A NEW BOOK OF TRIBAL FICTION

VERRIER ELWIN

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GOVT. OF ARUNACHAL PRADHESH
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This book is a successor or supplement to my earlier *Myths of the North-East Frontier of India* as well as, in a sense, to the three other collections of folk-tales which I have recorded—*Folk-Tales of Mahakoshal, Myths of Middle India* and *Tribal Myths of Orissa*. I have never been a folklorist in the technical or exclusive sense but I have been impressed by the light thrown by stories, legends and myths on the customs and thinking of tribal people. I have thus not gone into their territory with the specific aim of collecting folk-tales but have always been engaged primarily on other work, sometimes on the study of religion, sometimes busy with social organization, art or crime, sometimes working in the field of applied anthropology. During the past ten years I have spent a great deal of time on long tours in the remotest hills of NEFA and during these I have collected stories wherever that was possible and time permitted.

In *Myths of the North-East Frontier of India* I published stories which were mainly concerned with the origins of things; most of them were myths in the technical sense of the word. I reserved others, most of which were more properly classified as fairy stories, for a second volume. This book does, in fact, contain a number of myths of origin which I recorded after the first book was published, but the longer and more interesting stories are of a general kind.

Since most of these stories, except the Singpho...
collection which was recorded mainly by my assistant, Mr Sundarlal Narmada, were taken down by me on tour I have prefaced each chapter with a brief Tour Diary to give, in a natural and unforced manner, brief glimpses of the people and countryside which I saw as I went slowly along. I had to rely on interpreters, inevitable when I was covering such a large area where many different languages and dialects are spoken, but my interpreters were very good and in each village where we recorded stories, the work was almost that of a committee, with one or often two interpreters, several village elders, Sundarlal and myself, and we were able to check and re-check the stories in the very place where they were told. During my Khampti tour, in the course of which I also obtained a few Singpho stories, I had the efficient and knowledgeable help of Mr T. K. M. Barua who has been with me on a number of expeditions.

One of the difficulties that face the investigator in all the tribal areas of India is that there is no standard, no canon of doctrine, titles or names, and the result is that it is possible to record stories in different villages where the plot is mainly the same but the characters have very different names. Sometimes even in the same village the people will not agree on the names of the hero or heroine and other characters.

I must express my obligation to Mr B. Das Shastri for generous help, given freely to me as to many others, and to Mr Someswar Lahiri, my stenographer, who did the first English renderings of many of the stories recorded in this book.

SHILLONG
31st October 1963

VERRIER ELWIN
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The NEFA Background

In this book we visit three Divisions of the North-East Frontier Agency—Kameng for the Sheredukpens, Siang for the Ashings, Shimongs, Ramo-Pailibos and Khambas, and Lohit for the Khamptis and Singphos. To those who know these areas the stories will have a special appeal, indeed parts of them cannot be understood without some background knowledge of the tribes. For example, we have references to people looking up from underneath a house or creeping below a house in order to listen to what is being said inside. This is intelligible only when we realise that the majority of houses in this part of the world are built high above the ground on piles and that the space thus formed is left open; during the day pigs, dogs and fowls search for food which, since the floors of the houses are generally very badly made with many gaps, often falls down for their benefit. The houses also have verandas and in more than one story the development of the plot turns on the use of what I have called a drying-rack, a bamboo-frame which is hung above a central hearth and on which meat and fish is spread to dry. There is also generally a loft above the main room where things can be stored.

In these stories we get brief glimpses of the former institution of slavery, which has now almost disappeared from NEFA. In an Ashing tale (2.13)
It is proposed that a girl, who is a thief, should be made into a slave, though the Village Council decides in the end that if she pays compensation this need not be done. Similarly, a Wiyu girl of low morals, who is also a thief, is declared a Mipak (outsider) and a slave. As such she is not allowed to go into the girls' dormitory (2.27). In former days it was common for a man, who was unable to pay a fine imposed on him by the Village Council, to be made a slave. In a Ramo-Pailibo story (4.5) Abo-Tani, who is unable to pay the bride-price for his wife, promises that he will give any children he has as slaves to his father-in-law and other relations in settlement of his debt. In another Ramo-Pailibo tale (4.8) Pollo the Moon unable to find a husband, seduces one of her father's slaves and this is why she only appears at night because she is so ashamed of what she has done, for any intimacy with a slave is regarded as a very serious matter by the Adis. There is also a Bori story\(^1\) which attributes the eclipse to the institution of slavery: a great Wiyu (spirit) in the form of a bear kidnaps the Sun and Moon and keeps them to work in his fields as slaves. Men, animals and Wiyus redeem them in part, but they are unable to pay the whole price and from time to time the Wiyu comes to claim his debt and this causes an eclipse.

The Village Council (Kebang) is frequently mentioned in the Adi stories. In the Asbing tale of 'The Woodpecker and the Bees' (2.13) there is an account of a Kebang held to settle what is to be done to a girl who steals, and the story tells us that two

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\(^1\) Verrier Elwin *Myths of the North-East Frontier* (Shillong, 1958), p. 39
of the men present are great drinkers and they drag on the discussion as long as possible so that they can go on drinking other people's rice-beer. It is a common charge against the old men on the Council that they lengthen the meetings out so that they will be able to drink more at the general expense. In another Ashing story (2.18), a Council is held to decide what should be done to the snakes who bite and kill people. This is a Council of Wiyus and they resolve that the fangs of the snakes should be removed as a punishment and their heads cut off in compensation. In a Shimong story (3.11), also about snakes, a Kebang decides that a snake who has bitten a man without any reason, should have its fangs broken and it must pay beads, which in those days snakes wore as necklaces, in compensation.

The Rasheng is an institution which organizes and disciplines the unmarried girls of an Adi village. The girls use this little hut, which is what it usually is, only at night and there they spin and weave and dance until they go to bed. It is under the leadership of an elder girl and as Roy says, 'it is a training institution for the girls in discipline, comradeship, responsibility and leadership'. The Rashengs are organized on a clan basis and are visited by boys who are seeking girls to marry. Roy quotes B. S. Guha as saying that: 'It also helps the growth of a spirit and comradeship among men and women and a life of healthy relaxation which provides the outlet for the release of tensions and repressed forces which otherwise would have developed.'

INTRODUCTION

into factionalism and marred the development of a healthy tribal life. This institution plays its part in the stories, some of which cannot really be understood without knowing what it is.

Many stories have references to trade. The Khampti Choupet and his friend take ivory, the horns of deer and rhino to barter in distant villages (6.16). It is when Motik Gylebo goes to trade that he is betrayed by his wife (5.4). Tsowa Tsongpon comes from Tibet to India with loads of beads, iron and salt and we have a vivid picture of the rigours of the two months' journey: The horses die; there is no firewood to keep the travellers warm in the thick snow; and they nearly perish from cold and hunger (5.2). Ashing stories describe how a Wiyu's wife takes her crab-daughter to Tibet to trade skins for salt and wool (2.14) and how the fly takes a small party of a bee, a caterpillar and a locust also to Tibet to obtain wool and food-stuffs (2.21).

There is a remarkable difference in atmosphere between the Adi and the Buddhist stories and I have often been struck by the fact that although some of the Buddhist tribes have taken Adi or other tribal items of theology into their thinking, the Adis themselves have hardly been influenced at all by the Buddhist groups who live so near them. The Ramos and Pailibos have a great deal to do with the Buddhist Membas with whom they trade and from whom they have at least learnt to drink milk and make butter, but I find very little influence of the Buddhist theology in their stories. Similarly the Shingongs and the Tangams live in frequent contact with the
Khâmbas of the Yang Sang Chu Valley but have borrowed little beyond a few ornaments and certain elements of dress.

Adi stories are dominated by the Wiyus, the unseen spirits who have so great an influence on human life and whom I describe at the beginning of Chapter 3. They also have a large number of animal stories; sometimes all the characters are animals, sometimes animals and human beings marry each other. A frog takes a Wiyu wife; a girl marries a bear. It is interesting that Goswami observes that 'not many Assamese tales illustrating his motif group are available'.

On the other hand, in the Buddhist stories, although there are plenty of animals, particularly among the Sherdukpons, they are not very prominent. Many of these stories have a moral, which other tribal stories rarely teach.

In general, the Buddhist stories are more sophisticated, perhaps because many of them have an ultimate literary origin. One fact may immediately strike the reader: the Adi tales refer to village elders or headmen, the Buddhist tales to kings and queens. There is not really very much difference. Some of the Adi elders had the authority and power of minor kings; some of the Buddhist "kings", ruling over their own small villages, are no more than landlords or headmen.

**The Attitude to Women**

In the Buddhist stories the attitude to women is often unfavourable. It is, of course, a common

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psychological device adopted by Buddhists to attain freedom from attachment to meditate on the unpleasant or transitory character of worldly things. Thus the devout Buddhist is enjoined to meditate on the filthy nature of the human body, to think about the graveyard and what happens to us there, to contemplate the dreadful speed with which human life passes away and the folly of attributing ultimate value or importance to it. To a monastic order one of the greatest temptations comes from women, and both in the traditional Buddhist literature and in these folk-tales we are shown that they are just not worth our attention. For example, the Mudu-pani Jataka\(^1\) illustrates how impossible it is to keep women from going after their own desires. Even if a father holds a daughter by the hand it is impossible to guard her and the Jataka reminds us that though women are soft in speech they are insatiable and that a man should be free from them, for they will burn him like fuel in the fire. The Gulla-palobhana Jataka\(^2\) points the same moral that women in the old days drive the most faithful souls to sin and the story emphasises the idea that a woman's company can make even an ascetic fall into evil for she is full of seductive wiles, deceitful and tempts the most pure-hearted to his fall. Again and again the Jatakas return to the same theme. The Gahapati Jataka\(^3\) insists that women can never be kept right; somehow or other they will sin and trick their husbands. The Radha Jataka\(^4\)

\(^2\) ibid., Vol. II, p. 228.
\(^3\) ibid., Vol. II, p. 94.
declares that it is impossible to keep guard over a woman ("No guard can keep a woman in the right path") and tells how a Brahmin entrusted his wife to the charge of a parrot when he had to go out on business whereupon she misconducted herself daily: there was no end to the stream of her lovers in and out of her house. And the Bodhisattva says that even though a man carries a woman about in his arms she will not be safe.

The Asatamanta Jataka¹ says that women 'are lustful, profligate, vile and degraded' and asks why any sensible person should allow himself to be 'tossed by passion' for them.

The Panchatantra and the Tibetan tales from the Kah-Gyur emphasise the ingratitude of women. A Tibetan story describes how a husband twice saves his wife's life, even cutting some flesh off his own thighs, giving it to her to eat and opening the veins of his arms and giving her his blood to drink. But in spite of this she conspires against him with a handless and footless cripple. The Panchatantra tale describes how a woman dies of thirst in a forest and the husband hears a voice saying that if he will give up half his own life she will be revived. Soon after her recovery her husband goes away somewhere and in a garden she hears a cripple singing so beautifully that she falls in love with him at once. She takes an early opportunity of pushing her husband into a well.

In our stories here there is an interesting contrast between the Adi and the Buddhist tales. On

¹Ibid., Vol. I, p. 148

2—1 MEFA/64
the whole, the Adi’s attitude to women is more generous and more trustful. It is true that there are some bad girls. There is an Ashing story (2.13) of a girl who steals beads and gets into trouble for it. There are a number of faithless Wiyu girls—the lovely but wanton Wiyu Lodo (2.22), whose freedom results in an illegitimate child who is born dumb and ugly. There is another Wiyu girl who is hard to please and refuses to marry not only Wiyus in human form but animals as well. She steals and is condemned to slavery. In the end she conceives by the wind and gives birth to the cricket (2.27). Another girl, whose fault is not so much in the field of sexual morals as in cruelty, is at first human, but her husband dies and she becomes a Wiyu in the underworld. Her son goes to find her and she is so afraid that if the other Wiyus discover that she has a human husband and a human child they will laugh at her and perhaps drive her away, that she kills her son in a singularly cruel manner (2.31). A curious Shimong story (3.3) shows Pollo the Moon, who is here regarded as a woman, falling in love with a cock. Her husband the Sun catches her with her arms around her lover and the Village Council orders the cock to be mutilated in compensation. The wife of the hero of another Shimong story, ‘The Adventurous Frog’, is not unfaithful but she eats the food which her husband thinks she should have given to him and behaves in a careless and vulgar manner (3.4).

On the other hand, the picture of women in the Adi stories is generally friendly. Jebo-Samir, a Wiyu girl, who lived in the underworld, used to go everywhere completely naked and animals, gods and
even insects pursued her but she appears to have retained her chastity (3.7). It is possible that the institution of the Rasheng, where sex is disciplined and controlled, has contributed to this higher attitude towards women among the Adis.

In our Buddhist stories, however, as in the classic tales, the picture of women is less favourable. The story of the credulous merchant, Motik Gyelpo (5.1) describes how his wife professes to love him so much that she will not let him out of her sight. When he goes to visit a neighbouring Raja she forces him to make a clay image so that she will have him always with her, and he says: 'A woman who really loves her husband can never make love to others.' Yet within a few hours of his departure she has seduced a rather unwilling friend. A little later in the same story the Raja, who also believes in his wife's virtue, is betrayed by her with a mad man and when the merchant discovers it, he exclaims: ‘How astonishing it is! But this is the nature of women. They only pretend to be loyal to their husbands while in actual fact they betray them.' The Raja and the merchant accordingly agree to live together as brothers and never to have anything to do with women, deciding that it is because women have more desire than men that they are never satisfied and have to go to others. But in the end desire is too strong and they remarry, sharing a wife between them. Yet she too betrays them with a young and handsome servant. After this the friends leave their home and now 'their aim in life is only to worship God and do good to other people'. The Khamptis have a very similar story (6.22) where a supposedly devoted wife insists on the Raja, her
husband, making a golden image of himself to keep her company when he goes away. But he is not so simple as Motik Gyelpo and an hour or two after his departure he returns to his palace to see whether his wife is true to him or not. He hides himself inside the image and has the mortification of seeing his wife seduce a mahout. He goes away to visit another Raja and secretly observes his friend’s wife also betraying him with a swineherd. This amuses him so much that he laughs and laughs until he dies.

We may note that in these stories there is a Gamekeeper motif, as we may call it, for the women are unfaithful with lovers of definitely lower social status—a mad man, a servant, a mahout and a swineherd.

In general, the Buddhist stories show women as ready to yield to anyone who approaches them. In the story of the Flying Vessel (5.6) the hero goes to visit five women in succession, each of whom insists that he should spend the night with her. Even though these relationships are ultimately regularised by marriage the moral is evident.

In the Khampti story (6.18) of the Five Wives there is a similar picture of girls who, immediately on seeing the hero, are filled with love and give themselves to him.

The Khampti story of Nang-Padungma (6.24) suggests that there are few women who are at once beautiful and faithful. Nurses, though often good dancers and singers, are particularly dangerous. They love many men and provide girls for their charges.

Singpho stories are equally severe on women. In the story of ‘The Conversion of the Demons’ (7.6)
there is a very pretty princess who goes to seduce boys, though in the end she is converted to religion.

Women are also witches and there is a grim Khampti tale (6.20) of a well-known and widely-respected monk living in peace and virtue, who is enchanted by a witch and nearly destroyed. Another Khampti story (6.21) of witches describes how one of them turns into a vulture and devours the children of her village.

Women, even the wives of deities, suffer from jealousy and there are Singpho stories illustrating this unpleasant trait (7.7). The Khampti Choupet’s wife quarrels with her husband who is a murderer and in her temper lets out the story of his crime and thus leads to his death (6.16).

In a Sherdukpen story (8.4) the three daughters of a demon Raja each promises her father that after his death she will do everything possible to trouble mankind. One turns into a rat and spoils the harvest; the second becomes a pretty girl and makes love to the young men and their desire for her drives them to quarrel and fight each other. The youngest becomes a mouse and spoils the religious books and other precious things in the monastery.

But women who do not behave themselves face an evil fate after death. The Singpho story of ‘The Monk and the Bitch’ (7.10) is about a woman who used to steal her husband’s food and betray him with other men. After this she goes to hell and is turned into a bitch and the God, Mathum-Matha, tells her son: ‘Your mother is in hell where she has been turned into a bitch, for she used to go to other men and gave your father dirty food and
the leavings from her own plate. Those who do such things become dogs in hell.' In spite of this, her virtuous son rescues her and sends her to heaven.

The Virtue of Generosity

Among the virtues praised in the Buddhist stories perhaps the most honoured is generosity, the practical expression of non-attachment. In this collection we have the Singpho tale of the Good Old Man (7.9) who almost ruins himself and the happiness of his home by giving away the chickens that he is supposed to sell. But the most important is the tale of Dime Kundan (5.5) in which the hero gives away everything he has, including his children, his wife and his own eyes after being driven into exile on account of his liberality. In time, of course, everything is restored to him but he passes through a period of great suffering first.

This theme is popular in Buddhist fiction everywhere. The most famous story, and that which most closely resembles the story in the text, is the Vessantara Jakata\(^1\) which describes how the Bodhisatta, like our Dime Kundan, is miraculously born and begins to speak directly after his birth. He is named Vessantara and his highest quality is generosity. When he is eight years old, after he has given priceless necklaces to his nurses, he says to himself: 'If one should ask my heart, I would cut open my breast, and tear it out, and give it; if one ask my eyes, I would pluck out my eyes and give them; if one should ask my flesh, I would cut off all the flesh of my body and give it.' He marries the princess Maddi but this does not, as in our tale,

\(^1\) Cowell, op. cit., Vol. VI, pp. 251 ff.
turn him from the path of righteousness. He does not have a magic jewel or talisman but a glorious white elephant who brings rain wherever he goes. One day there is a great famine in Kalinga and the people there ask for the elephant and the prince gives it to them. This makes him very unpopular and his own people want to slay him but in the end his father persuades them to agree to his going into exile. After distributing princely gifts he goes with his wife into the forest, gives her to a Brahmin and even gives away his own children. This version of the story, however, does not include the incident of the giving of the eyes.

The same story is given by Spence Hardy¹ and von Schiefner, who refers to the Kah-Gyur, and tells the story of Vessantara in a rather shorter and clearer form than that given in Cowell’s edition of the Jataka.² In von Schiefner’s version the prince’s name is Visvatara and the English editor, Ralston, writes sympathetically about the sorrows of Madri, the princely ascetic’s wife, who is reduced, by her husband’s passion for giving everything away, first to exile and poverty, then to bitter grief on account of the loss of her dearly loved little children, and finally to slavery, but submits to all her husband’s commands.

Ralston refers to other stories of this kind. One of them is the Nidanakatha³ which describes the great generosity of Mangala Buddha. The story is that when he was performing the duties of a Bodhisattva, being in an existence corresponding to the

Vessantara existence, he dwelt with his wife and children on a mountain. One day a demon named 'Sharp-fang', hearing of his readiness to bestow gifts, approached him in the guise of a Brahmin, and asked the Bodhisatta for his two children. The Bodhisatta, exclaiming, "I give my children to the Brahmin," cheerfully and joyfully gave up both the children, thereby causing the ocean-girt earth to quake. The demon, standing by the bench at the end of the cloistered walk, while the Bodhisatta looked on, devoured the children like a bunch of roots.

Similar is the tale of Harischandra, which has been recorded in folk-tale form in Stokes's *Indian Fairy Tales* (No. 13). In this story Harischandra promises to give an ascetic two pounds and a half of gold but his wealth is turned into charcoal and in order to keep his word he is compelled to sell his wife and child for a pound-and-a-half of gold and himself for the remaining pound, with consequences tragic to himself and his family, although in the end everything is restored to him.

The *Katha-Sarit-Sagara* contains a story of the generous demon, Namuchi, 'who was devoted to charity and very brave and did not refuse to give anything to anybody that asked, even if he were his enemy'. By his virtue he wins the magic horse at the time of the Churning of the Ocean and when his enemies, the gods, find themselves in despair they go and ask for it and he gives it to them, although he is their enemy, rather than man, the

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1 His last birth before attaining Buddhahood.
glory of open-handedness which he had been accumulating since his birth. When Indra goes to ask for his horse, Namuchi says to himself, 'If the glory of generosity, which I have long been acquiring in the worlds, were to wither, what would be the use to me of prosperity of life?'

Then we have the generous Induprabha, the son of the King of Kurukshetra. There is a famine in his kingdom and his ministers do not want the King to give people relief but Induprabha tells his father that he is their 'wishing-tree' and should do so. This annoys the king and he taunts his son. When the boy hears this he makes a vow that he will attain by austerity the condition of a wishing-tree or die in the attempt. In the end he succeeds and makes his father's subjects as happy as if they were in paradise, for he grants them even the most difficult boons. Indra offers him entrance to heaven as a reward for his goodness but Induprabha refuses, asking how he can disappoint so many men by going to heaven for the sake of his own happiness.

Another story in the Katha-Sarit-Sagara, which resembles the Vessantara Jataka, is the story of Taravaloka. His wife is Madri and their sons are called Rama and Lakshaman. He himself possesses an elephant and is famous for his generosity; he builds almshouses for the distribution of food and other things. His enemies ask him for his elephant, for they think that once he has given it to them—and he cannot refuse—they will be able to take his kingdom from him. As in the other stories, the

1Penzer, op. cit., Vol. VI, p. 84.
citizens are enraged at this and they send him with his wife and two children into exile in the forest and the remainder of the story follows the plot of the Vessantara Jataka, though this version also omits the gift of the hero's own eyes.

Yet another version of this story is given by Waddell which at the beginning broadly follows our text but includes the incident of the donation (often omitted) of the generous prince's own eyes. 'He meets a blind man, who asks him for his eyes, which he immediately plucks out and bestows on the applicant, who thus receives his sight. The prince, now blind, is led onwards by his wife, and on the way meets "The Buddhas of the three Periods" who restore the prince's sight.¹

Finally, among the Sherdukpen tales recorded by Mr Rinchin Norbu there is a story of a woman with a pious son who gives alms to Lamas and the poor and feeds the pilgrims who pass by their house. One day, while the mother is away, a very old woman comes to beg and the boy gives her all the food they have. The old woman blesses him and says that Lord Buddha will reward him and that if he will go to a neighbouring hill he will find something of great value. When the boy's mother returns home, she is very angry that all the food has been given away.

The story goes on to say that the boy goes to the hill where he finds a tattered bag and a pair of old shoes and when he comes home these divine gifts make him so rich that he is able to spend all his time giving food and money to pilgrims and the poor. The

king of that place offers him his daughter in marriage in order to discover the secret of his wealth. From this point onward, however, the Sherdukpen story departs entirely from that in the text.

*The Magic of Laughter*

Bloomfield has analysed the various kinds of laughter in Indian fiction. There are the laughs of joy, irony, malice, trickery and triumph. In some cases laughter and crying go together. Sometimes we have the sardonic laugh, the enigmatic laugh and the laugh of mystery.¹ Penzer's analysis is somewhat simpler. 'In Hindu fiction I would divide laughs into two distinct varieties: (1) those which clearly show their nature, but not the reason which prompted them; (2) curious and mysterious laughs which give no clue either to their real nature or their significance.

'Both varieties are dramatic, the second more than the first. It is, of course, the dramatic laugh that becomes such a force in the hands of the story-teller. It has been observed that, with but very few exceptions, all Biblical laughs are dramatic—usually of scorn or derision. The innocent laugh of joy would nearly always pass unheeded by the chronicler or historian, as it would lack the interest necessary to produce a dramatic situation.'²

Most of these types of laughter occur in our stories. In an Ashing story (2.3) a dead Otter gives a jeering laugh when he hears the Bat telling obvious lies, and in a Khampti story (6.12) we have another.

unusual laugh when a large fish, which has swallowed a Raja's son and is already dead laughs, when the fisherman prepares to cut him up. The reason, for this is apparently that the fish knows that the child is in his belly and is amused at the thought of the surprise which his captors will feel when they find it.

Neither of these mysterious laughs are as effective, for they are not quite so mysterious, as the laughs of the same kind in the Katha-Sarit-Sagara.

Then in an Ashing story (2.34) we have a ribald tale of a man who dies through laughing too much. In fact, there is often an element of cruelty in tribal laughter. Aimapet (6.15) chuckles to himself as he drowns the men of his own village by a clever trick. In another Khampti story (6.16), Choupet, who has murdered his friend after the latter has prayed to dark clouds overshadowing the sky, laughs while he is sitting with his wife and the sky is again darkened, thus reminding him of the dead that made him rich. This laugh leads to his destruction, for his wife insists on his telling her the reason for his amusement and finally blurts it out during a quarrel.

The fear of laughter occurs as a motif in a few stories. The Ashing tale (2.27) is of a Wiyu girl who conceives by the wind and through fear of being laughed at as the mother of an illegitimate child, goes away to the Land of the Moon and has her baby there. A very cruel Ashing story (2.31) describes how a widow murders her own son by crushing his head in a mortar because she is afraid that the Wiyus, among whom she is now living, will laugh at her if they find out that she has a human son from a human husband.
INTRODUCTION

In two stories, one from the Khambas and one from the Khamptis, we have the motif of magic laughter combined with the theme of a wife’s infidelity. In the first a man vomits when he laughs and brings up precious beads, so valuable that he grows very rich. But going one day to visit a Raja he is depressed by his wife’s infidelity and cannot manage as much as a smile. It is only when he sees his friend’s wife falling into the same error that he begins to laugh. The Khampti story is about two Rajas, both of whom have very profitable laughs. The first laughs when he is pleased and the sound of it brings rain. The second Raja laughs at anything surprising or unusual; he vomits and brings up gold and silver. As in the Khamba story he is depressed by his wife’s infidelity and only laughs when he discovers that the first Raja is also deceived.

In these two stories are combined the motif of treasure falling from the mouth (D 1454.2) which is known in Kashmir, the Punjab, Mysore and Madras, and the magic laugh, (D 2143.1.11) where a man laughs to bring rain. H"1194.1 is the motif of a man whose laughter brings rain but is unable to laugh until two people unknown to each other go to sleep in the same room and frighten one another.

The Power of Body-dirt

The motif of a deity or hero creating animals or human beings by rubbings from his skin is not as common as might be expected among people who

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1These, and other, reference are to Stith Thompson, Motif Index of Folk Literature (latest edition, Copenhagen, 1958.)
do not often wash and who, therefore, when they sweat, produce a fair amount of dirt when the skin is rubbed. The motif is classified in the Stith Thompson Motif Index A 1211.5, ‘Man made from skin rubbed from Creator’s (hero’s) body’; A 1263, ‘Man created from rubbings of the skin’; and under the headings A 1725.2 ‘Animals from body-dirt of deity (hero).’ In the Khampti story (6.1) the Creator rubs many little bits of dirt off his body and they turn into honey-bees and ultimately create the world. In several Singpho stories we have the same motif. In one the Creator’s back begins to itch; he scratches it and under his nails he gets a little dirt which turns into a spider (7.1). In another story (7.11) the Creator’s wife rubs some dirt off her body and makes a beautiful young girl with whom she proposes to test the virtue of her husband. There is also a variant in a third Singpho tale (7.3) when the creator goes away to find food during a storm. His wife grows anxious and rubs her cheek until a little black pimple grows there. She scratches it off, it bleeds a little and she sends it to call her husband home. ‘It spread its wings and flew away and the drop of blood became fire and lighted it through the darkness.’

In Orissa and Central India there are many examples of this motif which is known to the Kamars, Jhorias and Konds of Orissa.¹ It is also known to the Gonds, Kamars, Agarias, Kols, Murias and Bhuiyas of Central India.² A 1725.2 is found among the Konds, Kamars, Binjhwars and Parengas of

¹See my Tribal Myths of Orissa, pp. 4, 445, 480.
²See my Myths of Middle India, pp. 29, 47, 50, 125, 138, 177 etc. and my The Agaria, p. 90.
Orissa: Sometimes the dirt is rubbed from the Creator's body and is made directly into a human being or animal. Sometimes he makes little dolls and turns them into baby boys and girls. He creates man from the dirt of his forehead, from the dirt of his ear, the dirt under his toenails, or the dirt of the breast. Men are also created from sweat, blood, blood-clots, fingernails and spittle.

The variant, where the Creator's wife turns the body-dirt into an animal to frighten her husband home, is found in a Kamar story in which she creates a tiger, and a Parenga story where she makes little balls of dirt into mosquitoes. In my *Myths of the North-East Frontier* (p. 104), there is yet another variant where in a Bugun (Khowa) tale the first girl and the first boy are separated by a great mountain. A bee settles on the girl's naked body, takes a little scrap of her dirt and, flying to the boy, puts it on his body. Then he takes a little of the boy's dirt to the girl. Both are filled with desire and, though there is no intercourse, the girl becomes pregnant and first child is born.

In the same collection is a Digaru Mishmi story of a Khampti Raja who has the habit of rubbing his hands together. This causes a swelling which breaks open and a girl comes out.

*Rare and Popular Motifs*

It is interesting that some of the most popular and famous motifs known throughout the world are almost absent in this and the earlier book of NEFA tales. The step-mother does not figure in

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1See my *Tribal Myths of Orissa*, p. 254, 338, 569 and 627.
the stories, nor generally does the successful youngest son. The 'external soul' is found but seldom. The Hand of Glory is not known nor is the Act of Truth, and the theme of the Poison Damsel is rare.

There are no formulistic or cumulative tales, and there is little about sacred numbers.

On the other hand, very common motifs are those of the primaeval ocean (A 810); the original sun or suns being too hot (A 720.2); earthquakes caused by a great animal or fish on whose back the world is supported (A 1145); the poppy flower growing from a dead body (A 2611); tobacco as a solace in time of mourning; the goat robbing the dog of its horns (A 2245); the rivalry between the pig and the dog (K 41.2); a few Trickster tales; the monkey as developed from human beings (D 118.2). There are a great many examples of magic charms, talismans and horns. The spider appears as teaching weaving to man (A 2091); there are flying elephants (A 2292.3); body-dirt turning into an animal messenger (D 444.2.3); disenchantment by the destruction of the hero's skin (D 721.3); many examples of magical conception (T 510-T 538) and many tests to which the hero is subjected (H 1010-H 1049). Surprisingly, in a very remote Ramo-Pailibo village I found a story (4.7) with the common theme of J 1191.1.1—where a clever dog arrives late at a trial with the excuse that he was delayed because the Siang River was on fire: he claims that this is no more absurd than to claim that a male mithun can have a calf.

There are a number of charming or significant motifs. The world, which grows out of a many-coloured lotus, is called 'honey-sweet'; it is so
attractive that the gods who visit it will not return to the sky, they want to smell more and more of the sweet and beautiful earth (5.1). God looks down from heaven and sees its loveliness: the women of earth are more beautiful than those of heaven.

We have a number of beautiful girls in these stories. There is Lodo, the lovely but wanton young Wiyu girl (2.22); Pedong-Sune, the water-spirit, a girl with flowing hair (2.15); the very beautiful Jebo-Samir who goes about completely naked until she puts on a girdle (3.7); Nang Padungma who is born of a flower and cradled in a lotus—she is as gracious as a temple flower (6.24).

Some of the scenes in these stories are striking. We see a Wiyu girl in the Himalayas winnowing snow in her fan and sending it to fly through the air (2.7). Earth and sky lie in constant embrace until at last they have to separate: lightning is the lamp which the sky uses when he searches for his lover (3.2). I like the picture of the Tibetan girl and the future father of mankind who meet on a great rock among the high mountains and sing to each other and dance together till love comes to them (3.16). I like too the picture of the red, blue, yellow and black elephants following their King, the white elephant, in a great valley which is seen from above (5.19). And in another mood there is the contrast between the crabs, fish and frogs in a pond and enormous elephants who disturb their peace when they come to drink water (6.13).

We have a storm like a dark mountain, a snake as high as a hill and dark clouds which are the ill-omened witnesses of a treacherous murder.

There are too notable themes of another kind.
In an Ashing story, after Kare the hero dies, his two wives turn themselves into birds and fly to the dangerous world of the dead to find and rescue him (2.20). In a Shimong story the frog's wife puts the heart of a pig, which has been killed for supper, on the top of a pole so that all can see it and realise 'her heart and her husband's are one as the heart is one' (3.3).
PART TWO: ADI STORIES
CHAPTER II

THE ASHING STORIES

I

Adi Folk-Lore

The Gods and Spirits

The Adis of the Siang Valley visualise their life on earth as surrounded by a great company of good and evil spirits, above whom rises the majestic figure of the Sun-Moon, Doini-Polo. Doini-Polo is not indeed the Creator or the Prime Mover of creation. That dignity appears to belong to the enigmatic Kayum, the Great Mother, whose character and activity is shrouded in the mists of antiquity, who is not worshipped, who does not intervene in human life and who is but rarely remembered except in the great genealogical songs of the Miris. From Kayum descended a line of mysterious beings—Yumkang, Kashi, Siang, Abo, Bomuk, Mukseng, Sedi. Pedong, Nane was the living water from whom (in one version of the legend) Wiyus, men and animals were born. Doini-Polo emerged rather late in the scheme of things, and his origin was not altogether dignified: there were at first two Suns, of an unbearable brightness, but the Frog shot at one of them with his arrow and reduced its radiance to the cool and gentle light of the Moon. The Sun-Moon was

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1This note is an abridgement of notes I have made on tour in remote villages in northern Siang. Customs and ideas vary greatly from place to place.

2The Rain Mother: Pedong means rain or water.
created after the Wiyus and, according to some traditions, later even than mankind.

But today, Doini-Polo is the nearest approximation to a Supreme Deity known to the Adis. He reigns unchallenged in the heavens; he is the ‘eye of the world’; he is as important to man as the eye is to the body. He watches everything; he is the witness; he shows men the way to go; he protects them; he shows them mercy. Above all, he is the lord of truth, and an oath taken on his name is the most binding of all. Though he is not offered special sacrifices, for he does not need them, his name is invoked on every ritual occasion. He is the unifying force behind all Adi theology, and it may well be that he will provide a basis whereby Adi religion can develop along the lines of the Truth and Goodness which are his most conspicuous attributes.

Below Doini-Polo is the great company of the Wiyu spirits.\(^1\) As in other parts of tribal India, some of these are of general, some of strictly local, cult and there is considerable divergence of opinion as to their names and attributes.

The Wiyus may be broadly divided into Wiyus of Earth (Sedi or Kedeng) and Wiyus of the Sky (Melo or Taleng) but it is not possible to distinguish them as good or evil on that account. There are good and bad spirits on earth, good and bad spirits

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\(^1\)I have adopted the conventional spelling of the word, which does not lend itself to phonetic transcription. Dunbar spells it Uyu and observes “the word Uyu always seems to me a remarkable description of a spirit they believe to be not unlike a bat; one can almost hear the beating of his wings”. G. Dunbar, *Abors and Gallongs* (Calcutta, 1915), p. 76. I have also followed the conventional spelling of ‘Doini’, whom Roy spells Donyi: the word is pronounced differently in different areas.
in heaven; in the main, the evilly-disposed spirits are in the majority.

Among the earth-Wiyus are Kine-Dene and Sitting-Kedeng who live below or ‘within’ the ground, and are generally malevolent. They kill men with their arrows; they make their feet swell; they torture them with dysentery and indigestion.

The Epom spirits are Wiyus of the forest. There are many of them and they can assume human form, wearing Minyong hats and carrying daos and spears; you can sometimes hear them sharpening their daos on a rock. They are great fishermen and when they set their traps in a river, no fish are available to men. Their most sinister attribute is the habit of carrying off human beings alive. An Epom Wiyu makes a noise like a child crying at the top of a tree. The unwary traveller goes to the place and, instead of a child, finds the headless body of a wild cat. As he stands gazing at it, the Wiyu kidnaps him and he is never heard of again. The Epoms also make men cut themselves with daos as they work in the forest.

Then there are the Wiyus of the great mountains. They are very dangerous, of an implacable hostility to men, and no sacrifice can divert them from their purpose. They take the soul of a man from his body and carry it about the world; what he sees during these expeditions is what we call a dream. They are sometimes known to sell a soul into slavery; if this happens the dreamer rests in an eternal sleep.

Then there are the water-spirits. Chief among these are the Nippongs, who live in marshy places and among wild plantains and may appear in the form of birds. They are female spirits and interfere
with a mother’s pregnancy (indeed some Nippons are the ghosts of women who have died when pregnant), cause excessive menstruation in young girls and give every kind of disorder to a woman’s body. They have the habit of keeping their fingers clenched close together. When a woman is attacked by a Nippong, she raises both her hands to her hair and clutches it. You cannot drive the Nippong away with a dao or stick; the only thing to do is to put a dish of burning coals on the woman’s head.

Ladang-Laiyo is the Wiyu of streams and rivers and often appears in the mythology. He and others, whose home is in the great rivers, cause men to drown and fall to their death from bridges.

There are many Wiyus of the sky. Banji-Banmang also known as Taleng, is regarded as very dangerous. He as well as Lesi-Litang and Piang-Rongne kindle disastrous fires in villages; they incite men to quarrel and fight; they make them fall from trees; they cause drought. Banji-Banmang is thirsty for human blood, and always has a pot in his hand to be filled with the only drink he desires.

Doying-Botte is a Wiyu of ambivalent character. Although he is often regarded as a giver of wealth, he can at the same time drive men to despair by causing acute pains in the head and by giving epilepsy. Sacrifices for him must be offered on the roof of a house, and the tokens of offering must be raised on a long bamboo pole high above everything else.

There are many other Wiyus, but this brief account will suffice to show the way in which the Adis think

'Doying means 'history' or tradition: Botte means great.'
about them. They must all be placated by sacrifice, usually by animal sacrifice, and if this is properly done, they may leave an individual or a village alone for a time. But at Shimong, where there had been many deaths during the previous months, I listened one night to the despairing cry of a bereaved father who went round the village shouting, 'The Wiyus are devouring us. They take no notice of our offerings. Do not believe in them. They eat our gifts and they eat us as well. Let us give them no more.'

The Wiyus have different forms. In the myths they may take the shape of a mithun, a yak or a human being. Banji-Banmang is sometimes said to have the form of a monkey. The Nippons may appear as birds. Their villages, invisible to mortal eyes, are on earth, below the earth, beneath the deep water of great rivers, in the sky and midway between earth and heaven. To these villages they take the souls of the human beings they kill.

The Wiyus can marry and have children; they can die. They quarrel and fight among themselves. They behave in fact very like human beings.

The Wiyus may also take human partners and these become the gifted individuals, the Miris and Nyibo, who are inspired with more than natural knowledge and powers of speech. A human being may have children by his Wiyu wife and after his death may himself become a Wiyu and live with her.

The Shamans

The traditions of the Adi shamans resemble those of the Sherdukpens of NEFA and the Saoras
of Orissa in some striking particulars. Like the Saora shaman, male or female, the Adi shaman is directed into his profession by a series of dreams; he often experiences a period of semi-insanity; and his initiation is marked by a ‘marriage’ to a tutelary spirit of the other sex.

The shamans of the Siang Valley are called Miris and they may be either men or women. They do not normally wear any dress or insignia to distinguish them from other members of the community, though some of the women are said to be marked by large round eyes ‘like the eyes of deer’, which give them the power of looking into the unseen world. When inspired, their tone of voice changes and they are said to use a language of their own. Their office is not hereditary, though a child growing up in a Miri’s house naturally tends to follow the profession of his parents.

A Miri at Shimong thus described his spiritual pilgrimage: ‘I dreamt that many Wiyus in human form crowded round me. There was a bamboo. They said, ‘Plant a shoot of this.’ There was a ridding tree. They said, “Plant a shoot of this.” I planted them and they took root. There was a girl who had been born of a grasshopper and I danced with her. When she wearied I danced by myself on a rock. I danced well, and that is why I have become a great Miri. Later, I dreamt that I was on a high mountain. I made a noose-trap and hung it in a clump of bamboos. I caught a squirrel in it.’

Such dreams may begin in youth and continue for years. Only when the Wiyu-bride is pleased

1See my The Religion of an Indian Tribe (Bombay, 1955).
does she work her will upon the future Miri. One sign of her presence is that he goes for a time out of his wits: he reels like a drunken man, dances round the village, wanders in the fields. At such a time he is not allowed to enter the Bango (boys’ dormitory). This stage may last from six to twelve months. When he recovers he sacrifices a pig to his Wiyu-tutelary and brings meat, rice and rice-beer for the elders in the dormitory. As they eat, he walks from end to end of the building, singing the traditional Miri songs.

After this the spirit-wife is constantly present to inspire him when he goes to divine the cause of sickness and directs his singing in the dance.

At Karko and Shimong I watched Miri-women perform special ceremonial dances and saw how the spirit came upon them. The Shimong woman yawned, belched, trembled from head to foot as he came; the girl at Karko took a man’s ornamental dao in her hand, placed a splendid helmet on her head, and began to dance. At the same time an old man-Miri dressed himself in a woman’s cloth. As among the Saoras, this transvestite practice seems to be in honour of the spirit of the opposite sex who has taken possession of the shaman’s body. I heard of one Miri who had a very long hair in her nose. When her Wiyu came on her, she blew it out: when he left her, she sniffed it up again.

Miris and other shamans have children by their spirit-wives. A woman told me that her tutelary looked very like her human husband. She would sit and drink with him in her dreams, and go about the country in his company. She has had three children, two boys and a girl, from him. After
her death she expects to live with her spirit-husband, not with the ghost of her human husband. But this is less complicated than it sounds, for her human husband is a Nyibö and after his death he will go to live with his spirit-wife.

If a boy does not want to become a Miri despite dreams urging him to be one, his parents must sacrifice to the Wiyu concerned to leave him alone. She may agree to this, but even then may visit him in dreams for the rest of his life.

Some Miris are credited with extraordinary powers. They have the gift of transforming themselves into animals, in reality as well as in their dreams. I heard of a Miri who was said to have turned himself into a deer, but in this case he was only partly successful; his legs remained human and he died soon afterwards. I also heard of a Gallong woman who used to go to the forest and transform herself into a barking-deer. One day a party of hunters caught her, but as their arrows sped towards her she disappeared. Later, when they had returned to their village, she came to them carrying the missing arrows in her arms.

The Miris usually employ their powers for the benefit of mankind. They divine, with the help of egg or liver, the causes of the sickness of their fellows and offer sacrifice to appease the spirits. But they can also misuse their gifts. They can send their Wiyu-tutelaries to injure or kill their enemies; they can destroy by their curses. I heard of a Min-yong woman who could see what was happening in distant villages. She would send her Wiyu to bring her victims and would then kill and eat them. I heard of another who had married a Banji-Banmang
Wiyu, that very deadly class of spirit which is always thirsting for human blood. With his help she killed two people, one of them a Bori in a village many miles away.

All the villages in this area have one or more Miris, and if necessary they can borrow a Miri from elsewhere, should their own personnel be unable to cope with, for example, a serious epidemic. The Miris are usually rewarded for their services by a share of sacrificial meat, with gifts of rice-beer, and by gifts of beads. A Miri who leads the Sollung dances will be rewarded by girls of the village with so many beads for each dance he performs.

The shamans are of great importance to Adi society, and the fact that so many of them are women raises the position of their sex in public estimation. They lead the dances, direct consultations at the Kebang (tribal council), divine the cause of sickness, offer sacrifices, foresee the success or failure of the crops, recover strayed or stolen animals, and are the guardians and exponents of the historical traditions of their tribe.

Dreams

The great talkers in the village councils depend a lot on the dreams. Thus, before he became a Nyibo, an Adi dreamt that ‘I turned into a great mithun and stood in front of the dere.’ Whenever anyone came near me, I frightened him away. In the dere I built a shrine for sacrifice. Then I climbed a high mountain. There was a pond there and many little frogs were making a lot of noise. I threw a stone at them and they kept quiet. I cut a bamboo

\[1\] The Adi dormitory is called moshup, dere or bango, according to locality
into many little pieces and put them in my bag. In my hand there was a great spear: in front of me were men, behind me were mithun. Someone whispered in my ear, "You are a very good man and I am pleased with you." I took a flute and, sitting on the top of a mountain, played sweetly on it.'

Another leader of the Kebang was also changed into a mithun in a dream. 'I went to the dere and found many elders sitting there. One of them filled my hands with fruits: When I counted, I found there were twenty of them. Another elder filled my hands with fruits: when I counted, I found there were fifty. A third gave me a bundle of sticks: when I counted, I found there were a hundred. I turned into a mithun. They tried to catch me by one horn, but failed. Then they caught me by the other, and they all cried. "What a fine mithun!" On another occasion, this man dreamt that: 'I turned into a splendid red cock. I perched on the roof of the dere and crowed. All the cocks in the village answered me.'

Another orator had an initiatory dream of the same pattern. 'I saw a pond full of frogs which were making a terrible din puduk puduk tak tak tak. I threw a stone at them and they were quiet. They started their noise again and I fired an arrow at them.'

Another of his dreams was of a great bamboo which grew on the hill above his village. It fell on his head and the water from the leaves was scattered on both his shoulders. From this dream, he claims, came the wisdom he always shows in the discussion of tribal affairs.
In these dreams, the symbolism is fairly clear. The great achievement of a speaker in Kebang is to get a hearing. The frogs in the pond are the people assembled in council who are forced to silence by the dominating personality of the speaker. The cock whose crowing is answered by others represents the singer whose theme is answered by the refrain. The flute is traditionally associated with the shaman. The great speaker or singer is frequently compared to a mithun, and one of my informants assured me that he could actually turn into a mithun.

*Sickness and Death*

Perhaps the greatest single fact in the life of the modern Adi is the threat of sickness and death. These people suffer atrociously from every kind of disease and their theory of its causation is not calculated to relieve it, for it discourages them from turning to scientific medicine. Sickness is caused by dreams, by sorcery, by breach of taboo, but above all by the Wiyus, and even where there may be some other immediate cause, a Wiyu is often the active agent. Let us consider the less common causes first.

Dreams not only warn of sickness to some; they actually cause such infections as leprosy and goitre.

Breaches of taboo make one ill or liable to an unpleasant accident. An expectant mother who is careless of the rules during her pregnancy may cause much trouble later to her child. If she or her husband drinks water from a stream that dries up in the hot weather, their child will be deaf. If she eats the flesh of a certain bird, the child will have red and inflamed eyes. If she eats monkey's flesh, the
child will have sunken eyes like a monkey. If she kills a snake, her child will be born dumb, for a snake’s tongue shoots in and out.

A man who carries out a corpse to burial must not eat a gourd for a year: if he does, he will get goitre. Nor must he eat a pumpkin, or his body will be covered with sores.

Sickness may be caused by witchcraft. A Miri may put his or her great powers to the wrong use: then ‘he devours men secretly and they die.’ I have already given examples of women who send their Wiyus to drink the blood of their enemies.

The real danger to human beings comes from the Wiyus. This great unseen company of spirits surrounds man on earth and, while some Wiyus are benevolent, the majority are touchy, jealous and naturally hostile to man. It was the trickster and cannibal Robo who was their ancestor and his descendants are worthy of him: there is no evil to which they will not stoop.

One of them causes eye-trouble of every kind. Another wanders about the world, giving dysentery wherever he goes. Yet another, who lives in a village between earth and heaven, ‘looks on a man and drives him mad’.

Venereal disease (though rare) is caused by a very sinister Wiyu. Sacrifice is offered to him at night and the house is taboo to strangers for several days and the whole village for one day, ‘for all men fear this disease.’

Malaria, which has the curious name of ramnam, was, according to Adi tradition, unknown before the military Expedition of 1911. ‘Bentinck’ Migam brought it to us.’
Sterility in women is caused by a female Wiyu called Doini-Appi. Long ago, this girl, daughter of the Sun-Moon, lived in human form on earth. At her first menstruation, she went unwittingly to a stream, where Doini-Polo used to go to bathe. There she washed her clothes and body, and drank a little of the water. By doing this, she offended Doini-Polo and she never bore a child. After her death, she lived on as a Wiyu in certain streams and pools. Sometimes, a girl is unfortunate enough to meet her when she goes to wash her things at the end of her first period, and then Doini-Appi makes her barren.

Several Wiyus devote themselves to troubling women in child-birth and the Adis have many ways of checkmating their activities.

When delivery is delayed, the attendants place an egg on the floor and make the mother break it with her knee and then drink some cold water. As the water of the egg is thus released, the amniotic fluid will begin to flow.

The husband makes a bracelet of grass, puts it before his wife and says, 'If I have forgotten anything; if I have left anything shut up anywhere: if there is a vessel closed or basket unopened, it is my fault: I admit my mistake.' Then he cuts the bracelet with his dao.

I once watched a score of men with spears range themselves round a house where a young mother was wearily struggling for delivery. At a given sign they raised their spears and drove them at the walls, again and again, shouting to drive away the obstructive Wiyu.

If, in spite of all this effort, the child is not born,
the Miri is called and he sacrifices a hen on the mother’s head, letting the blood pour over her and saying to the Wiyu, ‘Take this, but let the woman alone.’ They do not eat this fowl, but throw it away: ‘all the flesh is for the Wiyu.’ If this fails, they kill a dog above the mother’s head.

Another method is to dress the mother in the best and oldest ornaments they have, put on her a fine Mishmi coat and a new skirt, and cry: ‘Come out quickly: don’t stay inside. Whether you are a boy or a girl, come out and get the lovely things we will give you.’

The Adis have some idea of the spread of infection, and it is interesting that this applies not only to material but to moral sickness also. Thus, if anyone is guilty of incest, always a very grave matter in tribal society, no visitor will enter his house for at least three months for fear of catching the infection and committing the same crime. So too, if a man kills a mithun by accident, he is not fined, but his house is avoided for some time, for such a man is spiritually infectious: he has been driven to his deed by some hostile spirit, who may also attack his friends.

On entering many villages, I have been greeted with a ceremonial arch and a large crowd of people, who shouted loudly as my party approached and pelted us with chunks of plantain stalk. On the right bank of the Siang, a sort of fence may be erected and long white strips of bark hung from it. On one occasion a large piece of plantain hit me in the midriff and bowled me over.

A hundred years ago Father Krick had the same experience. ‘Eighteen young men’, he writes,
'met me at the foot of the mountain. No sooner did I move on, than the two youngest of the band proceeded to cover my body with leaves. They meant of course to purify me and deliver my body from all diabolical influence. This exorcism was soon to be followed by a second performance more weird and threatening. As I emerged from the forest, I was made to pass under an arch bristling with bows and arrows and decorated with all sorts of devilries and monsters pierced with arrows, and in striking attitudes that baffle description. This piece of architecture was fearful to behold, as well it might be, for it was to expel from my body the more stubborn devils who had been daring enough to cross the first obstacle.'

The fearsome architecture today has lost some of its picturesqueness, but many villages still have elaborate defences against those who would bring sickness-giving Wiyus from outside. Spiked fences and gates, with imitation arrows, or realistic bamboo snakes, are erected and the head or body of a fowl, dog or monkey is hung up to deter the mischievous spirits.

Adi eschatological ideas are vague and confused, and the dead do not interfere greatly in the affairs of the living.

Today, it is the Wiyus who bring death to men. There does not seem to be any god of the dead (although Dalton noted one among the Hinduised Adis bordering on the plains). The Nippong Wiyus kill women in childbirth. The Epom Wiyus attack men in the forest, taking them away and hiding

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them in great trees. Others kill men suddenly: kill women in spite of any sacrifices offered for their safety: devour sacrifice and human being together: or cause fatal accidents.

After death, the Wiyu responsible takes the spirit of the deceased to his village and keeps him there as a slave for a year or two. Then the ghosts of his forefathers come to rescue him and take him to their own place. This is on earth, and though human beings cannot go there, mithuns may wander through it. The homes of the dead are in steep and rocky places: they plant roots, and build houses: the cock crows for them. In the end, they die again.

The Adis do not seem to have any idea of reincarnation.

Taboos

Adi life is controlled by a fairly large number of taboos. Every festival has its rules on going in or out of the village during the duration. A family which offers sacrifice places a taboo on strangers entering their house. Before a hunt, the women of a village must not go to the fields.

When a child is born, no one should enter or leave the house for twenty-four hours: no strangers may come in to see the child. On the second day, the family names the child and holes are bored in the ears: they continue to observe taboo. On the third day, only the actual parents are taboo, and on the fourth to eighth days only the mother. But until the mother begins to cook, strangers may not enter the house.

At the time of death, taboos press most heavily
on those who carry the corpse to its grave. The first time a man does this, he is in a state of taboo for twenty days. During this period he cannot go to the fields or visit other people: he should spend his time in the forest hunting and trapping. On the second occasion, he is taboo for fifteen days, on the third for ten. Those who dig the grave must also observe taboo: those who dig deeply for five days, those who help only with the surface soil for three. A man who carries a leper to his grave must never, for the rest of his life, eat a certain root and bean.

A number of taboos are connected with animals. Suppose a hen hatches out a brood of chicks. The woman who feeds the mother hen is in a state of taboo and must not cook. If she does, she may get too hot and the chicks will die. Nor may she fetch water, for water falls from above out of a bamboo pipe, and the force of it might kill the chicks.

If a sow bears a litter in a field, all the members of the household are taboo for a day when they brings them home. They must not leave the village, or fetch wood or go hunting or to work. Whoever feeds the sow is taboo for two days.

Mithun usually live out in the forest and bear their calves without the owner's knowledge. If anyone comes accidentally on a new calf, it is taboo for him to cut a tree or pluck a leaf: if he does the calf may die. When he gives the news to the owner, he must reward him with food and rice-beer in honour of the occasion.

Menstrual taboos are very light in the remoter villages, though such taboos always become heavier in contact with the outside world. A woman in
her period may work in the clearing; she may cook, fetch water, dance, enter the men's dormitory: she may even have intercourse. But a girl must not wash her soiled clothes in a pool where fish are, or the fish will become sterile. A man must not go hunting on the day his wife bathes at the end of her period. Women must be careful to avoid plantain trees growing in lonely places and must never gather nettles, for the Nippong feed on them. There is a general rule that women must not eat the heads of animals.

On recovery from a dangerous illness, the patient must not eat any game taken in the hunt, nor certain roots and plantains, for a year.

On the day a taboo ends, those who have observed it put a bundle of wood and leaves at the intersection of two paths outside their village and place a stone upon it to signify that they are now free.

**Control of the Rain**

Control of rain, storm and hail is effected in ways that may be paralleled in other parts of the world. In time of drought, the people combine to buy a mithun, for sacrifice. They take it to the nearest stream, tether it in the middle of the water, and then pour water over its head until it collapses and dies. As they do so, they shout, 'Pedonge-hoe-he': O water come! They feast on the flesh and perform a special dance.

On the other hand, if the rain is too heavy, a special Doini-Miri leads a dance for two nights running in the dormitory. He ties a leaf over the door in the hope that as it dries, the rain too will dry.

This brief review of some of the beliefs and practices of the Adis, even though they vary from village to village, will provide a background to the
stories that follow. These stories are rapidly being forgotten and the ideas behind them are being abandoned. For the Adi people all along the Siang river and even in the desolate Ramo-Pailibo hills are changing at an unprecedented speed. Schools are being opened everywhere and children now are learning their stories, not from the lips of their grandparents but from the text-books on their desks. Modern medicine is changing the old ideas of diagnosis and cure, although I suspect that the authority of the priest or medicine-man will be slow to decline. The old picture of trade is now very different. The NEFA merchants no longer cross great mountains to Tibet: goods are lifted for them by aircraft or provided in conveniently placed cooperatives within the Indian frontier. Slavery has largely disappeared: dress is changing—for example, the beyop girdle is now only seen in the remotest villages, and the younger educated generation is keen on adopting Western fashions.

These stories, therefore, have not only a folklore, but a historical, interest. They reflect something that will soon disappear forever and they are thus doubly precious as a record of a way of life that for the people themselves was free, happy and adventurous.

II
Tour Diary
1958

Saturday, 4th January

Arrived at Tuting near the Tibetan frontier in the Siang Frontier Division of NEFA. Halted here
on Sunday when we were all busy getting ready for a long tour.

_Monday, 6th January_

**Tuting to Ninging**

Today we began our way south along the right bank of the Siang River. This wonderful river, rises in Tibet as the Tsa-ng-Po and, after embracing the 24,445' mountain, Namcha-Barua and passing over rapids for about thirty miles, enters Indian territory and flows through the often majestic terrain of northern Siang until it enters the plains at Pasighat, where it is known as the Dihang, and then merges in the Brahmaputra.

It was a long hard march, which included the crossing of a very shaky bridge, and ended with a steep climb of about 3,000' up to Ninging. Here we had a wonderful reception; our porters were Khambas who are very charming; and large crowds of children immediately thronged round us. I had two interpreters, one, my old friend Tapan Taki, and the other, Odin Modi who went ahead with Sunderlal and prepared an excellent camp where we could sit in the day-time though, as always, we slept in what is here called the Bango, the boys' dormitory. As we went along, the sky was heavily clouded but the rain held off and by nightfall all was clear and a nearly full moon shone brightly on the snow-covered hills all round.

On the way I noticed a man carrying his dog and another picked one up and carefully took it over a bridge. This illustrates the typical Adi love of dogs, which we find in the tales.
When I arrived I found my socks full of blood when I took off my shoes; there had been a lot of leeches on the way.

The people between Tuting and Bomdo used to be called Bomdo-Janbos. Dunbar calls them 'Angong' Abors and yet others have called them Bogums. When I was there they called themselves Ashings.

The Ashings number about 1,200 people and are among the most charming in NEFA. They are very good to look at and are well dressed. They prefer to weave in white or dark blues and reds; they have a clever way of mixing black threads with red to get a darker colour. They grow cotton which they gin, spin and dye themselves and they also use a little bark-fibre. The men have black Mishmi and green Adi coats as well as long reddish-brown coats in the Tibetan style. Their villages, except for Pango, are marked by an extraordinary zest and happiness which made one forget the cold and rain which pursued us inexorably during this tour. They are very hospitable and in every village we were entertained with meals of rice, eggs, pieces of mithun (generally rather high), strips of pork and beer. There is a lot of sugar-cane here, some of which is provided by Government, and trade both with other tribal groups in NEFA and across the border to Tibet is flourishing. The Ashings make more cloth than they need themselves and they used to take it to Tibet and exchange it for salt and beads. The Tibetans used to come through the Kepung-La Pass with salt, iron, cloth, musk, blue

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3 This is no longer true
porcelain beads, and metal pots. They would carry back mithuns the horns of deer, hides and rice. The interest of the Ashings in trade is reflected in some of their stories.

*Tuesday, 7th January*

**HALI NINGING**

After a clouded early morning the sun came out and transformed everything. This village is on a high hill and from our camp in the dormitory we can look straight down on the Siang River. Towards Karko the Pari mountain rises in magnificent white; beyond Gelling to the north the mountains are also snow-clad: and there is a range, very bright in the sun, immediately above us.

I tried to take some photographs but the people are very nervous of the camera and they all ran away. So we sat in the Bango with some of the elder men and took down eight stories from them, which they seemed almost anxious to tell. Nearby some people were building a house with astonishing speed and many women and children sat about, most of them engaged in cleaning each other’s hair of lice. Children were playing on a sort of see-saw; a wife was cutting her husband’s hair by chopping at it on a dao; and I was struck by the absence of crying children. This is a lovely village and we had a most enjoyable day. In the evening we visited the head Gam, a prosperous person, who gave us a sumptuous meal of hard-boiled eggs, dried fish, dried venison and rice-beer.

*1A Gam is a village elder, officially recognised by a red coat.*
Wednesday, 8th January

NINGING TO PANGO

It was a very long march today, at least twelve miles, which took us seven hours. It was not too bad down to the river but the climb up to Pango seemed interminable, though we had beautiful views of the river and snow mountains along the way. Pango itself is today a sad and dirty village which has seen a lot of death. The people are thin and we saw some tragic sights. Nobody was inclined to tell any stories and, though they insisted on dancing, they did not dance well.

Thursday, 9th January

PANGO TO MIGING

It was a shorter march today to Miging. There was a long steep descent down to the river, a rather pleasant walk along it, and then a very stiff climb of almost exactly 3,000' up to Miging. The day was overcast and as we came higher it grew very cold. We had a fine welcome from the Gams and a number of girls who danced us into our camp. The dormitory was clean and roomy and we occupied one corner while the boys crowded into the rest.

Friday, 10th January

HALT MIGING

Here too we got quite a number of stories, some of them very interesting. We had the feeling of being very high, much higher than the actual elevation, and the hospitable Ashings insisted on our
having the usual hard-boiled eggs and some decay­
ing mithun-flesh. In the evening there was a good ponung dance led by a pretty and graceful dancer. I distributed official presents—two daoos, sugar, tea, tobacco, twenty-five bundles of red and white yarn and twenty pounds of raw wool—which I repeated in each of the villages we visited.

Saturday, 11th January

MIGING TO MOSING

Another grey, overcast day. There was a walk down to Angong stream where we rested and then a long climb up to Mosing and we were met, as usual, outside the village by the leading men and the dancers. I noticed a fair amount of cotton grown here and the people have ginning machines.

Sunday, 12th January

HALT MOSING

Managed to take a number of photographs and record some more stories. I noticed here a number of Tibetan-style coats, many felt-hats as well as the Adi ‘bowler’, and commonly the dark-blue Bori shawl. Boys played with balls of rolled-up bark-fibre and I watched an old woman laboriously picking out the thread from a bit of gunny.

Monday, 13th January

MOSING TO JANBO

As we went along we had superb views of the Siang with two great snow peaks behind it. The
march was long and tiring, ending in a 3,500 climb up to the village but we had a delightful welcome which quickly took away our fatigue.

Dunbar records a tradition that Abors, Gallongs and Mishmis all came from the stone of creation near here and settled down together between the Sigon and Siyom Rivers. Bomdo and Janbo are said to be the oldest communities in this region the other villages up to Tuting having been colonised from them.

Tuesday, 14th January to Friday, 17th January

HALT JANBO

I found Janbo very pleasant, though we did not intend originally to stay so long. But persistent rain and warnings of the slippery nature of the path persuaded us to wait until the weather cleared. We stayed in an enormous Bango which was always crowded with people. It is rather depressing to feel that there is so much beauty all round which we could only see at moments. The view from the village, when we can see it, is almost awe-inspiring in its beauty. However, we were able to keep busy for we got a good many stories and I studied Adi religion. We watched children play a mithun-game, dragging a boy along with fibre ropes as if he was a mithun, and shouting ‘Ha-ha-ha-ha’. We saw a narrow passage, through which we were told the Minyongs and Padams passed at the time of the first migration from Tuting.

I tried to get information on Adi customary law but the elderly Janbos were giving little away. They have had no quarrels, they said, and no murders
during their lifetimes. But they were able to tell us of notorious cases—some fifty years old. Every evening there was a ponung dance which here was generally very good.

Saturday, 18th January

JANBO TO BOMDO

Today we had a delightful march though we started in heavy cloud, but it was a glorious day by the time we arrived. Most of the way we went along the bank of the Siang. Bomdo is a little over 3,000' and the first flat village we have been in, with superb views of snow-mountains all round. Earlier observers had noted the dirt and ugliness of Bomdo and one of them described it as 'a peculiar village with peculiar people'. I personally found it exhilarating with its distant splendid views: it was clean and peopled by charming folk and most attractive children.

There was a splendid ponung in the evening, some of the best dancing I have yet seen in this part of the world, and it continued until nearly midnight.

Sunday, 19th January

HALT BOMDO

We woke to bright sunshine for the first time on this tour and were surrounded by such crowds of children that it was difficult even to eat my breakfast and this is a village of which Tapan Taki had said that the people were so timid that nobody would come near us and that they never danced! Most of the staff went down to the river making
a raft for us to cross to Puging, and I took Sunday as a quiet day.

Monday, 20th January

HA LT BOMDO

The weather has still kept fine and the women are sitting everywhere out in the sun ginning, dyeing their yarn and weaving on their little loin-loomas. Most of them began at 8 o’clock in the morning and went on all day. There is a Bobo swing here which is constantly in use: it seems to have been erected to ward off dysentery, but boys can swing on it at any time. Normally there should be a stuffed monkey tied to the top but here the monkey was made of straw. The boys are very expert: they can swing up into the air without holding on to the ropes, and others shot arrows into the monkey at the top.

A few years ago an old man died in this village, leaving his wife but there were no children. One of his clansmen, therefore, carried the body to burial but before this the widow cut the cord round the dead man’s waist. Soon afterwards she too died and another clansman carried her to the grave. The two men then quarrelled about the property, each of them claiming it. A meeting of the Council was called and they asked who cut the cord when the man died. When it was admitted that this was done by the widow it was decided that the property automatically passed to her and, therefore, the man who carried her, and not the man who carried the husband, would inherit. There was a good deal of discussion after the meeting was over and finally it was decided that the first man should receive a
quarter of the property and the second should receive three-quarters; for the important thing was the cutting of the cord round the waist.

The Ashings generally regard twins as ill-omened. A bastard, who is usually born in the forest is sometimes abandoned on the spot and left to die. When this happens the people fine the girl, not so much because she has killed the child, but because her deed will spoil the crops.

In the old days, the Ashings punished an immoral girl by stripping her naked, tying her to a tree and beating her. Even if a girl refused to join her husband for some reason, the Ashings used to strip her naked and give her chilli-water. If, while living with her husband, she misbehaved they cut off her hair which they then chopped small and mixed with rice-beer. The clans-folk of her husband would assemble to drink it, declaring that as the girl's hair was in the beer her soul was also in it, and by drinking it they were ensuring her early death. After this the husband let her do what she liked.

There is an interesting tradition in these Ashing villages, as well as elsewhere, that if you steal something from a store-house or granary, you take the 'soul' (aith) away from it, and if you are caught, in addition to paying compensation for what you have stolen, you have to sacrifice a pig and rice-beer to the granary to persuade its soul to return to it. If the soul does not do this there is danger of more thefts.

For example, some years ago a thief went into somebody's granary here at Bomdo. The owner heard a noise, collected his clansmen, quietly surrounded the building and caught the thief. When
he asked him what he was doing, the intruder accused him of having stolen his things and said he was, therefore, stealing in return and he ran away and escaped. There was a meeting of the Council, but the thief was so poor that he had nothing to give by way of compensation. He was fined twenty rupees, however, and had to sell almost everything he had and the elders took it all. The owner got nothing, for he lost nothing, but the entry of the thief into the granary had made it taboo and robbed it of its 'soul' and the owner himself had to offer sacrifice to clear it.

The Adis have a system of excommunication and in the Ashing villages an excommunicated person is called a Mipun. A Mipun is not in such a bad position as a slave, but he is definitely looked down on. He cannot visit the girls' dormitory, though he can sleep in the Bango and people can eat with him. Anyone who has intimate relations with a Mipun becomes a Mipun. He is not supposed to speak at meetings of the Council, but it is possible to be free of this discredit by giving the village a mithun as a fine.

*Tuesday, 21st January*

**BOMDO TO PUGING**

From Bomdo we crossed the Siang River by raft to Puging, for the old suspension bridge there had been destroyed in the great earthquake of 1950, which had also drowned four of the villagers. We found there was a great fear of the river and it was not easy to persuade the Ashings to make rafts and
take us across. Our crossing certainly caused a
great deal of excitement. Crowds of people as-
sembled and the headmen of half a dozen villages.
There were literally buckets of rice-beer to keep
them all in a good mood. On getting to Puding on
the other side we were greeted by a large crowd
and were hauled up a precipitous ascent to the vil-
lage.

The change is a dramatic one, for the Ashings
with their long hair and the attractive shawls of their
women, which are suspended by a string passing
over their heads, are in striking contrast to the
Shimongs with their shaven heads and more conven-
tional dress.¹

THE PLENTY OF ASSAM

There were two sisters who lived in a place called Dagam-
Peying. One year they had such a wonderful harvest that they
despaired of carrying it all home; besides, it was much more
than was needed for just the two of them. They wore clothes
made of bark-fibre in those days and they took them off, tore
them into strips, set fire to them and scattered them in that
part of the field which they were too lazy to reap.

When the Wiyu who makes seed fertile saw this, he was
angry and turned himself into a bird. As he was flying away,
one of his feathers fell to the ground on the bank of a river,
and presently a cotton-plant grew from it. The Wiyu flew on
across the country of the Minyongs, the Pasis, the Padams and
at last to Assam, and everywhere he dropped his feathers and
cotton-plants sprang up. He then settled in Assam, and this
is why the people there have good harvests and always plenty
of cotton.

¹The narrative is taken up again at p. 91.
2
WHY THE EARTH IS SOMETIMES HOT

The reason the earth is sometimes hot is this: Sitting-Kedeng, far below the surface of the earth, is the home of the Wiyus. From time to time, they sacrifice a pig or a mithun and make a great fire to roast the meat—and this heats the whole world.

3
THE WAR WITH THE STARS

Long ago, the Stars and the Fish used to marry each other, but in time they divided into clans. With the Fish was their brother Otter. One day the Star-people wanted to sacrifice, but they had no mithun or pig for it, so they set a trap and caught Otter. They thought it would be all right as long as the Fish-people didn’t find out, so they hurriedly sacrificed him. But as they were cutting up the meat, Bat flew by and asked what they were doing. They made Bat sit down by the fire, flattered him and gave him beer to drink and a generous share of the meat.

‘Don’t tell anybody,’ they said, ‘and, specially not the Fish-people.’

‘Of course I won’t,’ promised Bat.

As he spoke, the head of the dead Otter gave a jeering laugh and they were all frightened.

When the feast was over, Bat flew away to the village of the Fish-people and found them weeping for their missing brother. He was about to go into one of their houses, but they stopped him.

‘Someone has died: it is taboo.’

Bat was annoyed and said, ‘What do you know about people dying? If I were to come in, I could tell you something really interesting.’

The Fish at once let him into the house and said, ‘Tell us quickly: what is it?’

Bat told the story of the captured Otter and his sacrifice and added, ‘They gave me some of the meat and I ate it too.’
The Fish-people were greatly disturbed at this and called a Council of all the Earth-people and decided to fight the Star-peopele. This war goes on for ever and the Fish come out to fight the Stars whenever there are heavy clouds and the Stars strike back with lightning.

4

FIRE AND WATER

Two Wiyus were living together as man and wife below the surface of the earth. Here they both died and from her gall-bladder came Water and from his came Fire. At first then Fire and Water lived inside the earth and Fire made the world hot.

The people living in the village of Doini the Sun said to one another, 'It's never been as hot as this. Whatever can have happened?'

They went to find out and came to the place beneath which Fire was burning. They called Rolung-Sobo the mithun and told him to dig. He made a great pit in the earth and Fire and Water came out. Wiyus, men and animals were pleased; they were able to cook now and had better food.

But one day Water said to Fire, 'What do I get out of all this? These creatures drink me, cook with me, wash with me, but I get nothing.'

Fire was angry when he heard this and said, 'I am a man, you are only a woman. It is through me you are warmed and only through me that people can cook. Without me you are nothing.'

As he spoke, Fire blazed up fiercely and Water shrank back in fear into the ground. The whole world was burnt and Wiyus, men and animals ran to find Water to save them. But she was nowhere to be found, so they told the tiger and the bear to try to find her. They went growling and roaring till they heard the sound of the Water far below the earth and then they called Rolung-Sobo to dig it up for them again. Water came bursting out of the ground and there was a great river.
THE ASHING STORIES

When Fire saw this, he was frightened and hid in stones and trees and men still get it from them. And Water still roars sometimes like the bear and tiger that went to find it.

5

THE ORIGIN OF WIND

Pedong-Nane had a son who had a human head, but no arms or legs on his body. She could do nothing with him, so she left him, on a rock in the place where he was born.

One day Bise-Botte went to hunt deer and came to the rock where he saw the child and, thinking him to be some sort of animal, shot at him and the arrow stuck in his body. But when Bise-Botte saw the human head, he went quickly to pull the arrow out. As he did so a great wind puffed out of the wound and blew him into the air. This is how the winds began to blow across the world.

6

THE FIRST RAIN

From Kayum came Yumkang, from Yumkang Kasi, from Kashi Siang, from Siang Abo, from Abo Bomuk, from Bomuk Mukseng, from Mukseng Sedi the earth.

The generations of Sedi are Sedi, Diling, Liteng, Tene, Eppe, Pedong. Pedong who is Water lived in a lake in Tibet: she was held there by the Fish, the Frog, the Crab and the Stars, who would not let her go. The Fish and the Frog loved each other and the Fish gave birth to more water and there was so much in the lake that it was ready to overflow. For Water, being a girl, wanted to find a husband.

The Wiyu Sune, grandson of Pedong Sune desired the Fish as his wife. But he was of the Earth and she of the Water: how could they come together? But when he saw Water ready to overflow, he planned to drain it off, for then, he thought, the Fish would be free of it and he could marry her. He digs
channel and Water flowed away happily to find a mate, but the Fish, the Frog and the Crab went with her.

As Water flowed down through the hills she became a great river and mist rose from her body into the sky where it turned into Cloud. Water married Cloud and went with her husband to the sky, but there was nowhere for her to live and she fell back to the earth as rain.

7

THE HARVEST OF SNOW

There is a Wiyu who makes his fields on the high hills and the snow is his harvest. As men have work in the fields for half the year, so the snow remains on the hills for six months. When the Wiyu winnows the snow in his fan, it flies through the air and falls again on the earth.

8

SLEEP AND LOVE

Originally men did not sleep but worked both day and night. But the Wiyus of the mountains and the Wiyus of the rivers did not like this and they went to Sitking-Kedeng and said, 'If these people work so much they'll spoil our hills and we'll have nowhere to live.'

Sitking-Kedeng said, 'Don't worry, I'll see to it.'

Now the spirits of night, male and female, came into being far below the surface of the earth. They grew up and married each other and had many children, boys and girls, and they built a large village, for they were just like human beings.

One day the Wiyu boys and girls went to human village and caught the souls of the boys and girls and took them home and after that people began to sleep. The Wiyu girls have a great Rasheng (dormitory) and they kidnap the souls of human boys and make them dance there. The Wiyu boys take the souls of human girls and marry them. Then in the morning everyone goes home.
HOW SPIDER TAUGHT MEN TO WEAVE

There were two brothers who were Wiyus but had the form of men.

When Sedi-Botte died, the whole world was covered with water and the brothers had nowhere to live. While they were wondering in despair what to do, an eagle flew to their help. They jumped into the air and urged him and he carried them into the sky, and when the water dried brought them down again to earth.

There they built themselves a little hut, but they were cold and naked, for they had no cloth. One day however, Spider wove her web across a corner of their house and they said, 'If we could make something like this, we would have clothes for the day and covering for the night.' First of all, therefore, imitating Spider, they made mats of leaves, but when they saw the fine weaving of the web they were not satisfied. But one day when they were out hunting, they found some cotton-plants and brought them home, though they did not know what to do with them. Then another day, as they hunted, they came to the place where Sedi-Botte had died. They made a spindle and loom from his bones, and when they returned home they began to spin and weave their cotton, and soon had clothes to wear.

SPIDER'S LOOM

Spider went to the land of Doini-Polo and there found Doini-Irni, daughter of the Sun-Moon, weaving cloth. She watched her secretly and learnt what to do, then stole the loom and ran away with it to Tibet. But after a time she returned and gave the loom to her sister Doini-Ari and taught her to weave and she in turn taught other girls.

But Crab and Snail objected and quarrelled with Spider. 'Don't teach things to these human beings, for they are our enemies,' they said. 'If you do, we'll fight you.'

Doini-Ari called Crane and asked him to help. So he went to Spider and said, 'Don't listen to those two; they're jealous.
You go on teaching people to weave and I'll fight them for you.'
This is why Crane still eats crabs and snails.

11

SPIDER'S BRIDGE

Long ago, when men did not know how to make bridges, Spider was able to go where men could not. He brought thread from his backside and threw it across a stream and went to and fro.

One day Abing-Nibo went to catch fish and when he saw Spider's bridge, he said to himself, 'That's a good idea. Why shouldn't I make a bridge too?' He collected a lot of creepers, made them into rope and threw it across the river but when he pulled on it, it broke.

Sometime previously, Pedong-Nane had died while hunting on a hill nearby, and the wild animals had eaten her body. But a cane had grown out of a fine rope strong enough for a bridge. In this way Abing-Nibo copied Spider and all the Adis copied him.

12

WHERE SHEEP CAME FROM

There was a Wiyu who had human form, but went about on all fours and had horns like an animal. One day he went to the snow mountains and stole the crop of another Wiyu, Dimu-Tayeng, who shot and killed him. But when he saw the body, half human and half animal, he felt sorry for what he had done and gave it proper burial.

Some time later, when Dimu-Tayeng was working on the hillside, he passed near the grave and saw a very fine stout bamboo growing from it. From inside came a curious noise. He

\[Nibo\] may refer to the first man, or it may be Nyibo, a priest or Shaman.
wondered what it was and cut it down, whereon a tiny sheep came out. He took every care of it and since then there have been wild sheep among the snows.¹

13

THE WOODPECKER AND THE BEADS

When Missung-Botte died, the craftsman Ninur-Botte made his bones into danki-bowls and beads. He gave the beads to a girl who was a friend of his, but she could not string them together as there were no holes in them. So she called the woodpecker to make the holes and when they were ready she gave them names—kudo, podat, kulli, pulan, poli, tagum. It was she who made the first dudap². She was very rich, for she had all the ornaments there were, but one day, another girl who was her neighbour stole them.

When the first girl discovered her loss, she went to the two most important people in that country. They held a Kebang at which there was much difference of opinion. The people said that no fine or compensation could be accepted, but that the thief must be made into a slave. Now the old men were great drunkards and they dragged on the discussion as long as possible so that they could go on drinking other people's rice-beer. This is why Kebangs even today always take a lot of time, because the leaders want to go on drinking as long as possible.

The girl got impatient with all the talking and drinking and asked two other elders to hold a Kebang instead. They decided that the thief should not be made a slave but that the ornaments should be returned and compensation paid.

After she had got her things back, the girl married Minum-Botte and of course took the ornaments to his house and, when she died, they became his. She had hidden them in the loft just under the roof of the house and he could not reach them. He tried to bring them down with a bamboo pole but scattered them,

¹When the Ashings, who tell this story, go to hunt the wild sheep, they sacrifice to Dimu-Tayeng before setting out and afterwards, too, if they are successful.
²An elaborate pendant worn round the neck.
some into the river, some to the hills, and in this way they passed to all mankind.

14

THE CRICKET AND THE CRAB

A long time ago a Wiyu had a daughter, Cricket, and a son, Crab. After the birth of Crab, his father died and the mother, unable to do the heavy work of the fields, resolved to go to Tibet to trade. As she was about to leave, her little daughter ran to her and begged her to come back soon and the other noticed that the girl's hair was full of lice.

She thought, 'If I leave her here like this, the lice will get into the boy's hair too. I'd better take her with me.'

So mother and daughter went together to Tibet, leaving the boy behind.

While the mother was trading skins for salt and wool in Tibet, she died, but her daughter liked the country so much that she decided to fetch her little brother and settle there. She went home but when she asked Crab to go with her, he refused. She tried to drag him along, but he was too strong for her and in a fit of temper she beat him with her dao and broke his legs. He scuttled away to hide in a hole under a pile of stones. Ever since, the crab's legs have been bent and he has lived in holes and under stones.

But Cricket returned to Tibet and every year in the rains still comes to see her brother. But he hides when he hears her song.

15

THE HABITS OF FROGS

Pedong-Sune was a water-spirit, a girl with flowing hair. Another water-spirit, Ladang-Ramula Rumule, a rough and boisterous fellow, wanted to marry her. He arranged everything with her parents and they accepted his presents, so even though the girl did not like him, they forced her to go to his house. Even
after going there she refused to sleep with him or talk to him.

Then one day the greatest of the water-spirits, Ladang-Laiyo, saw the girl and fell in love with her. Pedong-Sune more than returned his love. They met secretly, but Ladang Rumule discovered them and abused and beat his wife so badly that she decided to run away to a Wiyu village in Tibet.

On the way she passed a small pond and drank a little of the water. At once she had such violent pains in her belly that she jumped into the pond to drown herself.

But when she touched the water she gave birth to many frogs and said, 'Now I've got rid of you, there's no need for me to die. You stay here in the pond; I am going on.'

Pedong-Sune reached Tibet, and stayed there for some time, and then decided to go and see her parents. The path took her past the pond, and when the frogs saw their mother they cried for her.

But she said, 'You gave me so much pain that I don't want to have anything to do with you.'

Yet after all they were her children, so she made a channel from the pond to the river so that they could go to their father. But when, after visiting her parents, she returned to Tibet she found the frogs had gone back to their mountain pond.

What happens is this. When Pedong-Sune visits her mother's house, it grows hot and the frogs go to the rivers. But when she travels across the mountains to Tibet, it is cold and the frogs go to the ponds.

16

THE CRICKET'S WIVES

Cricket was the son of Wiyus who lived below the surface of the earth. When he grew up, his parents arranged for him to marry Duck, but she wouldn't stay with him. Then they married him to Wild Fowl, but she wouldn't stay with him. Then they married him to Sparrow, but she wouldn't stay with him. Then they married him to Rat, to Deer, to Monkey, to
Bear, even to Tiger—they tried everything and everybody—but nobody would live with him. For he was nothing but a poor little insect. Finally his parents lost all patience and said, 'We have spent enormous sums on your wives and you can't please one of them. Go away and try to fix up something for yourself.'

So Cricket went to his uncles and told them what a mess he was in. They said, 'There's just one wife for you and that's Kargo Fish who is shy and lonely like yourself.'

Cricket went over the mountains to Tibet and found her at the source of the Siang River and she agreed to marry him and go with him to his parents' house. She came out of the water and they went along together. But it was so hot that Fish died on the way. As she died she gave birth to Honey-bee. Cricket wept and Honey-bee drank his tears as if they were his mother's milk. This is why honey is so sweet.

Cricket sat on a leaf of the plantain tree and his tears fell on it and made its fruit sweet. He flew about the forest and wherever his tears fell on a tree, its fruit became sweet. And still today he weeps and is always restless remembering his dead wife.

17

THE FIRST KITE

The first Kite was born in the water of Pedong-Nane. When he was big enough, the mother said, 'Go and work in my field.' But instead of working, he used to steal from other people's fields. The neighbours were soon complaining and Pedong-Nane beat her son with a fire-brand and burnt his wings, and drove him from her house. He could not fly but hopped slowly along until he came to a great rock where he sat for many days without food or water. Then one day came a great wind and blew him into the sky: his wings grew again and he was able to fly.

And since he had been a thief from childhood, he was a thief still. And ever since has stolen chicks and whatever he can find.
WHAT HAPPENED TO THE SNAKES

A certain Wiyu lived in a very rainy village with his two snake-sons, Bunja and Bidak. He later had two other sons, one a tiger and one a bear.

When he grew up, the bear was sent by his father to get him vegetables and roots from the forest. But he liked the forest so well, and got so much to eat that he stayed there and never came home.

Then the Wiyu sent his son the tiger to get him meat, but all the tiger did was to steal a mithun from Abing-Nibo’s village. The next day he went again and this time he stole a pig. The third day, Abing-Nibo was waiting for him and gave him a good beating with the tongs from his hearth: they made stripes all over his body. ‘Thief!’ he cried, and spat at him and made round blobs on his body.

The tiger ran weeping to his mother. ‘Son,’ she said, ‘these are men, the sons of Tani. If you steal their things you’ll be in trouble. It is better not to go anywhere near them. Hunt in the forest instead: it will be safer and much more fun.’ So the tiger went to the forest and got so much to eat there that he never returned home.

When the snakes heard that a mere son of Tani had dared to beat their brother, they were angry and went to Abing-Nibo’s village and began to kill the people there. But Abing-Nibo caught them and took them to the village of Wiyu’s, where he held a Council to decide what should be done.

The Wiyus said, ‘Take out their fangs as punishment and take their beads as compensation.’

Abing-Nibo agreed, but when he threw away the fangs all kinds of poisonous snakes were born from them. Bunja and Bidak have ever since been without poison and run away whenever they see a man, but the other snakes still attack human beings in revenge for their lost beads.

THE DOG, THE PIG AND THE COCK

One day when Abing-Nibo was hunting, he came by chance to Doini-Polo’s house. ‘Doini-Polo himself was away, but his dog
and his cock were at home. The dog saw Abing-Nibo and barked and the cock flew up onto the roof and when he saw the visitor he crowed. Abing-Nibo was pleased at his welcome, and thought of stealing the dog and cock but he reflected that after all they belonged to the great Doini-Polo and it might be dangerous. But, as he was going away, the dog and the cock said to him, 'We have nothing but trouble here. It's all right when Doini-Polo is away, but when he's at home, we can't get a thing to eat or drink and you feel as if there's great fire all round you. Do take us away with you.' This was just what Abing-Nibo wanted to do, so he said 'Very well' and all three went off together.

Presently they came to Sitking-Kinding deep underground and there a pig came scrambling out of the womb of the earth and stood before them. Abing-Nibo said, 'You too come with us,' and he followed them.

After a long time, Abing-Nibo said to his three friends, 'Brothers, I have nothing more to eat. You will have to go and find something for yourselves and for me too.' The cock went to a house and scratched about under it and got a few worms. The pig found Abing-Nibo's dirt and had a good meal off that. But the dog went far far away to Takar-Among where the Wiyus live and put some of their grain in his ears, and returned home.

Abing-Nibo asked the cock, 'What did you get?' 'Nothing,' he said. He asked the pig, 'What did you get?' 'Nothing,' he said. He asked the dog, 'What did you get?' The dog turned its head from side to side and shook the grain out of his ears. Abing-Nibo took the grain in his hand and said to himself, 'I must not eat this. I will sow it, that it may increase and there will be enough for me, and for those yet to be born.'

So Abing-Nibo told his three friends to go and cultivate a field. But the cock flew onto the roof and said, 'Not me! I'll stay here and guard the house.' Then the pig and the dog went to an open piece of land and the pig worked hard all day breaking up the soil. But the dog did nothing; he went off to hunt in the forest. In the evening, after the pig had gone home, the dog was a little frightened and went to the field and made his footprints all over the ground which the pig had dug. Then he went home, and both he and the pig claimed to have done a great deal of work. 'I'll look at it and decide in the morning,' said Abing-Nibo.
Next day, Abing-Nibo went with the dog and the pig to the field, but on the way the pig found some dirt and stopped to eat it, so the dog reached the place first and showed Abing-Nibo the proof of his work. Then came the pig with his mouth smeared with filth and Abing-Nibo was angry and called him a liar and a lazybones. He said, ‘From today you will live on dirt’ and he built a little hut for him and fed him every morning on his dirt. But to the dog he said, ‘You have worked well. You will be my brother and live in the house with me.’

THE DEVOTED WIVES

There was a Wiyu who had a young son called Kare. One day as they were sitting together by the fire, the boy asked for a bow and arrow. His father had never seen such a thing, had no idea what it was, and was rather annoyed with his son for asking for it. But the boy was so insistent that at last he made a sort of bow, using a bit of firewood as the arrow. Kare was delighted and spent all day playing with it.

Next morning he shot one of his father’s hens and killed it, and the next day he killed one of his pigs. This made his father furious and he said, ‘If you are going to kill things at this rate, we will soon have nothing left. If you want to kill things, go and kill them in the jungle.’

The boy said, ‘Make me a real bamboo bow and I will go, certainly.’

But there was no good bamboo there and the father had to go a long way to find any. Finally, in Abing-Nibo’s village where the Wiyu Toék-Botte had died and was buried, he discovered some fine bamboos growing out of the grave. He asked for some and made a strong bow and many arrows. After that Kare, who was now big enough to have two wives, went hunting every day and they all had lots of meat.

When the monkeys saw what Kare was doing, they were frightened and said, ‘One day this boy will kill us, for he is armed and we are not.’

As they were discussing the matter, Bat came to them and said, ‘Don’t worry, I will get the bow and arrows for you.’

The next time Kare went hunting, he killed a wild boar. He
tied it up with cane-rope and hoisted it on his back. But Bat flew down and said, 'What a strong man you are: I have never seen any one like you.'

Kare smiled.

'But,' Bat went on, 'you never should use cane-rope. I know something much better. Try a creeper. Here is one. Tie the pig with it and lift it up and down and see how strong it is.'

Kare tried, but the creeper broke at once; he dropped the pig and as it fell, one of its tusks ran into his foot, his whole leg swelled up and presently he died.

Bat stole the bow and arrows and took them to the monkeys.

Now when Kare's two wives heard that their husband was dead, they hurried to the place and buried his body. They wept, saying, 'It was Taleng Wiyu who took him away.' They turned into birds and went to Taleng's village where they found that Kare himself had become a Wiyu. There was a tree in the middle of the village and they perched on it, crying to Kare to come back to them. The noise upset the Wiyus and they shot at them but missed. Then they called Kare himself and he tried. He too missed but the birds fell down into some bushes, though they were still alive. Kare went to find them and they became women again and dragged him home.

On the way, they passed his grave and he said, 'My things are here: let me get them.'

He dug a hole in the ground and put his head down into it. But when his head touched his own corpse he turned into a boar and ran away.

The two women wept loudly: 'We brought you back with so much trouble and all that's happened is that you have turned into a pig!' They called their dog and sent it after him and this is why dogs always chase pigs and boars.

21

THE FOUR FRIENDS

When the Wiyu Pedong-Dodum's child was four months in her belly, she died and was buried. The child struggled to escape and at last managed to get out through the corpse's mouth and pushed her way into a plantain tree. This is why
the plantain, like an unborn child, has no bones.

When the plantain grew up, she lay with the earthworm and in due time gave birth to a firefly, though at first the fly had no fire in him. The fly grew but was always very small, too small to work in the fields, so he decided to go to Tibet to earn his living by trade. But it was a long way and he had no one to go with him. So he asked the hairy caterpillar and they set out together. On the way they met the locust and took him along with them. A little later they met the bee and he too joined them.

When they reached Tibet, the bee found very sweet food and the locust very tender food to eat. The caterpillar got a load of wool and, well pleased with their earnings, they prepared to go home. But the fly was annoyed for, although the leader of the party, he had got nothing.

One of the Wiyus living there had lost his flint and the fly found it. 'I have got something at least,' he said to his friends. 'Let us go.'

They started on their long journey but before they could reach any village, it grew dark.

The bee said, 'I cannot travel at night with this great load of sweet stuff.'

The locust said, 'Look at all this food: how can I carry it in the dark?'

But the caterpillar said, 'It's all the same to me: I can go by day or night.'

'And what about you?' they asked the fly.

'I have only this little flint,' he said. 'Let us see if we can do anything with it.'

He struck fire from it and put the fire in his backside, and now there was light for the whole party and they soon reached home safely.

This is how the bee got its honey and the caterpillar a load of wool on its back. And the locust got the taste for tender leaves in Tibet and has never stopped eating them.

THE UNATTRACTIVE SUITOR

Lodo was a lovely young Wiyu girl. Her parents tried to arrange a husband for her, but she was not ready for it,
preferring to live in the dormitory far beyond the proper time. She grew wanton and could not be tied to anyone. Then one day there was a child in her belly and when he was born, he proved ugly and could not speak.

When he grew up, he searched everywhere for a wife, but he looked so horrid that no one would marry him. Sad and lonely he turned into an owl.

As an owl, he made friends with a hornbill, for he thought such a fine fellow would easily be able to get him a wife. The hornbill went to the village of the Stars and found a very pretty girl, Takar Idu Duming*. He told her that his brother wanted a wife: would she marry him?

The girl said, 'What's your brother like? Is he nice, good-looking, rich?'

'In every way,' said the hornbill, 'he is preferable to me.

'Good', said the girl. 'Ask my parents: I'm ready.'

The hornbill went to see her parents and soon won them over by his fine appearance and clever talk. He paid the bride-price and went off with the girl. When they reached the owl's house, he was sitting outside, and the girl said, 'Whoever are you?'

The owl said nothing, for he was dumb. She asked again and he still said nothing. She asked a third time, and he made signs to show he was her husband. This gave her a proper fright and she at once turned back and ran away, hotly pursued by the owl. She arrived, frightened and out of breath, at her parents' house and when they heard what had happened, they said, 'You can't get out of it now. We've accepted his presents and he's our son-in-law. You'll have to live with him.'

Soon afterwards the owl arrived and they told him to take the girl away, but she escaped again, this time to a place called Tobo-Siggo, where there was a small pond. She was just washing herself, when the owl caught up with her and killed her. As she was dying, she gave birth to a fish which jumped into the water.

This is the Kargo fish, a shy creature which lives alone in the springs from which the rivers flow.

The owl has always been sad since then. He went to her

*Takar means star.
parents and wept before them, and still weeps for his dead bride night after night.¹

23

THE UGLY BIRD

The Wiyu Tapu-Taleng had the form of a bird but was so ugly that no one would marry him. Accordingly he made friends with Peshin² and Peggang³, who were also bird-Wiyus, and persuaded them to try and find him a wife. They went to the village of Fish, but could not find anyone suitable, and then on to the village of Stars where there was a really beautiful star-girl called Takar Idu-Duming. They told her that their elder brother wanted a wife and she asked them what he was like.

‘Much finer than us,’ they said. ‘Brighter feathers, better face, more beads, more mithuns and pigs.’ The girl was excited by what she heard and went with them.

When they reached the village, the two Wiyus pointed out Tapu-Taleng’s house and said, ‘You go there: we’ll come presently, as we have business at home for the moment.’

Accordingly Takar Idu-Duming went by herself, but there was no one there, as Taleng was out hunting, so she sat down to wait on the veranda.

Meanwhile Peshin and Pegang went to find their friend and when they met him they said, ‘We’ve brought a wonderful girl for you; she’s there, in your house.’

Thrilled and excited Taleng flew home and at once caught hold of the girl. But when she saw his horrid face and ugly dirty wings she broke away from him and ran for her life, away, away to the land of Doini-Polo the Sun-Moon. Taleng followed and caught her up there just as she was giving birth to a child.

Whose is this?’ he demanded.

¹The Ashing elders tell this story when a girl refuses to go to her husband and the case comes before the Village Council.
²Wild fowl.
³Hornbill.
'It is the son of two friends of mine', she replied. 'For I loved them both.'

This made Taleng so angry that he killed both her and the child. He left the girl's body where it was but buried the child between the villages of the Stars and the Fish.

From the grave grew the tree called tavir, whose fruit was plentiful and sweet and many birds came to eat it. But when the Stars heard how he had murdered their sister, they smeared bird-lime on the branches. His wings were caught in the stuff and he fell to the ground. The Stars picked him up and cut off his head and buried it in one of their fields.

From his head came a certain kind of root, which makes your mouth smart when you eat it.

24
THE ORIGIN OF GOITRE

One day a Wiyu Pungum-Pangam made a lot of beer for a festival and invited all the other Wiyus and Abing Nibu too. Abing Nibu took his little boy along with him.

Now it was taboo for anyone to eat a gourd at that season in their host's house. All the guests sat round drinking, but there was no food provided, and the child got very hungry and went quietly into the Wiyu's house and cooked and ate a gourd.

When the Wiyus saw this they were shocked and said to the child, 'Now you yourself are taboo: the taboo falls on you.' At once there was a swelling on his neck.

This is how goitre came to the world.

25
EQUAL TO THE GODS

The Wiyu Takar Idu had a pretty daughter called Idu-Duming. They both had human form, but Tapu-Taleng, who was a Wiyu in bird form, wanted to marry the girl. He gave her parents a lot of beer and meat and they were pleased and agreed to the match. But Idu-Duming objected to marrying a bird and refused
to go to him. Tapu-Taleng was angry at this and one day, when she was alone bathing in a stream, he flew down and killed her.

This led to a feud between the two families. Takar Idu's clansmen fought against Tapu-Taleng's clansmen, killed all but three of them. Soon afterwards, while Takar Idu and his clansmen were mourning their dead, a man called Nine-Nerung came to their house and asked what had happened.

When they told him, he said, 'If I destroy your enemies for you, what will you give me?'

They said, 'You can have anything you want.'

So Nine-Nerung went to find the bird-Wiyus and presently discovered them high in a hollow tree. He climbed up and smeared bird-lime on the branches and when the Wiyus came out their wings were caught in the lime; they fell to the ground and Nine-Nerung killed them easily.

But when he went for his reward, Takar Idu said: 'You are a killer and that makes you taboo. You cannot come into the house: go and sit down below.' So he had to sit with the fowls and pigs underneath the house.

But Takar Idu was drinking with his clansmen and completely forgot him. Day and night the feast went on and Nine-Nerung sat down below, cold, hungry and increasingly annoyed. But a few drops of rice-beer fell through the floor onto his hands; he licked them and liked the taste so much that he resolved to ask for it as his reward. But for the moment it only made him more thirsty.

At last, when he could bear it no longer, Nine-Nerung shouted up through the floor, 'Look here, I went to all the trouble of killing your enemies for you and you take no notice of me. I want the reward you promised.'

Takar Idu was ashamed and hurriedly offered beads, mithuns, pigs, danki-dishes, everything he had.

But Nine-Nerung said, 'None of these are any good to me. All I want is the secret of the stuff you were drinking last night.'

They were about to give it to him, when Takar Idu said, 'We are spirits: he is only a man. If men get beer, they'll be equal to the gods.'

So he wrapped up the ferment for the beer in a leaf-parcel
and said, 'We give you this on one condition, that you go to the House of the Winds and open it there.'

Nine-Nerung agreed and took his parcel to the House of the Winds, but when he opened it the Winds carried ferment and leaves away. Some of the ferment fell on the trees and their fruit has ever since been sweet.

As Nine-Nerung went weeping to find his prize, he met Rat on the way. He told him his trouble and Rat said, 'If I find it for you, what will you give me?'

'Anything you want,' said the man.

Rat found the leaves and there was a little of the ferment on them. Nine-Nerung took them home and made rice-beer, but he forgot all about Rat.

Ever since rats have looked on men as their enemies and do all they can to spoil their crops and damage anything they have.

26

SUGAR-CANE

There are three kinds of sugar-cane, two of which grow of their own accord: the third has been given us by Government and is good for making molasses.

Nine-Nippong died and was buried. The first kind of cane grew from the bones of her leg, which is why it is very sweet, sweet as the marrow of a bone.

After Nine-Nippong's death the mourners put bamboo tubes of rice-beer on her tomb, and the second kind of cane grew from one of these, which is why it is thick and strong as a bamboo and is full of juice.

27

THE JACKFRUIT

There were four Wiyu sisters, whose parents married off three of them, but had a lot of difficulty over the youngest whom nothing could satisfy. At last in desperation they said, 'Will you
marry a dog, a pig, a tiger, a bear, a mithun or any of the birds? You have only to say; you can do anything you like.'

"No," she said, 'I don't want any of them'.

'Then go away,' said her father. 'We have done all we can, but you won't listen to us. Go and marry as you please.'

So the girl left her parents' house and went to the village of the stars. She was hungry and stole food from the fields to keep alive. But they caught her and declared her a thief and outsider (mipak).

'No one is to marry her,' they said. 'She will have to be a slave.'

So the girl had to stay in the village; she made her own field, and got enough to eat, but was not allowed to go inside the Rasheng.

One day, after working very hard in her field, she lay down to sleep on the ground. There came a strong wind and blew the seeds of various plants and trees into her and she conceived. She was frightened and ashamed, for she had never been to a man and thought everyone would laugh at her, so she went to the Land of the Moon, and was there delivered of a male child, the cricket.

From there she went to the Land of the Sun, but it was so hot that the child died. She did not realize he was dead and put him to her breast. When he did not suck, she squeezed out the milk and put a few drops in his mouth. Then she knew he was dead and wept for him. The people there heard her crying and buried the child and took her to their village.

A few days afterwards the girl went to the grave and found a jackfruit tree growing from it. 'This is my child', she thought, and resolved to tend it. She watered it with milk from her breasts and it grew quickly and soon bore fruit. This is why the leaves and fruit of this tree have milk in them to this day.

28

THREE KINDS OF BAMBOO

Long ago there was a Wiyu called Totik-Botte who, was very fond of hunting birds. One day, as he was setting his traps, he noticed a lot of birds perched on a tall tree. 'Ah,' he thought,
"this is the very place for my traps," and he climbed up, but slipped and was killed. The other Wiyus came and buried him and presently from his body grew a very fine dibang bamboo. Abing Nibo fenced it round and used it for bows and arrows and for roofing. As Totik-Botte was a hunter, this bamboo makes the best bows.

Another kind of bamboo, which some call eppe, grew from the navel of Tonang-Botte. This bamboo is thick but rather weak though it makes good tubes.

A third kind of bamboo, which some call ere, came into being in this way. When Polung-Sobo the mithun dug the channel that drew off the water that originally covered the whole world, one of its horns broke and the bamboo grew from it. This kind is thin, but the shoots are delicious as the marrow of a mithun's horn.

THE ORIGIN OF GOURDS

Nine-Nerung cleared a field at the place where Doino-Polo, the Sun-Moon, rises into the sky. He had a fine harvest but a mithun came to steal it every night until Nine-Nerung killed him. He cut off his testes and buried them in his field and within a day a gourd-bearing creeper had grown from them.

THE VALUE OF SMOKING

One day long ago, before there were people in the world, Tani-Abu the father of all men saw, far away on the side of a great hill, the smoke of a fire and went to see what it might be. He found a village of Wiyus where they were keeping festival: they had killed a mithun and made a big fire to roast it.

When the Wiyus saw Tani-Abu, they said, "You're a human being: you've no business here. What do you want?"

"Nothing special," he replied. "I just saw the smoke of your fire and came to see what it was."
'Well, now you've seen it, go away. We don't want you here.'

But before he went they gave him one bamboo tube full of mithun's blood and another of smouldering coal and ash. 'Take this,' they said, 'but on no account open it till you get home.'

Tani-Abu went on his way but after a time began to feel hungry. 'There's probably some food in these bamboos; I may as well eat it.' He opened the tube which had held the blood and found it full of leeches. Then he opened the other tube and a swarm of mosquitoes flew out. The leeches fastened on his feet and the mosquitoes settled all over his head and body. He jumped about slapping himself, and ran from the place, but the mosquitoes followed him. 'It was only when he took out his pipe and began to smoke that they went away.

THE STRANGE MOTHER

A man and his wife had a young son, but when the boy was old enough to work his father died. Soon afterwards, there was a sacrifice for a sick man in the village, and the boy went to watch. When he returned home, he found his mother had taken off her clothes and was sitting naked on the hearth. He asked her what she was doing and she replied, 'Son, your father is no longer here, so I am putting things right.'

After a little while she said, 'Son, my brother your uncle is sacrificing a mithun; go and see if all is well.' And the boy went away.

When he returned home again, he found his mother had taken off her clothes and was sitting naked on the drying-rack above the hearth. He asked her what she was doing and she replied, 'Son, your father is no longer here, so I am putting things right.'

After a little while she said, 'Son, wild pigs may be damaging the field; go and watch it.' And the boy went away.

When he returned home again, he found his mother had taken off her clothes and was sitting naked in the loft. He asked her what she was doing and she replied, 'Son, your father is no longer here, so I am putting things right.'
After a little while she said, 'Son, your friends are calling you: go and see them.' And the boy went away.

When he returned home again, he found his mother sitting naked on the roof.

She called to him saying, 'Son, your father is no longer here so I am going to live with someone else.'

And she turned into a bird and flew away, leaving the boy weeping and staring at the sky.

For a few days the boy stayed there, sad and lonely, and then decided that he must go and find his mother, for he could not live without her. He put dried meat and fish in his basket took his bow and a quiver of poisoned arrows and set out. After a long time he reached a village where there was an old man selling flints for making fire. He was filthy, his eyes were bunged up with dirt that he could hardly see, but the boy asked him, 'Father, have you seen my mother anywhere?'

'First of all,' replied the old man, 'clean my eyes and face with your tongue and then I'll tell you.'

The boy cleaned the eyes and face with his tongue, whereupon the old man said, 'I saw her: your mother went by this very path.' The boy left him and hurried on his way.

Soon he came to another village, and here was an old woman selling daos. She was filthy, with a running nose, but the boy asked her, 'Old mother, have you seen my mother anywhere?'

'First of all,' replied the old woman, 'clean my nose and face with your tongue and then I'll tell you.'

The boy cleaned her nose and face with his tongue, whereupon the old woman said, 'I saw her: your mother went by this very path.' The boy left her and hurried on his way.

After this he came to a great forest, in the heart of which was a village of Wiyus. They were having a feast that day and many young Wiyu-girls had come into the forest to pick leaves to use as plates. When they saw the boy they were excited, for the newcomer, they said to each other, was much more handsome than the Wiyu-boys. They surrounded him, laughing and chattering, but all he said was: 'Have you seen my mother anywhere?'

'Yes,' they said. 'She's here, in our own village. Come with us and we'll show you.'
The boy followed the girls but when he reached the village he found that his mother had become a Wiyu, had married a Wiyu and was with her new husband. When she saw her son, she was disturbed, for she was afraid that if the Wiyus discovered that she had had a human husband and a human child, they would laugh at her and might even drive her away.

'There's only one thing to do,' she said to herself. 'I'll have to kill the boy.'

But openly she said, 'Son, you've come a long way: you must be tired and hungry. There is some rice-flour over there in the mortar: help yourself and eat as much as you want.'

The boy put his hand into the mortar but it was too deep for him and he could not reach the flour. 'I can't reach it,' he told his mother.

'Then put your head in,' she said, 'and eat it like that.'

But directly the boy put his head down in the mortar and began to eat, his mother threw a cloth over him and husked him to death with her pestle. When she had beaten him to a powder, she took it to the forest and threw it away.

From the powder that had once been the boy's body, there came the first mosquitoes, flies, hornets, scorpions and all other poisonous creatures that irritate mankind.

32

BAD SMELLS AND DIRTY THINGS

Pedong-Dolong-Longbo and his wife were neither Wiyus nor human beings, but something in between, a sort of ghosts. They had four daughters and for a time were well cared for, but when the girls married and went to live with their husbands, they found things very difficult, for they were not strong enough to work and had no one to help them. The old man, therefore, started setting traps. He hobbled off into the forest and set traps for rats. But a tiger stole everything he caught. He climbed trees and set traps for birds. But a kite stole everything he caught.

One day he went to the river for water and when he saw the fish there, he made traps for them. He watched on the bank
all night to see that nothing stole them. In the morning, when the traps were full, he went to get his catch, but he slipped into the water and was drowned.

When the Wiyus heard of it, they went along the bank searching for the old man's body.

Presently they met Duck and asked if he knew what had happened. 'The old man is dead,' he said. 'See, I am wearing his black coat. The body is down there, along the path.'

The Wiyus were pleased with Duck and said, 'Henceforth your whole body will be a fine black colour like the old man's coat.'

The Wiyus went on until they met Woodpecker and asked if he knew what had happened. 'The old man is dead,' he said. 'See, I am wearing his coloured coat with pretty patterns. The body is down there, along the path.'

The Wiyus were pleased with Woodpecker and said, 'Henceforth your whole body will have pretty coloured patterns on it.'

The Wiyus went on again until they met Otter and asked if he knew what had happened. 'The old man is dead,' he said. 'See, I am wearing his loin-cloth. The body is down there, along the path.'

The Wiyus were pleased with Otter and said, 'Henceforth your underbelly will be white.'

They told Duck, Woodpecker and Otter that they should always live by streams and rivers and eat the fish.

At last the Wiyus found the old man's body, rotten, stinking and full of worms. A bone from his back had fallen off and was lying by itself. The Wiyus said to each other, 'We really can't bury it ourselves, but if we leave it as it is, all sorts of things may be born of it, especially from that bone.' So they asked Chameleon to bury it.

Chameleon nodded its head and tried to get the corpse on its back, but the smell was too bad and it ran away. Ever since it has had a crooked back.

Then the Wiyus asked Tiger and, hearing there was a body to be had, he agreed for he thought he would get a good meal. He took the old man's head in his mouth and his teeth stuck there. But even for Tiger the smell was so bad that he ran away. Ever since Tiger has had big teeth and his breath stinks.
Finally the Wiyus got hold of Rat and persuaded him to drag the corpse and the bone away and bury them. This is why the Rat stinks and spoils everything it touches.

All the evil smells in the world, even today, have come from the corpse of Pedong-Dolong-Longbo, and from the worms it bred came the mosquitoes, slugs, insects and all things that like to live in dirty places.

HOW DEATH CAME

In the days before death came, there were many, too many, people in the world. There were so many hunters and fishermen that the animals, birds and fish held a council and said, 'Our race is dying out, but those who kill us live forever. We must kill them if we are to survive.' But nobody could suggest a way of doing this. So they went to a Wiyu to ask his help.

That very day two children had been born from his left side and he was observing a taboo.

'You can't come to my house,' he said.

But when the taboo time was ended, they went to him and told him their trouble.

'The only creatures,' he said, 'who can kill men are these children just born from my side. They're small now, but let them grow and I'll send them to kill men.'

The names of the children were Bunja and Bidak. They were the first snakes.

At this time only one of Abing-Nibu's sons had been born and he loved him very much. One day he put him to sleep in the sun, covering him with a cloth, and went to work in the house. The two snakes found the child and bit him. He screamed and Abing-Nibu came running to see what was the matter and saw the snakes wriggling away. The child died and his father took the little body to the Wiyu Yado Yongmo.

This Wiyu was an ironsmith and a potter and made pots, dao's and arrow-heads.

Abing-Nibu said to him, 'You are a great craftsman: make my son alive again.'
The Wiyu replied, 'That is beyond my power. But go to the potter in Sitking-Kedeng below the earth; he may be able to help you.'

Abing-Nibu burrowed a hole in the ground and when he reached the Wiyus' village he asked the potter to make his son alive again.

The potter said, 'Leave your son's body here and return after five days, but as you go be sure to close the burrow by which you came.'

Abing-Nibu, weeping and anxious, returned home but he could not eat or drink or settle down to anything, and spent his time wandering about in the forest. On his way he passed a certain Wiyu's grave, out of which the first tobacco-plant had grown. Abing-Nibu was weak for hunger: he had nothing to eat, so he picked some tobacco leaves and chewed them. After that he felt better, so much better that he entirely forgot to go and fetch his child.

In the meantime, the potter had made the child alive and well, but since his father did not come for him, he made him a member of his own clan and the boy went on living under the earth and became a Wiyu himself.

It was after this that two things happened: men began to die, and they learnt to chew and smoke tobacco.

34

DEATH BY LAUGHTER

Sedi Nirju-June and Melo Peju-June were great friends who did everything together. The only trouble about Melo-Pejung was that he was always breaking wind and this annoyed his friend. So one day Sedi Nirju-June made a sort of stopper with leaves and put it so that Melo Peju-June could not do it any more. But unfortunately the wind collected in his belly and made it swell so much that he fell unconscious to the ground. Sedi Nirju-June thought he was dead and made arrangements to bury the body. He dug the grave and was about to put Peju-June into it, when he thought it was hardly proper to bury him with leaves stuffed into him like that. He pulled out the
stopper and the wind came bursting out with a great noise *pung-pung*. Peju-June sat up alive and Nirju-June began to laugh. He laughed and laughed—he could not stop laughing—and he laughed until he died.

When Peju-June saw he had killed his friend by making him laugh so much he was very sorry and resolved to break wind no more. He sacrificed a mithun to enable him to overcome the habit. But when he had done so, he said to himself, 'Whatever am I to do with all this meat?' So he threw nearly all of it away, keeping just a few pieces above the hearth to dry.

After the sacrifice, he did not break wind for several days, but then he ate the dried meat and started all over again.
CHAPTER III

THE SHIMONG STORIES

Tour Diary

1955 (a)

Thursday, 20th January

Komkar to Shimong Camp

After a fortnight's marching along the left bank of the Siang through Riyo, Geku and Komkar we set off, in fine weather and exquisite views of hill and valley, for Shimong. It was not possible, however, to reach this important village that day and we camped, after going about ten miles, by the pathside. Shimong is the chief village of the Shimong sub-tribe of Adis, which now numbers approximately 3,400. It is the southernmost of their villages, ten more of which stretch north along the Siang up to the Yang Sang Chu River.

The countryside is thickly wooded and is broken up by many streams. Above it arises the splendid snow-clad peak Eko Dumbing (14,000 feet) which is sacred to both Khambas and Shimongs.

As we left Komkar we passed through the cemetery and watched a woman bring some burning...
logs to a grave-hut to make a fire which would warm the ghost of her husband who had just died. As we approached Shimong there were fresh views of the snow-clad mountains rising at the head of the Siang Valley. We were met at the camp with disconcerting stories of a great epidemic that had cursed Shimong and we were advised not to go there but we decided to keep to our programme, though with some apprehension.

Friday, 21st January

Staging Camp to Shimong

In the early morning the snow-clad hills looked angry and threatening but within two hours we had covered the four miles to our destination where we were met by the headman with little gourds of rice-beer, but there was no dance in view of the epidemic. Here is a new world; houses, dress, hats, ornaments differed from those in the villages to the south, and I notice a greater use of stone both for walls and sitting-platforms, while the dress of the women lacked the gay colour of the Minyongs who have come under Pasi influence. We went round the village, which is a large and substantial one, and visited a camp of Membas who had brought a blacksmith-shop and were repairing the people’s tools.

Saturday, 22nd January

Halt Shimong

Many people have died here in the last month or two and today a child died and we watched the
mother carrying the little body on her back to his grave. We visited the cemetery, where there are several tombs above which gourds, with holes cut for eyes, nose and mouth, are set up on poles. These are erected to show that the dead man was a great warrior, thus making an interesting comparison with the Naga practice. I noticed that the people were digging graves with wooden implements which must be due to some taboo, for the presence of the Memba blacksmiths show that they had plenty of iron. One of the Gams gave me a big bundle of little sticks which represented the number of people who had died in the last two months. In the evening there was a sort of dance where an old woman sang to a seated audience which made the responses. This woman, the Miri, showed great suspicion of me when she discovered that I had false teeth, and I fear she regarded me as a Wiyu in human form. There was also a man who dressed in a colourful woman’s skirt and danced, but alone, for a long time.

Sunday, 23rd January

SHIMONG TO KAR KO

It is only six miles to Karko, which is not unlike the Shimong villages, but it took us as many hours, for the enormous cane bridge over the Siang here was not at all easy to cross.

I cannot say that we enjoyed this visit to Shimongs, for it was sad and the people were definitely frightened. They even abused the gods for being so harsh with them. But we were able to record a number of stories, which seemed to be of the general Adi pattern.
Tuesday, 21st January

BOMDO TO PUGIN

After crossing the Siang amid scenes of great excitement, we were met by a large crowd at the foot of a precipitous rock leading to Puging village. A score of eager hands seized us and dragged us on improvised bamboo ladders which the people had made for us and we were then taken by a large crowd to the village. It would have been an easy walk had not two girls clutched my hands and dragged me along at a breathtaking pace.

Coming to the Shimong villages from the right bank of the Siang, where the people have long hair, the contrast with the Shimongs and their cropped hair is striking though otherwise, except in certain differences in dialect, they are very similar. The Shimong weaving tends to be a little dull, for there is not much by way of design or colour. They are fond of white cloth with a thin red stripe and very attractive coats made out of the typical Adi blankets.

Like the Ashings, the Shimongs make a great deal of cloth and they spin much of their own cotton. They make more than they want and they exported a good deal of it to Tibet and exchanged it for salt and beads.

There are fewer coats of the Tibetan type on the left bank of the river but there are a lot of Mishmi coats which come from the Dibang Valley through the Abroka pass. I met one Mishmi who had brought

1The narrative is continued from p. 58.
twenty coats to sell and was proposing to buy a mithun with the proceeds. The girls wear the usual Adi ornaments but are particularly fond of heavy necklaces of little brass bells.

*Wednesday, 22nd January*

**PUGING TO RIKOR**

We started this morning at 7-30 and it took us till 4 in the afternoon to reach Rikor. The track was extremely bad. We first climbed through ice-cold forest to the top of a high hill called Kitko and then down a very steep and slippery slope, some 4,000', into a strange, almost awe-inspiring, gorge of the Sisi stream. There was then a fairly easy march for four miles and finally a climb up to the village. There were two bad bridges, one of which quivered and writhed like a snake and was most alarming. We were met by a group of girl dancers, all in smart new black blouses, and the Gams with the customary rice-beer. A party of charming Khambas arrived in the dormitory where we were staying and camped with us. One of them was a Lama with a very beautiful face who brought a spirit of peace into the noisy hut.

*Thursday, 23rd January*

**HALT RIKOR**

It is much warmer here, for we are low down near the river. Everyone was very friendly and we were able to get some excellent stories. The girls danced indefatigably practically all day, not especially in our honour, but just because very few visitors
had been here and they were a little excited. After telling their stories, a group of old men sat round the fire by my bed, bellowing at the top of their voices to a late hour.

*Friday, 24th January*

**RIKOR TO PALING**

This is another march of ten miles which took us seven hours, for there were a lot of ups and downs ending with a steep ascent of about 3,000' to the village which is wonderfully sited on a flat hill-top with views of snow-mountains on three sides. Our porters who escorted us and the Paling people who greeted us were unusually friendly and, although we all got very tired, it was an enjoyable trip. Dancing began directly we arrived and went on till midnight.

*Saturday, 25th January*

**HALT PALING**

Today it was raining a little and everything was covered with thick mist which hid the splendid views, but we were able to get quite a number of stories and I made some enquiries about Adi customary law which I am doing in all these villages. It strikes me that the left bank villages are more progressive than those on the right bank. The villages are cleaner; so are the people. There is a little wet-rice cultivation; vegetable gardens are made; cotton is grown; there is some sugar-cane; and the villages are sited with taste and intelligence.

The people seem to be completely self-sufficient
in cloth. In one girl's basket there were two shawls, two skirts, a blouse and a blanket, all hand-woven. Dancing went on indoors in our dormitory up to a late hour.

**Sunday, 26th January**

**PALING TO SINGING**

Sachin Roy told me that "the track from Paling to Singing runs up and down for a major part and is consequently used as little as possible." When Roy made his journey through these villages he was at least twenty years younger than when I made it, and I too found the trip extremely difficult. The ten miles march took us eight hours with very little opportunity to rest on the way, for the weather was raw and dull. We had to cross the Luyor hill which involved a climb of about 5,000' and it never seemed to end, for just as we thought we had reached the top new vistas opened out above. Once we reached the summit we went three miles through very cold wooded country and finally made a steep descent down to Singing where there are two hamlets which lie low down just above the Siang river. Here we have a very small Bango (dormitory) to stay in. Again the scenery is magnificent but shrouded in mist.

**Monday, 27th January**

**HALT SINGING**

Heavy rain all night and in the morning but it is astonishing how water proof these dilapidated-looking buildings are. This is a nice little village.
the smallest we have yet visited. But the people were most friendly and some of the girls wore attractive shawls with green and pink stripes. We were able to get some good stories and had interesting discussions about Adi religion with the elders. There were some good and carefully-fenced vegetable gardens here and an excellent water-supply brought down the hill in bamboo pipes. The people looked well-nourished and they had a lot of livestock, but including far too many dogs. Tibetan influence was less evident here.

After the Earthquake the people brought oranges from Pasighat and planted the seeds and they have many trees growing. The Shimongs are very afraid of the Khambas who are believed to collectaconite from the Eko Dumbing Hill, and they are said to have used it to poison two Shimong boys who seduced their girls. In spite of this, however, the Shimongs carry on vigorous trade with the Khambas in Mangkhota.

In the evening there was a supper of rice, hard-boiled eggs and chicken, very good, at the Head Gam's house where a beautiful little baby girl danced for us. When we got home there was a marathon ponung from 6-30 to 11-30 in our tiny camp: it was led very well by a Miri woman in traditional dress and waving a sword.

_Tuesday, 28th January_

**HALT SINGING**

It poured with rain all night and it was still coming down heavily in the morning and so we postponed our departure. It was difficult to walk
out, for the village was deep in slippery mud, though we were able to do a fair amount of work. There was a small Bobo swing outside our dormitory with a stuffed monkey at the top and the boys shot arrows at it. Two Bhutia merchants passed through the village today on their way from Gelling to Shillong and they sold five hundred rupees worth of beads, charging what seemed to me very high prices. Such merchants have no overheads, for they are fed by the people as they go from place to place and they carry all their own things.

**Wednesday, 29th January**

**SINGING TO ANGING**

It continued to pour with rain all night and this morning but we started at 8-15 and walked for three hours in a steady down pour along the path which would have been all right had no one tried to improve it, an attempt which simply turned it into a morass of slippery mud. But, except up to Anging village, there were no big climbs and in good weather it would have been delightful. We were greeted for the first time with garlands made of flowers, berries and small potatoes. The village is very pretty and everyone was most friendly.

**Thursday, 30th January**

**HALT ANGING**

Another day of pouring rain, heavier even than yesterday, which meant that all the people crowded into our little camp and just stand about hoping for something to happen. The Shimongs are nice, smiling folk: the boys are pretty but most of the girls are pudding-faced. While the Ashings have three lines tattooed on their chins, the Shimongs
have five and the Minyongs have none. Rain fell relentlessly all day but this gave us a chance, in spite of the vociferous crowd in our camp, to take down a number of stories. In the evening we had three suppers one after another, for each of the Gams insisted on our going to his house.

Here I was told the story of something that happened in Singing village many years ago which illustrated the 'rough justice' of those days.

There was an elderly woman, deformed and half-blind, who seemed to have been a kleptomaniac. She was caught a large number of times stealing eggs and beads, sometimes from her own relations, sometimes from members of other clans. One day she stole some meat and tried to set fire to a house and for this she was tied up and told she would be thrown into the river. She threatened, however, to steal beads from a number of rich people and would jump into the river with them—the result would be that her family and clan would have to pay heavy fines. This alarmed her relations and five men, including her own father and brother, carried her down to the river and pushed her into the water and she was drowned. There was a group of Gams from six different Shimong villages present when I was told this and they insisted that there was nothing wrong with it. It was an old custom and in former days was not uncommon though it has long since been abandoned now.

Friday, 31st January

ANGING TO JIDO

As it was not actually raining we started at 7-30 on our ten-mile trip to Jido which took us
seven-and-a-half hours. Presently the weather cleared up and it turned out to be a beautiful march along the river, though it was very difficult and we all arrived quite worn out in the evening. On the way we watched a party of Membas march round an ancient shrine and were met by Pema Wanchu and then by a large dance party. Here we found Membas, Mishmis, Tanams, Boris and Khambas in the village as well as Shimongs.

From Jido we will turn our steps up the Yang Sang Chu Valley and a new cultural world.¹

₁THE SIANG RIVER

At first there was only water everywhere. Ages passed and Doini the Sun said to Polo the Moon, 'Where can we make a home for your children?' They sent their mithun, Polung-Sobo, to do something to cause the water to drain away. The great creature came to Koje-Jango in Tibet and looked all round but he could see no way of getting rid of the water, even though the otter and the jackal were ready to show him what to do.

Then Polung-Sobo lost his temper and with one of his horns he made a deep pit in the ground and the horn broke off. The blood fell and become the rameng shrub from which red dye is made. The black horn became a bamboo. The white powder in the horn fell to the ground and turned into salt. This is why the best salt comes from Koje-Jango in Tibet.

Then with his other horn Polung-Sobo completed the pit and the water flowed away, following the otter and the jackal who went ahead. This is why the Siang River has a winding course. Polung-Sobo also followed and reached Assam and there his other horn broke and he died. This is why Assam is rich in every kind of tree and in cotton and metals.

¹Described in Chapter V, p. 153
2

EARTH AND SKY

When the Wiyus Melo and Sedi first appeared each had one eye and they lay together in a constant embrace until at last the wind was born from them and they both died. Their son did not know what to do with their bodies, so he blew Melo's body high into the air and he turned into the sky and his one eye became the sun. His bones turned into stars and his skin into the clouds.

The wind sent Sedi below, and there her flesh turned into the earth, her bones into the rocks, her hair into grass, her fingers into trees, her blood into water, and her one eye became the moon.

This means that Melo's soul (aith) is above while Sedi's is below the earth. When Melo's soul goes to join with Sedi's soul, the encounter causes an earthquake. The lightning is the lamp that Melo's soul uses when he is searching for Sedi's soul.

3

THE COCK AND THE MOON

Tungi-Tabe, himself a Wiyu, was a famous Miri for the Wiyus. When he died they buried him and made a little hut, as usual, above his grave. When his wife went to put rice-beer and food for his ghost in the hut she saw two eggs lying on the floor; they had come from the kidneys of her dead husband. She took them home and kept them warm near the fire and the following day two chicks, a cock and a hen, were hatched out.

One day the cock wandered through the grave and found Tungi-Tabe's comb hanging from the roof. He took it in his beak and brought it home. When the wife saw it she stuck it on his head and it turned a bright red.

Another day the cock visited the village of Doini-Polo. Dolini the Sun was out somewhere and Polo the Moon was at home. She welcomed the cock and fed him on rice and beer. She fell in love with him and threw her arms round him but at
that moment Doini came in and caught them at it, and with a
great flutter of wings the cock ran away.

Doini called both spirits and human beings to a Council
which decided that the cock had dishonoured his wife and must
pay compensation. They called him and ordered him to pay
but he had nothing to give. But at that time he had a very large
organ, so the Wiyus said, 'Let's cut it off and throw it away.'
Doini agreed to accept this in compensation and it was done.

The thing fell to the ground and turned into an earthworm
and every morning this worm calls to the cock crying, 'Doini is
coming; the sun is rising; wake up and be ready for him' and
the cock cries in reply, 'I'm ready, I'm ready'.

From a fowl's eggs and livers the Miris can diagnose disease,
for fowls are themselves Miris and know when evil spirits are
abroad and they cry at night saying 'Beware', for they know
that danger is on the way.

4

THE ADVENTUROUS FROG

Pedong-Nane had a son whose name was Doini-Boote. When
he grew up he married and went to live with his wife. One day
he went on a journey to trade and bought a mithun; he sold the
mithun at a profit and bought a pig; he sold the pig at a profit
and bought a cock. Then he said to himself, 'If I sell the cock
what can I buy now?'

So one day he took the cock down to the underworld Sitking-
Kedeng and there the Wiyus took the cock from him and gave
him a clay pot for it. He took it home and put it up on the
drying-rack and sat below it, warming his hands by the fire. His
wife had gone out somewhere and when she came in she
immediately asked her husband what he had got. He reached
up to bring the pot down but it slipped and fell on his knee
which swelled up badly and was so painful that he could not
walk. His wife called many Miris but no one could cure him,
until she found a famous priest who, when he saw the swollen
leg, told the wife to heat iron tongs in the fire and strike the leg
with it. She did so and the swelling broke open and a frog
hopped out of the wound and sat on the stone before the hearth.

Doini-Botte said, 'Let's burn this creature that has given me so much pain.'

And he pushed it into the fire, heaping wood upon it. After a time he opened the fire to see if it was burnt, but the frog hopped out unhurt.

Then Doini-Botte said, 'If we can't burn it, let's boil it.'

And they heated a pot full of water and threw the frog into the boiling water, but when they took off the lid the frog hopped out unhurt.

Then Doini-Botte said to his wife, 'Put this creature in a mortar and beat it to death.'

She did so, beating with the pestle for a full hour but when she stopped exhausted the frog hopped away unhurt.

Doini-Botte then asked the frog, 'Who are you? Why can't we kill you?'

'I am your own son,' replied the frog, 'How can I die at your hands? Instead of killing me, you must get me a wife, for I am grown up now.'

Doini-Botte and his wife at once exclaimed, 'What girl would marry such an ugly thing as you? Why, you aren't even human.'

The frog said, 'No, no, I'll go and get a girl for myself. Make me some food for my journey.'

Doini-Botte sacrificed a pig for his son's success and the mother prepared roots, dried fish and meat, and the frog, putting the bundle over his shoulder, went to find a wife.

He travelled a long way and many girls but he did not like any of them. Then he turned his steps towards the Land of Doini-Polo, but on the way he met Doini-Ari, Doini-Polo's daughter, and liked her, and what was more, she in her turn was searching for a husband. They agreed to marry but the girl said, 'We must go and tell my parents first.'

When Doini-Polo saw the frog he said, 'How can I give my daughter to such a creature?'

This made the frog very angry and he exclaimed, 'Tell me frankly if you will give me this girl or not.'

'I won't give her to you', said the father.

The frog called on the wind and it came as a great storm and blew down Doini-Polo's village and this frightened Doini-
Polo so much that he promised to give the girl if he only sent the wind away.

But when the wind went away Doini-Polo changed his mind and said, 'No, after all, I am not going to give you my daughter. If you want her you will have to fight my mithun.'

The frog was not afraid at first and sent a flood of water. But the great mithun possessed fire and when he brought it out the frog was frightened and called his grandmother, Pedong-Nane, from the river to help him. Then Water and Fire fought and in the end the frog won with his water and Doini-Polo gave him the girl.

The frog stayed there for a time and then decided to take his wife home. They gave Doini-Ari plenty of good rice but to the frog they gave only dry maize. On the way they got hungry and the girl ate her good food herself, but the frog could not bite the dry maize and had to go without. When he reached his village he sacrificed a pig to celebrate the marriage and cut out the heart and gave it to his wife asking her to put it in a shady place, where it would not get hot. The girl put it in her crotch and when the frog saw it he was very insulted.

'There are plenty of other shady places', he said. 'This girl is a wanton. I will leave her and marry her sister instead.'

So he left Doini-Ari and went back to the Land of Doini-Polo and there he found his wife's younger sister, Doini-Appi and asked her parents for her.

They said, 'We have already given you one daughter. We certainly aren't going to give you another.'

The frog swaggered about in front of them and said, 'O yes, you are.'

The parents replied, 'Go out of our village and kill a wild boar with big tusks. If you do that, perhaps you can have her. The frog went out hunting. No one else got anything but he got a wild boar with big tusks. Everyone in turn came and told the parents that the frog had killed it.

Doini-Polo said, 'Go and kill a wild sheep and then I will give you my daughter.'

The frog climbed up among the hills and killed a wild sheep and the villagers cut it up and ate it, but they cut off the head and hollowed it out. They put the frog inside and threw him into the river.
Deep down under the water the frog found many beautiful girl-fish. They danced for him and he seduced several of them and they conceived and gave birth to many little frogs. When he was tired of this he came out of the water carrying the sheep's head and returned to Doini-Polo.

Now the villagers had gone home before him, shouting loudly that it was they who had killed the wild sheep, but when they saw its head being carried by the frog they were ashamed.

Doini-Polo said to the frog, 'You have won and you can certainly now marry my daughter.'

Soon afterwards he did marry her and decided to take her home. The girl's mother prepared plenty of good rice for Doini-Appi but only gave the bad hard maize to her husband. But this time when the girl saw what food the frog had, she gave him hers and she somehow managed to eat his.

When the frog reached home he sacrificed a pig and gave a feast to the neighbours. Again he cut out the heart and gave it to his wife asking her to put it in a shady place. Doini-Appi put it on the top of a long bamboo and stood it up where everyone could see it.

She cried, 'See, my heart and my husband's are one as this heart is one.'

The frog was delighted with this and exclaimed, 'This is the kind of wife I want.'

In due time a son was born and one day when he was old enough to recognise his parents, the frog said to Doini-Appi, 'On the top of a great mountain the Tafeng Wiyus are dancing and if you would like to see them, take the child and go to watch.'

Directly Doini-Appi had left the house, the frog took off his skin and became a handsome youth and went to dance with others on the mountain-side. Presently Doini-Appi arrived there and when she saw him dancing she desired him as her husband saying to herself, 'After all I have only got a frog.'

When the dance was over she returned with the child but the frog reached home before her, got into his skin and sat down by the fire.

But the child said to his mother, 'Did you see how well daddy danced today?'

She said, 'But your father is here sitting by the fire.'

There was a dance again the next day and Doini-Appi took
the child to watch, and the frog-youth also went. When he saw his father the child began to cry but the father took a little knife out of his pocket and gave it to him and he was pleased and said to his mother, 'See what daddy has given me.' Doini-Appi recognised it, but when they reached home they found the frog sitting as usual by the fire.

The third day Doini-Appi only pretended to go to the dance. Actually she hid behind the house and when the frog had gone to the dance she went inside and found his skin lying on the floor. She threw it in the fire and as it burnt, up on the mountain her husband got high fever while he was dancing. He ran home and cried to his wife, 'Where is my skin?'

'I burnt it', she said.

'Alas', he replied 'There was a year still to go. If you hadn't burnt it, I'd have conquered all Tibet and Assam.' And so saying he died. From the frog's son the Khambas are descended.

1 Shri T. K. Bhattacharjee, who recorded a number of Shimong stories when he was stationed at the outpost of Inkiong, has another version of this tale. The introduction is very similar except that the old man, whose thigh was injured, is called Mijing Porte and he is attended not by one but by three very expert Miris, one from the Country of the Crows and another from the high mountains. The frog jumps out of the old man's body and they try to kill him by putting him in the fire and in boiling water and then by tying his hands and feet together and throwing him into the Siang River.

The frog escapes and goes to find a wife in a village in the sky which is called Taleng. Here there is a very rich man, not in this version called Doini-Polo, but Ropo-Poduk. The Mithun festival is in progress and the frog jumps on to the udder of one of the mithuns which have been tied up for sacrifice. Ropo-Poduk has two daughters, one beautiful and one ugly, here called Ai and Ari, and when Ari approaches the frog jumps on to her breasts and sits between them—in those days, of course, the girls did not cover the upper part of their bodies. She tries to drive him away but he refuses to move until she agrees to marry him, whereon he jumps to the ground. She then changes her mind and the frog, who is here called Tikdong, cas on his maternal uncle, the Siang River, which swells up and pours its waters over the village. Ari then agrees to marry and the Siang retires. She again changes her mind and this time the frog calls for a great landslide. She again agrees and the stones withdraw but the girl yet again feels that she cannot face marriage with such a creature. This time the frog brings a plague of laughter and three of the villagers die of it. The final trial comes when the frog makes everybody cry. This time too three die and no one can sleep or do any work. After this Ropo-Poduk imposes a number of tests on the frog—the sort of household chores which a son-in-law is normally expected to perform. He has to fetch cane from the forest, cut wooden posts for the house and go out hunting. Tikdong succeeds in killing a wild boar but the villagers are annoyed at this and they tie him up inside the stomach of the dead animal and throw it in the Siang. But the frog survives and brings a load of meat back to his father-in-law. He goes out hunting again and is again successful. This time the villagers throw him over a precipice but he again survives.
When the earth was first made there were no trees, no grass, not even insects.

Sedi-Botte had two sons, Langkon-Tumbo and Langtang-Konne. The land where they lived was all barren and Sedi-Botte went to Tibet to find trees and grass which he could plant. He climbed up to the summit of a great mountain there but he could see nothing and on his way down he slipped and was killed. His corpse turned into a hill. A Wiyu, who lived in the snow mountains, found the corpse and dug a grave for it. He tried to lift the body but it was so large and heavy that he found it impossible to move it. So he cut it into pieces and threw them in all directions. The hair of Sedi-Botte turned into grass; the head became rocks; the brain turned into ice; the bones into stones; the hands and feet and nails into trees; the ribs into iron;

Now there is a change in the story from that in the text. The frog wants to marry the beautiful and intelligent Ari but at the last moment the father insists that he should take her ugly and stupid sister Ai instead. The incidents on the journey of the frog getting the bad food are repeated but there are some additional motifs when Tikdong wants to test his wife. Among other things, he asks her to prepare some goat's meat but put the liver in a place where wind can come. She keeps it between her legs and this annoys her husband so much that he takes her home and insists on having Ari instead. In this version, however, it is not the wife's wantonness but her stupidity that offends him. Now Ari plays the part that Appi does in the story in the text. She too is tested but is intelligent enough to put the liver under the roof where there is plenty of air, no wind. The incident of the heart on the pole does not occur in this version.

There are a number of other incidents which lead up to the dance and the burning of the skin. The frog, who now calls himself Kuku-Nomechinachen, falls very ill and there is a curious motive that his hair grows thick and thousands of lice invade it and Ari has to spend a lot of time removing them.

The last part of the story departs entirely from that in the text.

In a Sherdukpen story recorded by Mr Rinchin Norbu, we find the motif of a frog who was born from a man's knee which had swollen up after being hit with a grindstone. The story is far shorter than that in the text but it includes the motif of the frog going to the palace of the Sun and asking for his daughter, in this case his seventh daughter. The girl refuses and the frog begins to cry at which it rains heavily. When the girl agrees to the marriage, the frog begins to laugh and it becomes so hot and stormy that the whole world and the palace of the Sun begin to shake and crack.

There is not a great deal of resemblance to the story given here but it is interesting that in an area at a considerable distance from the Shimongs even the above details should be found.
the liver into an onion: and the intestines into worms and insects.

Now Langkon-Tumbo had one son and Langtang-Konne had nine. They built a village and lived there. One year in the hot weather all the water dried up and Langtang-Konne's eldest son went to the hills to find a spring. On the way he came to a place where a very old Wiyu was living. When he saw the boy he was pleased and said to himself, 'Here is a good meal for me at last.' He called the boy and talked pleasantly to him and when the boy wanted to go away the Wiyu said, 'I am all alone here; I have no children; and I am very old. At least have something to eat before you go.' The boy thanked him but the Wiyu put poison in his food secretly. The boy died and the Wiyu cut the body into strips and hung them up to dry.

When this boy did not return the second son went to find water. He too found the old Wiyu and suffered the same fate. In this way all the other seven sons died there and the Wiyu's house was full of dried meat.

Now Langkon-Tumbo's son thought, 'My uncle's sons have all disappeared. I must go and see what has happened to them.' He sharpened his sword and went to find his cousins. After travelling over the hills he came to the place of danger and the Wiyu, as usual, tried to make friends with him and cooked rice for them both in the same pot, but separately made some vegetables for the boy and put poison in them. Then the Wiyu went to fetch water and the boy changed the plates. When the Wiyu returned they sat down to eat but the Wiyu, of course, had the poison and died.

The boy said to himself, 'If I bury this evil body, who knows what will grow from it?' He decided to throw it away somewhere and carried it up to the top of a neighbouring hill and threw it down to the village of Nite-Nippong that lay below. This made the people there very angry and they went to find the person who had thrown the body down and when they found the boy they killed him.

When Langkon-Tumbo heard what had happened he prepared for war, but it was very difficult to reach the village, for it was at the bottom of a precipice and there was no path. He made a long cane-rope and slowly lowered himself down and when he came to the village he fought and conquered Nite-Nippong.
On the way home he found that his brother, Langtang-Konne, had been murdered by the Wiyus and he went to find out who was responsible.

He first met a Wiyu with one head and asked him, 'Did you kill my brother?' But the Wiyu denied it.

Then he met a Wiyu with two heads and asked him, 'Did you kill my brother?' But the Wiyu denied it.

Then he met a Wiyu with three heads and asked him, 'Did you kill my brother?' But he also denied it.

Then he met a Wiyu with four heads and asked him, 'Did you kill my brother?' But he too denied it.

At last he met a Wiyu with five heads and asked him, 'Did you kill my brother?'

And this time the Wiyu said, 'Yes, I killed him.' Langkon-Tumbo at once killed him in revenge and a great tree grew from his body. He was angry at that and cut down the tree and from it came a large beetle. Near the tree, from which the beetle emerged, there was a man's footprint. Langkon-Tumbo drew his sword to kill the beetle but it suddenly turned into a beautiful girl and when he saw her Langkon-Tumbo was very happy and decided to make her his wife.

After the wedding, the water-girl, Pedong-Nane was born to them and at once the rains began. They had two sons Tani and Taro. From Tani came all the human beings, from Taro all the spirits.

THE BEYOP BELT

In the sky were the two sisters Doini and Polo, and their two brothers Dosi and Poto. When the four of them—Doini, Dosi, Polo, Poto—shone at the same time, which they did all the day round, it was terribly hot, the rivers dried up and the vegetation withered. So one day Wiyus, men and animals forgot their differences and assembled in a great council. 'We must
kill the two brothers, they decided, but they could not decide how to do so, for the four always went across the sky together. But after a great deal of talk Tatik the Frog promised to try: his chief difficulty was to know which was which. But the two sisters wore galle-skirts of flaming red and yellow and Frog stole them, ran home and threw them in the fire. When Doini and Polo found themselves naked, they were ashamed and hid themselves, and their brothers came down to earth to punish Tatik, but he killed them both.

Now the brothers were dead, and their light was gone, and the sisters were hiding, so their light was gone too, and the whole world was dark. Wiyus, men and animals held another council and asked the craftsman Bisi-Ada to help. He saw the round house of the honey-bee and made two belts (heyops) of brass like it, and the Wiyus gave them to Doini and Polo to cover their nakedness. Doini put hers on and came into the sky and it was day. But Polo was still shy and would not appear and it was night.

Doini had a daughter, Doini-Ari, whom she dressed also in the belt. She married Tatik the Frog and he taught its use to human girls.

7

THE NAKED GIRL

A girl called Jebo-Samir lived in Sitking-Kedeng. When she grew up she used to go everywhere completely naked and the animals and even the insects, seeing her, used to follow her about, crying, 'Ho-ho-ho'. The worst of them all was the grasshopper who was very tiresome and would never leave her alone, until in despair she went to save herself in the Star Village. But the people there also pestered her, for she was very beautiful, and naked too, and she was so frightened that she went to the Wiyus of the snow-mountains. They too would not leave her alone. Then she went to Doini-Polo's village and they also molested her. Finally Pedong-Nane sent her to the craftsman, Ningnu-Botte, and when he heard her story he made her a
beyop belt\(1\): Once she put this on, men, animals and insects no longer bothered her.

THE GREEDY SPIDER

Pedong-Dodum had one son of whom he was very fond. When the boy grew up he got a swelling in his groin which hurt him very much. His father cut it open and a bit of intestine bulged out. Pedong-Dodum thought it was his son’s soul, so he did not want to throw it away or burn it and he buried it in the ground. In due time a cotton plant grew from it. Everybody thought it was a very good plant but they did not know what to make with it, so they went to the spider and showed it to him and asked him, ‘Can you do anything with it?’

The spider replied, ‘You can do nothing. It is an evil, dangerous plant. Only I can fill my belly with it.’

In this way, having frightened them off, the spider ate the cotton plant and then from his own backside produced thread and made a fine house and many bridges from tree to tree.

But Pedong-Dodum was unwilling to leave it all to the spider and he and many others cultivated the plant and made its cotton into thread.

COCKS AND HENS

There was a female Wiyu who was like a rock. She greatly desired a husband but she could not move. One day, however,

\(1\) The most interesting product of the Adi metal-workers is the beyop disc. This “singular ornament” was first described by Dalton:

“All females with pretensions to youth wear suspended in front from a string round the loins a row of from three to a dozen shell-shaped embossed plates of bell-metal from about six to three inches in diameter, the largest in the middle, the others gradually diminishing in size as they approach the hips. These plates rattle and chink as they move, like prisoners’ chains.” Verrier Elwin, *The Art of the North-East Frontier of India*, p. 122.
from far away she heard the sound of male Wiyus talking and by the sound itself she conceived and after a time, rock though she was, she laid two eggs.

One day an old man called Dodum-Botte came by, hunting rats and a rat ran under the rock. The old man followed it and found the eggs. He took them home and after a time a hen was hatched from one egg and a cock from the other. Dodum-Botte cared for them and they grew up.

At first the cock's organ was very small but it grew and grew until the old man thought he had better cut it off. He did so and buried it and it turned into an earth-worm. And this is why the cock has no organ.

And this too is why a hen can lay eggs without going near a cock, simply by hearing it crow.

10

THE MOTHER OF THE BIRDS

There was a youth called Mirung-Guppu who had a very large goitre in his neck, so large that no girl would marry him. He tried his luck everywhere without success until at last he went to the village of Tapeng, the Bat, and asked him if he could find a wife for him. 'If you do,' he said, 'I'll feed you for the rest of your life.' He gave the Bat a fine feast and Tapeng went off to find a girl for his friend, carrying meat and rice with him.

Tapeng went below the earth to Sitking-Kedeng where a girl was husking grain. When Tapeng saw her he thought she would do and said to her, 'I am very hungry. Here is some rice. Cook it for me and make some beer.' When it was ready she called him to come and eat but he said, 'I have got a frightful stomach-ache, I can't eat a thing. Call your relatives and make sacrifices

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1The motif of magical conception (indexed T510-T538) is very common throughout the world. Women conceive by eating fruit or vegetables, by drinking urine, swallowing crane's dung, licking spittle, through desire, from union with a god, by sunlight or moonlight, by wind, by smelling flowers, by a man's or a god's shadow. The nearest to the exceptional theme in the text where a rock conceives as a result of hearing two male spirits talking are found in T532.10—conception by the hiss of a cobra or T539.2—the Persian tale of a woman who conceives by hearing a cry.
to cure me.' So the girl called them and sent for the Miri and they sacrificed.

But Tapeng said, 'I am not any better. You had better eat the food.' And they all sat down and enjoyed the meal.

When they had finished Tapeng said to the girl, 'Your relations have eaten my food. It was your bride-price. Now you will have to come with me and marry my brother.'

The girl was angry and frightened and said, 'This is a trick. Why should I go with you?' But her relations were pleased for they had had a good feast and plenty of beer, and they thought Tapeng must belong to a good family.

The girl asked, 'Tell me, what is your brother like?'

Tapeng replied, 'He is younger than I. A good worker in the field, a good hunter, a good builder. He is not lazy and he is very good-looking.' This cheered the girl up and she went with Tapeng.

On the way they met Mirung-Guppu's clansmen and Tapeng said to the girl, 'I will sit and talk to these people and you go on. It's the first house on the way.' But she could not find the boy at home, for he was sitting on the roof to watch for his wife but did not see her coming.

Then Tapeng and the relations arrived and sacrificed a mithun but the girl said, 'You are making a great feast but first of all I want to see my husband.'

Then Tapeng brought Mirung-Guppu to her but she did not like him and wanted to run away. Tapeng said, 'Don't worry about his looks. He does ten men's work and he will always get you plenty of meat. After all, that's what matters.' So on hearing this the girl stayed behind to see what Mirung-Guppu was like, but she would not let him make love to her. Then Mirung-Guppu went hunting and nobody else got anything, but he was able to kill a couple of deer and when the girl saw this she relented a little.

Then she went with him to clear the jungle and he did the work of four men in a single day, and now she began actually to like him. She lived with him and gradually grew rich.

Presently the girl conceived and she no longer fetched food for her husband but stayed in the house. When the time came for delivery she was in great pain but had no child. They sacrificed to every Wiyu they could think of, but the child was not
delivered. At last a Wiyu-Miri came and said, 'Make a big basket and fill it with grass. Give it to her and all of you go away.'

The girl sat in the basket and laid a great many eggs in the grass. This alarmed her, for she said to herself, 'I have the form of a human being. How can I lay eggs? Everyone will laugh at me.' She stayed sitting on her eggs and would not get up, until at last she hatched out every kind of bird.

### WHY SNAKES BITE

There was a man called Midang-Kanga who had a great friend who was a Wiyu. This man had two small sons who loved to go out hunting birds. One day the Wiyu met them in the forest and killed and devoured them.

The anxious father searched everywhere for his boys and, when he discovered that the Wiyu had eaten them, he was very angry and said to him, 'I always thought you were a real friend but now I know you are an enemy.' He killed the Wiyu and threw the body into the jungle. The skin and the flesh rotted away until only the bones remained. The rain fell and washed them clean and they shone in the light.

One day when Midang-Kanga was out catching rats, he saw the bones shining and thought that it might be possible to make something with them, so he collected them in a basket and took them to Ningnu-Botte. The great craftsman made the skull into a danki-pot, the arms into a gun, the fingers and toes into beads and the palm of the hand into a beyop-belt. He gave these things to Midang-Kanga. Midang-Kanga was delighted with them but complained that there were no holes in the beads. Ningnu-Botte called the woodpecker to make holes in the beads, but when it began to peck the beads they became alive.

The beads were very cross and went to the village of Snakes and made their home under one of the houses there. The snakes were drinking rice-beer and when they spat it out, it fell on the beads and gave them all sorts of colours. When the snakes saw them they strung them into necklaces and wore them round their necks.
But the leader of the snakes bit a man and the man's friends caught it and held a Council and decided that, since it had bitten without any reason, its fangs must be broken and it must pay beads as compensation. This offended the other snakes and this is why today all snakes bite people out of revenge.

12

THE MAKING OF DOGS

Long ago, there was a famous hunter who never missed the mark, but one day while he was out in the jungle something killed him. The Wiyus of the hill buried him and from his tomb grew a bamboo. Siking Wiyu, who was a spirit in the form of a man, had two sons and one day when he was out hunting rats he came to the tomb and saw the bamboo; it was the first time he had ever seen one. He decided to give it to his sons but as he cut it down two fat worms without heads or arms and legs came out of the culm.

Siking Wiyu was very surprised at this and he took the worms to a craftsman to make them into something useful.

The craftsman took them in his hands and gave them legs of wood, put squirrel's tails on their backs, fixed tongs in their heads to serve as mouths and made one of them a male and the other a female.

The difficulty was to make eyes for them. He put the bosses of a women's belt for eyes but they remained blind. Just at that moment, however, Doini and Polo relieved themselves and the craftsman took some of their urine and put it on their eyes and they were able to see. He tied brass bells round their necks and stuck thorns in their feet as nails. The bells went into their throats and made them bark.

One day the Banji Bangmang Wiyus went to the craftsmen's village and when the dogs saw them they barked loudly and the Wiyus thought they were very serviceable animals and took them home.

Now these Wiyus were very evil, eaters of flesh and drinkers of blood, who killed every animal and human being that they could find. They fed the dogs on the flesh and blood of their
victims and taught them the different smells of different animals and men.

The little boys were delighted with the bamboo and made it into bows and arrows and when they went out hunting, killed many animals. One day out in the forest they met the dogs and they followed the boys and always went hunting with them.

One day they found a pig belonging to Sitking-Kedeng. The boys shot and wounded it but it escaped below the earth. The dogs followed the track of the blood to the village and there found the Wiysus drying grain, but they were not able to find the pig. So they played with the grain and some of it went into their ears and in this way they brought grain to the world.

Dogs are useful to men and men love them, for they help them to hunt. They keep the fowls and pigs in order and call the mithuns from the forest, and they bark to warn men when spirits come.

THE FIRST MITHUN

There was a Wiyu in human form. Just as a man would do, he cleared the forest, burnt the wood to ashes and prepared a field. The day after he had finished, he noticed a fine creeper had sprung up and was astonished at such a growth in a single night. He built a little fence and put two poles to support it, but it was soon much taller than the poles. One day a butterfly settled on it and after a few minutes flew away. Soon there was a flower and then a single fruit.

The fruit grew and grew and one day the Wiyu heard a strange noise inside it. He picked it and broke it in half and a large worm, without face or legs or tail, came out.

The Wiyu decided to make something of it. He gave it four bits of wood as legs and used another bit as a head. He put leaves for the eyes and ears and bamboo shoots as horns. For a tail he gave it the soft inside of a plantain, for teeth bits of the plantain flower, for entrails a creeper, for hair the skin of a hairy caterpillar.

When he had finished, it was a mithun, the father of all mithuns.
THE BEAR’S SON

There was a man living in Tuting village with his sister. They used to work together to their field and on the way home she used to go into the forest to collect wood, leaves and roots. One day she met a bear and they came together, so she returned home very late and with scratches on her arms and legs.

This went on for a long time but, though the brother was suspicious, he never guessed the real reason and the girl was always ready with some excuse for her late return. But in time she conceived and when her child was born he had a little tail. He grew up and somehow they managed to get a wife for him. He had children, and grandchildren, but then the family died out.

THE GHOSTLY VISITORS

There was once a man who made some sort of living by catching rats. He used to make a little camp in the forest and build a fire, put his food and other things there and then go out to his traps. One day he forgot to light his fire, but when he came back he found it burning brightly. The next day he did not cook anything in the morning, but put some raw rice in the pot and left it there. On his return, he found the fire burning, the rice cooked and plenty of water in bamboo tubes. He stood in the middle of the camp and shouted. ‘Are you a spirit or a human being, a boy or a girl? Whoever you are, come and show yourself. Don’t be afraid. I am very pleased with you.’ But there was no reply.

The man ate his food and slept and next morning went home. When he came again to his camp in the forest, he put uncooked rice in the pot and stood there and shouted. ‘O dweller in the camp, whoever you are, you are good. Catch whoever comes and keep him till my return.’
Then he did a round of his traps and when he returned he found his supper ready and a girl sitting by the fire.

He asked her who she was and she told him, 'I am the daughter of an Epom.'

They talked for a time and the man asked her to live with him as his wife. 'Certainly', she said, 'but when the dogs and fowls in your village see me, the dogs will bark and the fowls will cackle, for I am a spirit.'

This is why, when dogs bark or fowls cackle for no apparent reason, we know a spirit is passing by.

But the man said, 'Don’t worry about that. I’ll look after you.' He got her home unobserved and hid her in his house.

One day she said to him, 'Go and mark out as much land as you want and my brothers will come and clear it, as much as you can use.'

So the man went and marked out a great tract of forest on the hillside and came home. Then a dark cloud, rumbling with thunder, came down and lay over the forest and in its cover the girl's brothers cut the trees and cleared the ground and when they had finished they went away and the cloud lifted. The girl said, 'Now sow your seed.' There was a splendid harvest and they began to grow rich.

Some time later the girl said, 'My parents and brothers want a feast of mithun, pork and beer.'

The man went to his clearing and built a great platform of bamboo; he killed pigs and mithuns and they made a lot of rice-beer. When it was ready, the man put everything on the platform and went away. Then a dark cloud, rumbling with thunder, came down and lay over the platform and in its cover the girl's parents and brothers enjoyed the feast. When they had finished, the spirits tied many mithuns under the platform, built styes for the pigs and hung thousands of beads on the bamboo poles. They went away, and the cloud lifted.

The man went to the place and found all these gifts and he and his wife were richer still.

In time the girl conceived and bore a son, but soon afterwards she died. The Epoms came to take away her body but her husband followed them and tried to bring it back. During the quarrel the body disappeared and turned into the plantain tree which bears one fruitful stalk and ends.
Sakiang-Kariang was a girl living in Tibet. Adi-Abu was a boy who was to be the father of mankind.

One day Sakiang-Kariang’s hen fled away from Tibet to the boundary and hid beneath a great rock. On the same day Adi-Abu’s cock escaped from his house and went to the same place. The girl and the boy both went to find their fowls, killed them, ate them, and returned home without exchanging a word.

Then one day the girl’s sow ran away to the same rock and soon afterwards the boy’s pig came to the same place. The girl and the boy went to find them, killed their animals, ate them and returned without exchanging a single word.

Then the girl’s ewe ran away to the same rock and soon afterwards Adi-Abu’s ram came to the same place. But this time Sakiang-Kariang said to Adi-Abu, ‘This is all very extraordinary. Your cock and my hen, our pigs and our sheep all come to the same place and make friends with one another. If our animals can do this, we too should be friends.’

So they killed their sheep and took off the skins and spread them on the ground. Adi-Abu sang in his own language and Sakiang-Kariang sang in Tibetan and they danced together until love came to them.

Sakiang-Kariang said, ‘Give me something by which I can remember you’, and Adi-Abu gave her a ring and in return she gave him a ring.

Then Sakiang-Kariang went to Tibet and Adi-Abu went home, journeying down the Siang river, but as he went he said to himself, ‘It is a lonely business living without a wife. I must go and find this girl.’

But this was not easy, for there were five great mountain-ranges between them. So Adi-Abu killed a pig and filled a bamboo tube with the blood, made a bundle of meat and went to find his wife.

On the way he came to the village of the Taleng Wiyus but they were annoyed that a man should dare to come to a village of spirits and they attacked him. One of them seized the bamboo tube of blood and hit Adi-Abu with it; it broke and blood
poured all over him. When they saw this they sat down to hold a Council and Adi-Abu said, 'I've done you no harm but you've covered me with blood and you must pay a fine for it.'

They agreed that this was just and asked him what he wanted. Adi-Abu said, 'I don't want anything. I was going to find Sakiang-Kariang and now you've beaten me so badly that I can't walk. Somehow or other you must take me to her.'

So they picked him up and carried him over the five mountain ranges.

Adi-Abu felt better by then and he said, 'I can manage now. You can all go home.'

Now Adi-Abu came to a village where everything was black; the people were black, the houses, the animals, the trees, the grass—all was black, and when the people saw him they wanted to kill and eat him.

But Adi-Abu said, 'I'm your son-in-law. How can you kill me? I'm on my way to marry Sakiang-Kariang.'

When they heard this they changed their minds and fed him properly and gave him beer to drink.

The next day he came to a village where everything was red; the people were red, the houses, the animals, the trees, the grass—all was red, and when the people saw him they wanted to kill and eat him.

But Adi-Abu said, 'I'm your son-in-law. How can you kill me? I'm on my way to marry Sakiang-Kariang.'

When they heard this they changed their minds and fed him and gave him beer to drink.

The next day he came to a village where everything was yellow; the people were yellow, the houses, the animals, the trees, the grass—all was yellow, and when the people saw him they wanted to kill and eat him.

But Adi-Abu said, 'I'm your son-in-law. How can you kill me? I'm on my way to marry Sakiang-Kariang.'

When they heard this they changed their minds and fed him and gave him beer to drink.

The next day he came to a village where everything was green; the people were green, the houses, the animals, the trees, the grass—all was green, and when the people saw him they wanted to kill and eat him.

But Adi-Abu said, 'I'm your son-in-law. How can you kill
me? I'm on my way to marry Sakiang-Kariang.

When they heard this they changed their minds and fed him and gave him beer to drink.

Finally he came to a village where everything was white and here the people said, 'Our daughter Sakiang-Kariang is very beautiful and the Taleng Wiyus want to marry her but her father has laid down certain conditions that they can't fulfil and you yourself are only a human being. So how can you win her? All that will happen is that they'll kill you.'

Adi-Abu was dismayed at hearing this but the people said, 'There is one thing you can do. There is a bridge near here over a deep river. Don't cross by it but go into the water and when you reach the other bank, lie down there and rest. When Sakiang-Kariang comes to fetch water she'll recognise you.'

Adi-Abu crossed the river; the water was very cold and he lay shivering on the bank. The Taleng Wiyus came to fetch water and they saw him and thought he was some mad fellow and took no notice of him. Even when Sakiang-Kariang herself came she did not recognise him but wondered who he was, but he cried, 'I'm dying of thirst. Give me a little water!'

The girl brought him some water in a hollow bamboo and Adi-Abu slipped the ring she had given him into it. She went home and when she emptied the bamboo the ring fell out and she recognised it and knew that it was Adi-Abu.

She said to her father, 'There is a mad boy here who came through the ice-cold water. Let's bring him to the fire and get him warm and he can stay under the house.'

The father went down to the river and brought the boy back and they put him underneath the house but the girl said, 'He'll die down there. Why not let him come into the house?'

The parents were agreeable and brought the boy in and he went to sleep by the fire.

That evening the Taleng Wiyus came to discuss the girl's marriage with her father and he said, 'She can marry anyone who can skin a living deer and a living tiger and can get me the head of a water-spirit and can bring down a star from heaven.'

But the Wiyus said, 'How can any of us do this?'

When they had gone away Sakiang-Kariang said to her father, 'Perhaps this boy can fulfil these conditions.'

And the father said to Adi-Abu, 'Do you also want to
marry my daughter?'

He thought to himself, 'If the Wiyus can't do these things, how can I?'

But the girl said, 'Don't worry. After all you are Adi-Abu.

She gave him some salt and said, 'Go to the place where the deer come for water. Lie down with salt beside you. When a deer comes to eat it, catch it and skin it while it's still alive.'

Adi-Abu did this and thus fulfilled the first test.

Then Sakiang-Kariang gave the boy a bamboo-tube of water and a piece of wood saying, 'When the tiger comes to kill you, throw down the bamboo and it will turn into a river. The tiger will then try to cross the river to catch you. Throw the stick at it and it will become a clump of bamboos in which the tiger will be caught and then you can take the skin.'

Adi-Abu did as the girl told him and in this way he fulfilled the second test.

Then Sakiang-Kariang said, 'Sharpen your sword and go to where the water-spirits live. There is a tree there. Stand by it and say to the water-spirit, "Cut me with your sword". When he tries to do so, fall on the ground and his sword will miss you and stick in the tree. While he's struggling to pull it out, cut off his head.'

Adi-Abu did as the girl told him and thus fulfilled the third test. But the girl's father said, 'Let's see if you can bring down a star from heaven.'

This was the hardest task of all but Sakiang-Kariang said, 'Wait till my father gets drunk and I'll tell you what to do.'

The next day the girl gave her father a lot of beer and he got very drunk. She went quietly to Adi-Abu and said, 'Look at that star in the sky. Shoot at it through the hole in my ear.'

Adi-Abu fitted his arrow to her ear, shot through it and the arrow spread straight to the star and brought it down.

Now all the tests were fulfilled and the girl's father brought many beads and valuable pots for the marriage.

Adi-Abu stayed there for time and then said, 'I want to take my wife, your daughter, home.'

The father agreed and Adi-Abu brought the girl with a great store of beads and pots to the Shimong country and there they became rich.

But Adi-Abu had an elder brother who grew very jealous...
thinking that it was he who should be rich.

'Come,' he said to Adi-Abu, tempting him. 'Let's go and fight the Wiyus, our enemies.'

The two brothers set out but got hungry on the way and sat together to eat. When Adi-Abu opened his mouth his brother put a stone into it and said, 'This stone has gone down into your stomach. You mustn't speak to anyone, not even to your wife, for a year. If you do, blood will pour from you when you relieve yourself.'

So Adi-Abu went home silent. His wife could not understand what had happened but fed him well and looked after him. A long year passed, all but a day, and then Sakiang-Kariang said to herself, 'What's the use of my staying with this dumb fellow?' and she went away to her father.

When Adi-Abu saw that his wife had gone he followed her, always leaving a hill between them.

Sakiang-Kariang came to the Taleng Wiyus' village where they tried to seize her, but she saw her husband following her and took off her cloth and threw it to the Wiyus and they picked it up and smelt it. When Adi-Abu reached his wife he explained all that had happened, and they went on together to her father's village and camped below the house.

She whispered to her husband, 'Let's listen through the floor whether my father is pleased or not.'

That night they heard her father talking to her mother, 'Our daughter has not come for a very long time. When she and our son-in-law come I'll give them many beads.'

When they heard that they knew that they would be welcome, and in the morning they climbed up to the door of the house and the old parents greeted them warmly and gave them many beads and sent them home.

When Sakiang-Kariang heard about the elder brother's mischief she said, 'Why don't you do the same to him?'

So Adi-Abu said to his brother, 'Let's go and fight the Wiyus.'

As they went along they got hungry and when they sat down to eat and the elder brother opened his mouth, Adi-Abu put a stone in it saying, 'Now you mustn't speak for a whole year: if you do you will pass blood in your stools'.

That night Adi-Abu went secretly underneath his elder
brother's house and heard him talking to his wife and telling her what had happened. He climbed up to the house and went in and said, 'I warned you not to talk for a whole year but you've broken the rule and now blood will flow when you relieve yourself.'

The next morning the elder brother passed a great deal of blood and this is how dysentery came to the world.

TREATMENT FOR MALARIA

Tani-Abu, ancestor of the Shimong people, had only one mithun, but Epom-Abu, son of Taro, ancestor of the Wiyus, had many mithuns as well as deer, pigs, sheep and fowls. This irritated Tani-Abu and whenever he could he used to kill and eat Epom-Abu's animals. When Epom-Abu taxed him with it, Tani-Abu said, 'They're really mine; they escaped from my house. It's you who are the thief, not me.'

So Epom-Abu said, 'Very well, we'll have a test.' He tied a long creeper to a tree and said, 'Sit and swing on this. If it doesn't break, it will mean the animals are yours. But if it does break, it will mean they're mine.'

But Tani-Abu was not nearly such a fool as the Wiyu thought. He saw that the creeper would break at once, but he had some cane-rope round his waist and, when Epom-Abu was not looking, quickly substituted it for the creeper and then, when he swung on it, it held his weight without breaking. 'You see,' he cried, 'the animals are mine.'

But Epom-Abu would not have it. 'We must try again,' he said. 'Let's go to the river and whoever can stay under water longest will be the winner.'

So they went down to the river and plunged into the water. Epom-Abu came up first, but Tani-Abu stayed down a long time. When he came up, the defeated Epom-Abu had disappeared, but he himself was shivering with cold. He went home and lay down by the fire, but he went on shivering with fever for days.
This is how malaria came to the world.¹ But Tani-Abu's victory gave human beings the right to hunt wild animals.

18

HOW PEOPLE LEARNT TO WEEP

Lada-Laiyo, greatest of the water-spirits, had a son called Cricket. When the boy grew up, he went every evening to the Rasheng (dormitory) of the girls. They liked him and there was not one who was not ready to marry him, but he did not like any of them. He visited many Rashengs and at last found a girl of the same clan as his own, named Ngoing: he liked her and slept with her. When the other girls heard about it, they laughed at him saying, 'He's going with his own sister.'

The two lovers felt very ashamed of themselves and went far away to the land of Doini-Polo. But it was so hot there that the girl fainted and, while Cricket was fetching water to revive her, she died. When he returned, he threw the water over her but it was too late and he sat down and wept. From her body grew the chilli-plant and Cricket watered it with his tears.

When men first ate the chillies, tears came to their eyes, and this is how they learnt to weep. The chilli makes men cry, for it is a plant of sorrow, watered by a husband's tears.

¹The Shimongs offer sacrifice to Epom-Abu to cure malaria.
Chapter IV

The Ramo-Pailibo Stories

Tour Diary

1958

After going to Mechhuka in the North-West of Siang, where I spent a week in the beautiful Bajasiri Valley, I turned south into the Ramo-Pailibo hills, which lead into the Bori villages, most of which I have already visited.

Friday, 31st October

Mechhuka to Half-Way Camp

Our first march was a short one of only five miles, one mile of which I was able to do on pony. The scenery along the river bank was charming and reminded me of the Sherdukpen countryside near Rupa. As we went along somebody arrived with the news that three of his slaves had run away.

Saturday, 1st November

Half-Way Camp to Rego

It was a short march to Rego but it took us four hours, for the way was hard. There was a lot of climbing and some very steep descents which had to be done by bamboo ladder, and most of the path had been turned by rain into slushy mud. We had a great welcome at Rego, for there had been very few visitors from outside in these little villages.
Unfortunately the weather clouded over and we had some rain.

Here we are among some of the most dignified and charming people in NEFA. Rego is a Ramo village and everybody, except a few Government employees, wear their own dress. The men have the namung, a long black strip made of goat’s hair with an opening in the middle through which the head is passed, so that it hangs down on either side of the body. I noticed a number of different kinds of hat, some of plain leather, others with a brim; there was the Bori bowler and the Bokar hat edged with fur or bark-fibre. Many of the girls wore shawls resembling the Bori or Ashing shawl with an ornament of flowers done in cowries. They have beads hanging from the ears and brass plates on their backs. But many of the men had the long Tibetan coat, either very dark brown or deep brick-red. They said that they paid the Membas two or three hundred rupees for one of them, an exorbitant price. Some of the houses were very small but others were spacious with room for thirty people in each. There are covered-in verandas with an open space in front on the ground which is also roofed. The floors are generally very bad but otherwise the houses are warm and cosy.

Tee tradition is that the ancestors of the Ramos were closely related to the Bokars and Sachin Roy told me that the Ramos descended in the direct line from Dungram, the elder brother of Dumgumi, the ancestor of the Bokars. Roy also said that the Ramos appear to have settled originally in the valley of Tang San Po in Tibet. Their ancestors left their original village, moved from place to place in
Tibet and finally crossed over to the Tadadege area and settled within Indian territory. Their last migration from Tadadege to Rapum, which they still inhabit, took place long ago.

I am told that among both Ramos and Pailibos three or four brothers may share a wife between them, though one of them, who may be either younger or older—it does not seem to matter—is regarded as the real husband. All the children born from any of the brothers are held to belong to the real husband but if the wife falls ill, all the brothers must contribute for the sacrifices to bring about her recovery.

In the evening we called on Duyor Komoi, the leading man of the village, who was very excited at our visit and led the way to his house shouting at the top of his voice. Here we had a very friendly time and had something to eat. We saw how the slaves were accommodated, each in a tiny cubicle in the main house with a separate hearth. The girls did a dance, putting on Gallong and Minyong skirts for the occasion and covering their shoulders with dirty face-towels, but the inevitable rain came down at about 9.30 and we went to bed.

Sunday, 2nd November

HALT REGO

We had a quiet day in this friendly village visiting a few other houses and noticing the pathetic little slaves who are akin to Tagin slaves, of whom there are a good many in this area. We were able to record a number of stories and had long discussions about Ramo customary law and I noted a number of actual cases which had happened in the
last ten years. I noticed that some Tagin women wear men's leather hats and also have leggings made either of leaves or of red and black cloth. One of the Ramo girls had a boy's Mishmi coat. Some of the slaves looked very miserable and their faces were sad; several of them were dressed in old gunny bags. Here the people had never seen an elephant and had to be told what it was.

*Monday, 3rd November*

**REGO TO RAPUM**

Porters to carry our baggage arrived before dawn but we were not able to start until 7 o'clock and spent about four hours to do the five-mile journey for it was a difficult trip. Half way there we were met by the Gembu, as important men are called here, who had organised a tremendous reception outside the village. It then began to rain and continued heavily during the afternoon. Later we called on Kodu Tartin and sat with him for some time. Two little boys, completely ignoring our presence, started to fight with knives because one of them had accused the other of breaking wind, regarded here as a very great insult. Tartin had built a fine new house of wooden planks but he was a little apprehensive about it, for he said that his forefathers had never built such a house and it would remain to be seen whether he would live or die. New ways are always dangerous.

*Tuesday, 4th November*

**HALT RAPUM**

We woke to another damp morning with mud everywhere round our camp but this gave us an
opportunity to take down a number of stories, some from a famous old man called Kotin Lipo.

I watched Ramo children playing with tops (made of large chestnuts with sticks through them) and Jew's harps. In this village, as at Rego, where the people have come under the Memba Buddhist influence, they drink milk and make ghee. I saw a curious ornament, a dog-chain worn around the waist, as well as cowrie belts. There was a lot of mill-cloth in use and I was told that the 'markin' cloth became fashionable as a result of being widely distributed as a relief after the Earthquake. Many of the women had multiple cane belts. Traditionally the Pailibos and Bokars may only wear black—other colours are unhealthy.

We are now in the Niyeng Shi Valley which is almost like a gorge for we go along between great walls of rocks which close in upon us, rather gloomy especially in bad weather. The little villages cling to the hillside.

In November 1951, the then Political Officer visited these villages but at that time the Ramos did not welcome visitors. They sent a message by means of a small bit of wood with three marks cut on it and bits of white and black wool tied to the ends. The marks represented the Political Officer, his interpreters and the headmen from other villages. The white wool at one end represented happiness and the message meant that if the visitors did not come to the Ramo area they would be happy. The general practice was to make diversionary tracks so that the party would not pass through the villages. There was a good deal of inter-village war at this time and the Pailibos and Ramos about
1955 attacked the Boris for digging for *coptis teetta* on the Bayur hills, a practice which they believed disturbed the weather and caused heavy rain.

Later, at Tato, I was told that one year when the time came of burning the jhums, rain fell for a whole month and it was impossible to light the wood. The Pailibos of Tagur heard that their fellows at Irgo had been extracting *copis teeta* from the hills and decided that this was what had caused the rain, for the belief is that this shrub is the umbilicus of Dote-Abu, the sky, and if anyone picks it he is hurt and his tears fall as rain. But the herb is valued as medicine; it is put on wounds, used for stomach-ache and fever, is an antidote for poison and commands a good price when it is sold. But it must always be extracted secretly so that neither man nor sky can see it done. A cover of branches is erected above it, and when the root is removed the plant itself is left as if it was growing, for the Ramos say that if the sky sees it, rain will fall; if men see it, they will quarrel.

The Irgo people did not take these precautions and the Tagur folk were very angry and captured a mithun from the Irgo herd. The owner and his friends ran to save it and there was a heated quarrel and an exchange of arrows in the course of which one of the Irgo men was hit and fell unconscious. But after the payment of compensation and a great deal of talk, peace was made between the villages.

*Wednesday, 5th November*

**Rapum to Harme**

A very hard march today and though it was only six miles it took as many hours. We stopped at a
small Ramo village, Liposi, on the way and on arrival at Harme we were completely exhausted but we were somewhat revived by an excellent haunch of musk-deer presented by Kotin Lipo.

Thursday, 6th November

HALT HARMЕ

I have a heavy cold today and have to stay indoors a good deal. But we managed to get a number of stories and a lot of information.

Friday, 7th November

HALT HARMЕ

It was thought advisable to spend another day here as my cold was bad and there was plenty to do, though mostly sitting round the fire.

Saturday, 8th November

HARME TO TATO

Another very steep march of seven miles which took a little over six hours. Tato is our first Pailibo village but there is very little difference in appearance, religion or custom between the Ramos and Pailibos. There are said to be about 700 of each. Roy has told me that the Pailibos are descendants of Bomong and originally inhabited an area to the south, near Dosing. They wanted to go south but were forced to turn back along the right bank of the Siyom and finally settled in this area round about Yapuik. Here at Tato the Siyom joins the Niy ing
Shi and from this village we can look up the valley of the Siyom leading into the almost awe-inspiring Lower Bokar area. The hills ahead look very formidable and my heart fails at the thought of crossing them.

The Pailibos would not let us camp inside the village for someone was ill and it was believed that if we were allowed to camp inside the village he would die. It was also taboo to have a dance within the village boundaries. So we had to camp outside and there was a good Ginjhinia dance and a parody, very cleverly done, of a Tagin song.

The Pailibos here are very poor and their villages are small. They are good traders, however, and they trade with the Bokars and Membas and get cattle by barter against their local dye known as *tamen*, raw hides and chillies.

**Sunday, 9th November**

**Halt Tato**

A lovely morning but very cold; snow was now appearing on the tops of the hills. Noticed a lot of goitre here, though I saw none among the Ramos. People say that it is due to a stream that flows down from the Tagin hills. During the morning went up the hill above the village where the Development people were teaching the Pailibos to do contour-bunding. A number of Bokars from Meyo came from across the river to see us. There were crowds of women in our camp all day: they had rather hard faces but were attractively dressed in red coats with blue beads and cowries made into flower-patterns. They wear multiple-cane belts and decorate themselves...
with dog-chains. In the evening we managed to get a few stories, though the Pailibos do not seem to have many or perhaps are not willing to share them. Those they have told us, like the Ramo stories, are of the general Adi pattern.

Twenty years ago, I was told, there was an outbreak of cholera in this village. The Nibu priest offered many sacrifices and took the omens from the liver of a fowl. In a dream he saw that a Mamba of Lalung village should be sacrificed and his body cut up and that everyone in Tato should eat a little of it. The liver further directed that a Ramo should perform the actual sacrifice. In every house the Pailibos got ready and prepared great quantities of rice-beer. Then the Tato people in full war-dress took a Ramo with them to Lalung but when the Membas saw them approaching they ran away and hid in the jungle. But they forgot a ten-year-old boy who was left behind in the village and the Ramo caught and killed him. They cut off the boy’s left hand at the wrist and took it home. Back in Tato the priest sacrificed to the hand and laid it on the stomach of every sick person. The people made a huge vat of beer and put the hand in it and everyone in the village drank a little. For three days the men went round and round the village shouting, ‘Hee-hee-hee’. After that they all got well and they removed the hand from the beer and threw it away. Had they not recovered, I was told, they would have eaten it, cutting it up into very small bits.

I was told of two other incidents of the same kind. At Irgo the people said that many years ago there was an epidemic of cholera and the Council decided to sacrifice an old slave woman belonging
to a Pailibo man there. They all clubbed together to buy her. The Pailibos put on their war-dress and went to hide in the forest outside the village and the owner sent the slave woman after them on the pretext that she was to collect firewood, but two of the men caught her and killed her with their daos crying 'Hee-hee-hee' as they did so. Then the others rushed out of their hiding place and cut her up into pieces and went away with the bits of flesh. Everyone in the village, including the children, ate a small bit, "about the size of a pill" as someone said, and the cholera stopped.

Similarly in a Ramo village, the name of which the elders would not reveal, there was an outbreak of cholera and the Village Council decided to buy someone to sacrifice but could not find a suitable victim. So they put on their war-dress and went to a Memba village called Singpir most of whose inhabitants escaped into the forest when they saw them coming, but a Tagin slave-girl could not get away in time and hid inside her house. The Ramos broke down the door, killed the girl, cut off her left hand and carried it away with the Membas' goats, clothes and any ornaments they could find. Everyone in the afflicted village drank a little rice-beer in which the hand had been placed and ate a tiny piece of the flesh.

This custom, I was assured, has now been abandoned everywhere.

*Monday, 10th November*

**TATO TO TAGUR**

An exhilarating, if tiring, day. The march took five hours but apart from some steep climbs the path
was well aligned and we had an enthusiastic welcome at Tagur. There was a gate with many realistic bamboo snakes and an enormous stuffed tiger in front of it. Our camp was in a wonderful site with snow mountains all round and I was able to photograph the Siyom River plunging down from the Bokar Hills. It was a relief to be out of the Nying Shi Valley which gave me a sense of claustrophobia. Here it was all open and beautiful though the valley in which we were, led to the hills going up to the Tagin area, and was desolate. The forest was rich in game. In the evening the girls danced remarkably well, using many complicated steps. From a tour diary by Ramdas Haldipur who was here two years ago, there had evidently been a great deal of improvement, particularly in house construction. In this village there were many stacks of wooden planks cut by dao. Two years ago the people were servile and constantly begging for things. I found nothing of this. In fact, the Pailibos gave an impression of self-confidence and pride; they were even a little tough. Children here fought much more than elsewhere. Two little girls of about eight had a ferocious battle in my camp pulling each other’s hair and wrestling. Finally, one of them with a thunderous countenance hurled bits of wood at her adversary, taking care, however, not to hit her.

The Pailibo villages are small but with ten to sixteen houses are sufficient for some sort of community life. Some of the houses are very small, others fairly big. Now and then you find one or two houses entirely by themselves in the hillside in order to be near their clearings. The Pailibos seem to have very little in the way of livestock—only a few
mithuns, no cattle and not many pigs.

A number of Tagins who are not slaves have settled in these villages. Ramos do not marry other Ramos and Pailibos do not marry other Pailibos but marry the Bokars or Tagins. Ramos and Pailibos can intermarry. This suggests that they were once one large tribe except that they all have different traditions of origin. They buy very attractive woollen blankets and red shawls from the Membas who charge very high prices, and this morning I watched some of our Memba porters selling their things. The Pailibos have have little idea of money. The tiger’s skin, which was stuffed in our honour, was bought for three hundred rupees from the Gallongs and is now to be bartered for a one-year-old dzomo.

Tuesday, 11th November

HALT TAGUR

Another beautiful day which, however, clouded over ominously in the afternoon. Took a few photos but the people clearly did not like it and I had to restrain myself from taking some beautiful boys and children. A Pailibo presented me with a piece of monkey-flesh which my cook indignantly refused and gave to one of our interpreters, Tagam, who ate it. The monkey had been killed by a poisoned arrow and the flesh was insufficiently cooked to counteract the aconite and Tagam got ‘drunk’, as he put it, on the poison.

There was a hot discussion about the high prices of wives: Pailibos have to pay more than Ramos: they do not seem to like Bori girls at any price.
Wednesday, 12th November

TAGUR TO TADOGITO

A fairly short march of four miles though it took us as many hours, for the path went straight down and then straight up again. There is a small rest-house here where we stayed, for the Pailibos are very poor in this village.

Thursday, 13th November

TADOGITO TO IRGO

A rather easy walk through splendid scenery. On the way we halted at Yapum where we were very well received. This is a village of small tumbledown houses which are thatched with plantain leaves. At Irgo there was a magic gate with the usual bamboo snakes and the camp was in a beautiful site with distant views in all directions. We visited a rock above the village where the Wiyus are said to dance. Many of the people here have married Upper Gallong girls and the result is a decidedly Gallong atmosphere, though the girls retain their characteristic hair-cut. There are no cane-belts and many of the girls wear green blouses and Lushai skirts. They are good dancers and the ponungs are usually led by girls. It is said that cotton cloth from the bazaars harbours scabies acarus in a way that the wool does not. I noticed a few cases of tinea imbricata obviously brought in by the Tagins.

Friday, 14th November

IRGO TO YAPUIK

A short easy march of three miles to Yapuiik
though there was a hard climb at the end. This is a small outpost though not very much has been done in it, and I noticed with interest a Bobo swing. There is a Bango House, as they call it, where meetings of the Village Council are held and we had an interesting couple of hours discussing what was to happen ultimately to this area so remote and so difficult to reach.

Once long ago, I was told, the Pailibos of this village got very drunk and began to boast: 'Who are these Tagur people? We can kill them as easily as one cuts down plantains in a jhum.' This was repeated to the Tagur folk who wondered why the others were talking like this, for they had done nothing to offend them. But for their own prestige they caught three of the Yapuik mithuns and a few days later two others. In revenge some of the Yapuik men went to Tagur, caught one of its inhabitants, brought him back and put him in the stocks. The Tagur people could not do anything about it for fear that the Yapuik men would kill the hostage. So they went to our old friend, Kotin Lipo, the Gembu, and consulted him. He went over to Yapuik and held a Council at which the people said, 'Let the Tagurs restore the mithuns they have stolen and we'll release our hostage.' The Gembu then went to Tagur and said, 'They were only drunk. You were wrong to take any notice of them and to steal their mithuns.' And with his persuasion they restored the five mithuns to Yapuik and received their hostage in return. They erected a small stone in token of a treaty of peace between the two villages. The Gembu was given a small mithun and vessels worth about fifty rupees for his services.
Saturday, 15th November

YAPUIK TO PAUM

A six hours march took us across seven or eight miles to Paum this morning. It was not easy, for there were many cane bridges and particularly the Paum bridge itself made me feel quite sick and giddy. In many places I scrambled up and down bamboo ladders. Near Paum were two wonderful waterfalls. Some one described to me how when they ate snakes they cut the creature into sections and roasted and ate them.

Sunday, 16th November

PAUM TO RO

With a very long and tiring march today, we went out of the Ramo-Pailibo area into the first of the Bori villages.

1

THE COMING OF SNOW

Doje and Nije were brothers who at first lived together with their families but, when the number of children increased, they built separate villages.

Whenever one of Nije's children died, Doje dug up the body and he and his children ate it, just as if it was a wild pig. Nije did the same to Doje's children, but more of Nije's children died and so Doje's family got more to eat and grew fat while Nije and his family remained thin.

One day Tapeng the bat lay with Nije's wife and the husband caught them and wanted to kill them, but Tapeng said, 'If you kill me like this, what will be the advantage to you? For you won't see me suffer. If you want to give me a hard death, tie a
bundle of grass to my backside, set fire to it and burn me to death.'

So Nije tied grass to Tapeng's backside and set fire to it. but Tapeng flew away to Doje's house, perched on the roof and burnt it down.

Doje was very angry and accused Nije of doing it on purpose and insisted that he should refund the cost of the building.

Nije was agreeable to this but Doje said, 'After this you can't live near me any longer.'

Nije replied, 'You and I are brothers and we have to live together.'

But Doje said, 'Let us have a test. You cook the food today. If I can't eat it all at a sitting I'll go away, but if I can eat it all at a sitting, you'll have to go away.'

Nije agreed and went to cook the food.

In those days a single grain of rice was a sufficient meal for a man in Doje's house but Nije used to cook a whole handful of grain every time. This time he cooked so much that the bamboo cooking-vessel burst and the house was filled with rice which soon covered the forests and hills. When Doje saw this he thought to himself, 'If we try to eat as much as this we will die.' So he collected his family and they all went away.

The rice that covered the hills turned into snow and Doje now lives in the snow-mountains and is lord of the wild animals living there.

2

THE EARTHQUAKE

There lives a great animal, like a mithun, as big as a mountain, below the earth. It has huge horns but only one leg, on which it stands. Sometimes it quivers a little and in this way it tells men things such as a change of weather and so on.

When a great man—a warrior, a hunter, or a rich man (for these are the three marks of greatness)—like Kotin Lipo; dies, three days after his burial, there is a great earthquake. This happens because his Orum (spirit) stays with the corpse for two days; on the third day it goes to Pomte-Romte who lives
above the earth but can only be reached by going from below it. But the path is blocked by the great mithun-like animal and the Orum cannot go that way. So it takes out its dao to kill it. Seeing this the animal moves its leg and the whole earth quakes.

In Manigong, Dungyo Pulong, a Bokar, was famous in war and hunting and everybody honoured him, for he was also rich. When he died, after three days there was an earthquake.

3

THE RAPE OF THE MOON

Taming-Tamo was an enormous and virile Wiyu who used to pester all the female Wiyus as well as human women. Doini did not like this at all but Taming-Tamo said to him, 'If you don't like what I do, I'll force your wife also.' He tried to, but Doini opened his huge mouth and swallowed him. Taming-Tamo somehow escaped. This happened three times. But afterwards Taming-Tamo learnt to hide by the path and jump out at Polo and rape her and thus Doini was defeated: Taming-Tamo nowadays picks Polo the Moon up and carries her up somewhere where he can force her. And this is an eclipse.

4

THE HOME OF FIRE

Sitking-Ane, the earth, is a woman and Dote-Abu, the sky, is a man. Sitking-Ane had many children in her belly, and they all wanted to be born. But Dote-Abu kept her so busy that she had no time to deliver them and this alarmed her.

Then she went to Tamu Wiyu and said, 'Dote-Abu gives me no opportunity to bear my children. Do help me.'

Tamu Wiyu devoured the Sun and everything became dark, so dark that Dote-Abu could not find his wife and she was able to give birth to every kind of grass and tree and hills without noticing it.

But when Dote-Abu found he could not see his wife, he went to a craftsman and told him his trouble.
'Give me,' he said, 'some light-making thing with which I may find her.'

The craftsman said, 'Cut some bits of wood, tie them together to make a torch, light it and go and find your wife.'

Dote-Abu took it and ran to find his wife, but he was so excited that he dropped the torch and his children—the grass and the trees—caught fire. The Wiyus were very frightened at this and tried to put out the fire but could not.

In Tibet there was a great tree which contained water and the Wiyus begged this tree to let its water out. The tree accordingly fell to the ground and the water gushed out as a great river. But even this water could not drive away the fire and in the end it dried up.

So then Polung-Sobo, the rock in the form of a mithun, and Iri-Sobo, iron in the form of a mithun, sat with their mouths open in front of the fire and it entered them and went out. Ever since fire has lived in stone and iron.

5

FAMINE

In the days of Abo-Tani, when he married Rat, there was no grain. So he had to go daily to hunt and get meat for food. He was very fond of venison but his Rat-wife did not like it, for she said it gave her a stomach-ache.

Now below the earth there lived some dangerous Wiyus with a very beautiful daughter who had in her possession every kind of seed. One day while Abo-Tani was away hunting, Rat burrowed down to this girl's house and stole and ate her grain. So, of course, when Abo-Tani came home she wasn't hungry. Abo-Tani thought this was a little odd, for usually his rat-wife was a great eater. He examined the place where she slept and he found grain in her droppings and understood what she had been up to.

One day, therefore, Abo-Tani hid behind the house instead of going out to hunt. He saw his wife go underground and followed her below the earth and hid there. When Rat went home Abo-Tani slipped away to talk to the Wiyu girl who was actually very pleased to see him but felt it would be proper to give him a fright.
‘My father and brothers are spirits’, she cried. ‘Run away or they will destroy you.’

Abo-Tani said, ‘I am not afraid of them. I’m going to marry you.’ In this way Abo-Tani married the Wiyu girl.

When her father and brothers heard about this they went after Abo-Tani to demand the bride-price, but he had nothing to give them. Instead he promised that he would give any children he had as their slaves.

After that, Abo-Tani brought his new wife with her great store of grain to the surface of the earth and in this way seed came to the world. But from time to time people die as a result of the attacks of the Wiyus in the underworld and this means that they are going to serve as their slaves.

When Abo-Tani’s new wife came up to the light and air she cooked one grain for each man in the village and this was quite enough for them. But one day the Wiyus kept festival down below and they invited their daughter to come for it. But she had not told her husband how to cook and he boiled a large pot, full of grain, for each person. The grains swelled up and broke the pot and the house was full of rice. When Abo-Tani saw it he was frightened and called every animal, bird and insect to eat it up quickly, for he was afraid of what his wife would say if she saw it. All the creatures came and ate eagerly, but they could not finish it—it was so much—and Abo-Tani was very worried. Then at last a female Wiyu came to his house and asked what the matter was and when she heard, she said, ‘Don’t worry. I’ll finish it.’ But she ate so much that her belly swelled up and she fell unconscious. Abo-Tani thought she was dead and threw her into the river. As she fell she raised her left thumb out of the water. This meant that whenever she wanted to eat the food of men she would come and finish off anything there was.

This is how famine came to the world and in time of universal hunger we sacrifice to the Wiyus.

6

THE CANNIBAL BIRDS

Bogum and Bo were two brothers who were born of heaven and earth. They lived with their families and friends at Ragla in
Tibet, among the hills where the Siang River rises. Bogum and Bo were careless and irresponsible: they loved hunting but thought nothing of their families. They were too idle to build houses and lived in caves and under rocks. One day there was a great landslide.

On the Ragla hill there were two great and savage birds; the female bird ate human flesh but the male preferred the taste of venison. Every day the female bird stole a child from the village and all the people were in despair but Bogum and Bo did nothing. One day, therefore, the people said, 'You are our leaders. You kill fierce and strong animals but you take no notice of this evil bird. If you are true warriors, if you are truly brave, you will kill it.'

When Bogum and Bo heard this they were ashamed and decided to kill the bird. Their difficulty was that they were unable to get down over the landslide to the birds' home at the foot of the mountain. But the people said, 'We'll make a great cane rope, tie it round your waist and we'll lower you down. When you reach the bottom, give it a tug to show that you have got down safely.'

But when the two brothers reached the bottom the people pulled up the rope and Bogum and Bo were left below. They went to the bird's nest and found two chicks there but the parent birds were out hunting. They waited till dusk and then the male bird came home with a wild boar for supper and the female brought a human child. Bogum and Bo killed both the birds, and then tried to climb up home again but it was impossible.

The people thought that Bogum and Bo were dead so their younger brothers took their wives and divided their property. Bogum and Bo made a home down below where the bird's nest was. On one side were the bodies of the birds and on the other the bodies of the animals and children they had killed. They gave the chicks human flesh and themselves fed on animal flesh. There were a great many daos there and many ornaments of the dead children.

Now, between their camp and Ragla there flowed the Siang River. Gradually the little birds grew up and one day Bogum and Bo tied the ornaments and the daos to them and said, 'Cross the river and throw these things on the opposite bank and then return.' When they got back, Bogum and Bo sat on their backs.
flew across and then killed them and the two brothers, taking the dao and ornaments, went towards Ragla.

As they came near to the place they met a girl fetching water and Bogum said, 'Who are you?' 'I'm Bogum's daughter but my father has died and my mother has married another man.' The brothers were surprised at hearing this and they hurried home and recovered their property and their wives. Then out of the ground came a Wiyu to devour mankind. But Bogum cut off his left hand and Bo cut off his right hand and they preserved them carefully.

Then they left that place and came south to Tuting, Bomdo, Janbo, Karko, almost to Pasihat. One night as they were camping they heard the Piyak bird cry, 'Bosang-kur, Bosang-kur', which means 'You Bo people, go back, go back'. So they turned back and the dark clouds came down so that they could not see their way and they had to go forward shooting arrows in order to fight the clouds. Many years passed; they multiplied and they built houses up and up to reach the sky and they climbed onto them, but the wood at the bottom rotted away and they all fell down and many died. Those who remained stood on the ground on a small mountain and completely encircled it. There was room for only one more man, and Epom Wiyu stood in the gap. When they saw that it was a spirit, the Bogums were frightened and ran away and turned into Gallongs and Bomdo-Janbos. But the Bos went towards Mechhuka and settled somewhere near Keak.

The Tagins were the first people: then came the Bogums and Bos: and then the Ramos and Boris.

A CLEVER DOG

There was an old man who had a male mithun and not far away in the same village was an old woman who led a female mithun. These two animals came together and when the man saw it he asked the old woman to come to him but she refused.

The mithun was pregnant and the man decided to claim the calf as his since it ultimately came from his male mithun. The
old woman used to leave her house to bring grass and leaves for her mithun but the man brought nothing for his. When the she-mithun's time came the old woman went to fetch leaves and grass for her, but while she was away the man tied his mithun nearby and when the calf was born, put it underneath his body and hastily washed the blood from the she-mithun. So no one could tell that she had borne a calf.

Then he called the neighbours and said, ‘My mithun has given birth to a calf’, and everyone said this was obviously correct.

But when the woman returned from the jungle and the man said to her, ‘Look, my mithun has borne a calf’, she said, ‘That’s good! My mithun too is due to be delivered.’

Day by day she anxiously waited, but her mithun’s belly grew smaller and not larger, until at last she realised that she had been deceived.

And then one day a friend told her that the old man had stolen her calf. ‘How can a male mithun bear a calf?’ he asked.

The old woman quarrelled about this and the man summoned a Council and called the whole village as witnesses. At last she went to the Raja and he called the man and asked whose calf it was.

‘It’s mine,’ he said.

‘Where are your witnesses?’

‘Here are all the villagers,’ he said.

Then the Raja asked the woman if she had any witness and she said, ‘Yes, I have the pole to which the mithun was tied.’

She brought it and the pole said, ‘The woman is right. It was her mithun which bore the calf.’

But the Raja would not listen and sent the woman away weeping.

Doini and Polo were sad when they heard of her wrongs and sent their dog to her. When the dog saw her crying he asked what the matter was and she told him the whole story.

The dog said, ‘Go back to the Raja and I’ll be your witness.’

And the Raja agreed to hear him.

But when the dog was due to come the following day he did not appear and the Raja sent the old woman away angrily.

But as she was going she met the dog who said, ‘We’ll go back together.’

The Raja asked the dog, ‘Why are you so late?’

He replied, ‘I only came with great difficulty for the Siang
River was burning and I had to put it out.'

The Raja said, 'Who ever saw a burning river?'

'Why not,' asked the dog, 'if a male mithun can have a calf, why shouldn't a river burn?'

THE SLAVE-HUSBAND

At the very beginning there were two Wiyus called Jomi and Joma. Jomi gave birth to a daughter whose name was Jomi-Nippong Polo (the Moon), and two sons who were both called Jomi-Niddo Doini, for there were two Suns in the old days. When these children grew up they went out of the house and with their heat destroyed everything until at last men and animals killed one of the boys to make things cooler.

The surviving Sun said, 'My brother didn't do anything wrong. What did you kill him for? You must pay, some compensation.' Men and animals agreed to this, but he demanded so much that they could not pay. At last they said, 'We'll have to pay you bit by bit as we can.' So now whenever any living creature dies, this is part of the debt that men owe to Doini the Sun.

Doini found a wife for himself but Polo, the moon, could not find a husband, and at last she seduced one of her father's slaves. This is why she only appears at night because she is so ashamed of what she has done.

There is a great mithun, white as a cloud, who carries the earth on his back. High above him is a strange creature who is neither a man nor an animal but has a mithun's head with horns and one leg and is very black to look at. On his back he carries three great mountains, one of iron, a second whose rocks reach to the sky, and a third, the Earth Mother in whose belly was a girl-child.

1The central motif of this story, which is here adopted to NEFA conditions, is widely known in India. It is classified as J 1191.1.1 in the Stith Thompson Index where a list of references is given. I have recorded a similar tale about a Bania and a Teli (Hindu Merchants) in my Folk-Tales of Maha-Koshai. pp. 247 f.
Now Dote-Abu had no wife and was unable to find one. He went to Doing-Botte and the latter told him where to go and suggested that he should marry the Earth-Mother's daughter when she was born. But he said, 'She won't be born until the other two hills fall down.' So Dote-Abu sent the tailless rat, which is fat like a frog and has a long snout, to dig below the hills, which at last fell on top of the Earth Mother and she gave birth to her daughter and Dote-Abu married her.

9
GRASS BELTS

Before there was any grass in the world which the women could use for weaving belts, all the Bokar, Pailibo and Ramo women died. Since there were no other women, the Ramos and Bokars had to marry Tagin girls and the Pailibos had to marry Bori girls. From them only girl-children were born. Then grass grew in the world and the women were able to make their belts and they lived. After this the three tribes have intermarried with each other and lived happily.

10
HOW TO CURE ITCH

Long ago, the Wiyus suffered terribly from itch, but at that time human beings were free of it.

One day a wild boar went to the village of the Wiyus and wallowed in the mud at the water-place and got itch as a result. Soon afterwards as he was passing through a neighbouring village he went to a sow and the sow got it too. Then the sow wallowed in the mud and itch went into the water and when the people washed they also got itch.

This is why, when a village suffers badly from itch we offer sacrifice to the Wiyus at the place where the pigs roll in the mud.
WHY LEECHES DRINK BLOOD

There was a man called Nibo with two small sons. He made them little bows and arrows and they used to go out to hunt birds in the forest. One day as they wandered a long way across the hills they met a very old Wiyu with his wife. This couple were so old that they could not hunt or cultivate and so they were always hungry. When they saw the boys they were excited at the thought that here was a good meal and they tried to catch them. The boys ran for their lives and climbed up a tree.

The old man tried to follow them but could not get up very far and asked, 'How did you manage to climb so high?'

They replied, 'We spat on our hands and that helped us to climb.'

So the old Wiyu spat on his hands and rubbed the tree but, of course, this only made it slippery and he fell down.

He said again, 'Don't lie to me, but tell me really how you climbed up.'

This time they replied, 'We fixed a dao in the trunk and climbed up by it.'

So the old Wiyu fixed his dao in the tree but he slipped and cut his leg. That made him very angry and he said, 'You tell me nothing but lies. This time I shall cut down the tree and we will devour you.'

The boys replied, 'Don't bother to do that. We'll give you a rope and you can climb up to us.'

So they let down a rope and the Wiyu climbed up, but when he had nearly reached them they cut the rope and he fell on his head. He was killed and turned into a leech.

This is how leeches came into being, for, the Wiyu wanted to drink the boy's blood and leeches drink the blood of all men.

THE SNAKE HUSBAND

A man called Nibo had a sister who used to help him make clearings in the forest and sow his seed. One day he said to
her, ‘I want to go home today. You stay in the forest to watch the crops.’ The girl was frightened at this and said, ‘How can I stay all alone? Please take me back with you.’ ‘No,’ said Nibo, ‘I must go, for there is a meeting of the Council in the village this evening.’

The girl, therefore, stayed in the forest, frightened as she was. But when the sun set she sang songs to cheer herself up.

Not far away there was a great rock below which lived a snake which had a human head and arms but no legs. When he heard the girl singing he was excited, for he had never heard such a sound before, and he sang songs in reply. When the girl heard him she supposed that there was some boy watching in a neighbouring clearing. By singing love came to them even though they had not seen each other.

The following day when it was time to go home, Nibo told his sister that she could go and that he would watch in the forest. But she replied, ‘I was frightened yesterday but I don’t mind now. I will stay if you like and you can go home.’ So Nibo left her and again late at night the girl and the snake sang their songs and the girl went to the snake with his strange human head and they came together.

Next morning the girl went home and prepared special food and rice-beer. She took it to the clearing and fed the snake and spent the night with him.

This went on for many days until at last Nibo noticed that a lot of food was disappearing and at the same time discovered that his sister was pregnant. He decided that he must see what was going on and he went secretly to the forest to watch. But their very night the girl was deliverd of many kinds of snake-children. Nibu did not see them, but he saw his sister with the snake and killed them both.

This is why snakes bite men in revenge for the murder of their parents.

13

THE FIRST HOUSES

At the beginning, men lived in caves and under cocks. The white ant and the red ant also did not know how to make houses
... but one day they saw the bee making his hive.

'However do you do that?' they asked.

'I build it with my wax,' she replied.

They made friends with her and she gave them some of her wax and they both made houses, one in the ground, the other in a tree.

When men and women saw how comfortably the ants were living, they asked them how they managed it and they told them to go to the bee. But when they asked her for help she said, 'You people are the enemies of my race; I won't give you anything.'

So they had to steal the wax and at first made a mud house like the white ant's, but the rain destroyed it. Then they went to a craftsman to ask his advice and on the way saw a dead mithùn, whose flesh had rotted away leaving only the skin and bones.

They looked inside and said, 'We could live in something like this.'

So they went home and built a house like the carcass of a mithùn, roofing it with leaves.
PART THREE: BUDDHIST STORIES
CHAPTER V

STORIES OF THE YANG SANG CHU VALLEY

Tour Diary—1958

Saturday, 1st February

JIDO TO KUGING

It was a beautiful day and we now\(^1\) turned our steps up the Yang Sang Chu Valley, walking through pleasantly-wooded country with lovely views of snow-mountains in all directions. We had a great welcome from the Shimong village Gaming and then later at our first Tangam village, Kuging, which is in a very fine position. The people here were most hospitable and we had to have three suppers in succession with the three Gams. In this valley we found a great mixture of people. We have already met Membas, Mishmis from across the Abroka Pass, Boris, Khambas, Shimongs, Minyongs, and now the charming Tangams. The day ended with a ponung dance. Some of the Jido girls who had come to see the fun did the usual Shimong dance, and the Tangams danced in a circle led by an old woman with very pretty singing but practically no movement.

There is a great variety in dress here—some dress in Bori fashion, some in Shimong, others have Tibetan coats. The young girls have coloured striped skirts and shawls. There are a few beyops to be seen but many have the conch-shell belt. Some of the men wear Bori hats, some Minyong and some hamburgs. After having seen the Shimong

\(^1\)After reaching Jido as I described at p. 98.

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villagers with their hair cut short one has an impression that everyone else is very hairy.

**Sunday, 2nd February**

**HALT KUGING**

The sky had now clouded over. We did not seem to be able to manage more than a day at a time with fine weather. It was fairly cold. In the early morning the mountains looked very beautiful. The people were charming but they refused to tell any stories. They did not know or at least would not tell even what their idea of an earthquake or an eclipse was.

The houses here are substantial in the general Adi style but with wooden planks, most of which are prefabricated and fitted to each other with rude joints. Some of the men have their hair done in a pigtail. There is a very small Rasheng (girls' dormitory) crowded with nice little girls.

**Monday, 3rd February**

**KUGING TO NYUKONG**

We all got up early and Sundarlal and Tashi Mayum, one of my interpreters, left by 7-00 as there were no dormitories ahead of us and camps had to be made. The rest of us left half an hour later and did the five miles to Nyukong in about four hours, travelling slowly over a rather bad track. There was a steep climb up to Nyering where we were met by some very friendly Khambas, who presented scarves, and a number of Mishmis.
We went on to Nyukong, a pleasant little village on a hill side with a range of white mountains above it. The houses were made of wooden planks just like Monpa houses and raised on pillars. I was given a bedroom by a very friendly Gam: it was actually a little shrine with four images of the Buddha and some Tankas. There was a fine display of prayer-wheels outside and a broken-down Mane shrine with a lot of little home-made clay Buddhas round it.

The Khambas seem to have migrated about sixty years ago from Kongbo, Chimdro and Pemako by various routes and are now settled in five villages. They have completely acclimatised themselves and regard themselves as full Indian citizens.

The Tangams came earlier, it is said, about a hundred years ago and spread themselves in half a dozen villages but very soon clashed with the powerful Shimongs who were in the habit of going to Tibet for salt. The Tangams cut the bridge over the Yang Sang Chu River to stop them and the Shimongs came over the Riutala range and massacred most of them except a few who escaped into Tibet. There they lived for about fifty years and then sent a deputation to the Shimongs to ask permission to return, which was granted, though it is said that a few Tangams remained in Pemako.

The main point of dispute between the Tangams, Khambas, Mishmis and Shimongs concerns the rights over the Riutala mountain which is known to the Shimongs as Eko Dumbing. This is a sacred mountain but is also a very fruitful place for hunting and in its high reaches aconite for use on arrows can be found. The Khambas claim that
their interest in the mountain is entirely spiritual. They wish to do pilgrimage and circumambulate it, a great Lama, Gambu Pa, having made the first circuit about six generations ago. This whole valley, in fact, is full of holy places and there are a number of pilgrim centres, some of which we visited.

In the evening some Ashings from Ninging and Miging came with skins and woollen cloth for sale or barter. There is a great deal of inter-village trade going on and Mishmis come frequently over the Abroka Pass with their attractive coats. There was a rather excited Kebang (Council) about the marriage of a girl which proved that, in spite of their denials, the Tangams and Khambas do inter-marry.

I bought a nice little Jew’s-harp in its decorated container but the Tangam woman who sold it to me would not part with a second one which she had tied round her neck, for she was pregnant and she thought that I might take away the soul of her unborn child.

Although we had some tins of sweets I was struck by the fact that nobody begged for anything during the entire tour. Even the children did not once ask for sweets.

There was a good deal of beer-drinking: Khamba women drink heavily; Minyong women moderately but Shimongs and Ashings hardly at all.

After a very jolly dance, when a gang of friendly little boys caught hold of me and made me dance with them, we all went to bed at about 8 o’clock.
Tuesday, 4th February

**Nyukong to Mangkota**

Today's march of seven miles, on which we started at 8 o'clock after some difficulty about porters, took us five hours. Everyone was a bit tired for all last night there was a meeting of the Village Council about a very romantic girl, Api Toy, who had refused to marry the boy for whom she was designed. It was a fairly easy trip today with a long halt at Yortong, our first real Khamba village. At Mangkota we were greeted by Lamas blowing their long trumpets and with the usual offerings of scarves. We were accommodated in the Gompa which was at this time tumble-down and poorly furnished. I noticed that in some of the houses there were a good many religious books.

Wednesday, 5th February

**Halt Mangkota**

After an early morning of mist and drizzling rain we went with presents of tea and sugar to the Ane-Gompa (nunnery), climbing up a very steep path to a rather miserable and dirty building, where four dear old ladies received us while the Lamas blew their trumpets. There were a good many images and a lot of old masks lying about. We were offered milk, rice-spirit and butter-tea. Next door was the Lama's house with an inspiring little shrine containing some fine images which he had made himself. I noticed that there were beautiful china and silver cups which the people used themselves but to do me honour they always served me in
enamel mugs or revolting tumblers of thick glass—I suppose because they thought I was 'civilized' and must be honoured with the product of civilization.

Here is a religion of bric-a-brac, everything is broken, piled up and tumble-down. There was a very long row of prayer-flags—they buy white mill-cloth far away in Pasighat and print it here with their own blocks. On our return to the village we visited another Lama's house. He has a beautiful face and was painting masks and images. A little later, the whole Khamba population from Yortong, Lango, Tashigong, Nyukong and Mangkota itself, even the nuns and all the Lamas, assembled for a special dance. There was an imposing group of Lamas wearing red hats, blowing their long trumpets, clashing cymbals and beating large and small drums. The Gompa served as a sort of drop-scene for the dances which were performed in the courtyard.

The dances illustrated Buddhist themes but also had a good deal about the demons which haunt the countryside. The Deer Dance, for which the performers wore masks with long horns, had its origin from the early years of Buddhism. When the Buddha began to preach his doctrine, the deer became his first disciple and itself taught men. For this reason, although the Lamas here eat meat, they do not touch venison and they dance in honour of the deer.

Another dance was performed by two dancers with drums and wooden swords. Its story runs as follows:

Long ago when men were first born there was a very dangerous demon who ate human flesh and drank human blood and this led to a drastic
decrease in the population. Uje-Rambuche\textsuperscript{1} sent two deities, Phoging and his wife, Moging, to protect mankind. Phoging planned to kill the demon and said to his wife, ‘You go and tempt him and when he tries to catch you, I will kill him.’ Moging went to the demon and was pursued by him and her husband ran out and killed him.

The dancers, who represent the two deities, dance to reassure men that they are now safe.

An interesting dance has the name of Achar-Cham and I was told that, when it was performed with all the necessary adornments it was intended to show how Chinese, Tibetans, Bengalis, Assamese and Punjabis have some sort of religion as well as the dancers themselves. On this occasion they only had a Punjabi mask which was worn with a turban.

In another dance men, dressed and masked as birds, held snakes in their beaks. Long ago, they said, the world was entirely water, in which two demons lived and gave men every kind of disease and created snakes which caused a lot of trouble. Uje-Rambuche sent Chachu, God of the birds, who caught the snakes and killed them. The water-demons begged Chachu for forgiveness and promised not to trouble men in future. The dance is thus performed in gratitude to the Bird-God and to ask for his protection.

There was also a very amusing dance played by a masked woman and a man called Arakacho who was dressed in a bear-skin\textsuperscript{2}. This was intended to cheer people up. The story goes that long ago men

\textsuperscript{1}Local variant of Rimpoche, 'the precious one', a reincarnate Lama.

\textsuperscript{2}Some of these masks are illustrated in my \textit{The Art of the North-East Frontier of India}. 
were always sick and hungry and did not know how to live well. So at last Uje-Rambuche sent Arahakcho and his wife to amuse them. The dance was certainly very funny and from that day sorrow and anxiety have been banished by laughter.

Finally there was a very obscene dance, which I need not describe in detail, where a man’s wife betrays him with a horse. As a result she gives birth to five demon-children. One is like a woodpecker and gives people sores; a second kills those who live too long. The third spoils or improves the rice-beer and makes men drunk and quarrelsome. Then there is a demon with very long arms, who goes about in the dark and knocks people over, and finally a very sinister creature who makes men poor.

Thursday, 6th February

HALT MANGKOTA

We recorded a number of stories this morning and later after lunch there was another show of dancing and I was able to take about forty photos. I noticed at least one Khamba wearing a Mishmi hat, another had a cap of musk-deer skin but most wore ordinary felt hats. Some of the children wore snails strung round their necks.

It is remarkable that while the Buddhists have been considerably influenced by Adi mythology and they propitiate the Wiyus who they think may give them trouble, the Mishmis and Adis have taken practically nothing in return. Our interpreter, Tashi, a Tangam, for example, did not know the name of the Buddha or anything about him.

Flutes are used here with four, five or six stops
and make very good music. Even more common is the Jew’s-harp. The Bobo, the great swing, which I had previously thought was confined to the Apa Tani plateau but which I have found on both banks of the Siang and among the Pailibos as well as here, was frequently in use.

Some of the Khambas put out their tongues to greet you.

How astonishingly happy these people are! All around the children are playing, boys and girls joking, laughing and flirting, the elders look on benevolently and everyone seems very clean.

Friday, 7th February

MANGKOTA TO NYERING

A nine-mile walk which took six hours in fresh sunny weather. On the way at Nyukong we had lunch with both the Gams, eating hard-boiled eggs and great slabs of roast chicken.

We estimated that there were about a thousand people in this delightful valley and a dozen villages, including four small Mishmis villages with a population of 156. Nyering itself is prettily situated but it is very small with only eight houses and a little over thirty people. Here was the beautiful child Babu whom Api Toy was supposed to marry. Kumar and I stayed in the Head Gam Dabo Yaro’s house. The atmosphere was typically Tangam, a sort of blend of Bori and Memba. The Gam had his hair in a pigtail, but his wife was dressed like a Bori woman.

The light on the hills was wonderful in the evening. Boys played putting the weight with
enthusiasm. We arranged for porters in the usual fashion by distributing little sticks of bamboo. There was a dance at night, first in Tangam and then in Khamba style, led by an old blind woman in an enormous grass cloak with ten hornbills projecting from the back. I slept in a little study, as one might call it, with a few books, images and holy pictures.

Saturday, 8th February

Nyering to Ngaming

Rain during the night reduced the track to a long discomfort of slushy and slippery mud so that it took us six hours to do the seven or eight miles. We were met by a large and enthusiastic crowd. I tried to record some stories but when the headman began to tell me one his wife stopped him saying that if he made any mistake in the narrative he would fall ill. A Miri shaman refused to sell her ornaments on the grounds that some of the dirt on her neck had got on to them and this meant that her soul was in them. If, therefore, she parted with them her relations with her tutelary would be disturbed.

Sunday, 9th February

Halt Ngaming

It was a bad day and we were all tired after the two exacting marches of yesterday and the day before. The snow mountains above Tuting have now come into view but were rather covered with cloud. A score of Memba blacksmiths arrived to
spend the month here making *daos* and repairing implements for the villagers.

The Tangams here told me a murder story of long ago, which illustrates the strange wild life, half dream and half harsh reality of former days.

A Bori with his wife and two children used to live in Ninging. When the daughter was in her teens and the boy was still a baby the wife ran away and the father was so upset that he sold his daughter into slavery and, declaring that he was going out to 'hunt rats, took the baby to the Siang and threw him into the water. He returned weeping to the village and said that the Wiyus of the forest had taken the child. The villagers went everywhere shouting for him and the Bori too went out of the village and sat on the bank weeping as he reflected that he had thrown his own child into the river. When the truth was known, the others turned him out of the village and he went to live in Tuting. There he seduced many girls, unmarried and married, and the people there turned him out also.

Finally he went to Kuging and stayed with an old Tangam man and his wife. They had a married daughter and the Bori fell in love with her and she, returning his love passionately, insisted that she should live with him. But where, he said, could he get compensation to pay the husband? The Bori said he would manage something and after making friends with the husband, took him one day down to the river to fish. There he killed him with a stick and hid the body under a great rock.

The Bori went home and began to live with the widow. Everybody searched for the missing husband but there was no sign of him. But after some
time the boy’s father’s sister was ‘caught’ by the dead man’s ghost (orum) which said to her, ‘It was this Bori who killed me and my body is hidden under such and such a rock.’ Next morning the people went to the place and found the decomposing body there.

The Council held a meeting to decide what should be done. The dead man’s father and his clansfolk were afraid that the Bori would kill them too so they captured him and decided to drown him in the river. The Tangam girl followed them weeping but they drove her away with their daos. Finally they took the Bori to the river and killed him there and threw the body into the water. The Tangam girl had a daughter from the Bori and she is still living. No one would marry the mother but the daughter is in no way taboo.

Monday, 10th February

Ngaming to TutinG

Today our journey ended. We left at eight in the morning and had an easy walk to Jido where we saw mithuns and pigs being sacrificed. We went on to the Siang River which is really impressive here with its wide stream and stretches of sand. The people had made a fine raft with a flag and carpeted seat for me. On the other bank many people came to meet us, prayer-flags were put up and a pig was sacrificed for our safe journey, for this was the first time that anyone had crossed the Siang here since the Earthquake.
THE PERILS OF MATRIMONY

There was a man named Motik Gyelpo who had a beautiful wife. Whenever he laughed he vomited and would bring up all sorts of costly beads with which he used to trade. In this way he became richer even than a Raja.

Not far away, there lived a Raja called Endraborti who heard of Motik Gyelpo and told his sepoys to go and fetch him. Motik Gyelpo was not very pleased at this summons, but agreed to go with them. His wife, however, loved him so much that she would not allow him to leave her even for a moment. She said to her husband, ‘You can’t go, for if you do, I will die. Without you I cannot live.’

Motik Gyelpo said, ‘I must obey the Raja’s order and go, or he will kill me. So please let me go.’

She said, ‘Then you must make an image of yourself and leave it with me so that whenever I feel it I can see you in my mind.’

Motik Gyelpo made a clay-image of himself and when his wife saw it she was very pleased and allowed him to go.

Motik Gyelpo left the house and on the way he met an important merchant called Tsongpon Norbu Dzangpo who asked him where he was going. Motik Gyelpo replied that he was going to the Raja’s house and would be away for some time. On hearing this Tsongpon Norbu Dzangpo was silent. Motik Gyelpo asked him, ‘Why don’t you answer? Have I said something wrong?’

Tsongpon Norbu Dzangpo said, ‘I am a merchant. I know you too are a great merchant and as I am going to your village to trade, I thought that I would be able to stay in your house. But as you’ll be away, where shall I stay?’

Motik Gyelpo said, ‘I have a large house and you can easily stay in it. I have left my wife there and she will look after you very well.’

Tsongpon Norbu Dzangpo said, ‘It will not be good for me to stay in a house where only a woman is living.’

1Indrabhuti.
2Tsongpon is a complimentary title meaning a rich merchant.
'But why?' Motik Gyelpo asked, 'Do you think that my wife will give you trouble?'

Tsongpon Norbu Dzangpo said, 'I'm not worrying about that. I am young and handsome and your wife also is young and beautiful. I'm afraid that she may fall in love with me. You are my friend and if this happened you would be greatly upset.'

'That can never be,' Motik Gyelpo said. 'My wife is loyal and devoted. She loves me so much that if I am out of her sight even for a moment she is unhappy and just now I had to make an image of myself to leave with her when I went away. Don't you know that a woman who really loves her husband can never make love to others?'

Tsongpon Norbu Dzangpo said, 'You are wrong, my dear friend. I'm afraid that she is certain to make love with me.'

Motik Gyelpo said, 'Never.'

Then Tsongpon Norbu Dzangpo said, 'All right, let us see. I'll shut you up in a box and carry you to your house and I'll put it in the room where I'll be staying and you can see for yourself what happens. If she does not make love with me of her own accord I will give you all I possess; but if she does, you will have to give me all you possess.'

Motik Gyelpo agreed to this, for he felt sure of winning a fortune. Tsongpon Norbu Dzangpo made a large box, put Motik Gyelpo into it and carried it to his house. When Motik Gyelpo's wife met Tsongpon Norbu Dzangpo she was charmed with him. She made him stay in the guest-room and prepared a delicious meal for him. Every now and then she appeared before her guest and changed her dress every time she did. At night she served him food and drink. She made her own bed very comfortable and called to him, 'Come and sleep with me, for your room is very cold and not comfortable.'

Tsongpon Norbu Dzangpo said, 'I am all right here. I'm very tired and I can't possibly come to the room of my host's wife.'

She said, 'Let me serve you in every way I can, for you may never come to our house again. You are very handsome and I am charmed to see you. I love you very much. Come and sleep with me.'

Tsongpon Norbu Dzangpo said, 'I won't come to your room, but if you want to come to mine, you may.'
The woman was delighted and hurried to him. She lay with Tsongpon Norbu Dzangpo and made love with him and every time this happened Tsongpon Norbu Dzangpo struck the box where the husband was hiding.

After some time Tsongpon Norbu Dzangpo opened the box and said to Motik Gyelpo, 'Now you have seen for yourself.' The unfortunate wife was terrified and covered her face in shame. Motik Gyelpo did not take any notice of his wife but he said to Tsongpon Norbu Dzangpo; 'All of my possessions as well as my wife are now yours. You take them.'

'You are my friend,' Tsongpon Norbu Dzangpo said. 'I do not want to make you a pauper and so I will take just a few of your possessions in order to keep our bargain.'

Motik Gyelpo said, 'I cannot keep what is yours by right, but if you yourself do not want to take my things, give them to this woman.' So saying he went away to see the Raja.

The Raja was very pleased when Motik Gyelpo arrived, for he thought that he would vomit precious beads which would make him rich. But as Motik Gyelpo was very depressed by his wife's behaviour he did not laugh or vomit.

He stayed in the house for several days, but he was unable to laugh or vomit, so the Raja said to his sepoys, 'If he does not vomit tomorrow lock him up and if he still does not vomit, kill him.'

That night when the Raja and Rani were sleeping, the Rani suddenly cried out loudly as an ear of grain (which was on the bed) scratched her back. This awoke everybody in the house and Motik Gyelpo also heard her.

Next morning the Rani got up very early and went out for a walk. A young man, who was a little mad, saw her and desired her. He made her lie on a large stone and made love with her. The stone caused her back to bleed but she was so happy that she felt nothing. The mad man went away and the Rani went back to the house. But Motik Gyelpo had seen what happened and he said to himself, 'How astonishing it is. But this is the nature of women. They only pretend to be loyal to their husbands while in actual fact they betray them. Last night the Rani could not bear the very little pain caused by one ear of grain in her bed but now doesn't mind the great pain caused by the rough stone. In fact she seemed to like it.' As he thought of
this he laughed loudly, and as he laughed he vomited and brought up many precious beads.

When the Raja heard about it he called Motik Gyelpo in and asked, ‘Why didn’t you laugh before?’

Motik Gyelpo then told the whole story of his wife and said, ‘That is why I was miserable and didn’t feel like laughing.’ And when the Raja asked him the reason why he laughed in the end, Motik Gyelpo told him everything he had seen that morning. He laughed and shed and brought up many more beads.

But the Raja was furious and asked him, ‘Is this really true?’

‘Yes,’ said Motik Gyelpo. ‘You can ask the Rani.’

When the Raja asked the Rani if it was true she said that it was. Then the Raja said to Motik Gyelpo, ‘You have left everything you possessed for your wife and now I will have to leave everything I possess for mine. We had faith in our wives but they were not loyal to us. I am not going to live here with this woman any longer. We will live together as brothers and never have anything to do with women.’ And they went away to another village.

There they built a house and lived together. After some time the neighbours there criticised them for not marrying and they themselves desired wives for all their brave talk. They decided that they both should marry the same girl. Motik Gyelpo asked the Raja, ‘But whom will we marry when all women are disloyal to their men?’

The Raja said to him, ‘We will have to discover first the reason why women make love with other people. Do you know anything about it?’

Motik Gyelpo said, ‘The only reason I can think of is that generally women have more desire than men. Those who have more desire are not satisfied by their husbands and go to others.’

The Raja said, ‘Then we must marry a girl who has no desire at all so that she won’t make love with others.

After searching everywhere, they found a girl they thought suitable and both men married her. After their marriage they built a new house, making three bedrooms, one for each husband and one for the wife, whom they would visit in turn. The Raja said to Motik Gyelpo, ‘Whoever of us desires to sleep with the Rani will knock on the other’s door, and then he will not interfere.’
They engaged a servant to work for the Rani. He was young and handsome. After some time he fell in love with her and one day he said to her, ‘I love you very much and if you don’t love me I will die.’

The Rani replied, ‘I love you too.’

The servant said, ‘But how can I meet you?’

The Rani said, ‘Come after supper tonight and I will tell you what you must do.’

When the servant came after supper, the Rani told him to go and knock at the doors of both the Raja and Motik Gyelpo. The servant did so and each of the two husbands thought the Rani was with the other. Every night the servant used to do this. A month went by and neither the Raja nor Motik Gyelpo slept with the girl and as neither knew what was happening they grew angry with each other, each thinking that the other was having more than his share.

At last the Raja said to Motik Gyelpo, ‘I am not going to stay here any more. You live here and enjoy yourself. You can have the wife and the house all to yourself.’

Motik Gyelpo was surprised at this and said, ‘What’s the matter?’

The Raja said, ‘You should be ashamed of yourself. Nowadays you are sleeping with the Rani every night, as though she was entirely for you and I have no right to her.’

Motik Gyelpo said, ‘What are you talking about? It is already a full month since you have been possessing her. And now you accuse me of sleeping with her every night.’

At last they came to realize that neither of them had had anything to do with the Rani and they decided that they must find out what was going on.

That night both of them heard the usual knocks at their doors and Motik Gyelpo came to the Raja’s room. Then both of them went to their wife’s room and saw the servant with her. The Raja killed both of them with a dao. They then decided not to marry again and left the house.

Now their aim in life was only to worship God and do good to other people. This is how monks began.¹

¹This may be compared with the Khc.npti tale. “The Laughing Raja” (6,22) which it resembles at general points.

12—1 NEFA/64
THE REVERSALS OF FATE

Long ago, in Tibet there were some small traders and a very rich merchant called Tsowa Tsongpon who had a hundred and fifty horses and mules and many servants. They all used to trade with India in wool, beads, iron and salt and make lakhs of rupees worth of gold and silver ornaments—just as later goldsmiths and blacksmiths from Tibet used to come to the Abor Hills, supply the inhabitants with ornaments and daos and take home more than four times their value.

One day Tsowa Tsongpon and the other traders left for India with loads of beads, iron and salt. But unfortunately, at every stage of the two months’ journey some of Tsowa Tsongpon’s horses and servants died, and by the time they reached India all his horses and servants had died and he was even short of food. His fellow-traders were glad at his misfortune, for they had always been jealous of him for being so rich. Tsowa Tsongpon said to them, ‘As you know, I have nothing to eat now. I have to keep alive somehow and go back to my country, and there is only one thing for me to do. Let me graze your horses and in return you give me my food and clothes.’ They agreed, for they thought that at least for some time they would have the satisfaction of being able to order about someone who had once been very rich.

Tsowa Tsongpon’s days were now very miserable. His new masters used to abuse him and treat him meanly, but he endured everything in silence.

One day, while grazing the horses, he came to a river with grassy banks and a wheat-field nearby. He said to himself, ‘The horses have plenty to eat. While they graze I can rest under a tree and keep watch so that they do not spoil the wheat.’ While he was resting, he saw birds coming to the field and stealing the grain. Every day he used to go there to graze the horses and the birds also used to come and eat the wheat, and soon had finished half the crop. Tsowa Tsongpon said to himself, ‘It is strange that nobody comes to look after the field. Doesn’t it belong to anybody?’ So thinking he went to the field and saw that it was covered with valuable beads
which the birds had passed in their droppings. He said to himself, 'If I take these beads for myself, I will be a thief. Only the owner of the field has the right to have them. If I want to possess them I must first find the owner and buy the field.' He found out the owner and said to him, 'I want to purchase your wheat-field with its harvest and will pay you for it whatever you demand.' The owner actually demanded very little for the field, as he was living far away from it and it was not at all profitable.

Tsowa Tsongpon came back to his fellow-traders and said to them, 'Your horses have spoiled a wheat-field and now the owner demands compensation. Give me some money and I will pay for it. When I get home I will pay you back. If I am unable to pay you the money, I promise I will work for you for the rest of my life.' They agreed to this for, although Tsowa Tsongpon had lost everything he had with him, he still had enough at home to repay his debts.

Tsowa Tsongpon gave the money to the owner and took the field into his possession. He collected a huge amount of cowdung, divided it in two parts, in one of which he mixed the beads. He then made cakes of the two lots separately, and when they were dry he made them into two separate loads of twenty-five each.

By now his fellow-traders had already sold off the things they had brought and were ready to go home. Tsowa Tsongpon asked them to help him by lending him some horses so that he could take the dung-cakes with him. They laughed at him but gave him the horses he wanted.

They started for Tibet. They looked down upon Tsowa Tsongpon and behaved very badly to him as they were now rich and were taking home loads of gold, silver and other things while he was taking only cow-dung cakes.

The track was very difficult, covered with thick snow, and there was no fire-wood to be had. The travellers came to a point beyond which it was impossible to proceed and they made their camp there. It was very cold and they were hungry too. As there was no fire-wood there they asked Tsowa Tsongpon to give them some of the dung-cakes. Tsowa Tsongpon refused and said, 'I am now very poor. You have many loads of gold and silver and I have nothing but these dung-cakes which I
had to work hard to collect. And now you demand them.' They said, 'We will only be able to use part of them and the rest you can take to Lhasa. We will certainly pay for those we use, but we will leave the price to be decided by the King of Lhasa.' Tsowa Tsongpon agreed to this, and gave them the twenty-five loads of the dung-cakes which were not mixed with the beads.

After a week they again began marching and soon reached their homes where they were met by their relatives. Tsowa Tsongpon said to the others, 'I must not take this dung home. Let us put it in the headman's house. After two or three days I want to go to Lhasa and you might accompany me to, decide the price of the fuel you used.' They all agreed.

After three days they went to Lhasa. There Tsowa Tsongpon showed the Raja one cake of dung and said to him, 'I request you, Sir, to fix its price, for my friends here have used twenty-five loads of this fuel and promised to pay for it.' The Raja broke the cake and found it was full of valuable beads. The price he decided was a thousand rupees for each cake. He then asked Tsowa Tsongpon's fellow-traders to pay for twenty-five loads of cakes at that rate, but as they had not enough, the Raja ordered them to serve Tsowa Tsongpon for the rest of their lives.

But Tsowa Tsongpon was very kind and did not take anything from his fellow-traders. He said to them, 'My friends, you should never proud of your position. You should remember that when a child is born he is not expected to live for ever at his mother's breasts. One day he will become a boy, then a young man and at last he will grow old. So is the lot of man. Today he is rich, but tomorrow he may become poor. Therefore you should always be very kind to poor people.'

HOW LAMAS BECAME POOR

At first the Lamas were very rich, for they used to cheat people by pretending that whatever they were given was taken by the gods, but that they themselves were poor.
There lived a famous Lama in a cave with a large stone roof. He stored many precious things in it, but he told the people that he was very poor and demanded more and more from them. In this way the villagers themselves became poor.

But there was a god named Aku Tempa who felt very sorry when he saw this and one day he came to the Lama and said, 'I am afraid that one day this stone roof may fall down. If this happens your riches will be destroyed and you too will die.'

The Lama said, 'It can never fall down. I know better than you do.'

Aku Tempa said, 'Very well', and went away.

After some time Aku Tempa came again to the Lama and said to him, 'What I forecast that day is true. Today the stone is going to fall down.'

The Lama touched his feet and said, 'My Lord, I am very sorry I did not recognize you. Tell me what I should do.'

Aku Tempa said, 'Don’t worry. I will hold up the stone so that you can take your riches out but do it quickly.'

Aku Tempa pretended to hold up the stone while the Lama began to remove his wealth from the cave. Aku Tempa said to him, 'Let me help you, for you are too slow; the stone is about to fall.'

The Lama agreed and now he held the stone while Aku Tempa removed the things. Aku Tempa said to him, 'Let me put these far away from here, otherwise when the stone falls it may destroy them.'

And he took them to a very distant place. When there was nothing left in the cave Aku Tempa said to the Lama, 'Hold the stone and I will come back soon.'

The Lama waited for Aku Tempa for a long time but as he did not return he realized that he had been deceived.

From that day Lamas have been poor. Nowadays Lamas are respected but they have no possessions.

4

THE RAT'S LUCKY SON

There was a poor boy who had lost his parents. He made a clearing on the hillside but when the harvest was ready someone
came and stole the grain. The boy was surprised at this, as there were no other people living there, and he decided to keep watch and catch the thief. So he hid himself in the jungle nearby and when a rat came to steal, he caught him and said, 'I am a poor boy and have none to help me. I had to work hard to get this crop but you have stolen it. Now I am not going to spare you. Get ready, I'm going to kill you.'

'The rat said, 'Don't kill me, my boy, for I am your father, and I shall give you anything you want.'

The boy said, 'Is it really a fact that you are my father? If you are, and want to help me, then let me have a good house and get me a good wife.'

The rat said, 'Very well, you shall have anything you want. Wait here till I come back.'

The boy said, 'How can I tell you're not going to cheat me?'

'That I will never do,' the rat said, 'I am your father, so how can I cheat you?'

The rat left the place and went to a Gompa where there was a conch which he stole. He came back and gave it to the boy saying, 'Come with me and blow it when I ask you to.'

The boy accompanied the rat and after some time they saw a large house in which a demon lived. The rat asked the boy to blow the conch and this frightened the demon who thought that the Kanchosum¹ had come and would kill him, so he left the house and ran away. Then the rat and the boy went in and the rat said, 'This house is for you. I have put everything you need here.' The boy was glad to see many kinds of cloth and beads as well as the corn the rat had stolen from his field.

He said to the rat, 'Father, you are now very old. When I go to work in the field who will look after you? Get me married as soon as possible, so that your daughter-in-law can look after you well.'

The rat said, 'Tomorrow we will go out to find you a wife.'

So the next day they started on their search, and came to a place where there was a large Mane (Shrine) from which paper flags were flying. The rat asked the boy to take the flags down. After some time they approached a village and the rat said to

¹Kanchosum, the Trinity of the three gems (sum means three): Buddha, Padma-Sambhava and Avalokiteswara, or body, soul and power.
his son, 'Here is a village. You stay here and I will go and see if there is a girl who will do for you.'

The rat went to the village and came to the house of Tsongpon Norbu Dzangpo, a rich and famous merchant who gave him a very good meal. This merchant had three daughters who were not married, and they all came to see the rat. The rat looked them over and thought the youngest daughter would be the best for his son, and asked for her. This made Tsongpon Norbu Dzangpo angry and he said, 'You are nothing but a rat and I am a rich merchant. My daughters are very beautiful. How can you expect me to marry one of them to your son?'

The rat said, 'Forgive me. Don't be angry, but first see my son and then consider whether your daughter can be given to him or not.'

He came back to his son and told him to put on dirty clothes, and they returned to Tsongpon Norbu Dzangpo's house. As the boy was so dirty the merchant did not like him at all, but he asked each of his daughters if she would marry him, but not one of them was willing.

Then the rat told his son to have a bath and change his clothes and make many shoes out of the paper flags he had brought and change them every time they looked dirty. The boy took a bath and changed his dress down on the river bank. He made shoes out of the paper flags and put them on. At that time shoes were not generally worn. When he came to the house he looked very smart indeed and the girls saw him changing his dress and shoes every now and then, and this gave them the idea, as it was meant to do, that he must be very rich, even richer than their own father. The eldest said, 'If father is ready to marry me to this boy, I will be glad. I like him very much.' The second daughter said, 'I will go and ask mother to arrange for me to marry him.' The youngest said, 'You go and tell our parents, but when he leaves this house I will follow him and won't wait for their permissions.'

In the meantime the rat said to his son, 'If the old man asks you to select one of his daughters, choose the youngest.' Tsongpon Norbu Dzangpo too thought the boy must be very rich and said to the rat, 'Excuse me, Sir, I did not realize that your son would be so handsome. Now I am ready to marry one of my daughters to him. Please ask him to choose.' The boy selected
the youngest daughter, and the rat said to her father, 'I am ready to pay whatever bride-price you want.' But as the merchant was very rich he did not ask for any bride-price, but instead gave his daughter a large quantity of beads and other things.

The boy came back home with his wife, and they were very happy together. But after some time the rat said, 'I am an animal and you are human beings. I cannot live with you here. My home is the forest where I have my other relatives and I am going to live there.' He bade them good-bye and so departed.

5

THE GOOD PRINCE

In the kingdom of Bate-yul there lived Raja Sichong Drapa and his Rani Ganden Zangmu. It was so rich and prosperous a land that it had no poor or distressed for the Raja had a magic jewel called Norbu Ganden Punzam which provided him with all the wealth he desired.

But, rich as he was, Raja Sichong Drapa had no child and one day he said to his Rani, 'Here am I rich and famous, but without a child there is no happiness. What can we do?'

The Rani replied, 'We must give alms to the poor and the Lamas and make sacrifices to Kanchosum.'

So the Raja began giving generously to Lamas, pilgrims and the poor and made expensive sacrifices to Kanchosum.

Soon afterwards the Rani Ganden Zangmu had two dreams. In the first she heard a golden bell ringing very sweetly; it came down from the sky and entered her womb. In her second dream she saw three suns in the sky. In the morning when she got up she wondered whether her dreams were good or bad. She bathed and took food to her husband and told him about them.

He said, 'These dreams are very good. The sweet-sounding bell means that a soul will come to you from the sky. The

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1Zangmu means wife or mistress. Ganden is the name of one of the three greatest monasteries in Tibet.
2Norbu is the Tibetan for gem. This seems to be the Chintamani, the mother of all gems, which grants every desire.
were finished. The old woman lost her temper at this and said, 'You're a very clever merchant. That is just how your father used to cheat everybody and became so rich that the Raja had him killed. I won't give you my cowries.' Now at last the boy had heard what had happened to his father and he begged the old woman not to be cross but tell him the whole story. If she would, he said he would give her all his yarn and take nothing for it. So the woman told the story and the boy gave her the yarn and went home. But even when he told his mother she still remained silent.

The old woman went to the Raja and said, 'You killed that merchant, but his son is more cunning still and he will soon be richer than you are.' The Raja was alarmed at this and decided to send the boy to get the treasure hoping that he would die on the way as his father had, and he sent his messengers to call him. When they came to the house the mother was frightened and wept saying, 'The Raja killed your father and now he will kill you—that is why I never told you about it, for fear you would want to go to the same place.'

At first the boy was frightened but he soon recovered his courage and went to the Raja, who received him with honour and made him sit down beside him, and said, 'I hear you are very clever so I want you to do something for me.' And he told him about the lake and the magic talisman. The boy said, 'I'll go, if you will give me two charms, one to protect me and one to bring peace. I want a seer of each.' To this the Raja agreed.

The boy went home and when he told his mother she burst out crying, but the boy said, 'Don't be afraid, for the Raja is giving me charms which will save me.'

But the mother said, 'It was the Raja's charm that led to your father's death.'

The boy replied, 'Go to the forest and pray to God there. If a voice tells you anything, remember it; if a hand gives you anything, keep it carefully.'

The mother went to the forest and prayed and presently a Lama came to her and gave her two kinds of charm. The first was called Lujeja which gave protection and the second was called Lumeja which brought peace. He also gave her seven pills and a conch. He said, 'If your son is in great danger let him take one of these pills and say Namo Sanghaya Namo Buddhaya.' The
mother had kept her eyes shut all the time and when she opened them she found that the Lama had gone away and there was nothing to be seen but the charms in her hand.

She went home and gave these things to her son and the boy got ready to go. When he went to the Raja the latter again gave him evil and dirty things, but the boy secretly threw them away and took the Lama’s charm instead. He went to the lake as his father had done and spoke to a tree and cut it down. But this time, when the tree came down, not a single leaf fell to the ground.

The boy made a boat and loaded it with his things. He said to his friends, ‘Those of you who love your parents and wives more than me should go home; those who love me more should go with me.’ This time, though some of his friends returned home, many went with him on the dangerous journey. They rowed to the middle of the lake and there was a storm like a dark mountain and the boy threw part of the Lumeja charm into the water and it became calm. They rowed on and now a snake as high as a hill rose above the boat to sink it. The boy gave him some of the Lujeja charm and the snake was pleased and said, ‘This is no ordinary man but clearly a person of consequence.’ Then came another storm from all four sides at once. The boy threw his conch towards it and the conch fought the angry waters on all four sides and pacified them.

In this way the boat crossed the lake and finally reached the other side, where it landed on a strip of sand and there the boy found his father’s skeleton and put it in his boat. Then he and his friends left the boat and climbed up a high mountain on the top of which was a great Gompa. He said to his companions, ‘Do not touch any of the treasures here but carry back to the boat any evil and dirty things you can find, and while they were collecting them he himself tried to go inside. But before the door was an enormous snake which opened its mouth to devour him and he threw one of the pills into it, so that although the snake swallowed him he was able to come out of his body. This happened three times until the snake grew tired and said, ‘You are too much for me. Go on your way.’ The boy went a little forward and there was a great bear and then a tiger and the same thing happened with each of them.

At last the boy went into the Gompa and found a Lama
sitting before the image. He had the treasure Norbu Ganden Punzam in his hand, but when he saw the boy he was very cross and said, ‘I have never seen a human being here before. How did you get here?’ ‘By my own strength,’ said the boy. The Lama called the snake, the bear and the tiger and abused them, but they all three claimed that they had done their best, but that the boy was too powerful for them. The Lama was impressed by this and gave the boy the magic talisman and sent him back to the boat.

When he came there he found that some of his friends had taken silver and gold and others only dirty things like bones and excreta. They got into the boat but by the time they reached the other shore, the gold and silver had turned into bones and the bones had turned into gold and silver. So those who had been greedy were punished and those who obeyed were rewarded.

The boy took his treasure home but did not go to the Raja. The old woman heard of it, however, and told the Raja who called the boy and took the treasure from him. But when the Raja saw it, he was more frightened than ever, for he thought, ‘If this boy is powerful enough to give me such valuable things, one day he will be greater than I and will kill me.’ So this time he said to the boy, ‘Far away there is a high mountain on the top of which is a golden vessel which flies through the air. If you can bring it to me I will make you Raja in my place, but if you can’t, I will have you killed.’ The boy said, ‘Don’t worry, I will certainly bring it.’ But this time he went alone.

On the way he came to the village of Chaling-Amma who is the Mother of Iron. She was all alone in the house and said, ‘For three years I have had no meat, but today I am going to eat you.’ And she opened her mouth and swallowed the boy but he repeated his charm and escaped. This happened three times until Chaling-Amma exclaimed, ‘You are greater than I and you will have to marry me.’

The boy said, ‘I will do so willingly, but first of all I must find the golden vessel. On my back I will take you home with me.’

Then she said, ‘I have a son who has gone hunting. When he returns he will kill you.’

So she hid the boy but when the son came in he said, ‘I smell a human being.’
The mother said, 'There is no such creature here, but today I have taken human form. So you can eat me if you want to.' That night the boy spent with her and in the morning Chaling-Amma's son went out to hunt, and the merchant boy went on his journey.

He came now to Raling-Amma, Mother of Copper Trumpets. She had two sons who had gone hunting and she tried to devour the boy and in the end said he must marry her. Then he went on and came to the village of Kangling-Amma, the Mother of Thigh-bone Trumpets; she had four sons and the same thing happened. Then he went on to the village of Gyaling-Amma, the Mother of Silver Trumpets, who had six sons, and then to the village of Serling-Amma, the Mother of Golden Trumpets, who had nine sons. Each of these women was very hideous. Their breasts hung down to the ground and their eyelids to their navels. When they were with the boy they looked like lovely young girls, but when he left them they became ugly again.

Serling-Amma, Mother of Golden Trumpets, gave the boy the golden vessel and he said, 'Come with me,' and they sat in the vessel and flew in it to each village in turn and from each he took a wife until he had five altogether. Then he returned home, but though the Raja sent for him several times he refused to go.

The Raja, therefore, definitely decided to kill the boy, and collected a large quantity of wood to burn him. But the boy said to his five wives, 'Here is my father's skeleton. The Raja will burn me and kill me, but when I'm dead collect my bones and ashes and put them together.' He gave six of the magic pills to his wives and said, 'Put three of these on my father's skeleton and three more on my bones and cover both with cloth.'

At last the boy had to go to the Raja but even now he did not take the golden vessel. A great fire was ready and the Raja had the boy thrown into it and he was burnt to death. But when the fire died down, the five wives collected his bones and ashes and put the magic pills on them and on the father's skeleton and they both became alive.

Then the five wives took the golden vessel out of their house and played with it. They climbed in and flew up a little way, flew over the Raja's house, came down and then went up again. The Raja was very pleased at this and decided to marry the five girls,
not realizing that their husband was alive. The girls said, ‘Certainly we will marry you, but first of all you must ask our parents.’ ‘But how can I go to them?’ he asked. They said, ‘In the golden vessel, of course; we will take you.’ The Raja was delighted and climbed in and they flew up in the sky and the girls threw him down to the ground and he was killed. Then the five girls came down to join their husband and he became Raja of that kingdom.
CHAPTER VI
THE KHAMPTI STORIES

I

The Khamptis

The Khamptis are today a quiet, industrious and progressive people of Shan or Tai stock who migrated from the Bor-Khampti country near the source of the Irawaddy about 200 years ago. 'Their first settlement in the (Brahmaputra) valley,' says Dalton 'were, by permission of the Assam Rajahs, on the river called the Tenga-pani, but during the civil wars in Rajah Gaurinath Singh's time (A.D. 1780 to 1790) they pushed on to Sadiya, ousted the Assam Governor of the Province called 'Sadiya Kowa Gohain', and gave that title to their leader; and the people of the country acquiescing in the arrangement the Assam Government was too weak to disturb it. The Khampti chief was acknowledged by the Assam, and subsequently by the British, Government as Sadiya Kowa Gohain. But in A.D. 1839 the Khamptis rebelled against the latter Government, and, having been expelled from Sadiya in consequence, they for some years lived the life of the hunted, scattered on the frontier, but were eventually allowed to settle somewhere in the vicinage of their old villages.' Today they will be found in the Lohit Frontier Division of NEFA, where there are now 2,600 of them, and in the North Lakhimpur District of Assam. They are a river-loving people and have made their villages along the banks of the Tengapani, Kamlang and Dehing—
a fact which accounts for the important part that rivers play in their folk-tales.

The Khampti language is an Indo-Chinese tongue of the Tai family; they have an old traditional script of their own; but today most of the men can speak Assamese: many can read and write. Dalton observes that many of the Chiefs took Assamese wives and thus ‘softened and improved’ the features of succeeding generations.

I cannot do better than quote some paragraphs from Dalton’s classic account¹ of this tribe, which gives the background against which the folk-tales were evolved.

‘Religion: The Khamptis are very far in advance of all the north-eastern frontier tribes in knowledge, arts, and civilisation. They are Buddhists and have regular establishments of priests well versed in the recondite mysteries of their religion.

‘House, &c: For the residence of a chief and his family two large houses are built, framed of strong timber with raised floors and thatched roofs, contiguous to each other, a trough of wood being fixed under the junction of the two roofs to carry off the water. As each roof covers a breath of 18 to 20 feet, and is 80 or 100 feet in length, great space for the family and retainers is thus obtained. The interior is divided into chambers, private and for reception, and the whole terminates in a railed open balcony, a prolongation of the raised floor beyond the eaves affording a convenient airy place for the family to sit and work or lounge in. The roof of the houses comes down so low that externally there

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is no appearance of wall. The people of the common order have similar houses, but single instead of double.

‘The temple and priests’ quarters are also of timber and thatched, but the temples are elaborately carved, and great neatness and taste are evinced in the arrangement of the internal fittings. The priests have shaved heads and amber-coloured garments and rosaries. The office is not hereditary: any person may enter upon it after the necessary novitiate and instruction in the Bapuchang, as the priests’ quarters are called, but they must, so long as they wear the sacerdotal habit, renounce the world and devote themselves to a life of celibacy.

‘Every morning the priests move quickly through the villages preceded by a boy with a little bell, each holding a lacquered box in which he receives the offering of the people, generally presented by the women, who stand waiting at the door with a portion of their ready cooked food.

‘Arts. &c: The priests in their hours of relaxation amuse themselves by carving in wood, bone or ivory, at which they are very expert. In making ivory handles of weapons they evince great skill, taste, and fecundity of invention, carving in high relief twisted snakes, dragons, and other monsters with a creditable unity and gracefulness of design.

‘It is customary for the chiefs also to employ themselves in useful and ornamental arts. They work in gold, silver, and iron, forge their own weapons and make their wives’ jewels. They also manufacture embossed shields of buffalo or rhinoceros hide, gilding and lacquering them with skill and taste.
three suns mean that where formerly there were two, there will now be three. Let us give more generously in charity and make more sacrifices.'

On that very day the Rani conceived and in due time a child was born. As he came from the womb he said, 'Mane pemé' three times, and at this the Rani and her handmaidens were astonished and sent word to the Raja, who was very happy at the news. He called his Lamas and they said, 'It is as though God himself has come among us.' The news spread and the whole kingdom rejoiced. The child, to whom the Lamas gave the name of Dime-Kundun, grew up quickly and when he was five years old he was able to read and write.

One day Dime-Kundun said to his father, 'You are a very rich and famous man, but what is the good of that? For I am your only son and what can I do with all this wealth? Why not give it away?'

The Raja said, 'But already in my kingdom there are no poor or distressed people.'

The boy replied, 'But there are many poor in other kingdoms.'

The Raja said, 'You yourself are my true treasure and everything I have is yours. Do what you will. I am giving you everything, except Norbu Ganden Punzam.'

So saying he handed over the keys of his store-house and his treasury to Dime-Kundun who sent word throughout the land: 'Whatever anyone wants, even to the taking of my own life, he may have.'

Poor people, sick people and Lamas crowded to the court and Dime-Kundun asked them what they desired. He loaded elephants and horses with gold and silver and grain and in this way half the treasure of the land was distributed.

This alarmed the Raja's Ministers who thought that the kingdom would be ruined, for how can any Government survive without plenty of money? They went to protest to the Raja, and he replied, 'I have only one son and he can do what he desires.'

But they said, 'Our reputation will be ruined and our enemies will come upon us. How will we be able to fight them?'

Kundun means 'The presence', an honorific title given, for example to the Dalai Lama.
This partly convinced the Raja and he said, 'But the boy is determined to give everything away. How can we stop him now?'

The Ministers said, 'If you find him a wife then, when he has children, he will forget other people and think of himself.'

The Raja agreed with this and sent them to find a wife for his son.

In a neighbouring kingdom there was a Raja, powerful but not so rich, who had one daughter named Mende Zangmu. When the Ministers asked for her, he gave her as wife to Dime-Kundun and after this the boy stopped giving things away.

Two years later Mende-Zangmu had a son called Lækpal. After another two years she had a son called Lekden, and then after yet another two years a daughter called Lekzema and they all lived happily thinking of themselves.

But one day when Dime-Kundun was walking through the bazaar, many blind and lame people from neighbouring lands came asking for alms. Most of them had no food; some had no clothes; others could hardly stand; others had to crawl on the ground for they were so weak. After seeing them, Dime-Kundun went home and lay down on his bed burying his face in his pillow. He would not speak to anyone and he ate and drank nothing. His wife and mother tried to feed him and persuade him to talk, but he took no notice of them. When the Raja Sichong Drapa heard about it he went to the boy and said, 'Son, what is the matter? Why are you angry with us? You are my only son and all is yours; you can have anything you want and do what you will.'

For a long time Dime-Kundun refused to speak but at last he stood up and said, 'If this is so, then I must give away everything we have. I am a man, even though I am a Raja; these sick and poor are also men, yet they have nothing. What is the use of all this wealth to us? When we die it will not go with us and who knows what will happen to us in our next birth. So let's give all we have away.'

The Raja was pleased at this and said, 'My son, do what you will and I will be happy.'

Dime-Kundun went out and gave great quantities of things to those who needed them and then he ate and drank. Yet, however
much he gave away, because of the magic jewel Norbu Ganden Punzam he always got more.

Not far away was a country where the Raja and his Ministers had become very poor. They called for the holy Lamas and asked them what they should do to become rich.

'Shall we fight and invade other kingdoms? Shall we steal? What can we do?'

To this the Lamas had no answer.

Now in that country there was a very good old man who heard that the Raja was thinking of fighting or stealing to become rich and he said to himself, 'This is not the right way to wealth.'

He went to the Raja and his Ministers and said, 'This is the wrong path. But follow my advice and you will soon become rich. In the kingdom of Bate-yul live Raja Sichong Drapa and his son Dime-Kundun. In their house is the magic jewel Norbu Ganden Punzam. If you can get it you will become rich by its magic power.'

'But,' asked the Raja, 'can we get this precious thing without fighting for it?'

'There is no need to fight,' said the old man, 'Dime-Kundun has sworn to give away anything he is asked for. If he refuses, all his merit will be lost. Send our beggars to ask him.'

Nobody was ready to go and in the end the old man himself went to the kingdom of Bate-yul and found Dime-Kundun sitting in front of his palace. The boy saw him hobbling along and having to rest after every few paces, and he came down to greet him. He raised him up and brought him to his house, clothed him with costly raiment, fed him and asked him why he had come and what he desired.

The old man said, 'Our kingdom is very poor and we have heard about you and have come for your help.'

Dime-Kundun said, 'I will give you anything you want—gold, silver, jewels and grain. I will load them on elephants and horses and send them to you.'

But the old man said, 'We do not want any of these things: all we want is your magic talisman, Norbu Ganden Punzam.'

Dime-Kundun replied, 'This is the one thing that is not mine; my father has given me everything else, but not this.'

The old man said, 'You are the Raja's son and everything is yours; you can surely give it to us; if you don't, all the merit you
have gained will be lost.'

Dime-Kundun was ashamed and promised to give what the old man desired, but said that he would have to bring him the treasure secretly.

He went when no one could see him to the chamber where Norbu Ganden Punzam was hidden. It was a dark place but light shone from it of its own accord. Dime-Kundun put it carefully in a basket and gave it to the old man and prayed to it saying, 'Through you our land has become rich. Now go with this old man and let none steal you or lose you. Give no trouble to my neighbours but make them rich too.'

The old man took the jewel home and gave it to his Raja and from that day there was no poverty in his country. But when the Ministers of the Bate-yul kingdom heard that Dime-Kundun had given away the jewel Norbu Ganden Punzam they told the Raja about it and he went to the chamber where it had been kept and found there was no light there. At first he was very angry but then he thought, 'After all my real treasure is my son.'

But the Ministers said to him, 'It is through this jewel that we are safe from our enemies and have grown rich and famous; now everything will be lost, and it is your own son who has ruined us. It would have been better if he had never been born. You must punish him.'

The Raja said, 'We will not kill him but I agree that we will have to put him in prison.'

So for seven days and seven nights they shut him up in a small room. They stripped him naked, tied him by hands and feet and dragged him round the palace by a rope round his neck. At night they dug a pit and filled it with thorns and stones. Even this did not satisfy the Ministers who urged the Raja to kill the boy. 'Tie him to four pillars and skin him alive.'

But there was one good and religious Minister who said, 'If we kill this boy, who will succeed our Raja who is already old?'

The Raja replied, 'We have agreed to kill him but he is my own son and he must not be killed in my presence.'

The good Minister said, 'There is a place called Kongbo Dywu Hashang,¹ where snakes, bears and tigers live by day and

¹In Tseia District of Tibet.
demons live by night. Send the boy there into exile for twelve years and he will be killed long before then.'

The Raja gave Dime-Kundun half of all his wealth and told him to go and live in this inauspicious place. The boy loaded his property on elephants, horses and mules and left his own land with his wife and three little children, accompanied by many servants. When the people heard about it many poor and sick people crowded round asking for alms and Dime-Kundun distributed his riches freely as he went along. It was a six-month journey to reach the place but within four months he had given everything away, and had no food or clothes or anything to ride on, and they had to go forward on foot.

At the beginning of the fifth month three gods (who were three Buddhas in the form of men) came to beg. 'Why have you come to me?' asked the boy.

'Because we heard,' they said, 'that you give to everyone.'

But Dime-Kundun said, 'Now I have nothing left to give. You can see how we are walking on foot with hardly any clothes to wear.'

But the three Buddhas said, 'You have three children. Give them to us to be our servants.'

The father was very sad at hearing this and he said, 'How can we part with our own children?'

But the Buddhas said, 'You have always given whatever you are asked. If you fail now all your virtue will be lost.'

Dime-Kundun was greatly disturbed and said, 'I am willing to give, but how can I make their mother willing?'

The Buddhas said, 'She will do whatever you say.'

So Dime-Kundun called his wife and said, 'I am very hungry. Go and find some roots and leaves in the forest.'

Directly she went away he called the children and gave them to the three Buddhas. The children said, 'Whatever you say is good, but we must say goodbye to our mother for we were in her womb and drank her milk.'

Dime-Kundun said, 'No, you must go immediately,' and they bowed before him and went away.

When the mother returned and saw her husband sitting alone and realized what had happened, she fainted and fell to the ground. When she recovered Dime-Kundun explained to her what she had always known about his oath—that he must give
even his own life if need be and even his own wife if his virtue was to endure. When she heard him, she stood up and, folding her hands, said, ‘I love my children. How can I not? But I shall always obey you.’ Then they went on their journey, sleeping under trees and eating roots.

Now there was only a month left of their journey and Kanchosum came in the form of an old man to beg. Dime-Kundun explained that he had nothing left, but Kanchosum said, ‘Then give me your wife.’ Dime-Kundun had to agree, and he said to his wife, ‘Serve this old man faithfully and forget me,’ and she did what she was told.

So now Dime-Kundun had to go on by himself. When there were still fifteen days left before he could reach the place of exile, he met the old man and his wife standing with folded hands beside the path. ‘I am giving you back your wife,’ said the old man. ‘I am very happy with your gift but I cannot keep it. You must take her back.’ So then husband and wife went on together until they reached Kongbo Dywu Hashang.

There the bears and tigers came and sat by them as if they were dogs and cats, and the snakes came to kiss Dime-Kundun’s feet. The husband sat in one place and asked his wife to sit a little way off and they lived in this way for eleven years without speaking to each other. They had no anxiety about food, for the animals brought them all they needed: even the demons when they came at night brought them gifts of fruit and flowers.

When eleven years and six months passed, the wife called from her place saying, ‘After six month’s more you must decide whether you will go back or stay here.’

Dime-Kundun replied, ‘My father’s orders were to stay here for twelve years.’

When this time was complete the animals and birds, the snakes and the demons sent them on their way with great honour. As they went along they met the three Buddhas with their children and Dime-Kundun said, ‘I gave you my children. How can I take them back?’ But they insisted. So the parents took their children and proceeded on their long journey.

But presently an old blind man met them and said, ‘I want nothing from you except that you should restore my sight.’

‘But how can I do this?’
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The old man said, 'Give me your own eyes.'

Dime-Kundun drew his knife and took out his eyes and gave them to the old man who put them into empty sockets and found he could see. The wife and children fell weeping to the ground but the old man said, 'You gave everything and thought nothing of yourself. Your fame will last forever.' Dime-Kundun lifted up his wife and children and consoled them.

Finally the old man who had taken Norbu Ganden Punzam heard what had happened and what sufferings the young prince had endured. 'We have become rich,' he said, 'But they have become poor. Let us now give the magic jewel back.'

So the old man took it to Dime-Kundun and offered it to him, and though he tried to refuse, at last he had to accept it, and the old man went away. The first thing that Dime-Kundun's wife did was to beg Norbu Ganden Punzam to restore her husband's sight and it did so. Then Dime-Kundun's father and ministers heard the story of all that had happened and how the talisman had been restored. Before Dime-Kundun and his wife reached home the Raja had sent his army with many gifts to welcome him. The Raja took off his own crown and gave it to his son who laid it on his head for a moment in obedience to his father and then put it on his eldest son. He and his wife went out of the village and offered sacrifices to Kanchosum, and as they did so they rose into the air and disappeared.

6

THE FLYING VESSEL

There was a very clever merchant, named Tsongpon Norbu Dzangpo, who became richer than many kings, and the Raja in whose kingdom he lived grew jealous and plotted to kill him. He sent for him and said, 'Among the hills there is a great lake beyond which is the magic talisman or jewel Norbu Ganden Punzam. It is round and shining and it is sometimes up in a tree, sometimes in the river. Go and get it for me, for you are the only person clever enough to do so. The water of the tank is haunted by many spirits, but I will give you charms to protect you.'
Tsongpon Norbu Dzangpo prepared to go but the king, instead of giving him real charms, made a mixture of human excreta and pig's dung, dried woman's blood and other dirty things, and gave it to him. After travelling for several days the merchant reached the lake and there he said to a tree, 'I am going to cut you down. If I am fated to find Norbu Ganden Punzam, do not allow a single leaf to fall to the ground, but if I am to die in the attempt you should break to pieces.' He cut the tree and when it fell it broke into many pieces. This put the merchant in a quandary and he said to himself, 'If I go into the water with this ill omen, I will be killed by the spirits; If I do not go, I will be killed by the Raja.'

So he made a boat, loaded his things on it and told his servants that he did not want them to risk their lives, and that those who loved their wives and parents more than him should go home and that those who loved him more should get into the boat with him. They all went home, for they remembered their families, and Tsongpon Norbu Dzangpo went alone across the lake. Almost at once there was a storm like a dark mountain and he threw his charm at it to pacify it, but the water gods were insulted and in their anger they sank the boat, the merchant was drowned, and the Raja was satisfied.

Tsongpon Norbu Dzangpo's wife was pregnant at the time and soon afterwards gave birth to a little son. When the boy grew up he asked his mother where his father was.

'You haven't got one,' she said, 'your father is the wind.'

But as he got a little older the boy saw that every hen had a cock and every sow had a pig and he said, 'I have seen all the creatures in the world and they all have fathers, I must have one too. If my father is dead or lost, tell me the truth.' But the mother still would not tell him.

The boy grew older and in time, like his father, he took to trade. One day he went to sell a bundle of threads that he had trimmed from bits of cloth. On the way he met an old woman who had a bag of cowries for sale and he said, 'Look, I have some yarn; you have cowries; let us exchange.' The woman agreed, and the boy joined the bits of yarn together and measured them. First he made a thread one foot long and a row of cowries one foot long. He did the same for the second and third length, each a foot long, and continued till the cowries
The women are skilled in embroidery; they make elaborately worked bags for their husbands and for sale, embroidered bands for the hair and other pretty things, and are not the less capable of bearing a very severe share of the out-door farm work.

Religious festivals: The Khamptis have two great religious festivals in the year,—one to celebrate the birth, the other to mourn the death, of Gautama. At these ceremonies boys dressed up as girls go through posture dances, for which, I believe, Burmese women are celebrated, and at the anniversary of the saint’s death the postures are supposed to be expressive of frantic grief; but as a more distinct commemoration of the birth, a lively representation of an accouchement is acted. One of the boy-girls is put to bed and waited on by the others. Presently something like infantile cries are heard, and from beneath the dress of the invalid a young puppy dog is produced squeaking, and carried away and bathed, and treated as a new-born babe.

Treatment of wives: It will be seen by what I have stated above that Khamptis are not restricted to one wife. I do not, however, recollect having met with more than two to one husband, and though the second wife may be the favourite companion of her lord, the supremacy of the first wife is always maintained. The Shan tribes have no idea of ‘purdah’, *i.e.*, of secluding their females; they all go to market and pay visits in a very independent manner, and the Khampti women have not suffered in character from the freedom allowed to them. The ladies of the Ahom families in Assam are equally unrestricted; indeed, till the occupation of the country
by aliens of our_ introduction, the seclusion of even wellborn Hindu maidens was not enforced, and to the present day, I believe, the ladies of the ex-royal family are in the habit of visiting the officials when they have an opportunity of doing so.

'Costume : The dress of the Khampti is simple and neat: the men commonly wear tight-fitting jackets of cotton cloth, a white muslin turban so twisted as to leave exposed the top knot into which their long hair is twisted, projecting somewhat over the forehead. The nether garment is of coloured cotton of a chequered pattern or of silk, more or less ample according to the rank of the wearer. The upper classes wear the Burmese 'patso', a piece of particoloured silk.

'Weapons : They are seldom seen without the useful weapon the 'dao' hanging in its sheath, plain or ornamented according to the condition of the wearer, by a sling made of split rattan. It is worn somewhat in front, so that the hilt is readily grasped in the right hand; this and the defensive round shield of buffalo hide are sufficient for a Khampti to take the field with, but many of them now carry muskets or fowling-pieces.

'When they rebelled in 1839, their combinations for attacks were well planned, but they lacked the courage to carry them out. They are, however, wonderfully useful auxiliaries in mountain warfare, capable of enduring great fatigue, of subsisting on any kind of food, and full of resources. They will start on an expedition, each man carrying his own provisions for ten days and all necessaries. These generally include a small cooking vessel; but a Khampti can cook his rice in a fresh-cut joint of
a bamboo. If it be a dash at a particular point and they are to return by the same road, they lighten their burden by making a ‘cache’ of food for one day at each halting place. If they come to an unfordable river, they construct rafts in a very short space of time, solely of bamboo. They will navigate rock-broken rivers on these rafts, skilfully shooting the rapids, and often thus pleasantly breaking a journey.

Women’s costume: The costume of the women is like that of the men, plain but neat. They wear their hair drawn up from the back and sides in one massive roll, which rises four or five inches, so much in front as to form a continuation of the frontal bone. This gives an appearance of height to figures that require an artificial addition. The roll is encircled by an embroidered band, the fringed and tasselled ends of which hang down behind; the lower garments, generally of dark-coloured cotton cloth, is folded over the breasts under the arms, and reaches to the feet. This style of wearing the principal garment, common to the Shans and Manipuris, appears to have been introduced into Assam by the former, as the Assamese women of the lower classes have all adopted it; but the Khampti women wear in addition a coloured silk scarf round the waist, and a long sleeved jacket. The chief ornaments are cylindrically shaped pieces of bright amber inserted in the lobes of the ears, and coral and other bead necklaces.

Burial grounds: The burial ground of the Khamptis is generally a tidily kept spot apart from the village. The graves are surmounted by conically shaped tumuli which, when first constructed (to the best of my recollection) diminish from the base
to the apex in a series of steps; the earth being kept in position by bamboo matting round each step. The Ahoms, notwithstanding their conversion to the Hindu faith, retained this method of sepulchre to a recent date. The tumuli constructed over the graves of the Assam (Ahom) sovereigns are very extensive, and when opened the remains of the dead have been found in coffins of massive timber with gold and silver ornaments, and outside the coffin various utensils, arms, and implements of agriculture.'

II
Tour Diary
1959

Wednesday, 18th February

TEZU¹ TO CHOUKHAM

We drove to the river and after crossing it in a little country-boat continued on elephants to Choukham, the chief of the Khampti villages. I had Sundarlal, T. K. Barua and my young son Wasant with me. For this tour I took a number of bronze images of the Buddha to present to the Buddhist temples, as well as a supply of paints with which the monks might decorate their carvings, and this led to a quite disproportionate enthusiasm about our visit. On reaching Choukham I was met by the monk, the Chief and a large concourse of villagers who carried my image to the temple with such blowing

¹Tezu is the headquarters of the Lohit Frontier Division of NEFA.
of trumpets, while old ladies in turbans, carrying pots of flowers, threw parched rice over us. In the afternoon there was a big procession round the village when our image in a chariot was carried by girls in front and boys behind. They played a sort of tug of war again and again as they went along. Finally there was a ceremony in the Bapuchang, as temples are called here, when the monk 'gave life' to the image and our other gifts were presented.

Thursday, 19th February

CHOUKHAM TO MOMONG

We made a four-mile journey to Momong on an elephant leaving about 11 o'clock, and here again we had a great reception and our image was taken in procession round the village. The temple here is very pretty, and contains some beautiful images, which are tended by three young Bhikkhus. In the evening there was a rather poor dramatic performance.

Friday, 20th February

HALT MOMONG

We were up early for a ceremony of blessing the image I presented. Later the monks called on me and we discussed what could be done for the improvement of the temple building which was rather dilapidated.

We lunched with the Chief in a very substantial house, sitting on the floor which was raised above the ground. There was some very tasty posha,
the famous raw-fish soup, and a dish of venison. In the evening I recorded a few Khampti stories, one of which was very good indeed.

Saturday, 21st February

Momong to Lathao

Today I travelled in a small boat with Wasant and Sundarlal while the other members of the party came by elephant which Tapan Kumar fell off. We had what has become the usual enthusiastic reception with very vigorous dancing and found a charming little temple, though rather tumble-down, and very friendly people. In the afternoon the boys staying in the temple, which serves as some sort of equivalent to a village dormitory, danced very well. At one point they hopped about imitating frogs. The boys are taught to read and write and to practise their religion. They do all the work themselves, collecting firewood, cleaning the temple and cooking the food which is contributed by every household in the village.

In Lathao there are a number of small stupas and I was told that the Khamptis offered them to the temples as one of the ways of attaining salvation. They are also put up by ‘sinners’—a sort of fine for any act of immorality.

It strikes me that the temples are very homely. The people joke and laugh in the middle of a ceremony, spit through holes in the floor, and even smoke cigarettes. There is generally a smell of cooking and dirty clothes are hung up round the walls. The boys play games in the compound. Yet these little buildings are filled with a sense of peace and I have
found great inspiration in them, in spite of the distractions and discomfort.

Sunday, 22nd February

HALT LATHAO

At quarter to three in the morning we were woken up to see the burning of the Maiku Sanphai, a tall pyre which is burnt in these villages in order to drive away the cold weather and to bring the warmth that will fertilise the fields. This is an Assamese, not a Buddhist, rite but the Buddhists observe it with enthusiasm. Unfortunately it was pouring with rain and the fire burnt reluctantly, so we did not stay long. Later in the morning there was a ceremony in the temple to 'put life' into the two small Buddhas that I had presented, and we spent the rest of the day quietly taking down Khampti legends and talking to the very friendly and charming people here.

Monday, 23rd February

LATHAO TO ENDEEN

We spent four hours today doing about seven miles and passed through some small villages—Shironto, Nanam and Sensap. The way was very rough, for there were no proper paths and we had to go through long stretches of marshland over which the elephant lurched and staggered, nearly throwing us to the ground. We visited the Bapuchangs in each of the small villages and were warmly welcomed, though unfortunately it rained all the time. At Endeen the Khamptis gave us an excellent lunch and
this was followed by an interesting drama, the layout of which reminded me of the Elizabethan stage, people sitting all round, boys playing the part of girls and everything symbolic: the actors swung their arms to suggest a journey, waved wooden swords for an excursion or a battle. They had paper for money and when anyone was killed he just got up and walked away.

Tuesday, 24th February

HALT ENDEEN

Rain fell all day and poured down in the evening, which gave us an opportunity of collecting a number of stories, and I spent a good deal of time in the temple. In the evening, in spite of the rain, the monks sent up a 'sky-lantern'. This custom, they said, goes back to an old King of Kosala who was so generous that he gave gifts to every creature in the world—not one was left out. When he had given everything he had, he went to the Lord Buddha and asked if there was anything else he could do. The Buddha said, 'All you have done is good but you have not yet made a lantern to light up the sky. If you make that, you will gain great merit.' The very next day the King made the lantern and ever since the Khamptis have followed his example.

Wednesday, 25th February

ENDEEN TO NINGRO

We began by riding on the elephant through very thick, wet jungle as far as Namsai and then
after lunch went by motor-boat down the river to Ningro where we had a tremendous reception. At night there was dramatic entertainment—a religious play about Dharam Kumar, the pious prince who abolished animal sacrifice. It was very well done, but unfortunately was interspersed with rather deplorable comic scenes when the players read out their lines in a very stilted manner.

*Thursday, 26th February*

**Halt Ningro**

We went early to the temple and there were prayers and ceremonies of worship for a couple of hours. I was awarded the ‘honorary degree’ of Phradayaka by the monks and was given the following blessing:

‘Oh stranger, you have come a long way,
And set up an image in this holy temple.
The rays of the sun drive away darkness from the earth,
The merit you have gained by your noble deed is like the sun’s rays,
And has washed away darkness from our minds. May some part of your merit also come to us
So that we may all share the divine blessing.’

Then the chief monk recited a blessing for the people which I had to repeat after him:

‘The thirty-two elements of the human body decay when the soul departs;
The six passions bring unhappiness to man. May all of you be free from bondage to the six!
As the Bhikkhus and Shramanas attained
Nirvana during the reign of Agnimitra the Second,

So may you all be free of rebirth.
May the merit I have acquired by the gift of the image pass to you,
And may you all live happily, undisturbed by any kind of sorrow and anxiety.

We spent a very pleasant day here talking to the monks and meditating in the temple.

Friday, 27th February

NINGRO TO DOOM-DOOMA

After a pleasant ceremony and breakfast with seven monks in the temple we left by motor-boat and, passing through Namsai, continued on a three hours' journey to Saikhowaghat and then went by jeep to Hansara where we spent the night with Peter James and his family, and the following day returned to Shillong.

THE HONEY-SWEET WORLD

When the earth was first made, the sun used to walk about on the earth and burnt everything to ashes. Then came the wind and blew the ashes into the air and everything was covered with water.

When Choukhun-Chang saw this he was very sad and went to find Phra, but he was not at his home. Some people said he had gone to the north, some said he was in the east, and others said he was in the south or west.

Choukhun-Chang went from one quarter to the other until he wearied and his body was covered with sweat. He sat down to rest and rubbed his body and many little bits of dirt came off and fell into the water where they turned into honey-bees who at once sought for a place to make a hive. At last they found a lotus-flower floating on the water and a swarm of bees settled on it and
built a hive. Gradually there were hundreds of hives and then
millions and tens of millions and when the wind blew it made the
hives bigger and bigger and from them a new earth was made.
When it was ready the new earth was as sweet as honey.
Choukhun-Chang smelt it and knew the world was ready but he
sent five gods to examine it and make sure. The smell was so
sweet that they did not return to the sky but stayed on the
earth, and gradually travelled to all the four corners of the world.
They did not care where they were going; they only wanted to
smell more and more of the sweet and beautiful earth.

The god who went to the west became a buffalo and
wherever she went she left many calves. One day she came to
a high mountain which she could not cross. She looked back
thinking that her children were following but not one came after
her. She cried loudly to summon them but as she cried her body
went down into the earth until only her head remained above.
From her mouth flowed a river of water which flowed every­
where she had wandered. This is the Ganges River.

The god who went to the east turned into a cow and had
many calves which she left wherever she went. One day she came
to a high mountain which she could not cross. She looked back
thinking that her children were following but not one came after
her. She cried loudly to summon them, but as she cried her body
went down into the earth until only her head remained above. From her mouth came a river of water which flowed everywhere she had wandered. This is the Brahmaputra River which causes goitre if you drink its waters, just as a cow’s neck
has a swelling like goitre.

The god that went to the south became a mare and wherever
she went she left many foals. One day she came to a high
mountain which she could not cross. She looked back thinking
that her children were following but not one came after her. She
cried loudly to summon them but as she cried her body went
down into the earth until only her head remained above. From
her mouth flowed a river of water which flowed everywhere she
had wandered. This is the Irawadi River.

The two gods who went to the north turned into a tiger and
an elephant and they had many children but when they reached
a high mountain and went to the top they saw them far below.
They too sank into the ground and water poured from their
mouth. The tiger's water became the Siriku River and went into the sky. The elephant's water turned into the Namkiu river and this too went to the sky. It is these two rivers that bring the rain. The very black clouds are the elephant's; the white clouds are the tiger's. When the clouds fight they make a noise like a tiger and an elephant fighting and this is the thunder.

THE MANY-COLOURED LOTUS

At first there was a world just like ours. Then the Sun found a wife and after a while she gave birth to five boys. So long as they were small the Sun did not allow them out of the house but when they had grown up they went out secretly and their heat was so great that the whole world caught fire and every living creature was destroyed by the flames: the earth became one great glowing coal of fire.

Choukhun Chang, the greatest of all, heard what had happened and came from his house to see. When he saw the whole world red and glowing he tried to find someone who could make it cool, but none of the gods were willing to help. So at last he went home and told his wife that the following day he would go himself to put out the fire but she replied, "Today or tomorrow I must bear a child. How can you leave me? I will be alone here with no one to help. You can't go, really you can't."

That very night a child was born but the mother did not know what had happened and could not see her baby, for this was Wind and it was born with a great noise and went as a whirlwind to the earth and drove down into it and brought the rain which quenched the flames and covered everything with water.

During that night a lotus flower with four leaves rose to the surface of the waters. In the morning Choukhun Chang was preparing to go and put out the fire he looked at the earth and saw the waters shining in the light of the early sun and the beautiful lotus in the middle. He was delighted at this and went down to see the flower and found each petal of a different colour. The leaf pointing to the east was yellow; that going to the west was white; the northern petal had all colours; and the southern was black and red.

The great god, happy and refreshed, went home planning to
make a new world. The ashes of the old world settled on the petals of the lotus and piled up until after five thousand years they turned into the earth which was, of course of various colours.

Three thousand more years passed and then grass and trees came into being. Choukhun Chang looked down and saw the beauty of the world but there were no men and women there. So he sent many male and female gods and they spread to the four corners of the earth and their children were human beings who are coloured as the petals were coloured.

Then at last the lotus went up into the sky, and many men climbed up to see it, but when Choukhun Chang saw them he picked up the flower and threw it down. Since then the lotus has become small and men can no longer climb up to the sky.

3

THE IMPORTANT DUNG-BEETLE

Putao-Lang-Lang is a great spirit in the form of an animal who lives below the earth and the earth rests on his back.

Once long ago the dung-beetle said to himself, 'How great I am! Yet if a man treads on me I will die. I can't fight with men but I must do something to destroy them. I know what I'll do. I'll go to Putao-Lang-Lang and tell him something, falsely, to make him angry.'

Accordingly, the dung-beetle went down below the earth and found Putao-Lang-Lang sleeping in spite of the great load on his back. He woke him up and said, 'You are sleeping very comfortably here but don't you know that up above everybody has died.' This startled Putao-Lang-Lang and he tried to get up. The whole earth shook and trembled and men cried, 'We're alive, we're alive.' When he heard this, Putao-Lang-Lang was quiet but he was so angry at being deceived that he hit the beetle on its head and ever since it has been small.

But the dung-beetle still goes from time to time to tell lies to Putao-Lang-Lang and whenever he does so it causes an earthquake. When the earth shakes, the Khamptis still cry, 'We're alive, we're alive.'
THE KING OF THE FISH

The earth is surrounded by the water and the king of the fish, who is called Panan-Ta, lives in it. He is so large that his body goes right round the earth and his head touches his tail. In old days there were plenty of fish in that water, but there was not a single fish in the rivers and ponds of the world.

Panan-Ta used to eat eighty thousand fish every day and thus the number of fish went down quickly. The remaining fish assembled one day to discuss how to save their race and they decided to leave the place and go to live on earth. Thus all the different varieties of fish came into being.

Since that day, as there is no fish in his own kingdom, Panan-Ta has lived by eating mud. Sometimes he bites his tail by mistake and the whole of his body shakes with pain and the earth quakes. This is what an earthquake is.

ECLIPSES

Frog, Sun and Moon were three brothers, of whom Frog was the eldest and Moon the youngest. Two of them always used to go to work in the fields while the third looked after the house. One day when Sun was at home cooking and the others were in the fields, a monk came to the house. The food was ready and Sun thought, 'Here is this hungry monk and it is time for food. I will give him my share and gain merit thereby.' So he gave him some very hot and delicious rice and asked what sort of fate he would have. 'Your fate is very good', said the monk, 'and one day you will be a Raja, but your kingdom will be as hot as this rice.'

After a time, Moon returned home from the fields and he too saw the monk and asked Sun if he had given him anything to eat. Sun replied that he had given him his own share of rice. Moon, anxious not to be behind in anything also gave his share, but the rice was now cold. He too asked what his fate would be. 'Your fate is good', said the monk, 'and you will be a Raja, but your kingdom will be as cold as this rice.'

Finally Frog, tired and hungry, came home and asked the
brothers what they had done for their visitor. They both said that they had given their shares of the food, and Frog resolved to do the same. He washed his hands and feet and brought out his rice, but since it was at the bottom of the pot it was burnt. but he gave it to the monk, and asked about his fate. ‘Your fate will be very bad’, said the monk, ‘for you have given me black rice and that shows that your heart is also black.’ This annoyed Frog who quarrelled with his brothers, since they had brought him bad luck.

Later on when Sun and Moon became Rajas, Frog tried to take revenge from time to time by casting his black shadow over them. As he thinks of his wrongs he goes now to Sun, now to Moon and opening his mouth, tries to devour them.

6

THE FIVE RIVERS

In the great cold Himalaya mountain, on the very summit, is a strange creature who has no body but five heads growing on a single neck. Each is the head of a different animal—an elephant, a snake, a buffalo, a tiger and a cow. From their mouths flow five great rivers.

From the mouth of the elephant comes the Brahmaputra, and this is why it has so much water and is so deep. From the snake’s mouth flows the dark water of the swift Siang, in which gold and silver from the snake’s head may be found. From the buffalo’s mouth comes the Phungmai river in China. From the tiger’s mouth comes the Kangkakha river which is also in China. From the cow’s mouth is the Ganges river, flowing to the west.

This place is so high that even aeroplanes cannot fly over it. For the air is like a pair of shears and cuts the aeroplanes in half if they dare to go there. But here is something which makes old men young and restores life to the dead, and anyone who bathes there becomes very beautiful.

7

THE COMING OF FIRE

At first Squirrel and Hornbill were close friends. One day
they were both very thirsty and they went to the river Malikha to drink. After they had refreshed themselves they went a little way off and sat down together. Hornbill said, 'Friend, is there any fire in your tail?'

Squirrel said, 'Friend, I cannot tell you; there may be for all I know.'

Hornbill said, 'Let me see if I can get it out,' and so saying he pecked Squirrel's tail and sparks flew out and set fire to the grass. Hornbill tried to blow out the fire but it blazed up all the more and Hornbill himself caught fire and that is why his feathers, which formerly were white, are now partly black.

Then Squirrel also tried to put out the fire and when he himself was caught by it he ran up a tree to escape and that is why he is now both black and white and lives in trees.

In this way Fire came to the world. When it spread everywhere the animals thought they were bound to die. They held a meeting and asked who could put out their new enemy. Tiger said that he would, and he tried but all that happened was that he got stripes over his body. Then Bear tried, but his long hair blazed up and ever since he has been black. Then Elephant, who was then white, tried and that is why most elephants today are black. At last Indra sent the wind and he blew the fire three miles down into the earth.

This is why when it is cold and wet the wind goes to and fro making the earth colder and in the hot weather the wind goes to rest beneath the earth and the whole world becomes hot from the fire that is burning below.

A LARGE FAMILY

Long ago there was an old man and his wife who had a very large family. They had as many as twenty sons and daughters, all of them the same size, very small, crawling about and dribbling on the floor. They were very poor and when they did get any food the children used to gobble it all up, and the old people hardly got anything to eat at all.

One day the old woman went out to work in the Raja's field and collected a little rice; the father went to the river and caught
a few fish. When they came home they said quietly to each other, 'Make something for the children and, when they are asleep, we'll at last have a good meal of fish and rice.' The children went to sleep but just as the old people were settling down to enjoy their fish, they woke up and demanded it.

This went on and on until at last the old man and his wife in despair took their twenty children to the forest. The father made little houses for them under the trees and put two or three children in each. He brought them some fruit and said, 'You will be able to get lots of fruit like this in the forest. In the meantime you live here and when we get a good harvest I'll come and fetch you.'

The parents went home and started working in their fields and now, since they had more to eat, they worked better. But the first year, though they got everything ready, there was no harvest. Nor was there any harvest in the second year. But the third year there was a fine crop and they remembered their children and went to find them. In the forest they found their twenty children alive and happy and doing well on roots and fruits. The only thing was that somehow they looked different. The parents saw that they had long hair on their bodies and each of them had grown a little tail. They were able to climb the trees and jump from branch to branch.

In spite of this the parents begged them to come with them. But the children said, 'How can we live in a village as we are now; we'll feel shy of meeting other people? But you go home and let us stay here where we are free and happy.'

So the parents blessed them and went home. But the children who were now monkeys, stayed in the forest.

THE ILL-FAVoured GIRL

A Raja had a daughter with a very pretty body, but her face was spoilt by the fact that she had only one eye. She was also deaf. Many young men heard of her beauty and came to seek her in marriage, but when they saw that she had only one eye and was deaf they went away disappointed. This depressed the
girl very much and she wanted to kill herself. Choulkun-Chang heard about it one day and took the form of an old monk and went to her. When she saw him she thought, ‘I’m going to die, so let me do one good deed before I leave this world,’ and she gave the monk a good meal.

The monk was pleased at this and said to her, ‘Ask for anything you want.’

The girl replied, ‘I’m going to die, so what do I need?’

The monk said, ‘Nobody loves you now, but I’ll make you something that everyone will love.’

Then the girl went away to the forest and hanged herself. When her father heard of it he went weeping to Phra and said, ‘My daughter has killed herself, for she could not find a husband. Now make her something that everyone will love.’ They carried the corpse home and buried it and presently from her heart grew up an opium plant. This is why the poppy flower is shaped something like a heart.

10

THE DOG AND GOAT

Long ago the dog and the she-goat were great friends. In those days it was the dog who had horns, but the goat had none. They used to go together to steal food. One day they went into an empty house and the goat found some uncooked rice, but that was not good enough for the dog, who wanted his food cooked. On the hearth there was a pot of rice with only a small opening. The dog could not get his head in as he was, so he took off his horns and put them down on the ground and then put his head into the pot and began to eat.

While he was doing this the owner of the home came in. The goat quickly picked up the horns, put them on and ran away. But the dog, having his head inside the pot and being so busy eating, did not hear the owner coming; and the man gave him a good beating with his stick. He hastily pulled out his head and ran away. But ever since he has had a crooked tail. He had no time to find his horns and, though he went back to get them, they were nowhere to be seen.
After a time, however, the dog met his former friend the she-goat and found her wearing his horns. He asked for them back but she ran away. Ever since there has been enmity between the two animals; the dog has a crooked tail; and the goat has horns.

11

THE TIGER'S WIVES

A tiger had two wives; one of them was herself a tiger and the other was a cat. The tiger-wife was elderly and had a cub to look after, so the tiger generally went about with his cat-wife. The result was that the tiger-wife, who was too weak and too occupied with the baby to go out hunting, was always hungry, especially as the husband used to give all the best food to his younger wife, and in the end she wasted away and died. Later the husband died also.

When the tiger cub grew up he said to the cat-wife, 'You're my little mother but you're a very bad woman. You took all my mother's food and she died. I hate you and one day I'm going to kill you'. The cat said, 'How can you catch me? Whenever I see you I'll run up a tree.' The cub replied, 'You can do that if you like, but I'll sit at the bottom of the tree and starve you to death.' The cat said, 'Then I'll go to live with human beings and you'll see how you'll be able to catch me.'

This so annoyed the tiger that he sprang at her, but she escaped and as she ran away she laughed at him, crying, 'You won't even see my droppings'. She reached the nearest village safely and has lived with men ever since. But even now she is always careful to bury her droppings.

12

LITTLE BOY LOST

There was a Raja, a very rich man, but he had no child. His subjects said to him one day, 'You have become old and have no child. After you die who will be our Raja? You must discover...
some way to have a son.' This pained the Raja very much indeed. Night and day he thought about it and it made him so depressed that he wanted to die. But at last Phra blessed him and the Rani conceived, and in due course gave birth to a male child. When the Raja heard this he was so overwhelmed with joy that he came running to see his wife. The child had not yet been washed and when the Raja saw it, he said, 'Your son is very dirty. When people will come to see him, they will laugh. So take him to the river and wash him.' Accordingly the Rani went to the river just as she was and while she was going her blood fell drop by drop on the ground and from these drops came the first land-leeches. While she was washing the child in the river, blood was mixed with the water and turned into water-leeches.

While she was washing her child he suddenly slipped from her hands and fell into the river and a large fish swallowed him. The Rani, shocked and terrified, returned home. But her eyes were so full of tears that she could not see the way and she fell down and cut her face.

The Rani was still crying when she reached home and when her husband asked the reason she explained to him how she had lost her child. The Raja did not believe her, for he saw the blood on her face and said to her, 'It is not true that the child fell into the river; the truth is that you have eaten him. You're a devil and one day you may eat me.' So saying he took her to the river and dropped her deep into the water and she turned into the first crocodile.

As the Rani suffered for no fault of her own and this great injustice was done to her, the crocodile is always one of the greatest enemies of men and whenever it gets an opportunity it kills them.

The fish which had devoured the Raja's son went down the river and was caught in a trap prepared by a fisherman. When the fisherman saw the fish he was overjoyed and said to himself, 'After many years today Phra has been kind enough to give me a big catch. I'll take it home for my wife.' And when he brought the fish to his house he shouted with great joy to his wife, 'Come, come. You have never seen such a big fish.' The old woman came out and they both laughed with delight. The belly of the fish was swollen and as the husband was about to cut it up, it laughed, for it knew what he would find. Hearing
the fish laugh, although it was now dead, the fisherman cut it up very carefully, and they soon saw the child, which was still alive. As they had no child, they were very glad to have him, and they brought him up affectionately. The news spread all round and ultimately the Raja also came to hear of it. He said to himself, 'This might be my own son. After all, it might have slipped into the river from my wife's hand.'

So the Raja came to the fisherman's house on an elephant laden with presents of gold and silver. He told the story of his lost son and offered them anything in the world in return for the boy. The old man and woman were moved by the Raja's sorrow and gave him the child. They said that they did not want anything in return and that no worldly thing could give more happiness than the sight of the Raja's pleasure. But the Raja did not listen to them and gave them all the gold and silver he had brought for them.

The Raja came back home and was very happy. He gave a feast to all his subjects, but on this occasion he looked very sad and gloomy as he recollected the injustice he had done to his wife.

THE GOOD CRAB

A man and his wife had no children, but they made a fine field and sowed paddy in it. In this field lived a crab with his wife and children; nearby was a little pond with frogs and fish. There was very little water there at the best of times and one day when a herd of wild elephants came there to drink, they dried it up altogether and the frogs and fish wept for thirst.

The crab heard them and said to his wife, 'Why are the fish and frogs crying in our pond? I'll go and see if I can help them.' The wife said, 'Here we are living in a hole. We ourselves don't get enough to eat and we have our little children to look after. If you go to help the fish I'll have to go out and find food and the children will follow me. The owner of this field is very bad and he'll catch the children and eat them. So if you are going go quickly and come back quickly'. The crab replied, 'Don't
worry: I’ll be back soon.’ But when he reached the pond and saw how the frogs and fish were dying of thirst he said, ‘Don’t worry: I’ll do something to help you.’ He dug a ditch from the pond to the nearest river and the water flowed in and made the frog and fish happy.

Meanwhile the crab’s wife, hungry and worried at her husband’s long absence, went out to find food and the children followed her in a long row. That day the owner and his wife were working in their field and they chased the baby crabs and caught them, thinking they would make a good meal. When the she-crab saw what had happened she scuttled back to her hole and wept there. The owner of the field took the little crabs home, killed them and cleaned them and threw their backs away. The crows flew down to eat them, blessing the owner of the field.

The crab now returned home. His wife was sitting at the door of their hole and when she saw her husband she wept loudly and told him what was happened. The crab said, ‘Don’t worry. If our fate is good, we will have lots more babies and I will certainly take revenge on the owner of this field.’

Now that year the crop was very good. Every day the crab went to and fro in the field cutting through the stalks at the bottom and the grain dried up. When the owner saw this he decided it was the crab who was spoiling his crop. He offered sacrifices but nothing happened and he spent much of his time looking out for some way of catching the crab. One day the she-crab said, ‘Beware of this man, for he is very bad, and if we’re not careful he’ll catch us.’ The crab said, ‘He won’t catch me but if he does, don’t worry.’

One night the crab went to the field as usual and cut the paddy stalks till dawn but then he could not find his way home. The owner and his wife came to look at their field and the wife saw the crab. ‘Look’, she cried, ‘there’s the rascal who is doing the damage.’ She tried to catch him but the crab bit her, hard, and she began to cry holding her hand in pain. The owner was very angry but decided not to kill the crab immediately; he would catch him, he thought, take him home and torture him to death. So he caught him and tied him to a stick with a bit of string and took him home.

When the crows saw this they were pleased, for they thought
they would get something good to eat. But the headman of the village, whose name was Pha-Jampu, was a very good, kind man and when he saw the big crab he said, ‘Give it to me.’ ‘No,’ said the owner, ‘this is my enemy. I’m going to kill him slowly and then I’ll eat him.’ Pha-Jampu said, ‘I’ll pay you anything you want if you will give me this crab.’ In the end they agreed on a price of one hundred rupees and Pha-Jampu took the crab home and kept him in his house. When the crows heard about it they were very annoyed and plotted to destroy Pha-Jampu as well as the crab himself. They went to the snake and told him that Pha-Jampu was now plotting to kill him. The snake at first refused to believe this and said, ‘Such a merciful man could not do such a thing.’ But the crows went on talking until the snake became angry and one day as Pha-Jampu was going to his field he bit him and he fell to the ground unconscious. Then the crows assembled and said to the snake, ‘You have done well: you have saved yourself in time.’

The crab waited for his friend and then went to find him. He found him lying by the path and heard the snake discussing the matter with one of the crows. With one claw he caught the snake by the throat, with his other claw he caught the crow. The snake said, ‘It is not my fault, I only bit him because of what the crow told me.’ The crow said that he had never said anything and there was a fine quarrel. At last the snake said, ‘Let me go and I will make Pha-Jampu alive again.’ So the crab let him go but he killed the crow with his claw. Then the snake sucked out the poison and Pha-Jampu recovered his senses. He treated the crab with honour and sent him home to his wife.

The she-crab was sitting at the door of her hole, waiting for her husband. She greeted him and they lived together happily.

PHANG-THOI AND THE TIGER

There was a man called Phang-thoi who was a great liar and cheat, but he was clever and amused people so much that he got enough to eat by his stories.

One day when Phang-thoi went to the forest to cut cane he
met a boar with great tusks. His mouth watered when he saw it, but he couldn’t kill it himself. So he made friends with the boar and said, ‘I have come here to tell you something. Yesterday I met a tiger and he said that when he meets you he is going to fight. So I have come to warn you, the best thing for you to do is to wallow in wet mud every day. This will make it hard for him to catch you and even if he does, the mud will get into his mouth and choke him.’

Phang-thoi went to the tiger and greeted him with respect. This pleased the tiger and they sat down together in the sun. Phang-thoi said, ‘Raja, you are a great lord of the jungle and all creatures fear you, yet today I heard a boar boasting that he was a greater lord even than you and the tiger was nothing but a conceited fool. “I will fight him,” said this boar, “and will tear him to pieces with my tusks and rule in his stead...”

The tiger was very annoyed at hearing this and not a little frightened and said, ‘What shall I do?’ Phang-thoi replied, ‘Why are you afraid? This boar is a tricky fellow, it is true, and his tusks are very strong, but if you will promise that whatever I do you won’t eat me, I’ll help you.’ The tiger swore friendship with Phang-thoi who then went and cut some cane and tied it round the body of the tiger, until he looked just like a bundle of wood. Then Phang-thoi took the tiger thus protected to meet the boar and the two creatures fought. When the tiger tried to bite the boar, all he got was a mouthful of mud. When the boar tried to bite the tiger, all he did was to blunt his tusks. In this way they fought until they were both weary. Then the tiger withdrew for a moment to relieve himself and went secretly to Phang-thoi and asked what he should do. Phang-thoi said, ‘Run away across the river as if you were defeated; the boar will follow you and the mud will be washed off in the water and then you can easily kill him.’ The tiger ran to the river and swam across and the boar followed, but when he reached the other bank the tiger leapt on him and killed him.

Phang-thoi then went and found a pole covered with thorns and removed the thorns from one end. He tied the boar’s carcase to the pole and gave the thorny end of it to the tiger, taking the smooth end for himself. He said to the tiger, ‘Now we must pick this up, but be careful not to cry “O mother!” for if you do the meat will go bad.’ When they picked up the pole
the thorns scratched the tiger’s shoulder and he cried, ‘O mother!’ Phang-thoi pretended to be angry and said, ‘Now the meat is spoilt. Put it down, for it is no use carrying it any further.’ The tiger was abashed and asked what he could do to put things right. Phang-thoi said, ‘I’ll make you a bamboo tube. Go and get water in it and I’ll wash the boar’s body and it may be all right. But when you come back roar loudly to frighten away any other hunters there may be.’ Phang-thoi cut a bamboo tube for the tiger but made a little hole in the bottom. The water was a long way off and every time the tiger filled the tube, it ran out before he reached the boar.

Meanwhile Phang-thoi, leaving the skin as it was, removed the meat from inside and took it a little way off and roasted and ate it.

The tiger got more and more weary until at last a pigeon flew down beside him and cried, ‘Kutku-koo, kutku-koo. The tiger is fetching water and Phang-thoi is eating the meat.’ The tiger looked at his bamboo tube and saw the hole in it. When he realized how he had been deceived, he roared like thunder. When Phang-thoi heard him he at once put bitter herbs into the boar’s body and sat beside it. The tiger came roaring and full of temper and asked, ‘Have you eaten it all by yourself?’ Phang-thoi replied, ‘It is so bitter that no one could eat it. Try and see for yourself.’ The tiger put some of the meat in his mouth but it was so nasty that he was sick. As he was being sick Phang-thoi put some of his own roasted meat in his mouth and the tiger said, ‘How can you eat it when I can’t?’ Phang-thoi said, ‘This is not the boar’s flesh, but I am so hungry that I have cut off my organs and am eating them.’ The tiger said, ‘I’m very hungry too.’ And Phang-thoi replied, ‘Bite off your organs and eat them.’ But when the tiger did so, he suffered such terrible pain that he begged Phang-thoi to put some medicine on the place quickly. Phang-thoi rubbed in salt and chillies and it only hurt the more. Then he said to the tiger, ‘Come, let’s go a little way further and I’ll find you some better medicine.’

They came to a field and Phang-thoi dug a deep pit there. ‘Go into this, my friend,’ he said, and the poor tiger, who by now was in such pain that he would do anything to get relief, went down into the pit. Phang-thoi threw dry grass and wood
on top of him and set fire to it. The tiger's hair was burnt off and he managed to get out and ran towards the village. Phang-thoi followed shouting, 'The tiger is mad. Kill him quickly' and the villagers in great alarm came out and killed him.

This was an excuse for Phang-thoi to quarrel. 'Why have you killed my tiger?' he shouted. But the villagers pacified him and cut up the meat and began to roast it. Phang-thoi thought, however, that he would not get enough; so he said, 'This is a great occasion and we must have a proper feast. I'll get my drum and we will dance first.' The villagers liked this and Phang-thoi brought a wasp's nest which looked rather like a drum; he broke it in the middle of the people and the wasps drove them all away. Phang-thoi was able to sit down and eat as much as he wanted, and when his belly was full he took the rest home.

But the people were very cross and wanted to kill him. He climbed up a tree and they started to cut it down. Then he jumped down and hid behind a plantain and a man cut it with one blow of his dao. Finally he hid himself in a hole in the ground and the people poked a long stick down and hurt him very much. Then suddenly there was a storm and the rain poured into the hole and the end of the story is that Phang-thoi was drowned.

15

A CLEVER TRICKSTER

There was a man called Aimapet who had a splendid buffalo, as large and fat as an elephant. It used to damage other people's fields and killed anyone who tried to drive it away. In the end the villagers got weary of it and said to Aimapet, 'Keep your buffalo properly tied up or we'll kill it.' Aimapet said, 'I don't mind, kill it if you want to and you can eat the flesh, but you must give me the skin.' So the villagers assembled and killed the great animal and had a feast of the meat and gave the skin to Aimapet. He dried it and when it was ready he told his neighbours that he was going away to sell it somewhere.

He set out and came to a great forest through which there
were two paths: one went to another village and the other was a path where thieves used to go to hide. He took the thieves' path and soon found himself lost. There was no village to be seen and no sound of human voice. He was frightened and stood still while he considered what to do. But at that moment he heard people talking. There were in fact three people there in the forest, thieves who had stolen money from the Raja of Assam, and were sitting under a tree quarrelling about the division of their spoils.

One of them said, 'Don't make such a noise.'

The second said, 'Why not? what is there to be afraid of?'

The third said, 'There is indeed cause for fear, for something that is making a strange noise is coming through the forest and may kill us.'

When Aimapet heard this, he drummed on his dry skin and made a loud noise bad-bad and the thieves, supposing that an evil spirit was approaching, ran for their lives, leaving their money behind. Aimapet went to the tree and picked up as many rupees as he could carry, leaving the skin behind.

When he returned home the neighbours asked him, 'What have you got there?' 'Rupees,' he said, 'lots of rupees. I sold my buffalo skin for them, though actually I only got a little as I had only one skin. If I had had more I would have been rich.' The people were astonished and asked where he had been. Aimapet said, 'The people in that forest are so anxious to have skins that they quarrelled as to who should buy mine.'

The villagers then killed all their buffaloes, dried the skins and took them to sell in the forest expecting to make a fortune. In the meantime Aimapet built a big house and collected a large store of food.

The villagers travelled for months without coming to a single village or meeting anyone. They finally realized that Aimapet had deceived them and they threw their useless skins away and returned home. They said to one another, 'How are we going to plough our fields now that our cattle are dead?' They threatened to burn down Aimapet's house and drive him out of the village but Aimapet said, 'How did I deceive you? You killed my buffalo; you ate its flesh; you killed your buffaloes of your own accord and you gave me nothing.' But the people did not listen to his protests and burnt his fine new
house. Aimapet couldn't rescue a single one of his things: they were all burnt. His wife wept loudly, but Aimapet himself jumped about shouting with laughter, pretending to be very pleased and saying, 'Now I am really rich.'

Aimapet collected the ashes of his house and filled a lot of baskets, putting a little salt on the top of each. Then he took them away to sell. One evening he reached the house of the Raja of Assam. It was rather dark and Aimapet was very tired. So he put his baskets under the platform of the house and lay down to sleep near them. But the Raja saw him and cried; 'Gohain Deo, you are very tired; come and sleep in the house.' Aimapet was going to bring his baskets up, but the Raja said; 'Put your things down below: no one will steal them there.'

Aimapet said, 'You have many cows: they may eat my things and they are very valuable.'

The Raja said, 'Don't worry. My cows are very good animals; they'll never touch your things and, if they do, you may take as many cows as you want instead.'

So Aimapet went into the house and the Raja fed him royally. When his host was safely asleep, Aimapet went quietly out and opened his baskets and then went back to sleep.

During the night the cows, attracted by the salt on the top of the baskets, broke them open and scattered everything about. Aimapet got up very early and pretended to weep loudly crying, 'My precious things have been spoilt and it is all your fault.' The Raja felt ashamed and said, 'Take as many cows as you want.' Aimapet took a hundred cows home.

When the neighbours saw this they were astonished and asked Aimapet how he got so many beautiful cows and he replied, 'I sold my ashes for them. For the people over there are very keen to have ashes; I wish I had had more houses for you to burn.'

When they heard that the people burnt down their own houses and took the ashes out to sell. But of course no one bought them and they returned very angry, determined now to kill Aimapet. But he said, 'Do not kill me in a hurry, but set up a pole on the bank of the river, tie me up in a basket and hang me on the pole and then all of you, just as if you were going to war, attack the pole and cut it into bits. I will fall into the river and drown.' The neighbours liked the idea and
went to prepare themselves by drinking beer.

Just then a Chin man came by with a hundred elephants for sale. When he saw Aimapet tied up in the basket he hit it with his whip and Aimapet, pretending to be angry, asked angrily who he was. The Chin asked humbly, 'Why are you in this sad condition? Who has tied you up?'

Aimapet replied, 'I am Aimapet. No one can tie me up. I have done this of my own accord. My parents are dead and from inside this basket I can see them and talk to them.'

The Chin said, 'Big brother, I came here with my wife to trade, but she died on the way. I greatly long to see her and talk to her again. Do change places with me. So that I may do so.'

Aimapet said, 'That isn’t possible, for I have not yet finished talking and I will take a long time.'

So the Chin man said, 'If you will let me get into your basket, I will give you my elephants'.

At this Aimapet agreed and they changed places. Aimapet tied the Chin up and went off with his elephants. Presently the villagers, in their war-dress and drunk with beer, came to the pole and cut it into pieces in spite of many protests from the Chin and he fell into the river and was drowned. Aimapet kept out of the way for several days and then returned home with his new elephants.

In the meantime the people had decided to divide Aimapet’s property and to share his wife among themselves. When Aimapet returned they were sitting in the council to decide this. He said to them, 'The pole you made was too thick. Had it been longer I would have got three hundred elephants instead of a hundred.'

The people said, 'If we can get elephants so easily, then tie us up as we tied you.'

Aimapet, chuckling to himself, put up a lot of poles, tied all the men up in baskets and then cut down the poles and the people fell into the river and were drowned.

Aimapet went home very pleased with himself. The wives of the village asked where their husbands had gone, but he did not say anything. After a month the stream dried up and the woman found the corpses of their husbands and realized they were widowed.
Aimapet was now the richest man in the village and he took as many of the women as he wanted to be his wives.¹

16

THE MESSAGE OF THE DARK CLOUDS

There was a Khampti whose name was Choupet. He was a rascal, a drunkard and a gambler. But he had a friend Chouto who was a very good man. The two men earned their living by trade and one day they decided to go on a very long journey, taking with them ivory, the horns of deer and a rhino’s horn. When they reached the kingdom of Ming-Marika they sold their goods at a great profit. Choupet ate and drank enormously and soon gambled away all his money. But Chouto saved his and had a lot to take home.

On their way back, just as they were approaching their village, Choupet began to realize how the neighbours would look down on him, as he had no money and would respect his friend because he had plenty. So he decided to kill Chouto and take his money as his own. He wanted to be fair, however, and told Chouto what he intended to do.

At that moment dark clouds spread across the sky. Chouto said, ‘Do whatever you will, but wait a moment while I talk to these clouds.’

He stood up and raising his hands to the sky, cried, ‘O clouds, my friend wants to kill me but, if he does, always come to remind him of what he has done’.

Then he said to Choupet, ‘I am ready: you may kill me now!’

Choupet promptly killed the poor man and took his money, and when his wife saw it she told everyone what a fine husband she had, since he had come home with such riches. Chouto’s wife came to the house and asked where her husband was and Choupet said, ‘I was able to sell my goods quickly, but Chouto could not find customers and he has gone on to more distant villages’.

¹I have studied the Trickster theme in NEFA and Assam in my Myths of NEFA, pp. 137, where a number of stories are given. Goswami refers to a tale very similar to that in our text as current in Assam, Goswami, op. cit., p. 103. Hutton also gives a close parallel told of the Angpmi Matsuo. See J. H. Hutton, The Angami Nagas (London, 1921), pp. 276 f.
Choupet was now rich and lived well and became greatly respected. One evening while he was sitting on the platform outside his house and his wife was doing her hair with a bamboo comb, dark clouds spread over the sky. When he saw them Choupet laughed loudly. His wife asked what had amused him but Choupet refused to say. She pressed him and at last he began to accuse him of betraying her during his travels with the girls he had met on the way and said that he must be laughing at the memory of his adventures. So then he finally told her the whole story but begged her to repeat it to no one.

So long as Choupet had plenty of money he and his wife lived happily enough, but when it was finished they began to quarrel. He accused her of eating too much and spoiling her clothes, and used to beat her almost every day. So at last she ran away to her parent’s house. He followed her to bring her back and there they quarrelled again and in her rage the wife told the story.

The tale got round and Chouto’s brothers heard of it and killed Choupet in revenge. So it is that he who kills another will himself be killed.

THE STORY OF THE NOBLE CHOUJEYA-KUNGMA

In his kingdom there lived the Khampti Raja, Choumi-Chiriya. In the kingdom of Uirinja was another Khampti Raja, Raja Magdha.

When Choumi-Chiriya was still a young boy, his father had been defeated by Raja Magdha’s father, and when he grew up he remembered his wrongs and decided to kill Raja Magdha and take his kingdom. He called his minister, Amat-Lung, and said, ‘I propose to fight Raja Magdha. Get my weapons and my army ready.’ The minister made all preparations and they went to Uirinja to fight.

When Raja Magdha heard that his enemy was coming, he realized that the latter was more powerful than he was and he decided to flee to the forest and hide. He said to his Rani, Nang-Snana, ‘Somehow or other we must escape.’
At that time she was pregnant and it is said that they were not afraid to die but they desired that their child should live. So they fled away to the frontier where there was a village in which a worker in bronze called Papumu lived. He was their friend and he let them hide in his house.

Raja Choumi-Chiriya sought everywhere for them and took the kingdom of Uirinja under his control.

In the meantime in Papumu's house Rani Nang-Snana was delivered of a son whom they named Choujeya-Kungma.

When the boy grew up he showed a great desire for learning and one day he said to his parents, 'Give me your blessings and I'll go somewhere to study.'

His parents explained their unhappy state as exiles to the boy and that their enemy desired to kill them.

'Whatever you do,' they said, 'tell no one who you are.'

Then they blessed him and sent him away and he went to study under a very learned guru.

Now in the Kingdom of Choumi-Chiriya there was a barber called Satajeya who made a little money by going round playing a sort of guitar, begging for alms and cutting people's hair. One day he came to Papumu's village and learnt from the gossips that Raja Magdha and his wife were hiding there. He went to beg from them and when he had seen them went back home and reported the matter to his Raja, who was very pleased and, giving him a reward of ten thousand rupees, immediately sent his soldiers to catch the fugitives. They went to the village, seized them and beat them all along the way.

At that time Choujeya-Kungma, having finished his studies, was returning home and met his parents in this sorry condition. He did not realize what was happening and told them, in his own language which the soldiers could not understand, all that had happened to him. The parents were very happy at seeing their son but they were terrified that the soldiers would take him also and Raja Magdha said, 'Go away quickly and hide.'

When the boy had gone the soldiers dragged his parents to the palace and when Raja Choumi-Chiriya saw them he ordered that they should be taken to the forest and killed. Their son followed afar off and, when the soldiers had departed, dug a grave for them and wept above it.
Then the boy, sad and anxious, wondered where to go and what to do. He went to a herdsman who was a good player on the lute and this man taught Choujeya-Kungma to play. He became so expert that the herdsman gave him the instrument and the boy went to his enemy’s palace and played before it.

One evening as he remembered his parents he sang sad songs about them and woke up Raja Choumi-Chiriya who was deeply moved by the music. The following morning he sent his men to find the player and they brought Choujeya-Kungma to him. The Raja asked him to play before him and the boy played many tunes, sad and merry.

The Raja gave him his sword and said, ‘From today you shall live as a prince in my house.’

After some time the Raja announced that he would go out hunting and told his minister to make arrangements. They went to Brindaban and as they went through the forest came on a sleeping deer. When it heard them it jumped up trembling.

The Raja saw it and said, ‘Don’t let it escape. All of you surround it and whoever lets it go will pay for it with his life.’

The deer, terrified, leapt from side to side and at last broke through the very place where the Raja himself was standing.

The minister asked, ‘Had the deer escaped through one of us you would have killed him, but what punishment will you give yourself?’

The Raja said, ‘You all go home. I and the young prince will go on in search of the deer and won’t return until we’ve killed it.’

They searched until night fell and the Raja was very tired. He said to the young prince, Choujeya-Kungma, ‘Let’s rest here.’ And he put his head on the boy’s lap and went to sleep, after telling him to keep a watch for tigers, bears and human enemies.

Now Choujeya-Kungma said to himself, ‘This is the man who killed my parents and has ruined my kingdom. He is my greatest enemy and now is my chance to take revenge. I can easily kill him and no one will know.’

He drew his sword but then he thought, ‘It’s a great sin to kill a sleeping man. I can’t do it’, and he put the sword back in the scabbard.

But after a little while he drew the sword again but then he
thought, 'To kill a man who has laid his head on your lap is a great sin', and he put the sword back in its scabbard.

And yet again after a while he drew the sword but said to himself, 'It’s a great sin to take the life of another. This Raja sinned in killing my parents but why should I sit by killing him?'

As Choujeya-Kungma put the sword back in its scabbard for the third time, the Raja woke from a dream and started up saying, 'Who are you? Tell me the truth. Why did you draw your sword to kill me and put it back three times?'

At this the boy caught the Raja’s head by the hair with one hand and drew his sword with the other and said, 'I am the prince whose parents you so cruelly killed. You’re my greatest enemy. I shall kill you, for it will be no sin for me to do my duty.'

But Raja Choumi-Chiriya begged forgiveness saying, 'I’ll give you whatever you want. I have a beautiful daughter, Nang-Changduati, and I’ll give her to you. I will restore your father’s kingdom and give you half of my own.'

Then the boy forgave his enemy and they went home. Raja Choumi-Chiriya gave orders for an immediate marriage of his daughter with the young prince but his minister said, 'Didn’t you let the deer escape? What punishment are you giving yourself?'

The Raja was annoyed and said, 'Don’t talk about that now. I want this marriage to take place quickly.'

And forgetting all other things the noble Choujeya-Kungma was married to the beautiful Nang-Changduati with great joy and they had every kind of blessing throughout their lives.

18

THE FIVE WIVES

Chou-Chathi was a fine young fellow, strong and handsome and his wife adored him. She never left him for a moment but

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1This is the story of Prince Dirghayu, son of King Dirgheti, which is ascribed to the Buddha himself in the Maha-Vagga. Names and places differ, but the main course of the story is the same.
followed him about everywhere. One day he said to her, 'Tomorrow I'm going very early to the fields and you had better come later with our food when it's ready.'

She said, 'No, let's go together'; but he replied, 'No. I'll go first, for there is an enormous lot of work to be done.'

Chou-Chathi got up before dawn and went to his field, which was near the river, and worked there. But when the sun rose in the sky, a snake bit him and he fell to the ground unconscious.

At noon the wife came with their food and she saw her husband lying on the ground and supposed him to be asleep. But when she went to awake him, she found him cold and decided that he must be dead. She wept loudly and cut a plantain tree, out of which she made a little boat. She put the body in it and set it floating down the stream. It drifted on and on until it came to a village where there was living a shaman who had two unmarried daughters. They were bathing in the river at the time and when they saw a body in this little boat they brought it to the bank and carried it to the house.

They said to their father, 'Look at this fine, handsome youth: you must make him alive.'

The father put some of his magic medicine on his head and he revived.

Chou-Chathi stayed on in the house and he was so handsome and charming that the sisters quarrelled over him until at last they both married him. The father did not like this at all and he turned Chou-Chathi into a maina bird, tied a bit of thread round its throat and drove it away. The maina crossed the river and came to the house of an old woman who was living nearby. She had a good crop of grain and the bird began to steal it. But when she found out she made a trap and caught it. The maina was very pretty and talked well and she made a cage for it and kept it in her house.

In a village not far away there was a Raja who had an unmarried daughter who lived in a separate house which he had made for her. The old woman knew that the Raja was very fond of his daughter and gave the maina to her in the hope of getting a good present in return. The girl was delighted and gave her twenty rupees. She kept the bird in the cage in her own room and everyday took it out and fed it. One day she
noticed the thread round its neck and untied it. Directly she did this the bird turned into Chou-Chathi. When she saw him the girl was filled with love and fear and at once tied the thread round his neck again and Chou-Chathi once more became a bird.

After this every night the girl turned the bird into Chou-Chathi and in the morning, when people began to move about, turned him back into a bird and put him in his cage. But now of course, she had to order a double portion of food and this soon roused suspicion; the cook watched secretly and when he saw what was happening he reported it to the Raja.

The Raja did not like this at all and sent his servants to kill the maina. But the girl heard them coming in time and just as the men reached her door she let the bird fly out of the window. Unfortunately the thread caught in a bit of bamboo and broke and the bird turned into Chou-Chathi and he fell heavily to the ground. But he jumped up and ran for his life pursued by the Raja's men.

Soon he reached the house of a good old man called Nang-Chanta, where he and his wife and daughter were eating their supper. The boy begged them to save him and the old man made him sit down to eat just as if he was a member of the family. When the Raja's servants came they asked the old man where the boy was and he said, 'You may search the house if you wish. Here is my wife, my daughter and my son-in-law.' They searched the place but could not find anyone else and went back. The old man gave his daughter to Chou-Chathi in marriage and they lived there together.

At the next big festival they invited the neighbours to a feast. The villagers came and some local merchants and among them was Chou-Chathi's first wife, the two pretty daughters of the shaman and the Raja's daughter. The first wife caught Chou-Chathi in her arms and cried, 'Here is my husband.'

The two daughters of the shaman at once began to quarrel over him, each declaring, 'Here is my husband.'

The Raja's daughter took him by the hand and said, 'Here is my husband.'

But the last girl said, 'He doesn't belong to you; he's mine.'

So there was tremendous fight between the five wives and to keep them quiet the people held a Council and let each of them tell her story. When the elders had heard everything they gave
their decision. They said to the first wife, ‘You threw him away
in a little boat in the river—he is not yours.’

They said to the two girls, ‘Your father turned him into a
bird and drove him away and you did not save him, how can he
be yours?’

They said to the Raja’s daughter, ‘You were so frightened
that you drove him away, so how can he be yours?’

But to the last girl they said, ‘Even when the Raja’s servants
came, you were not afraid and so he belongs to you.’

19

THE ELEPHANT’S TUSK

There was once a kind and generous Raja who gave an old
childless widow a field and seed to sow in it. When the harvest
was ready she prepared to reap it. But in the night a white
elephant came and destroyed all that she had. She knew it was
a white elephant because she saw its hairs among the grain
which had been trampled by its feet.

The poor old woman went weeping to tell the Raja. He
replied, ‘Had the elephant been a black one I would have had it
killed, but I cannot kill a white elephant’. She was disappointed
at this, but she herself took a dao and went to find her enemy.
On the way she grew very thirsty: there was a little pool full of
the elephant’s urine and she drank it and at once conceived. In
due time a son was born to her. The boy grew up and his
friends used to tease him saying, ‘You were born without a
father; other boys have a father to play with, but where is
yours?’

The boy went home and asked his mother where his father
was. ‘My child,’ she said, ‘you haven’t got one.’ By and by
when the boy grew bigger he used to get very angry when other
boys teased him and he bothered his mother until she told him
what had happened.

When he heard the story the boy went to search for his
father and found the tracks of the white elephant and measured
his feet against them. When he did this he thought that he was not big enough to find his father and went home. Three years afterwards he tried again and now he found that his feet were the same size as the elephant's and he went on his way.

As he went through the forest he met a man who had tied five hundred bamboos to his back and was dragging them along. To test his strength the boy caught hold of one of the bamboos and the man found he could not drag them any further. He looked around to see what had happened and when he saw the boy he threw the bamboos down and said to him, 'I am strong enough, but you are even stronger than I. Let me come with you.'

They went along through the thick jungle and presently met a man who was dragging five hundred carts. The boy caught hold of the last cart and the man could not pull any of them along. He looked back and when he saw the boy he left the carts alone and said to him, 'I am strong, but you are even stronger than I. I'll come with you.'

So the three of them went all together. The elephant-boy, they soon saw, had the strength of twelve elephants. After a time they came to the foot of a great hill, from the top of which stones and earth were falling down. The elephant-boy said to the bamboo-boy, 'Go up and see who is knocking all this stuff down.' The boy climbed up and found a great cricket. He attacked him, but with a single kick the cricket bowled him over and over and he lay senseless on the ground. When he didn't come back, the others climbed up to see what had happened and the cricket kicked the cart-boy over too. The elephant-boy said to himself, 'This must be a very strong creature,' but he caught him by one leg and threw him in the air; the leg came off in his hands, and the cricket lay where he fell.

The boy put the leg on his shoulder and found his friends, saying to them, 'Come, let's go up the hill and if we can find any fire we will roast this meat.' Presently they saw smoke and found an old woman sitting beside a fire. The elephant-boy sent the bamboo-boy to bring some fire from her and she said, 'Help yourself,' but when he bent down to get it she caught hold of him, broke his arms and legs, rolled him up into a bundle and put him in a corner of the house with the idea that she would eat him for supper later on.
Then the elephant-boy sent the cart-boy to fetch fire and he too asked the old woman for it and, when he bent down to get it, she caught him and broke his arms and legs, rolled him into a bundle and put him in a corner of the house, intending to eat him for supper too.

Finally the elephant-boy went himself to the old woman and realized what she had done. He hid a little way off to watch her and soon saw that she had a magic stick. By using one end of it a man could jump a great distance; by using the other end you could cure a man's broken limbs and restore him to life. The boy stole the magic stick and hit the old woman with one end and she went jumping away; then he used the other end to restore his two friends to life.

At last the three friends came to the top of the great mountain and saw the elephants in a valley below them. There from above, they looked down on red, blue, yellow and black elephants and among them as their king a white elephant, whom the boy recognized as his father. He asked his friends to hit him with the magic stick and with great bounds through the air he came to his father.

The white elephant at first was surprised and angry but he asked the boy who he was. The boy told the story and described the long journey he had made to find him. The elephant said, 'If you really are my son, break off my left tusk. If it comes off without hurting me I will know that you are my son.' The boy did so and the elephant felt no pain. The tusk was forty-five feet long and twenty-two-and-a-half feet thick. When the elephant recognized his son he said, 'Take this tusk away with you and from it you can get anything you want.'

'But how can I carry it?' asked the boy.

'Say to it: "If you are really my father's tusk, become very small," and then when you want to use it make it big again.'

The boy made friends with the red, blue, yellow and black elephants and then after making the tusk small he rejoined his friends and they all went happily home.

When they came to the place where the carts had been left, the elephant-boy used the tusk to fill them with grain and the cart-boy took them away. When they came to the place where the five hundred bamboos were lying in the forest, the elephant-boy used the tusk to give his friend many presents and let him
go, and at last he himself came home.

When the neighbours heard the story, they went to tell the Raja who called the boy to his palace. The boy had made the tusk small to carry it and the Raja said, 'How can this be your father's? His tusk was very big.'

At that, the boy made it big and frightened the Raja who thought, 'If this boy turns against me, I will lose my kingdom.'

So to please him he gave him his daughter in marriage and the boy, by using his father's tusk, gained everything he wanted and became rich and great.

20

THE BEWITCHED MONK

There was a great temple surrounded by fruit trees where a well-known and widely-respected monk lived in peace and virtue. One day he went into the garden and tried to bring down some of the fruit and struck and shook the trees again and again without success. Presently an old woman came by and she looked up at the trees and clapped her hands and at once the fruit came down in showers.

When the monk saw this he was astonished and asked the woman to teach him her magic charms, for he felt the temptation of power. But she rebuked him, saying, 'Bhante, you are a teacher and everyone honours you. My charms are evil. It took me many years to learn them and now I am sorry that I did.'

But the monk pressed her to share her secret with him and at last she said, 'I'll teach you, but no sin should attach to me.'

The monk said, 'Certainly, no sin will attach to you.'

And so she asked him to show her where he slept and promised to come at night and teach him.

That night the monk lay down to sleep not really expecting her to visit him, but at midnight she came and spat on his mouth and went away without saying a word. He breathed in the spittle and it went down into his body.

In the morning he went as usual to worship in the temple but suddenly he felt possessed and drunken and he stayed there
the whole day until sunset seeing terrible visions. He saw human blood and pig's blood and the livers of human beings and at night like a mad man he went round the village, first to the pig-sties, then to latrines, and then to where a man lay with his wife. He only returned just before dawn and then fell exhausted into a dreamless sleep.

When the monk awoke he bathed and went to worship; but in the evening he gave a great yawn and clapped his hands, whereupon the boys in the temple fell ill.

This continued day after day until another monk in a temple some distance away heard of it. He came and secretly tied some rice-flour in the afflicted monk's robe, leaving a tiny hole for it to escape. At night when the monk went as usual round the village, the flour fell to the ground and left a track behind him. Next day when they had finished their worship, the second monk took the first to the village and showed him where he had been. The first monk realized what had happened and that it was the old witch who had enchanted him.

They found the woman and begged her to take the charm back. If she did not, they said, she would be guilty of a very great sin. So she took the monk to the river and caught him by the feet, making him fall into the water and then pressed his head down into it. He vomited and in the mess the evil charm came out and he lost consciousness. They took him back to the temple and let him sleep and when he awoke he was well again.

21

THE WITCH ON THE SILVER TREE

In a place called Myung-Pishi lived a great many witches. Not far away a Raja had his home and near his palace there was one tree which bore golden fruit and another which bore silver fruit. So the Raja and his people grew rich and never lacked money to buy food.

The witches on the other hand were poor and worst of all they could not get human flesh to eat. So one day one of them turned herself into a great vulture and went to the Raja's village which she reached at sunset. She perched on the golden tree and the branch broke; she flew from branch to branch but every branch broke beneath her weight. When she had
spoilt the entire tree, she flew to the silver tree but its branches were stronger and did not break.

Presently a four-year-old child came running along under the tree, and the vulture flew down and carried him home where the witches ate him. In this way the bird used to go daily to village and catch children. The people were sad and in despair and tried to kill her. When they failed to do this they asked the Raja to destroy the silver tree on which she made her home. The Raja replied, 'If having a silver tree means losing our children we should destroy it, however much money we may lose.'

The people dug a ditch round the tree and filled it with fierce fire till the silver melted and the tree fell. The molten silver ran all over the ground and then hardened. When the bird came that evening she found no tree and had to sit down on the ground on the hardened silver. But the villagers had surrounded the place and they came from all sides and killed their enemy. In their rage and despair some of them tore her to pieces and ate the body, feathers and all, but others said, 'This bird ate our own children; we cannot possibly eat it.'

Those who ate the body of the bird themselves turned into sorcerers and witches.

22

THE LAUGHING RAJA

Very very long ago there were two Rajas, each living in his own kingdom. One of them was such a man that when he was pleased at anything he laughed loud and long and the sound caused the sky to pour down rain. The other Raja also laughed, but in his case he laughed when he heard anything surprising and unusual, and then he was sick and brought up gold and silver and made everyone rich.

One day the first Raja fell into a fit of melancholy and for three years nothing could make him laugh and so there was no rain and a famine came to his land. His people did everything they could to please him and make him laugh but without success.

At the end of the three years when the people were dying of thirst and hunger, the Raja in his anxiety and sorrow thought, 'If I make friends with this other Raja he might save the situation. I will ask him to stay with me here and we will
surprise him with something. If he laughs we will get gold and silver and even though we can’t grow food we will be able to buy it.’

So the first Raja went to visit the second Raja and offered him many presents and told him his troubles. The second Raja said, ‘Go home now and in a week’s time I’ll follow you.’ The first went home and a week later the second prepared to go too. But his wife said that she wanted to accompany him. He replied, ‘But look, the first Raja didn’t bring his wife to see me, so how can I take you to see him?’

She said, ‘But how can I live without having you to look at? I must come with you.’

Her husband replied, ‘I’ll make an image of myself and while I am away you can look at it and remember me.’

The Rani agreed to this and said, ‘Let it be as tall as you and hollow inside and make it of pure gold.’

After this was done the Raja went away but when he had travelled a few miles he remembered how much love his wife had professed and decided to go back secretly to see whether she was true or not. He went unobserved into the palace and hid himself inside the hollow image.

That evening the mahout, who looked after the royal elephants, went to get food for his animals from the Rani. She said to him, ‘Today my husband is away. Food is ready for us. Come and eat with me. There is no need to bother today about the elephants’ food. Let’s eat and spend the night together.’

The mahout exclaimed in astonishment, ‘But the Raja is standing there’—and he pointed to the image. ‘Don’t talk in such a way.’

The Rani laughed and said, ‘That’s not the Raja: it is only his image.’

She tried in every way to seduce the mahout and at last took him in her arms but he was very frightened and said, ‘The Raja will kill me. Let me go.’ And he pushed her from him and escaped.

She cried, ‘Don’t you trust me? Look, I’ll prove it’s only an image.’

And she hit it hard and knocked it over. When it fell to the ground it opened of its own accord and the Raja came
out. He did not say anything but went away on his visit to
the other kingdom.

Now the first Raja had prepared great entertainments for
him. Soldiers and musicians came a long way along the road
to greet him and they escorted him to the palace. There was
a great feast and many story-tellers were called to surprise him
and make him laugh. But the Raja felt very upset about his
wife’s behaviour and was worried about what she was up to
in his absence. He listened to stories for a whole week but
did not even smile once. This annoyed the other Raja and he
remembered all the expense he had been put to. ‘If he does
not laugh by tomorrow,’ he said to himself, ‘I will put the
gloomy fellow in jail.’

Then he said to his visitor, ‘I am going out now and I am
going to lock you up in your room.’

Then he went to his Rani and told her all that had
happened. ‘Tomorrow,’ he said, ‘I’ll make one last attempt.
I’ll go and find somebody to amuse this man and I’ll be back
by evening.’ Early next morning he went out but actually only
to the jail where he had a deep pit made.

That same morning the pig-man went to get food for the
pigs from the Rani. He was an old lover of hers and she at
once took him in her arms saying, ‘It has been a long time.
Come and play with me, for the Raja will be away all day.’

‘It is true it has been a long time,’ he replied, ‘and I have
sent you many messages but you have never come to meet me.’

And he slapped her hard but she only laughed and said,
‘You hit me but it does not hurt a bit. I love you with my
whole life.’ And she took him in her arms again.

The second Raja was watching all this through the window
and was struck by the thought that both he and the other
Raja had been deceived by their ever-loving wives and this
tickled him so much that he began to roar with laughter and,
as always when he laughed, he brought up gold and silver.
He brought up so much that the entire palace was full of it
and it overflowed into the garden. But he himself could not
stop laughing and, he went on laughing till he died.

*This story may be compared with the Khamba tale “The Perils of Matri-
mony” (5.1) which is on similar lines.*
There was a kingdom by the sea. Here lived an old man who made his livelihood by fishing, but though he worked very hard, he was always poor. One day he went far out into the sea but caught nothing until he was approaching the shore. He threw his net into the water and caught a big fish. He tried to pull it into the boat but it was too much for him and he fell into the water and the fish swallowed him.

Now the old woman, his widow, had no children and lived alone. After her husband's death she had very little food to eat. One night she dreamt she was lying with the fish and as a result she conceived. The neighbours thought that she must be a very bad woman. But some of them said, 'She is old now. It can't be a baby; it must be some disease.'

Gradually the woman's belly became enormous, three times the size of her whole body, and when her time came, at night when all were asleep, she gave birth to a beautiful fish-baby. She was surprised but was immediately possessed with love for her little fish and she got a large pot for him and filled it with water. The next day, when the neighbours came, they were astonished to see the fish swimming in the water.

Now the child took the form of a fish by day but at night he left his fish-skin and turned into a charming boy and drank his mother's milk and made her very happy.

When the boy was about ten years old, some merchants came in a boat from Marike-Jang-Phang and when the fish-boy heard about them he told his mother that he wanted to go with them to trade. The mother said, 'Son, you are a fish and they are human beings; how can you go with them?' But the boy collected some food and got into the boat and went with his new friends.

Presently they came to the place called Myung-Killing-Killit. They drew the boat to shore and the merchants said to the boy. 'You stay here and look after the boat.' So he sat quietly where he was, while the merchants went to sell their goods. The Raja there gave them a little golden ball, and one of them came back to put it in the boat and then returned for other
business. The boy hid the ball in his mouth: the merchants thought it had fallen into the river.

When their work was finished the merchants took the boy home and went to their own country. The old mother stood on the shore every day looking for his return and when they saw her the merchants gave her some cloth and money.

The boy did not show the golden ball to anyone but he used it to build a good house and now was able to give his mother proper food.

In that place there lived a Raja with seven pretty daughters. One day the boy said to his mother, ‘Go to the Raja and ask him to give me one of his daughters for wife.’

This frightened her and she said, ‘I'm only a poor old woman living in a hut. Besides, you are a fish. How will he give one of his daughters to you?’

But the boy insisted that she should go and she started. But after going half-way she was so frightened that she returned and told her son that the Raja had been very angry and had driven her away.

The boy said, ‘Why do you lie to me? You never went near the Raja. Now go back again and I promise that he won’t be angry.’

This time the poor old woman went trembling to the Raja and asked him for one of his daughter. He was very annoyed as she had expected and abused her but, as she was going away, he said, ‘If you want one of my daughters for your son, then in eight days you must make a road from your house to mine with plantains growing on either side. If you don’t, I’ll have you both buried alive.’

Trembling with fright the old mother went home and told her son. But the boy laughed and said, ‘Don’t worry: this won’t be difficult.’

For five days the boy did nothing, then on the sixth day he prayed to God to make the road and the trees in a single night. God heard him with compassion and at once made the road with plantains growing on either side. On the next morning, the seventh day, the Raja came with all his subjects to see the spectacle.

The Raja was so pleased, that he at once called his seven daughters and asked which of them would like to marry the
fish-boy. The six elder girls refused and the Raja was afraid that if his youngest girl also refused he would be compelled to break his word. But fortunately she agreed to marry the boy and the Raja gave her presents and sent her with the old woman to the fisherman's cottage. When she got there, the girl saw her future husband swimming as a fish in his pot and she was sad at first, but she said to herself, 'It is my fate and I must accept it.'

But that night when she lay near the fish's pot and had fallen asleep, her husband took his human form and sat on the bed beside her. He smoked a cheeroot and ruffled his wife's hair. After sitting like this for two hours he turned back into a fish and went into his pot. When the girl woke she found her hair dishevelled and cheeroot ash scattered on the floor and knew that a man had been there. The boy did this again and again until one night the girl only pretended to be asleep, breathing heavily with her eyes shut. The boy came out of his pot and that night lay down beside her and fell asleep. She at once got up and threw his fish-skin, which he had left at the foot of the bed, into the fire. When morning came the boy jumped up and tried to find his skin, but there was his wife standing before him. She begged him to forgive her and after that they lived happily together and in the end he himself became a Raja.

24

THE NANG-PADUNGMA STORY

On the bank of a small lake in the middle of a great forest there was a very beautiful temple in which there lived a monk whose name was Chou-Chang-Yachi. He was very devout and was always worshipping the lord Buddha. The lake by which he lived was full of lotuses and Chou-Chikiya Raja Indrajit found it so beautiful that he used to go down daily from the sky to bathe there. He used to take water and flowers into the temple and offer them. One day he thought, 'If only there was

1The King of the Sky is usually called Indra in Hindu mythology.
a girl as beautiful as these flowers.' He passed urine on one of them and the flower conceived.

He went away and in time the flower gave birth to a beautiful little girl. She began to cry and when the monk heard her he came out of the temple and found her cradled in a lotus. He picked her up and looked after her in the temple. He used to put his little finger into her mouth and when he did so milk used to come from it and with this as her food the child quickly grew up. So long as she was a baby the monk let her share his room but when she grew too big he made a special place for her and taught her to serve him and clean the temple and offer flowers daily to the images.

One day when Raja Indrajit came down to bathe he saw her and asked the monk what her name was. The monk said that he had not given her any name and asked him to do so, and Indrajit named her Nang-Padungma. As the days went by the monk taught the girl wisdom and she became lovely and bright as the sun.

Not far away there lived a Raja, a very handsome man, who was married but had no children. He employed a famous hunter called Pulanu who used to provide for his family by selling venison. He himself did not eat the flesh of animals but drank their blood and used to barter the meat for rice.

One day Pulanu was out hunting and got nothing and was worried that his children would be hungry. He went on and on from one forest to another wandering among the trees and finding nothing. At last when he was himself almost dying of thirst he came to the lake near the temple and seeing it forgot his thirst and gazed at the beautiful scene in rapture. He drank some water and was so delighted with the place that he continued to sit by the lake until he remembered that he must get something for his children.

He got up to go away and then he saw the temple and was again struck by its beauty. He went inside and when he saw the girl his senses left him and he fell to the ground. The monk came and raised him up and let him sleep in his own bed. Presently Pulanu revived and he worshipped the images and paid reverence to the monk, and asked who made the temple.

The monk said, 'Raja Indrajit made it.'
'Then is this girl yours?'

'No. she's the daughter of the sky-god. She was born of a lotus flower and her name is Nang-Padungma.'

That evening Pulanu reached home to find his hungry children watching the path for him. But when they saw he had nothing for them they cried and went to bed supperless.

Next day early Pulanu got up and bathed, put on new clothes and went to visit the Raja who was angry, for it is considered unlucky to see a hunter early in the morning. But Pulanu begged him to forgive him and to hear his story. The Raja was very pleased when he heard about the beautiful girl in the temple and gave him a thousand rupees, promising that on the day he was married to the girl he would give him enormous wealth.

The Raja sent six of his most trusted servants to the temple to see the girl and arrange his marriage with her. But the monk said, 'The girl is not my daughter. I will have to speak to Raja Indrajit.'

So when the sky-god next came to the temple the monk spoke to him and he was agreeable.

'I know this man. He is a good ruler and he may certainly marry her.'

The Raja began to make preparations but the monk was worried about entertaining so many important people in his humble temple. So he prayed to Indrajit, asking him to send musicians, elephants, plenty of food and gold and silver. On the appointed day all these things were provided.

Then came the Raja with a host of followers like a swarm of bees. The monk entertained them and they greeted him with reverence. The Raja gave the girl royal presents and then took her home where he built a special palace and laid out a beautiful garden for her.

In this way four years passed happily, but the girl had no child. One day the Raja said to her, 'If you don't give me a son, who will rule my kingdom after my death?' Nang-Padungma was very sad at this. Now she had a very clever maina as a pet and she decided to send the bird to her father to ask him what she should do. The maina flew away into the sky and found Raja Indrajit sitting on his throne. When he heard the message he prepared magic medicine and tied it in a little package of leaves to the bird's neck. Unfortunately, at that
very moment Indrajit's wife Nang-Sudama looked out of her window and saw what her husband was doing. She was a very suspicious woman and said to herself, 'This man of mine is always going down to visit earth. He must have a secret wife there and this bird is her messenger.' So she sent a kite to kill the maina on his way home. But when the maina saw it coming he quickly flew back to Indrajit and told him. The Raja said, 'Don’t be afraid; go by a zig-zag route and the kite won’t be able to catch you.' The maina did escape but he was so frightened that he dropped some of the magic medicine into the forest and some into the great river and when he reached home only one-third was left. Even that was sufficient, for when the girl ate it, she quickly conceived. She said to the bird, 'I am very pleased with you and I'm going to set you free from today. Go where you will.'

The maina flew into the garden and there met a she-parrot: they made friends with each other and wanted to get married. But the parrot said, 'I cannot marry you, for it will bring disaster on you. I’ll tell you why. Yesterday I saw a monkey and his wife; the wife was very pretty and the monkey adored her. She had a child in her belly and wanted to eat a plantain and an apple. When she asked her husband for them he said, ‘Come, let us go together to the garden and I’ll give you the fruit there.’ They went to the garden on the edge of the forest and there the monkey said to his wife, ‘I’ll keep a lookout for the owner and you get the fruit.’ The wife climbed the tree and the monkey sat on the ground below. When the owner discovered what was happening he came with his bow and arrows and a dog and when the monkey saw him he ran away. But his wife, supposing her husband to be on guard, went on eating the fruit and the owner was able to shoot and kill her. The monkey did not even come back to see his wife’s body. And the very next day this monkey who professed to love his wife so much, began to live with another monkey. This is why I don’t believe in getting married.

By the time this story was finished it was evening and the parrot flew away to her nest and the maina returned to the girl.

When the girl's time came, she gave birth to a beautiful boy and the Raja was very happy. Indrajit heard of it and came to see the child and named him Chousiri-Nanta: When the
boy grew up. Indrajit said to him, 'Never suppose that you are alone. You have two brothers. From that magic medicine which fell in the forest a white elephant was born, from the medicine that fell in the river a crocodile was born. If ever you are in trouble call on them and they will help you.'

Beyond the great river there was a place called Myung-Sem-Lang where there lived the very lovely daughter of a Raja. This girl had a nurse who was a good dancer and singer. But she was not a good woman, for she loved many men. When the Raja heard the stories about her, he was afraid that his daughter would be corrupted and drove the nurse from his kingdom. She went to the father of Chousiri-Nanta and he and his Rani thought that she would be just the person to look after the boy, for they had not heard anything about her, and the nurse in fact did look after him very well. But one day she told him about the other Raja's daughter, saying, 'If you want to marry anyone, there's a girl for you; she's heard about you and is always thinking about you.'

Chousiri-Nanta was excited at this and said, 'Go to this girl and tell her that her name is in my heart and that I am longing to meet her. Somehow or other you must arrange it.'

The nurse went secretly and told the girl what a charming boy he was and the girl said, 'Let him come here when they have all had supper and gone to sleep.'

So the next day Chousiri-Nanta dressed in his best clothes, girded on his sword and was about to go when he thought, 'How will I cross the great river?' He remembered the crocodile and called on him and he carried him across. The girl was waiting for him; all the world was asleep and they talked for a long time, but there was no love between them and he came back long before dawn. But after this he went every night and they made love with each other.

But at last Chousiri-Nanta's parents discovered what was going on and they banished the nurse. She decided that she would kill the boy in revenge. She went to the girl and asked whether she slept in her lover's arms or separately. 'Do you put your head,' she asked, 'on his right arm when you sleep with him?' The girl said that she did not, and the nurse replied that this meant that the boy did not really love her.

That evening, when Chousiri-Nanta visited the girl, she
received him lovingly but refused to sleep with him.

‘You don’t really love me, for you never take my head on your right arm.’

‘But that is because it is not the custom.’

The girl insisted, ‘No, you don’t love me,’ until at last he let her sleep like that and soon forgot everything in the world.

As they were sleeping peacefully and happily like this, the girl’s parents sent their soldiers who broke suddenly into the house but the boy managed to escape and called on his brother the crocodile for help. The crocodile fought the soldiers and they cut off its tongue, but it saved the boy by taking him across the great river.

Next morning the nurse went to the girl and told her that her father’s soldiers had killed her lover and thrown his body into the river. The poor girl fell to the ground and died of grief. Then the nurse went to Chousiri-Nanta and told him that it was because the girl was so sad at his running away that she had died of sorrow. Hearing this the boy also fell to the ground and died. On one bank of the river the mourners prepared to burn the boy’s body, on the other side they prepared to burn the girl’s. The smoke rose up from both pyres and met in the middle and went up into the sky and you may still see it as the Milky Way.

When the white elephant heard this sad story he flew to Raja Indrajit and told him what had happened. The Raja took the form of an old man and hastened to the place, leaving the elephant behind. When Indrajit’s wife saw him she thought he was the supposed secret wife’s messenger and cut off both his wings and ever since the elephant has not been able to fly.

But Raja Indrajit went to the boy’s pyre and restored him to life. Then he crossed the river and restored the girl to life. The two were married at last and they both lived very happily. Chousiri-Nanta was the first Khampti Raja and this is one reason why Khamptis regard elephants as their brothers and a white elephant as the king of all elephants.

25

THE SOURCE OF TRAGEDY

Long ago there lived a great monk, a Chou-Chila. He used to fast constantly and gave generously to the poor, and as a
reward, he went to heaven after his death. There he became the Chief of the heaven-dwellers and lived happily and at peace. But in time he grew proud and said to himself, 'I am lord of everything here and I shall do as I please.'

And with this thought in mind he began to trouble the ordinary unimportant people of whom there are many even in heaven.

When Choukhun-Chang saw the monk was proud and arrogant he went to him and said, 'You've lived very happily here for a long time but now you'll have to go back to earth.'

And he rolled him up like a ball of flour and threw him into a river and he floated down the stream.

On the bank there lived a Raja who had a very lovely wife. He never left her, took her everywhere with him, and when he had to be away kept a maid-servant to look after her. This maid used to go every morning to bathe in the river and brought water for the Rani. One day she saw a great ball of flour floating down, waded into the stream and brought it to the bank. She thought it was very beautiful and decided that it would taste good. She began to nibble at it and liked it so much that she ate it all. Directly she had finished it she became very beautiful—more beautiful even than the Rani herself.

On her way back to the palace she met the Raja. The Raja did not recognise her as his maid-servant and was so thrilled at seeing such a lovely creature that he took her in his arms. Unfortunately the Rani caught them in this embrace and was furious and beat the maid so hard that she vomited all the flour she had eaten and at once became ugly again. A cow came by and ate the vomit and she became beautiful in her turn. When the Rani saw this she beat the cow and the cow brought up the flour and she too became ugly as before. Then a buffalo came by and ate the vomit and was transformed, but the Rani could not beat her, for she escaped into the forest, where after a time she became pregnant and gave birth to a wonderful human child. The mother used to let the boy ride on her back and fed him with her milk. His name was Choungi-Kaikham.

When Choungi-Kaikham was eleven years old he went to a village called Mungtai-Yang. By day the buffalo used to graze near the village and at night would take the boy on her back to the forest.
In this village lived an old man and his wife and their two daughters, Among and Amju, both very pretty. The old man had a few cows and the girls used to take them out to graze in the forest and one day they met the boy riding on the buffalo’s back. When he saw them he sang to them and the girls sang in reply.

This went on day after day and gradually Choungi-Kaikham grew up and after a time his mother, the buffalo, died. The boy buried her and went to the grazing-ground and wept. When the girls heard him crying they asked what the matter was and since they were his only friends they took him to their house. He stayed there for a time and then built a little hut for himself.

In that village there was a young prince called Maokolang and his mother. When this prince grew up the mother was worried about getting a bride for him and went to find one but there was nobody suitable. But one day when the prince was out hunting on his elephant, as he returned home in the evening, he passed the hut where the girls lived and met them bringing their cows back and at once decided to marry them both. When he told his mother she summoned the girls’ father to her palace. When the messenger came to call him the old parents were very worried, for they suspected that this might be something about their daughters and they had already decided to marry them to Choungi-Kaikham.

But the parents had to go and when they reached the palace Maokolang and his mother received them with honour and the old lady offered them anything they wanted in return for their daughters. They replied that they could say nothing immediately but would let her know after a week.

Back at home they said to each other, ‘Perhaps this is a good thing after all. It is true that this other boy is very handsome but as princesses our girls will have an easy life and we ourselves will become rich. Moreover, if we don’t agree the prince will give us a lot of trouble.’

That night the father had a dream. He saw the Brahma-putra river dividing into three streams, in one of which there was a golden grindstone and a golden axe, and a voice said to him, ‘Give your daughters to whoever can find these things.’

In the morning when the father told his wife about his dream
she said, 'This is an excellent idea. The prince will be sure to find the golden grindstone and the golden axe.'

And they sent a messenger to Mankolang and told him about the test.

Now the prince was very rich and he had a boat made and took many of his servants with him to the river and searched everywhere but could not find the golden things.

Then the two girls, who loved Choungi-Kaikham and desired to marry him, told him about the test. The boy had nothing and thought it was impossible for him to fulfil the conditions, for he had no boat and no means of making one, but he went to the forest and brought back a lot of creepers and made a net. In the evening the two girls went with him to the river and he threw the net into the water and when he pulled it out there was the golden axe. He threw the net a second time and now he caught the golden grindstone. The axe weighed two maunds and the stone weighed eight and he took them back to his hut.

But unhappily someone saw him and reported the matter to the prince. He said, 'If you can steal these things and bring them to me, I'll make you rich for life.'

Choungi-Kaikham was very tired and, after going to bed that night, he fell fast asleep at once. So when the thief came to his hut he was able to steal the axe and grindstone without difficulty. He took these precious things to Maokolang and that very night they made all the preparations for the wedding and next morning sent a party to fetch the girls.

When Among and Amju saw what was happening they were very upset and ran to the boy and told him that his things were stolen.

'So now,' they cried, 'we'll have to marry the prince.'

The boy said to them, 'Don't worry. Sooner or later I'll marry you both.'

He ran out of the house as if he were mad and going to the forest prayed to Choukhun-Chang, telling him all his troubles. Choukhun-Chang heard him with compassion and gave him a sword.

Armed with this, Choungi-Kaikham went to the village of another Raja, Raja Phakiolat, and threatened that he would kill everybody there unless they did what he wished. The Raja sent for him but he said, 'Why should I go to this fellow? What
can he do to me?" Hearing this the Raja was angry and went to fight but Choungi-Kaikharn killed him and ruled in his stead and took the Rani as his queen.

After a time news came that in a place called Khiku there was a Raja called Phakikho who had a very beautiful wife, the most beautiful girl in the world. The boy went to fight him, killed him and took this girl also as his wife. So for a time with these two beautiful women of high birth he lived happily and completely forgot the two village girls.

In the meantime Among and Amju had married the prince but they told him that, since they had taken a vow, they could not sleep with him for five years. Maokolang built them a separate house and four years passed. No news came of Choungi-Kaikharn and at last the two sisters decided that he had forgotten them. All the same they rubbed some of the dirt from their bodies to make a hornet and sent it to find him and bring him to them. The hornet flew away and at last found Choungi-Kaikharn with his two wives. It flew to and fro in front of them and round and round their heads and the boy told his wives to kill it, for it might sting them. One of the Rani had a fan and knocked it down and killed it, whereupon Choungi-Kaikharn suddenly felt a desire to eat it. He roasted and ate it and at once his skin turned black and he behaved like a mad man running from that place all the way to the old village where the girls had been. Among saw him but did not recognise him at first and said to her sister, 'Let's drive this mad fellow away.'

But long ago when he found the golden dao he had cut his leg and he showed the mark to the girls who realized who he must be and they exclaimed, 'This is our beloved Choungi-Kaikharn.'

One of them picked up a pot of water and poured it over him and his colour changed and he became sane. They were all three very happy at meeting again. They cooked supper and when they lay down they put their three heads together and when at last they fell asleep they did not awake till very late.

In the morning the prince's mother came to see her daughters-in-law and when she saw how they were sleeping with a strange man she went at once to her son and told him. He picked up his sword and went in rage to the place and when he saw the three heads together he wanted to kill Choungi-Kaikharn. But he could not strike him without killing the girls at the same time. Then he
picked up the boy's head by the hair and put it on one side and cut it off. He put the body in a box and made his servants carry it out to the forest to burn. He went to cut wood for the pyre but every time he cut a branch it flew up and stuck to another tree. In this way he cut seven trees but could not get a single piece of wood, for it all stuck to an eighth tree. At last he wearied and went home.

That night he saw in a dream that if the two girls were to go to cut the trees they would get enough wood for the pyre. He got up at once, for he was afraid that if the corpse was not burnt it would turn into a demon and destroy him. So he took the girls to the place and asked them to cut the eighth tree to which the branches of all the other seven trees had stuck. They cut it down but it fell on them and killed them.

Then the prince Maokolang thought, 'These three truly loved each other. My marriage was useless, for there was no love in me.' He put all the three bodies on a single pyre and burnt them together. The bodies were consumed but the boy's head remained. The prince thought that did not matter and went home. But when the fire died down a crow picked up the head and put it on a tree.

In Maokolang's village ten girls went to fish in the river. They got tired and sat down to rest under the very tree where the crow had put the boy's head, and entertained themselves by singing songs. Choungi-Kaikham's head heard the songs and sang in reply. The girls looked everywhere to see who was singing but could not find him and went home and told the old woman, the mother of Among and Amju. Next day she went with them to the tree and they sang again and the head answered. The woman remembered all that had happened and cried, 'You are the head of Choungi-Kaikham,' and hearing this the head was silent. Each girl climbed the tree to bring the head down; they stood on each other's shoulders, one above the other. When the last of them touched it the head pushed her so hard that she fell down and the other nine girls tumbled into the river and were drowned.

Today the name of the head is Ming-Dung-Choungi-Chai-khan, a demon, and it is on his account that men fall from trees and into rivers, or hang themselves or murder one another, or are caught in whirlpools and whirlwinds and so die.
CHAPTER VII
THE SINGPHO STORIES

The Singphos

The Singphos of NEFA are today few in number, only 400 of them in the Lohit Division and 600 in Tirap. In Lohit they are scattered in 14 villages where they mix with Khamptis, Mishmis and others. In Tirap there are 10 villages which are more homogeneous. But everywhere they have come under Khampti Buddhist influence, though they have very few shrines or temples and those they have are indifferently maintained.

But in former times the Singphos were a powerful and warlike race and I will quote part of Dalton's description of them as they were then.

'The Singphos, like the Khamptis, have settled in Assam within the memory of man. They are said to have first made their appearance in the valley during the rebellion of the Muttuck of Mahamaria sect against Raja Gaurinath Singh, about A. D. 1793. Their first settlements were on the Tenga-pani, east of Sadiya, and on the Bori-Dihing river in the tract called Namrup, and they not only met with no opposition from the scattered and harassed Assamese population of that tract, but were well received as an element of strength to assist the inhabitants to hold their own. By degrees the Singphos formed large villages under their chiefs, the Dapha,

the Bisa, the Latora, and other Gams (the head of a family is so called, the second branch assuming the affix 'La', and the third 'Thu' or 'Du'), and not only maintained themselves in a state almost independent of the Assam Government, but absorbed into their own communities the few Assamese left in that part of the country.

'The Singphos are of the race called by the Burmese Ka-Khyen or Kaku, whose original settlements were on the great eastern branches of the Irrawaddy river; they are there in contact with the Kungings, with whom they are closely allied in language and origin. They extended east to the confines of Yunan, and west to the valley of the Kyendwyen; but it was only on spreading into the valley of Assam that they assumed the name of Singpho, which in their own language means "man".

'The Singphos on the frontiers of Assam occupy large villages often in somewhat unassailable positions, consisting of sixty or more large houses, each from eighty to a hundred feet long and about twenty in breath, with raised floors throughout and open balcony at one end, where the ladies of the family sit and spin, weave and embroider. The house is divided into different apartments on both sides of a long passage open from end to end. There are generally several hearths round which the family sleep, and over the fireplace are large bamboo racks hanging from the roof, on which are placed meat or fish requiring to be smoked.

'They are generally a fine athletic race, above the ordinary standard in height, and capable of enduring great fatigue; but their energies are greatly impaired by the use of opium and spirits, in which they freely
indulge. The men tie the hair in a large knot on the crown of the head, and wear a jacket of coloured cotton and chequered undergarment of the same material or of silk, or the Burmese 'patso'. The respectable chiefs assume the Shan or Burmese style of dress, and occasionally short smart jackets of China velvet, with gilt or amber buttons. They also wrap themselves in plaids of thick cotton much in the fashion of Scotch Highlanders.

The features are of the Mongolian type, very oblique eyes and eyebrows, mouths wide, cheekbones high, and heavy square jawbones. Their complexion, never ruddy, varies from a tawny yellow or olive to a dark brown. Hard labour tells on the personal appearance of the females, rendering them coarse in feature and awkward in gait, but in the families of the chiefs light complexions and pleasing features are sometimes seen. Their dress consists of one piece of coloured cotton cloth, often in large broad horizontal bands of red and blue fastened round the waist, a jacket and a scarf. The married women wear their hair, which is abundant, in a large broad knot on the crown of the head, fastened with silver bodkins with chains and tassels. Maidens wear their hair gathered in a roll resting on the back of the neck and similarly secured. They are fond of a particular enamelled bead called deo mani, and all wear as ornaments bright pieces of amber inserted in the holes in the lobe of the ear. The men tattoo their limbs slightly, and all married women are tattooed on both legs from the ankle to the knee in broad parallel bands.

The national weapons of this tribe are the heavy short sword called Dao or Dha, so well known
in Assam, admirably adapted for close quarters in war, and for clearing jungle and preparing the ground in peace,—the frontier tribes can dispense with the trouble of converting their swords into plough-shares, they use them as they are:—a spear with a short shaft used for thrusting, and a strong crossbow with bamboo arrows: but they affect the use of the musket whenever they can get one, and are sometimes seen with China matchlocks.

They use shields of buffalo hide, four feet long, and helmets sometimes of that material, sometimes of thick plaited rattan work, varnished black, decorated with boar’s tusks, &c.

In travelling the Singphos carry a haversack of very neat appearance, cleverly adapted to the head and shoulders. It is made of very finely plaited fibre on a frame of wood covered with the skin of the large grey monkey. They are also provided with handsome bags, woven and embroidered by their wives, in which they carry their pipes and tobacco, opium, &c.

The Singphos understand the smelting of iron, and their blacksmiths with no implements but a lump of stone as an anvil, and a rude hammer, forge weapons—especially dao—which are highly prized all over the frontier for their temper and durability.

The Singphos manufacture their own wearing apparel. The thread is dyed previous to being woven, and thus are produced the checks and coloured garments of which they are so fond. They use as dyes a kind of indigo and the bright yellow root of a creeper...........

The Singphos repudiate all affinity with the Shans, and are not considered by ethnologists to
be connected with them expect very remotely. Their language is entirely different, approximating more to the Karen, Manipuri, Burmese, Kuki, Naga and Abor dialects, and their religion is a rude paganism, whilst the Shans are most of them Buddhists.

'The Singphos have a confused notion of a Supreme Being, but they propitiate only malignant spirits called Nhats, of which there are three,—the Mu Nhat or spirit above, the Ga Nhat or spirit below, and the household Nhat or penate. They sacrifice fowls, pigs and dogs to the Nhats, and when about to proceed on important expeditions a buffalo is offered, and acceptance of the flesh of the animal, when cut up and distributed amongst the friends of the chief, is considered as a pledge that binds them to his service on this particular occasion. There is no regular priesthood amongst the Singphos, but they pay great deference to the Pungyes or priests of the Buddhist Shans. Some of them are, however, supposed to possess powers of divination, and Colonel Hannay mentions having witnessed the process. The diviner was seated by himself at some distance from the crowd, and had beside him a small fire and a bundle of common "nul" grass, which grows to a large size in swamps. Taking a piece of "nul" containing several joints he held it over the flame, until by the heat one of the joints burst with a sharp report, the fracture on each side threw out a number of minute hair-like fibres which were carefully examined and put aside. Another piece was then put in the fire and similarly treated. This continued for at least an hour, when the result was disclosed, namely, that a certain chief, whose arrival was awaited, would make his appearance in
three or four days, and so it happened.

'Polygamy prevails amongst the Singphos, and chiefs especially rejoice in a plurality of wives. The girl is bought with a price, and a feast completes the ceremony. As a maiden she is allowed considerable liberty. I have been informed by Duaniahs that the girls of some villages occupy a house appropriated to their use in which, under charge of an old woman, they receive visits from young men, but I have never seen such an institution, and if it exists it is not shown to strangers.

'They bury their dead, but in the case of a man of note the body is kept for two or more years in order that the scattered relations of the deceased may have time to attend his funeral: the body being removed to some distance during the process of decomposition, after which it is placed in a coffin and brought back to the house, where it remains in state, decked out with all the insignia of rank used during life.

'If the deceased met his death by violence, they sacrifice a buffalo the head of which is fastened as a memorial in the centre of a cross of wood of the St. Andrew's form. This ceremony is omitted if the deceased dies a natural death. The gods took him at their own good time and do not need propitiation. When finally committed to the earth a mound is raised to mark the spot, sometimes of considerable dimensions. This custom they appear to have taken from their neighbours, the Khamptis.

'Tradition of origin: According to the Bisa, one of the most influential and intelligent of the Singpho Gams that settled in Assam, the Singphos believe "they were originally created and established
On a plateau called Majai-Singra-Bum, situated at a distance of two months' journey from Sadiya, washed by a river flowing in a southerly direction to the Irrawaddy. During their sojourn there they were immortal and held celestial intercourse with the planets and all heavenly intelligences, following the pure worship of one Supreme Being." Why they left this Eden is not stated in connection with this tradition; but they have another, in which the fall is assigned to an act of disobedience on their part in bathing in interdicted water. On descending to the plains they became mortal, and having imbrued their hands in the blood of men and animals in self-defence and for subsistence, they soon adopted the idolatries and superstitions of the nations around them.

THE BEGINNING OF THE WORLD

At first there was nothing but water. Then Mathum-Matha and Singlap and Phra met to discuss together how they could make a world. As they were talking Singlap's back began to itch and he scratched it and got a little dirt under his nails. He removed it and the dirt fell down from the sky (where they were talking) into the water below and it turned into Spider. Spider spun thread from inside herself and wove a web right across the great ocean. Mathum-Matha looked down and saw her sitting in the middle of her web and asked the others what it was. They had no idea, but they sent the god Pungkam-Waisun and his wife Ningkon-Chinun to go and see. They pointed that there was no way to get down but Mathum-Matha brought a rope and tied them to the end of it and so lowered them down from the sky, promising to pull them up again when they had finished. But the rope broke and he had to leave them down below. They managed to find shelter in Spider's web and there they lived.
until Ningkon-Chinun gave birth to twins, a boy and a girl, with a single cord. The boy’s name was Sumanang and the girl’s name was Sawanang. The mother shut them both up, along with their cord, in a basket. Soon afterwards she was delivered again, this time of Tiger and Frog, though each had his own cord, and she put them also in the basket. Then finally she bore a human boy, Cheng-Ning Chang, with a golden dao at his side. He himself picked it up and cut his own cord. When she saw that, the mother was frightened and asked him what he was doing.

The boy asked who had been born before him. The mother opened the basket and brought out Frog first and the boy said, ‘Is this really my brother; have I got any others?’ Then his mother brought out little Tiger and the boy looked at him with astonishment. Then she brought out the twins and Cheng-Ning-Chang took his golden dao and cut their cord. He made a pipe from it and blew down it and the wind came into being.

Sawanang turned into earth and spread all over Spider’s web and thus the world was made. Sumanang was blown by the wind high into the air and turned into the sky. Then Cheng-Ning-Chang cut the tiger’s cord into many small pieces and scattered them over the world where they turned into forests and mountains. He said to his brother, ‘Here’s a place for you to live.’ He cut Frog’s cord and scattered the bits over the rivers and said, ‘Go and live there.’

Finally Cheng-Ning-Chang said to his parents, ‘You must live here until every animal and every kind of human being is born. Until then you cannot go back to the sky.’ He gave his mother the golden dao and said, ‘Use this to cut the cords of all your children’, and then he himself returned to the sky.

In time Ningkon-Chinun gave birth to every kind of animal and human being. There were the sixty castes of Hindus, the eleven kinds of Burmese, the thirty clans of Khamptis and Singphos, Mishmis and others. These she divided into three parts. She gave the Burmese a place to live beyond the Irrawadi. She gave the tribal people and as far as the pine-trees that grow round Shillong. She sent the Hindus to the plains for there were more of them and they needed more room.

When all the work was done she and her husband returned to Phra in the sky.
THE FIRST SACRIFICES

At the beginning, when men and gods lived together, there was no such thing as night. In those days when men sacrificed to the gods they used to give them living animals and the gods themselves killed them, and took the flesh home and gave it raw to their families. The men who offered the animals got no share of them, and if they tried to take a bit of meat the gods used to take it away from them. The result was that men did not get enough to eat and were always weak and often sick.

At last men went to Singlap in the sky and complained that the gods were troubling them. Singlap came down to earth and told the gods that they must share what they had with men. He turned the heads of the gods back to front and bent them down so they could not see far away. He also created night and said that the gods should walk in darkness and men by day. The gods should remain awake at night while men went to sleep.

Singlap said to men, 'Hence forward do not give the gods living animals but kill them first. If you do that it will suffice if you give a little of the flesh to the gods and you can eat the rest yourselves.'

THE FIRST FIREFLY

Mathum-Matha lived with his two wives in Sidding-Don up in the sky. The elder wife gave the world its gold and silver, while the younger wife was the source of every kind of grain. Mathum-Matha was a very busy farmer: he even sowed the seeds of gold and silver, which at that time grew on trees. When it was time to reap the crop the younger wife used to go to winnow the grain and great quantities of seed came from her. When the elder wife visited the fields of gold and silver, a rich store of precious metals came from her also. The younger wife was not very pretty, for she was always tired from bearing the crops, but the elder wife was as lovely as silver and gold.

The younger wife was reborn every year when the first shoots came out of the ground: by the time the plants were ready to
bear fruit, she was mature; and when they dried and withered she was old. This is why Mathum-Matha did not love her, for she was always growing old.

But one day when Mathum-Matha was working in his rice-field at the time when the crop was new, this wife came to him looking very young and pretty and he built a little hut for her and they lived together there. When he did not come home, the elder wife waited three days for him and then when he did come bringing the younger girl with him, she was jealous, and shut him up in a golden room. The two women quarrelled violently and the younger wife ran away in a temper to her parents' house and did not return for twelve years. Once she was safely out of the way, the elder wife let her husband out of the golden room, but he was not happy and all the time was saying to himself, 'She will come today or at least tomorrow.'

In this manner twelve years passed and the world was starved of grain in the absence of the younger wife. Mathum-Matha was very worried about this and went himself to the forest to dig roots and gather wild vegetables to feed mankind.

When Mathum-Matha helped mankind in this way, great black clouds gathered in the sky and all was dark. When the elder wife saw this she was anxious about her husband finding his way home. She rubbed her cheek and a little black pimple grew there. She scratched it and it came off in her hand, bleeding a little. She said to it, 'O thing of my cheek, fly away and call my husband home.' It spread its wings and flew away and the drop of blood became fire and lighted it through the darkness.

But Mathum-Matha returned home by another path and to this day the firefly wanders about the world searching for him.

THE GOD'S DILEMMA

Mathum-Matha lived in the sky with his daughter Dim-Kainang. He had a passion for buffalo meat and whenever anyone on earth wanted to get a wife he used to say to him, 'Make me an offering of buffalo meat and I will arrange it.' Those who gave the god meat got their wives. Those who couldn't had
to go home unsatisfied.

Now on earth there lived a god called Ing-Ka-Tuwa who had one son. He searched everywhere for a bride but was unable to find one. But at last he heard about Mathum-Matha and went to him and said, 'I hear you have a beautiful daughter; marry her to my son.'

Mathum-Matha said, 'If you will give me a buffalo for her, your son may certainly marry her.'

But Ing-Ka-tuwa had only one buffalo and he wanted it to have many calves so that he could distribute them to the whole world. So he was in a quandary. 'If I give my buffalo I will have no calves; if I don't give it my son won't get married.' After he had thought for a long time, he decided that marriage was more important than giving calves to the world and so he gave the buffalo to Mathum-Matha who then also found himself in difficulty, for he said to himself, 'I have no wife now and I could use this buffalo to get one. But if I give the buffalo for my wife, how will I have its meat to eat?' The god couldn't make up his mind.

Many days went by and at last the buffalo said to Mathum-Matha, 'You have been talking about eating me for ages and yet you never do. Why don't you kill me? Remember I'm an old creature now, and I'm getting tougher every day.'

She said again, 'Throw away my skin and the bones and horns. Just eat the flesh.'

But Mathum-Matha thought to himself, 'I'm not going to waste a single thing. I'll eat up everything.'

So he killed the buffalo and cut the carcass into small pieces and hung them on the platform of his house. Then he went to fetch water, but while he was away all the pieces of meat fell to the ground of their own accord and every bit turned into a living buffalo. Mathum-Matha then gave them to human beings all over the world.

5

THE RIVAL CLOUDS

There were two gods living in the sky: one was called Chou-Chi-Kiya and the other was called Sula-Sangnin. They had a great
white elephant called Oiravat. Chou-Chi-Kiya was married but Sula-Sangnin lived alone which meant that he was always drinking. When he didn’t get any liquor he quarrelled with his friend and when he did get it, he tried to take away Chou-Chi-Kiya’s wife and claimed the white elephant as his. The result was that Chou-Chi-Kiya was rather frightened of him.

One day, therefore, he gave Sula-Sangnin a great deal of beer and made him very drunk, then he put him on the elephant and flew down with him to earth and left him there. As he flew back to the sky on the elephant, he said to himself in triumph, ‘Now he’ll never be able to trouble me again.’

When Sula-Sangnin came to his senses he looked all round and realized that he was on earth. He was very upset at this, and then he saw a bombax tree covered with flowers and climbed to the top, for he thought that he might get back to the sky that way. He smelt the flowers but, though they were very beautiful, they had no scent. This made him angry again, for he remembered the sweet smell of the flowers that grew in the sky and in his rage he turned into a black cloud.

As a cloud he climbed into the sky and fought Chou-Chi-Kiya. When the two flourished their daos, there were flashes of lightning. Sometimes one of them dropped his dao and it fell to earth as a thunderbolt. The white elephant was frightened and when it trumpeted it was the thunder. When the two clouds fought they brought rain upon the earth.

This goes on endlessly. When they are tired they make friends, but after a time they quarrel again and from time to time the elephant flies about. When he does there is a great wind.

THE CONVERSION OF THE DEMONS

One day Mathum-Matha, far away up in the sky, felt sick and tried to vomit but he could only spit. The spittle fell to the earth by the shore of a great lake and the eagle was born of it.

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The great bird sat where he was, for he was so weak from hunger that he could not fly, and Mathum-Matha looked down and saw him. He thought that since he was born of his spittle he must be his own son, and he went down to give him food.

At that moment a wild elephant and a snake both went to drink at the lakeside and when they met each other they fought. Mathum-Matha saw them and said to the eagle, 'Go and eat both of them until your belly is full.' The eagle seized them, one in his beak, the other in his claws and carried them into the sky. As he flew up there was a great storm of wind and rain and all the earth-dwellers were drowned and everything was covered with water.

A mighty god called Chou-Chi-Kiya went to Mathum-Matha and told him what had happened and Mathum-Matha came out of his house and looked down but could see nothing but water, except the eagle with the elephant in one claw and the snake in the other. The eagle took the elephant's head in his mouth and was about to bite it off when Mathum-Matha cried to the bird, 'Look down'. The eagle looked down and felt very sad at seeing the destruction of the world. He bit off the elephant's head and let the body fall and as it struck the water far below everything dried up and the earth was made anew from the elephant's body. That is why there are many different kinds of soil in the earth, for there are many kinds of meat in an elephant's body. The elephant's feet turned into great mountains, its bones into rocks and metals, its fat into the oil that men bring out of the earth, its hair into grass. When the earth was ready the eagle also dropped the snake and it at once went to look for water and as it went on its winding course it left a mark which turned into the Brahmaputra River.

Then the eagle thought, 'Now the world is ready. I'll be able to get a meal at last.' He still had the elephant's head and as he flew above the world he removed the skin and by accident let the head fall. Now he only had the skin and in a temper he let that fall also.

In the place where the head fell, the kingdom of Mung-Merika came into being. This is America where people are white, for when the elephant's head was skinned it was red and white in colour. The tusks also fell there and that is why the Americans are so rich.
In the place where the skin fell, the kingdom of Phirka came into being. This is Africa where the people are as black as the elephant's skin.

In Mung-Merika it rained heavily and in a single hour a million girls were born. Each of these bore a son, also within a single hour. The children grew up at once and talked and went about, but they were only three feet high and had no hair on their heads or bodies. These million boys made a great boat and said to their mothers, 'We're going to find another land wherever the boat goes of its own accord.'

The mothers cooked food and put it for them in the boat and everyone went on board. After a long journey they came to Mingphai and there of its own accord the boat grounded on the shore.

Among the boys the leader was called Along and he found a temple which was full of the images of the Lord Buddha and there was a monk who worshipped them.

Along saluted the monk and when the monk asked him how he had come there he told him. The monk said, 'Beware, for here are the Nat demons who devour men. Bring your companions quickly, otherwise they will be in great danger.'

Along brought the boys to the temple and the monk shut them in a great hall and tied a magic charm in the hands of each of them.

After a while the Nat demons came to the temple and prayed to the Lord Buddha saying, 'We have killed with our feet and hands and have eaten flesh. Forgive us our sins.'

But as they were going away one Nat said, 'Surely, I smell men, lots of men.'

The other Nats said, 'If so, they're men without hair.'

But others said, 'The flesh of such men should be very tasty.'

After the Nat people had gone away the monk let the boys out and they went, all million of them, to a beautiful place high up, but with lots of caves in which they could hide, above the temple. They decided to level the ground and make a city there and they all got busy.

The Nat people heard of it and came to devour them. But when they approached, somehow or other the boys always appeared behind them. Whenever they turned, in whatever direction they turned, the boys were always behind and not in
BUDDHIST STORIES

front, for they had magic in their hands. After a time the Nats wearied and went to their village. The Raja asked what had happened and was angry that his people had not brought him any food and said he would himself go with them and would ensure that next time they caught the boys. Again and again they went and at last the Raja had to salute Along as the victor, and he went home weary and anxious about what would happen.

The Raja's daughter was a very pretty girl and when she saw her father was worried she asked what the matter was. When the Raja told her she said, 'Don't worry about a little thing like that. Tomorrow I'll go and bring them to you.'

Then the next day the princess took all the Nat girls to visit the boys. She herself went to Along and said, 'I've been waiting for you for many years. That's why I have never married. When will you come to me?'

But Along was very clever and recognised that, however beautiful she was, she was really a demon and he said, 'I too have come here to find you and I want nothing more than to marry you.'

He took some dust in the name of the Buddha from the soles of his feet, mixed it with his spittle and gave it to the girl.

'If you really want to marry me,' he said, 'swallow it.'

She did so and Along swallowed some too and they were united.

The girl said, 'My father is waiting for me and I must go home. Tell me how many days hence you'll come to me.'

Along said, 'There's a great deal of work here, for I have to build a whole city, but I'll come to you after five days.'

So the girl and her companions went home and said to the Raja, 'You'll have them in five days' time.'

The Raja ordered the Nat people to make lots of good liquor and told them that when the boys did come they should make them unconscious with drink and then they would feast on them.

Five days passed but Along did not go, no one went. Then the girl again went to them and asked why they had not come.

Along replied, 'Because we're far too busy. We're going to hold a great fair and there's a great deal of work to be done and I have very few people to do it. Could you help us?'
The girl replied, 'I'll ask my father and if he agrees we'll come to help you.'

When her father heard it he said, 'This fair is an excellent idea. Lots of people will come; they're sure to drink a great deal; and we'll be able to catch them easily.'

So the Nat people went to help and everyone worked so hard that within a week the new city was ready as well as a great temple. They set up images in the temple, laid out dancing grounds, built booths for the merchants and sent word everywhere inviting people to the fair.

After another week the fair began with every kind of dance and music before the temple. But now a strange thing happened. The Nat people had gone prepared to kill and devour the people at the fair, but when the music and song of the temple entered their ears all sin went from their minds and their faces changed also and they no longer looked like Nat demons at all. The love of religion possessed them as they entered the grounds of the fair and they went to the temple, worshipped there and begged the monk to teach them. He told them the five holy names and when they heard them all the Nats were converted and became religious persons.

In this way Along built a beautiful town, filled with good and holy citizens, and he married one of the Nat girls whose life had been changed. They called the place Along and it became a centre of worship of the Lord Buddha.

7

THE JEALOUS WIFE

When the world and all living creatures were made, the great god Mathum-Matha came down from the sky to the earth and built a temple where he could stay quietly to write the story of Creation. The first time he only stayed two days and then went home; the second time he stayed five days and then went home; the third time he stayed ten days and then went home.

1This is not the Along which is the headquarters of the Siang Frontier Division of NEFA.

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This third time Mathum-Matha’s wife began to be suspicious, saying to herself, ‘He’s never stayed so long as this before, he must have found some girl to play with’. For the women of earth are more beautiful than those of heaven.

As she was brooding about this, her husband returned and she was so cross that she could hardly speak to him. But after they had supper together she declared, ‘Next time you go down to earth, I’m coming with you.’

Mathum-Matha said, ‘Don’t bother about that. There’s no need to worry. I’m not up to any mischief, I’m simply writing a history of the world.’

“That may be so or it may not be so’, said his wife, who knew what writers were like. ‘But this time I’m going with you.’

Mathum-Matha did not like this because he thought that if she came with him he would never get any work done, for his wife used to talk all the time.

So when he next decided to go down to earth he said to his wife, ‘I’m only going on a very short visit and I’ll be back immediately. Next time I’ll take you with me, but it’s not worth your while coming now.’ He escaped and this time he stayed for twenty days. His wife in the sky ran out of food and decided that her husband really must have another wife down below. She was so hungry that she had to go out and find some sweet potatoes. She cooked them but felt so irritated at having to eat such food that she threw the roots down to earth, cursing them and saying, ‘Go and eat this fine book that my husband is writing.’ The roots turned into rats and went into the temple and began tearing Mathum-Matha’s work to pieces.

When Mathum-Matha saw this, he knew it was his wife’s doing and said to himself, ‘She has made an evil thing which will bring loss to men and gods.’ He picked up a bit of wood and threw it at the rats and it turned into a cat who drove the rats back to the sky, where they went into the house and began to eat the wife’s clothes.

After some time Mathum-Matha went home and saw his house crowded with rats and no food to eat anywhere. He said to himself, ‘Heaven is no place for rats, for if they stay here I’ll never have enough to eat.’ So he sent them down to earth where they still steal grain from men and destroy precious books and papers.
The god Mathum-Matha had a very pretty daughter called Dim-Kainang and he was so fond of her that he dreaded the day when she would be married, for he wanted her to live with him always. So he decided to make her marriage as difficult as possible. Under the platform of the house he put a very heavy stone and tied it with a rope which he hung over a strong beam. He secretly covered the rope with oil and declared that only a man who could pull the stone up could marry his daughter.

As the girl grew older many young gods came to seek her in marriage but the father put them all to the test, and the oily rope slipped from their hands and they had to go home disappointed. Mathum-Matha was very pleased about this, but the girl herself was dreaming of her future husband and was so sad about the unfair test that she decided that, if she could not marry within a year, she would kill herself.

There was one very handsome boy, called Ningching-Waspen, the son of the Earth-god. He used to go hunting every night and slept during the day.

In her desire for a husband the girl planned to go down to earth when her father went to sleep at night and to be back in the sky before he woke up. She put on her best clothes and went down to earth by the great ladder that then connected earth and heaven. She came down in the forest and wandered to and fro but could not find anyone. Presently, however, she heard a cock crow and supposed there must be some people living there. As she was going towards them Ningching-Waspen came by on his way from hunting. When he saw the girl he asked her who she was, but she made no reply. He asked a second and then a third time, but still she said nothing for she was struck dumb by his beauty. When at the fourth time she still did not answer the boy, lost his temper and spoke sharply to her. Now she took off her turban and revealed who she was. When the boy saw how lovely she was, he decided to marry her; she had already decided to marry him. But dawn was coming and the girl hurried home to get to bed before her father awoke.
After this she used to go down every night to meet her lover, and one day she told him about the test and asked if he could fulfil it. When she went home she secretly cut the rope in several places and covered with ashes to dry the oil.

The next day Ningching-Waspen came to her father's house and asked for the girl in marriage. The father showed him what he must do and the boy easily raised the stone. But then the father said, 'Before you marry my daughter you will have to bring her bride-price.' So the boy went back to earth and collected a number of fowls and gave them to the father but they, finding nothing to eat in the sky, flew back to earth and turned into wild fowl. Then the boy collected a number of pigs but when they found no mud to roll with in the sky they went back to earth and turned into wild boar. Then he collected a large number of buffaloes and took them to the sky but when they found there was no salt there, they went back to earth and turned into wild buffaloes. Mathum Matha then said to the boy, 'Everything you’ve given has run away; now go home and tie a buffalo up for sacrifice, I'll let down a rope and you tie it to the buffalo meat and I'll pull it up and we'll get something to eat at least.' This time he allowed his daughter to go with the boy.

Down on earth they sacrificed a buffalo and tied up the meat with a rope that went to heaven. Mathum-Matha was just about to pull it up when a swarm of butterflies surrounded him and he asked why they were looking so pretty. They explained that Ningching-Waspen had sacrificed a buffalo that very day and that they had been eating its flesh. The god was very angry about this and threw the rope down to earth and broke the ladder by which men climbed up and down. Since then there has been no way of going from earth to heaven.

A GOOD OLD MAN

There was a very poor Singpho who used to sell chickens for a living. But he was so generous that when poor people told him that they needed a chicken for sacrifice but had no money
to pay for it, he used to give it to them free. In this way he made very little and actually got into debt, for he used to take the fowls on loan even when he knew he would give them away.

One day he said to his wife, 'Cook me some food and then I'll go and sell my chickens.'

At that she lost her temper and cried, 'How many days have you been selling things, selling even the pots and clothes in the house? What have I got to cook in the kitchen?'

At that very moment one of his creditors came to demand money and abused him.

The Singpho, therefore, did not wait for his food but took all the chickens he had and went out to try and sell them by evening. He reached a great forest where he heard the trumpeting of elephants and the roar of tigers but, though he was frightened, he said to himself, 'If I am killed by them it might be a good thing rather than to live like this', and he walked along slowly tempting them to attack him.

After a time he came to a temple in the middle of the forest. When he saw it he felt better and went to it, though it was quite dark when he reached it. He found it old and tumbled down. There was nothing there but the image of the Lord Buddha. He bowed before it and said, 'I'll stay here worshipping you if you will help me.' He put the chickens in their basket in a corner of the temple and lay down to sleep. In the morning when he woke up he saw a large golden pot by his head. The Lord Buddha had put it there for him, for the Singpho was a good, kindly man who never quarrelled with anyone, but helped his poorer neighbours. He was naturally very pleased and let his chickens go free in the forest and took the golden pot home. He sold it for so much money that he became rich. He was able to pay back his debts and build a good house. The rest of his life he spent following the Path of the Buddha and caring for the poor.

THE SINGPHO STORIES

THE MONK AND THE BITCH

Long ago there was a man who had a disloyal wife. She stole his food while she was cooking it and she used to betray
him with other men. In the end she died while giving birth to a child. The husband looked after him, though he found it difficult to do so, and gradually the little boy, whose name was Choumuklang, grew up and became a monk. In time the father died too and the boy continued to practice and preach faithfully the path of religion and the worship of Mathum-Matha. In all his life he never killed a living creature, and both gods and men were pleased with him.

One day Choumuklang remembered his mother and went to Mathum-Matha and asked where she was. The god replied, 'Your mother is in hell where she has been turned into a bitch for she used to go to other men and she gave your father dirty food and the leavings from her own plate. Those who do such things become dogs in hell.'

Now Choumuklang was so righteous that he could go to heaven or hell as he pleased and see what happened there. When he heard of his mother's fate, he declared that he would rescue her and take her to heaven. Mathum-Matha said, 'You are such a holy man that you can do even this.'

Choumuklang went down to hell and there he found every kind of sinner, some transformed into pigs, others into fowls, others crawling as insects on the ground. There was a whole village of dogs and he recognized his mother at once, a handsome bitch sitting on a pile of ashes. Among the ashes was a burnt coal, which he picked up. Then he tied his robe round his mother's neck and dragged her away to Mathum-Matha who at once changed her back into a human being and sent her to heaven.

The monk showed the coal to Mathum-Matha who said, 'This is a very bad thing. Why did you bring it here? Go and put it back where it was, for it is full of sin. This coal used to devour the flesh of man; it burnt the houses of the poor; it destroyed the sacred books and temples. So it is punished for ever, for ten lakhs of years, and if it were to go to earth, it would be bad for everyone.'

Choumuklang said, 'Then of course I'll take it back,' and went away. But on his way down from heaven he said to himself, 'It is a very long way to hell.' So he broke the coal into little bits and threw them away; some fell in the forest and rivers and turned into leeches; the dust turned into mosquitoes.
and other stinging insects. For in his life on earth fire was a cannibal and ate men. Now as an animal he drinks human blood.

THE COMING OF DISEASE

Mathum-Matha had two wives and of course they always quarrelled. In the end the younger wife ran away to her parents' house and stayed there for twelve years. Since she was the source of grain, her husband and all mankind were left very hungry.

So one day Mathum-Matha took the form of a monk and went to beg from house to house down on earth. He took whatever he received in his begging-bowl back to the sky and he and his elder wife ate it.

Crow saw this strange sight of a monk going up and down between heaven and earth and one day followed him home and hid near his house. The next day when Mathum-Matha went out to beg, Crow went into the house and saw how beautiful the elder wife was. But Crow knew that he was ugly and wondered how he could make friends with her. But he had always been very cunning and so he said to the woman, 'What an extraordinary thing it is that when your husband has such a beautiful wife he should go every day down to earth. But you know why this is, don't you? He has another wife down there. If your husband can be unfaithful to you, why can't you be unfaithful to him?'

The wife replied, 'My husband's just coming. Let us talk about it tomorrow.' This frightened Crow, for he thought that the girl would probably tell Mathum-Matha who then would kill him, so he said, 'Hide me somewhere.' She put him in a corner and then rubbed some dirt off her body and made a beautiful young girl with it and made her stand by the door. For she thought, 'If my husband is really a loose fellow, with another wife on earth, he'll talk to this girl. But if he's really a good man, he'll only talk to me.'

Mathum-Matha came into the house and saw the girl, but at once lowered his head and did not look at her but went
directly to his wife and said, 'There's a visitor out there; you had better look after her.' His wife laughed at this, 'She's not a visitor, she's just a girl that I made to test you. Now I know that you are a good man and that Crow is a liar.' She went to where Crow was hiding and pulled him out and threw him in the fire.

Mathum-Matha went up to the girl and spat in her face and she turned into an ugly old woman. He smelt Crow's feathers burning and snatched him out of the fire, saying to his wife, 'It's a sin to kill anyone; and after all, there are many liars on earth.' In his pity he let Crow fly away, but ever since he has been black.

When the wife saw the beautiful girl she had made turned into an ugly old woman she was very sorry. But her husband said, 'There's no place for a pretty girl here! He put eight kinds of seed in her hands and sent her down to earth. She walked among men and threw the seed everywhere, with the result that men got many diseases, especially the smallpox which looks like seeds growing on a man's body.

12

THE FIRST TO DIE

In the beginning nobody ever died. In Burma there was a young man called Singlap-phung-kam who lived with his grandmother. The old woman was addicted to opium and the boy grumbled to himself for, as she was always taking opium, she couldn't do any work and he had to do everything. This made him decide to get a wife to work for him. After a time he found a beautiful girl called Pulam-Tusan and married her. This girl loved him madly; she would never eat unless he had his food first and would not leave him for a moment. But three months after their marriage the old grandmother ran out of opium and couldn't work or eat or sleep without it.

So the boy said to his wife, 'You stay here in the house and look after the old woman; I am going to get her more opium for otherwise she will die.'

The girl said, 'If you go, I'll go with you, for I cannot stay without you.'
He replied, 'If we both go, who will give her food and water? If she suffers on our account it will be a sin for us.'

At last the girl said, 'Very well, you can go but come back soon.'

The boy went to find opium, but a whole month passed by and he couldn't get any. Back at home, his wife became very worried and one night while she was sleeping her soul left her body to find him. Her soul travelled far, so far that she couldn't return that night or the next day and all the time her body lay in the house as if she was dead. When the old woman woke in the morning she called for her, 'Pulam-Tusan! Pulam-Tusan!' but there was no reply. She crawled to the girl's room and shook her saying, 'Give me some water. I haven't any food to eat.' But the girl did not answer and the old woman wept loudly.

Singlap heard her cries and sent Squirrel and Porcupine to see what was the matter. When they reached the house the old woman said, 'I don't know what's the matter with the girl, for she doesn't move or speak; she must be dead.'

They were angry with her when she said that, and asked 'What is this talk about dying, there's no such thing. Nobody has ever died; she must simply be asleep and when your grandson returns she'll be all right.'

But Crow heard this talk and when Squirrel and Porcupine went away he flew to the grandmother and said, 'Why do you keep this useless body in the house? It will certainly kill you and kill your grandson too when he returns.' So the old woman took the body from the house and Crow pecked out the girl's eyes, and other animals and birds came round to eat the body. When they had finished, cows and horses ate the grass that grew from the dirt of the body that was left. In this way the contagion of death came to all creatures.

In the meantime the soul of the girl found her husband and when he saw her he ran to her and took her by the hand saying, 'Come with me, for it has been a long time since we met.'

But the girl replied, 'Where can I go with you? I have left my body behind and your grandmother has given it to the animals and birds to eat.'

She snatched her hand away and disappeared. Then since death had come to the world, the boy died of sorrow and his body turned into a stone.
CHAPTER VIII

THE SHERDUKPEN STORIES

The Sherdukpen

At the 1961 Census the Sherdukpen numbered some 1,200 individuals. They occupy two main villages, Rupa and Shergaon, to the south-west of the Kameng Frontier Division and have as their immediate neighbours to the west the southern Monpas, sometimes called Sherchokpas, and to the east the small tribe of Buguns (Khowas) and the larger, more formidable tribe of Hrussoes (Akas). They are probably a branch of the larger Monpa group, with which they inter-marry though they speak a different dialect. Formerly they paid tribute, along with the Monpas, to the Tawang monastery through its officials at Kalaktang.

The country of the Sherdukpen is singularly beautiful. It is watered by streams of pellucid water and surrounded by picturesque hills which rise to 10,000 feet and are covered with conifers, yews, oaks and birches. Among these shine the red and white flowers of the magnolias and rhododendrons in their season. The climate is pleasant (the elevation of Rupa is 5,100 feet, that of Shergaon is 6,600), though rather cold in winter, and the rainfall is comparatively light—in the neighbourhood of 30 to 32 inches a year.

1 This with some modifications, was written some time ago, in 1955. Since then a small book on the Sherdukpen has been published by Mr R. R. P. Sharma.
Sherdukpen Trade

A remarkable feature of Sherdukpen life is the annual migration to a place called Doimara. At the beginning of the cold weather, the entire tribe (with the exception of a few caretakers and very old people) moves south to a settlement a few miles from the plains. They leave their comfortable houses and the lovely scenery of their valleys and go to live in a heavily forested, malarious camp of small huts for several months. They return in March or April, when the weather becomes warmer.

The original aim of this seems to have been to extract taxes from the plains-people; today it is a sort of picnic, a change, a holiday at a hill-station in reverse, which everyone enjoys enormously. The Sherdukpens have many friends among the Kacharis, whom they used to tax, and they have business relations with them and other inhabitants of the plains at Missamari, Rangapara and elsewhere.

I was told at Rupa that very friendly relations still existed. The Sherdukpens go with suitable offerings to the Bihu and other festivals: the plains-people send gifts of cloth for prayer-flags and pan-supari for the Khiksaba Festival. The Sherdukpens are received with honour and hospitality in the houses of their Kachari friends.

Agriculture and Other Crafts

The Sherdukpens have both shifting and permanent cultivation but they do not seem to be particularly expert at either, for they frequently suffer from a deficiency of food for which they have to make up by trade. Their permanent fields, of which there are many in the valley of the Dupla
Ko, are in many cases covered with stones, which the people refuse to remove on the ground that if they do so the fertility of the soil will be impaired. They use a very primitive plough which may be drawn by buffaloes, cows or bullocks; this has an exceptionally broad yoke and requires two men to operate it. They usually have to plough the ground twice before sowing their seed. In these permanent fields they rotate their crops, following wheat and barley alternately by maize and millet. They manure their fields by tying up their cattle in them when they are lying fallow, but they do not use oak leaves as the northern people of Dirang do. In addition to the main crops they grow pulses, chillies, mustard, ordinary and sweet potatoes and various vegetables.

In the hill clearings they grow maize for the first year, wheat and barley or millet in the second and mustard in the third. The cycle of cultivation is approximately eight to ten years. They begin their cultivation, after returning from Doimara, in the fields which are more distant from the village and later sow the same crops in the fields nearby.

The Sherdukpens supplement their food supply by hunting, the popularity of which is suggested in a number of folk-tales, and by fishing. When the late J. P. Mills visited Rupa in 1945 he was shown 'the most ingenious local fishing tackle. No hook is used. A line of knotted white horse-hairs, said to be invisible in water, is attached to a bamboo rod about 15 feet long. There is a weight at the end of the horse-hair line and a few inches above the weight there is a noose, to which is tied a piece of an iris root said to smell like roe. The weight is
slung gently out and worked down stream in fairly fast runs. A fish coming to the bait gets the noose behind its gills, and is played till exhausted. There being no reel, the angler usually takes a friend with him who helps to keep the fish under control by throwing in stones ahead of it if it tries to run. I am assured that large numbers of fish up to three or four pounds are caught in this way, and that it is quite impossible to catch any on a hook.'

Sherdukpen women are fond of weaving, which they do on the usual loin-loom. They make attractive bags in coloured designs, sashes to be tied round the waist of both men and women, and the large pieces of cloth called bogre which are used as slings for carrying things. For this they use yarn obtained from the bazaars or home-made thread obtained from the bark of a nettle. The women have to cover their hands with cloth in order to remove the leaves from the stalk of this plant before they are able to extract the fibre.

Social Organization

Sherdukpen society is based on a fundamental division into two classes, an upper (the Thongs) and a lower (the Chaos). These are endogamous and each is divided into a number of exogamous clans.

The relation of the Chaos to the Thongs is an intimate and friendly one, though the Chaos are definitely subservient. Each Chao clan is attached to a Thong clan and is expected to perform menial as well as certain ceremonial duties for it. The Thongs pay for any work they take from the Chaos, but if a Thong does anything for a Chao he will
not accept payment, though he will accept his food for the period of his assistance. But a Thong will never carry a load for a Chao. Should a Thong require the services of a Chao of a clan which is not attached to his, he is expected to ask permission from the members of the Thong-clan concerned.

It is a serious thing for a Thong girl to marry a Chao boy. It is possible, but a heavy fine is taken from the boy's household and given to the village temple.

The Chaos have certain duties and privileges at marriages and funerals. When a Thong girl is married, her father gives a scarf to each of the Chao families related to his clan, and they give the bride certain presents, such as utensils of various kinds. The bridegroom's father also gives the Chaos a sheep and feeds them throughout the ceremony.

At funerals the Chaos attached to the clan of the deceased have the duty of carrying out the corpse for it is taboo for a Thong to touch it. It is, therefore, the Chaos who wash the body, wrap it in a new cloth and take it for cremation or burial. For this service they receive a token gift of five rupees and a feast.

There does not seem to be any difference in dress or way of life between the Thongs and the Chaos, but though there are rich and poor in each group, the general standard of the Chaos is much lower than that of the Thongs. The Chaos too enjoy a certain relaxation of the food-taboos, which press so heavily on the Thongs: for example, they may eat mithun-flesh which is forbidden to the Thongs. But it is possible for a Chao to be a Jiji, or tribal priest, and the rules are stricter in his case.
The outstanding quality of the Sherdukpen character is its gentleness. I have rarely met so pacific a people. Their villages are quiet, almost subdued in tone. Children do not cry, but neither do they seem to left off their feelings. I was told that quarrels were rare and that murder, suicide and rape were non-existent.

**Sherdukpen Dress**

The Sherdukpons wear a lot of clothes, for their country is cold and there are dim-dams about. The men put on long trousers and wrap a cloth criss-cross about the upper part of their bodies. The cloth used is often endi-silk from the plains and when it is clean it looks very well.

Ordinary people wear a rather attractive little black cap, a sort of pudding-basin of black yak felt, with small tassels of the same material and often with a white cockade at the side or a white band round the brim, but the headmen and members of the village council wear splendid hats of fur and yellow silk, which are either made by the Monpas or brought from Kalimpong. Round the waist most men wear a sash of coloured cloth, into which they stick a dao or sword, and they often have an attractively woven bag of distinctive patterns. If a man has to carry something, he ties round his shoulders a large piece of the hand-woven cloth called the *bogre* and this serves as a sling.

The women are rather shapeless in appearance, for they drape themselves in a number of strips of cloth which cover them from shoulders to knees or ankles. Many of them wear loose trousers to keep off the dim-dams. Round their waists they
usually tie a coloured sash. A number put on attractive little caps imported from the Tawang area. The ornaments of neither men nor women are of any special interest.

On special occasions, the leading Thongs wear magnificent clothes of Chinese silk and Tibetan hats which look very fine indeed.

Girls cut the hair round the head, almost in Minyong Adi fashion, though they keep more hair than the Minyongs. Some girls, however, allow the hair to grow long and hang down all over the face. This is considered very attractive by the young men, and in fact it does add a touch of mystery to the rarely beautiful Sherdukpen features. After marriage, and always after the birth of a child, the women tie up their hair in a loose bun.

Dances and Pantomimes

The Sherdukpen pantomimes, which closely resemble those performed by the Monpas to the north and west, are of great variety. There are at least fifteen of them, and I was told at Shergaon that there were altogether twenty-one masks in use. Some of the masks are of high artistic quality and those representing human beings are strikingly realistic: I saw one of an old woman and another of a jester with a perpetually smiling face which were so naturally done that sometimes you thought you were looking at actual faces. Young men and boys take both male and female parts (throughout the world animal dances are nearly always performed by men), and play with great spirit.

Each of the pantomimes is associated with a story
and some of them have a definite moral purpose intended to emphasise the fate of sinners after death.

The most important of these dance-pantomimes is the Yak Dance. In this a large dummy animal, the body made of black cloth, the head a cross between a horse and a yak, is carried by two men concealed within it. On its back sits the figure of a goddess with upraised arms. Three masked men representing Apapek and his two sons accompany the ‘yak’ and dance round and with it. From time to time they sing, and a party of drummers beat the rhythm.¹

Another popular dance is the Ajilamau, in the course of which two figures masked to represent demons with ferocious faces and flowing hair perform with one man dressed as a Raja and two others representing Ranis.²

Associated with the Yak Dance (and often having the sitting figure of the dummy as a background) are a number of other dances. There is, for example, the Dance of Death which introduces Sangothung, the God of Death, who dances round the animal and then sits majestically beside it on his horse.

This may be followed by the dance of the Cow, when a man with a mask representing a cow’s head enters the scene and chases Apapek and his two sons. This teaches the moral that if any one should kill a cow, it will wait for him in the other world. When the slayer’s ghost arrives there, Sangothung sends the cow to chase and torment it.

In the Horse Dance, a man with a finely carved

¹For the story, see my Myths, p. 429.
²For the story behind this, see my Myths pp. 122f.
and coloured horse's head dances with the three mummers and pretends to attack them. For I was told that if anyone beats or overloads his horses, a horse will trouble his ghost after his death.

The Tiger Dance, similarly warns the living of the fate that awaits a man who wantonly kills a tiger, one which has not killed his cattle or goats; and the Snake dance warns those who unnecessarily kill an innocent serpent.

The Sherdukpen are reluctant to eat pork and the reason emerges in the course of the Pig dance which shows how a great Pig punishes those who kill and eat too many pigs.

In the same way, those who neglect or beat their dogs, who kill and eat too many birds, who kill monkeys, who hurt or kill cats are warned in the Dog, Bird, Monkey and Cat dances, which are performed by mummers wearing appropriate animal masks.

To kill a rat is also dangerous, for the rat's ghost may enter your ghost's head by one ear and burrow its way out through the other: it will tear out your eyes and bite off your nose. This is vividly illustrated by the Rat dance.

The Sky dance illustrates the domestic conflicts of the mighty figures of Bruk and his wife who live in the sky.

The Deer Dance is performed with great vigour by a man wearing a great deer's head with spreading antlers. This reminds the audience of another story about Apapek and his sons.1

In another Bird Dance, two 'birds' called Jachung, male and female, appear with brilliantly

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1 See my Myths, p. 376.
coloured birds' heads on their shoulders, and gay clothes covering their bodies. Presently an old woman, who represents one of the local gods, appears with a fish-trap and tries to catch them. This dance is based on an interesting legend.¹

Sherdukpen Religion

Sherdukpen religion is an interesting blend of Buddhist and tribal ideas.

The Lord Buddha is called by the people Konchosum or Kunjusum, but this really denotes the trinity of the Buddha himself, Padma-Sambhava and Avalokiteswara. He is the teacher of righteousness; temples and shrines are erected in his name; there are festivals and sacrifices in his honour. But he is not the Supreme Creator of the world and he stands rather apart from the local pantheon.

At the head of this pantheon is Chungba-Sangyat and his two brothers Lopon-Rimpoche or Padmasambhava and Chomdande, a semi-deified Lama. All three now live in the sky, whence the two brothers once looked down on the watery expanse of the primaeval ocean and wondered where mankind could live. They threw down a lotus flower which covered the face of the waters with its blooms and called to the four winds to bring the dust which mingled to make the world. Chungba-Sangyat created fish and was angry when they denied his creative power. He appointed a king to rule over the birds. He showed mercy on the young Tepagalu when he called upon him in his despair. He saved

¹Ibid., pp. 345 pp.
the magic deer threatened with poison and removed the evil from its body. Lopon-Rimpoche tried to protect mankind against the terrible cannibalistic birds who were preying upon them. The Gompas and Kakalings also contain a large number of images and pictures of minor deities and incarnate Lamas or Rimpoches.

Curiously enough, in view of the popularity of the Sun-God in other tribal cultures in NEFA, the Sherdukpens have few ideas and, so far as I could discover, no legends about the Sun and Moon. I was told, however, that ‘there are seven Suns, all feminine, and they live together. There is only one Moon and he alternates: he is a man one month and a woman the next.’

Among the lesser gods is Jamu-Wang-Sing, the great spirit of the forest, and the other forest deities—Phu Servi Mangbi of Shergaon and Phu Sawang of Rupa, who are worshipped at the Khiksaba Festival. There are many water-spirits, and they too are worshipped at the Khiksaba.

When dysentery or any other water-borne disease attacks a village, the Lama or Jiji ties a row of flags across a stream in honour of Gyapu Meding, a water spirit. At the confluence of two streams there lives Du the ‘black’ spirit who is found where the water is muddy and dark through the conflict of contending streams.

A rainbow is due to the adventures of four water-spirits, one white, another black, a third yellow, and the fourth red. These live in springs and wander across the sky for ever seeking wives as lovely as themselves. The rainbow is the path they make across the sky. When they cross it a little rain falls—
this is the tea and rice-beer they drink to refresh themselves on their journey.

A dangerous spirit called Tebrang lives on great rocks among the hills. He catches hold of children and makes them cry.

Mikam is a god of fire, a restless spirit, always moving from place to place. He visits Rupa every year and if he is not quickly appeased he burns down a house. He has caused several disasters both in Rupa and Shergaon. The orthodox method of appeasing him is for the Jiji to take a cow or a pig to a place where two streams meet and let it go in his name. The Sherdukpens will not kill a sacrificial animal themselves, and the Buguns profit by this, for they have no such taboo and catch the animals and kill and eat them. The idea is that as the animal goes into the water, so the god will become wet and cool. If they fail to do this, it is believed that small children in the village may go dumb and in fact there is a certain percentage, 4 per cent I believe, of cases of deaf-mutism among the many sufferers (28 per cent of the whole tribe) from goitre in this region.

In the sky are two mighty beings—it is not clear whether they are gods or not—Bruk (or Brik) and his wife Nimibatapa. When he desires his wife, he approaches her, but she is frigid and flies from him. As she runs across the sky her parts flash like lightning. The thunder is the noise of her husband’s pursuit.

It is interesting to note that the Sherdukpens attribute earthquakes to a natural, almost a scientific, cause, unlike the other tribes who imagine a great being on whose shoulders the world is resting uneasily. ‘The Earth’, I was told at Rupa, ‘is for
ever revolving. There is a great ocean below us and in the middle of it a high mountain towers above the water. Sometimes as the earth turns round it knocks against the mountain and this causes an earthquake. When this happens the earth begins to turn in the opposite direction and it continues to do so until it knocks against the mountain again.

Finally there is the sombre figure of the God of Death, whom I heard called variously Sinche Gyapu and Sangothung. The Sherdukpens believe in rebirth: a good man goes to Chungba-Sangyat: ‘he sees the Sun and Moon and is feasted on splendid food.’ Then he is sent back to earth as a human being.

But a bad man goes to Sinche Gyapu, King of the Dead, who punishes him in ways that are vividly illustrated in the dances and sends him back to earth as an animal.

The punishments inflicted by Sinche Gyapu are similar to those depicted in Buddhist temples in Ceylon and Siam. The King of the Dead orders his servants to cut up a murderer as the latter cut up his victim. A liar has his tongue, the organ with which he offended, pulled out: a pin is put through it so that he cannot take it back. A thief has his hands tied together and dipped in boiling oil. An adulterer is punished by being chained to a pillar. His penis is tied to another chain and is stretched till the agony is unbearable. A woman guilty of the same offence is tied with arms and legs outstretched against a frame, her head is pulled upward and a fire is lighted beneath her. A mean woman is offered food but, as she is about to eat it, Sinche Gyapu ties a cord round her throat so that she cannot swallow.
In addition to what we may call 'gods' there are a host of demons, ogres and, of course, ghosts in the unseen world. Some of these are active only in the folk-tales, but others are dangerous to life and happiness today. The Srinpus and Srinmus are the legendary 'Rakshasas', whose home was and perhaps still is—beyond the Himalayas. Here is the Land of Women; it was from here that fire was stolen by the bat and brought to men; it was the Srinpus who were the chief enemies of the Lamas in the early days; from them came the mosquitoes who bother men and the rats which eat the sacred books.

A specially troublesome Srinmu, or female demon, is Esekandoma-Jaima. 'She is so ugly that you feel sick if you so much as look at her. Her breasts hang down her back; she has an enormous belly; her feet are tiny and turned the wrong way round.' This unattractive spirit, unable to find a husband among her own kind, visits human habitations in search of one. After a long and fruitless search, she dies frustrated and in despair, and after her death comes to men in dreams. She can now change her appearance to that of a young and lovely girl, and men yield to her but to their undoing, for she robs them of their strength and happiness.

Human ghosts can also be a burden to the living, and for this reason the Sherdukpenes do not have regular cemeteries. The Lama drawing his inspiration from the stars, directs where each corpse should be taken. 'For if all were taken to the same place, the village of the ghosts would be too strong and dangerous.' Rich men are cremated: the poor are buried.

The temples (there are three in each village)
at Rupa and Shergaon are substantially built, three-storeyed buildings, decorated by artists from Tawang. They contain many images of the Buddha in the Tibetan style, libraries of sacred books, and Tibetan scrolls hanging from the walls. Outside are tall poles with prayer-flags fluttering in the wind, and many prayer-wheels in niches in the walls. At both villages there is a large prayer-wheel worked by water.

It is said that the largest of the Rupa temples was used as a fort where the people could take refuge when the village was raided by the Akas.

Both at Rupa and Shergaon there are Kakaling gates with domed roofs which are elaborately painted with conventional designs and images of the Buddha. At Rupa, the wooden head of a dog is fixed in the outer wall.

Scattered about the countryside and in the villages are the pleasant little stone shrines called *mane*. These are in shape narrow walls six to eight feet high and ten to twenty feet long. Let into the walls are tablets bearing the sacred inscription 'Om mane padme om' and there is sometimes a carving of lotus or the figure of the Buddha. These shrines are erected 'where there is danger from demons or where strange noises are heard.' A rich man may have one built during his life-time, or one may be put up, as an act of piety, to his memory after his death.

The Sherdukpen temples are tended, wherever possible, by Lamas. At Shergaon, for example, I found a Lama, himself a Sherdukpen who had been trained at Tawang and had even visited Lhasa. His duties were to look after the temples, make offerings
before the images of the Buddha, care for the sacred books, and preside at festivals.

The Shamans

But in addition to the Lamas, the Sherdukpens have a class of priests known as Jiji whose function is suggested by the following legend.

'At the beginning, before the world was created, the spirits, good and evil, lived with Chungba-Sangyat. But when the world was made, he sent them to live on earth and they began to be a great nuisance to mankind. No one knew who they were until the Jijis were created. The Jijis then discovered their names and were able to say what was to be done for them.'

Today, the Jiji, who may be drawn either from the Thong or the Chao section of the community, performs all the rites relating to the gods and spirits of the countryside. He offers sacrifice to them and presides at the festivals which are specially celebrated in their honour.

The Jiji is also a diviner and medicine-man. He divines the cause of illness or other disaster by examining eggs or the livers of chickens as well as by playing with a kind of dice. When he has diagnosed the cause of a disease, he recites charms, offers sacrifice and, if necessary, can extract alien substances such as bones and worms from a patient's body.

It is interesting to find that the Sherdukpen Jijis have dreams of initiation and are married to tutelary spirits in the same way as the Saoras of Orissa and the Adis and Hill Miris of NEFA. One of the priests of Rupa gave me the following account of his initiation into his profession. He had a
series of seven dreams which began when he was quite a young boy. In the first dream, he saw his parents going round the village and standing before each house in turn. After this they went away to another village. 'The meaning of this was that the Jiji must be prepared to visit every house in his village and go wherever he is called.

In the next dream, he saw his father dressed in traditional tribal clothes coming with three other men. They were very small with long hair and dressed in white clothes and garlands of flowers.

In his third dream, the three men caught the would-be priest saying, 'Your parents have given you to us and we are going to take you away.' He refused to go with them and as he struggled to free himself he awoke. 'Then,' he said, 'in my next dream the three men came back again. They were now wearing only a cloth round their loins, but it was beautifully designed and woven. Their hair was tied behind like a woman's and was decorated with flowers. They carried swords in their hands. The eldest of them said, "We have the permission of Konchosum and of your parents to make you a Jiji and so we are going to take you away." He caught me by the hand and took me to a great river where there was a rock standing in deep water. He made me sit on the rock and said, "Look! from today eat no wrong thing; you must take no beef or pork or venison or fish of certain kinds. If you do not obey we will punish you."'

'I was still young when I had this dream and I did not take any notice of it, but continued to eat whatever I liked. But then I had another dream
when the three men came to me and the eldest of them said, "Why have you not obeyed us?" And he hit me very hard on the cheek. Then they took me weeping again to the great river. There they made a bridge of a single thread of cotton and ordered me to cross it. But directly I trod on it, it broke and I fell on the rocks beneath. Then they said to me, "Will you obey us or not?" This time I promised to obey them. They mended the thread and this time I was able to cross in safety.

The dreams now became more definitely related to the Jiji's duties. In my informant's next dream, the three men came to him again and asked him if he recognized them. When he replied that he did not, they tied a rope round his waist and dragged him to the river, where they pushed him into a fish-trap. He screamed and they took him out. Again they asked him if he recognized them and whether he would obey them, and this time he said he would.

They now took him to a great mountain where many spirits were sitting on the hill-side holding some sort of meeting. Some of these spirits had heads of horses, others of mithuns, others of pigs or birds. There were a few with great heads, long teeth and pendulous bellies. Some of them, however, looked like ordinary human beings dressed in decorated cloth and garlands. The young priest was very frightened when he saw them, especially when the three men who escorted him declared, "This man is to be a priest and we have brought him to you." The spirits replied, "That is very good." And they asked him, "Will you obey our orders?" He replied, "Yes, certainly I will but who will tell me what to
do.' They answered that they would see to that and that he need not be anxious.

The final dream was the most important of all. Now the three men brought a girl with them, a beautiful girl in fine clean cloth and with garlands round her neck. They took the priest and the girl to a dark place where they could see nothing and left them there together. The boy asked the girl what her name was and why she had come. She said that her name was Armusunka-Jangmu and that she had come to be his wife in the spirit world and that it would be her task to teach him the duties of a priest and help him to fulfil them.

As she told him this, the whole place was filled with light and he could see many tiny buildings which she said were the homes of the gods. Then it became dark again, and after a little while the light shone out once more and now the priest saw big houses, some with dark, others with white walls.

After this dream, the boy went out of his senses for a time. He used to wander about the village, singing senseless songs, or would go out into the forest and sit there. When he asked an elderly Jiji what was the matter with him, he was told that this was part of the usual process of becoming a priest. The old man offered a fowl, some grain and fifty little bits of cloth to the spirits saying, 'Do not trouble this man further; tell him what he is to do and he will do your work well.' After this the boy began his first period of training with the old Jiji and when this was completed started to practise on his own.

In June there is a two-day festival called Wang in honour of the Buddha. In September, at the
Kurim festival, the Lama offers rice and flowers in the temples. Photenya is the Harvest Festival, when branches of crops are hung up in the temples and the Jijs offer them also to the forest and water spirits.

**Taboos**

Like all tribal people who have come in touch with more fully developed communities, the Sherdukpens are intensely interested in taboos on food. Here, however, the taboos have a religious rather than a social motive. A Raj Gond in central India thinks himself superior to an ordinary Gond because he does not eat fowls, and if you ask him the distinguishing characteristic of his tribe, this will be the only thing he will be able to tell you. But I do not think the Sherdukpens consider themselves superior to the Khowas and Akas because the latter eat cows and they do not. Their food taboos are a direct consequence of Buddhist influence.

The result of this is that the Sherdukpens do not eat beef, pork, fowls or goats, though they keep cattle, a few pigs, fowls and goats for trade. They may only take non-domestic animals such as deer, fish and certain birds. The Chaos may eat mithun, but this is forbidden to the Thongs. They may all, however, eat yak’s meat.

The Lamas are regarded as set apart from other men by their greater love of living creatures. The Lama at Shergao told me that he must never use a plough for fear of killing a worm in the soil. He should not eat a fish until it had been dead for twenty-four hours, so that any ‘warmth of life’ would have time to leave its body. Strickly speaking, a
Lama should not eat any meat, but in practice and especially in view of the rule that compels a Buddhist monk to accept anything he is offered, the Lamas do eat fish, venison and other game, but only if the killing is done by other persons.

This, of course, adds a complication to the business of sacrificing animals to the forest and water spirits. For even the Jijis ought not to kill the domestic animals which are the suitable offerings for this purposes. Several legends attempt to solve the problem.\(^1\)

Another legend describes, in a rather interesting manner, how the first Jiji was appointed and how the Lord Buddha tried to prevent his exercising his profession. It will be noticed that the conflict between Buddhism and the tribal religion in this story turns entirely on the question of taking animal life.\(^2\)

I have visited Rupa several times and Shergaon once. It is a lovely part of India and the stories told by the people take one into another world.

1

THE BATTLE FOR THE FISH

Long ago, before there were any fish in the world, Lopon Rimpoche\(^3\) was walking along a river-bank. He saw that the water was dirty and full of weeds and said to himself, 'People will die if they drink the water from this river. What can I do to make it clean? If only there were some creatures that could eat the dirt, the water would be purified. I must do something about it.'

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\(^1\)See my *Myths*, p. 242.
\(^2\)ibid, p. 243.
\(^3\)Padma-Sambhava.
Thinking in this way he made some creatures in the shape of fish with the paper that the people manufactured in a village nearby, put life into them and threw them into the river saying, "Eat all the dirt and weeds.'

Then he picked up some pine-fruits, gave life to them and threw them also into the river saying, 'Eat all the dirt and weeds and clean the river.'

From the paper came fish without scales and from the fruits came fish with scales.

Now the people did not know what to do with the fish. There were so many of them in the river that they found it difficult to go into it even to fetch water, and the animals could not drink the water as the fish used to bite their feet. But there was nothing they could do about it.

After a time Tsang Dande Rimpoche heard of it and came to look at the river but he could see nothing but fish and no water was visible. But since the fish had been created by Lopon Rimpoche he could not catch or kill them himself.

Presently he saw a stick floating down the river and picked it up. He put life into it and threw it into the water saying 'Go and eat the fish.' The stick turned into a water-rat and started to catch and eat the fish. In fact, he ate so many of them that soon there were very few left. Those who survived escaped by hiding under rocks and stones.

One day Lopon Rimpoche came to see how his fish were faring and was surprised to see so few of them. He called to them and asked what the matter was. They began to weep and cried, 'Tsang Dande Rimpoche has made a creature which has eaten nearly all of us. Just a few of us escaped by hiding under rocks and stones but we ourselves are afraid that the rat will devour us also and not one of us will be left.'

'Don't worry,' said Lopon Rimpoche, 'So many fish will be born from you that it will be impossible for the water-rat to destroy you all.'

So saying he went away.

As the days went by, the number of the fish increased again and the water-rat got tired of eating them. Tsang Dande Rimpoche came again to see what had happened and asked the rat, 'Why are there so many fish in the river? Can't you eat all of them?'
'No,' replied the water-rat. 'The fish are increasing daily at such a rate that it is impossible for me alone to eat them.'

Tsang Dande Rimpoche said, 'From now onwards the bigger male fish will help you to eat the smaller fish.'

So saying he went away.

Now both the large male fish and the water-rat started eating the fish—the male fish ate the smaller ones and the water-rat the larger ones and again the number of fish decreased. Next time when Lopon Rimpoche came to see them and asked how they were the female fish wept before him and said, 'We are very unhappy. Formerly, only the water-rat used to eat us but now our husbands have joined him in destroying their own children.'

Lopon Rimpoche said, 'Hitherto you have given birth to your children directly but from now onwards you will lay your eggs and your children will be hatched out from them. Lay them near the river-bank and when your babies are hatched out you must hide them somewhere under the stones till they are strong enough to protect themselves from their enemies.'

So saying he went away. Since then fish have laid eggs.

Tsang Dande Rimpoche came yet again to look at the fish and again he asked the rat and the male fish, 'Why are there so many fish in the water? Aren't you eating anything nowadays?' They complained that the female fish were now laying eggs and hiding their children when they were born and that when they grew up it was impossible for the male fish to eat them. Tsang Dande Rimpoche said, 'From now onwards men, animals and birds will also eat fish.' Directly he said this, a desire for fish came to men, animals and birds and they began to catch and eat them. This is how men, animals and birds learnt to eat fish.

Now there was a girl of a poor Sherdukpen family whose name was Nyuphili. She used to pass a great deal of water, so much that her urine flowed like a river and many fish of a certain kind swam in it all the way down to the Assam plains. The Sherdukpens were very surprised at seeing so many of these fish and went about asking where they were coming from. The girl replied, 'It is my urine.'

They said, 'See how many fish are coming from your urine. Who is going to eat them? We certainly aren't going to.'
And ever since then those who catch and eat this particular kind of fish are regarded by the Sherdukpen as inferior people.

2

THE TWO WIVES

There was a deer with his wife and a child. One day in a dream he saw a hunter coming towards them with a dog and a bitch. The dogs chased the deer and they all ran away but he himself was killed. In the morning he told his dream to his wife, and she said, 'Why should you die? If you die I will be a widow. It will be better that I myself should die.' The deer replied, 'If you die, who will give milk to our child?' She said, 'The child does not need milk any more. He is old enough to live on soft grass.' The deer said, 'No one in the world can bear to see his wife being killed. I will never permit it. It is I who will die.'

Soon afterwards they saw the dogs approaching. The deer said to his wife, 'Here they come. You run away with the child and let me die.'

The wife said, 'Very well, you die today and I will die tomorrow. After you are dead you will be reborn as a Raja's son and after I am dead I will be reborn as another Raja's daughter. When we have grown up we will marry and live together very happily.'

The bitch heard what they were saying and said to the hind, 'I will never let you be together.'

The hind ran away to the hills with her child and the dogs chased the deer to where the hunter was standing and he shot at him and killed him. He was very pleased and took the carcass home.

Next day the hunter came again with his dogs to the same place. When the hind heard the dogs barking she told her child, 'Yesterday your father went somewhere but he has not yet come back. I must go and see. Don't go anywhere but wait for me, for I will be back soon.' So saying she came out of the forest and the bitch chased her towards the hunter and

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Another Sherdukpen version of this story is given in my *Myths of the North-East Frontier*, pp. 315 ff.
he shot an arrow at her and it killed both her and the bitch. He was very sorry at having killed his bitch but at the same time he was happy at having killed the hind.

Now the deer, as she had foretold, was reborn as a Raja's son and the hind was born as another Raja's daughter. The bitch was born as a daughter in the house of a rich man.

When they grew up, the deer as the Raja's son and the hind as the other Raja's daughter were married and lived together very happily. One day, the Raja's son was walking along the road and met the rich man's daughter. She was so beautiful that he fell in love with her and took her as his second wife.

Now everybody loves his younger wife more than his elder one and this also happened in the house of the Raja's son. Every day the younger used to quarrel with the older woman and tell her husband about it, with the result that the elder wife lost her peace of mind. She could not eat and gradually became very weak.

When she was on her death-bed she said to her husband, 'Now I am dying, but I remember those beautiful days in our previous life when we lived so happily as deer. You saw in your dream that you were going to be killed and told me about it the next morning. When I said that I should die instead, you were not willing to let me be killed before you. Then I said that after your death you should be born again as a Raja's son and after my death I should be born again as another Raja's daughter. While we were talking that bitch heard what we said and she told me that she would not let us be happy. The next day the bitch as well as I myself were killed and I was born in a Raja's house and the bitch was born in a rich man's house and now she has become your second wife. She made me so miserable that I could not bear it but I never told anybody, not even you, and now I am dying. I hope you will be happy with her. Let me die in peace.' She said to the bitch, 'After I die I will be reborn as a dog and after you die you will become a deer and then I will take my revenge.' Then she died and was reborn as a dog.

After the bitch-wife died she became a deer and this is why dogs chase the deer and kill them to this day.

If a man has two wives we know that the elder was a deer in her previous life and the younger was a bitch.
THE POWER OF INTELLIGENCE

Long ago, under a great rock lived a vulture. One day she gave birth to two puppies—one male and the other female. Presently a hunter passed by the place and saw the vulture feeding her children. He was surprised when he saw the difference between the mother and her children—the mother had feathers and two legs and was extremely ugly; and the children had no feathers but four legs and were very pretty.

He asked the vulture, 'How is that you have feathers and two legs and your children have no feathers and four legs? How is it that there is such a difference between you?'

The vulture replied, 'My children are not birds. They are very good hunting dogs. If you take them they will be of great help to you.'

'Would you really give them to me?' he asked.

'Yes', she replied, 'you may certainly have them.' And she gave her puppies to the hunter.

The hunter went on his way with the two puppies and after a time they met an elephant. The dogs, impressed by his size and strength, said to each other, 'Why shouldn't we go and live with this great animal?'

They said to the man, 'We are not going to stay with you any longer but we are going to live with the elephant.' So saying they went to the elephant to live with him.

That night the dogs barked and the elephant said to them, 'Don't make such a noise or the wild buffalo will come and kill me as well as you.'

The dogs asked, 'How will he kill us? Is he bigger than you?'

'No', the elephant replied. 'He is not big but he is strong and I am terrified of him.'

At that the dogs said, 'We are not going to stay with you any longer. It is best to live with the strong animals. We will go to live with him.' And they left the elephant to live with the wild buffalo.

That night the dogs barked and the wild buffalo said to them, 'Don't make such a noise or the tiger will come and kill us.'
The dogs asked, 'How will he kill us? Is he bigger than you?'

'No', the buffalo replied, 'He is not bigger than me but he is a very strong and cruel animal.'

At that the dogs said, 'We are not going to stay with you any longer. It is best to live with the strong animals. We will go to live with the tiger.' And they left the buffalo to live with the tiger.

That night the dogs barked and the tiger said to them, 'Don't make such a noise, or the man will come and kill me as well as you.'

The dogs asked, 'How will he kill us? Is he bigger than you?'

The tiger replied, 'He is not bigger or stronger than me but he is very clever and he can kill not only me but all the animals.'

The dogs said, 'Then we are not going to stay with you. We will go and stay with the man and help him in hunting.' So saying they left the tiger to live with the man.

Ever since dogs have lived with men and have helped them in hunting.

4

THE DEMON'S DAUGHTER

Between the borders of Tibet and Gyakar Dorjeden (Buddha Gaya) there was a place called Peyur Chorten where Lopon Rimpoche was having a mane (shrine) made. But there was little water and the people had to work very hard. To encourage them Lopon Rimpoche said, 'When the mane is ready I will give you my blessings and whatever you want you will have.'

But there was a demon there who heard what Lopon Rimpoche said and he thought, 'I am a mighty giant, I should be able to do the work easily. I must go there to help but, if I go in my present form, Lopon Rimpoche will kill me.' So he turned himself into an animal which was rather like a yak and rather like a mithun but was actually neither a mithun nor a yak. When the people saw him they engaged him to draw water and he said to himself, 'When the work is finished I will ask Lopon Rimpoche to give me a boon so that I will be able to devour all mankind.'
He worked so hard that he gradually became completely exhausted.

When the mane was ready, Lopon Rimpoche called together all the people who had worked on it. They, not understanding that the animal was a demon, tied him to a pole and went to Lopon Rimpoche. Lopon Rimpoche blessed them and gave them what they desired and then departed. But when the animal learnt that the people had cheated him he untied himself and rushed to where Lopon Rimpoche had been living. When he found that Lopon Rimpoche was not there he was furious and said to the people, 'You used me to draw water and I worked so hard that I have become very weak. Without my help it would have been impossible for you to have built the mane. Now the shrine is ready but you didn't take me to Lopon Rimpoche. For this I shall take revenge. I shall become a Raja and when I rule over you I will give you every kind of trouble.'

After some time the demon died and was born again as the son of a Raja called Dui Langdar.\(^1\) When he grew up the Raja arranged for his marriage and then in due time he died and the demon himself took the throne. Now that he was Raja he oppressed his subjects in every way: he used to drink the milk of the women and ordered that one human child should be brought to him to eat every month. Anyone who refused to obey was tortured. The people were very frightened and thought of running away but they were afraid that if they did the Raja would pursue and destroy them.

Then, the Raja's wife gave birth to three daughters. When they were old enough they went to school. The Raja used sometimes to inspect the school and one day he asked the children to examine his head and find out what there was in it. Nobody dared to do it except a very brave boy called Lalung-Peki Dorje who examined the Raja's head and found that there were two little horns there. This was such a great shock to him that he did not say anything about it then and ran away from school.

The boy could not forget what he had seen. 'How is it possible,' he thought, 'for a man to have horns? I must tell

\(^1\) Zang Darma, the Devil.

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the people about this. But if the Raja hears that I have spoken of it he will devour me.'

So he dug a hole in the earth and went inside and made a trumpet through which he announced, 'The Raja has two horns, the Raja has two horns.'

When the people heard this they said to each other, 'This is a very extraordinary thing. The Raja cannot be a human being; he must be a demon. That is why he drinks human milk and eats human children. We must kill him at once.'

When the Raja heard that they were plotting to kill him he was so frightened that he hid and did not come out of his house.

The people looked for the Raja everywhere but could not find him. They said to one another, 'How can we kill the Raja if he never comes out? The best thing for us to do will be to dance in front of his house for seven days and there is a chance that he may come out to watch.' Then they discussed who should actually kill the Raja. Everybody was afraid to do so except Lalung-Peki Dorje and he went to join the dance with his bow and arrows in his hand.

The people danced for two days but the Raja did not come out. On the third day his eldest daughter said to him, 'There is a beautiful dance outside. You must go and see it.' But the Raja refused to go out.

On the fourth day his second daughter said to him, 'There is a beautiful dance outside. You must go and see it.' But he did not go out.

On the fifth day the youngest daughter said to him, 'They are doing a beautiful dance outside. You really ought to go and see it. But you needn't leave the house if you don't want to. I will open the window and you can look through that.'

The Raja was anxious, in spite of his fears, to see the dance, so he asked the girl to open the window and he looked out. When the people saw him they began to dance with great vigour to distract his attention. Among them Lalung-Peki Dorje was dancing with his bow and arrow and when he saw that the Raja was completely absorbed in watching, he realized his chance had come and he shot at the Raja and pierced his heart with an arrow.

As the Raja fell, his soldiers began to shout and pointed at
Lalung-Peki Dorje, who was the only person who had a bow and arrow with him. The boy ran for his life and the soldiers followed him.

Lalung-Peki Dorje reached a cave which had a cobweb across the door and he crept inside. One of the soldiers came to the cave but did not recognize the boy and asked him whether he had seen anybody going along the path. The boy replied, 'Yes, I saw a boy running, but by this time he must have gone far away.' This made the sepoy suspicious and he approached Lalung-Peki Dorje and felt his heart. As the boy was tired from running, his heart was still beating violently. The sepoy said to him, 'I know it is you who have killed the Raja but it is good that you have. He was a bad man and troubled us in every way. It is good that you have killed him and I won't tell anyone where you are.' So saying the soldier went home alone.

The Raja did not die of his wound but it was impossible to take the arrow from his heart. He said to himself, 'I am dying and what have I done? I was unable to give as much trouble to mankind as I desired, but in spite of that they have killed me.'

Then his eldest daughter said to him, 'Why are you worrying, father? You are in great pain and it is time for you to die. When I die I will become a rat and I shall go to the fields and spoil the harvest and in this way take revenge upon mankind.'

The second daughter said, 'Why are you worrying, father? You are in great pain and it is time for you to die. When I die I will become a pretty girl and I will make love to the young men and they will all desire me. This will make them quarrel and fight each other and many will be killed. In this way I shall take revenge upon mankind.'

The youngest daughter said, 'Why are you worrying, father? You are in great pain and it is time for you to die. My eldest sister will become a rat and ruin the harvest; the second sister will become a pretty girl and make the young men fight each other. I myself will become a mouse and live in the Gompas where I shall spoil the religious books and other precious things.'

When the Raja heard this he was relieved and said to his daughters, 'What you have said has made me happy. Now I can die. When I am dead, my body should not be buried but burnt.' And after some time the Raja died and they took his
body to be burnt. When it was almost consumed by the fire a great wind came and blew away the ash and unburnt pieces of the body. From the larger pieces came all kinds of poisonous insects and from the smaller pieces came mosquitoes and dim-dam flies. The intestines turned into every kind of snake.

In due course the three daughters died and as they had promised, the eldest became a rat, the second a pretty girl and the third a mouse.

And this is why even today the rats ruin the harvest, and mice spoil our religious books in the Gompas, and wherever there is a pretty girl our young men desire her and fight each other for her.

5

THE FIRST BEAR

There is a place called Khamjung in Tibet. Long ago there lived a Khampa man and his wife with their children. But husband and wife were not on good terms with each other and used to quarrel every day. One day it went to such an extreme that the husband went away in a rage to the forest to live there. But he had no food to eat and got so hungry that he lost the power of distinguishing what was edible and what was not. In fact he ate anything he saw and one day ate some jungle charm

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1This story appears to be an imaginative version of something that actually happened as long ago as about A. D. 899. A man who has been called the Julian of Lamaism, Lang Darma, was a King of Lhasa who persecuted the Lamas and did everything he could to destroy the religion of Buddhism.

He desecrated the temples and monasteries, burnt their books, and treated the Lamas with the grossest indignity, forcing many to become butchers.

In the third year of his reign, however, he was assassinated by a Lama of Lhalun named Pal-dorje whose deed is commemorated in dances to the present day. ‘This Lama, to effect his purpose, assumed the guise of a strolling black-hat devil-dancer, and hid in his ample sleeves a bow and arrow. His dancing below the king’s palace, which stood near the northeast end of the present cathedral of Lhasa, attracted the attention of the King who summoned the dancer to his presence, where the disguised Lama seized an opportunity while near the king to shoot him with the arrow, which proved almost immediately fatal. In the resulting tumult the Lama sped away on a black horse, which was tethered near at hand, and riding on, plunged through the Keyi river on the outskirts of Lhasa, whence his horse emerged in its natural white colour as, it had been merely blackened by soot, and he himself turned outside the white lining of his coat, and by this stratagem escaped his pursuers’—L. A. Waddell, The Buddhism of Tibet (London 1934), pp. 34-35.

2Probably the Province of Kham
which turned him into a bear. When he saw that the whole of his body was covered with long hair and that he was completely changed into an animal, he said to himself, ‘I was a fool to quarrel with my wife and come to the forest. And now God has made me such a creature. Whatever was going to happen, has happened. Now I must go to my wife and ask her whether she will allow me to live in my house or not.’

In the evening he came to his house and called his wife. She came out of the room and when she saw him she was terrified. The bear said, ‘Don’t be afraid. I am your husband. I went away to the forest in a temper and there I had nothing to eat. So I started eating everything I saw. One day I ate some jungle charm and that has made me into a creature like this. Now I have come to you to apologise and want to know whether you will allow me to live with you. I promise I will never quarrel with you and whatever you want me to do I will do.’ The wife said, ‘God has made you a bear but how can I live with you? I am a human being and you an animal. Your home is the forest. Go there and live on jungle fruits. You should not stay here any more, or the people will kill you. So run away immediately.’ The bear said, ‘Very well, I will go but I must see my children before I do!’ She said, ‘Don’t enter the room, for the children will be alarmed at seeing you.’ So saying she came back to the room and closed the door. The bear was very angry and came to the door and made a hole in the plank and put his face through it. When he did this, the wife beat his face with a burning stick from the hearth with the result that his face was burnt and he ran away.

After that he lived in the forest and was the first bear. And the black spot on the bear’s face is due to the burn his wife made with a blazing stick long ago. Even today the bears remember the trouble a woman gave to their ancestor and take revenge when they can. This is why bears do not spare a woman when they catch one.

6

THE JEALOUS SISTER

In a little settlement in the valley leading from Shergaon to Rupa lived two girls. The elder was so lovely that it was as if
the sun was shining through the hair hanging over her face. The younger was beautiful as the moon looking through clouds in a bright sky.

But both the girls had goitre on their necks and for this reason the young men did not come to marry them.

One day as the younger girl was walking by a river she met a Lama and asked him to heal her of her affliction.

‘My daughter,’ he said, ‘you will be cured if you go on pilgrimage to Tawang.’

The girl accordingly bathed in the river, crossed it and began her journey through the hills. In the evening she lay down to sleep under a tree.

Now in this tree there lived two ogresses and as the girl was about to fall asleep she heard them talking to one another.

The first ogress said, ‘Come, we must go and find something to eat.’

The second ogress replied, ‘But look, here is something ready lying beneath our tree.’

The girl heard what they said, but she took the name of Konchosum and was not afraid. The next morning she got up and went to the river and was about to cross the stream. She looked down into the water and saw her reflection there. To her joy she saw that during the night the swelling of her goitre had disappeared.

What had happened was that the second ogress had stolen the goitre for her supper. But when she put it in her pot to cook, although she kept it boiling all night long, it remained so hard that she could not cut it even with an axe.

The girl went back to her village and described how her goitre had been cured. But the elder sister, instead of rejoicing, was jealous and immediately set out on her way to Tawang. When she reached the tree where the other sister had slept, she too lay down there and fell asleep. But next morning, when she went to look in the river, she saw that she had two swellings instead of one.

What had happened was that the second ogress, angry at not being able to eat the younger sister’s goitre, had fixed it on the neck of the elder one.
Beyond Kalimpong there is a place called Chang-Jangchi, where long ago there lived an old widow with her only daughter. The old woman used to make many pretty designs on cloth, but the girl did not know how to weave. One day her mother said to her, 'I am the only person in the world who knows how to make designs. Even you have not cared to learn them from me, and so with my death this beautiful art will die out. You must learn it, my sweet girl. Look, I am going to the field and you remain in the house and try to make designs.'

The mother went out and the girl sat down to weave designs, but as she did not know what to do, she did not make much progress.

It grew dark and the girl had her supper and slept but with an anxious heart.

There was a lake near the village where the water-god, Lu-Gyalpo Mento lived. He had a very beautiful golden house under the water and golden and silver furniture in it. He could change his form: sometimes he was a handsome young man and sometimes a snake.

The girl used to go every day to the lake to fetch water and bath, and when Lu-Gyalpo Mento saw her, he desired her and thought, 'If I marry her, how happily we could live together. But how can I arrange it? When I take a man's form, all is well, but when I look like a snake she will be frightened of me and tell her people and I will be killed.'

Now as he was a god he knew the trouble she was in about weaving. He said to himself, 'I know the girl is in great trouble. Her mother has asked her to make designs but she doesn't know how. If I teach her to make the designs, she will not refuse to marry me.'

One night, therefore, while the girl was sleeping, Lu-Gyalpo Mento came to her in a dream and said to her, 'Your mother wants you to make designs but you don't know how to weave. You are very worried about this, but I can teach you. Listen,
I will come to you and sit on your lap and you can imitate the designs on my body.'

The girl said, 'Very well, you may come.'

Next day the girl came to bathe in the pool, and remembered what she had seen in her dream the previous night. 'Who came to me in a dream and offered me to teach designs? Whoever he is, I do hope he will come.' Whatever the girl thought Lu-Gyalpo Mento knew. The girl came back and again tried to make designs, but they were no good.

It was evening and the girl had her supper and went to sleep. In a dream Lu-Gyalpo Mento came again to her and said, 'I know you want me to come to you and teach you to make designs. But how shall I come? If you see me you will be frightened and run away. Sometimes I turn myself into a snake and sometimes into a man. I am the Raja of the water and in the lake where you go to bathe I have a beautiful golden house and all the furniture I have is made of gold and silver. I won't come to you in a man's form but I will come to you as a snake. But if you run away in fright the people will kill me.' The girl said nothing.

Next morning she went to the lake as usual and came back and spread the loom to make designs. When she was doing so she remembered her dream and thought, 'Last night the water-god came to me. He wants to teach me to weave designs, but he will come as a snake. Why should I be afraid of him? If he devours me I don't care. After all I will learn to make designs. It is better to die than live doing nothing.'

She could not weave anything that day also and in the evening she ate her supper and slept. Lu-Gyalpo Mento again came to her in a dream and said, 'I know you won't be afraid of me, and I can come to you easily. If I teach you to make the designs, will you marry me and will you come to live with me in my house in the lake?' She did not answer in words, but smiled sweetly at him.

The next day she came to the lake to bathe. As she was bathing she remembered her dream and said to herself, 'The water-god wants to marry me and I will certainly marry him. He may be a snake but since I can't find a man to marry me, I will have to marry somebody, and I had better marry him.' She went home and sat at her loom to make designs.
but again could do nothing. In the evening she ate her supper and slept.

Lu-Gyalpo Mento again came to her in a dream, 'I know you're ready to marry me and won't be afraid of me. Tomorrow morning I will come to you.'

The girl said, 'Yes, do come.'

Next morning she was very happy. She thought, 'Today my bridegroom will come. I must be well dressed so that I look beautiful.'

That day she went to bathe earlier than usual. She returned home, dressed in her best clothes, did her hair and was eagerly waiting for her future husband.

Lu-Gyalpo Mento came out of his house as a snake but directly he left the water he turned himself into a handsome young man, fully dressed as a rich Monpa—he wore a Monpa coat and a hat, put on Monpa shoes and ornamented himself with golden and silver beads. As he approached the girl's house, she did not at first know who he was but when she realized who he was she said to herself, 'I have never seen a man like this. I had no idea a man could be so handsome. If I marry him how happy I will be.'

Lu-Gyalpo Mento came to her and said, 'I am the Raja of the water and have come to teach you the designs we have talked about. Now I am going to take a snake's form. Don't be afraid and don't cry. I won't bite you. After I change my form, let me sit on your lap, and when I sit there hide me beneath the cloth so that nobody can see me and then imitate the designs on my body.'

Lu-Gyalpo Mento then transformed himself. The only difference was that his face changed to that of a snake and he had a tail, but his body did not change. The girl allowed him to sit on her lap and hid him beneath the cloth on which she was weaving and now she was able to make many beautiful designs, imitating them from the snake's body. Then the water-god turned himself into a man again and said to her, 'Now you have learnt to make many designs. Teach them to as many girls as you can within three months. After that I will come and marry you and take you with me to my house.' So saying he went away. The girl now was very pleased and every day she made beautiful designs.
After some time, her mother came back and was very pleased to see the many designs made by her daughter, and said to her, 'My child, I did not expect you to be able to do so well. I am very pleased with you. Now you must teach them to as many girls as possible.' The girl taught many girls to make designs and they also were very pleased.

Three months passed until only two days were left and the girl said to her mother, 'Mother, I am going to marry a snake and live in his house.'

The mother was very angry at this and said to her, 'This is the first time I have heard such an extraordinary thing. Does any human being marry a snake? The snake is our enemy, for he bites us and then we die. Have you gone mad?'

The girl said, 'My snake is not what you think. He is very handsome and I love him. He is the Raja of the water and it is he who has taught me these designs. He can change his form into that of a man and when he is a man, how splendid he looks. He has a very beautiful golden house with golden and silver furniture. He loves me and wants to marry me. Mother, let me marry him.'

Failing to make her understand, the mother was very distressed and began weeping. The girl said to her, 'Mother, your son-in-law will come the day after tomorrow and will take me with him. When he arrives with the bridegroom's party, you won't be able to see them. You will only hear the music.'

The old woman began crying, 'My only daughter will marry a snake. What shall I do? Where shall I go?'

The day came and the girl heard the music but could not see anybody. She told her mother, 'Mother, your son-in-law has come to take me. Now I will go.'

The mother said, 'My daughter, I am your mother and I always want you to be happy. You are a human being; how will you live with a snake? You won't be happy if you go with him.'

The girl said, 'Let me go, mother. I must marry him. Whenever you are in trouble, whenever you don't get food or clothing, come to the lake and call me three times. I will then come out of the water and take you to my house and give you whatever you want.'

So saying she went to the lake, following the sound of the music, and directly she came there Lu-Gyalpo Mento took his form as
a man and, putting his arms round her, took her to his house.

Lu-Gyalpo Mento had five servants in his house named Lu-karpo, Lu-Marpo, Lu-Sebu, Lu-Danonpu, and Lu-Nakpo. Whenever he changed his form they also took his form. They worked well and the Raja was pleased with them. Their duty was to turn the water into vapour, take it to the sky as clouds and make it fall on the earth as rain. Among them Lu-Nakpo was very hard-working but rough and hot-tempered. Whenever he used to make the clouds fall to the earth as rain it was followed by heavy wind and thunder and lightning.

His excreta used to fall from the sky as lightning and killed men and destroyed trees. If his urine fell on anybody, the side on which it fell became paralysed.

Now her husband gave the girl the name of Lu-Gemu. She gave birth to many children who also had the power of changing their form.

Nine years passed and the mother grew old and could not work any longer. She was very poor and had to live in rags. She remembered what her daughter had promised and decided to go to her. She came to the lake and called her daughter three times. Lu-Gemu recognized her mother's voice and came out of the lake and took her mother down below the water. The old woman was delighted to see the golden house and to find that her daughter was happy. The children came to her crying, 'Here is granny, here is granny.' The Raja greeted her and the old woman was full of joy, especially when she was given very good food to eat and fine clothing to wear.

But when the children turned themselves into snakes and crawled over her body saying, 'Granny, granny,' the old woman was frightened out of her wits and said, 'I don't want to stay here any more. Take me back, take me back.' And seeing they were troubling her the children took human form again. Presently Lu-Gemu said to her mother, 'Mother, your son-in-law and his servants are coming to see you.' Immediately the Raja and his servants turned into snakes and crawled towards the old woman who was terrified at seeing them.

The girl said to her, 'Mother, don't be afraid of them. This is your son-in-law.'

The mother said, 'How can he be my son-in-law?'

The girl said, 'Mother, of course he's your son-in-law. As
I told you, he sometimes turns into a snake and sometimes into a man.' Then the Raja and his servants took human form and the old woman was consoled.

This went on for some time. Whenever the Raja and his servants and the children came to her in human form the old mother was very happy, but whenever they came to her as snakes she would scream and say, 'I don't want anything from you. Let me go.'

After some time, therefore, the old woman said to Le-Gem, 'It is a long time since I came here and I have lived with you very happily. Now I want to go back. Whatever you want to give me, give it and send me back.'

The girl accordingly made some small parcels and put separately into them sand, bits of rope, pine-fruit, red, black, blue, green, white and yellow bits of paper, and made a special parcel of a large piece of stone. She gave them to her mother, and said to her, 'Whatever I have, I have given you. Take them to your house and keep them in separate boxes.' So saying she took her mother out of the water and let her go. The old woman reached her house, but was very annoyed with her daughter for the things she had given her. She said to herself, 'What has my daughter given me? She has so much gold and silver in her house, furniture and very beautiful clothes but she has not given me anything except these scraps. What shall I do with them?' And in a temper she threw away the things that her daughter had given. As she did so, the parcel containing the stone vanished.

But after a little while, the old woman reflected, 'I must see what these things are. After all if I keep them, they are not going to do me any harm.' She picked up the parcels which were now scattered about and put the parcel of sand in a big basket and the parcels of rope and pine-fruit in smaller baskets separately and closed them. She put the parcel of paper into a wooden box and closed it.

She used to work for others and somehow managed to get enough to eat, but sometimes in despair she used to think, 'I can't work any more. I am too old for it now. I want to rest, but who will feed me? My daughter is very rich and she has so many things in her house but she has given me nothing. O God, when will I die?'
One day she was very tired and could not go to work and had nothing to eat in the house. She opened the basket into which she had put the parcel of sand and found to her astonishment that it was full of rice. She was very pleased, but did not realize that it actually came from the sand her daughter had given her.

Now she had plenty to eat and did not go to work. One day she had a desire to eat dry meat. ‘Who will give me some?’ she thought, ‘I have no money to buy it.’ She opened the basket in which she had put the bits of rope and found it full of dry meat. Now she was very pleased and had a fine meal of rice and meat. On yet another day she thought, ‘I am tired of eating meat. If I had some dried fish how happy I would be.’ She opened the basket in which she had put the parcel of pine-fruit and found it full of dried fish, and was very pleased and happy.

The winter was approaching and snow began to fall. The old woman had no cloth and was trembling with cold. She said to herself, ‘I have no warm cloth; it is too cold; I will die.’ She opened the box into which she had put the parcel of paper and saw that it had turned into warm clothes. And now she realized that these were the things her daughter had given her and said to herself, ‘But my daughter gave me five parcels. I have got only four; where is the fifth parcel? I was so foolish that in my anger I threw all the things away and that parcel disappeared.’

Happily she did not realize that the stone would have been a block of gold.¹

¹Another version of this story is given in my *Myths of the North-East Frontier*, pp. 334 ff.
Note:—Some local names will be found spelt differently in different places, because these were found so recorded by the author. Of these are Gyalpo, spelt as Gyelpo, Gyapu etc. Tsang Dande as Chomdande also; Kanchosum as Konchosum and Kunjusum.
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