good harvest.

A special feature of their society is the existence of separate dormitories for boys and girls. Free mixing between boys and girls is allowed, and attachments are formed during this period, leading to marriage agreements, usually with the consent of parents. Taboo on incestuous relations is strong and marriage is prohibited among certain close relations. A chief cannot take a commoner for his first wife.

The Noctes traditionally possess strong political organizations represented by their councils of elders and presided over by the chief of each separate section of the tribe. The councils which once used to take decision on war and head-hunting raids during the days of intertribal feuds and murderous expeditions have now

transformed themselves into peaceful bodies concerned with development and welfare activities. Nevertheless, these bodies have not lost their importance and they still continue to regulate community life.

A council of elders is called *ngothun*, *ngongthun*, *ngongthit* and so on among different sections of the Noces. A typical council, besides the ordinary members representing each clan comprises several officials. The chief or *lowang*, as we have already mentioned, presides over the council. The functionaries are *ngongba*, *ramba*, and *tanba*, and the members are called either *noktang* or *kampa*. *Ngongba*, who is also called *ngopa*, acts as a minister to the chief who consults him on every affair of importance. No wonder, he enjoys a position only next to the chief. *Ngongba* is also the master of ceremonies since he directs all rituals and community festivities. The *ramba* corresponds to a public relations officer for it is his duty to keep liaison with the general body of the public, notify members of the council about the sitting of *ngongthun* and perform other errands. He also acts a priest, conducting rites. *Tanba* is a special messenger of the chief. He often deputizes for the chief when he is sent on political mission to a different village. *Tanba* is also called *kamba* and, in some places, *tanti*.

The general body comprises elderly veterans who are conversant with the unwritten rules, usages and customs of the community. They guide the deliberations of the council and advise the chief particularly in taking correct decisions in accordance with customs and traditional rules of the society.

Inter-village disputes arising out of illegal encroachment on land, reserved hunting grounds, and fishing preserves, forceful lifting of girls or clandestine affairs, in the past, often led to head-hunting raids, if efforts at

amicable settlement failed. The opening of peaceful negotiations always began with deputation of a messenger or intermediary and, when the mission failed, the aggrieved village used to take to war-path. And when this once started, other villages also became involved, taking sides with either of contesting parties.

Cognizable crimes committed within the jurisdiction of a village council are decided usually by the council according to customary laws of the community. Punishments vary according to seriousness of crimes by the prevalent standard. In the past, some offences were treated with extreme harshness. If a person was so bold as to be involved in affairs with a chief's wife, he was mercilessly cut down to pieces, should his guilt be found out. If by accident any person caused a whole village to be burnt down, no consideration was shown to him. The people in such cases never thought of waiting for the verdict of the council but were ready to take law into their own hands. They would tie up the offender to a post and spear him to death. A mad person, if he should prove dangerous and harmful to the community, met with the same fate.

In all other cases, the general criterion of punishment is payment of compensation. Even wilful murder was decided on this principle. The scale of compensation to be paid naturally varies with the gravity of crime committed. If a person, for instance, commits adultery with a married woman, he is required to pay one pig, one bangle (*sitham*), thirty rupees in cash and one tola of opium. The theft of paddy from granary is considered a serious offence. Compensation demanded may include one buffalo, one pig, one bangle (*sitham*) besides five tolas of opium for the members of the *ngongthun*. At least, that was the scale a few years ago. Ex-

tremely heavy compensation has to be paid for murder ; compensation in this case should be commensurate with all articles required for the funerary rites of a dead person, including funeral feast. There is some difference in the scale of compensation in relation to the sex of the person killed. It is not the same for man or woman.

It is worth mentioning here that all the Nocte villages are under two powerful chiefs, namely the chiefs of Namsang and Borduria. If for any reason, a subordinate village council under a junior chief fails to decide a case, it may ultimately be referred to one of the two chiefs having jurisdiction over the village.

The Noctes are fully aware of the connection between sexual relations and procreation but they strongly believe that conception cannot take place unless willed by their god, *Jauban*. The god must be pleased with a woman in the first place, if she should conceive. A pregnant woman ordinarily carries on her normal duties in the house as well as in the field till the eighth month. In case of a newly married woman, she must not stay in her parental house beyond the eighth month of her conception because, according to Nocte idea, the birth should always take place in the husband's home. The Wanchos have a similar bias as we shall see in the next section. Deviation from this rule is considered highly unnatural and also, perhaps, inauspicious.

During the period of pregnancy, a woman has to observe many taboos relating to food and movement. She is supposed not to partake of vension, certain kinds of fish, any fruits, all kinds of food which taste bitter, drinks and narcotics. Meat of any animal which has died naturally should be strictly avoided as also dried meat and fish. Meat of a sacrificed animal and also some vegetables are taboo. A pregnant woman should not kill

any creature ; she should avoid meeting a corpse nor should she visit a house touched by death. The husband, on his part, should not kill any animal, a snake under any circumstances. He cannot sell any household article when his wife is pregnant. He may attend the cemetery, if needs be, but he must not touch a dead body.

In every Nocte village, there are expert women, called *dak rum*, *nobeniyu*, *nabinu* etc. from one village to another, who help with delivery. No male members, including the husband, should be present during the delivery. A very curious and cruel custom exists among the Noctes. They do not allow twins to live. In some places, child mortality is very high and the fact is attributed to the custom, known as *jonpon*, which permits premarital sexual relation.

On the third or fourth day, in some village on the second day, the baby has to go through the ordeal of having its ear lobes pierced. The ceremony is called *nabamba*, *nathot* or *nabin* in different places. The hair on the head is shaved off. On the same day, a name is selected for the baby by the process of divination. Generally, the name of a person preceding in the ancestral line is preferred. In other words, names of deceased members of the family are submitted according to the sex of the baby for selection by the method of divination. Another peculiar custom is that the old hearth is removed and a new hearth is installed and lighted. The whole ceremony is of course rounded off with a feast to the villagers.

After about a week of this ceremony, the mother takes the new born baby to her own parents' house, sometimes accompanied by her husband. It is the privilege of the maternal grand-parents to put the first rice in the child's

mouth ; the maternal uncle also enjoys this privilege. Naturally, they do not grudge a feast for the occasion. After some time, the mother, followed by some elderly ladies and young girls, carries the child to the field and performs some rituals there. There is practically no end to rituals and ceremonies which mark every stage of the life of a Nocte.

The single family with parents and their married sons and unmarried daughters constitutes the basic unit of the Nocte society. A son may continue to live under the parental roof with his newly wedded wife for some time but usually not after a child is born. It is customary to set up his own household then. So long as however all live together under the same roof, food is cooked and served from the same hearth. The eldest son continues to live with the parents till the end and he succeeds to the position and property left by the father. It is usual for the father or, in his absence, the eldest brother as the head of the family to come to the aid of other brothers is establishing their separate homes. The position of women in Nocte society is completely subservient to the male members of the family. Her lot is far from enviable since she has practically no personal liberty.

The original religious belief of the Noctes centres around their god *Jauban*, also called Jongban or Tesong. There seems to prevail some confusion about the character of this deity. He has two aspects, good and evil. He may confer prosperity and happiness or may cause misfortune and misery according to his whims. The Noctes identify these two aspects as *kat Jauban* and *wang Jauban*. A variation of this idea occurs in some villages, where they say that there are two *Jaubans*—one who dwells in the sky, called *Rang Jauban* and the

other on earth, called Ha Jauban. The latter is a benevolent deity who protects the village.

The Noctes also identify numerous spirits, mostly ill-meaning, who are responsible for various kinds of sickness and other misfortunes of the human beings. They are to be kept in good humour by regular offerings and sacrifices. There is, however, one spirit very dear to the Noctes. He protects the house and its members from all misfortunes and also from other spirits. Every time a Nocte takes rice-beer, he will pour a little quantity on the ground for this house spirit.

They believe that, after death, the soul substance, called *mang* or *ja khang*, repairs to *ulim* or *balum*, a place in the sky. It may take the shape of a kite and appear the day when the dead body is disposed of. So when a kite is seen flying over the house, the relations of the dead pour water on the ground for the departed soul. In case of abnormal death they believe that the soul turns into an evil spirit.

The method of disposal of corpses by exposure on open platforms still has a vogue among the Noctes as among certain American Indians.

They have recently taken to wet rice cultivation side by side with their traditional *jhum*.

WANCHO

The Wanchos inhabit the south-western part of the Tirap district. Dr Elwin described them as 'the most virile and picturesque'.

Their society is divided into four classes in order of status enjoyed by each. At the top, the chiefs constitute the class of *Wanghams*, and the commonality, termed as *Wangpans*, are at the lowest rung. Between the two, first comes the *Wangshas*, who are the offsprings of

Wangham fathers and *Wangpan* mothers, and next to them, *Wangsus*, children of *Wangsha* fathers and *Wangpan* mothers.

Determination of the class and the status a person belongs to, follows from his birth. This fact has certain implications regulating the norms of social behaviour and social relations. A chief's daughter born of a mother who herself is the daughter of a chief, is termed *Wangsia*. Now, a chief's son born of *Wangsia* mother is a *Wangham* because he carries pure royal blood in his viens. But a chief might have other sons born of wives taken from the lower classes of *Wangsa*, *Wangsu* and *Wangpan*. The *Wangsha* and the *Wangsu*, though lower in status than the *Wangham*, still have some royal blood in them, and consequently are entitled to hold certain positions in society. They might be appointed to look after the chief's *morung*.

Social distinction in the ordinary course of life does not become obvious but it is recognizable during some social functions where the whole community participates. For example, on the occasions of social festivities, the *Wangpans* who are at the bottom of the society are not allowed to take meal sitting in the same row with the *Wanghams*. A *Wangpan* under no circumstances can aspire to marry a girl who is above him in status. But there is nothing to stop a *Wangham* from taking a *Wangpan* girl for his wife. The *Wanghams*, the *Wangshas* and the *Wangsus* practically control the society and the *Wangpans* merely obey and abide by the decisions of the higher classes. We cannot say how far this division of classes resembles the caste system of the Hindus but, perhaps, we notice here something like a nascent state of caste distinction.

The villages, grouped into several confederacies, are under the control of Wanghams.

There are in fact 36 villages formed into eleven groups or confederacies which they call *jan* and the people of each group is usually known by the distinctive name of the *jan*. Now, each group is centered around a parent or original village while other separate villages within the group are regarded as its branches which had separated in course of time. The name of the *jan* is often applied to the original or parent village under a superior chief. Each village may again be divided into two or more smaller units, consisting of a number of houses, each under a junior controlling chief. Such units are called *jong*. These separate units or divisions might have their own *morungs* or bachelors' dormitories. Most villages have two units called *tingnu* and *tingsa*. But instances are known, as at Longkai and Nginu, where as many as 18 units or divisions are found. Whatever may be the number of *morungs* in a village, only two, called *panu* and *pasa*, are recognised for all important puposes. *Panu* is the chief's *morung*, and is the venue of all serious social meetings. It was the custom in bygone days to preserve the heads taken during head-hunting expeditions in *panu* or chief's *morung*. Other *morungs* are under the controlling authority of these two *morungs*.

The number of *morungs* do not always conform to the number of units or divisions in the village. For example, Senua village has three divisions but as many as twenty *morungs*. It all depends on the size of a village and its population.

Wancho villages do not reveal any conscious planning as one notices, for instance, in an Apa Tani village. But like the Apa Tani village, they can be very congested the roofs of houses touching one an-

other. In a village, there are four types of houses, the residential houses called *ham* or *kom*, granaries known as *pung*, farm houses called *tar*, and *morung* named *pa* or *pan*. Though no separate house is put up for girls' dormitory, whatever residential house they utilize as such a dormitory is called *nausajip ham* or simply *sin*. Excepting the granary which is constructed on a raised platform, other constructions apparently appear to be on the ground. The farm house is a miniature form of the residential house. The chief's farm house is, however, a more elaborate affair, which from a distance looks like the back of a tortoise.

The houses are usually built on slopes of hills. They appear to be on ground level, but generally have parts raised on piles where the ground falls away. Like Nocte houses, solid logs and beams are used in the frame-work. The roofs are usually high with *toko* leaves used for thatching. Every house has an open projection serving as a verandah. The front room is fairly spacious with separate hearths for men and women on either side and is used in common. Beyond this is a long passage with rows of compartments on either side of it. The number of compartments has relation to the number of wives and the other family members of each household. A carved paddy pounder is housed beyond the rows of the compartments.

The distinctive part of the Wancho dress is a coloured shoulder band. Men wear very fine *lenghutis* and women have skirts with special patterns. Shawls are common to both men and women. These body wears seem to have a late introduction. Dr Elwin remarked:

'The Wancho traditionally are not fond of clothes, but make up for this by the use of splendid ornaments of ivory, horn shells and beads while the more ephemeral

grace of feathers and flowers distinguishes their ears and hair'.

Both Wancho men and women heavily tattoo their bodies. Distinctive of women is a cross over the navel, besides other designs on different parts, of the body. Men have spectacle designs round the eyes apart from other patterns on the neck, throat, chest, arms, back and the stomach.

Tattooing in fact has a very special significance for the Wanchos. Besides being personal decoration, it has both social and ritual import. Tattooing is locally called *hu* but *chu* is the more common term. Apart from the rank and social status of a person, different designs of tattooing on different parts of the body signify attainment of different stages in life, particularly in case of women.

A man from the chief's family has very elaborate designs all over the body while others, lower in rank, have simple ones. A head-hunter had special designs on the face and body as marks of bravery.

The process of tattooing is very laborious and demands great patience and physical endurance on the part of the person undergoing the operation. In the first place, tattooing can be undertaken only on a special day fixed by divination or augury, a fact which signifies its ritual importance. A feast has to be arranged for the occasion. Designs are first drawn with black paint prepared from soot over the desired parts of the body and these are pricked with thorns. During the process, some one keeps the skin stretched. Then the juice of a particular plant mixed with blue colour is applied over the designs. The juice is also said to have a healing effect on the wounds. The wounds sometimes become serious, turning septic, and usually confine a man who can hardly move about for a couple of days or even longer be-

cause of intense pain and swelling of the affected parts. There are experts who perform the operation ; they are not paid in cash but are honoured with offer of rice, rice-beer and meat.

Tattoos of different parts of the body have different names ; that on the face is *thun hu*, on the chest *kha hu*, on the neck *ding hu* or *chakhu hu*, on the back *tock hu*, on the umbilicus *chung hu* or *chum chu*, on the thigh *betam hu* and on the calf *chichin hu*. Men get tattooed on the face, neck, chest and back but women on the chest, arms, back, umbilicus, thigh and calf but never on the face. The patterns of tattooing are also different for men and women.

Tattooing in women has quite special significance marking different stages of life, and it is a part of the marriage ritual. The first tattooing over the umbilicus is done at the age of about 6 or 7 years when a girl is betrothed or just before betrothal. When a girl attains puberty or immediately prior to it, tattooing is done for the second time on the calf. The design is either circular lines or diamond designs coverings the tibia. The chief's daughter might have more elaborate designs. This is also the occasion when formal betrothal takes place. The girl is now free to mix with the boy to whom she has been betrothed. Anominal ceremony signifying marriage precedes this second tattooing. The third tattooing on the thighs just over the knees is done before the girl leaves her parental house for her husband's home. In some villages, this is done after the girl first conceives. The design is parallel lines upwards from the knee. In case of chief's daughter, eight small dots in two rows are marked across and over the parallel lines.

The last and the fourth time, a broad 'M' design is tattooed above the breasts during the seventh month of

pregnancy or, in some places, after the first child is born. This time the tattooing is done in the husband's home. The girls of the chief's family, in addition, get their forearms tattooed along with that on the chest. There are adept women who undertake the task of tattooing in case of girls, and are remunerated in kind.

Like the Noctes, the Wanchos went out on head-hunting expeditions formerly and human head formed the central motif of their traditional wood-carvings. With the coming of peace and tranquility, the practice of head-hunting, which was born out of a certain belief in the magical efficacy of human skulls, has now become a thing of the past.

In the past, various were the reasons why the Wanchos went out on head-hunting expeditions. Besides the exhibition of manliness and prowess, they were prone to take offence at slighted honour or insult, real or imagined. For instance, it was established by custom that a chief should take his first wife from the house of another chief from a different village. If after betrothal, he was denied the girl so betrothed, that would have been reason enough for embarking on head-hunting raid against the offending chief's village. Head-hunting expedition was resorted to sometimes for more real cause such as encroachment on others' territory and refusal to pay compensation by the poachers when detected. There was then of course the belief in the magical efficacy of human head because it was believed to increase the yield of cultivated land.

In the ultimate analysis, the cause for head-hunting expeditions almost invariably arose between two chiefs and their subjects became automatically involved. But the decision was always taken by the chief at a meeting of the council of elders. Before embarking upon a head-

hunting raid, it was customary to take augury in order to foretell the result. It often became necessary to postpone or withhold the expedition, if the divination proved unfavourable. A head-hunting expedition was always led by the veterans known as *naumai*. The rest of the party were called *fanu*. There used to be several *naumais* in every party; they both led the party and also brought up the rear. The most common method of such raid was to take the enemy village by surprise in the small hours of the morning. Open confrontation rarely took place.

During such expeditions, heads were taken indiscriminately but there was strict injunction against commoners taking the head of a chief. If by mistake a commoner was guilty of such sacrilege, he was thoroughly abused and was forbidden from taking goat's, meat, beef or fowl and also certain kinds of fish for the rest of his life. It was believed that he would turn a leper, if he broke the rule. Apart from taking heads, the raiders indulged in burning the enemy village, destroying the granaries, poultry and carrying away cattle.

The manner of collecting heads was an interesting procedure. If several men attacked and killed an enemy, it was the privilege of the person, who first struck, to bring the head and afterwards wear a brass or carved wooden head on the chest. The second man would detach a hand of the enemy from the body and bring it home, thereby earning the right to wear a wooden hand as personal decoration, the actual hand being preserved in the *morung* as a trophy. The third attacker would cut away a foot and thereafter was entitled to attach a wooden replica of the foot to his basket.

After the raiders brought the heads to the village, these were fixed to long bamboo poles near the chief's

house. Later on, after the flesh had completely decomposed, the heads were thoroughly cleaned and preserved either in the *morung* or specially erected house in the shape of *morung*, called *ponu*, near the chief's house. In order to distinguish the heads of a chief and the members of his family, a hole was bored on the crown of each skull. Five days after the heads were brought in, the head-hunters received tattoos on different parts of their bodies, executed by experts. After this part of the ceremony, they were required to confine themselves to their houses and refrain from talking to anybody for one day.

We cannot recount here all the rituals which had to be gone through by the raiders but mention has to be made of the ceremonial feeding of the heads. After harvesting, a festival, called *gantang*, was performed and the ritual experts, known as *gampa*, offered rice-beer and pieces of ginger to the heads preserved in the *morung*.

Morung or bachelors' dormitory used to occupy a very special place in Wancho society and probably it does even now. In the past, it was the main centre of activity in a village. It was here that the decision to go out on head-hunting expeditions was taken. It was the store-house for human heads collected by the raiders during their head-hunting missions. It was also the arsenal where all weapons were deposited. Every *morung* or *pa*, as it is called, possesses a log-drum, called *kham*, which is actually the hollowed-out trunk of a tree. It has very much the shape of a boat, with various designs such as human heads, animals, birds and snakes carved on it. In the past, alarm signals were sent out to the village by the beating of the drum. A drum can be as long as 30 feet.

The *morung* has lost much of its past glory and importance. But it even now serves an important social purpose as a training centre for the youth of a village. They take lessons here in community cooperation and other disciplines demanded of them as members of the society.

There is no separate *morung* for the girls. But by arrangement among themselves they use some convenient house for sleeping together, usually under the supervision of an old widow. Such house is also called *nausa jup ham*, meaning 'young girls' sleeping house'. Young boys are free to visit their girl friends here, gossip, exchange gifts and even spend the night with their tacit consent. Notwithstanding this latitude for free mixing, the rule of clan exogamy is strictly obeyed. Breach of this rule was at one time punishable with death. The girls are not expected to sing with boys of their own clan, whom they regard as their own brothers.

The young people usually select their own mates but marriages generally are arranged by the parents. Cross-cousin marriage with the daughter of the mother's brother or of the father's sister has social preference. Polygamy has a certain currency and divorce is obtainable on payment of fines.

The Wancho society is patrilineal as the property devolves in the male line. The law of primogeniture operates for the eldest son inherits property. Even when a family breaks up with sons setting up separate establishments, family property is not distributed. The eldest brother might help the other brothers to set up their households even with gifts of land but they have no legal claim to the family property.

The life of a Wancho is surrounded by many rituals and ceremonies from the very day he is born till his

death. These periodical ceremonies, feasts and festivities lend colour to his life and makes him a cheerful person full of zest for his own way of life. The Wan-chos feel very much concerned to continue the species. A barren woman has no importance and she faces divorce as soon as her barrenness is found out. Before confinement, the wife must move to her husband's house as it is considered unnatural and, perhaps, inauspicious if a child should be delivered anywhere else. From the fifth or sixth month of pregnancy onward, the life of a woman is beset with many taboos. She must sleep separately, never visit a cemetery nor a house contaminated by death. She should not take dry meat or flesh of any animal which has died naturally. A pregnant woman does not look at a rainbow for it is believed that the god of the rainbow may devour the child in the womb or cause miscarriage. The husband has also to labour under certain restrictions. He cannot sell any article from the house during the pregnancy of his wife. He should not kill a snake though he might join others in hunting and fishing.

After delivery, a woman remains confined to her compartment for five to six days and she should not go out of the house before a period of ten days. Six days after the child is born, its head is shaved by a person of the class called *khau gu manu*. The father goes out with other villagers to the river for fishing. They must succeed on the occasion in catching some fish. The shaving of the head of the child has to be completed before the party returns from fishing.

On the same day, the child is given its name. Divination is taken on a number of names according to the sex of the child and the one found of good omen is given to it. A feast is arranged on the day with rice beer

cooked rice and meat. A pig is usually killed for the purpose. Another ceremony of some importance and significance takes place when a child is first fed ceremonially with rice. The ceremony is called *nau thom* and is performed when the child is barely one or three months old. The parents of the mother of the child and the uncle and aunt on the mother's side are specially invited for the occasion. It is the privilege of the parents of the mother to first put the rice in the child's mouth. Thus one may go on counting the ceremonies and rituals that should be observed at every stage of the life of a Wancho.

The political organization of the Wanchos is quite well developed and it functions as a centralized body in each village. Every village has a council of elders, called *wangchu-wangcha*, presided over by the chief. When the council is in session, it is called *ngojon*, *ngojong* or *ngothun*. The council comprises several officials with specified functions. The number of members as well as of officials, constituting a council, varies from village to village even with variations in designations of the functionaries.

We may take here the constitution of the council at Pumao village as a typical example. The Wangham or chief presides over the council. Besides ordinary members, the council has a number of officials such as *wangcha*, *wangchu*, *ngopa*, and *wangcham*. Each clan nominates a member to the council. The *wangcho* and *wangcha* are also called *khonsai* and they enjoy the status some what similar to ministers. The chief almost invariably consults them before giving decision on any matter ; hence the significance of the term *khonsai*. The *wangcham* acts as a messenger to the chief and the council. He announces and notifies the date of meeting

of the council to the members. The *ngopa* communicates to the villagers the council's decision about performance of festivals by loud shouts. The council holds its session at the chief's *morung*.

In the past, it was the chief function of the council to take decision on head-hunting raids, intra-village disputes besides, of course, cases of disputes within the village. With the change of time and sense of security, it now deliberates on development works and welfare activities affecting the village. It also continues its original function as a court of justice.

Customary laws and ideas of justice among the Wanchoos were intricate and punishments awarded for various offences could be extremely severe. As late as 1952-53, a habitual thief from Pumao village was put to death. He brought the punishment upon himself by repeatedly defying the warnings of the council. It was customary to carry out the sentence of death by hanging the convicted person from a tree or throwing him into a river with his hands and feet firmly tied. Several were the crimes which met with extreme punishment. Anyone who took liberties with the chief's wife was immediately done away with, if apprehended. If a person intentionally inflicted serious injury or killed a man, the usual punishment was death. It was also customary to get rid of an insane person by throwing him into a river.

In case of illicit connection with a girl, the offender was treated rather lightly. He was required to pay compensation which went to the person to whom the girl was betrothed. In addition he had to give a pig to the members of the council who decided the case. Adultery with a married woman was a more serious offence and the compensation demanded of the offender was extremely heavy. At present, even if the chief's wife

is involved, the offender can get away with paying compensation. But compensation demanded in such case is of menacing proportion.

It is of some interest to note that the Wanchos had the system of transporting convicts to a fixed penitentiary. It was the custom to send away a person who committed murder unintentionally to such a penitentiary. It was believed that, if such an offender was allowed to stay in the village, he would bring bad luck to the whole village and people would suffer from disease and other calamities. The Niaunu group of villages for instance sent away the offenders to a place called Chatong. Other groups of villages had separate penitentiaries. But ideas of crimes and punishments to be awarded are already undergoing transformation with the coming of peace and tranquility to the whole region.

It should also be mentioned in passing that default in community work is considered an offence. Such default is known as *genna*. Violation of this rule is rarely reported. The offender is required to pay a fine involving one pig and the pig is appropriated by the council.

Ceremonies attending death are no less elaborate and cannot be neglected without inviting ill luck and misfortunes to the whole family. The Wancho has complete recognition of natural death due to old age. Premature death due to illness or accident is always laid at the doors of evil spirits. The malevolent *Baurang* is held responsible for causing sickness. The dead body is kept inside the house for a whole day or 24 hours for the relatives to gather and express grief. A commoner's dead body is simply wrapped up and carried to a place called *jak kha*. The wrapped corpse is then placed on a platform about five to six feet high. A chief's body is kept in a specially made coffin. A small shed is put up

over the platform and an effigy fashioned out of bamboo or wood is set up near the platform with the personal belongings of the dead hanging from a pole.

After about a month, when the process of decomposition has run its course, the skull is detached from the body by an old man called *taisongpa*. It is washed thoroughly, wrapped up in a piece of red cloth, and put inside a jar. Later on the head is removed and placed under a stone pit. The day when the skull is detached is marked with a ceremony called *rapoley* or *ja foatle*. Thereafter, every year, during the *poatakle* festival (after new harvest), skulls of all the deceased members of a family are taken out and offerings of rice beer and cooked food are made to them. Here again, we notice the Wancho's reverence for human head not unrelated perhaps to his belief in its magical efficacy. The treatment of the chief's corpse is slightly different and marked by pomp and ceremony but we refrain from going into details here.

The Wanchos believe in a host of spirits, of whom the benevolent sky-god, called *Rang*, and the malevolent god of the earth, named *Baurang*, are the most prominent and powerful.

TANGSA

The Tangsas inhabit the eastern hills about the centre of the district. The main concentration of the Tangsas is in the valleys of the Tirap river and the Namchik 'extending from the Patkoi range in the south to the border of the state of Assam in the north'.

The traditions, current among the Tangsas, indicate that they had originally migrated to their present home across the Patkoi in search of cultivable land. They have been in the valley of the Namchik for generations

now but their migration to the Indian side of the border might not go very far back in time. The places across which their forefathers had come in course of their migration is still fresh in their memory.

Like many other tribes, the Tangsas are divided into a number of sub-tribes of which the important ones are the Lungchang, Yogli, Mosang, Ron-Rang, Khomising, Moklum, Tikhak, Ponthai, Longphi, Sanke, Lungri, Taipi and Have.

The meaning of 'Tangsa'—we are told by Parul Dutta—is 'hill people', derived from *tang* (hill)—*sa* (people). The Tangsas, however, never apply this term to other hill tribes.

The house type is the usual pile dwelling prevalent in this area with some variations in the lay out. A house has three main parts: The front part, unlike the Nocte or Wancho house, is open except for side walls. This portico-like front room is called *ran*, and is used both as a common room and a guest room. It has a fireplace (*tap*) slightly to one side in the middle. The mid portion, divided into a number of small compartments, is called *jumong* or *himong* and the back part, where generally a paddy pounder is installed, is known as *jumchang* or *himkha*. Guests belonging to other sub-tribes should not go beyond the *ran* or the front room.

The middle part has a long passage on one side with the compartments opening off it. Each compartment has a fireplace. One of the compartments is used as a common kitchen for the whole family. Besides, attached to each compartment, there is a lavatory.

The walls of the common room in front are decorated with skulls of buffaloes, pigs and other animals killed on various festive occasions. One corner of this room is partitioned off use as urinal.

The costume of the man is made up of a *lungi*, a shirt and a turban. The original dress consisted of a loin-cloth or *langut* (*rai*), a sleeveless shirt (*santong*) open in front and a piece of cloth (*khupak*) for the head, all of their own manufacture.

The traditional dress of the woman consisted of a *khasa* or *khatsa*, a single piece of cloth wrapped round the body from the breasts down to the ankles, a blouse, and in some cases turbans. Some change of fashion has taken place in recent years with the coming of new ideas. The ladies now wear a black skirt (*khailung*) reaching below the knee and sometimes coming down to the ankles, a blouse, (*champhung*), a piece of white cloth (*pungmeng*) thrown over the body, and a *khupak*, i.e. a piece of cloth wrapped round the head turban-like.

Tangsa men wear in the ear lobes coloured beads held by copper wires. They also put on cane leggings usually dyed black. At one time, they wore cane waistbands which have now gone out of fashion. Women wear in their ears a transparent crystal bead known as *jangphai*, in Assamese. They also wear bead necklaces and sometimes necklaces of coins.

Tangsa women are good weavers. They have a preference for geometrical designs on their cloths. Dutta remarks that 'Tangsas are particularly sensitive to scarlet-red, black and dark-green colours.' Some of the sub-tribes grow their own cotton.

The Tangsas do not have proficiency in wood carving and it is rather rare among them in marked contrast to their neighbours, the Noctes and the Wanchos, who take special delight in wood-carving. They are, however, very expert in cane and bamboo basketry work. Blacksmithy is practised to very limited extent. They fashion iron scorpers, spear-heads and *daos* for their own use.

Cultivation traditionally and even now is largely of *jhuming* type.

Their religion is mainly shamanist. They believe in all kinds of spirits: Some are favourably disposed towards mankind while lot of others are responsible for the many ills and sufferings to which human beings are subjected. These illmeaning spirits are to be specially propitiated.

The method of disposal of the dead body is different among the different sub-tribes. The Yoglis bury their dead. The Moklungs and some others cremate. The Lungchangs have special cremation grounds while the Moklungs cremate within the sight of their houses.

Agriculture and Land-Ownership

THE STUDY of land-ownership in Arunachal Pradesh, as it still obtains, is of immense interest. The pattern that emerges is closely related with the method of agriculture pursued by the various tribes. Most of them with the outstanding exception of the Apa Tanis still depend to very great extent on the cyclic method of shifting cultivation or *jhuming* as it is called in this part of the country. This is due chiefly to the nature of the terrain each tribe has occupied from time immemorial. The Apa Tanis are particularly blessed with an extensive area of flat land ideally situated where permanent and sedentary method of cultivation is pre-eminently possible. It is no wonder that early explorers, as it has already been noted, called their basin-like plateau 'the rice bowl of the Apa Tanis'.

Although appreciable progress has been registered in the field of economy due mainly to various development schemes initiated by the Administration, it will still be true to say that the economic activities of the people of Arunachal Pradesh continue to be largely of a subsistence nature based on agriculture. Traditional trade in indigenous products of however limited scope

is no doubt still carried on ; some local people own shops and do brisk business in the market areas of the District and Subdivisional headquarters. We have, therefore, to take notice first of agricultural activities as almost all the tribes here practise some form of agriculture. It, however, hardly forms the main stay of any of the tribal groups except the Apa Tanis in this difficult terrain. Agriculture, therefore, is either of a supplementary nature to other activities such as hunting, food-gathering, trapping, fishing, raising of animals, and trade, or is supplemented by such activities. It accordingly follows that dependence on agriculture varies from tribe to tribe, consequent on the availability of land, nature of the terrain, and climatic conditions.

As has been pointed out by some writers, the form of agriculture practised by any people is often the result of social progress, and not the cause of progress itself. It is also absolutely wrong to attribute the backwardness of the type of agriculture practised to the inherent inertia or lethargy of a tribal group, who are often the prisoners of their own environment and circumstances. This is nowhere so evident as in Arunachal Pradesh, because the terrain and the climate here differ greatly from one region to another. It has been noted by one author that, in Arunachal Pradesh, the single factor that determines the type of agriculture followed is variance of rainfall. In areas where it is very heavy as in the valley floors, the lands are swampy and area malarial. Here cultivation is carried on the upper slopes which are usually steep. Agricultural operations on steep hill sides conform to the shifting type and the pattern of land-ownership is communal. In areas where rainfall is favourable, not generally exceeding 60", particularly in lands located on gentle lower slopes and also on valley

floor, permanent type of cultivation is often possible. Lands coming under permanent cultivation are usually privately owned.

It happens that there are areas experiencing both types of rainfall, sheltered valleys having less of rainfall while upper exposed parts getting more. In such areas, both types of agriculture are followed, relative of parts falling under different spheres of rain, ie., shifting and permanent types of agriculture.

In accordance with variation in rainfall and gradient of terrain, agriculture in Arunachal Pradesh, therefore, falls into three categories ; permanent or sedentary, shifting or *jhum*, and mixed type of agriculture, shifting in part and in part sedentary. Corresponding to the method of agriculture, land-ownership can also be studied under three categories ; *land owned privately, land owned collectively by clan, and mixed type of ownership, partly private and partly communal.*

PERMANENT CULTIVATION

Amongst all the tribes in Arunachal Pradesh, the Apa Tanis, who occupy a single valley in the central part of the Subansiri district, almost exclusively pursue sedentary method of agriculture. The valley floor where their rice lands are situated, was possibly a lake in the remote past. Tradition also confirms that their forbears, who migrated down to the valley from higher grounds in immemorable past, found it a swampy country infested by some kind of amphibian creatures called *buru*. With an average annual rainfall of less than 50" the whole area is drained by the Kele river meandering through the heart of the valley. The situation is thus ideal for the practice of sedentary form of agriculture. The Apa Tanis, though meticulous in the care of their rice fields,

employ only manual labour, animal or mechanical traction of any kind being unknown to them until recently.

Cultivable agricultural land in the Apa Tani society is completely privately owned. Due to the principle of private ownership of land, and the right of alienation vesting in the owner, great disparity in the material well-being exists between individuals. The average Apa Tani head of a family inherits some lands for cultivation, a house site usually located in the residential areas of his own clan and one or more bamboo groves, varying in size, outside but adjacent to the residential areas. An individual may augment his possessions by acquiring more lands during his life time.

Apart from these private lands, an individual may also own plots for growing vegetables, maize, and tobacco. These plots might later be converted into house sites for his sons, as need may arise. There is besides site for granary on the outskirts of the village lying close to the rice fields, groves, and garden plots.

In addition to irrigated rice fields, an average Apa Tani farmer also owns a patch or two of dry land on higher grounds rising from the valley floor. Such plots are used for growing millet, and are valued much cheaper. One or two mithans, even a pig, could fetch a small plot in the past.

The law of inheritance among the Apa Tanis indirectly puts a limit to the concentration of lands in the hands of a few rich. It provides for equal distribution of cultivable lands amongst all the sons. Each son is supposed to get his share even during the lifetime of his parents when he marries and sets up his own household. A rich man was also under moral obligation to provide some land for a freed slave.

We have noted earlier that the Apa Tanis are very

meticulous in caring for their lands in marked contrast to tribes among whom land is held in communal possession. This might be due mainly to two factors. Private ownership of land undoubtedly works as a great incentive boosting up personal effort. But no less important is the fact that land is in limited supply here and nature of sedentary agriculture requires working of the same fields year after year. The lands have, therefore, to be kept in proper state of fertility. On the other hand, where the shifting method of agriculture is practised, new land can be put under cultivation whenever the old plot is found unproductive.

SHIFTING CULTIVATION

In the areas, where the shifting method of cultivation is followed, all land as a principle belongs to the clan or village. It should be mentioned that in the past, villages used to be coextensive with single clans. Where, however, exception occurred, the right of cultivation of communal land was adjusted within the framework of village lands. Within clan lands again, three types are recognizable according to the use, they are put to. These are agriculture, forest and settlement lands.

It will be wrong to think that communal ownership of land does not countenance individual rights of possession of any sort. It only means that such rights, when acknowledged, do not run counter to the principle of clan or communal ownership, and are actually recognized within the limits of this principle. The individual right of cultivation and possession continues through the cycle of agricultural operation, and remains suspended during fallow periods. All fences are removed during the fallow season and the land is thrown open to pasturage for all village animals. The pattern of individual

possession of land, where communal ownership is the rule, also varies from tribe to tribe. In some cases as with the Gallongs, individual claims to the ownership of different plots of lands revive only when particular areas are taken up for cultivation. Once a family cultivates a plot, it can always claim it as its own.

Among the Padam-Minyongs, ownership is absolute in the sense that land can be sold, transferred, leased or exchanged, but never outside clan members and the village. Among Daflas and Idu Mishmis, who have extended families consisting of married sons and other relatives, the land is cultivated jointly. An Aka can lay claim to a piece of land by the mere fact of having wrested it from the forest. Among the Khamtis, the whole community tills the land on cooperative basis. The chief, who in principle owns the entire land around however, has a portion allotted to him, which could be cultivated by slaves.

The forest land is actually land reserved for future use. While it continues to be treated as such, it can otherwise be used as hunting ground, for extraction of forest produce like cane, wood, edible roots etc. Here individual ownership is not generally recognized, but separate areas might be assigned to different clans and subclans.

With regard to extraction of forest produce, rights again vary from tribe to tribe, either on collective or family basis.

The third category of land in the areas of shifting cultivation is the settlement land which has three kinds of use. In the first place, settlement land is cleared by communal efforts, and is, therefore, clan land in principle. An average family, however, has at least one of each type of lands—a house site in the village, a site for

granary on the outskirts, and a small plot serving as kitchen garden. Some communities, such as the Adis have clan houses in the form of dormitories for boys and girls in addition to private residential houses.

We have noted earlier in the context of the Apa Tanis that a great deal of meticulous care is expended where the method of agriculture is permanent or sedentary, and the land is in limited supply. No doubt, the principle of private ownership acts as additional incentive to account for the zealous care, with which they treat their lands. But the picture changes pointedly as we pass on to areas where the shifting method of cultivation is followed ; land is held in clan or communal ownership, and new land can be brought under cultivation at any time as the need arises.

MIXED TYPE OF AGRICULTURES

Where this mixed type of agriculture is in vogue, the pattern of ownership of land also presents twofold aspects. Land under permanent cultivation is owned privately while that under shifting cultivation is communal land. Among the Sherdukpens and the Monpas of Kameng, the mixed type of agriculture is practised. In the valleys, where annual rainfall measures up to 30", land is under permanent cultivation. On the exposed slopes swept by rain, shifting cultivation is the rule.

Both among the Monpas, who are more advanced, and the Sherdukpens, who are relatively poor agriculturists, private lands are tended with greater care. Manuring is resorted to in all earnestness in order to preserve the lands in proper state of fertility. This is because this type of land is not obtainable otherwise than by payment.

Besides the Khamti and the Singpho, the Monpas,

among all the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, use wooden plough drawn by cattle. Contour ploughing is the rule here. Terracing of private lands on the mountain slopes is done with great care to prevent erosion, and to get level patches as far as the lie of the land permits. For manuring, oak leaves are used extensively. These are heaped on each field, and when properly sodden by rain, provide the necessary manure. The land here is never left fallow. The main crops are wheat and barley in winter and maize in summer. With the Monpas millet is a *jhum* crop.

The Sherdukpens make use of farmyard and kitchen droppings to manure their land. The other method is tying cattle during the idle season on the fields which are rather stony.

In areas, where land is held in communal ownership, the labour and energy devoted to clearing and preparation of land for cultivation vary accordingly as agriculture is fundamental, or only supplementary. Clearing of land is done everywhere on communal basis. Selection of land for clearance operation is a matter of great concern and serious thought. Among the Padam-Minyongs who are mainly agriculturists, patches of lands are clearly marked out, taken up in proper rotation. The Daflas take up several plotes scattered over different locations simultaneously. They do seem to give much thought and care to prevention of erosion of soil. The Gallongs on the other hand, use logs of large dimensions to prevent erosion by laying them along the contour lines. They also make use of big logs to dam water for the cultivation of rice.

THE PROCESS OF SHIFTING CULTIVATION

The method of cultivation by the shifting proces:

almost the same everywhere. It begins with the clearing operation. All trees along with undergrowths are cut down and left on the fields to dry. Women and children help with lighter work. After a fortnight or a month, fire is set to the felled trees, twigs and undergrowths. In the next stage, the charred remains are cleared, and the ashes levelled on the ground so that sowing may start. Of course, at every stage beginning with the selection of plots, the spirits of forests, trees and earth are duly propitiated with proper incantations, ceremonies and sacrifices.

Up to the stage before sowing starts, all work including that a fencing of family fields is carried on a communal basis. The Padam-Minyongs do not raise fence around family plots, but enclose the entire *jhum*. But fencing is done on communal basis after sowing has been completed. Usually among other tribes sowing is done on a family basis on family plots. The Padam-Minyongs again do it on communal basis, the work being allotted to women who start sowing, either by process of dibbling or broadcast, from the bottom of the fields where the granaries are located. Generally millets are broadcast, and maize sown in dibble holes.

Protection of seeds and crop from birds, domesticated animals, and also from wild animals, forms the next major part of the operation. This is done sometimes, as among the Akas, by older boys who live in batches in *jhum* fields in temporarily constructed huts. Among other tribes, where sowing is manly responsibility, most families move out to temporary huts in *jhum* areas.

Harvesting likewise is done on family basis. This is usually a simple matter as ears of corn are picked by hands. The Daflas grow, in addition to millet, corn and rice, and some amount of cotton which they sell to the

Apa Tanis. Among most tribes grain is stored in the family granary. The Khamtis, however, in consonance with the communal nature of their agriculture from the beginning to the end have communal granaries. Grain is measured out to each family every morning according to number of adults who participate in the operations.

Throughout Arunachal Pradesh, various tribal groups, clans, sub-clans, and even villages, have rights of cultivation over large tracts of land in the valleys and mountain slopes usually demarcated by natural features. Almost every mountain and every stream is thus claimed. Infringement of such rights is naturally considered a serious matter and, in the past, used to lead to inter-tribal and inter-clan feuds, though generally such rights are scrupulously respected. There are areas, however, where population is so sparse that no claim, either individual or collective, has been established over large tracts of forest lands. In such cases, Government has already included some areas under 'Reserve Forests' and propose to include further unclaimed tracts within this category. However, tribes living near such reserved forests are allowed to exercise their customary right of collecting timber and minor forest produce, of grazing cattle, hunting, and fishing in the streams.

Epilogue : The March of Time

The present book is practically a reprint of the original edition, and is purposefully so. The original idea behind the writing of the book, as conceived by the author, was to present a profile of the traditional culture of the major tribal groups of present Arunachal Pradesh. The walls of isolation had already crumbled and the tribal societies were in a flux. Needless to say, over the past decades, tremendous changes have come over the tribal communities and they have marched ahead confidently to join the main stream of the country in every sphere of life, political, economical and cultural. It again goes without saying that, in the process of the development, some traditional mores of the tribal societies have undergone inevitable changes. Stagnation over the centuries, due partly to the nature of the formidable terrain, and partly due to deliberate neglect and indifference on the part of the British rulers who considered the former frontier tracts as economically unproductive, and were reluctant to incur expenditure for their development, has yielded to breath-taking changes. Progress truly began with the achievement of Indian Independence. Education took rapid strides.

The tribal societies who were always zealous of their independence and possession of their lands quickly developed political consciousness. Evaluation of the impact of these far-reaching changes, brought about practically in every sphere of life of the people of Arunachal Pradesh, should be attempted in a separate book by more competent scholars than the present author is equipped to undertake. Nevertheless, an outline of the progress, however brief, made by the territory and the people of Arunachal Pradesh during little over last three decades in the political, constitutional and economic field, since the Indian Independence, is called for. An attempt has been made in this chapter to make a quick review of these momentous changes and the progress achieved.

POLITICAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

We shall pass over the march of administration in the interior of the region quickly as it has been described in the chapter on genesis and evolution of administration, and concentrate here on the political and constitutional developments in the wake of independence. The position as it obtained during the British time, had been summed by Sir Lancelot Hare in the following words:

“We have an Inner Line and an Outer Line. Up to the Inner Line we administer in the ordinary way. Between the Inner Line and the Outer Line we administer only politically. That is, our Political Officer exercises a loose jurisdiction, and to prevent troubles with the frontier tribes, passes are required for our subjects who want to cross the Inner Line”

In the later half of the thirties, an important change in the British frontier policy took place, as it was decided to extend the arm of the administration into the heart

of the wild territory, in some sectors up to the McMahon Line. The decision was influenced by persistent reports of forcible collection of taxes by Tibetan Officials in the Northern parts of Balipara Frontier Tracts and in some border villages in the Upper Siang area of the Sadiya Frontier Tract. A decision was taken in 1938 for formation of a 'Control Area' to the North, which was extended in 1941 under the sanction of the Government of India. Earlier, in 1938, the Political Officer of Balipara Frontier Track, undertook a tour of the Tawang area to warn the Tibetan Officials against violation of the frontier. Shortly after, the Second World War brought about the urgency of greater attention to the political importance of the frontier areas. The Japanese conquest of Burma in 1942 brought the war to India's very door-step and the attempted thrust of the Japanese forces through otherwise inaccessible Naga hills greatly enhanced the strategic importance of the North-East Frontiers. In 1943, a firm decision was taken to push up the administration into interior of the north-east frontier tracts hitherto under slack control. The decision to carry forward the administration through a policy of gradual penetration into unexplored and inaccessible areas was signalled by the creation of additional post of an Adviser to the Governor of Assam. This was a momentous decision as it set the pattern of administration of the frontier areas for years to come.

In consonance with the government's decision to bring the entire frontier tracts under regular administration, the services of an anthropologist of international stature was requisitioned. Christoph Von Fürer Haimendorf visited the interior of the Subansiri region in 1944 'to prepare the ground for extension of administrative control' into the Subansiri area. The application

of the Regulation I of 1945 which consolidated and amended the administration of justice, and exercise of police authority in the frontier areas, was further evidence of Government's determination on extension of administration into hitherto unadministered areas. The purpose of the introduction of the Assam Frontier (Administration of Justice) Regulation, 1945, was to ensure that a vast majority of disputes and cases, both civil and criminal, were adjudicated in conformity with the prevailing tribal customs and usages. The Indian Penal Code was, however, already in existence since 1916 to facilitate holding of trials by regular courts, whenever it became absolutely necessary.

Immediately after the transfer of power in 1947, the discretionary power of the Governor of Assam in respect of the North-East Frontier Tracts temporarily lapsed. In the meanwhile, the question whether the Governor of Assam should be allowed to retain his discretionary powers with regard to tribal areas of north-east frontiers continued to be hotly debated in the Constituent Assembly. The 1950 Constitution which eventually emerged, however, virtually re-enacted all the provisions of the Government of India Act, 1935, as they applied to excluded areas. In the meantime, the geo-political situation on the northern frontiers of India was greatly complicated by the emergence of the Communist Government in China, in 1949. Incidentally, the Government of India, as a successor government, inherited the legacy of the British Government in so far as its international agreements and commitments were concerned including of course the McMahon Line. India univocally declared her adherence to the recognition of Tibet as an autonomous region of China. In view of the changed geo-political situation on the border as

indicated above, the administration of the frontier areas was placed directly under the charge of the External Affairs Ministry of the Government of India. The Adviser to the Governor of Assam who was agent to the President, assumed direct charge of the Administration of the frontier tracts on January 26, 1950. His Secretariat was not separated, however, from the Secretariat of the Tribal Affairs Department of the Government of Assam until June 1950.

On March 22, 1951, after the Constitution of India came into force, the Indian Trade Agent at Yatung informed the Tibetan Foreign Bureau of Government of India's decision to take over control of the forward areas, including the posting of an officer at Tawang. Tawang, it may be recalled, fell on the Indian side of the border, south of the McMahon Line, according to the terms of the Simla Convention of 1914. Lhasa was also informed about Government of India's decision to extend 'regular administration' right up to the International Border, i.e., the McMahon Line.

A very important and far-reaching decision was taken in 1954 with a view to consolidation of Administration over the entire area of the frontier tracts. The promulgation of the North-East Frontier (Administration) Regulation, 1954, installed a full scale and integrated administration over entire territory which since came to be known as the North-Eastern Frontier Agency—abbreviated into NEFA for easy and speedy reckoning. As an aftermath of this reorganization, the former frontier tracts were redesignated as Frontier Divisions and a realignment of administrative topography also took place. Balipara Frontier Tract was divided into Kameng Frontier Division and Subansiri Frontier Division. The former Sadiya Frontier Tract was bifurcated into Siang

Frontier Division and Lohit Frontier Division. The Tirap Frontier Tract became Tirap Frontier Division. The former Naga Tribal Area was renamed the Tuensang Frontier Division. The attachment of the last named Frontier Division, namely Tuensang Frontier Division to NEFA, was short-lived as it was separated in 1957, and became a part of the reconstituted Naga Hills—Tuensang Area—NHTA for short. NEFA was thus left with five frontier divisions. The role played by the North-East Frontier Agency administration for the development of the territory which was to achieve new heights of glory in the years to come, cannot be over emphasised.

We must note in passing that, while the Administration was engaged in consolidating the gains of administration and uplifting the quality of life of the tribal population of NEFA, an ominous cloud was hovering over our northern horizon. Since the forcible occupation of Tibet by China in 1950, the situation on our northern border took a turn for the worse, which was further complicated by the flight of the Dalai Lama into India through the border of the Kameng Frontier Division in 1959. Then, without any warning, and when least expected, came the fateful day on 20th October, 1962, when China mounted a massive attack across our northern frontier laying astounding and extravagant claim to large chunks of Indian territory south of the McMahon Line. But due possibly to international pressure, and her own unexplained motives in invading Indian territory, China unilaterally withdrew her forces just when India got over her initial shock and was preparing to resist. It redounds great credit to the Agency Administration that it lost no time in restoring civil administration to the areas overrun by the Chinese troops

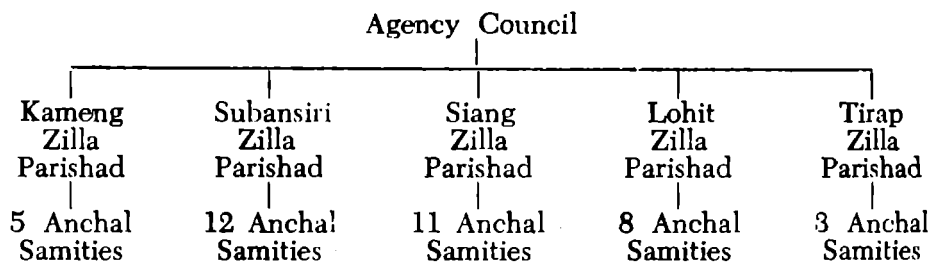
and it also must be said that the peoples' co-operation was forthcoming in the fullest measure.

For obvious reasons, we have to skip over minor developments in the intervening period, and concentrate on important political events. The people of NEFA were fully involved in the development activities, and were in fact impatient to forge ahead, and accelerate the pace of progress. In 1963, late Mr Daying Ering who was a nominated M.P. from NEFA, and eventually rose to the position of a Deputy Minister in the Union Government, undertook extensive tour of the Agency territory to gauge the feelings of the people on the question of improvement of the administrative machinery. The Government of India was also keen to bring about 'democratic decentralization' of powers. A committee which came to be known as the Ering Commission was appointed in April 1964 to explore the possibilities of extension of local self-governments, and submit report. The Commission did a quick job and submitted its report to the government in early 1965. The political and constitutional situation of NEFA as it obtained at the time, has been described by Prof. V. Venkata Rao in the following words :

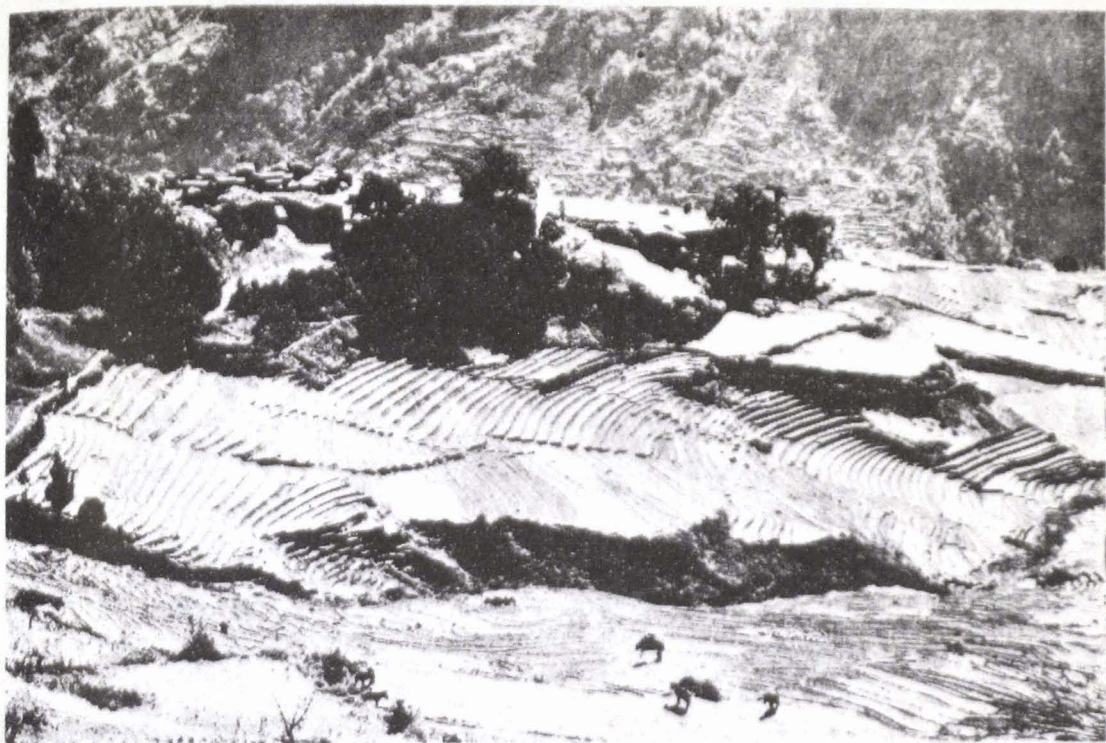
'There was no legislative assembly, to make laws for the good government of NEFA. NEFA was represented by one member in the Lok Sabha, nominated by the President. Laws made by Assam Legislative Assembly were not applicable to NEFA. Laws made by Parliament were automatically applicable unless there were specific orders against the application. *Thus, except village councils which existed from time immemorial, there was no representative institutions in Arunachal (Italics ours).*'*

* V. Venkata Rao: A century of Tribal Politics in North-East India, 1874-1974 (1976)

As an outcome of recommendations made by the Ering Commission, the North-East Frontier Agency Panchayat Raj Regulation (Regulation 3) of 1967 was passed. The Regulation envisaged a four tier scheme with an Agency Council at the apex. The village councils which were already recognized under the North-East Frontier Administration of Justice Regulation, 1945, were accorded the status of *Gram Panchayats*. Except for the village councils or *Gram Panchayats*, the other bodies were made elective. The Agency Council had its first meeting inaugurated by Mr B. K. Nehru, then Governor of Assam, on 3rd December, 1969. The three tiers of the *Panchayati Raj* above the village level, as formally constituted, presented the following picture :



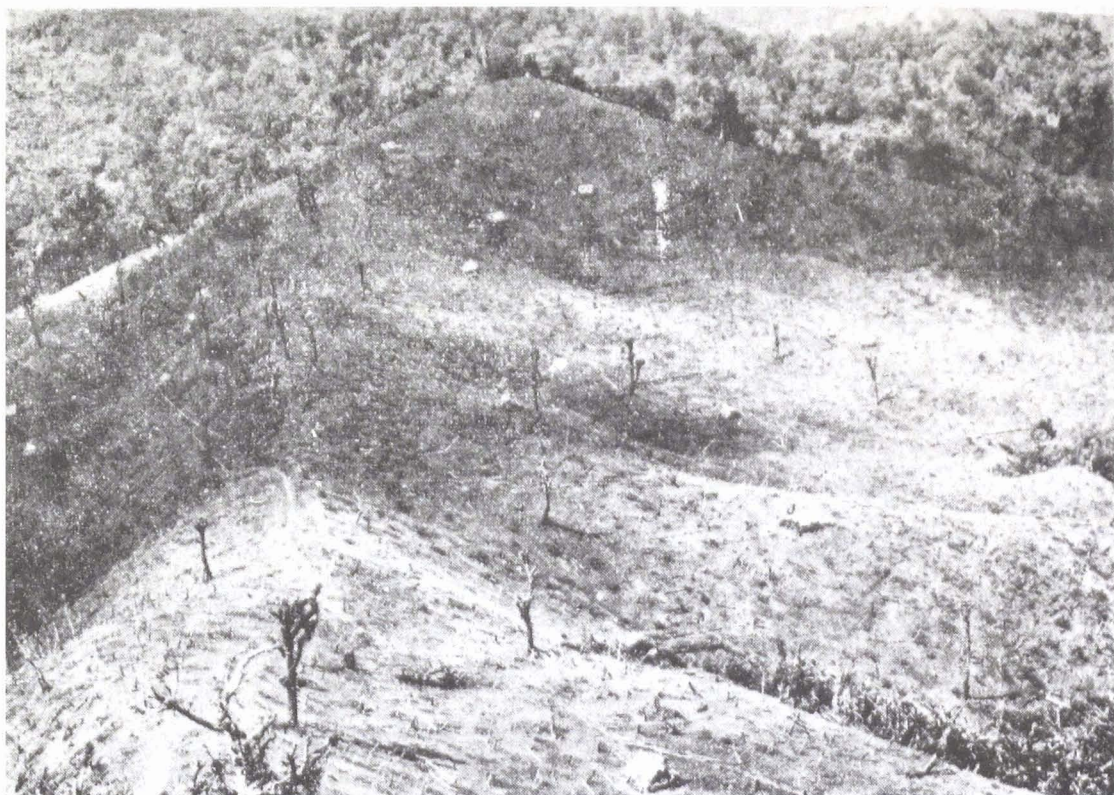
It should be stated here that the *Panchayati Raj Regulation* was an administrative arrangement, and did not signify a constitutional change of status. It may also be incidentally mentioned that introduction of *Panchayati Raj* came in for criticism from two different quarters, but for different reasons. Dr Verrier Eliwn who was the architect of the tribal policy in NEFA saw it as a departure from the traditional tribal ways, and a new concept not native to the tribal societies of NEFA. The integrationist opinion in the country, particularly, in Assam, saw in this move as yet another step towards ultimate constitutional separation of NEFA from Assam. It was, therefore, a curious development because the idea itself emanated from a tribal leader, late Daying



A panoramic view of terrace cultivation in the Kameng district



Land clearing for *jhum* cultivation.



Jhum cultivation on mountain slopes.



Jhum clearings on hill tops. Note the temporary sheds in the field.

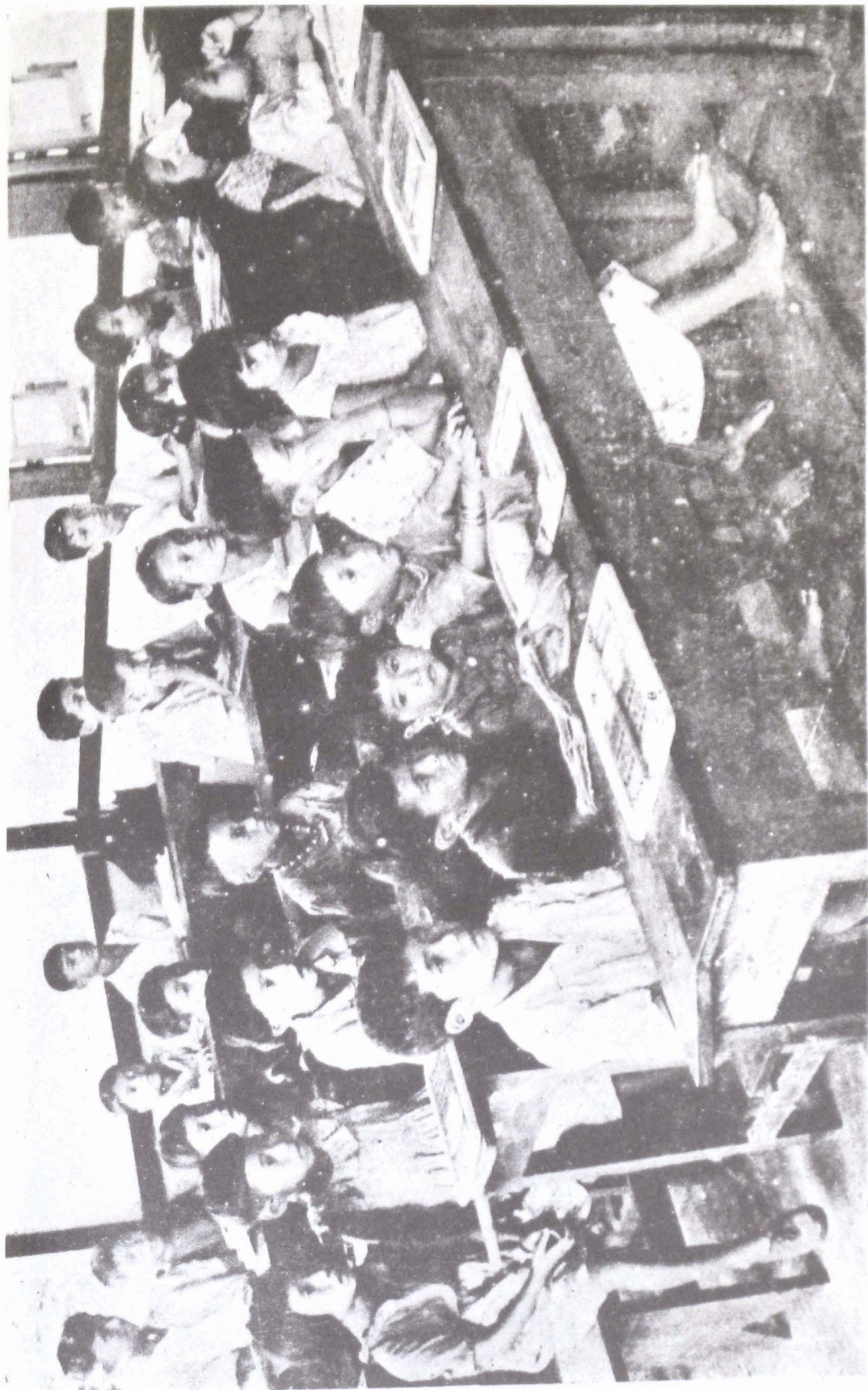


A surgical operation in progress somewhere in Arunachal. The hospitals are equipped with modern medicines and technical staff.



A nurses' training centre in Arunachal.

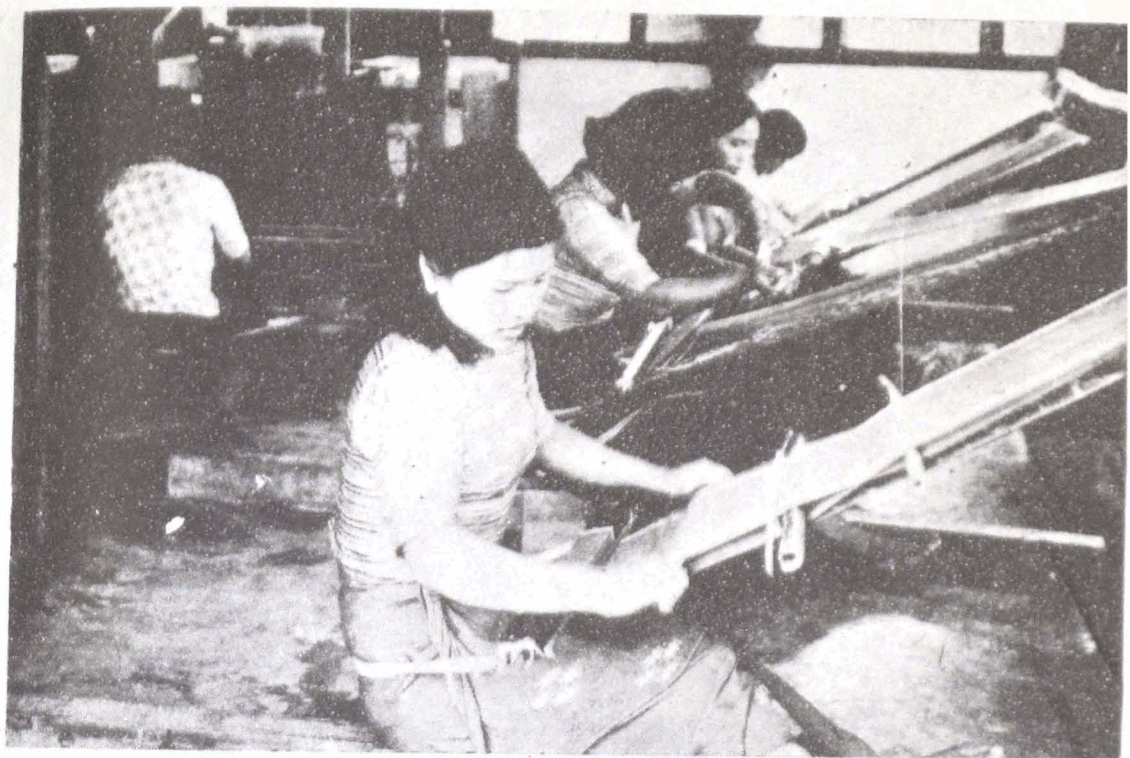




Children in a primary class.



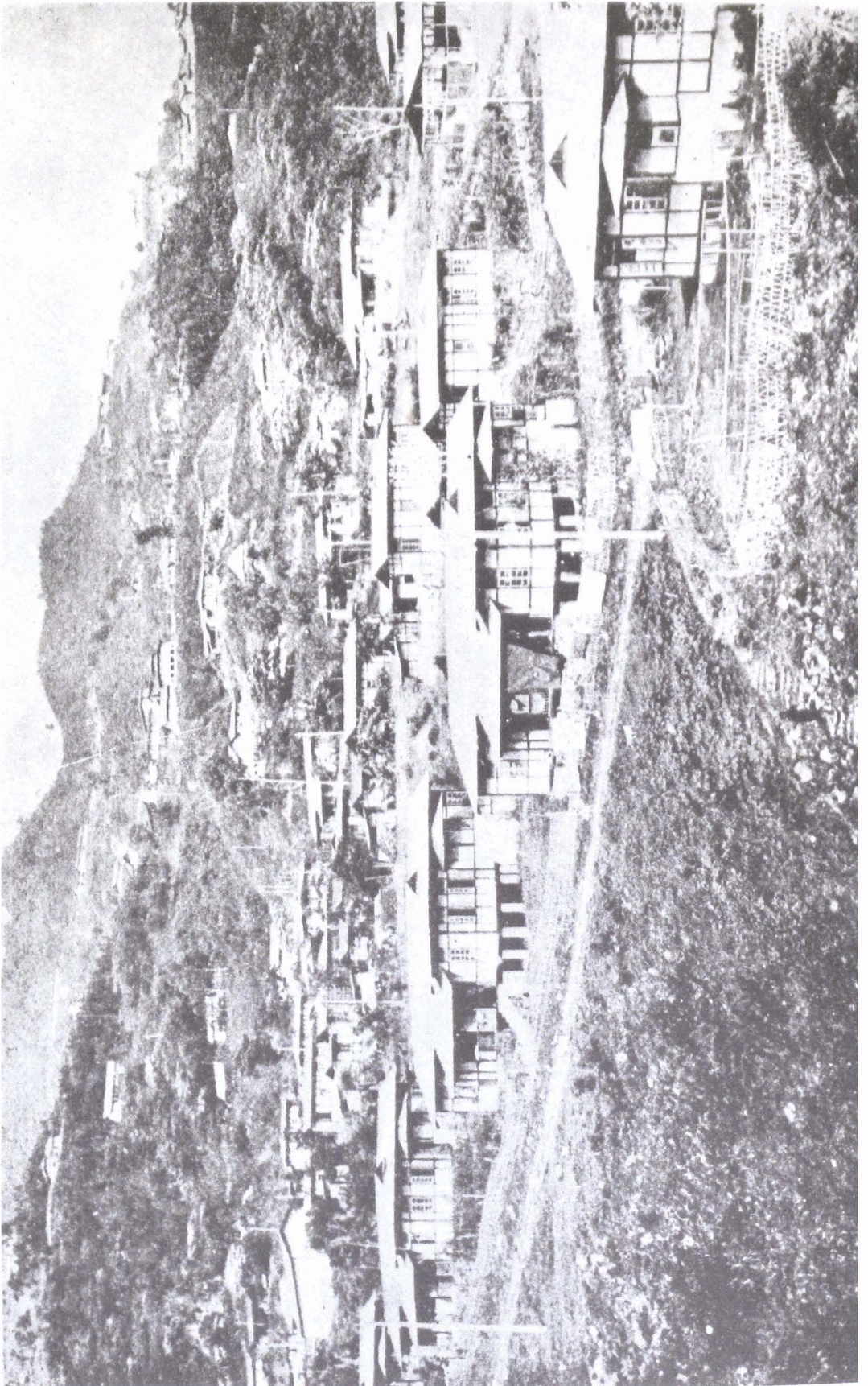
...el Nehru College at Pasighat.



Inside a craft centre.



Permanent wet rice cultivation introduced among the Adis of the Siang district, who knew only *jhum* cultivation a few years back.



Ering who represented the rising generation of the tribal youth who were already restive and impatient for accelerated progress.

Another very important development which followed as a direct consequence of the Ering Commission's recommendations, was transfer of NEFA from the charge of External Affairs Ministry to that of the Home Ministry on August 1, 1965. It was a natural development since the continuance of NEFA under the External Affairs Ministry was untenable and highly anomalous. On the December of the same year, the nomenclatures of the administrative divisions were changed, signifying, perhaps, an independent status of the Agency administration, and a further move away from its constitutional link with Assam. It was also a move in the process of streamlining the administrative machinery in order to bring it closer to the all India pattern. The Kameng Frontier Division became Kameng District; the Subansiri Frontier Division became Subansiri District; the Siang Frontier Division was called Siang District; the Lohit Frontier Division and the Tirap Frontier Division became Lohit and Tirap Districts respectively. Correspondingly, the Political Officers, the Additional Political Officers, and the Assistant Political Officers were redesignated as Deputy Commissioners, Additional Deputy Commissioners and Assistant Commissioners. As a logical sequence, the Base Superintendents became Circle Officers. Splitting of districts into sub-divisions and more administrative units went along simultaneously.

It might have been noticed above that the march of events and the change of political circumstances have been moving inexorably towards a separate status for the North-East Frontier Agency. Demand for separate

political identities had been voiced earlier in the tribal regions of the north-east India and the movement was gathering momentum. These political moves were naturally having their impact on the people of NEFA also. Forceful demand was raised immediately after the Chinese incursion for the shifting of the NEFA Secretariat from Shillong to the interior of NEFA or somewhere in the foothills areas. Shillong was then the capital of united Assam.

The Government of India, it was known, was already concentrating seriously on the question of reorganisation of the north-eastern states. Early in 1971, the Agency Council recommended a change of nomenclature of NEFA in favour of Arunachal Pradesh. According to Dr Chaube, it was during the fourth meeting of the Agency Council that members were informed that a new political set-up for the area was in the offing, and the Government of India was considering the proposal of giving the status of a Union Territory to the North-East Frontier Agency.^o However that be, in 1971, the Govt. of India passed a series of enactments, North-East Areas (Reorganization Act), the 27th Constitution Amendmendment Act, the Indian Union Territories Act etc., all aimed at bringing about a reorganization of North-East India. As a result, Assam lost its erstwhile constituent parts forming separate districts, namely Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram and NEFA. The last named under the changed nomenclature of Arunachal Pradesh became a Chief Commissionership with a Union Territory Status. Mr K. A. A. Raja, who was holding the post of Adviser to the Governor, was elevated to the position of the Chief Commissioner by the order of the President on 21st January, 1971. The Act

^o Shibankinakar Chaube : Hill Politics in North-East India (1973)

also provided the Union Territory with one seat in the Rajya Sabha and one seat in the Lok Sabha. The seats were to be filled by nomination by the President.

Events now moved really very fast. Arunachal has come a long way from the institution of the North-East Frontier Agency in 1954. The Agency Council was replaced by the Pradesh Council in 1971. Adult franchise was introduced for the first time in 1972 and all the Panchayat Bodies including the *Gram Panchayats* were made elective. The representation of Arunachal Pradesh to the Lok Sabha was raised to two, and were made fully elective. Other momentous changes followed not long after. In 1975, the Pradesh Council was converted into a Provisional Legislature. A Panel of five Counsellors, appointed previously by the Chief Commissioner, was constituted into a provisional Council of Ministers with Mr Prem Khandu Thungon elected as the first Chief Minister.

The Constitutional development of the territory of Arunachal Pradesh has thus come the full round and the first ever general election to the Union Legislature, incidentally a house of 30 members, was held in February 1978 along with the rest of the country. Two main political parties, namely the Janata Party and the regional Peoples Party of Arunachal Pradesh set up candidates between them. The participation of the Indian National Congress was only token, as it set up only one candidate, while there were 36 independent candidates in the fray. The Janata contested for 29 seats against PPA's 20. The total number of electorate was 2,39,293 of whom 1,29,919 were males and 1,17,374 females. After final withdrawal of nominations, 84 candidates were left in the field, including two women. Mr Prem Khandu Thungon and Mr Nokeong Boham

were declared elected unopposed from Dirang-Kalakatang and Niauxa-Kanubari constituencies respectively. An important feature of the election was that, in 12 out of remaining 28 constituencies, female voters outnumbered male voters. The results of the election installed a Janata Ministry in the Union Territory, headed by the Mr Thungon. Mr K. A. A. Raja who had been in the meantime appointed the first Lt. Governor of Arunachal, administered the oath of office and secrecy to the members of the Council of Ministers on the 14th March, 1978. The composition of the first ever fully representative Government or Council of Ministers with their respective portfolios was as follows :

1. Mr Prem Khandu : Business not specifically allotted
Thungon, Chief Minister to other ministers.
2. Mr Tadar Tang : Supply & Transport.
Minister Economics & Statistics, Census and Man-power Planning.
3. Mr Soben Tayeng : Agriculture, Rural Development
Minister & Co-operation.
4. Mr Gegong Apang : Public Works Department, Agri-
Minister cultural Engineering including Minor Irrigation, Community Development and Industries.
5. Mr Nokmey Namati : Education, Law, Labour, Legis-
Minister lature & Education Department, Parliamentary Affairs, Panchayat Raj, Local Self-Government, Health & Family Welfare.

Incidentally the last named, Mr. Namati, was the former speaker of the provisional Legislative Assembly which was brought into being in 1975.

It has to be stated here that, prior to the election to the Union Legislative Assembly, election to the two

Parliament seats was held in March, 1977. The Government of Union Territories (Amendment) Act, 1975 (29 of 1975) allotted two seats for Arunachal Pradesh in the Lok Sabha and Arunachal was divided for the purpose into two Parliamentary Constituencies: (1) Arunachal West and (2) Arunachal East. Mr Rinchin Khandu Khrame, a Congress candidate, who like Mr Thungon belong to the Sherdukpen community, was declared elected unopposed from Arunachal (West) Parliamentary Constituency. Mr Bakin Pertin, an independent candidate, was returned from Arunachal East Constituency, defeating his nearest rival of the Congress, Mr Nydok Yonggam, by a margin of seven thousand six hundred forty eight votes.

It is of interest to note that the first representative Government in Arunachal Pradesh was short-lived, and followed the all India pattern of political defection. The ministry lasted barely for two years. Mr Thungon was obliged to bow out of office due to defection from the rank of his party. He submitted his resignation on the 6th September, 1979. Mr Tomo Riba who headed the People's Party of Arunachal, and hailed from the Adi Community of Siang District, got his chance of forming an alternative ministry. He was sworn in on September 18, 1979 but alas, it went the way of Thungon Ministry again due to defection from the rank. It collapsed within barely two months of its installation. Mr Gegong Apang, also an Adi, who was a Minister in Thungon cabinet, staked his claim for forming a ministry. But the Lt. Governor, Mr R. N. Haldipur who took over the office from Mr K. A. A. Raja on the 18th January, 1979, took a different view and recommended dissolution of the Legislature to the President. The Union Territory thus had its first experience of president's rule though

for a short spell, until a mid term poll was held on January, 1980.

It should be mentioned here that, meanwhile, there was quick change of political fortune on the national scene which saw the end of the Janata rule at the Centre. It collapsed under the weight of its own internal squabbling. Arunachal went to the poll with the rest of the nation on January, 1980. A regional party, called the United Peoples' Party, has been formed in the meantime to fight the election. The contest turned out to be between two main political parties, namely the Congress(I) and the regional party UPPA, headed by Mr Riba. Election to the Parliament was held simultaneously with the Assembly election. The results of the election once again proved the tremendous enthusiasm they generated in the people who had only recently graduated to parliamentary democracy. All the seats were very keenly contested. The West Parliamentary constituency with a total electorate of 1,51,450 returned a Congress(I) candidate, Mr P. K. Thungon who had earlier joined the Congress(I). He polled 41,736 votes over his nearest rival Mr Kuru Hassang of UPPA who got 37,381 votes. The contest in this constituency was five cornered with the total votes cast 1,04,598. The East Parliamentary Constituency with a total electorate of 1,14,616 also chose a Congress(I) candidate in the person of Mr Soben Tayeng who was a minister in the first Thungon cabinet. In a triangular contest, Mr Tayeng secured 34,864 votes as compared to 32,429 votes polled by Mr Bakin Pertin of the UPPA. The total number of votes cast was 78,311. It may be recalled that Mr Pertin was a successful candidate in the first Parliamentary election when he won as an independent candidate.

In the wake of the election to the Union Assembly in January 1980, a Congress(I) ministry headed by Mr Gegong Apang was installed in Arunachal Pradesh. The oath of office and secrecy was administered in a formal ceremony held at Raj Nivas on January 18, 1980, by the Lt. Governor Mr R. N. Haldipur. In the beginning, it was a small cabinet consisting of the Chief Minister Mr Apang, Mr Tengam Ngemu and Mr Khapriso Krong. Eventually, the Council of Ministers was expanded. After the most recent reallocation of portfolios the composition of the Ministry stands as follows :

1. Mr Gegong Apang : All departments not specifically
Chief Minister assigned to any other minister.
2. Mr Khapriso Krong : Agriculture and Rural Develop-
Minister ment, Fisheries, Animal Husbandry, and Veterinary Services.
3. Mr T. Ngemu : Finance, Industry and Labour,
Minister Research, Panchayats.
4. Mr T. Dulom : Health, Information and Public
Minister Relations, Economics and Statistics.
5. Mr T. Tashi : P.W.D. (including power), Law
Minister and Parliamentary Affairs, Rehabilitation and Settlement.
6. Mr Tadar Tang : Co-operation, Supply and Trans-
Minister port.
7. Mr Haijen Ponglaham : Forests.
Dy. Minister
8. Mr Kameng Dolo : Rural Works Department, Re-
Dy. Minister habilitation and Settlement.

Mr T. L. Rajkumar and Mr Pasang Wanchuk were elected Speaker and Deputy Speaker respectively of the new Legislative Assembly.

It should be noted that an important change in the

administrative set-up of the Union Territory was brought about in mid 1981, with a change of the Lt. Governor. The former Lt. Governor Mr R. N. Haldipur proceeded to his new posting as Lt. Governor of Pondicherry. Mr Hari Sankar Dubey was sworn in as the new Lieutenant Governor of Arunachal Pradesh on 23rd July, 1981 in place of Mr Haldipur. Like Mr Haldipur, Mr Dubey was not new to the territory, having had served in Arunachal on two previous occasions. On the last occasion, he held the important portfolio of the Deputy Commissioner (Administration). Originally hailing from Vavnagar in Gujarat, Mr Dubey was born in Aligarh in 1926. He had a distinguished academic carrier, and started as a lecturer for some time at Lucknow University. He joined the Indian Police Service in 1952, the Indian Frontier Administrative Service in 1956, and was inducted into the Indian Administrative Service in 1968. He held many high offices, his last assignment being as Chairman of Himachal Pradesh State Electricity Board before his elevation as Lt. Governor of the Union Territory of Arunachal Pradesh.

RECENT DELIMITATION AND REORGANIZATION OF DISTRICTS IN ARUNACHAL PRADESH

Incidentally we may also note here that, for better administrative convenience and other practical considerations, including, perhaps, territorial distribution of ethnic and linguistic groups, the existing districts have been reorganised, in fact promoting some sub-divisions to the status of full-fledged districts, in accordance with the provisions of the Arunachal Pradesh (Reorganization of Districts) Act, 1980, as notified under the Governments' order of 23rd May, 1980. The following reorganisation of the districts took effect from the 1st June, 1980:

Name of Existing Areas	New Nomenclatures of reorganized districts	Headquarters
1. Kameng district	West Kameng District	Bomdila
2. Seppa sub-division	East Kameng District	Seppa
3. Subansiri District	Lower Subansiri District	Ziro
4. Daporijo sub-division	Upper Subansiri District	Daporijo
5. Siang District	West Siang District	Along
6. Pasighat sub-division	East Siang District	Pasighat
7. Lohit District	Lohit District	Tezu
8. Dibang Valley sub-division	Dibang Valley District	Anini
9. Tirap District	Tirap District	Khonsa

Naturally, in accordance with new reorganization of the districts, the Additional Deputy Commissioners of the former sub-divisions of Seppa, Daporijo, Pasighat, and Dibang Valley have been promoted to the ranks of Deputy Commissioners.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

When the British left in August, 1947, there was no 'core service' worth the name in the interior of the frontier tracts. They did not bother to create a nexus of social-welfare and technical services in the hills. Communication, medical service, educational facilities were as good as non-existent. All that existed by way of communication was 168 kms. of roads in the plains areas, mostly along the foot-hills; there were 13 hospital and dispensaries and one leper colony, all located on the fringe of the hills; educational facilities consisted of two lower primary schools also located at the foot of the hills. So when the Government of India decided to carry the benefits of modern administration and social services to the people in the hills, it was obliged to build from the scratch.

During the year 1948-49, i.e., after Independence, a total expenditure of seven lakhs was incurred for the

whole area. It was about one million rupees in 1949-50 and about twelve lakhs in 1950-51. In 1951-52, the total expenditure went upto three million rupees. It goes without saying that, during all these years, Government spending accounted primarily for the spread of administration into the interior of the hills and building up communication lines, even though rudimentary. The first five year plan sanctioned a total outlay of rupees three crores but the plan itself was ushered in only in 1953. In a true sense, therefore, a full scale development scheme was put into operation in 1953 with definite allotments on different heads of expenditure. The break-up accounted for as follows: Communications Rs. 13,500,000; Medical and Health Services Rs. 6,500,000; Agriculture Rs. 3,200,000; Education and Cottage Industries Rs. 4,800,000; and Forests Rs. 2,000,000.

It should be noted that, in the nature of things, the lion share of the expenditure was allotted to communication. The extension of medical services got into stride in 1951 with the establishment of a separate Medical Department. At the end of the 1st Five-year Plan, there were 19 hospitals, 22 indoor dispensaries, 17 outdoor dispensaries, 20 mobile health units, 3 leper colonies, and 27 anti-malaria units. Similarly, educational programme was inaugurated with 16 middle schools and two high schools at the end of the 1st Five-year Plan period. In the field of communication, a total of 5565 kms. of surface communication, including 368 kms. of all-weather roads, 364 kms. of fair weather roads, 745 kms. of mule and bridle paths and porter tracts were constructed. The total actual expenditure on various heads of development, during the 1st Five-year Plan, amounted to Rs. 20,100,000 (i.e., 67.1 per cent of

in this context that a very large chunk of the expenditure on communication had to be utilized for construction of air-strips at difficult heights for landing of small aircrafts and these for a long time served as uncertain links with the rest of the country.

Allocation for NEFA during the 2nd Five-year Plan totalled a sum of Rs. 50,956,000 and performance at the end of the period (1956-61) involved an expenditure of Rs. 35,644,000, registering thus a slight improvement at 69.9% of the total allocation being spent. In terms of actual expenditure, community development claimed 43%, Agriculture 49%, Engineering 80.2%, Forests 83.6%, Education 86.6% and co-operation 97.6%. In other words, overall performance would have been even higher but for rather poor account in the field of community development.

In the sphere of communication, out of a total plan outlay of Rs. 50,956,000, road construction alone appropriated Rs. 15,400,000 and Rs. 2,560,000 was allotted separately for building of airstrips. At the end of the period, roads were pushed through to all the five divisional headquarters and 13 airstrips of various sizes were constructed. The task of major road building projects were transferred from CPWD to the Border Roads Organization which popularly came to be known as "Tusker".

The Community Development programme, conceived as a part of economic development activities, was started with establishment of an Agricultural Research Institute at Pasighat in 1950. The first Community Project was launched also at Pasighat in 1952. The following year, the first National Extension Service Block came up in Namsang area in the then Tirap Frontier Division. By the end of 1956, there were six Community Blocks,

in each division, covering 206 villages with a total population of little over 60,000. At the end of 1966, the number of Community Blocks rose to 41. In the field of Community Development, 19 National Services Blocks were functioning in NEFA at the end of the 2nd Five-year Plan.

Medical Service also forged ahead during the period. By the end of the 2nd Five Year Plan, eight base hospitals, located at divisional and sub-divisional headquarters, one central laboratory, one training-cum-research centre, a central tuberculosis hospital and 85 health units were added to the list.

In the field of education, more attention was given to consolidation and improvement of existing schools, rather than adding to them. However, four lower primary schools, seven middle schools serving also as inter-village schools, were established. The two high schools were converted into residential schools for the entire region. By the end of the 2nd Five-year Plan, the literacy chart for NEFA stood as follows: (1) Kameng 6,107 (including males and females); (2) Subansiri 3,254; (3) Siang 6,863; (4) Lohit 4,714; (5) Tirap 3,075.

Agriculture was not neglected, attention being paid to introduction of permanent and wet-cultivation wherever feasible in place of wasteful *jhum* cultivation. At the end of the 2nd Five-year Plan, an estimated forty to fifty thousand acres of land was brought under permanent cultivation. This feat was largely accomplished through reclamation of forest lands. Demonstration farms were established at several places.

The Forest Department for the first time earned a revenue of Rs. 5,744,000 from the sale of timbers. The operational activities of the Forest Department, hitherto

confined to the lower regions, was extended to the central hill areas.

The total outlay for the 3rd Five-year Plan was further enhanced, raising it to Rs. 71,500,000. Besides normal allocation for communication, an extra allotment of Rs. 20,800,000 was provided in the plan for improvement of communication. It may be incidentally mentioned that China's extravagant claim to Indian territories south of the McMahon line in 1959 influenced the shaping of the 3rd Plan (1962-66) which was under consideration at the time. The performance at the end of the plan period registered a higher mark. It stood at Rs. 73,239,000 out-stripping the total allotment by Rs. 1,739,000.

Earlier, in view of the increasing strategic importance of the border roads, a Border Road Development Board had come up in New Delhi and the Tusker in NEFA was made subordinate to it. Tusker came under severe criticism previously for slow progress in the execution of construction works and serious charges were brought against it. The unsatisfactory conduct of the Tusker prompted the Government to entrust the construction and improvement of certain strategic highways to Army Engineer Corps in 1963. The targets set for the 3rd Plan with regard to communication were 419 miles of jeepable roads, 153 miles of mule track, 841 miles of porter tracks besides improvement of existing roads. Construction of seven new airstrips and improvement of existing 13 airstrips were undertaken, and completed in record time during the 3rd Plan period.

The Fourth Five Year Plan (1970-74) made an allotment of Rs. 18 crores but actual expenditure at the end of the plan period went up to Rs. 22 crores. The NEFA Admn. originally projected an ambitious plan involving

Rs. 23.68 crores. The Adm. hoped to raise a fund of Rs. 8 to 10 crores out of its own resources, mainly forest, to meet part of the expenditure. But the Central Govt. was reluctant to raise the allotment over Rs. 18 crores. As was to be expected, major emphasis continued to be on improvement of communication.

The pace of development in some important fields till the end of the fourth plan may be summed up as follows:

(a) Food Production. . .	0.90 lakhs tonnes, leaving a deficit of 0.10 lakh tonnes
(b) Area brought under permanent cultivation	22,000 hectares
(c) Power generated. . .	39,000 kw
(d) Number of Primary schools. . .	666
(e) Number of ME Schools	75
(f) Number of High & Higher Secondary Schools	18
(g) Number of colleges	1
(h) Number of HD/Dispensaries	104
(i) Number of District Hospital	6
(j) Hospital beds per 1000 population	1.94 beds
(k) Number of Veterinary Dispensaries & Aid Centres	90
(l) Road-surfaced 1480 km ; unsurfaced 3200 km.	i.e. 5.6 km. per 100 sq. km. as against the National average of 36 km. per 100 sq. km.

It should be mentioned in this context that, as early as the fifties, the Central Water and Power Commission made topo-sheet survey of hydel potential for generation of power from the major rivers of Arunachal Pradesh. As major hydel projects were considered both time-consuming and expensive, the Central Water and Power Commission and the CPWD which was associated with it hit upon the idea of micro-hydel projects as ideally suited to the conditions in Arunachal. By the end of the 4th Plan period, the following micro-hydel projects were completed:

1. Rahung.....	750 kw
2. Pasighat.....	200 kw
3. Basar.....	100 kw

We may make a passing reference here to Government's policy on land settlement for which initially a sum of Rs. 1.80 crores was set aside in the 4th Plan. It was proposed to resettle some retired Army personnel and Assam Rifles ex-servicemen and Behari labourers in available vacant lands in Arunachal. It appears a number of Assam Rifles ex-servicemen, mostly Nepalese, were settled in the extreme north-eastern section of the Tirap district, near what is now known as Vijaynagar, in accordance with a plan approved by the Central Government and under the direction of the Inspector General of Assam Rifles. Some labourers, also predominantly Nepalese, were provided with a house site and small plots of land for cultivation at the rate of one house per mile of road. There, however, was never any question of land settlement in a big way and, besides, there was vigorous opposition from the beginning to any such programme from the tribal population. Unforeseen circumstances created some problems for the

Administration following the influx of a large number of Tibetan refugees, Burmese and Pakistani refugees after 1959. Initially, it was decided to permit settlement of a limited number of Tibetan refugees in each division. But the scheme was never carried out to the extent it was originally contemplated, due presumably to possible political repercussions.

Since 1963, further complications arose due to two separate streams of tribal refugees from Burma and erstwhile Pakistan (now Bangladesh) entering the Tirap District of Arunachal bordering on those countries. The first wave from Burma consisted mostly of Lisus, which swelled to a sizable number of five to six thousand by 1965. Government's attempt to push them back having proved futile, they were allowed to settle around Vijaynagar on humanitarian grounds. The area was sparsely populated by tribesmen, and also included some of non-tribal lands. The second wave, chiefly from Chittagong Hill Tracts, comprised Hajong and Chakmas coming through the Ledo area. The Government tried with limited success to settle them around Miao area. Incidentally, the local-tribal population has recently been showing increasing resentment and displeasure against the presence of these outsiders, accusing them of all kinds of unruly behaviour.

We may discuss here in brief the Administration's policy on education which at times lent itself to controversy. We shall not enter into this controversy here, which centred around mainly the question of medium of instruction. But we must reckon here that, from the very beginning, the Government's efforts were greatly handicapped by its obligation to introduce a script for the tribal languages. Among the various tribes of Arunachal, only the Khamtis possessed a script origin-

ally derived from the Tai language and a few Monpa Lamas possibly could read the Tibetan script. The Adis of course have a very rich oral literature in the form of their Mosup-Abang but they lacked a script in which this could be reduced to writing for posterity. So the Government's dilemma and vacillation on the question of script could be understood to some extent. In other hill areas of the north-east, Roman script had already been introduced by the Missionaries with the connivance and active support of the then British rulers. The North-East Frontier Tracts were the only exception where no efforts had been made to introduce a script or education in a big way.

It was, however, decided to begin with that local language should be used as the medium of instruction even before the problem of script in which the text-books were to be produced, was resolved. As a result, the teachers used either Hindi or Assamese depending the background of the teachers and the capacity of the pupils to follow either language according to their training.

It was, however, known that text-books in local languages produced since 1951 were in Devanagari Script. There was opposition from the Assamese public opinion to this policy on the ground that a broken form of Assamese was for long the accepted lingua franca between the hill people and the plains people. The NEFA Admn. obviously yielded to pressure, and revised its earlier decision on the question. But this was not the end of the matter. More changes followed on the policy in 1962 and, at the end of 1965, the position with regard to medium of instruction worked out as follows: instruction in Assamese began in grade one, Hindi in grade three and English in grade four. The upshot of

these changes introduced from time to time in respect of the language formula resulted in all the emphasis being placed on learning of languages. Fifty percent of the school periods (24 out of 42 per week) had to be spent on language instruction.

We shall only make a passing reference here to the fact that basic education was introduced at all levels from the very beginning. In view of the main occupation of the people of Arunachal, agriculture was accepted as the central craft in Basic Education. A time came, however, when the educated youth of Arunachal voiced their opposition to Basic Education, and declared themselves categorically in favour of formal education even at the lower stages. They argued that formal education alone will qualify them for important position in Admn. and elsewhere. They possibly considered that the basic form of education was a waste of time.

In spite of hurdles and difficulties which beset the problem of education as indicated above, Arunachal continued to make rapid progress. We can best tell the story in terms of figures. Practically within a decade of the introduction of a broad-based policy on education, the people of Arunachal made no mean progress. The earliest figures of literacy available to us are according to 1961 census. These are as follows:

<i>District</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Total</i>
Kameng	5,678	429	6,107
Subansiri (Ziro)	2,722	135	2,857
Daporijo	372	25	397
Siang (Along)	3,833	219	4,052
Pasighat	2,451	360	2,811
Lebit (Tezu)	3,590	664	4,254
Reing/Anini	415	45	460
Tirap	2,696	379	3,075

The progress registered among the scheduled tribe population during the next decade, i.e., according to 1971 census, is noted in the following table:

Arunachal/ Districts	Percentage of Literates			Educational Institutions	
	Persons	Males	Females	Number	Per- centage
Arunachal					
Pradesh	5.20	8.72	1.70	559	100.00
Siang	7.71	12.91	2.61	182	32.56
Lohit	7.38	11.86	2.98	78	13.95
Tirap	4.76	8.20	1.30	137	24.51
Kameng	3.28	5.18	1.31	81	14.49
Subansiri	3.16	5.64	0.72	81	14.49

As against the overall literacy rate calculated at about 11.29%, the literacy rate among the scheduled tribes population accounted for 5.20%. It cannot obviously be claimed that the picture is very inspiring. For lack of space, we cannot go into a critical estimate of relative figures of literacy and education here, and prefer to leave it to our readers to draw their own conclusions with regard to the discrepancy between male literacy and female literacy and that between the number of institutions and the rate of literacy in each district. For a detailed analysis, readers may like to refer to the forthcoming publication of the present author (*Arunachal Through the Ages*). We will only note here in passing that, according to provisional estimate of 1981 census, the overall literacy figure works out at 20.09% as compared to 11.29% in 1971. Separate percentage of literacy in respect of each scheduled tribe population has not been released yet. There is however another direction from which to look at the prob-

lem. According to 1971 Census, literacy among the scheduled tribe population in Arunachal was as high as 38.8% in urban areas compared to only 4.92% in rural areas. The Siang district is much ahead of other districts with 49.58% of its urban population being literate.

Reverting back again to economic progress, the Fifth Five-year Plan (1975-79) made an allotment of 63 crores for Arunachal Pradesh but, in terms of performance, the expenditure came up barely to 39 crores. It was partly due to the fact that the Plan was not allowed to run its full course, and was replaced by the so-called 'Rolling Plan' during the Janata rule. A few statistical figures with regard to performance may be in place here. In the field of health, one district hospital, five dispensary-cum-health units and one T.B. hospital were added to the existing institutions. Power generation registered a higher mark with the following micro-hydel projects having been completed.

1. Along	...	400 kw
2. Tawang	...	1500 kw
3. Tezu	...	400 kw
4. Ziro	...	2000 kw
5. Sappers	...	1500 kw

Till the completion of the above hydel projects, 500 villages in the Union Territory had been provided with electricity and it was expected that an additional 170 villages would get electricity by the end of the plan period. The ultimate object of power generation in Arunachal Pradesh is replacement of diesel-operated plants entirely by micro-hydel projects.

During the first two years of the Fifth Plan, an additional 2,454 hectares of land was brought under per-

manent cultivation against the plan target of 9,950 hectares. The figures for the rest of the plan period, however, were not available. It may be recalled, the position in this regard at the end of the Fourth Plan was 22,000 hectares.

Horticulture received special attention during the Fifth Plan. 88,000 number of temperate fruit plants had been procured from Himachal and U.P. Government and distributed to cultivators during the first year of the Fifth Plan and 1.50 lakh temperate fruit plants were supplied during the second year. 150 nos. of Peoples Horticulture Gardens were established during 1974-75 and about 200 such gardens, each of 1-2 acres units were set up during 1975-76. Of the various plantation crops in view, precedence was to be given to tea, coffee and rubber. We shall have more to say on the prospect of these cash crops further on.

A sum of Rupees twelve crores and eighty four lakhs had been envisaged in the Fifth Plan on account of construction of bridges and cross-drainage works besides road building with a tentative target of 1639 km roads. The figures available for the first two years showed that 183.44 km of roads had been constructed and 135.00 km of existing roads improved. In the field of road construction, the Union Territory of Arunachal Pradesh still compared very unfavourably with the national average of 36 km per 100 sq. km., the average of 24 km. per 100 sq. km. in other Union Territories, and the average of 30 km. per 100 sq. km. in Nagaland.

The Government of Arunachal Pradesh decided to introduce its first State Transport service during the 5th plan with an initial expenditure of 76 lakhs. The Government proposed to procure a fleet of 16 Omnibuses at a cost of 27 lakhs. The time-schedule prepared for

introduction of transport services along five routes was as follows.

Name of route	Distance	The year of opening of services
1. Itanagar to North Lakhimpur	40 km.	1975-76
2. Khonsa to Naharkatia	72 km.	1975-76
3. Bomdila to Tezpur	163 km.	1976-77
4. Ziro to North Lakhimpur	115 km.	1976-77
5. Likabali to Daporijo	215 km.	1978-79

Even though some delay in the initiation of the services was caused by late delivery of vehicles, services were started on Khonsa-Naharkatia route on 15.12.1975 and Itanagar-North Lakhimpur route on 4.3.1976. Simultaneously with introduction of road services, projects were taken on hands for improvement of tourist sites among which were Saly Lake near Roing in Lohit district and Game Sanctuary in Tirap district at Namdhapa. Improvement of tourist spots in and around Tawang where the famous Buddhist Lamasery is situated was also on the card.

CONCLUSION

In summing up, we may give a resume of the noteworthy achievements in most recent years bringing our story as up to date as possible. Till about 1972, the position with regard to road communication was a total length of 1,176 kms. During the years between 1972 and 1980 the situation improved considerably as about 6,000 kms. of roads linked the various district and sub-divisional headquarters. An additional eighty kilometres of road, both surfaced and unsurfaced, have been

completed since then, and another 200 kms. was targeted for 1981-82. Some important bridges including the Pacha bridge in East Kameng district have been completed.

An outline of future development programme in this sphere may be appropriate here. Besides road communication, plans have been drawn up and approved for construction of railway links between Balipara in Assam and Bhalukpong in Arunachal and between Tibling and Itanagar, and also between Murkongselec, the railway terminus in Assam, and Pasighat in Arunachal during the Sixth Plan period.

The state Transport service at present cover a total distance of 1,000 kms. linking the various points in the interior of Arunachal. During 1980, 5 more Omnibuses were added to the existing fleet of vehicles and services have been introduced between Likabali and Daporijo (225 kms) and between Tezpur and Bomdila (160 kms).

The power generation from various micro-hydel projects already completed rose to a total installed capacity of 10,770 kilowatts in 1980. We give below a comparative statement of the projects already commissioned, and those which are currently under construction.

Micro-Hydel projects Already commissioned		Micro-Hydel projects under Construction	
1. Rahung	... 750 kw	1. Anini	... 50 kw
2. Pasighat	... 200 kw	2. Tuting	... 50 kw
3. Basar	... 100 kw	3. Seppa	... 200 kw
4. Along	... 400 kw	4. Daporijo	... 300 kw
5. Tezu	... 400 kw	5. Yinkiyong	... 200 kw
6. Ziro	... 2000 kw	6. Mai (ii)	... 1000 kw
7. Tawang	... 1500 kw	7. Shergaon	... 5 kw
8. Kalaktang	... 10 kw	8. Sirpo	... 200 kw
9. Taksing	... 10 kw	9. Roing	... 500 kw
10. Dirang	... 1500 kw	10. Pachin	... 300 kw
11. Tirezto	... 750 kw	11. Ampani	... 100 kw
		12. Siku	... 1000 kw
		13. Nirochnala	... 1000 kw

Achievement in the field of agriculture which remains the main pursuit of the people of Arunachal, was of no mean order. Against the production level of 1,14,000 metric tonnes during 1978-79 and 1,22,000 metric tonnes during 1979-80, the production level exceeded 1,31.00 metric tonnes during 1980-81.

The latest figures available in respect of areas under production of different varieties of crops are given in the table below (in hectares):

Crops	1977-78		1978-79	
	Area	Production	Area	Production
1. Paddy	78,229.04	1,13,253.97	80,273.00	1,26,593.30
2. Maize	28,790.00	26,142.00	21,148.00	26,191.00
3. Millet	15,678.00	12,086.00	16,481.00	13,686.00
4. Wheat	1,482.00	2,110.00	1,563.00	2,277.00
5. Buckwheat	568.00	486.00	NA	NA
6. Barley	1,360.00	1,612.00	NA	NA
7. Mustard	7,103.00	4,787.00	5,807.00	5,140.00
8. Pulses	910.00	709.00	967.00	792.00
9. Potato	649.00	3,561.00	792.00	4,652.00
10. Sweet Potato	158.00	494.00	161.00	569.00
11. Ginger	211.00	652.00	265.00	751.00
12. Tobacco	190.00	100.00	190.00	82.00
13. Sugar-Cane	468.00	1,368.00	490.00	1,607.00
14. Sesamum	72.00	34.00	107.00	126.00
15. Soyabean	242.00	197.00	200.00	150.00
16. Turmeric	58.00	175.00	100.00	292.00
17. Chillie	431.00	667.00	390.00	230.00
18. Vegetable	1,342.00	4,239.00	1,884.00	5,734.00
19. Cotton	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil

With regard to land reclamation for advancement of agriculture in Arunachal, one has to reckon with the fact that about 61.91% of the geographical area comes under various types of forests and rest are distributed over the foot-hills, narrow valleys, and steep hill slopes. Hardly little more than 4% of the total land area is avail-

able for agricultural operation. Of this, over 70% of cultivation is done under the age-old and traditional *Jhuming* which is a wasteful process. Settled type of agriculture has been extended till now to 30% of the arable land. According to agricultural census conducted in 1976-77, the net cultivated area was estimated at 84,539,626 hectares while the area under current fallow was reckoned at 24,765,478 hectares.

In this context, we may also note that a new method known as 'the watershed management method of cultivation' has been successfully experimented in Arunachal Pradesh under the aegis of North-Eastern Council at an initial cost of Rs. 1.04 crores. The Popum Poma watershed management project is aimed at rehabilitating 400 tribal families in settled cultivation. The concept of watershed management is supposed to be an improved method over the old pilot schemes for control of wasteful *Jhum* cultivation, and it consist in optimum use of natural resources of land and water within a natural physiographic or hydrological unit. The scheme is likely to be extended to other parts of the Union Territory in a phased manner.

In the field of horticulture, experiment is already under way with apple, plum, pear, walnut, chestnut, orange and guava. A Regional Apple Nursery has been set up at Dirang in the Kameng district with the financial assistance of North-Eastern Council. 35,000 apple trees have started bearing fruits and this cash crop is certain to add to the economic prosperity of the area.

Alongside agriculture, rearing of livestock was known to, and practised by, the tribal population of Arunachal Pradesh. The most ubiquitous were the pigs and mithuns. With the setting up of 3 veterinary dispensaries, 6 veterinary aid centres and the one diagnostic laboratory

in 1980-81, the total number of such institutions has risen to 67, 76, and 4 respectively. 8 cattle breeding farms, 77 cattle up-grading centres, one sheep farm, one goat farm, 4 poultry farms, 2 piggery farms, 8 sheep and wool extension centres and 30 key village sub-centres have already come up.

In the above context we may as well take stock of the existing man-power engaged in different categories of occupations in Arunachal according to 1971 census.

SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF WORKERS

Categories of Works	Workers—1971		Remarks
	Number	Percentage	
1. Cultivators	2,11,160	78.34	Mining and quarrying, transport storage and communication shares are still negligible.
2. Agricultural labourers (wage earners)	5,292	1.96	
3. Livestock, Fisheries, Forestry etc.	366	0.14	
4. (a) Household Industries	833	0.31	
(b) Other than household	103	0.04	
5. Construction	263	0.10	
6. Trade & commerce	1,551	0.58	
7. Other services	49,961	18.54	

It is at once noticed from above that the people of Arunachal are still predominantly agriculturists.

This is, however, not to say that Arunachal lacks natural resources around which an industrial complex can be built up. A notable step in this direction has already been taken with the setting up of a mini cement plant with a capacity of producing 30 tonnes of cement per day at Tezu in collaboration with the Cement Research Institute. The Cement Corporation of India has undertaken feasibility study for establishment of 200 tpd cement plant at Tidding in Lohit district.

We have already noticed that forests cover more than 60 per cent of the territory in Arunachal Pradesh. Forest-based industries such as paper pulp, paper mills, match-wood factory, fibre-board factories, plywood and hard-board manufacturing, timber-treatment and seasoning, resin and turpentine manufacturing industries are distinct possibilities. Steps are already under way for realization of these objectives. Today there are 18 saw mills, 7 veneer mills, and 7 plywood mills operating in Arunachal. The Norottam Co-operative Industries Limited at Narottam Nagar near Deomali in Tirap district is a classic example of forest-based industry in Arunachal. The Industrial Development Bank of India, the ICICI, IFCI and other financial institutions are showing interest in the industrial growth of Arunachal.

We have noticed earlier that the Government is seriously pursuing a plan for putting Arunachal Pradesh in the tea Map of India. Basar in the East Siang District has been selected for a 400 hectare tea garden in the joint sector.

Forests, as we have already noticed, constitute the chief wealth of Arunachal. A continuous regeneration and replenishment programme naturally received the urgent attention of the Government. Towards this end, the Forest Department raised teak and hollong plantations over 20,000 hectares by artificial regeneration method; 11,000 hectares of hollong, makahi and other plantations by a natural regeneration method and 1,200 hectares of pine plantations under the afforestation scheme. Coffee plantation on 800 hectares of Forest land and big Cardamom plantations on 300 hectares of land are other projects taken on hand. A total outlay of Rs. 3.10 lakhs for raising coffee Nursery in Tirap

district is to be borne by the North-Eastern Council. Notice should also be taken in this context of a pilot scheme for improved method of shifting cultivation in five selected areas at a cost of Rs. 11.81 lakhs, Social Forestry Programme at a cost of Rs. 2.58 lakhs, and Soil Water and Tree Conservation Scheme at a cost of Rs. 14.60 lakhs. The above schemes are in various stages of implementation.

Under the aegis of the North-Eastern Council open cost mining and underground mining of coal in Namchik and Nampui areas in Tirap district have been undertaken and exploratory work for the purpose has been entrusted to the Mineral Exploration of India.

In the field of health care also, Arunachal has made remarkable progress. In terms of national average it now ranks in the front line with 127 hospitals and dispensaries having between them 1393 beds and seventeen medical teams for half a million people. National programme such as National Small Pox Eradication, National Malaria Eradication, National Tuberculosis Control, Family Welfare and Child Welfare programmes have been successfully implemented. The number of T.B. hospital has risen to two. The District Tuberculosis programme units are now functioning. Leprosy once endemic in the area has been largely controlled. Temporary Hospitalization Wards and SET centres have been attached to different hospitals for early detection and treatment. Specialist services in surgery, medicine, gynecology and anaesthesiology are now available to the people.

Education has not lagged behind. This will be evident from the number of various grades of institutions functioning in the Union Territory. There are today 875 Primary Schools, 117 Middle Schools, 26 Secondary

Schools, 10 Higher Secondary Schools, and 2 Colleges with nearly 65,000 students on the rolls. Vocational courses have been introduced in six Higher Secondary schools at + 2 stages. 60 centres under the Farmers Functional Literacy Project and 90 centres under Non-Farmers Education Programme, all engaged in imparting some form of education to 10,000 adults have been established all over the territory. In fact, adult education programme is being implemented through 527 centres including 35 centres sanctioned during 1980-81. In the same year, 2000 additional students were awarded stipends taking the total number of borders in various school hostels to 10,561.

Concluding, we may as well give a consolidated list of some major schemes for development included in the Sixth Plan in which the North-Eastern Council will participate by extending its expertise and financial assistance.

1. Agriculture and Allied Programme.
2. Regional Foundation of Seed Potato Farm at Tawang.
3. Regional Vegetable Seed Farm at Tawang.
4. Expansion of Foundation for Potato Production Seed Farm.
5. Regional Apple Nursery at Dirang.
6. Watershed Management Projects at selected areas.
7. Nursery for Coffee.
8. Nursery for Tea.
9. Bud Wood Nursery for Rubber.
10. Regional Hill Cattle Breeding-cum-Demonstration Farm at Kamki.
11. Regional Fodder Seed Production-cum-Demonstration Farm at Kamki.

12. Establishment of Muga Food Plant and Oak Plant Nurseries.
13. Scheme for preservation of Oak-Tassar Seed Cocon.
14. Fellowship and Short Term Training Programme.
15. Industries and Mining.
16. Roads and Bridges.

We cannot omit from this account the high hopes raised recently of possible sources of petroleum wealth in the Union Territory. Geological explorations, it has been clamied, indicated existence of oil-bearing rocks over a very wide area extending from eastern Siang district right up to the Burma border, and also over an area extending from Rangandi in Subansiri district to Balukpara. Prospecting for oil has already begun and result are anxiously awaited.

TABLE 1

**DISTRIBUTION OF SCHEDULED TRIBES POPULATION
IN ARUNACHAL PRADESH IN RESPECT OF PRINCIPAL
TRIBES ACCORDING TO 1971 CENSUS**

Principal Tribes/ Linguistic Groups	Population	Percentage to Total Population
1. Monpas & Sherdukpens	29,447	7.97
2. Nishang/Nishi/Bangni group	1,02,886	27.85
3. Sulungs	4,250	1.15
4. Apatanis	12,888	3.49
5. Tagins	20,376	5.52
6. Hill Miris/Mishing	8,174	2.21
7. Adi group	1,00,600	27.24
8. Tangsa group	13,546	3.67
9. Noctes	24,292	6.58
10. Khamtis	4,078	1.10
11. Wanchos	28,650	7.76
12. Other Tribes	20,188	5.46
Total	3,69,408	100.00

TABLE 2
 DISTRICTWISE DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION
 ACCORDING TO 1971 CENSUS

District	Head quarters	Population	Area (in sq. km.)
West Kameng	Bomdila	50,867	13,724
East Kameng	Seppa	55,134	
Upper Subansiri	Daporijo	32,014	14,797
Lower Subansiri	Ziro	80,914	
West Siang	Along	59,242	23,723
East Siang	Pasighat	49,005	
Lohit	Tezu	47,633	24,427
Dibang Valley	Anini	15,232	
Tirap	Khonsa	97,470	6,907
		4,67,511	83,578

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DISTRIBUTION OF TRIBAL POPULATION IN ARUNACHAL PRADESH

Tribe	Kameng District		Subansiri District		Siang District		Lohit District		Tirap District		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1. Dafa (Nishi)	25,245	44.6	35,025	60.5	—	—	—	—	—	—	60,270	20.0
2. Monpa	21,985	38.8	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	21,985	7.3
3. Aka	2,257	3.9	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2,257	0.7
4. Miji	2,080	3.7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2,080	0.7
5. Sherdukpen	1,154	2.0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,154	0.4
6. Sulung	1,121	2.0	441	0.8	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,562	0.5
7. Bangru	983	1.7	681	1.1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,664	0.5
8. Tagin	227	0.4	8,419	14.5	15,878	15.6	—	—	—	—	24,524	8.1
9. Apa Tani	—	—	10,909	18.8	—	—	—	—	—	—	10,909	3.6
10. Hill Miri	—	—	1,859	3.2	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,859	0.6
11. Adis	—	—	—	—	77,208	76.0	3,069	10.1	—	—	80,277	26.6
12. Memba & Khamba	—	—	—	—	3,109	3.1	—	—	—	—	3,109	1.3
13. Mishmi	—	—	—	—	380	0.4	21,970	72.4	—	—	22,350	7.4
14. Khampti	—	—	—	—	—	—	2,556	8.4	38	0.1	2,594	0.9
15. Singpho	—	—	—	—	—	—	373	1.2	609	1.1	982	0.3
16. Wancho	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	23,393	42.8	23,393	7.8
17. Nocte	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	19,349	35.4	19,349	6.4
18. Tangsa	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	10,635	19.5	10,635	3.5
19. Others	1,689	2.9	603	1.1	4,963	4.9	2,376	7.9	590	1.1	10,221	3.4
	56,741		57,937		101,538		30,344		54,614		301,174	100.00

1. By courtesy Directorate of Research, Arunachal Pradesh Administration.

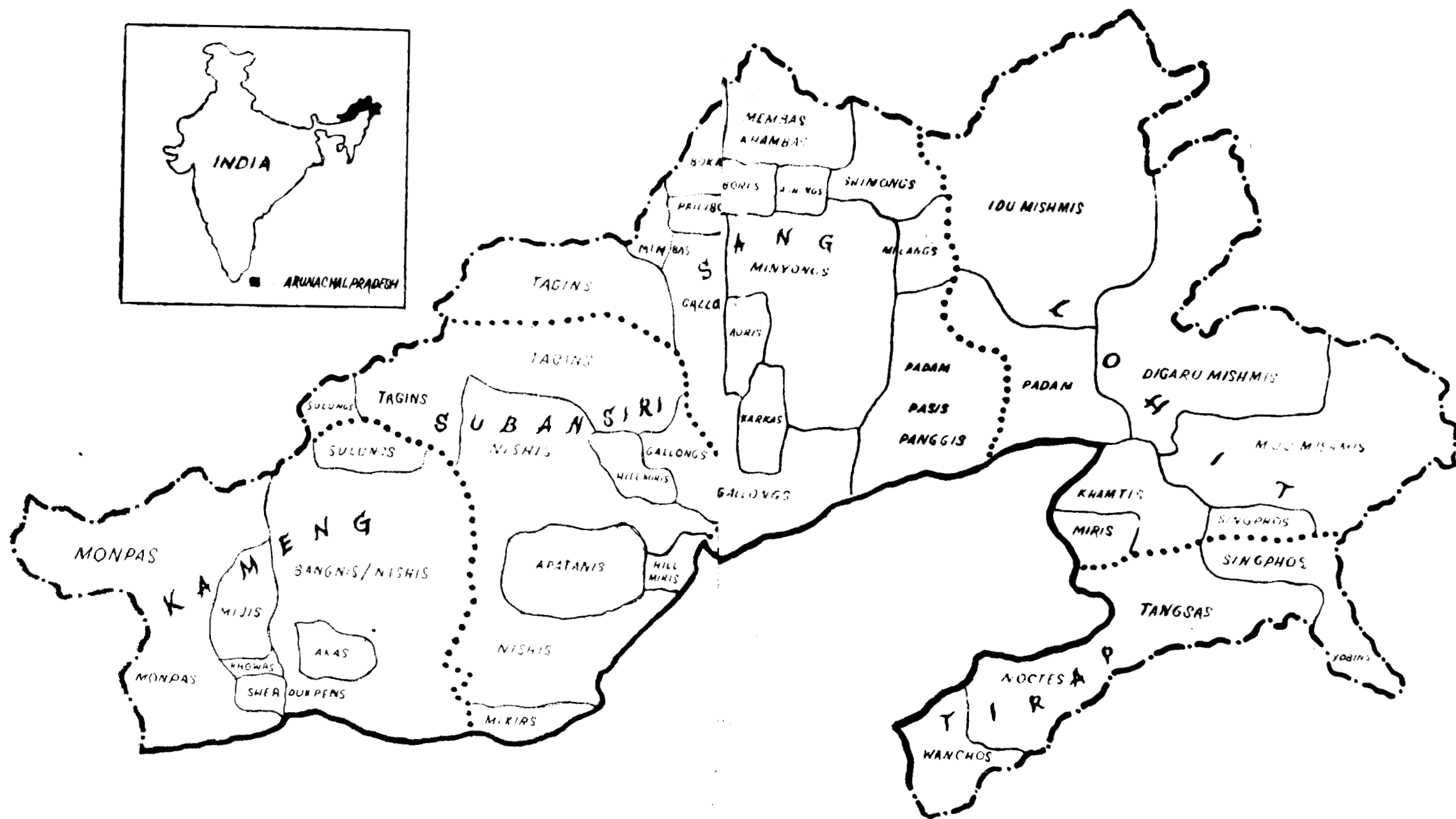
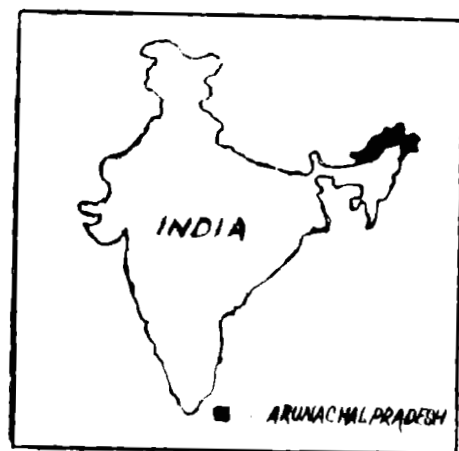
2. The table shows distribution of tribal population in Arunachal Pradesh according to 1961 census. The break-up figures of tribal population as recorded in 1971 census unfortunately are not immediately available.

**DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION DISTRICTWISE OF
ARUNACHAL PRADESH
AS PER 1991 (PROV) CENSUS**

State/ District	Head Quarter/ Capital	Total Popu- lation	Density of population 1991 (per Km.)	
		Population In 1981 (and rank)	Population in 1991 (and rank)	
ARUNACHAL PRADESH	ITANAGAR	6,31,839	8,58,392	10
1. TAWANG	TAWANG	21,735	27,574	13
2. WEST KAMENG	BOMDILA	41,567	56,402	7
3. EAST KAMENG	SEPPA	42,736	50,238	12
4. LOWER SUBAN- SIRI] ZIRO ITANAGAR	112,650	154,591	11
5. PAPUM PARE				
6. UPPER SUBAN- SIRI	DAPORIJO	39,410	49,163	7
7. WEST SIANG	ALONG	68,320	89,778	7
8. EAST SIANG	PASIGHAT	76,295	99,985	15
9. DIBANG VALLEY	ANINI	30,978	42,928	3
10. LOHIT	TEZU	69,498	109,632	9
11. CHANGLANG	CHANGLANG	62,211	92,891	19
12. TIRAP	KHONSA	66,439	85,210	36

SEX RATIO : 861 FEMALES
PER 1000 MALES.

LITERACY BY SEX : TOTAL 282,147 = 32.87 P.C.
MALES 190,691 FEMALES 91,456.



ARUNACHAL PRADESH DISTRIBUTION OF TRIBAL GROUPS

(Population over one thousand, 1961 Census)