

# AO NAGAS

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TO THE HON’BLE H. C. BARNES, Esqr.,

M.A., C.I.E., I.C.S.,

MEMBER OF

THE ASSAM EXECUTIVE COUNCIL,

This book is dedicated

As an humble token of the author’s

Deep gratitude and regards,

And in recognition of his keen interest

## PREFACE

The materials of the following pages were collected by me when on duty in the Naga Hills. I have depicted these, not merely because the life of this Primitive people has elicited a sense of curiosity in me, but more so, because they serve us with a topic of wider interest. As Professor Griddings says, "Many customs, laws and institutions are common to savage tribes and civil communities." This aspect of the savage life, which portrays in various phases the romantic tales of the long forgotten races, has led sociologists like Tylor and Frazor to conjure up a connecting link between the modern man and the uncivilised man of our times. It is not an enigma to the student of Sociology that some of the traits that one of us should prize, are not lacking in a community which is dubbed by us as savage and primitive. So unity, benevolence and perseverance are manifested in a Naga tribe, some of whom feel no scruples in eating on human flesh even to-day. Some of these characteristics can only obtain in an age whose justification lies in the retrograde [ii] carrying back of human history by centuries. The primitive mind presents to us a queer blending of the old and the new. Strangely enough his mind has remained stagnant for thousands of years while the human race is going on its onward march "To that had life progressed 3,000 or 4,000 years ago from its starting place in the slime of the tidal beaches." (H. Gr. Wells.)

It will not be far from the truth to assert that all the savage tribes that over-run the isolated patches of land on the earth's surface, have been driven away from their original habitation by more civilised men and secure them-selves in the inaccessible parts of a hill or a vast jungle. So were the ancestors of the Nagas refugees from the North Western Frontiers of China in the 13th and 14th centuries. Their type is the Indo-Chinese group. Sir Herbert Risley says, "There is nothing that I know of except the name to connect these clans with the tribes east of the Dayang. Their features are harsher, more decidedly Mongolian." Their laws and institutions are not peculiar as to distinguish them from other savage tribes. But some of these laws would be deemed as highly developed ethical doctrines by modern [iii] societies. But one thing strikes us as strange that these tribes who hold their relationship to arise out of a few original progenitors should have such a diversity of languages that it requires an interpreter to understand each other covering only a few villages between them.

Like all primitive people they are very fond of dresses of brilliant colour and wear a load of ornaments made of conch-shells, ivory or stone. Naga women weave clothes that show immense skill and a nice sense of art. About their occupation agriculture is the most important which is carried on a crude fashion. He is jealous, ferocious and prompt in taking vengeance. To the Nagas, human life has no more-value than a most paltry household utensil. The Naga is a brave fighter with his ancient weapons of the spear and the shield. The gun and the bullet hold up no spectre to him as was the case with some of Rider Haggard's men. Rather from what we know, the modern Naga has a lurking thirst for the gun. Naga villages are well-nigh inaccessible and well-fortified. A sentry is posted at the gate to challenge the stranger. [iv]

Some of the important features of the Naga marriage bear unmistakable resemblance to the systems prevalent in modern societies. Courtship is allowed. Then the marriage is contracted by the guardians of the consenting parties. It is a family contract where divorce is not unknown. Polygamy is a rare institution among the Nagas. Twenty or twenty two is reckoned as marriageable age for males and 16 or 17 that for females.

Nagas are animists and believe in various cults of trees, stone, snake etc.

Their mind has not evolved even a rude background of philosophical speculation. Some of them believe that pious men become stars, some have a dim sense of life after death. But most

men cannot understand anything beyond the present existence. This is the mental blank—the gulf that separates the two species of man-kind into ever widening horizon while the modern man throbs with surging life in his high pedestal of knowledge and reason, the soul of the primitive man looks with wonder and awe into the gathering mists of ignorance to have a peep into the arena of Light.

The Nagas are divided into various tribes [v] of which the Ao is the one, whose history I have tried to narrate from available resources. And for this my endeavour I am much indebted to Dr. J. H. Hutton, M.A., D.Litt., O.I.E., Indian Civil Service, who has done invaluable service by suggesting changes in places and by making necessary corrections. He has also provided me with some photos. I also extend my heartfelt thanks to Rai S. O. Ray Bahadur, M.A., B.L., M. L. O. for his kindly writing the foreword to this monograph.

Further, I am indebted for much of informations contained in this sketch to my bearer Mia Lepton—a resident of Naukam, and to his brother, Imimathang, a student of the School at Mokokchung, to both of whom I take the opportunity of according here my grateful thanks.

*Abhayapubi (Goalpara, Assam) India.*  
*The 17 February, 1925.*

S. N. MAJUMDAR.

## [vi] **FOREWORD**

It has long been a reproach to educated Indians that almost all the ethnographical work hitherto done in India has been accomplished by European officials or missionaries whereas we Indians, inspite of better advantages and opportunities, have neglected to take our proper share in the work. Any contribution from educated Indians to our ethnographical knowledge of the tribes and castes of India, is, therefore, of great interest and value to us. Dr. Majumdar's short monograph is indeed doubly welcome to us, first, as a contribution by an Indian student to the ethnographical literature about Indian tribes, and secondly as the first comprehensive account of an important section of the highly interesting Naga people.

True, the author has given a popular account meant more for the general reader, and anthropologists would naturally wish to have a fuller account of the physical characters and mentality, mode of life, migrations, social organization, religion and magic, language and folklore of the people ' but, until a more complete account [vii] is forthcoming, Dr. Majumdar's present monograph will form our main guide to the ethnography of the Aos.

So far as it goes, the present work appears to give us a faithful account of the life and habits, customs and Institutions of the Ao Nagas; and it is expected to receive a cordial welcome in and outside India. I fervently hope that other educated Indian gentlemen will emulate the example of Dr. Majumdar and utilise to the full such opportunities as they may have of studying their neighbours of the lower culture or, what is no less interesting, the 'Survivals' and 'Vestiges' of an earlier culture found embedded in the culture of comparatively advanced peoples, and embody the results of their enquires in the forms of monographs or magazine articles.

*Dated Ranchi (India) The 13th Febry., 1925*

RAI BAHADUR  
SARAT CHANDRA ROY, M.A., B.L., M.L.O.  
*Editor*—MAN IN INDIA.

### [1] THE AO NAGAS.

I had an opportunity of coming in direct contact with the Aos, during my residence at Mokokchung where I was posted as the medical officer in charge. Further my residence at Kohima in the same capacity for two years gave me many opportunities of studying the habits and customs of other Naga tribes as well.

The journey to Mokokchung was an uphill one. I reached Nakachari at 5 o'clock on a fine morning in the year 1914. The sun was not yet visible, and there was mist on all sides. It was the month of December. I wrapped myself up from head to foot and paced to and fro for a few minutes. The Station master enquired about my destination and I told him it was Mokokchung. He further enquired whether any Naga coolie was coming for me. I told him I was looking for them. But finding no trace of them whatsoever, I sat down on an arm chair.

At half past eight, the chaprashi informed me that the coolies had arrived. I lifted my eyes and saw some naked human creatures [2] taking charge of my luggage. Instead of fear I was overtaken by surprise and curiosity. Neatly shuffling all the articles, and without casting a single glance on me, they went away with their respective loads. I took my meal at Charali and continued my journey. The scenery was really very enchanting. On one side there were spread the extensive plains of the District of Sibsagar, and on the other the hills of the Naga range, "arrayed in gay theatric pride." On one side the plains were bedecked with the green verdure of the crops and on the other the billowy hills bordering on the field kissed as it were the clouds. After 5 miles or so, we began climbing the hills. As we advanced gloom and depression stole into my heart, and pleasure derived from the sight of the heaven-kissing hills gradually disappeared. Between the hills and the huge caves and precipices was spread the public road like a monstrous python. My hairs stood on their edge at the sight of the foot prints and excreta of wild animals here and there. The forest was so dense in certain places that light could not penetrate through the trees. The unbounded love of God was manifested even in such inaccessible regions. [3]

At intervals we caught sight of springs bubbling through the rocky mountains, whereat thirsty travellers quenched their thirst. We further saw fruit trees drooping with their loads uncared for by any human hand, tended by mother nature alone, for alleviating the worry of travellers exhausted with fatigue and hunger.

After proceeding for five miles we reached the foot of a hill so high that one could not gaze at the peak without being dazed and feeling giddy. In the process of climbing our hearts began to palpitate. That hill had to be ascended by five miles of zigzag path. After crossing the practically insurmountable region, we reached the Dak Bungalow at Lakhuni, at 4 o'clock in the evening, situated at a distance of 18 miles from Nakachari. The Chowkidar lighted the stove, and I went to bed, after regaling my-self with light refreshment. I came to know after dinner that Rev. Bailey of Impur had been occupying the next room in the bungalow. In the morning I got up early and went out after washing my hands and mouth. The sight all around was so fascinating that I was in a trance. Bar in the horizon we saw the snow-capped summits of the Himalayas, Gaurishankar, Kan-[4]chanjanga and Dhavalgiri pointing at the northern most extremity of India. The mighty Brahmaputra appeared like a faint silvery line. Jorhat was

distinctly visible and the position of Gauhati could only be dimly traced. When thus abstracted in my thoughts, Rev. Bailey approached me and being introduced to each other we had an interesting conversation. He lived at Impur—nine miles from Mokokchung. He pointed out to me the closely packed and snow-capped line of hills as the Darjeeling Range, and the archlike peak as Gaurisankar, with Kanchanjanglia and Dhavalgiri by its side. He pointed also the Brahmaputra washing the feet of Gauhati and appearing like the crest of a glittering wave.

From the Lakhum hill commences the Reserved Forest within the jurisdiction of the Naga hills and Sibsagar district. The thick forest, limitless and endless, spread itself as it were on the tops of trees. Occasionally we heard the screaming of monkeys, the barking of deer and the piercing yell of gibbons (Huluks) disturbing the deep silence of the hills—as if the tranquil waters of the sea had been agitated by the terrific roaring of distant aquatic animals. [5]

The dawn at last appeared with all its brilliance. The woods, moist with mist, appeared like so many islets on the bosom of the sea. In the far horizon the snows heaped upon snows, appeared as waves piled upon waves. In these oceans of forests, wild animals of all species roam about in their free will, and herds of elephants are seen flaunting through the jungles.

The country occupied by the Ao Nagas begins from Lakhum. The Nagas are divided into several tribes of which Ao is one. The tribes are as follows (i) Ao, (ii) Sema, (iii) Angami, (iv) Lhota, (v) Rengma, (vi) Kacha, (vii) Kuki, (viii) Kanyak, (ix) Thengkul or Manipuri Nagas etc. The Nagas occupy the region covered by the Naga Hills, Manipur and the outskirts of Burma. These tribes have got separate languages and their manners and customs also are dissimilar.

Some evidence of the fact that the present Naga Hills are the ‘Naga Desa’ or ‘Naga Loka’ described in the Mahabharata can be gathered. Some people say that at Khanama there can be seen the ruins of the palace of the Naga princess—Ulupi. Khanama is at a distance of eleven miles from Kohima. The Tunnel between Manipur [6] and Khanama is said to be still in existence. Through this tunnel the medicine was brought to restore life and consciousness to Arjuna who had swooned in his fight with his son Babrubahan. Even now the Nagas at Khanama offer annual sacrifices at the entrance to this tunnel. The ancient kings of Manipur were enthroned in a house situated on the tunnel. The entrance of the tunnel is as dark as a dismal cave, and no one dares go into it. There is a hill named Ukha after the princess Usha. I have heard that the remains of Usha’s palace can still be found on the Ukha-hill. There is a survey outpost on the Ukha-hill, from where Helio operations are carried on to Tezpur, Gauhati and Sadiya. At the foot of the Survey camp there is a tank covered with shrubs and creepers, guarded as they say by a white tiger. Many Nagas report to have seen this tiger which does not cause harm to any one. The Nagas regard that spot as extremely holy and worship the huge stone there. They do not remove anything from that hill, as they have a superstition that, in the event of such a removal, the miscreant will lose his way.

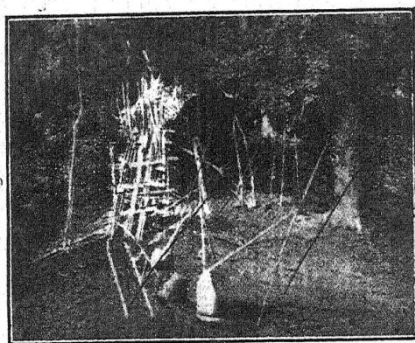
There is an image of Mahadeva or Siva on the Ukha Hill, and no one can say when it [7] was placed there. Some say that Usha worshipped Siva and there are many things to show that Siva, if worshipped with a sincere heart fulfils all our desires. It is thought that the “country of Pramila” described in the Mahabharata was situated somewhere between the Sema and Burma Hill. There is a tradition among all the Naga tribes that in the neighbourhood of Malami hill—80 miles from Kohima—there is a village solely occupied by females. It is believed that no man can go to that village. The man who will approach that Land of the fair sex will be surrounded by darkness on all sides, accompanied by a heavy downpour of rain, and the helpless intruder will lose his way and come back. The women there preserve bees in big caskets and let them loose on the approach of a man to the village, and the man flees for his

life. In a place bordering on the village there blows a peculiar breeze and women conceive on going to that place. A girl baby is fondly cared for and brought up, but a boy baby is killed immediately after birth. The ancient history of India is embedded in the abyss of time. We are looking eagerly to our antiquarians and scholars for unearthing that.

## [8] THE ORIGIN OF THE AO NAGAS.

“Ao” is the name given to them by the Nagas, Hathigaria by the Assamese. Lungthrok is situated on the southern bank of the river Diko near Mokokchung. There is a Naga tradition to the effect that the three brothers—Tiger, Man and Deo or spirit were first sent to Lungthrok hill by God. The tiger was the eldest and deo the youngest of the three brothers who all lived peacefully together. Once the three retired to the forest to offer a sacrifice. The man sacrificed a pig and the tiger drinking its raw blood resolved to leave that place and go to the forest to live upon raw meat and blood of animals which he would kill. As the tiger was starting from that place the man stopped him saying, “well brother, if you find plenty of food in the forest, please keep some meat for me”. The Nagas believe that when a tiger kills any animal, he eats half himself and leaves the remaining half for them. On the departure of the tiger, Deo or spirit with his hand turned towards his back prepared a Khang or basket without the knowledge of the man, and thus delivering it to the man said “I am also going to the forest.

Fig. 1



Khang or bamboo basket

[9] When you worship, leave my share of meat, fowl, egg or pork in the Khang at the place of sacrifice.” Thus saying the Deo also went away. The Khang supported on the piece of Bamboo in the above picture has been filled in by the meat meant for Deo. It was thus that Deo or spirit made the khang or basket. From the huge rocks of the Lungthrok hill there took birth many men and women.

They all began to settle in the village “Changlingti” and when the above village became too congested for so many people, the first created man with a handful of select followers of both sexes proceeded towards the river Diko. The man commanded his followers to cross the river Diko by a bridge made of cane-rods. The earliest man crossed the bridge first and then his followers. The bridge was then cut into two parts when the remaining men and women chased the first comers and wanted to cross the river. One of those who failed to cross the river said to the primitive man “Na Aor,” *i.e.*, are you going alone? “Ni Aor” was the reply, meaning, yes, I am going alone. “Ao” is derived from this word ‘Aor.’ The enquirer again asked ‘Nai nimiri’ *i.e.*, you have acted hostilely [10] towards me by not allowing us to cross the river.

The Miri Nagas are so called after the word Miri. Even now the country of the Miri Nagas is situated to the south of the river Diko and that of the Ao Nagas to the North of the same. The first batch of men and women settled at Ungma and Karitan after crossing the river Diko. The father of mankind is called by the Nagas as “Niloti.”

### **SUBDIVISIONS OF THE AO NAGA TRIBE.**

(1) Lungkhumro, (2) Chami, (3) Alam, (4) Puman, (5) Paocen, (6) Lungcha, (7) Usamukand (8) Lumto.

### **THE PHYSICAL CONSTITUTION AND COSTUMES OF THE AO NAGAS.**

The Ao Naga is short in stature. The complexion of his skin is mainly yellowish, nose flat, eyes small, eyebrows thin and drawn, head flat and face elongated. In look they resemble the Mongolian tribe.

*Males:*—The men are stout with firm and round muscles. They have a loin cloth for their wearing apparel. On their back they [11] fasten a piece of wood to their loincloth. Their Dao or sword hangs from this wood and it is never removed from their body. Specimens of fine handiwork can be seen in some of these pieces. Some wear bracelets made of ivory, some wear beads of conch-shell and some wear boars' tusks. Each ear is perforated in three places. In the upper hole, they wear cotton and in the lower two they thrust in tiny rods of iron. The ear-hole remains scarcely undecked. Some wear flowers, and some bamboo reeds. The members of different villages put on different ornaments in their ears, the most popular being a black wooden rod three or four inches long, the two ends being lined with yellow stripes, covering one-fourth of an inch from the extremities. The ornament is specially in vogue of the chunky villagers. Some wear twigs and sprays with leaves. Thus they ornament their ears with feelings of pride and joy.

They partially tonsure their heads removing the hair about two inches from the temples. They do not allow their hair to grow longer than three or four inches. The bunch of hair on the head, trimmed with precision, resembles a cap. They crop the hair with a dao by placing them [12] on a piece of wood. Scissors have been introduced in certain villages. They scarcely bathe and cleanse their body. Dirt accumulates on their bodies in thick layers.

*Females:* They are generally more beautiful than their males. The youthful girls regularly bathe and have a desire for decent living. The females wear 4 brass bangles on the right, and 8 on the left hand. Women have generally, according to their tribal customs, one or two holes on their ears. On the upper hole, they put on a huge brass ring, fastened with a ringlet of their own hair. On the lower hole, they wear a white crystal called *Natul*. The females are great lovers of beauty. They love flowers and thrust them in on their ears and heads. The males are great admirers of their women folk. They decorate their females with ornaments after their individual tastes. At the age of seven or eight, girls are tattooed on their hands, feet, bosom, knees and chins. Tattooing is accomplished by the thorn of some plant. The girl becomes restless under the strain of this torture. She has to be held down by 7 or 8 men.

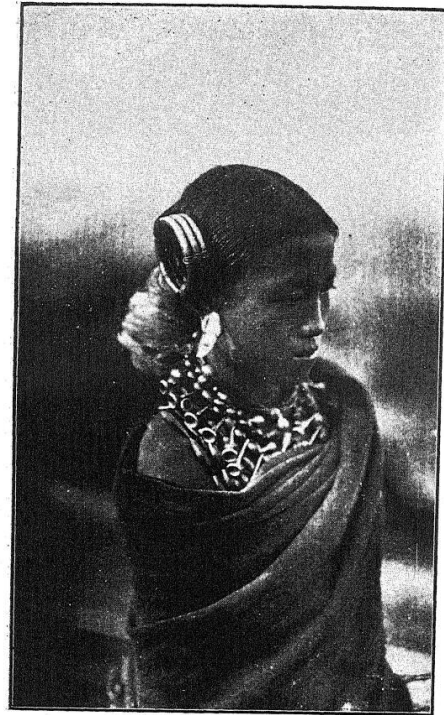
Orphan girls are tattooed by other villagers. Females wear a piece of cloth, covering the body

Fig 2



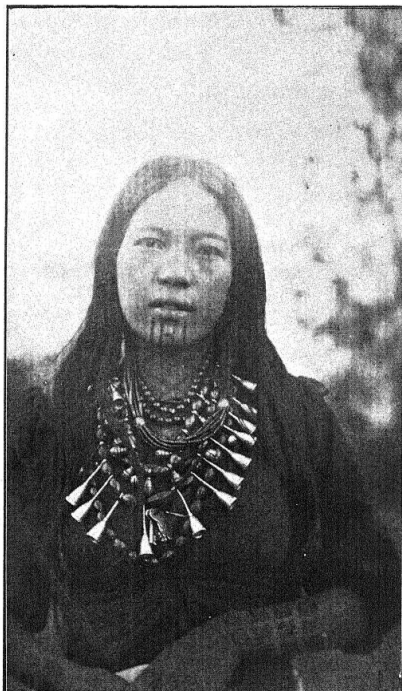
An Ao male

Fig. 3



The Ao female, showing the brass rings

Fig 4



The Ao girl, showing tatoo marks on chin, breast and forearm

Fig. 5



The Ao girl, showing tatoo marks on the leg

[13] from the loin down to the knees. They use another sheet from the bosom down to the knees and they wrap round the entire body with a third piece of cloth. The maidens are more careful in their dress than others. Middle-aged and old women scarcely cover the upper part of



their body. They generally use two pieces of cloth. The females wear strings of beads of small red stones.

The women do not observe any seclusion or *purda*. There are different customs of wearing dress and ornaments among the various sub-divisions and communities of the Ao tribe. Anyone violating the law will be fined and compelled to follow the prevailing customs.

### LUNGKHAMRO.

Men wear armlets of ivory and on their ears small rods of iron. Females wear brass rings and Natuls on their ears. The loin skirts of women are embroidered with small flowers designed with red thread.

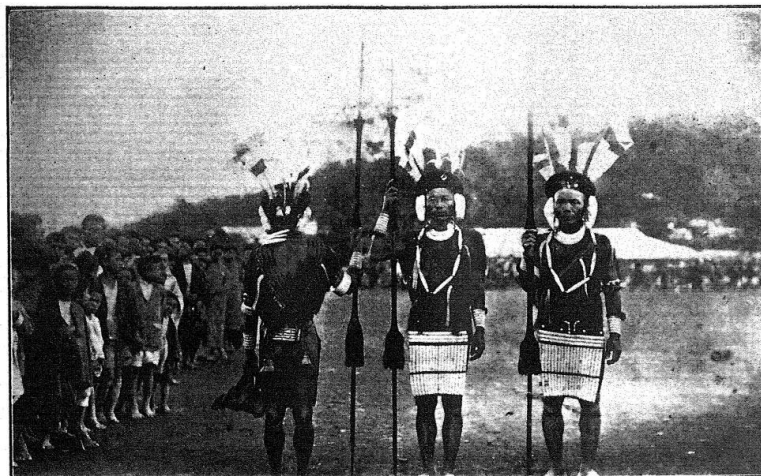
### CHAMI.

The men have no particular dress. The females wear Natuls and there is no embroidery on their loin cloths or *melchlas*. [14]

The men of the following divisions, viz., Alam, Puman, Paoceu, Lungcha, Usamuk and Lumto, like the Lungkhumros, wear ivory bangles on their hands and iron pins on the lower ear-holes. But the latter privilege is not conferred on the males of the Usamuk division. The women of the above divisions like their sisters of the Lungkhumro tribe wear brass rings on their ears and Mekhlilas with red flowers designed on them. But the females of the Usamuk division wear Mekhlilas with a thin red border and those of Lumto division like their Chami sisters wear Natuls made of crystal only.

Those natives who, before the advent of the British Government, fought with the Nagas or those who went to the frontier with British soldiers to fight against frontier tribesmen twice or thrice, are entitled to wear the boars' tusks. Those who have taken the heads of men are allowed to wear on their hands and waist dresses made of cowries; and on their breast red badges made of goat fur; behind, near their buttocks a pendent made of human hair and measuring nearly one cubit in length, and on their neck a string of red beads. The red string and the red badge symbolise their accession to fame and bloodshed.

Fig. 6



Ao Nagas in full dress

Fig. 7



An Ao pair of means in full dress, performing Sichatang worship

Fig. 8



An Ao Sardar  
(Julusangba of Nankam)

[15] The performer of a worship wears a conch string and if worship is offered to a grandfather, the grandson will wear such a string for full one year. If the same be offered to a father, the son will wear two rows of strings and the same rule applies if the man worships for himself.

Poor women are not allowed to wear more than two strings of beads on their neck, but the wives of rich men can wear as many strings as they like, and thrust between the gems spikes made of brass. The wealth, happiness and nationality of a person can be ascertained from the ornament he or she wears.

Those who have taken heads by killing men wear a kind of cloth known as *Mingkotapzi*. On the body of a black piece of cloth there run lengthwise 6 green parallel rows on the upper and five on the lower sides, and in the centre small human skulls are painted in red. They feel extremely exalted when they wear this cloth.

## **AO NAGA SARDAR.**

### **(JULUSANSBA OF NANKAM)**

Boar tusks on the neck, strings of red stones and conch shells, ivory bangles on the hand, dress made of cowries, red coloured badge made of [16] goats' hair on the breast, in front the cloth made of cowries is overhanging, in the hand a spear with decorated handles.

The accompanying picture was taken in front of the Nankam Inspection Bungalow.

## **MARRIAGE CUSTOMS.**

As marriages between the kindred descended from the same male stock are prohibited among the Hindus, so among the Nagas, marriages among descendents of the same line are tabooed. The maidens and youths of the line look upon each other as brothers and sisters.

Marriages between the Lungkhumro and the Chami, Human, Alam, Paocen and Lumto are allowed. Marriages may take place between the Chami division and the Lungkhumro, Paocen and Alam, and similarly between the Alam and Lungkhumro, Chami, Puman, Lungcha, Lumto and Usamuk. Inter-marriages are allowed between the Puman, Lungkhumro, Alam and Lumto divisions.

With the Paocen division, members of the Lungkhumro, Chami, Lungcha Ushmokh and Lumto division may marry. Inter-marriages between the following divisions may be allowed: [17] Lungcha, Alam and Paocen ; Lumto and Lungkhumra; Paocen Alain and Puman, Usamuk, Alam and Paocen.

The marriageable ages of young men and virgins range between 20 and 25, and between 18 and 20 years respectively. The married couples are sometimes of the same age. Courtship is allowed, and continues for a period of six months to 3 years before marriage. In some cases it is extended up to 5 years. After long continued courtship, if the pair do not find each other agreeable, the marriage falls through. Among the Ao Nagas, courtship is an invariable precedent of a marriage. During the period of courtship the couple behave as husband and wife. Among the Assamese this period of courtship is known as the mating period. In the event of a marriage not following a prolonged courtship, it is not regarded as disgraceful. When the couple part with each other, they may select new mates as their lovers.

Some maidens are courted by 10 or 12 men before they finally select one as their life mate. Some meet only one young man and they marry.

If a virgin conceives during the period of courtship then her lover will be compelled to marry [18] her, and if he be not willing to do so, he will have to maintain the child for five years, after which the man will be the guardian of the child. Courtship is carried on without the knowledge of the guardian, but he comes to know about it in the case of a prolonged courtship. If the young man wants to marry he will communicate his desire to his parents. At first the young man's father presents to the bride's father 4 or 5 fishes. This is the initial ceremony leading to the marriage. After the present of fish is made the couple will not be allowed to woo fresh lovers. Fine is imposed if this rule is violated. If the pair do intend to marry they may do so even after the payment of fine. Immediately after the presentation of fish the bridegroom's father will present to the bride's father five baskets of paddy and a Dao of superior quality. The parties concerned will remain very neat and tidy the whole day, and will see that no death occurs in the village. The day is very auspicious to the marrying couple.

Four or five days after the paddy has been presented, the bridegroom, with money presented to him by his father, and with the help of the villagers of his own clan will build a house of his own. Within [19] three days after the construction of the house, he will arrange the furniture and requisites of the same. On the fourth day the bride's mother with 10 or 12 of her own clanswomen will, in the company of the bride, go to the newly constructed house of the bridegroom. The young man will be accompanied by his mother and their friends and relations. The fathers of the bride and the bridegroom are not allowed to go there. The assembled people will be treated with boiled rice, meat and madhu or rice beer. After the feast, an old man of the bridegroom's party will hold a fowl near the face of the bride-groom and chant some incantations and the same fowl will be held before the face of the bride to the accompaniment of charms, the purport of which is as follows:—"May you live long in peace and happiness, let your home be free from all annoyance and trouble, and may you see the face of children". After the incantations the fowl is killed outside the house and its meat is taken by all except the bridal pair. They cannot go out of their house the whole day. Most of the guests assembled pass the night in the house of the bridegroom. For seven days after the marriage the new couple will not stay together. [20]

The day after the marriage they go together to gather fuel in the wood. Neither the bride nor the bridegroom can take a new mate within a month of their first marriage in the event of a dissolution by divorce, death or otherwise.

Divorce is in vogue, and is usually taken recourse to. After a divorce a second wife or a second husband can be accepted. All marital separations are generally due to the wantonness of the pair, the sterility of the wife or her quarrelsomeness. The guilty party will compensate the loss suffered. A wife found quarrelsome and unfaithful will be rejected by the husband and will not be entitled to any belonging of the husband. The children will be kept by the husband. If the child be a baby sucking mother's breast, it will be in the custody of the mother till five years old, but the father will bear his maintenance. If a wife be rejected on account of her sterility she will be entitled to half the number of pigs, fowls, paddy and furniture belonging to her husband. If the husband is divorced by the wife on account of his adulterous habits, she will be entitled to full share of the above. The wife has no claim upon the land and house of the husband.

Extra I



Carrying fuel from the wood

[21] The same marriage customs prevail among all the Ao clans. The young men and women of the same clan cannot intermarry and if they are found to love each other, they are fined and turned out of the village. Sometimes they are let off with fine only but they become objects of ridicule and contempt.

## RELIGION AND GENNAS

The Ao Nagas believe in one supreme God whom they style “*Lichaba Ali Yang Baba Sangram*”—(Lichaba—God, Ali Yang Raba—the creator of the earth including men and plains; Sangram—holy spirit.) The *Deo* who has created the earth is the Great God. The Ao Nagas have neither any form of worship nor any rituals. They worship God or Deo; they worship big stones also under the same belief in the month of January. The object of this worship is to avert epidemic diseases in the village, to secure a bumper harvest in the fields and to save the crops from floods and inundations. They believe that in the absence of this worship they will surely be liable to the dangers mentioned above. [22]

The above worship is known as *Lunglangba Khalam*—(Lunglangba—rock, Khalam—worship). A Pig and two fowls are offered as sacrifices in the worship. They will deposit 100 pieces of pork in one place and in another 50 pieces, and madhu in 100 leaves. And a fowl will be let loose. No one can eat either the fowl or the madhu or the meat. They believe that the man who par-takes these offerings will run mad.

They perform sacrifices in their respective fields for bringing in an abundant crop, where a pig and a fowl are sacrificed. Six bits of pork are placed in one place and madhu on three leaves. This sacrifice is known as *Alupensa Genna*.

When a Naga has his hands and feet severely bruised or cut or fractured while working in the field, or when he is attacked with dangerous illness he will be regarded as being possessed in that particular spot, and apposite sacrifices will be offered for his speedy recovery. This genna or worship is known as “Rentinre” or “Arakis”. A pig and a fowl will be first killed in front of the man’s house, and a fowl will be set free and an egg will be broken. Then a regular sacrifice will take place on the spot where [23] the man was possessed, by killing a pig and two fowls, letting loose two hens and breaking two eggs. Like the sacrifices performed in the fields six pieces of meat will be placed in three different spots and madhu on three leaves. In the case of a woman five bamboos and that of a man six bamboos will be planted at the place of worship wherefrom three khangs will be suspended.

The following Grennas are peculiar to the Aos, and can be performed by all men of circumstances but this must be done in order of succession, the violation of which will make the man unfit for performing sacrifices.

(1) The first sacrifice in precedence is *Tongsitong Khalam* which is performed in the house and can be offered at all times. One pig has to be sacrificed and a present of a pig and a basket of paddy is to be made to the Arasinre. For six days the worshipper is not allowed to leave the village nor to take anything belonging to another house.

In every village there is an Arasinre. They pray for the welfare of others, look after the sick and administer medicine. They are the hereditary priests and physicians of the village. [24] Other people not in the direct line of the descendents can never be Arasinres. They receive as tithes a fixed portion of paddy from everyman in the village.

(2) *Kitsug khalam*:—The next sacrifice to be performed is Kitsug khalam, but this order is not observed by all people. Sometimes the Tongsitong khalam worship follows the Kitsug khalam. In the latter a pig and a fowl have to be sacrificed in the house. People other than the members of the family will not be allowed to come to the house. The husband, the wife and the children, if any, will participate in the feast. No portion should go to other people. In this sacrifice also the performer will not leave the village for six days and will not take anything from others' houses.

(3) *Monglamangfopat*:—This sacrifice is the third in order of precedence. The requisites of this sacrifice are 70 to 80 baskets of paddy, 2 big pigs and 30 to 40 fowls. The pigs and the fowls will be killed in the courtyard of the house. Madhu or rice beer will be brewed with rice extracted from 40/50 baskets of paddy, and rice alone from another 20/30 baskets. Every khang contains 20/30 seers of paddy. Besides these [25] dried fish and meat are required in large quantity. A feast is given to the clansmen and relations living in the village. This sacrifice lasts for five days; the first two days are devoted to the brewing of madhu, the third to the sacrifice of pigs, the fourth to the slaughter of fowls and the fifth to the general feast. The restrictions concerning the leaving of the village and taking other peoples' things are extended to one month.

(4) *Aniptang fopat*:—The next sacrifice is Aniptang fopat. The third and the fourth sacrifices are marked by the same ceremonies, the only difference being the slaughter of a monstrous pig in Aniptang fopat.

(5) *Kafotsa*:—It stands fifth in order of precedence. In this sacrifice 70/80 baskets of paddy, a bull, a pig and a fowl will be necessary. It lasts for five days. The first four days are devoted to the gathering of fuel and the making of madhu. On the fifth day the bull, the pig and the fowl will be slaughtered. On the spot where the bull is killed there will be placed a wooden 'Hargara' or cross and the fowl will be tethered to it. The aforesaid fowl cannot be beaten by anybody. The Morang Golams *i.e.*, [26] Village swains sleeping in the morang will kill the bull and they will be supplied with liquor named *Rui*. For one month the sacrificer will not go to graveyards and places where dead bodies are kept.

(6) *Foar*:—This is the sixth sacrifice, the requirements being 100 baskets of paddy, 10 pigs and 3 or 4 hens and it lasts for four days. Fuel is gathered on the first and second days and the beer is also prepared at that time. On the third and fourth days pigs and hens are sacrificed. A feast will be given to all the inmates of the village, and in the case of certain villagers their meat will be sent to their houses. The worshipper will not be allowed to leave his own village or to go to any graveyard.

(7) *Akkikha*:—Akkikha is the next sacrifice. It lasts for one month and innumerable materials are necessary, *viz.*, 5 to 6 hundred maunds of paddy, 30 pigs, 22 bulls and 10 fowls. All the villagers will be invited to the feast lasting during the period of sacrifice. The performer of the sacrifice shall not leave his village for one year or take others' food for one month.

(8) *Agicha*:—The next sacrifice is Agicha where 20/25 maunds of rice, 2 pigs and 3/4 [27] fowls are necessary. It lasts for three days. The morang golams and Ranglus (village gallants and maidens) of the same class are invited to a feast and they will be entertained with dancing, music and amusements. For six days the man will not leave the village or take others' food.

(9) *Sichatang*:—This is the ninth sacrifice. This is the grandest and the final sacrifice of the host being the last one of the series. The performance of this sacrifice can be repeated as many times as possible, according to the circumstances of the worshipper. A bull, a pig, 3 or 4 hens

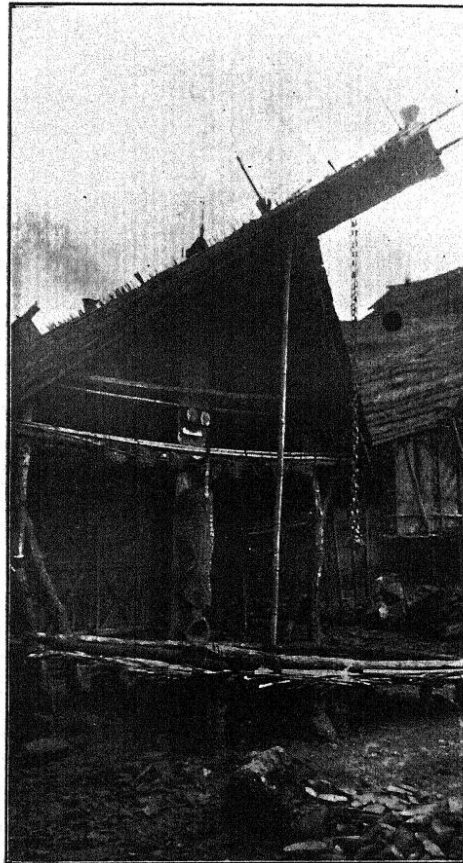
and a mithan or bison are required. The number of mithans is not fixed; it ranges from one to twelve. More than a hundred maunds of paddy are required. The sacrifice lasts for ten days. The first five or six days are devoted to the chopping of wood and the preparation of madhu. Then the scaffold for slaughtering the mithan will be brought from the forest. On the ninth day the mithan will be killed. The day following, rice will be pounded in front of the house. The performer of this sacrifice has triangular roofs and the sacrificial scaffold remains permanently fixed in front of his house. From this sign, the fact that [28] this householder has performed the Sichatang sacrifice can be ascertained. On each side of the house door six pitchers engraved on wood and known as *Molong*, are posted. Various kinds of birds—all made of wood will be affixed to the roof of the house. A piece of wood with the image of a tiger and a goat engraved, is fastened to a post. A flower made of bamboo and straw is fixed on the roof in the shape of a cross and earthen cups are inserted between the spaces in the flower, and two cane leaves are attached to them.

### MALONG

The cross shaped flower made of Bamboo and straw is called Waza. The cup, the straw and the cane look like a tub and are called *Posam*. Triangular straws and cane leaves are piled upon the posam and this is known as *Sensheri*.

The performer of a Nafotsa sacrifice will plant a perpendicular post and two inclined posts in front of his house. On the top of his house there will be first a posam and then two wazas made of straw.

Fig. 9



The house of an Ao Naga performing  
"Sichatang" worship

[29] The performer of Akkikha and Agicha sacrifices will fasten to the perpendicular wooden post, a bamboo post, and on both sides a pair of crossed shaped bamboo posts. On the roof of the house there will be fixed large number of waza made of bamboo, two wazas made of straw and two posam.

The personal or individual gennas or sacrifices mentioned above cannot be performed more than one a year. Sometimes one to four years elapse between the first and the second sacrifice. No fixed time is prescribed to the gennas, it depends upon the means and convenience of the performer. The sacrifices except Sichatang cannot be performed more than once. Well-to-do Nagas perform the Sichatang genna every year during their life time.

The Aos have some more gennas or sacrifices of a communal and social character:—

(1) *Tokong khalara*:—This sacrifice is performed in the month of March by the elders and youngsters of a class by the side of the paths of their respective fields, the requisites being a pig, a hen and six eggs. The eggs are broken on the paths and the pigs and hens are killed and eaten by the worshippers at the place of sacrifice. [30] The surplus meat will be carried home. The object of this worship is to secure abundance of crops.

(2) *Onglcomat*:—This is called by the Nagas Bread Sacrifice (Ongko—bread); and is performed on the Hindu “Holly” day. A few youths selected from among the Morung Golams kindle fires at four from different places and a youth from the village carries thither a loaf, and when he returns after placing the loaf, he is beaten with a half burnt log of wood. The youth will take to his heels and will come back again to the Genna with a fresh loaf. He will be beaten again and will again return. This will be repeated thrice. If the youth is beaten severely, his place will be taken by another. The eye of an Ao youth was burnt in the process and was under my treatment for a long time. The object of this sacrifice is, I believe, to afford amusement only.

(3) *Lichaba Khalam*:—This is the Divine worship of the Aos. The three oldest men of the village perform this sacrifice at the foot of the village with the help of a pig, a hen and an egg. The pig and the hen are killed and are kept at the place of worship. Fifty leaves will be spread with five pieces of meat on each, and [31] beer on 60 leaves. The old men will eat there and carry the surplus meat home. The above cannot be eaten by any one in the village except the three old men. The day following the sacrifice will be an auspicious day for the whole village. This sacrifice is performed in the month of April.

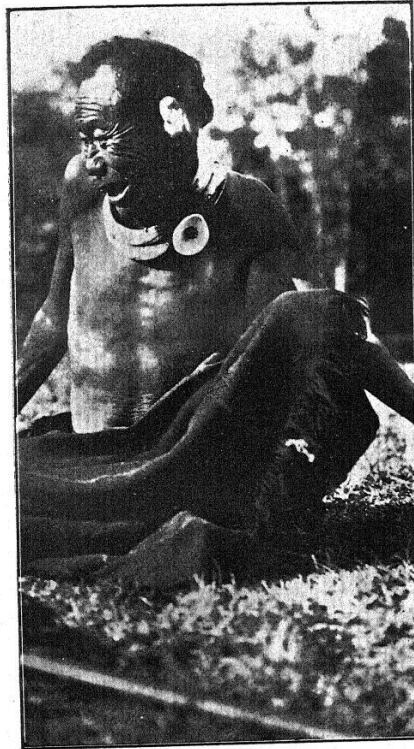
(4) *Chitan*:—This is performed in May. Like the Lichaba sacrifice this genna is performed by the old men in the place of Lichaba worship with a pig, a fowl and an egg. The peculiarity of this sacrifice is marked by the fact that the boys and youths who have not yet been admitted to the Morung house will go to the place of sacrifice and snatch the meat from the old men. “Chitan” in the Ao language means taking by force. The members of the village, when Chitan is performed, stop all communications and transactions with the people of neighbouring villages for six days. They will be allowed to eat in the auspicious village but will not be allowed to carry anything with them.

(5) *Tazinglombi*:—This is performed 4 or 5 days after the chitan sacrifice. The male members of the village perform this sacrifice on the path leading from the village to the field, with a [32] pig and a hen. They carry beer in innumerable gourds. At the end of the sacrifice, the youths of this village erect a huge machang or raised bamboo platform when they drink madhu and eat meat and dance and sing in riotous revelry. The old men retire to the village. The youths kindle a huge fire in the Morung house where they start a most wanton kind of



dancing and singing at the pitch of their voice. Then all the people, including the elders and the juniors fix a day for the Moachi sacrifice, which announcement is followed by universal rejoicing and revelry in the village. All family sacrifices will be suspended in view of this worship.

Fig. 10



An old Ao Naga after the Divine worship

(6) *Moachi*:—This is performed in the month of June. Before the sacrifice the Morung youths bring fuel from the wood, prepare wooden rests for their daos and all village raise subscriptions from their respective classes to purchase pigs. This sacrifice lasts for seven days. A pig will be killed on the first day and all will partake madhu and meat. The young men will put on ceremonial dress and go about singing and dancing in several places in the village and eat plenty of meat and drink wine there. On the fifth day they will make a road to the village, on the sixth [33] a way to fetch water, and on the seventh a path to the place where fishes are caught. This sacrifice is the most favourite one of the youths, and there is a carnival of merry-making in the village.

(7) *Tsengrammong*:—This is celebrated towards the end of July, and on this occasion young men and maidens all become absorbed in joy and merrymaking, and there is universal rejoicing in the village. In the house young and middle-aged women brew wine out of rice, the young men bring from the forests long strips of bark and make from them long and stout ropes, after which, for three days, there ensues a festivity of rope-pulling in full swing. The young men and women will have no rest nor any sleep, they will go about from house to house eating and drinking and singing and dancing. In the afternoon, in front of the Morung house they in their best apparel will be engaged in a tug-of-war. The youths pull uphill; and this tug-of-war will be accompanied by songs. There will be keen rivalry between the singing of the maidens and the youths.

(8) *Imkhalam*:—This is performed in August after the Tsengrammong sacrifice in a central place in the village. A bull, a pig, a dog and a [34] fowl are necessary. It lasts for one day and the meat is partaken of by all villagers. The lion's share will be allotted to the elders who had performed the Lichaba khalam sacrifice; then will come the gallant warriors of the village or those who have taken human heads. The quantity in this share varies according to the number of skulls they have collected. The remaining portion goes to the rest of the villagers. Before the British annexation the spoils secured, after defeating a village, were divided in the following order. The lion's share went to the three old performers of Lichaba sacrifice, the second share to the gallant warriors and the remaining to the other villagers. The three old men are known as *Putir* and they look after the Minenries of the village. The Imkhalam ceremony lasts for seven days. All communications with neighbouring villages are prohibited and no article can be removed from the village.

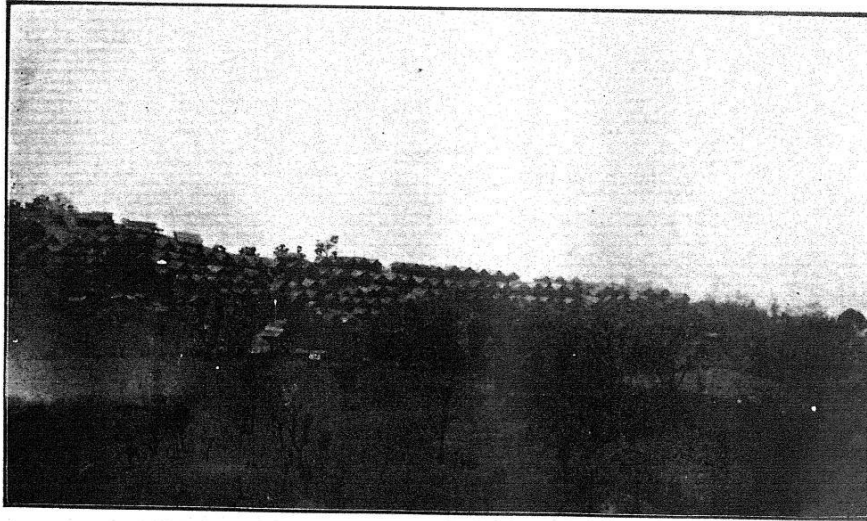
The expenses of the aforesaid Gennas are met by all the villagers on account of their social and communal nature. Paddy is collected from the village in the month of January, from which the expenses of the yearly genna *i.e.*, of purchasing the pigs and fowls will be borne. This [35] paddy collection is also of the nature of a festivity to them, and is known as *Sabisatn*, meaning money collection. The workers of the function drink madhu and eat meat sumptuously.

(9) *Sasongtang*:—This is performed in January after the Sabisam festivities, and this is also a public sacrifice in the village. The ditch or trench surrounding the village will be re-excavated, the sides will be newly fenced and the Lion's gate at the entrance of the village will be repaired. There are now very few duties connected with this genna as the trenches and the village barricades are no longer necessary. What they do at present is the digging of a small surface and the repairing of the entrance house to the village. The Nagas commence their new year after the Sabisam and Sasongtang gennas. The debtors who cannot repay their debts tell the irrespective creditors the facts of their inability to do so, and in lieu of it will allow their sons or daughters to serve in the creditor's house for one, two or three years as the case may be, and the year is counted from the day after the Sasongtang sacrifice till the last day of the next Sasongtang festivity, and the services of the children of the debtors are based on this calculation of years.

### [36] NAGA VILLAGES AND HOUSES

Every Ao village is a well barricaded fortress. It is situated on the summit or ridge of high hills on a rocky surface. The houses are built on hard rocks and not a blade of grass grows in the village. There is a deep and extensive ditch all round the village, many of which have been filled up at present, but their existence can be traced everywhere. This ditch is made to protect the village from invasion from outside. Prior to the advent of the British to the Naga hills there were eternal feuds and bloodshed among the people of different villages. There was a huge wall made of wood and bamboo all round the ditch. At one end there was the Lion's gate with a huge wooden door. Sentinels or watchmen were posted on the four corners of the wall and on the gate. There was a palisade of spear-shaped pointed bamboos planted in the ditch to prevent invaders from crossing the same. At the Lion's Gate there was a house which served the purpose of an entrance to the village. The hamlets of the Ao Nagas are like

Fig. 11



An Ao village

Fig. 12



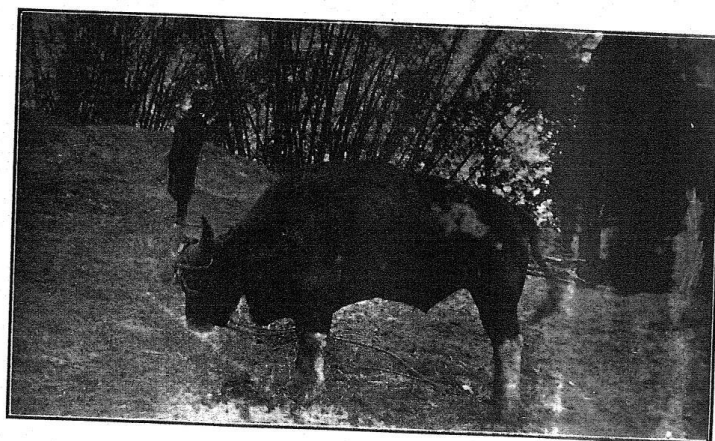
The Lion's gate at the entrance of the village

[37] the big lanes of a market place. The houses are more or less continuous and a lane faces the long line of houses. The number of lanes varies according to the population of the village.

A small path leads to the village, but at present some villages are situated on Government roads. The Nagas prefer their own narrow paths to the straight public roads as they have a belief that walking by the latter they get cramps in their legs.

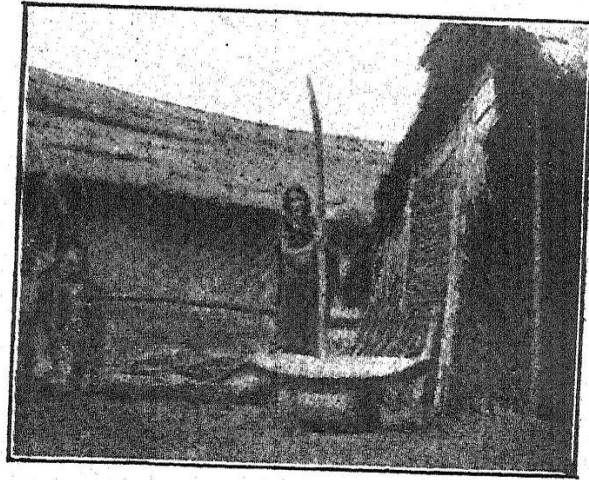
The different tribes build their houses indifferent ways; but all of them are made of straw and have two thatches. Ao houses look like inverted steamers. They are situated at right angles to the roads, and the front part of the house on the road is the porch of the house, which is open to the sun by a door. On entering a house, we come into a room roughly levelled to the ground, and measuring about 8 or 10 cubits. This is the first room of the house, having on all sides a bamboo wall. Throughout the house after the front part there is a bamboo *machang* 3 or 4 cubits high, and this machang is extended up to an open space at the back of the house measuring about 10 or [38] 12 cubits. The latter machang is 10 or 12 cubits high from the ground, and is propped by bamboo posts. The house affords a different view from the front, and from behind. From a distance the house presents a steamerlike view. Surrounding the machang there is a bamboo wall, with a stair case and a door in front of it, and there is a small door from the machang to the open space behind. The house has two rooms and open verandah. Between the machangs there is a square measuring about six feet in breadth, and the floor of the space is elevated up to the machang. A fire is kept kindled through-out day and night which serves as the family fire place. The interior of the house looks like a work-shop. The females usually spin yarn on the sides or weave cloths or do other household work on the verandah in the open space. They sleep near the fire on logs of wood. They can be fairly said to have no winter garments, which, however, they do not require as they sleep in such close proximity to the fire. The Nagas can never live without fire, they sleep on the road-side kindling a fire. Near the fire place they have a small shelf where they dry raw fish and meat, making the interior

Fig. -13



The Naga Mithon Bull

Fig. 14



The Naga husking Pedal

[39] of the house unsuitable for habitation on account of the stinking smell. On the verandah of the house they dry in the sun their paddy, pulse and tobacco leaves. The Mithons or Bisons generally live in the forests and sometimes in the compound in a cattle shed at the foot of the house along with other cattle. In the first room of the house, fowl, pigs and dogs generally live, and where the females also husk paddy. They make some holes in a huge log of wood and this serves as their Dheki pedal.

The house-hold furniture are kept in the second room which is extremely neat and tidy, and which serves also as their kitchen and bedrooms. Their granaries are constructed in a separate place on the foot or margin of the village where they store their paddy on the machang in baskets from where they take out according to their requirements. But no one touches another man's store.

The son builds a separate house after marriage, and lives separately from his parents. In the event of the death of both the parents, he lives with his brothers and sisters. The father transfers to the son a specified plot of land after his marriage, which is cultivated by [40] the newly married couple, to earn their livelihood. The children live under the roof of their parents till their marriage, but will sleep else-where from very early youth. The place where the bachelors spend the night is known as *morung*. Every Naga village is divided into several *khels* or localities, and the young men of every khel have their morung, where they commence spending the night from the age often or twelve. The name of *morung golam* is given by the Nagas to these who live in the morung.

The morung is situated by the side of every khel and is separated from the remaining house. The morung is bigger than the average house, and gives some testimony to the artistic abilities of the Nagas. The members of each khel look upon their morung with pride and decorate it to the best of their ability. In the open space in front the morung there are wooden seats and the heads of mithans, bulls and deer are suspended all around. Pieces of wood with the images of

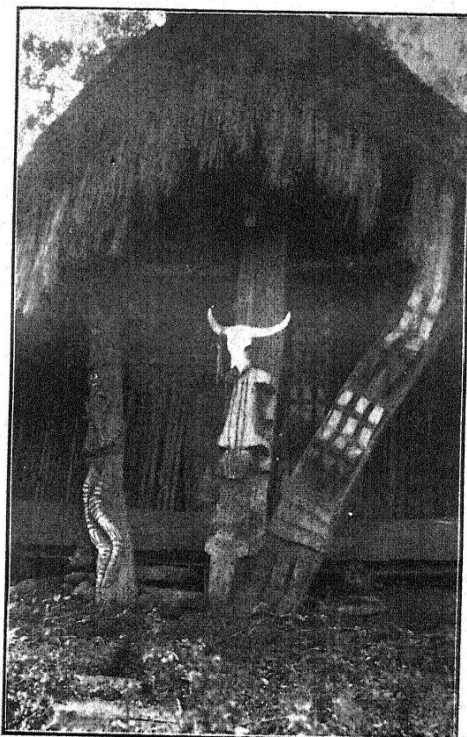
tiger, bear, mithan, snakes and birds carved on them are fastened to the front wall. In the second room the morung golams spend the night on small machangs made higher than

Fig. 15



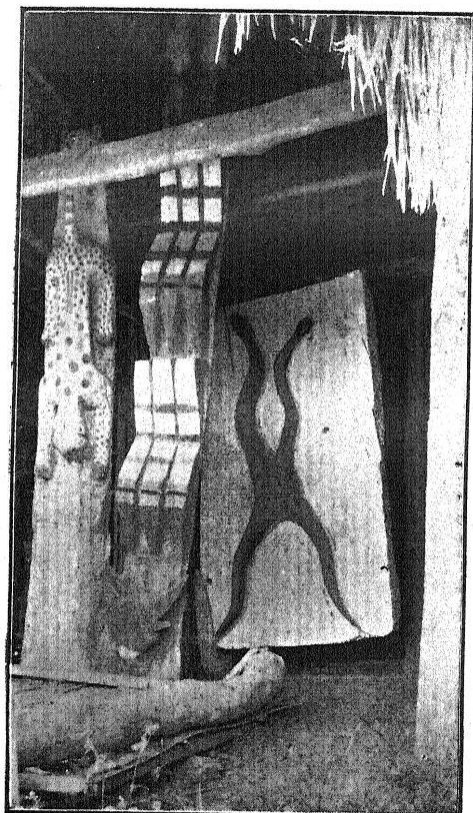
The Morung house

Fig. 16



Front view of the Morung house

Fig. 17



The Image of the tiger carved on a piece of wood, in front of the Morung house

[41] the general one. The third room serves as a closet or urinal, emitting such an obnoxious smell that it makes even the second room unfit for entrance. The morung has no open verandah at the back as in the ordinary house. Women cannot visit the morungs; till their marriage they spend the night with the elderly women of the village.

Young men and women mix freely, and Ao parents do not keep any watch over the character of their daughters, who allow themselves to be courted by lovers according to their own sweet will, and have not a very high regard for chastity. The Nagas ease themselves everywhere and cleanliness is practically ignored. Every Khel has its allotted place for sitting for both men and women.

*Morung*:—The construction of the Morung among the Aos is highly interesting. After all the materials for the house have been collected by the members of the Khel, some of them will carve the image of a tiger on a huge piece of wood and it will be brought in the evening to the village. The Morung Golams do not attend this function. But they, in the company of the three old men of the *Lichaba Genna* slaughter [42] on that day 10 pigs, the meat of which will be distributed to all the members of the khel after the wooden effigy of the tiger has arrived at the village. The Morung Golam will then retire to the forest with their meat, rice and other eatables and the morung will be constructed by other people. The Morung Golams will not return to the village till the house has been completed. Those who communicate with the Morung Golams in the forest will give very comical names to the latter such as monkeys, wild rats, jackals and boars. The Morung Golams will accept these appellations most cheerfully and there will be a wild uproar of laughter. If any of the men engaged in the construction of the morung is approached by a Morung Golam, he will at once fall flat on the ground as if dead, and will assemble the men of the village by calling them loudly, and give out the story that he has been beaten by the morung golam. The villagers will then return to the “injured” man’s house along with the Morung Golam and will remove the meat and fish of his house which they will all enjoy together, and the morung golam will return again to the forest, and will bring all his comrades back [43] on completion of the construction of the house.

The Ao territory comprises 52 villages, which are situated at a distance of 2 to 3 miles from one another. Nankam is situated on the summit of the highest hill, from where Golaghat, and Chariali can be seen. In that large village consisting of 800 households, women are more numerous than men. Before the British Regime, the Nankam Nagas dominated over the Ao tribes and exacted tax from them. Before the advent of the Pax Britannica, war was the custom of the day, the object of which was head-hunting. The man who takes the largest number of heads will be the most honoured man in the village and will wear the best dress and ornaments. The tree wherefrom the heads were suspended was known as Aku. All the human skulls were burnt by the Nagas by the order of the Subdivisional Officer Mr. Noel Williamson. The Nagas used to live in perpetual fear, their free movements were curbed and they could not even engage themselves in cultivation without anxiety. The weaker specially lived in dread of the stronger. Under the peace and protection afforded to them, by the benign British [44] Government, they are moving freely everywhere and cheerfully taking to their agricultural pursuits.

*Scoungkong*: is the war drum of the Aos, which is made by boring the trunk of a tree having a large diameter. It looks like a crocodile and can be divided into 4 parts,—the head, the neck, the body and the tail. The drum is kept in a house adjoining the Morung. The size of the scoungkong varies in different villages. The Nankam drum is the largest, being 14 ft. in diameter and 59 ft. in length of which the head is 11 ft., neck 8 ft., body 40 ft., and tail 5 ft. The drum is tightly fastened to a stone. Three or four drum sticks measuring 11 or 12 ft. in length and 3 or 4 inches in diameter are attached to the Scoungkong, and these sticks beating

upon the drum provide the war-music of the Nagas. This drum was beaten when the victors entered triumphantly into their own village, after defeating a neighbouring village, and taking human heads with them. But this head-hunting was possible before the annexation of the country by the British. Even now this national drum is beaten to welcome the villagers returning to their own village after [45] participating in a frontier expedition, say with the Mirrs, the Mismis or the Abors or coming back with a human head or any part of a human body. A Naga failing to bring with him a human head from any such frontier expedition stealthily removes the finger or the nose of a dead body to enable him to perform a genna on returning home. The scoungkong is beaten on genna days and also on the day of the dark moon.

The Aos believe that the sun and the moon are the greatest phenomena of nature and that on the days of the dark moon the moon is swallowed by a tiger who releases the victim on hearing the sound of Scoungkong and there will be no disturbance in the village. The Aos beat the drum also on lunar and solar eclipses under the influence of the same superstition. During an eclipse all the villagers assemble in the Morung and weep.

New Scoungkongs are made in the months of January and February, with the co-operation of all the villagers. But the work must go on outside the village, and the whole khel must bear the expenses of the actual makers of the drum till it is ready and installed in the village. [46] Bice-beer, meat and rice are daily carried to them in the forest. A house is constructed on completion of the drum, which is ceremoniously brought to the village drawn by stout ropes. The owner of the land where the drum is placed is attired in the dress used in the Moachi Genna and sits in front of the drum; and 24 warriors or head hunters of the village sit in two rows near the drum, and are drawn by the remaining villagers with ropes. The females touch the rope at the middle, and the males at the two ends. After the drum is installed in the village, all members of the particular khel will entertain the whole body of the villagers.

## FOOD AND DRINK

The Aos have a striking fondness for meat, and their males eat the flesh of all animals excepting elephants and snakes, their chief games being bears, monkeys, dogs, mithans, pigs (tame and wild), bulls, hens, deer and various kinds of birds and fish. The females only take fowls, tame pigs and fish. They boil meat and fish with water, or roast them, and eat them with salt and pepper. Bice is their staple food and they take plenty of salt and chilli. The Naga madhu [47] or rice-beer is their principal drink and is prepared in several ways,—the chief preparation being known as *Ruhi*. This wine is prepared with rice and the yeast of certain leaves.

Gourds and bamboo “chungas” or tubes are used as receptacles of Naga wine. A guest is first welcomed by this wine. The Nagas carry rice, meat and rice-beer wherever they go, which they take when necessary. At present the Nagas of both sexes and of all ages have taken to the use of cigarettes, the cheap varieties of which are circulated widely in the hills. Tobacco leaves are very dear to the Aos, which they take after drying and pounding them, in pipes made of bamboo or wood. They some-times put some fresh tobacco bits in their mouths or eat them with betelnuts. The Aos use with “Pan” leaves the bark of some particular tree, in place of nuts. The present of a tobacco leaf or a cigarette is enough to humour a Naga man or woman. Travellers are usually begged of these things by the Nagas. They never drink milk. Those who live by the side of rivers catch fish by poisoning them, by the juice of some leaves or fruits thrown on the current after which, all the fish come floating on the [48] surface. The water thus poisoned, and the fish caught by this process are not poisonous to men. The Nagas fetch water from the springs or fountains at the foot of the village, in bamboo tubes, 3 or 3 ½



cubits long, the joints of which have been already pierced to allow the water to sink to the bottom. The chungu is carried on the back being placed on a khang.

### **THE PROPERTY OF THE NAGAS AND THEIR LAW OF INHERITENCE**

The moveable goods of the Nagas consist of their cash, ivory, boars' tusks, gems of their strings, mithan, bulls, pigs, paddy, the natul of the women, apparels, spears and their daos, etc. Their immoveable property being the arable lands and bamboo clumps. The eldest brother gets the largest share of the moveables and the remainder is divided equally among the other brothers. The eldest brother also inherits the ancestral abode.

Their custom does not allow any partition of the real property. The brothers cultivate jointly, and divide the produce, be it paddy or pulse. Sometimes the brothers mark the field for their individual cultivation, but no titular

Fig. 18



The bamboo tube

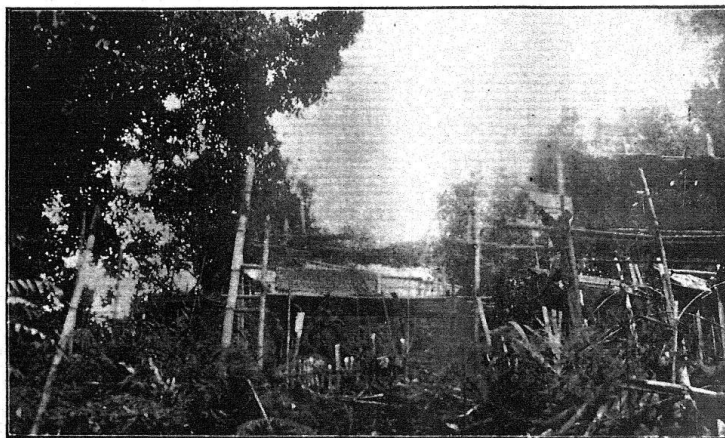
[49] partition of the land is effected. The male issue of the brothers will inherit equal portions of the paternal moveables, as if they were the uterine children of the same father. But in the presence of the brother's own son, the nephews or the first cousin do not inherit the self-acquired property of their uncle. Females do not inherit any estate. A widow lives in her deceased husband's house and will be supplied with paddy for her maintenance, provided she does not take a second husband. A father of affluent circumstances makes gifts of moveables to his daughters, such as paddy, pulse, mithans, bulls, pigs, etc.

## AGRICULTURE AND CROPS

The Nagas are principally cultivators, and men and women are equally industrious and they work in the field together. Their lands are situated 3 or 4 miles from the village. They select fertile lands for cultivation on any part of the hill, and they do not spare any hollow or rugged peaks or the rough surface of the hills. They earn their bread by the sweat of their brow, working in the field from morning till evening, with the help of a hoe which is their chief agricultural implement. They work [50] incessantly ignoring heavy downpours of rain and the scorching rays of the tropical sun. In the absence of the males from the village the females carry on the usual work of cultivation. The Aos clear and till a new plot when they cultivate for two successive years after which they abandon it for eight years to make them still more fertile. This entails great labour on the people.

Their calculation of the year is based on the bringing-home of the harvest. The females carry their babies with them to the field. I have seen the ploughing of a land by 20 young and middle aged women, all wearing their *mekhalas*, with hoes in their hands. They were singing merrily and did not stop their work for a minute. I watched them at work for nearly half-an-hour. Two or three babies were lying on the ground, and were attended to by the mother the moment they cried. Their inexpressible music resounded over the entire hill. Paddy, pulse, tobacco, chilli, garum, pumpkin and cotton are their chief products. The females spin yarn from cotton with which they weave cloth. Every family has a spinning wheel and a handloom for weaving purposes.

Fig. 19



Ao burial place

## [51] EDUCATION

Through the efforts of the American Missionaries, education has spread in the hills and at present Angami and Ao Nagas are being educated in the Mission schools. The missionary headquarters are stationed at Kohima and Impur, and under the latter the Ao and Lhota Nagas are acquiring the rudiments of knowledge. At Mokokchung there is a Government Primary school where English and Assamese are taught. The Missionaries have opened schools in numerous villages, specially in those where there are Christian converts, and churches are established. The Nagas have no written language and the missionaries have adopted the Roman Alphabet. Students are taught history, geography, arithmetic and drawing. Mission schools are aided by the Government, and arrangements have been made for imparting technical education, and in carpentry the Naga youths have shown special proficiency. Naga

Christians have learnt to sing sacred hymns in their own language. At present Ao boys and girls are attending schools at Shillong, Gauhati and Nowgong.

## [52] **TRADE**

The following indigenous products of the Naga Hills are brought down for sale in the plains—cotton, rubber, tea, agar, cane, cardamom, etc., while their chief imports are beads, bangles made of zinc or brass, boars' tusks, ivory and natuls. These are chiefly imported from Calcutta, Bombay and Burma. The Angamis are noted for their widespread commercial activity in which connection they have to visit distant places. There is a public path to Burma through Manipur and the Sema hills which route is generally adopted by the Nagas.

## **REVENUE AND VILLAGE ADMINISTRATION**

The British Government has imposed a tax of Rs. 2 per annum on every Ao household, exempting their arable lands from any rent. Old and helpless women, public interpreters, postmen and village head men are exempted the aforesaid tax. The Gaonburas or village headmen are the most powerful men in the villages. Government selects competent to hold the post of Gaonburas, and their decisions on village matters are sometimes [53] accepted as final by the Government. Those cases where Gaonburas have not been able to arrive at any decision are taken up by the Government. The Gaonburas make all possible arrangements for the convenience of the traveling officers of the Government, and deposit the revenue of the village at the Government treasury for which they get a commission of Rs. 12 ½ on their collections. The Gaonburas and the interpreters receive a red *Bonat* or shawl every three years as a present from the Government which they accept most eagerly and preserve with extreme care and pride. All of them, excepting a few Gaonburas, know the Assamese language. Office work is carried on with the aid of interpreters.

## **VILLAGE PANCHAYETS**

The Panchayet system is in vogue in every village where local and personal wrongs and grievances are discussed and remedied by the Gaonbura sitting with the village elders. If the guilt of the alleged offender is proved, he is fined, which can be paid either in money or in kind in the shape of paddy or cattle. The fines thus imposed are spent in feasting the village [54] interpreters, Gaonburas and the seniors. The members of a panchayet serve 5 to 30 years after which their functions descend to their sons or nephews or some other relations.

Imna Mirin was the chief of the Aos at the time I was residing at Mokokchung. He had built a large house roofed with corrugated sheets, and had 150 mithans, the price of each being on the average Rs. 100. He had sufficient cash and was the chief interpreter of the Government offices at Mokokchung. Mirin was the only Ao practising wet cultivation or *Panikhet*.

## **DEBTS AND REPAYMENT**

The Aos borrow cash and paddy, without any document. Debts if not repaid during the course of the first year will be doubled in the second year. No body has even heard of any Ao not admitting the loan he has taken. Paternal debts are repaid either by the son, or the grandson, and in their absence, by other heirs and descendants.

## HUNTING

Every Naga is strongly built and is noted for his courage. He roams alone in thick [55] forests with a spear and a dao in quest of game and fuel. At the prospect of game the Nagas become extremely jubilant. On receiving reports of the depredations caused by any tiger, bear or elephant, the villagers come out with spears, daos, preceded by hunting dogs barking with all their might and followed by other villagers who carry provisions for them. Sometimes they light huge fires on all sides of the village, thus practically besieging the animals. Every act of theirs bespeaks of their valour and manliness.

Though the light of modern civilisation has not yet touched the Nagas, yet they are straightforward, sweet-tongued, hospitable, truth-loving and content with their lot, and with the clothes and food produced by their own labour. They have few wants and have not acquired the vices of luxury and dissipation. God has manifested His mysterious ways of creation in the unsophisticated and beautiful hearts of the Nagas.

A Naga, Chiluyangba by name, was returning from the field to his village Juju, a few miles distance from Mokokchung. He saw two bear cubs on the road-side, one of which was hacked by him to pieces while the other escaped into the jungle. Hearing the screams of the [56] young one the mother bear rushed on the Naga and attacked him, who with his small dao aimed a blow at her head. But the instrument broke into two pieces and fell on the ground. Yet the Naga was not unnerved, and a deadly scuffle ensued between the hill-man and the brute. At times he caught hold of the bear's ears and threw her off, while at the next moment she flung upon and tore him to pieces with her nails, drenching his body with blood. After a while the bear let him off and ran into the forest, the man was brought to the hospital at ten o'clock at night, and the injured and lacerated portion of his body had to be sewed. The brave fighter soon recovered from the injuries and I was deeply impressed by his courage and pluck.

## DISPOSAL OF DEAD BODIES

The dead bodies of well-to-do Nagas are placed on the courtyard of the house, and those of the poor on a high machang in the front rooms, for five days in the cases of females and six days in the cases of males. The same rite is observed with regard to the dead bodies of children. On a fixed day the corpse is borne to the burial ground, generally situated on the road [57] sides at the front; of the village, where there is a large number of small huts with machangs inside. A hut is constructed for depositing every corpse which is placed in a prostrate position on the machang. The AOs actually allow their dead bodies to be scorched, and according to the social status and conditions of the man, spears, daos, and images carved or painted on wood or bamboo are suspended on all sides of the machang, and the dead bodies are attired in their fittest dresses. Distinct obituary rites are performed in the case of *Minenri* who are called *Apotia* by the Assamese. This name is applied to those who meet accidental death, by falling from a tree, by being drowned in water, by being devoured or mauled by tigers, and including also those women who die in child-birth. Their dead bodies are not kept in the house for a single day. They are removed on the very day of death, being borne by the old men and women of the village. The inmates of the *Minenri*'s home do not accompany the corpse, or stir from home for four or five days except for fetching water. During this "Quarantine" period they live upon the flesh of the domestic mithan-bulls, pigs and hens. On the sixth day an old woman [58] approaches the house and throws a stone into it from the door. The inmates instantaneously leave the house and live in a hut for one month in the outskirts of the village. The villagers supply them with cloth, rice, salt and chilli for the period, but are not allowed to talk with them. As in their own house so in the temporary hut the exiled people will not go out except for fetching water from a place distinctly meant for

them. After a month they leave the hut and go out for work. They build a new house, the old one with its contents being tabooed to all Aos. A genna lasting for three days is performed in the village on the death of a Minenri. During this period the villagers will not leave their homes, except for bringing water, and for bringing fuel on the third day. The Genna performed on the death of a man other than a minenri lasts for two days only, the first on the day of death and the second on the funeral day. No work can be undertaken on the two days, nor can the villagers come out of their homes. The violation of the above restrictions is regarded by the Aos as disastrous to the welfare of the village.

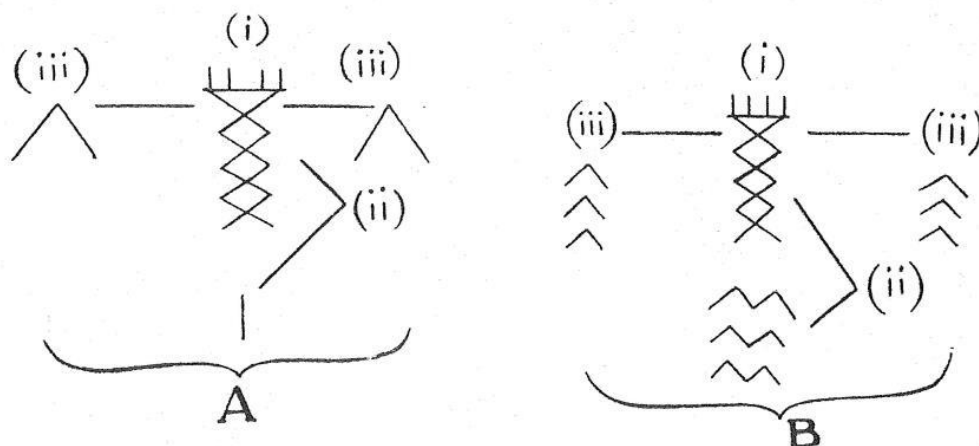
Fig. 20



Ao burial place

(2) Different villages adopt different marks in tatooting. Four perpendicular lines generally run from an inch above the chin down to the neck; which are met by the marks running from the bosom. In certain villages the outer chin marks start a little lower than the two inner lines.

## I

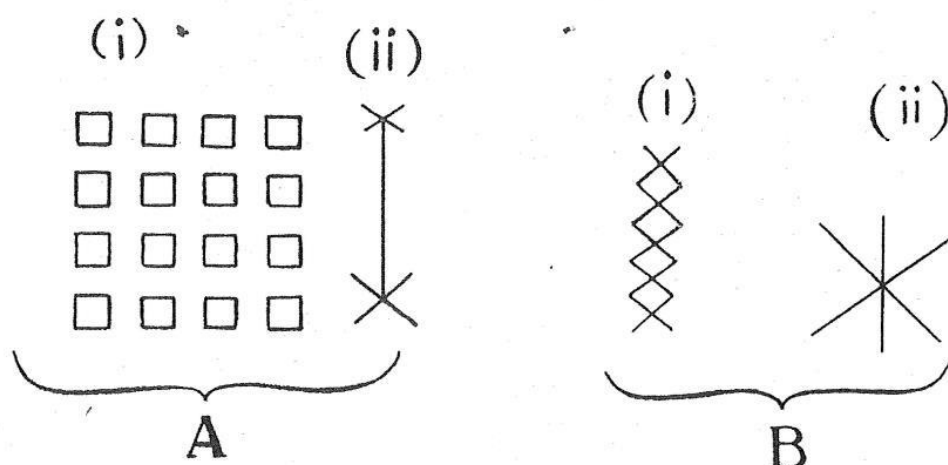


A & B.

Tattoo marks of different villages—on chins and bosoms.

(i) Chin. (ii) Bosom. (iii) From bosom extending toward to the arms.

## II

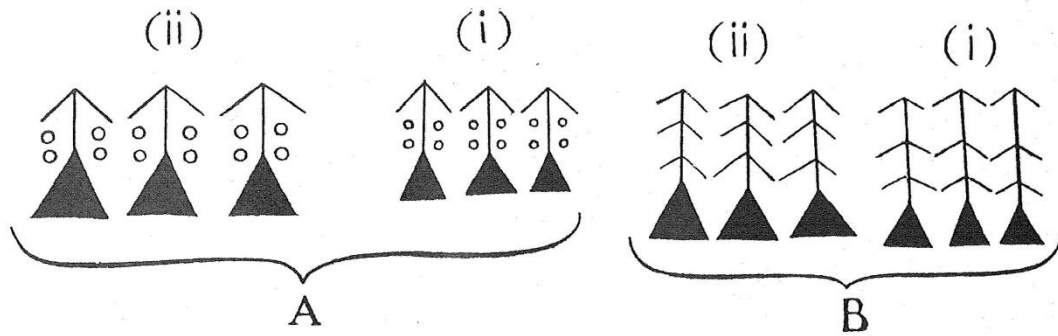


A & B.

Tattoo marks from wrists to elbows.

(i) Front. (ii) Back,

### III



A & B.

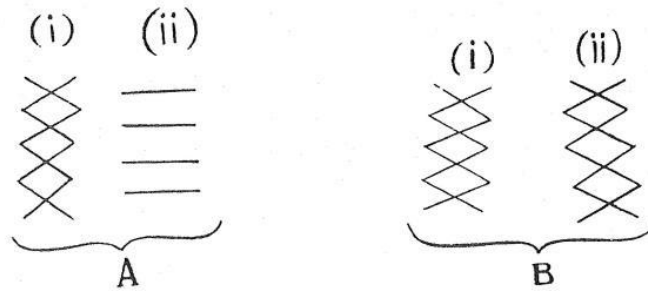
Tattoo marks of different villages, on knees.

(i) Front.

(ii) Back.

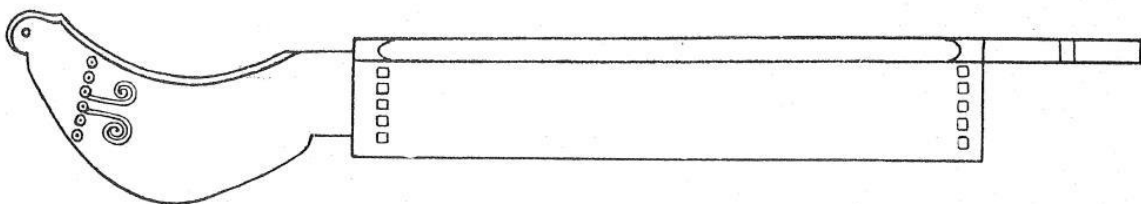
*N. B.*—The marks on the front part of the knee are smaller than those on the back ; they extend three inches above and below the knee-joint.

### IV



A & B.

Tattoo marks of different villages, on legs. (i) On Shin. (ii) On Calf.



Naga War Drum