

FOLK LORE OF THE NAGA'S. ~~That I may~~ convey some idea of the nature of the influences bearing on the traditions and folk lore of the Naga's, I am going to fall back into ^(geographical parlance) school-boy days, and say that the Naga's are bounded on the North by Lamaism, and Confucionism, on the west by Hindooism and Mohomadism^{an}, on the south by a mixture of Brahminism and Buddhism; and on the east by pure Burmese Buddhism; the Christian missionaries have tried hard to make a capital out of their dogmas, but have failed, leaving in their trail only traces of their beliefs and teachings.

From their surroundings, it ^{might} be imagined that the Naga's would not have much of a chance to evolve original ideas, unless they were themselves a strikingly imaginative people; this ^{we did not find them to be} they are not. Restricted as we were by our ~~short~~ stay among them, and hampered by being compelled to get our intimate knowledge of them through an interpreter, I do not pretend to give anything but the outline of their folk-lore, tinged, it may be, by elements of misinterpretation, or misunderstanding.

The Naga's are of the Turanian type, seemingly a cross between the Mongolians and the Malays; they are hill people, and live by farming, rather than by the chase, or by fishing. Like the inhabitants of Borneo, and the Philippines, they are head hunters, and decorate their houses with the skulls of their enemies in the belief that these human skulls bring them all sorts of good fortune. Their villages are built on the very crest of the hills, and are as inaccessible as steep, rocky hillsides and thick jungle can make them, Although they divide themselves into almost

as many tribes as there are hilltop villages, and although there are correspondingly numerous languages, nevertheless there is scarcely an appreciable difference in the type, except between the most northerly and most southerly tribes. ⁹ Relying as we did upon our interpreter, and the smattering of the language that we acquired, it was exceedingly hard to get a coherent idea of their religion. Through the different tribes, however, we were able to trace a belief in one powerful chief god, ^{and generally two or more revengeful deities.} ~~who~~ ^{The Chief god} is known in the different tribes as "Kagong", Chingrum, Atzarran, Kungumi, and Potso; this particular god always seemed to have the same attributes, ^{and whom appealed to with proper sacrifices would protect against the} ~~There were also~~ several other gods of evil, who sent afflictions and sicknesses upon man, and often struck him with sudden deafness or blindness. In several of the tribes there was a belief in a god, sometimes a goddess, of the harvest, to whom pigs and fowls were sacrificed when the grain was planted. Chingrum, or any of his other aliases, dwells in the sacred rubber trees, which are always planted in the villages, and beneath which are kept a number of round stones, which they say have been placed there by the lesser gods, who dwell in them, and keep watch over the whole village, making it their duty to see that none of the prescribed rules of Naga social life are disregarded. Once a year two old men, who are appointed by the villagers, sacrifice a pig and a fowl to these stones, arranging them in order around the base of

the tree; no one but these two old men dares to touch these mystic ^{and the bodies of the pigs and fowls sacrificed in their honour may not be eaten} ~~may not be eaten~~ abodes of the gods. We were told that sometimes when the spirit

not be eaten.

they put in front of their houses after the sacrifice of a wild bull, and which is regarded somewhat in the light of an altar.

The forked stake represents the horns of the wild bull, and be-

comes in their minds associated with the deities and the good for-
on it they fix trophies obtained in the chase - and it is regarded almost as an idol.
tune of the house, and thus merges into what might be called an

idol. ~~Some of the tribes told us that there was a separate god~~

There is also a god of storms and thunder and lightning
~~of thunder, whom they call Gong, but I am inclined to think that~~

~~this was nothing more than an attempt to represent the sound of~~
~~the thunder; we were unable to get a coherent idea of Gong's pow-~~
very
this

er, and his position in the Pantheon. Some of them told us that Gong was able to cause blindness, and a one-eyed old woman was pointed out to us as a victim of Gong's wrath, but why Gong should strike people blind they were unable to say, since there was no code of morals whose disregard entailed punishment.

Mapoo was another god whom we could trade with difficulty, one tribe maintaining that Mapoo was a god, and had the power of killing people; while another tribe told us that Mapoo

was simply a word of abuse. *Long kam ni is the god, some tribes say*

a goddess who looks after the crops and to whom offerings are made at harvest and planting time. (matuk)

Throughout all the tribes we found a striking similarity in their worship of stones; in the most northerly end of the

hills we found a single stone placed in a *small enclosure* lattice of stakes and branches, and regarded as the emblem of the god Kagong. It was a straight, natural column of stone, and probably on this account had been considered as resembling the Hindoo emblem of Siva,

which is worshipped by the Assemese, their near neighbors, as well

as by the Hindoo's; it is more than likely that this idea was borrowed, but nevertheless they placed sacrifices of fowls, and the jaw-bones of sacrificed pigs on the stakes surrounding this stone, and regarded it with considerable veneration. Among the tribes further south we found the worship of ~~the small~~ ^{cobble} round stones placed beneath the sacred rubber tree, to be a constant feature in all the villages; still further south the worship of stones was carried out in the erection of huge boulders and slabs of stone, in the village streets, or on hilltops ^(near by reserved) ~~set aside~~ for that purpose, ~~near by~~. These stones were not regarded so much as gods as they were as monuments to glorify the living, but nevertheless, ^{the dead and show the devotion of} there was a connection between them and the next world, for in ~~by sons who had been warned in dreams by the spirits of their parents that if they many cases they were put up out of regard for a dead parent or did not do it that they would fall sick. The occasion is near relative, and the occasion of their erection was a feast day~~ ^{It is only in dreams that the spirits of the departed can be seen, they never appear to for the whole village. ~~human eyes~~ ^{human eyes} in waking human eyes but dogs can see them at all times and when a dog howls at night or barks without meaning ^{in the daytime may say that} Generally the spirits of the dead are passing by.} Their ideas concerning the next world were indefinite in the extreme, ~~except in one tribe~~. The more northerly tribes, who were less civilized, were in many cases in doubt ~~as to~~ whether the soul remained in the body or left for another sphere of life; but we noticed at all of the graves there were utensils for cooking, baskets for carrying food, weapons, blankets, and often tobacco and pipes hung about the grave for the comfort of the ^{Sometimes they bury a bottle gourd, filled with rice beer, in the grave so that only the neck sticks above ground.} departing spirit. We asked one chief ~~if~~ ^{or his} ~~and~~ ^{died} friends who had ~~gone~~ before him, ^{and he} and he replied emphatically in the affirmative; saying that he was

sure they would all come out to meet him on his way to Jimnushang, which is the mountain indefinitely towards the south, whereon the souls of the departed live.

A more definite description of a nether world was given to us by the Lota Naga's at the village of Woka; they told us that when a person died, his soul went to a heaven under the ~~ground~~ ground where everything was exactly the same as in this life, parents were reunited with their children, friends long separated met again, and bereaved husband or wife lived over again the happy days spent in this upper air. The land was rich in trees, flowers, and animals of all sorts, and the sun shone by day, and the moon ^{lit} ~~licked~~ the skies by night. When they died a second time, their souls again passed to a heaven below this, which is not lit by sun, moon, nor stars, ~~and where~~ they are not sure whether or not there are trees and flowers in this ^{second} heaven, the same as in this world, but, when they die, for a third time, the soul comes back to this earth as a butterfly, and here perishes forever. They told us that when butterflies, or small house flies ^{lit} ~~licked~~ upon their cups of wine, they would never attempt to kill them, for fear that they might be the spirits of some of their friends or relatives. They had no tradition that ~~any~~ any mortal had ever been down to Etzuli, which is the name of their heaven, and returned to earth again; all their knowledge of the nether world had come to them through the fortune tellers, who had only visited Etzuli in their dreams.

While at Mao, we saw a man who was going through the village weeping and lamenting in a loud voice that the god had taken his brother. ~~This man was from another village, but at the present time living in Mao.~~ His brother, who lived at the village of Kosama, three miles away, had just died, and the ^{grief} ~~sorrow~~-stricken ^{brother (to let his sorrow be seen and heard)} ~~one~~ was returning to his home. He was repeating over and over again that Orameh had taken his brother and had turned him to earth, and it was causing him great ^{affliction} ~~sorrow~~. He passed through the crowd in the village streets, looking neither to the right nor ^{to the} left, ^{and those who were talking or working noisily, ceased for a moment, but no one expressed compassion or offered} until his wail ^{disappeared} ~~disappeared~~ in the distance. Among the Nagas ^{of Mao} there are two gods which may cause death, Orameh takes them by the slow process of disease, Kechera comes swiftly, and causes sudden death. Orameh is the creator, having made the sky and the earth. Moreover, he is a beneficent god, while Kechara is the god of evil. When they are ill, they take a black fowl out into the jungle and turn it loose as an offering to Kechara. This fowl must ~~of necessity~~ be black, but for other offerings, such as at the time of selecting ^(for an ancestor) a monument, only a white fowl may be used.

The ^{of the dead two} ~~departed~~ souls live in villages after the same manner that they did here on earth. One of these villages, Katimichi, is underground; the other, called Uchi, is up above. Kechara lives in Katimichi, but Orameh may live in both villages. The souls, after leaving this earth, and living in Katimichi, die a second time, and just as in the Lota Naga's account, they return to this earth in the form of flies, but when this fly dies,