

THE ETHNOGRAPHY OF THE NAGAS OF EASTERN ASSAM.

BY

W. H. FURNESS, M.A., M.D., Philadelphia.

[PRESENTED OCTOBER 28TH, 1902. WITH PLATES XLIV-XLVI.]

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WERE not the gigantic Himalayas so near and ever-present, the Naga Hills of Eastern Assam, even though not snow-clad, would be worthy of the dignity of being termed mountains. This chain of so-called hills stretches from the south-eastern borders of Tibet, between Lat. 20° and 26° , almost due south to the sea, forming a dividing wall between Assam and Burma. The peaks range in height from 4,000 to 10,000 or 12,000 feet, and in general are wooded to their very summits.

The dwellers on this chain of semi-tropical jungle-clad mountains are, without distinction, all known to the inhabitants of the plains of Assam as Nagas, but to the mountaineers themselves this is but a courtesy title to be used only when speaking of themselves, adding "Naga" to their own peculiar tribal name.

The origin of thus collectively naming these wild tribes Nagas can only be conjectured; possibly they were confused with the mythical demi-gods called Nagas, with whom the gods of the early Aryans had to contend, or possibly they were called Nagas owing to the serpent worship introduced after the Mongol invasion of the north-east of India. There seems to be no trace, however, of this serpent worship now remaining among these tribes. Or, it has been suggested that Naga is a corruption of the word *nanga*, meaning naked. The Nagas of the hills, reaching from the Tibetan border in the north as far as the district of Manipur in the south, may be, roughly speaking, included in the same general class as are their languages, viz., as Tibeto-Burman. In the facial contour, however, they have little more than a trace of their Mongolian or Tibetan ancestry; the drawing down of the inner angle of the eye, so emphatically marked in all Mongolian races, is but slightly noticeable among the Nagas, and the high cheek-bones seem to have been softened down by amalgamation with the flat-faced Burman. They are short in stature, yet lightly built, unlike the mountain people of the Himalayas. In fact, the Nagas resemble more closely the natives of the Malayan Archipelago than any of the other races inhabiting the hills or plains of India and Assam. Although their languages have been classed, in the Census Report of Assam for 1891, as belonging to the Tibeto-Burman family, so little is known about these numerous dialects, beyond certain vocabularies of the more important tribes, this classification is, at best, tentative.

An exhaustive grammatical study of the Naga language would be an almost hopeless task ; possibly there is no portion of the world of an equal area where so many dialects are spoken. Not only has each tribe a distinct form of speech, always liable to rapid changes, but also, in several instances, the clans, notably the Mongsem and Chungli clans of the Ao tribe, living in the same villages and working in the same field, speak almost totally different dialects ; each understanding the other, to be sure, but the member of one clan speaking his own clan language, until, in the case of marriage, the woman adopts the speech of her husband's household. The similarity of certain words and of grammatical construction, in the dialects of the Naga Hills, is admirably shown by Mr. A. W. Davis in the Census Report of Assam for 1891, in the chapter on languages, pp. 163-183.

The Nagas are farmers rather than hunters, and now that the Indian Government has assumed control over the larger part of the hills south of the Dikku river, and has thrown a depressing damper on the distracting and highly diverting pastime of human head-hunting in raids on the hills and even in the tea-gardens of the plains, the Nagas are able to farm their hillside fields in comparative peace, and have become almost self-supporting in the way of food supply ; but nevertheless it costs the Government many thousands of rupees every year to maintain this blissful state.

In travelling from Tamlu, at that time the border village of British control in the north, to Manipur in the south, and thence in a south-easterly direction to Mandalay in Burmah, I had the opportunity of observing the following tribes of Nagas in the order named :—The Miris, the Aos, the Semas, the Lhotas, the Rengmas, the Angamis, the Kajahmas and Merhamas (the two latter closely akin to Angamis), the Tunkhuls, the Manpuris, and beyond Manipur towards Burma the Aimons.

The different tribes seem to have settled in certain definite localities and there established their villages on the very crests of the hills, whence an extended view of the country round about may be obtained, and where sudden attacks are almost impossible owing to the acclivity of the approaches. The villages are furthermore protected by having the paths leading to them sunken, so that the attacking party when trapped in one of these ditches is at the mercy of the villagers above. The segregation of the tribes and the hilltop villages is undoubtedly for protection to the whole tribe and to the villages themselves, but there does not appear to be a marked tribal unity ; there is no one man whom any single tribe regards as a chief or leader. They have their definite customs, their tribal peculiarities, and their language by which they recognize each other, and although the villages seem to be the units of the tribal life, there are yet smaller divisions within the villages themselves which, to borrow a term from chemistry, appear to be the molecules of which the tribe is composed ; these are the *khels* or wards into which the village is divided. Some villages are made up of but two *khels*, others have four or five, some as many as

eight, and each *khel* has its head-man or chief, and apparently is united in a zealous obedience and loyalty to its leader. To any one but a dweller in the village the boundaries of these *khels* are unknown; there is no wall or fence between them and no stone or stake to mark where one *khel* begins and another ends. There is of course free communication between the different *khels* in a village; the members intermarry, they assist one another in the cultivation of the fields, they help to build houses for each other, and together they clear pathways through the jungle to the rice fields and between villages; yet there are often bitter inter-*khel* feuds and consequent bloody contests between the inhabitants of the same village, one *khel* against the other, albeit bound together by ties of marriage and kinship. To show to what extent this independence of the different *khels* exists an incident is given in the Assam Census Report for 1891, where a Naga gave a jocular description of an attack on his village, in the course of which one man, five women and twenty children were slaughtered in one of the *khels*, while those of an adjoining *khel* stood by and never lent a hand to their neighbours. The narrator declared that he never saw such rare sport as the killing of the children; it was, he added, just like killing chickens.

Over each *khel*, as I have mentioned, presides a head-man who, as far as I could ascertain, is self-appointed; that is, when a man has a sufficient following of friends or relatives who are willing to split off from their native village and either move to an unoccupied hilltop or establish themselves in another village or in a different location in their own village as a separate *khel*, they follow their leader and as a co-operative body build houses and clear new fields. Why certain men should have a following and exactly in what manner the followers remunerate their head-man I was unable to learn. The head-man of the *khel* lives always in the best built and largest house, and in front of his door there are usually to be seen several large forked stakes, symbolizing the heads of sacrificed wild bulls, or near by are several large boulders which have been dragged up from the valley and placed in the village as mementoes of lavish feasts given to the *khels* by this or that head-man. Such feasts involve no little cost in rupees, large distribution of stores of rice, and the slaughter of many pigs and fowls, but how this wealth is accumulated, whether by the industry of the head-man's family, or whether it is hoarded tribute, I could not find out. The head-man acts as arbiter in points of dispute over land or other property and imposes fines for violation of custom.

I have likened the village *khels* to the molecules of a tribe; let me borrow still further from the molecular theory and designate as atoms, of which the tribal molecules are composed, the *jhats* or clans which enter into the constitution of a *khel*. The *jhats*¹ are apparently family groups claiming descent from different ancestors or founders; possibly—I only tremblingly suggest—they may

¹ The words *khel* and *jhat* are used by the Assamese to indicate the divisions of a town, and family groups; I have borrowed them merely for the sake of uniformity, each tribe of Nagas uses a different word.

be relics of a forgotten totemism; at any rate, in their laws of exogamy they bear a resemblance to totemistic clans, but I was not sufficiently familiar with their languages to trace in the *jhat* names any sacredness of plant or animal, nor were the *jhats* differentiated by the worship of any animal, plant, or stone. I merely offer this as a suggestion for further research. Each *khel* in a village may be made up of one or several *jhats* living amicably together and intermarrying one with the other but never marrying within the *jhat*. I had been led to understand in conversation with Mr. A. W. Davis, then Commissioner of Police for the Naga Hills, and also by an article published some time ago in the *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*,¹ that marriage within the *khel* was against all Naga law, and wives or husbands invariably must be sought outside; on questioning the people of several villages on this subject I received such contradictory answers that at last I found that each one was answering for his or her own particular case; that those who lived in *khels* composed of but one *jhat* declared that marriage within their own *khel* was prohibited, while those living in *khels* composed of several *jhats* declared emphatically that they did not have to go outside of their *khel* to seek a husband or wife. Children belong to their father's *jhat*, but there is nothing either in name, dress, custom, or place of habitation to indicate to what *jhat* they belong—it is only tradition. As the members of one *jhat* may be scattered through several villages many miles apart, it is more than likely that these *jhats* often do get an admixture of new blood. This interdiction of marriage in the *jhat* was undoubtedly designed to prevent inbreeding, but, since the mother's *jhat* is ignored, it is but a half measure, and the marriage of first cousins on the mother's side of the family and also of uncle and niece are unrestricted. In the Rengma village of Kotsoma there are four *khels* but only two *jhats*; three of the *khels* are made up entirely of one *jhat*, so that the men of these three *khels* must look to the fourth for their wives. They told me at this village that in former times men of the Lhoto and Sema tribes used to marry Rengma women, but that the Rengma men never married out of their tribe. In this small village there were eight feeble-minded children and one deaf mute, in all probability the result of too close intermarriage. How the *jhat* obtains its name I was unable to ascertain, its origin is lost in the dim past of three or four generations, but some Nagas maintained that it was the familiar name of the founder of the clan. The *khels* were usually named for some natural feature or from the position of the *khel* in the village, namely, the "upper," the "middle," or the "lower *khel*," or the "*khel* of the large *morang*" or watch house, or the "pond *khel*"; sometimes when composed of only one *jhat* it took its name from this *jhat*; but there is never anything in an individual's name to indicate to what *khel* or to what *jhat* he belongs.

¹ Gertrude M. Godden, "The Nágas and other Frontier Tribes of North East India," *Journ. Anthropol. Inst.*, xxvi, p. 167.

The position of the villages on the crests of hills makes the construction of the houses mechanically difficult owing to the different levels on which they are built. Usually there is a main street or passage way along the ridge of the hill and the houses face each other with their front entrance on the level of the ground and their rear portion built on high piles and overhanging the slope of the hillside. Below the ridge-rows, on another level down the hillside, may be another line of houses scattered all round the knob of the hill or on little valleys and ridges between the crests. There is no attempt at levelling off the irregularities or removing large rocks from the passages between the houses. A heavy thatching of palm leaves and grasses serves as roof and the ridge-pole extends



FIG. 1.—THE VILLAGE OF NAOGONG.

far beyond the end of the house, forming a sort of verandah; or else it stretches out over the street to make a narrow and long gable-end which dovetails in with a similar extension on the roof of the house opposite, thereby almost completely roofing over the street between the fronts of the houses. Naga dwellings are not usually supplied with the luxury of a front door, but are quite well appointed if furnished with a screen of matting, which can be fastened up and held in place by two long poles crossed over it and tied to the door posts on either side. The side walls are about 4 feet high and are overhung by the eaves, so that there is small chance of the wind and rain beating through the strips of bamboo of which these walls are woven. The ground plan of the Naga houses is, in its main features, uniform in the several tribes that I visited; in some villages, where the hilltop or

ridge was broad, the houses were all on the flat ground and had no rear portion raised on piles. Beneath the overhanging front gable, separated from the rest of the house, there is quite often a small room closed in with upright poles whereto screens of bamboo are tied; this room is occupied by the old grandfather of the family, or else it is reserved for widows and old people who have no one to look after them. The front entrance to a house is usually barred, ineffectually it must be added, against stray pigs and dogs by a fence of broad posts about 2 feet high, with a slip-stake in the centre which can be removed or replaced when the pigs belonging to the household are to be driven in and confined for the night. When one steps over this barrier, and by good luck avoids stepping on a pig, a dog, a hen, or a baby, one enters the rice-pounding room; the floor is covered deep with the chaff of rice-husks, wherein fowls scratch and pigs burrow for stray grains of rice. On one side stands the trough-like rice-mortar, and on the other side is a rack whereon are hung rows of skulls of sacrificed cows, wild bulls, pigs, and not infrequently human skulls taken in head-hunting raids. Tucked in the loops of rattan and split bamboo, wherewith the house posts, partition walls and thatch are tied together, are all sorts of native-made farming implements, such as small hoes, short axes called *dhaus*, spear heads, snares for birds and small animals, sharp stakes of hard wood used for stabbing to death pigs and dogs at ceremonial feastings; water bottles made from gourds, etc., all rusty, dusty, dirty and soot-begrimed.

From the rice-pounding room one enters, through a narrow doorway, also provided with a barrier of wobbly stakes, the main large room of the house. In houses directly on the hillside, the floor of this room is slightly excavated, so as to make it level for at least two-thirds of its length. It is always exceedingly dark. Its only illumination sifts in under the eaves and through the narrow doorway at either end, and to add to the darkness, the smoke from the smouldering embers upon the hearth in the centre of the room obscures everything. The furniture consists of a few boards and very low benches (four inches high perhaps) which are placed round the central fireplace, where the housewives cook the food by day, and where the family and friends gather to gossip and smoke by night. At the far end of the room is a raised platform of boards or of coarse and heavy bamboo matting, whereon the father of the family, his wife, his daughters, and very young sons sleep, merely wrapped in their cotton blankets, without pillow or head rest. The young men of the household sleep at the "bachelor house" or *morang*, with which each *khel* is provided—except in the villages of the Sema and Angami tribes—therefore there is no need of separate rooms in the houses. In the Sema and Angami villages, where there are no *morangs*, there are separate alcoves in the main division of the houses, some of which are allotted to young girls, some to men. Beyond the main room, and corresponding to the rice-pounding room in the front, is a small room devoted to the storage of the tubs wherein the rice-beer (food and drink to every Naga) is made, and herein are stacked all the appliances needed in the brewing, wickerwork

sieves, funnel-shaped strainers of split bamboo, paddles for stirring the fermenting mash of rice, and pervading everywhere a nauseous sour smell, so heavy that it can barely escape through the doorway or the chinks in the wall. Beyond this brewery extends a slatted platform of bamboo projecting over the hillside and supported on high poles. So flimsy were these platforms in appearance, that I never dared trust my weight on them, but it is not unusual for the women to make workrooms of them in the daytime, and there set up their primitive and simple looms, and weave or card the native grown and home-spun cotton. They are chiefly used, however, for drying the rice before husking, and for spreading out the freshly dyed cotton thread.

Through the uneven thoroughfares and byways between the houses lean and lanky pigs, hungry dogs, and ruffle-feathered chickens forage for stray food; children clad in nothing but a small patch of hair on the crown of their head play games without toys other than pebbles or bits of wood; and old women stagger to their houses heavily laden with baskets on their backs filled with dry firewood, or they carry earthen jars or long joints of bamboo filled with water from the spring down the hillside. In front of many of the houses, the younger married women sit spinning cotton thread by feeding the fibre on a weighted bobbin, which they spin with their fingers and then hold suspended while it twists the strands; others tie their looms to the house-posts, and, seated on the ground, silently and industriously shift the long shuttle back and forth, weaving strips of cloth about 2 feet wide, which they sew together to make square blankets for themselves, their sons, and their husbands. The men rarely stay in the village during the day. They cultivate the rice-fields, collect fuel in the jungle, and keep clear the jungle paths between the villages of their tribe with whom they have trade in rice, cloth, tobacco, etc. Those who do stay at home employ their time in weaving bamboo matting, wherewith to repair their houses, and in polishing and cutting long beads and pendants for necklaces, from conch shells bought in the Assamese villages in the plains. They are, for the greater part, industrious, and seldom sit round the houses absolutely idle. The mountain air is invigorating and cool. The long nights supply good opportunity for sleep.

In every *khel* (except, as I have said, in the villages of the Semas and Angamis), usually on the highest ground, is a large well built house more open in front than the ordinary houses, and decorated with carving on the posts supporting the roof; this is the *morang* or "bachelors' house." Here is the assembly room for councils and dances, and the sleeping quarters for the young men of the *khel*. The *morang*, in the wild days before the hills were tamed, was the watch-house whence alarms were sounded, and where a close scrutiny of the gates in the stockade round the village or of the narrow sunken pathways leading thereto, was at all times maintained. When enemies attacked, the whole village was aroused by a loud beating on a long hollowed log, kept either in the verandah of the *morang* or in a thatched shed close by. These alarm gongs came to be regarded with almost sacred awe, because at the sound of their voice all

work ceased, sleep was forgotten, and the whole village was stirred to a ferment of activity. In some villages, I was told that the powerful god Ching Lum actually resided in the gong which they call "Tungkung." Young boys are forbidden to beat it, and women may not even touch it. On one end of the gong is almost always carved the head of the most powerful beast, the wild mountain bull, which the Nagas hunt, and although they sacrifice the animal to Ching Lum, they reverence it almost as a god. Its head is always to be found among the carved decorations of the two main front posts of the *morang*, although so conventionalized, that its identity is almost lost to the Nagas themselves, who were often unable to explain it to me.

The two front posts of the *morang*, one behind the other, are known as the male and female posts, and to them a certain sacredness attaches. When a *morang* is to be built these two posts are roughly hewn out and carved in the jungle, and, when ready for transportation, all the men from the *khel* assemble, and with much ceremony drag them to their final position and set them in place. Ropes of vine are fastened to them, and, shouting in unison, the villagers slowly drag the mighty logs home to the village. On one occasion I was so fortunate as to see the ceremony of bringing these posts to a village where a new *morang* was to be built; their acquisition seemed to cause as much excitement as the return of a successful head-hunting party. It was after dark by the time that these new *morang* posts had reached the foot of the steep ascent leading to the village, and a large bonfire was kindled on the eminence where the *morang* was to stand. With wild yells and savage bellowings, the male and female posts were hauled up the hill, over all obstructions, by the excited youths and men, decked out in their gayest ornaments and trappings of war. In the darkness, as I looked down on them from above, they appeared like a confused swarm of ants dragging a body many times larger than themselves over the ruts and stones of a country road. Some constantly let go their hold on the ropes of twisted vines, and ran aimlessly to lend a hand somewhere else where they were equally useless; others busied themselves in throwing logs for rollers under the posts; still others helped them over stones and gullies with levers, and all grunted, groaned and shouted, occasionally keeping time with the rhythmical blows which one of their number gave with the butt of his axe handle on the posts; but often the shouting was no more than a wild incoherent tumult. When they arrived at the site of the *morang*, panting with excitement and exertion, they dropped the ropes, and all together gave one long shout that died away slowly, and then was echoed from the surrounding hills through the darkness. In a twinkling innumerable joints of bamboo filled with rice-beer emerged from somewhere, and passed from lip to lip; the very air seemed suddenly to become fermented. After a few *pas seuls* by excited youths, who capered and posed with axe and spear glittering in the firelight for the approval of the circle of women that stood aloof in the outer darkness, the ceremonies ceased for the night. Next day a pig was killed by the soothsayer, and the omens revealed by the appearance of its pancreas were all that

could be desired; whereupon several other pigs were less ceremoniously put to death, and forthwith cut up and cooked in bamboo joints, and served with liberal potations of rice-beer. Still greater revelry was to take place when the house posts were to be finally put in position, and fire started for the first time in the new *morang*; but these ceremonies I was unable to witness.

In the village of the Miri Nagas (of all the tribes perhaps the least influenced by British control) the *morangs* were much more elaborate and seemed to be more used than elsewhere. The flooring of the *morang* is usually raised a couple of feet above the ground, and supporting the overhanging gable in front, stand, prominently, the carved male and female pillars. The carvings on the male pillar consist of four or five rows of squares, made by cutting deep grooves perpendicularly and horizontally across the flattened surface at the upper end, below the notch wherein the ridge pole rests. These squares are meaningless to the occupants of many of the *morangs*, who merely follow the time-honoured forms of decoration, but I am strongly inclined to believe from observing several carefully finished *morang* posts, that these squares are meant to represent human heads hanging on the posts; I was told that, in former days, when head-hunting was more generally practised than it is now, the heads of the enemies were placed on the posts. In the *morang* of the Rengma village of Kotsoma, each of these squares had eyes, nose and mouth carved upon it. Below these squares is the neck and head of the wild bull with horns carved in high relief recurving and encircling the post. In some few instances the bull's head is replaced by a tiger (which looked more like an obese lizard), sometimes two hornbill heads, meeting beak to beak, are carved in place of the bull's neck; and the backward curving horns, and a triangular representation of the head of the bull, are all that remains of the sacred animal. On the female post the topmost space, instead of being covered with the squares which I have assumed to be conventionalized human heads, exhibits carved conical projections, which were said to represent the breasts of women. Why women should thus be present in effigy, in a precinct from which they are utterly excluded, was not explained, beyond the assertion that it was merely a time-honoured custom. Below these breasts, a round concave depression betokened the conch shell ornament which Naga women wear on their chest. Below this the female posts are the same as the male. Usually, extending across the doorway of the *morang* is a mound of split bamboo matting, very springy and returning loud creaks and groans when stepped upon; possibly thus made on purpose to awaken the inmates in case of an unauthorized intrusion. In the Tamli *morangs* the whole floor of the large room is covered with wide hewn planks which act as excellent sounding boards for the rhythmical beat of dancers' feet, and also to impart emphasis to italicized harangues at councils of war. Along both sides of this room are stalls about six feet square wherein the young men sleep. In each stall a space is left bare of boards whereon fires may be built, and alongside of this space runs a narrow bench, a few inches high, of rough poles and boards which serves as a couch. In the smaller *morangs* the floor is not planked, but is the

bare ground, whereon fires are built on cold or stormy nights. When there is no dancing floor or council chamber in the *morang*, a raised platform is constructed outside and near by, whereon councils and dances are held, and where the men sit and gossip. Women are excluded even from these platforms. These bachelors' buildings are always the veritable home of the youths from early boyhood, until they marry and establish a household of their own. I could not find that there was any initiation when boys first left their parents' homes and slept at the *morang*; it seemed to be a civil rather than a social institution.

It is not alone in the *morang* that the main posts supporting the roof are regarded as sacred, or perhaps as the abode of household gods; in the private houses leaves are tied to these posts when the house is built, and over them at each harvest time or when fresh rice beer is brewed, a libation is poured; to them also are tied the feet or skulls of animals killed in the chase, and an egg shell from each hatching of a brood of chicks.

Among all the Nagas the Miris and Semas are decidedly the lowest in civilization; the Miris are often spoken of as "the naked Nagas"; in truth, when working in their fields and villages, the men wear absolutely nothing but necklaces and collarets of beads. In the cool of the morning and evening they wrap themselves in cotton blankets, but wear no loin cloth. The Aos, the next adjoining tribe, despise the Miris for their nakedness, declaring them to be no better than dogs or pigs. The Miri women also, although probably covered while in the village with a short skirt half way to the knee, are said to doff all garments while at work in the fields. The Aos wear not only a loin cloth, but also on ceremonial occasions an apron about a foot square, covered closely with rows of little white oblong seeds. The Ao women wear skirts almost to their knees and are almost always wrapped in a blanket, which is thrown over the shoulder somewhat like a toga, and hangs to the ankles (Pl. XLIV, 2). This is for protection more than modesty; when at work, they are stripped to the waist. The Rengma men and women dress like the Aos: the Semas wear no loin cloth but merely a narrow belt or roll of cloth round the waist with one end depending like a narrow apron about 4 inches wide. The clothing of an Angami man consists of a broad band of cotton cloth, dark blue or black, ornamented with three longitudinal rows of cowrie shells, and wrapped about the body at the waist, so that it hangs almost to the knee. Women wear plain skirts, a little longer than do the men, but fastened about their waists in a similar manner; they are furthermore covered with a blanket wrapped around their chests and hanging loosely down to their ankles. The ornaments worn by the different tribes do not vary much; they all wear large rings, either hoops of brass or white metal, in the lobes of their ears, and the men of all the tribes have holes cut through the conch of the ear, wherein they insert large tufts of white cotton, bright feathers, or even the skin of a small bird of gay plumage. The well dressed men of the Ao tribe wear in the lobes of the ear several pieces of fine brass chain, not native made with little weights on the ends (Pl. XLIV, 1). The women also have holes both in the conch and in the lobes of their ears. In the upper hole, which is usually small,

they insert a porcupine quill dyed red, or a small tuft of cotton ; among women of the Ao tribe this aperture is large and close to the border of the ear ; through it they wear rings of heavy brass wire in three coils, which they keep tied upright and flat against the head with a loop of string passing from one ring over the crown of the head through the ring in the other ear and then back of the head. In the hole in the lobe they wear either a single large brass ring or a pendant of crystal (or more commonly, now-a-days, of glass) about an inch and a half square and a quarter of an inch thick, with a narrow cleft running to a hole in the centre wherein the lobe of the ear may be caught (Pl. XLIV, 2). This seemed to be the one ornament for the ears peculiar to the Ao Nagas : I did not observe it in any of the other tribes ; whereas brass rings and tufts of cotton seemed to be universal. Necklaces and collars of many coloured beads, made in Germany, and of long tubular beads of native manufacture, cut out of carnelian, or out of conch shell, are decorations worn by all tribes. The successful head-hunters of the Ao tribe wear, as badges of their prowess, collars composed of pairs of boar's tusks, which are tied point to point and base to base, so that they encircle the neck (Pl. XLIV, 1). Each pair of tusks so worn indicates an enemy's head taken in battle. None of the Nagas wear nose rings or mutilate the nose in any way. Only three of the tribes practise tattooing ; both the men and the women of the Miri and of the Sema tribes to the northward of the Dikku river ; and only the women of the Ao tribe. They gave as reason for the practice, that, were they not tattooed, they might be mistaken for slaves. The operation is regarded as a sacred function, and while it is being performed the house is tabooed to all strangers ; and while women are being tattooed not even the men or boys of their own family are suffered to be in the house. There is always a preliminary sacrifice to the gods of a pig or a fowl. The ink is made of soot mixed with strained rice-beer, and the needles are sharp spiny thorns bound to a handle like a broad flat paint brush, which in turn is bound in a short, cleft stick at right angles. The needles are dabbed in the thick ink, and driven into the skin by using the instrument in the same manner as a chopper or a hatchet. The Sema men north of the Dikku river have their faces almost completely covered with narrow lines and rows of dots starting on the nose and following the curves of the eyebrows on the forehead and encircling the eye below on the ridge of the cheek bones ; four parallel lines follow the curve of the lower jaw bone to the chin, and above and below the mouth several lines and rows of dots complete the facial decorations. Across the chest are four parallel lines, making four deep waves from shoulder to shoulder. Among the men of the Miri tribe at Tamlu, the middle aged seemed to be the only ones tattooed ; the custom is probably dying out with head-hunting ; it is the privilege of those only who have taken heads, to tattoo over the cheek bones and on the chests a pattern representing little triangular bodied men, just such as our schoolboys draw on their slates. From shoulder to shoulder across the chest they have also four parallel lines enclosed in a row of dots which dip down from the points of the shoulders to about the middle of the sternum. The pattern of the tattooing on the women I could not make out

clearly, owing partly to the fineness and dimness of the lines, and partly to a certain condition of the skin, shared in common by all their fellow Nagas, arising from the scarcity of soap. As well as I could discern, the marks consisted of an interlacing of fine lines as far up as the knee, resembling the lacings of sandals; above the knee, extending half way up the thigh, there appeared to be a series of narrow, perpendicular loops. I tried to persuade the old tattooer of the village to accept some fine needles as substitutes for the thorns she used, but she maintained that although they might be all right for white people, their use would surely make Nagas sick. Very probably she was right and spoke from experience; without proper care rust would soon collect on them, and then blood poisoning would inevitably follow. In the Ao tribe the women alone are tattooed, the men never. They have a cross lacing of broad bands from the ankle to the calf, above this a band of slim triangle with their apices ending in the points of a horizontally zigzag line below the knee; above the knee a band of arrow-shaped marks, the barbed heads downward and the shafts extending about half way up the thigh. On the middle line of the chest and neck is a chain of four lozenge shaped figures, the upper and lower angles meeting, and the chain ending in a triangle between the breasts. In the Mongsem *jhat*, from the uppermost of the lozenge-figures, four lines extend upward on the neck to a square on the point of the chin; in the Chungli *jhat* they continue up to the lower lip. Above the breasts are three herring-bone designs one above the other. On the back of the forearms above the wrist is a St. Andrew's cross, with a perpendicular line running through its centre, and with two dots to the other side. On the inner side above the wrist are three small similar crosses one above the other, with short wide-spreading arms. The Mongsem and Chungli *jhats* were the only instances, that I observed, of one *jhat* being differentiated from another by any mark.

The pain and swelling entailed by the operation is very considerable; I saw many freshly tattooed women, who, unfit for any work, sat dejectedly on the platforms at the back of their houses and mournfully contemplated their inflamed and swollen legs, or else leaned back against the wall of the house, stretching the stiff painful scars on their necks. The whole of the pattern is not tattooed at one time, but the operation is extended over a period of five years. The first cross marks on the legs are tattooed when a girl is about ten or twelve years old, next on the chest, neck and chin, then on the arms; in the fourth year the legs are finished, and in the fifth the knees and thighs. The operation is best performed during the winter months, while the weather is cool and the work in the fields less arduous.

Men, women and children, the last even when they are hardly able to toddle are thorough-paced tobacco smokers; except the Angamis, with whom the drinking of *zu* (rice-beer) supplies a substitute. Pipe smoking is almost the universal custom, although cigarettes are occasionally used. I have seen an Ao mother quiet her crying baby, probably a year and a half old, slung to her back in a blanket, by giving it two or three puffs at her pipe. The pipes are somewhat akin to the

Chinese water-pipe, with a receptacle of bamboo below the bowl wherein the nicotine and other juices collect. The natives claim that these juices have wonderful medicinal powers and are most efficacious against toothache. The tobacco is native grown and cured, and has the most repulsive of odours, which I can liken to nothing but the combined combustion of horses' hoofs, india-rubber and hair; but to the Nagas the odour is delightful.

It is to be feared they are very far removed from godliness, so totally unacquainted are they with cleanliness either of person or linen. In the first place, water is scarce and must be carried up the weary, steep hillsides; furthermore the mornings and the evenings are cool, and fresh breezes blow; furthermore it is not fashionable to be clean. On questioning quite a number of them I found that a month was no unusual period to elapse without changing or washing the skirt or blanket, and the body got attention no oftener. One middle-aged man asserted absolutely without embarrassment that he could not remember ever having washed his face or hands—indeed the most casual glance confirmed his veracity.

To the north and east of the Nagas are Lamaism and Confucianism, to the westward are Hinduism and Mohammedanism, to the southward a mixture of Brahmanism and Buddhism, and to the eastward pure Burmese Buddhism, and for many years Christian missionaries have been working among them. Thus encompassed, and thus influenced, they have not had much chance to evolve an original theology.

Hampered by the necessity of an interpreter I cannot pretend to give more than an outline of their religion and folk-lore; and even this may be imperfect through misinterpretation.

Throughout the different tribes I was able to trace a belief in one powerful god, and several lesser gods of the harvest, and many revengeful demons. The chief god appears to be the protector of mankind, and to him sacrifices and offerings of grain and fruit must be made that he may avert or alleviate the malignity of lesser gods who have been offended, and who seek revenge by afflicting man with poor crops, sicknesses, sudden blindness and deafness. In one or two of the tribes there is a belief in a god, sometimes a goddess, of the harvest, to whom pigs and fowls must be sacrificed when the grain is planted. The chief god, said some, dwells in the large sacred rubber-trees which are always growing near the *morangs* in every village; others declare that he lives in the great wooden gong outside of the *morang*; others again maintain that he is underground at the foot of the sacred tree.

In Tamlu, a Miri village, I was told that a large columnar stone, standing upright in one of the streets, was Kagong, the chief god. The stone had been fenced in, and on the fence were hung the bodies of sacrificed fowls and the skulls of pigs. The Miri description of Kagong is that he has but one leg, is emaciated, and usually hangs, doubled up, with his arms hanging downward, over a long rope-like vine stretching between two trees in the depths of the jungle. If he looks at anyone, that person immediately falls desperately ill. The Lhotas believe

that in the jungle lives a goddess whom mortals cannot see, but they hear her laughing, and should she breathe on them they go crazy; they likewise maintain, however, that the *chief* god lives in the ficus-tree. Beneath almost all of these sacred trees there are several round stones, six or seven inches in diameter, which are also sacred, and which, they assert, are the abodes of the lesser gods. These stones are said to have come of their own accord, and no one dares to touch them unless he desires to take an oath as to honesty in word or deed. The gods that live in these stones make it their duty to see that none of the prescribed rules of Naga social life are disregarded; and to them, once a year, two old men, appointed by the villagers, sacrifice a pig and a fowl; and on this occasion the sacred stones are rearranged neatly around the foot of the tree. The bodies of the animals thus sacrificed may not be eaten. If the gods dwelling in these stones become displeased, one or two of them disappear; then follows some awful calamity to the village. The existence of the stones beneath the sacred trees was almost always denied by the villagers; only by personal investigation was their presence discovered, and only by persistent questioning was their sacred character revealed. On one occasion, in a village where the original sacred tree had died and there remained only a remnant of the decaying trunk, a new tree had sprung up in its place, but the sacred stones were nowhere visible. The villagers said there was a legend that long ago, even beyond the memory of the oldest man in the village, there used to be many round stones beneath the ancient tree, wherein the gods lived, and that even now they believed the stone habitations of the gods were there, covered by the fallen tree trunk and the tangle of roots and vines. They furthermore said that in olden days the heads of enemies were hung on the tree, and even then, as now, women were forbidden to approach it nearer than twenty or thirty feet. In the Angami village of Nerhama, the natives declared that there was no sacred tree sheltering the stone abodes of the gods, but investigation of the largest tree on the outskirts of the village brought to light at its roots one long stone, rounded off and smoothed by mountain torrents, and half buried in the ground. This, they finally admitted, was the god Kipu, and no native dared approach nearer than ten paces to his sacred abode, now somewhat neglected. The story of Kipu is that two men long long ago while hunting in the jungle were most fortunate in killing deer on many successive days, and each time that they ran down their game they found themselves near this peculiar long grey stone. It was therefore undoubtedly a god of good fortune, and with great care they lifted it and carried it many miles to their village, and placed it beneath the large tree that stood near one of the gates of the stockade. For years it was worshipped as the abode of the god of war and of the chase, and to it pigs and fowls were sacrificed. If ever the enemy came near that stone their doom was sealed; they could not escape; for Kipu protected the village. Since battles have ceased in the hills, Kipu's occupation is gone and no offerings of pigs or fowls fall to his lot.

On a ridge near the Sema village of Champimi, surrounded by a circle of trees, is a large oblong stone about nine feet long by about two feet wide; one

end is split off and lies close by. There are no other stones of any size in the neighbourhood, and this perhaps accounts for the reverence with which this large piece of sandstone is regarded. I was told by men from the village that this stone was the god Puzzi; that long ago, before the English came to the hills, it was not broken but stood upright, and was so bright and glistening that no one could approach nearer than many paces to it. Now, however, Puzzi was dead; Tukko the Angami god, came from another hill, and there was a fierce fight, in which Puzzi was cut down and his head chopped off. One of his ears, severed from his head, lies in the valley below, and one of the natives ran down the hillside and pointed it out to me. The cause of the fight none could say; the Angami have always been friendly to the Semas and have never attacked their villages. Despite the fact that Puzzi is dead, the spot where his body lies is hallowed ground and is kept free of weeds and undergrowth. When they make their clearings for rice fields in front of the body of Puzzi, they sacrifice a fowl, and from its entrails may be read the omens good or bad for their harvest. The body of the fowl must not be eaten, but must be hung on one of the trees near by, and some of its feathers tied to stakes near Puzzi's head. In many places the stone is smoothed off where the people of Champimi have used it as a whetstone for their knives and axes. There is no attempt at carving on the stone, nor is there any especial time when axes or knives are sharpened upon it.

The Naga legends concerning the creation of the world were vague. The Miris said that two gods made the hills and valleys; Chelok, by striking the earth with his enormous staff, raised it into welts, and Nagman, sweeping his staff along the ground, made the level plains. Nagman lives in the sky, and when he dances we hear the thunder of his feet and the perspiration dropping from his body comes to us as rain. The world was populated by the offspring of one mother, who emerged from the ground and at one time gave birth to a man, a bear, a deer, a tiger, an elephant, a rat, and a mouse. These multiplied and filled the world. The mother of all is still alive, and follows the herds of wild hogs in the jungle; she is never seen by man except under penalty of instant death; but sometimes they hear her rustling among the leaves and they see her footprints.

The Lhota legend is that in the beginning all people lived under the earth in a place called Lichun; one day while a party of men were out hunting, a man named Limhacha and a half-witted companion suddenly came forth to the surface of the earth through a narrow cleft. They ate the fruits that they found and tasted cool clear water which was new to them. Finding that they had discovered a much pleasanter place than Lichun, they returned and showed the path to their friends. The last man to come up was named Rankantan and he closed the gap, so that the newly discovered country should not be overcrowded. From these first people above ground originated the twenty-two clans of the Lhotas. When Lhotas die they go again to Lichun.

The sacrifices to the gods and the propitiation of the evil spirits are usually occasions of general feasting in the village, and all share in the benefits which may

result. When a man is ill and tossing in fever on his hard couch, he promises to the gods that, should he recover, he will sacrifice a cow or a wild bull and observe certain abstinences, such as from smoking or from drinking rice-beer, until the days devoted to the sacrifice and the feasting are over. It may, however, be many days, weeks, or even months after his recovery, before he is able to afford the cost of the sacrifice. On the appointed day, however, true to his promise, the cow or the bull is tied by the horns to a large forked stake near his house, and with due ceremony is slaughtered. It is customary on these occasions to make the animal suffer as much as possible, and its neck is first hacked by the sacrificer with a dull and very crude iron axe, kept in the village for this purpose; then all hands fall to and club and stab the poor animal to death. Its body is cut up in small pieces and distributed throughout the *khel* or the whole village, together with bountiful supplies of boiled rice, rice-beer, and packages of salt and ginger-root. The giver of the feast keeps the skull, and is allowed to place the forked stake in front of his house, as a sign to all men that he has fulfilled his vow to the gods. The skull of the sacrificed animal is hung in his house, and small portions of the flesh are wrapped in leaves and tied to the central house-post or to the forked stake outside. This is the custom among the Miris, the Aos, and the Semas; the Rengmas, the Lhotas, the Angamis, and the tribes closely akin to them combine the propitiation of the gods with honouring their parents, and when in dreams the spirits of their forefathers come to them saying that they have not been sufficiently honoured, that they are wandering and unhappy in the other world, and desire a stone whereon to rest, it is then the duty of the sons to drag up from the valley or the mountain side a huge boulder which shall be set up near, or in, the village as a lasting record of their affection. When a boulder of proper size has been selected, a red cock is carried to the stone, and after carefully washing its feet they place it upon the boulder; should it crow and not try to fly away, the omen is good, and the stone is pleasing to the gods and the spirits of the ancestors. The stone is then disembedded and placed upon a large wooden sled with long ropes of vines attached, and it is dragged to its new position in the village.

At Mao, or Sepfume, as the Angamis call it, I saw this ceremony of dragging a stone to the village. The huge boulder of sandstone, about five feet in diameter, had been dug out of the hillside, and placed upon the sled about an eighth of a mile from the village; a long procession of boys and young men went slowly down the trail from the village, led by two older men carrying spears and wrapped in snow-white blankets. The boys and youths hummed in harmony, accenting the humming in time with their slow and dignified steps. In their dances and in such processions as this, they walk with a measured tread, placing the ball of the foot upon the ground first, and balancing their weight for a second on this foot before they take another step; this gives a stately, dignified pace, which does not in the least suggest creeping or sneaking. When the two old men, one a fortune-teller, the other the giver of the feast, took their stand in the excavation close by, from which the stone had been taken, every boy and youth of the

company at once provided himself with a stick or a small stone. The fortune-teller,—or perhaps he might be called the chief priest,—produced from under his blanket a leaf cornucopia of rice-beer which, while muttering invocations to the gods, he poured over some green leaves tied to the sled, and then again from under his blanket he produced a white chicken bound tightly in a network of split bamboo. Freeing it from its bonds he waved it above and around the stone, holding it by the legs and at the same time murmuring prayers to the gods to be propitious and send bountiful harvests and good fortune to the village. As soon as his prayers were finished the fowl was flung on the ground in front of the expectant group of men and boys; instantly from all directions stones were thrown, and sticks beat at it, and its life was instantly crushed out as a sacrifice to Orameh, the chief god of the village. Two young men, stripped of all clothes but their loin cloths and necklaces of beads, jumped on the top of the stone, and standing there in statuesque pose, gave the signal for the sled and its burden to start up the roughly cleared path through the jungle. The men gave deep bass shouts and the boys alternated with piping trebles, and so, keeping time as they tugged at the ropes, they started the monument on its journey. When they arrived at the outskirts of the village near to where the stone was to rest, they dropped their holds and all ran helter skelter with loud shouts to the house of the giver of the feast, where each was refreshed by a drink of rice-beer. In a few minutes all assembled again in a broad open space on the edge of the village, forming a large circle, and, apparently as the spirit moved them, the youths one by one dashed out to the centre of the admiring group and performed energetic and agile dances, springing high off the ground, sawing the air with their legs and arms, and giving forth the war-cry of the Angamis, which sounds like the shrill crow of a cock. When twenty or more had displayed their proficiency, there pranced into the circle an elderly man dressed in all the equipments of Naga war-dances; on his head he wore a cap of split bamboo decorated in front with a pair of flat, wooden horns; on his body were numerous scarfs and breast-plates trimmed with red dyed goat's hair, and tied to his back like a tail was a quiver, also adorned with red goat's hair, wherein warriors carry sharp bamboo stakes, which, placed in paths, impede and injure the feet of pursuing enemies. In his right hand he brandished a spear, and in his left he carried, by a finger entwined in the hair, a small flat wooden figure of a man. He seemed to be the public jester; his capers and rapid sidelong sallies at the bystanders elicited loud laughter from the boys and men, who dodged and ran as he shook his spear or waved the little wooden figure in their faces. This little effigy was possibly a reminder of the days of head-hunting, when an enemy's head was taken on such occasions to pay homage to the memory of the ancestors for whom the monumental stone was placed in the village. When the jester retired, the company adjourned to the house of the feast-giver and there were regaled with unstinted measures of thick unstrained rice-beer, which they drank out of leaf cups; to each was also given a small packet of ginger-root and salt

wrapped in a banana leaf; young girls and boys passing in and out among the guests seated on stones, on upturned rice mortars, and on the bare ground, replenished the cups, and distributed packets of the condiments to engender thirst.

When the host has had time—a month or more perhaps—to prepare a new supply of beer and other food, a second feast is given, and the monument is settled in its final resting place. This is the occasion for the sacrifice of cows and wild bulls and unlimited feasting on meat—a great luxury. After that the sacrificer is entitled to have bulls' horns carved or painted on the front boards of his house and to put over the gable large cross pieces representing horns, and he is recognized by all as a man who has fully honoured the souls of his ancestors.

The Miri and Ao tribes bury their dead in coffins supported on stakes about five feet high and surrounded by a fence of interlacing strips of bamboo. The coffins are made to represent the hornbill bird, and at either end are rough carvings of the head and of the tail feathers. The renown of an individual is indicated by the number of these heads or tails—three such meaning a person of great importance. On the coffins and on stakes near by are hung the blankets, the pipe, the ornaments, the weapons and some of the other utensils used by the defunct, and also a bamboo-joint filled with rice-beer, some food and some tobacco to keep the soul equipped and supplied until it reaches the abode of the dead, which lies indefinitely to the south-westward. In front of the coffin a fire is kept burning for several days to frighten away wild animals. After several months, when the body has dried up, the family of the deceased open the grave and separate the skull from the body, and place it in an earthen jar, which is staked down to the ground and covered with a cone-shaped thatch of palm leaves. When the corpse has been placed in the burying ground it is the duty of the eldest brother or the nearest relative to remain near by and repeatedly shout the name of the deceased; when he is exhausted, the next nearest relative takes up the task. The reason for this I could not ascertain, but it was not, so said the Miris, to announce to those who had gone before the advent of a new comer.

The widow or the widower on returning from the burial makes new fire in the house, brings fresh water from the spring, and for one year, or probably until after the next harvest, forbears wearing ornaments, changing the clothes, or cutting the hair. The ornaments and implements hung on the graves are consecrated, and anyone stealing them would surely die a speedy and miserable death.

With the exception of these two tribes all the others bury their dead in the ground either close by the village or in the village streets in front of the houses, or, when a child or a young girl dies, in the earthen floor of the houses themselves. I was told by a Sema Naga, who pointed out to me on the floor of his house the newly made grave of his little girl, that he had buried her there because she would be so frightened to be left out in front of the house with nothing but the sky above her at night.

Over the graves in the village are built circular cairns about 2 feet high, walled up at the sides and covered with small flat stones on top. In addition, over the graves of men of importance are set up posts whereto are fastened the heads of sacrificed cattle, and sometimes effigies ornamented with some of the weapons or war costume of the deceased. The Angamis sometimes bury more than one person in one grave, and when the large flat cairns occupy a commanding position in the village they make excellent look-outs and lounging places. On many of them I observed gourds of rice-beer buried up to the neck so that the spirit of the departed should not get thirsty during the long sleep.

The men I questioned were in general a little doubtful as to whether the spirits of the dead remained in the corpse or near the grave, or went to a far off country; some thought that the spirits of dead people dwelt on a high hill to the southward or toward the setting sun; others maintained that the spirits of their people remained near the village and rested on the stone monuments put up in their honour; while others—the Lhotas and Maothana Angamis—gave a definite description of the abode of departed souls. When a person dies, they believe that the spirit goes to a heaven under the ground where everything is exactly the same as in this life; parents are re-united with their children, and husband and wife live over again the happy days spent in the upper air. The land is rich in trees flowers and animals of all sorts; the sun shines by day and the moon by night. When they die a second time, the souls pass to another heaven below the first, unlit by sun, moon or stars, where the souls live and die again; but when they die for a third time the souls come back to this earth as butterflies or small house flies, and in this shape perish for ever. When these small flies light on their wine cups, they will not kill them for fear of destroying someone of their ancestors. They have no tradition of a mortal having visited the land of the dead and returned; all their knowledge of the nether world comes to them from the fortune-tellers who have visited “Etzuli” in dreams. The spirits of the dead are not visible to human eyes; but dogs can see them, and if a dog howls or barks when no stranger is near, they believe that the souls of the dead are hovering about. They all seem perfectly assured that after death they will see again all the relatives and friends who have died before them.

In each village, there are certain old men, to whom is given the power to read the omens portrayed in the pancreas of pigs, and in the intestines of chickens; these old men are the only ones who are allowed to touch the round stones under the sacred tree, and they must plant the first rice in the fields after the jungle clearing is finished. They are in fact the high priests, but on ordinary occasions, they dress and conduct themselves as ordinary men; on state occasions, such as the dedication of a *morang*, or when the sacred stones are arranged at the foot of the figs-tree, they wear blankets of distinguishing colours.

In eliciting the omens from the pancreas of a pig, great care must be taken, in killing the animal, that no blood is lost; to this end the poor beast's snout is bound tight with thongs of leather, or a rope of rattans, and then a sharpened bamboo

stake is driven through its side, piercing the heart, and it is then beaten on the neck with a club. When the pancreas is cut out, the surface of the organ must not be scratched nor torn in the slightest degree, and to foretell good fortune it must be of a clear red colour, clean and smooth. It must be flat, and not crinkled or turned up at the edges. If black, or discoloured, or in any way irregular in shape, it foretells misfortune. The flesh of the pig, except when it is sacrificed to the sacred stones, is eaten by the people, but the pancreas is the share of the priest.

Auguries are obtained from fowls by the examination of two glandular appendages, which are partially connected with the lower end of the intestines; if these appendages are full and round, and of an even length, the omen is favourable. When the auguries are consulted in relation to marriage, if these appendages are of uneven length, and their rounded free ends do not point forward, it is most unfavourable. Neither the husband nor the wife will be happy, and the woman will probably die very soon after marriage. If the little outgrowths of fatty tissue which hang all along the intestines point upward, it foretells that a girl will be born first to the newly married couple; if the particle of fat hang downward, it will be a boy. Before the chicken is killed for auguries, its neck is plucked bare of feathers, so that no blood will cling to it, and after the omen has been taken, the body is hung up on the sacred ficus-tree, or on the forked stump in front of the house. At the time of propitiating the demons who look after the welfare of the village and live in the sacred stones, the fowl, which is used for omens, is thrown into the jungle, and no one may eat its flesh.

Simple fortune-telling in cases of sickness seems not to be the office of only a few old men or women in a village, but for such purposes anyone may consult the gods. When a man falls ill, the first thing to be done is to determine which god it is that is responsible for the illness. In order to do this, the interpreter between gods and men cuts two small discs of ginger-root, which are smoothed off on one side, and then placed upon the blade of a knife, which he holds in his left hand; with the blade between the index and middle finger of his right hand, he snaps these two small discs off to the ground, after having murmured an injunction to them to tell the truth. According to the manner in which these discs fall, whether they turn over or not, he interprets the god who is at fault, and after repeating the operation several times, announces to the friends and relatives, to which of the gods a sacrifice should be made.

The Nagas take oath in several ways, the commonest of which is to bite a tiger's tooth kept for the purpose, and then to eat some of the earth from a grave, saying at the same time, "The gods will see me, and if I am lying, they will send a tiger to eat me, or they will turn my head to earth like this grave." The most binding oath is for a man to put a small bit of his cloth, a hair from his head and a pinch of earth, on the blade of a *dharu*, or axe; then, taking the back of the *dharu* blade between his teeth, he calls the sun and the moon to witness that he is telling the truth. If he is not, may he never have good harvest again, and may he die a miserable death. Women may take oath in the same way as men, but



2. Ao woman.

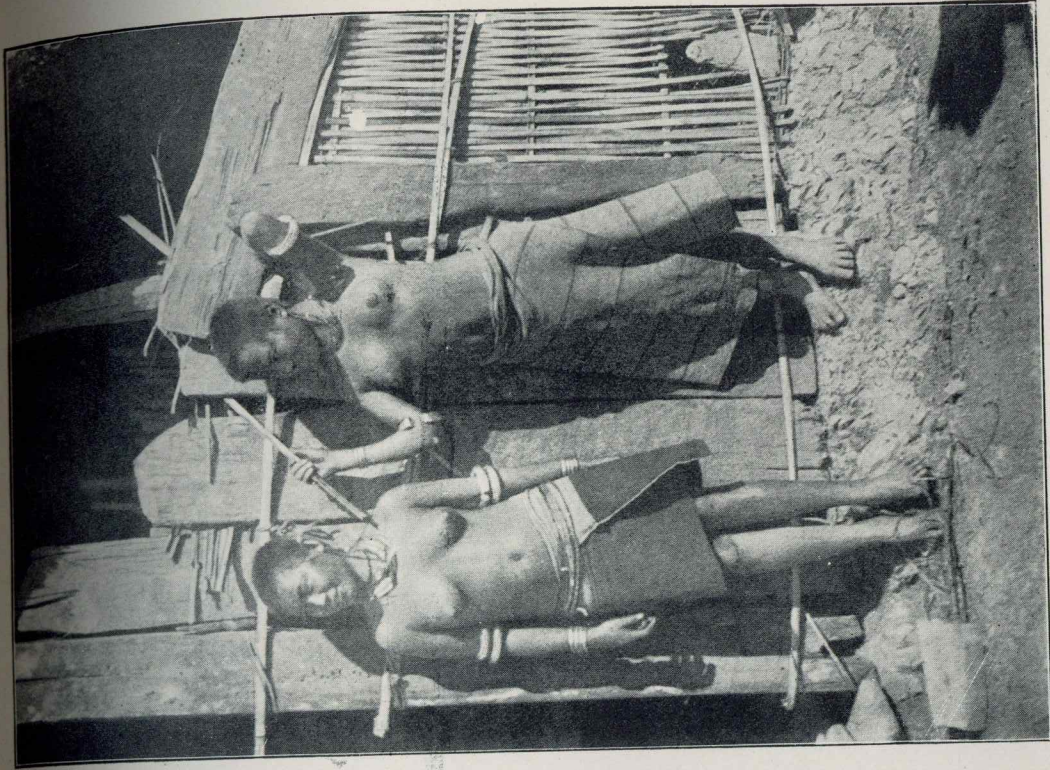


1. The Headman of Numkum : Ao Nagas.

THE ETHNOGRAPHY OF THE NAGAS.

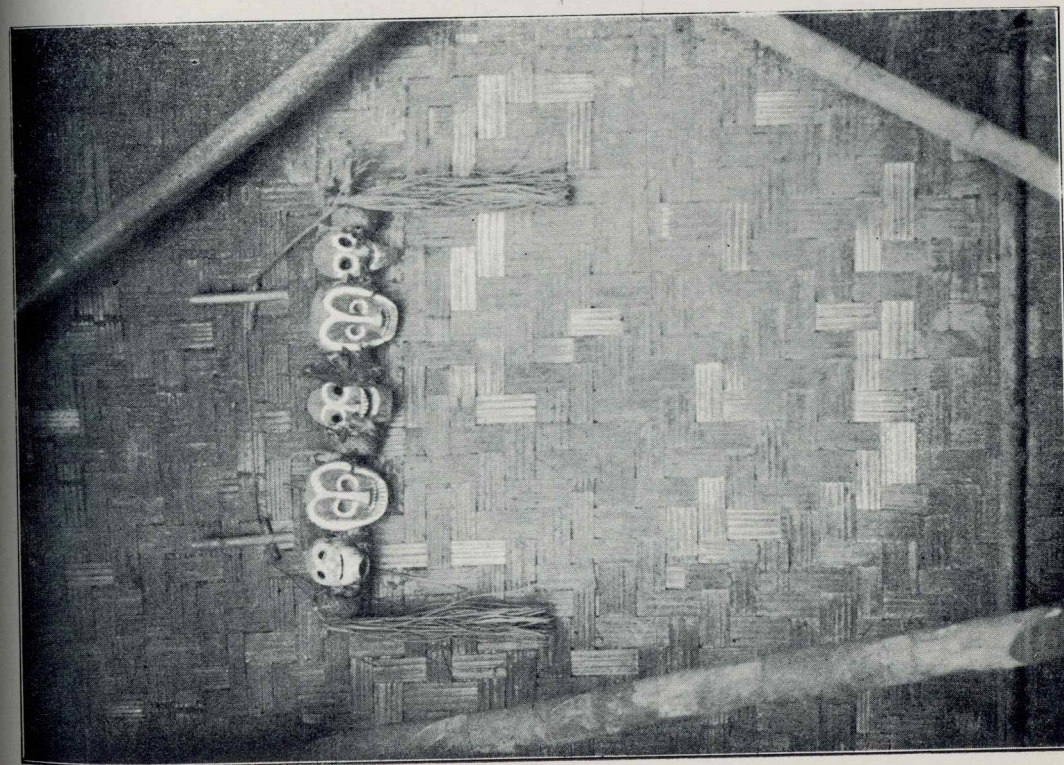


3. Headman of Naogong, War Costume, Ao Naga.



4. Unmarried Girls of Nungtang, Sema Nagas.

THE ETHNOGRAPHY OF THE NAGAS.



5. Heads made of gourds and of wood to record a head-hunting raid.]



6. Head-hunter's trophies hanging beneath the eaves of a house at Tamu. Miri Nagas.

THE ETHNOGRAPHY OF THE NAGAS.

they usually merely bite the tip of their forefinger, when they wish to impress the fact that they are truthful. If a man is suspected of theft, and wishes to prove his innocence, he will put his hands upon the sacred stones beneath the ficus-tree, and swear by the gods inhabiting them that he is not guilty. A form of oath used by the Angamis is, "May I be eaten by a tiger, and may my harvests be nothing but stalks; may my rice grow up and then may the beards of grain grow down into the earth again, if I am not speaking the truth." They seem to have absolute confidence in a man's statement, after taking oath in this manner. I once questioned the trustworthiness of such an oath, and an Angami Naga said: "Possibly a white man might live after breaking his oath, but a Naga would surely die." Their death rate must be large; the Angamis, above all others, are treacherous liars.

Their dread of tigers is born of bitter experience, for the jungles in the valleys are infested with them, and to the Nagas they are demons incarnate. If a man is killed by a tiger, his house and all his belongings are burned, and his whole family must go through elaborate purification, as if to exorcise an evil spirit. If a man's or woman's mangled body be found in the jungle within two or three miles of the village, his whole family divest themselves of every thread of clothing and go to the body, and simply wrapping it in a bamboo mat, leave it where it was found; returning to their village, they burn down their old house and build an entirely new one; new fire is started on the hearth by means of the fire-saw, and they wash themselves carefully, cutting their hair and paring their nails; not a single possession of the one who has been killed may be used again.

The horror of the nocturnal stealthiness of the tiger is so impressed upon the Naga that they have endowed this beast with the same supernatural qualities that are found connected with the wolf in the folklore of Europe, as far back, at least as the second century. Among the Nagas the tiger-man takes the place of the were-wolf, and in almost every village there will be some who maintain that they know tiger-men, but apparently they always live in out-of-the-way villages. These tiger-men, who are in league with the demons, are also fortune-tellers, and are much feared. They have the power of changing themselves into tigers, and in this manner revenge themselves upon an enemy by killing him and his pigs and his cows. When they wish to change back into men, the tiger-man's wife must throw her clothes over the tiger's head, and at once he will change back into his human form. If anyone kills him while he is in the shape of a tiger, he is dead, and cannot regain his human form. The accounts of these tiger-men, which I got entirely without suggestion from many Nagas, bear a striking resemblance to the well-known legends of were-wolves, wherein it always seemed to be necessary, in order that the man should change back into human form again, for the wife or some near friend to throw an article of clothing over the head of the animal, be it wolf or tiger.

The custom of taboo is carried out to a marvellous degree among the Nagas, and from the number of occurrences and actions which can put a household under

this ban, it would seem that social life in the villages would be exceedingly hampered. The indication that a house is tabooed consists of placing on the door-post bunches of leaves, and tying across the doorway one of the long pestles used for pounding the husks from off the rice. Among those tribes where tattooing is practised, the house is under a strict taboo, during the operation, against men, even of the same village, and whenever a man or woman is sick in a house, and the fortune-teller is called in, the prohibitory leaves are put up on the door-posts. It is also the custom when any of the domestic animals are giving birth to young or when a brood of chickens is being hatched, for the house to be under a taboo for periods varying from two to ten days; and when a woman gives birth to a child, the house is tabooed against every one, even members of her own family, with the exception of her husband and her mother.

A custom which I have found constant throughout Borneo and the Naga hills, is that of making new-fire by means of the fire-saw on all ceremonious occasions, when fire is necessary. When a new house is built, it is by this method alone that the fire may be started, and when a family goes out of mourning for a dead relative the first food cooked must be prepared over a fire started by this method. It is probably the most primitive process for obtaining fire, and on this account looked upon as the invention of the demigods who were ancestors of all mankind, and therefore sacred. It is a striking instance of the tendency to return to the primeval in all ceremonies.

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