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# THE
# ECONOMICS
## OF THE
# CENTRAL CHIN TRIBES

*by*

H. N. C. STEVENSON, F.R.A.I.,
Burma Frontier Service

*With a Foreword by*

H. E. THE RIGHT HON'BLE SIR REGINALD HUGH DORMAN-SMITH, G.B.E.,
Governor of Burma.

*Published by order of the Government of Burma*

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*To*

*my son*

*JOHN*

*Who brightened our days in the Chin Hills.*

*Submitted as a thesis for the Diploma of Anthropology at the University of London.*

# FOREWORD

**By His Excellency the Rt. Honourable Sir Reginald Hugh Dorman-Smith, G. B. E., Governor of Burma.**

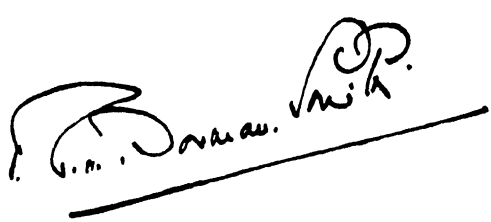
I am delighted that, in spite of the alarums and excursions of war, Mr. Stevenson has been able to complete his work on the people of the Chin Hills.

Burma has been backward in producing such works, the lack of which I, at least, felt greatly. When I was appointed Governor of Burma, I realised that I would be responsible for the administration of the Shan States and of certain tribes who inhabited the " Scheduled Areas of Burma." I am afraid that this meant but little to me. I knew but very little about the Shan States and must confess that I had never even heard of the Chins or the Kachins. Naturally I was anxious to learn all that I could about these people. I wanted to know about their ordinary everyday lives, their customs, their aspirations, their virtues—and their failings. That information was not readily available. Presumably it might have been found in the dusty files of the Secretariat but for the most part it was, and still is, locked away in the minds of those devoted Frontier Service Officers who have lived their lives among the hill tribes.

The Chins and Kachins, as well as the Nagas, have come into the limelight as the result of the Japanese invasion of Burma. They have shown themselves to be sturdy guerilla fighters, as the Japanese have very good reason to know.

What is to be the future of these tribesmen ? The whole world is thinking in terms of " Reconstruction." What will that mean to Chins, Kachins, Nagas or Shans ? No reconstruction can hope to be successful unless and until we thoroughly understand the spiritual and physical needs of the people whom we earnestly hope to assist along the road to a fuller and better life. Progress will not necessarily come to these tribes by the mere imposition of our Western ideas upon what to us may seem to be a primitive people.

Such books as this, which are written with a deep knowledge and love of the people, will help us to achieve the necessary understanding of the problems which face us. I can only hope that Mr. Stevenson's example of putting his knowledge and experience into writing will be followed and followed quickly by other officers of his Service, who have much to contribute to the future of the Hill Tribes of Burma.



*Governor of Burma.*

# PREFACE

THIS paper is intended to serve as a foundation in applied anthropology for my brother officers on the frontiers of Burma. It is by no means perfect, but it does present a new line of approach to our problems, and on its basis it should be possible to produce progressively better results in future. Most of the existing monographs on the customs of the Burma tribes were written many years ago, at a time when amateur ethnographers were apt to concentrate either on technology or history alone, or on the more bizarre aspects of culture. Much was written of the *form* of religious ritual, little or nothing of its *function* in tribal life. The humdrum details of the village scene took second place to the more titillating *minutiae* of sex life and the robust horrors of tribal war, head-hunting, sorcery and slavery.

In most other regions in which " primitive " peoples are found this state of affairs has long since been remedied, and the seeker after information has at his disposal a wide variety of modern scientific enquiries into almost all aspects of culture. The science of Anthropology has been revolutionised and its importance to the administrations concerned with primitives raised to such a degree that most governments insist on their executive officers having some anthropological groundwork in their training. Many go further and employ whole-time anthropologists to provide the background of detailed knowledge of tribal customs without which no administration can deal successfully with the problems of this changing world.

Burma has reached a stage at which she can no longer afford to be left behind in this respect—the gap in the library shelf is a standing affront to our energies, and an admission of anachronistic negligence of the social sciences. To fill that gap a start was needed somewhere, and since the break from the old tradition of tribal record had to be complete, I took for my subject the most utilitarian and least exciting aspect of culture—the economic aspect. It was a pleasant surprise to find that even in this sphere of his activities the Chin could provide the investigator with much intensely interesting food for thought.

Since a knowledge of the method of enquiry is essential to a precise appreciation of its results, I record here that collection of my notes occupied most of my time during the years 1934-36, when I was Assistant Superintendent, Falam. My questions were put in the local *lingua franca*—the Laizo dialect of the Chin language—and my informants were as a rule men selected for their deep knowledge of particular aspects of tribal life. Having made notes on theoretical reactions, I checked them against the actualities of daily life during the course of my constant tours, which covered every village and hamlet in the Falam Subdivision.

Just before leaving the area, I invited to my headquarters the elders of all the tribes and sub-tribes concerned and read over my notes to them in the local dialect, making corrections and alterations where necessary. It can be said with truth that no responsible man in the whole area lacked an opportunity of stating his views at one time or another.

In this connection it is worth noting that there has always been a strong democratic tradition in the administration of the Burma Hills. Pomp and circumstance play little part in the settled areas ; the frontier officer is regarded as a friend to whom at all times the local people are admitted without hindrance, whether their purpose be to 'grouse', to discuss legal or administrative problems, or merely to gossip about local affairs.

It is, however, inevitable that part-time enquiries by officials will lack a good deal of the documentation in terms of actual behaviour which a whole-time scientist can collect in the field. But the administrative officer has to spend years (if he is lucky) in one locality, and therefore is often able to make up by long term observation what he has to forego in detailed observation. This is especially so in the sphere of economics, because the effects of droughts and famines are often felt for years afterwards in these rural communities, and experience over some years often yields clues to economic mysteries that would otherwise remain unsolved.

As to presentation of the material—the paper is divided into three parts, the first introductory, the second dealing with production, in this case agriculture and its ancillary subjects, for less than 1 per cent. of the population earn a basic living by any other means. The third part is a detailed analysis of the distribution and consumption of local products, and describes the intricate system of social reciprocities that forms so remarkable a feature of Chin life.

Throughout the whole my main preoccupation has been the extraction of the administrative implications contained in the economic situation existing in the hills. It will be seen that whereas the outstanding inference to be drawn from this, as from all other modern analyses of primitive economics, is the close integration of all aspects of primitive culture; modern administrative practice, based on the increasing segmentation and departmentalism of " civilised " democratic government, seems to be heading in the opposite direction. In the closing paragraphs of most chapters I have drawn attention to the local dangers attendant upon this trend, and to the increasingly serious responsibility devolving upon the administration to see that all effort emanating from the departmental authorities is controlled and co-ordinated to the fullest possible degree.

The brief final chapter was written in an interval of sick leave in the present war. Where it falls short of what one should expect of a summary of this cultural survey, I plead the exigencies of service. The complete lack of sound modern analyses of the rural economies of the Burma Hills, coupled with the urgent necessity to prepare a plan of economic resurgence to take back into Burma with us on our

reconquest of the country, has given this volume an ephemeral value out of all proportion to the normal, and publication therefore could not wait upon literary or scientific excellence.

In conclusion I would like to add a word on the 1943 situation. I have been fortunate enough to be reposted to the Chin Hills in time to witness the great effort this small group is making to stem the tide of Japanese aggression. That they, almost alone in Burma, have escaped even temporary slavery under the heels of the conqueror is due largely to their own stout efforts and to their loyalty to the small band of British civil and military officers who have maintained unbroken continuity of normal administration throughout most of the district, though the tide of Japanese militarism has lapped its fringes for nearly a year.

Many of the predictions in this volume are already half way to becoming facts. The scars of new landslips in the Manipur River valley bear mute witness to the urgent need for control of destruction of the forests—a control which a wise administration has already established with some degree of success during the past few years. Pitsaws have become an essential part of timber extraction, while slate and tin roofed houses are many times more numerous than before, an indication that the local people are waking up to the part they have to play in forest conservation.

The enormous increase in cash in the local economy, due to the war and the much increased wage employment it has brought in its train, is exerting great pressure on the old economic system. Inflation has already reached a stage that makes the day to day sacrifices of the animists a serious burden. Their lot is the harder because occupation of the contiguous plains by the Japanese has closed what were in the past the only outside markets, so that the almost complete absence of alternative avenues of spending has thrown the whole weight of surplus cash on to the restricted market of local products.

The Chiefs and Elders have been hard put to frame a means of controlling further rises in the cost of living, and though efforts are being made to drain off some of the surplus cash by encouraging the formation of co-operative societies on the village scale, the task is made doubly difficult because, while the war situation makes necessary the reduction of floating cash surpluses, the same situation has had the not unexpected effect of making these primitive people shy of relinquishing hold of their negotiable assets.

Though the economic situation is now nearer normal, there was a time in the early summer of 1942 when the fear of losing their property to the invaders led to a holocaust of mithan and pigs hurriedly sacrificed to the guardian spirits. This action was not dictated wholly by fear, though there was good enough cause for that in the early days, but was due at least as much to a desire to have the decks cleared for action should the enemy succeed in penetrating to the hill villages. It was felt that

animals so sacrificed had been added to the spirit herds the people would find waiting for them in the Land of the Dead, and thus eternal poverty —so much harder to contemplate than mundane want—was well and truly averted.

But the most important fact apparent is the way the social system has stood up so far in spite of these difficulties. The Chiefs and Elders still exercise their authority with undiminished potency ; law and order still prevail and a child could walk unescorted through most of the district in perfect safety. The Feasts of Merit and Celebration still hold pride of place in the eye of the local investor, though the flood of cash pouring into this traditional field of consumption is the main cause of the rising local prices.

The fact that the cost of current feasts is thereby increased to double or more of the normal may result in efforts to get the traditional rates of " interest " in kind altered to suit present day investors, or, far worse in its ultimate effects, appreciation of the diminishing returns of feast-giving in relation to its cost may bring the whole system into disrepute. A possible result of this would be reversion of the local investor to the short-term loan systems instead of to the *tefa* system, and since these systems carry exorbitant rates of interest the effect on the distribution of wealth would be immediate and disastrous. In this connection the present abundance of ready cash is a potent danger, for it is resulting in a general trend towards cash rather than kind transactions which may in itself convert the Chin to more direct methods of employing his capital.

We cannot say what the future will bring to this remote corner of the Empire—it may yet have to face the ordeal by fire and see its quiet homesteads reduced to ruin and ashes. One thing is certain, and that is that the Empire as a whole and India in particular owes a very great debt to these sturdy hillmen. At one time they stood virtually alone to face an enemy that had just beaten a great army. Aided only by their mountainous environment and a small irregular force composed of the local Frontier Force Battalion, itself largely Chin, and disbanded Chin sepoys of the Burma Rifles, the people have succeeded, in spite of their paltry numbers and inadequate arms, in throwing that enemy back from their borders. It is not easy to assess the service they have done us by that lonely stand, but this we can say—that had the Chins let the Japanese pass through on their conquering way into Manipur and Assam, the difficulties that would have befallen India are beyond computation.

FALAM,
1—3—1943.

H. N. C. STEVENSON.

# Acknowledgments

The collection of the data for this paper entailed much hard work on the part of the local wiseacres, who sat patiently through many hundreds of hours of enquiry, jogging my memory, correcting my vocabulary, clarifying my questions and amplifying the answers of our sometimes rather slow-witted local farmers. That they were willing to suffer what must have been to them the excruciating boredom of constant repetition of facts long familiar to them is a pointer to the seriousness with which they regarded my mission, and a tribute to their sense of responsibility. Though most headmen played their part, the bulk of the strain fell on the five tribal chiefs, and in particular on Thang Tin Lian, Chief of the Zahau, and Khuang Zal, the Court Interpreter, whose zeal and determination to see a complete record made did much to maintain my own standards of efficiency.

Presentation of the facts owes much to my friends in the Department of Anthropology in the University of London. Prof. Malinowski, Dr. Firth, Dr. Mair, Miss M. Lawrence and my fellow students all made important contributions to my analysis of Chin economics through their friendly and constructive criticism. Their wide knowledge of primitive societies throughout the world was placed unreservedly at my disposal and their acute perception solved many of my problems.

Publication of the book I owe to the generosity of the Government of Burma.

I am greatly indebted to H. E. the Governor of Burma, Sir Reginald Dorman-Smith, G.B.E., for his gracious encouragement of my own personal efforts and his much needed support of the cause of social investigation in the hill areas of Burma.

Last, but not by any means least, I acknowledge the constant help and inspiration of my wife, who has shared with me for so many years all the trials and tribulations of a rough life on the lonely frontiers of Burma. That the manuscript survived at all is thanks to her foresight, for all else disappeared when the Japanese overran our home. The loss of my notes has meant that many detailed appendices have had to be omitted, and I have not been able to document the arguments in the paper with the fullness desirable in a work of this nature.

FALAM,
1—3—1943.

H. N. C. STEVENSON.

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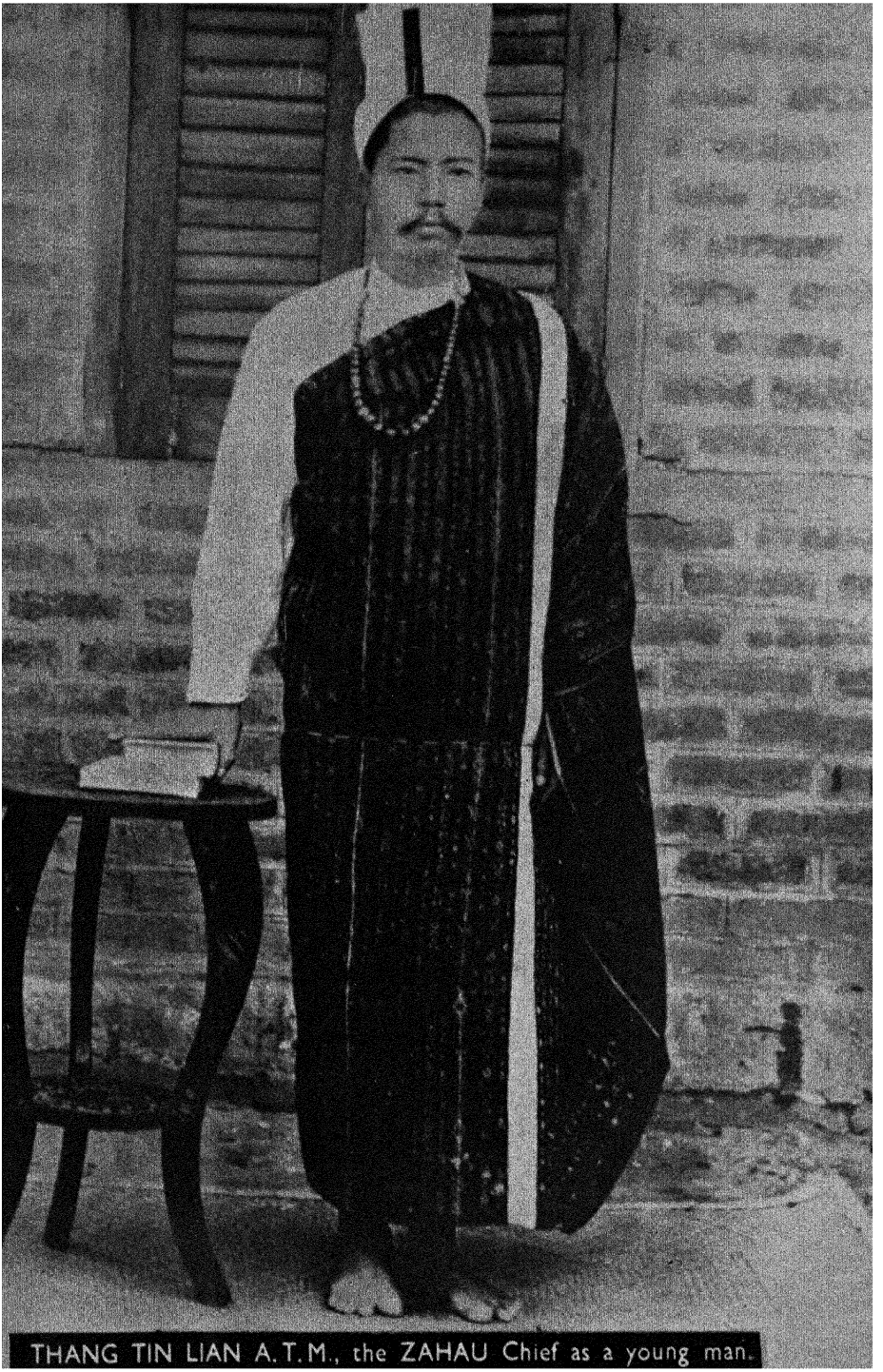
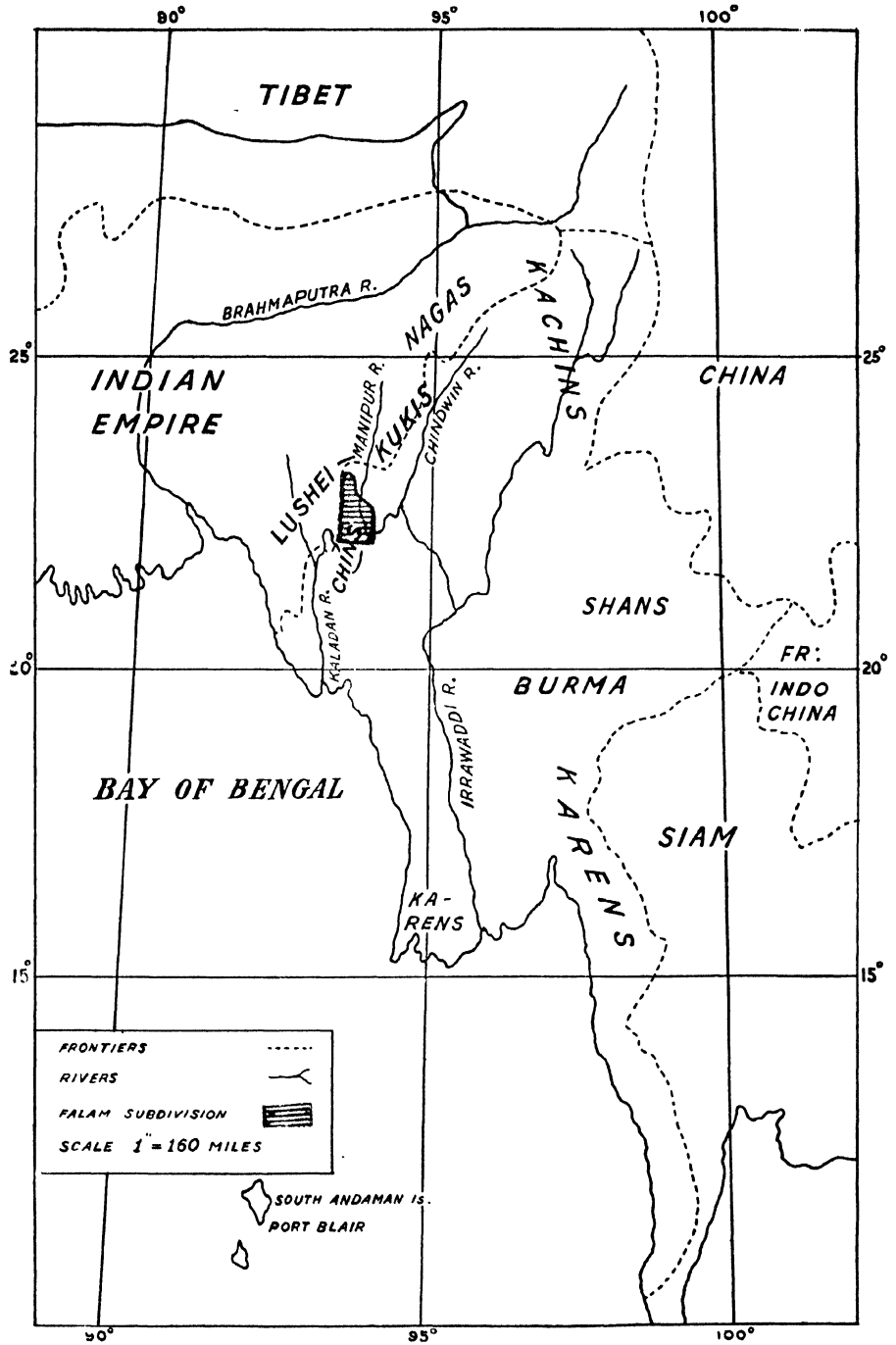


THANG TIN LIAN A.T.M., the ZAHAU Chief as a young man.

# MAP I.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TIBET
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NAGAS
KACHINS
25°
INDIAN EMPIRE
MANIPUR R.
KUKIS
CHINDWIN R.
CHINA
LUSHEI
KALADAN R.
CHIN
SHANS
FR: INDO CHINA
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BURMA
IRRAWADDI R.
BAY OF BENGAL
KARENS
SIAM
KA-RENS
15°
FRONTIERS
RIVERS
FALAM SUBDIVISION
SCALE 1" = 160 MILES
SOUTH ANDAMAN IS.
PORT BLAIR

# PART I

## CHAPTER I

## THE APPLICATION OF ECONOMIC THEORY TO CHIN CULTURE.

It is difficult for the practical administrative officer to escape a certain amount of suspicion when he enters the realms of scientific theory. There is a general belief that theory in administration belongs to the philosopher and the politician, and practice alone to the executive officer, despite the fact that in most other spheres of human endeavour progress in theory usually arises out of practical experiment. In the case of the Scheduled Areas of Burma, however, the administrator has a good excuse, for here philosophers are few, and the politician has as yet no place, the present principle of administration being Indirect Rule through the traditional political hierarchy.

Be that as it may, if we are to prove that some measure of prediction is possible in the field of Chin economics—and that is the object of the present writer—then we must analyse the local system to the fullest possible degree. Analysis of so involved a subject naturally demands the use of some plan and the acceptance of some range or another of verbal labels for the concepts necessary to disentangle relevant factors. It is to the social scientists whose terminology so affrights us that we are indebted for the only adequate plans of analysis, and whether we like it or not, we must use their concepts and their labels or invent another set which may well prove even more fantastic.

But here we come against the first of our difficulties. The Chin culture, with its simple technology, undifferentiated means of livelihood, limited resources and markets, and absence of a written language, falls into the category of the " primitive ", and the scientific world itself seems still undecided as to the degree to which the assumptions of western exchange economics can be applied in the primitive field. There is still some doubt as to whether our economic theory, if it is to be held valid at all, must be proved susceptible in some degree of universal application, or contrarily whether there should be a separate set of concepts for advanced and primitive economies. In a recent book* an attempt has been made to define indices whereby the economist might classify primitive economies into various categories and thereby facilitate the study of comparative economics.

It is not my purpose here to go deeply into the validity of all economic assumptions in the sphere of Chin economics. It can be accepted that some of the finer adjustments of theoretical reasoning will not be

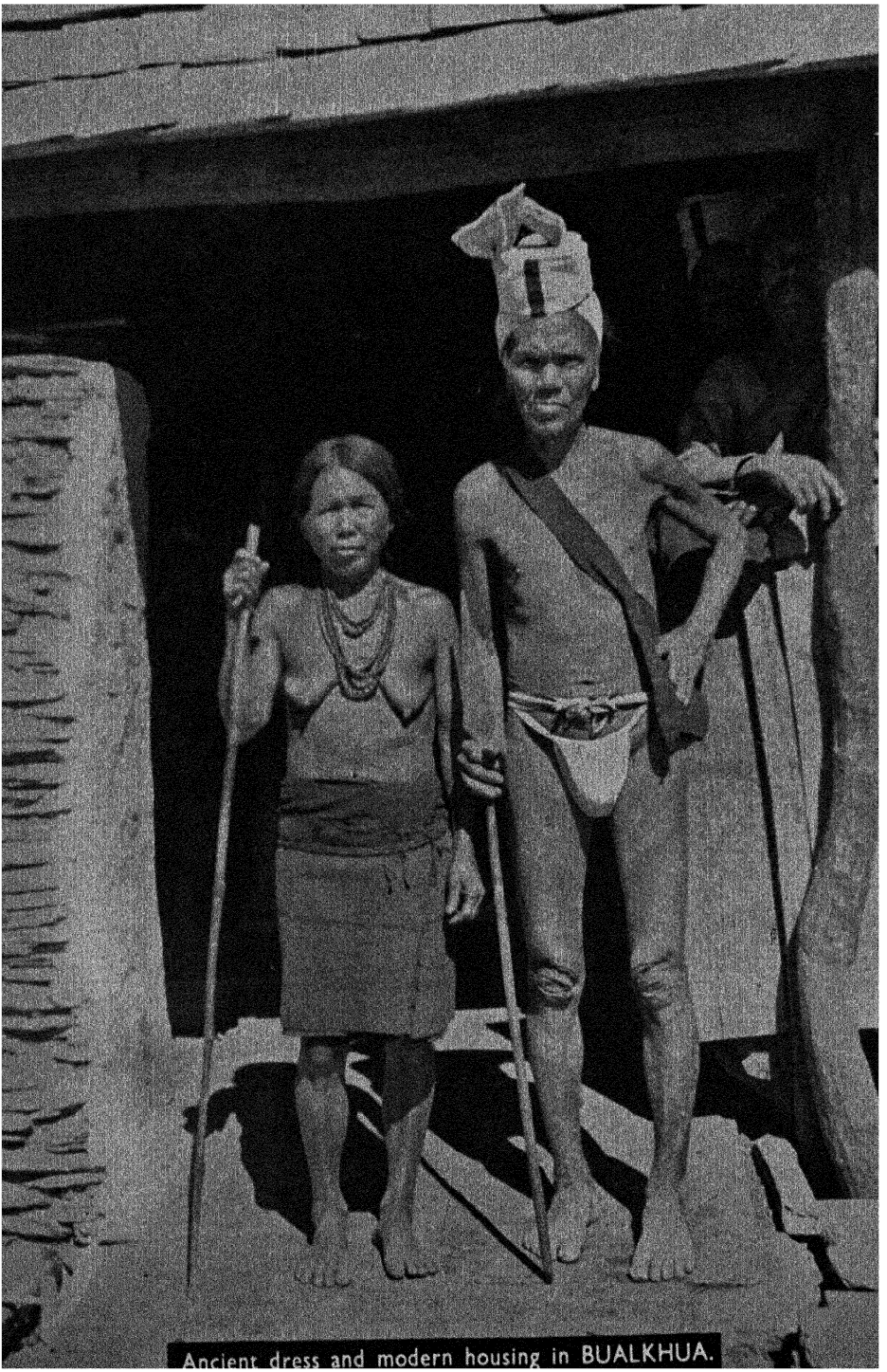
* " Primitive Polynesian Economy " by Raymond Firth. Routledge 1939. Page 356.

found applicable where modern economic institutions such as Stock Exchanges and limited liability companies do not exist. This short chapter is designed simply to outline a basis of those general assumptions which do seem applicable, and which might assist my contemporaries in administrative services in the task of recording the economic processes of the numerous other races of Burma, thereby increasing the chances of administrative foresight. Much remains to be done in perfecting our schemes of record of local cultures, and we need all the help we can get. I would be more than repaid for my trouble if this monograph succeed in directing towards our primitive people the scientific attention for so long concentrated on the African and the Polynesian.

Nothing is more certain to my mind than that the development of comparative economics will discover a much closer relationship between the motivation of primitive and civilised economies than is generally conceded at present. It is a truism to say that all men are equal under their skins, nevertheless this very fact demonstrates that the fundamental human reactions in the field of economics are not likely to differ any more widely than they do in other aspects of culture. Human beings will always have desires they want to satisfy, and not until the Millennium will they be able to do so without exercising choice from a given range of preferences, for we have not yet found a race with everything it wants.

Economic Man, with his complete freedom of choice, his " rational " evaluation of resources, his absence of sentiment in business and his vacuumised individuality, is a handy but unreal creature. The discoveries of anthropological research indicate that psychological factors arising out of the social environment exercise a profound influence on primitive human conduct in all spheres, in which we must include the sphere of economic choice and behaviour. There is no reason to doubt that this influence is exercised also (though in a lesser degree) in western cultures, and therefore western economic " individuals " are in this important sense similar to their primitive contemporaries.

Comparative study proves that all peoples are brought up from childhood to accept a certain set of social values, including economic values, and that all strive to attain the maximisation of satisfactions having regard to that set of values. The degree to which the psychological satisfactions outweigh the purely economic satisfactions seems to bear a direct relation to the degree of isolation of the community concerned. The more isolated the group, the more personalised are its economic processes, and the more the personalisation the greater the predominance of psychological over economic satisfactions seems to be. This rule holds good also for isolated European communities, such as exist in remote country districts, where every man knows his neighbour intimately, where to lose popularity and reputation is often considered more serious than to lose money, and where people must often help



Ancient dress and modern housing in BUALKHUA.

their neighbours at the cost of their own personal profit. Depersonalisation is characteristic not of the European economy as a whole, but of industrialisation and urbanisation. To hold therefore, that the theory of western economics is inapplicable to primitive communities, is to rule out its application to many of the rural communities of Europe, a suggestion which no one would accept. What we must try to determine is the degree of applicability.

The Chins, while they are in limited contact with outside markets, occupy an isolated block of mountain territory with very imperfect communications. We thus find theirs to be a borderline economy. The small contact with open markets has led to some degree of " impersonal " trade and the acceptance of the concepts of wages, capital investment, profit and price. Isolation tends towards personalisation and a considerable reliance on social institutions to regulate economic processes. Description of the economic function of these social institutions, however, demands an examination of the economic labels to be used in outlining the facts collected, and we must now proceed to a study of these labels and their relation to our facts.

To start with, let us consider the " economic disposal of resources." Given a common meaning of " resources ", which I will deal with later, does this not postulate the disposal of available resources to the best advantage to secure the maximum satisfaction of the needs, both physiological and psychological, which determine our economic ends ? And does this effort to make the most of things not exist as much in any primitive community as in a western state ? We shall see later that it does. It might be argued that stress on maximisation of " gains " rather than " money gains " is the only essential difference, for as we have noted, there is less emphasis on pure economic gain in primitive than in civilised communities. The term " available resources " implies restricted means, and there is no evidence in any Burma tribe of so great a superabundance of resources that all needs can be satisfied without the exercise of choice of the most careful and heart-searching nature between alternative methods of disposal. Even the scarcest means can be disposed of economically, and so we can accept the fact that " economic disposal of resources " has the same basic meaning in Chin economy as in western economy, and go on to the next label—economic value.

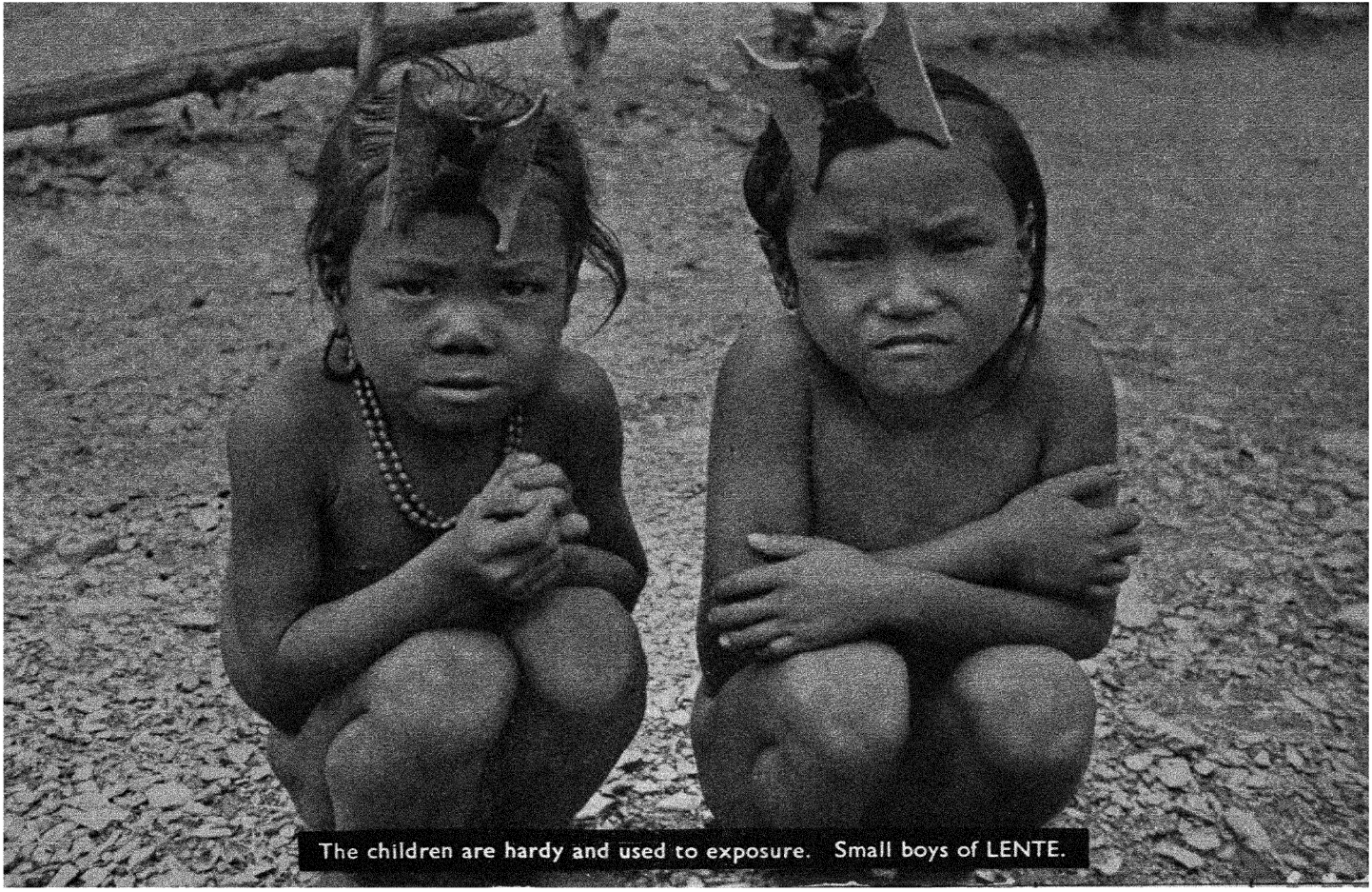
There is a regrettable lay tendency to regard price as an essential concomitant of economic value, and to suppose that where no price system exists there is no " economic value " as we know it. This is of course absurd. Economic value arises out of the impact on a given field of resources of a given range of needs. Since these needs are necessarily conditioned by the physical and cultural environment, it stands to reason that both the needs and the economic values arising out of them will vary from one culture to another. For instance, the need for speed in transit manifests itself in economic " wants " such as automobiles, ponies, or canoes, the local value of which will depend largely on the physical

environment. The mere fact that one riverine community pays a craftsman a price for its canoes while another acquires them by a complicated series of exchanges of labour and time through a social institution obviously does not mean that the one lot of canoes has an economic value and the other has not. It follows then that economic value also has the same meaning in the world of the primitive, though the medium of expression of that value may not necessarily be money or a primitive " currency." It is the assessment of the relative worth of local goods in terms of alternative local needs and available local resources.

This brings us to the postulate of waste, for one too often hears of the " waste " of resources in primitive sacrifice, and so on. Is not waste as variable a concept as value, and is it not affected by precisely the same factors of material and social environment ? I may pay £5 for a pair of comfortable shoes—to a Chin this is waste. He may hold a sacrifice—to me that is waste. Yet he regards his sacrifice as an essential to a full life, and so do I regard my good pair of shoes. Waste, like value, exists in the eye of the beholder, and we must get this point firmly fixed in our minds if we are to understand the Chin. We must see his values as he sees them if we are to know why his economy works, and to understand his values we must understand his cultural setting as well as list his material resources.

So far then, we find that " economic disposal of resources," " economic value " and " waste " are useful labels for our study of the Chin, but that these depend for definition on his physiological and spiritual needs. We must therefore examine the nature of these needs. First come the basic or primary needs, for which we will accept Malinowski's list—protection, shelter, sustenance, procreation, air to breathe and room to move, and a range of spiritual beliefs. For the Chin as for other men, satisfaction of these postulates the derived needs of defensive organisation, houses and bodily covering, an agricultural system, a form of marriage, land boundaries, religion and ritual observances, and so on. For him also the greater his resources the better his chances of fulfilling all his desires—like any western peasant he must face the basic equation, resources÷needs=satisfactions. We shall see that his wants are arranged in a rational scale of preferences, that the eagerness of his desire in one direction modifies his chances in another, and that the apportioning of his time, energy and resources calls for careful judgment, although his personal actions are to a greater or lesser degree circumscribed by the cultural institutions which he has evolved to regulate the satisfaction of his needs.

The disposal of resources brings us to the next important point—does the term total resources mean the same to the Chin as to us ? To the economist the application of time and labour to the production of goods are just as significant as the application of material resources, and it is therefore pertinent to examine whether the Chin regards time and energy in any sense fundamentally different to our own.


The children are hardy and used to exposure. Small boys of LENTE.

It will be seen in Chapter VIII that in his barter deals the Chin does not put an exchange value on the time spent on his trading trips, taking the same price for a pot disposed of five days march from home as he would in his own village. Superficially this would seem to indicate that time has no value for him, but when we ask whether the trader will trade on these terms at any season of the year, the answer is in the negative. To indulge in the favoured pastime of visiting he will travel when there is no work to keep him at home. For the same reason he will often take his wares to the buyer rather than wait for the buyer to come to him, knowing that he will get free hospitality at villages on his journey, and that therefore the time spent away from home will save a proportion of his consumption goods for use another day. He will hunt or fish in moments of leisure but will not let these pursuits interfere with agricultural effort during critical periods. He will refrain from work during periods of ritual abstention because he believes the time so spent in idleness will bring him benefit through the supernatural beneficences of his tribal spirits.

Thus we see that time does mean something to him, and that he uses it to what he considers his best advantage. In other words, time has for him an economic value, though it is not assessed in shillings per hour. It is a recognised unit in his total resources, consciously utilised in the maximisation of gains, and in this sense identical with the time-factor in western economies.

In the same way we can see by the payments to specialists, etc., the provision for additional charges where extra work is given to hired agricultural labour, and again the concentration of all labour on certain types of agricultural work at seasons when delay in completion would entail loss, that even in his traditional organisation the Chin shows a clear conception of the value of labour, a conception fundamentally similar to our own though again not always precisely assessed in pennies per unit of energy expended. His use and variation of labour groups even indicates an appreciation of the Law of Diminishing Returns.

Total resources are therefore demonstrably the same to the Chin as to us—time *plus* labour *plus* material resources, and we can conclude this item with a short summary of these last. Part I of the monograph deals in turn with agriculture, animal husbandry, hunting and fishing, and the collection and use of forest products. It demonstrates that the Chin is no simple happy savage waiting under a tree for the fruit to drop into his lap. The forests give him timber and thatch for his house, wood for his implement shafts and his fire, meat and honey for his table, and wax and lac for the outside markets: the rivers give him occasional fish: his fields and gardens produce the bulk of his food, tobacco and cotton for his clothes: his herds give him meat and open the way to social advancement. But all these products are gained only by hard work and the judicious use of time and energy.

His two main material shortages are salt and iron, and much of the existing trade between villages and with contiguous plains areas has resulted from his desire to obtain these essential supplies. The form in which they passed from hand to hand led to their adoption as units of a partial price system before the advent of money. Ingots of iron and packets of salt are two of these *seu* or units.

Let us now consider the actual working of Chin economy and see to what extent the concepts of economic units, entrepreneurs, economic choice, production and consumption goods are applicable to it. To start with the economic units.

In this we are fortunate that in a recent book* Dr. Goodfellow has done us the service of refuting certain fundamental concepts of pure economics and formulating others which facilitate especially the analysis of a primitive economy. His chapter on *The Significance of Economic Units* attacks the assumptions† that there are two categories of wants—collective and individual, and two distinct economic subjects, the State and the Individual, having characteristically different reactions to economic stimuli. He argues firstly that " all wants are of *one kind*, being socially conditioned and having their ends in individuals," and secondly that " there is but one *type* of economic subject, the human *group* through which decisions are almost invariably made."

From these two assumptions he goes on to define two principles by which the disposal of resources are governed, saying—" First is the principle of economic application of resources according to the subjective evaluations of the functioning unit or subject ", and " second is the principle that, the unit seldom or never being an individual, resources are disposed of not only in the market, but within every group which formulates economic decisions, and that this involves some practical comparison of the needs of the individuals making up each group."

We need not go here into the lengthy arguments by which Goodfellow supports his conclusions—it will suffice to say that on the basis of these assumptions and principles it is possible to give a clear outline of the economic aspect of Chin culture. For individual disposal of resources in De Marco's sense is almost non-existent in the Chin world, the household being the basic economic unit. Again though economic choice exercised in disposal of household resources is moulded by the social environment in which the family unit functions, it is conditioned in an equally potent manner by inter-personal comparison of the wants of each individual member.

For instance the decision whether or not livestock and grain should be used for the marriage price of a son's wife, for a religious ceremony, for a Feast of Merit, for repairs to the house or for loan or sale involves a typical example of this inter-personal comparison.

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* " Principles of Economic Sociology " by D. Goodfellow. Routledge.
† In De Marco's " First Principles of Public Finance."

The son might argue that his need was the greatest and point out the labour value of an extra woman in the house ; the father might want to redeem his promise to the spirits that he would complete the series of the Feasts of Merit without undue delay ; the mother might stress the need for a sacrifice to cure an ailing child ; all might suffer from a leaky roof, and so on. Each of these wants, having its end in and being expressed by individual members of the family, is subject to the final decision of the head of the family who will reach that decision only after comparison of the others' claims.

All of the claims are also conditioned by the customs which regulate the amounts payable as marriage price, the nature of the resources used at each stage in the Feasts of Merit, and the traditional sacrifices for various types of illness. But this influence of custom on economic choice is not absolute, even in the sphere of feasts, in that such simple factors as a bad harvest can throw the normal economic processes out of gear and create phenomena like the *kawlthah* feasts. It is sufficiently strong however to be of importance to the administration, since every innovation introduced by the contact of " civilised " and " primitive " peoples which involves economic choice tends to alter traditional usage of local resources and therefore must be watched with care. We shall see in later chapters that this is particularly the case when such innovations interfere with the incentives to production.

To revert to our units, next in the ascending scale after the household come the reciprocity-exchanging kinship groups, the Hunters' and Feasters' Clubs described in Chapter X, the *veng* or hamlet, and the village groups, the last of which forms the main agricultural and public service subject. Finally there is the tribal area, which functions as an economic subject only on the rare occasions when an outsize in public works is necessary, or a crushing calamity overtakes a whole village and external assistance is required to rehabilitate its fortunes. In all of these groups we find economic decisions being reached by the leader after inter-personal comparison of the needs of component units in the larger group, just as the head of the household arrives at his decisions after considering the needs of individuals in his family.

The reader may ask about the individual worker—is he not to be regarded as an economic unit at least in the sphere of production, when many opportunities might occur for single-handed effort ? It is here that we need to refer again to Goodfellow's definition of the one type of unit. For although a man may go alone to sell pots, or hunt, or carry rations for Government, he is not acting in a vacuum. He must consult others in the family before disposing of his time, arrange for the carrying out of his work at home by someone else in the family during the period of his absence, and finally share with his family the proceeds of his enterprise, whether it be meat or cash or barter goods.

Though the desire to follow a certain course of action may be individual, the decision involves the family and therefore we can say with

Goodfellow that while the want has its end in the individual it is satisfied through the co-operation of the human group—the family—to which the individual belongs. Thus it would be distorting the true situation to regard the individual as a separate unit, having the right to decide his own actions and seek his own satisfactions with no restraint or guidance from others.

It might be argued that the same applies to the larger units, each of which must take into consideration the control exercised by still larger ones. But there is no denying, at least for the Chin, that the disposal of individual resources is much more closely supervised by the family than is the disposal of family resources by the village council or the kinship group. There is no comparison between the responsibility devolving on the head of the household to regulate consumption within the household and that of a headman to control consumption within the village. The former has to decide between what is essential to life and what can be set aside as surplus for the satisfaction of less immediate needs; the latter deals almost entirely in the sphere of this surplus.

This brings us to the question of management, and the *entrepreneur*. All Chin groups have their traditionally recognised leader—the head of the house, the headman, or the chief—and in the field of economics these leaders assume the functions of the *entrepreneur* and "manage" the group resources to the mutual advantage of all. This management is much more real than a casual onlooker would imagine; anyone analysing the actual process of decision between alternative methods of disposal in a Chin village could not fail to be impressed by the commonsense and ingenuity brought to bear on problems of this nature.

And skill in this field is an important asset, not only to the householder, who may find himself deposed by his sons if senile decay clouds his judgment, but especially to the political leaders, for unless they can prove the soundness of their judgment in controlling village resources their villagers may well migrate to the domain of a wiser man. Chapter X will give some insight into the complexity of economic management on the village scale, and demonstrate the varied ways in which participants in a joint enterprise are rewarded for their efforts. It is not merely a case of one member of a group organising its efforts and taking a slightly larger share than others of the proceeds of their joint labour; the nature of the rewards gained is different and specific provision is made for "executives."

The will of the leaders is a strong determinant in economic choice within each group, and their position in this respect is worthy of close examination in relation to its stabilising effect on the economic system. But here we have to clarify our position in regard to what is rational choice, and take into consideration again the personalisation characteristic of primitive economies. We have noted that physical and social environment between them play a large part in determining local values and "arranging" the local scale of preferences, and on this

premise we can assume that the local concept of what is rational choice will vary from one culture to another, and that we can expect to find in Chin economics many examples of economic choice which appear irrational to us though they are sound enough to the Chin.

The physical setting of the Chin naturally restricts his range of economic choice, and it will be seen in Chapter X that this restriction has resulted in a complicated system of distribution within the kinship and village groups. The system is such that the Elders, by virtue of having given more feasts than their juniors, etc., have a greater stake in the village resources. The almost inevitable result is a strong desire on the part of the former to preserve the *status quo* in village economics, so that there will be no interference with the flow of " interest " accruing to them. If one adds to this the strong position occupied by the Elders from a political and educational standpoint, we see clearly the main reason for the resistance to innovations affecting local economics. Youth is brought up to regard as rational the economic choices which will place their resources on local " markets " in a manner beneficial to the vested interests of their seniors.

We can now turn to the utilisation of goods in production and consumption spheres. It has been stated* that though the undifferentiated character of primitive economies sometimes means that there is no sharp physical distinction between important production and consumption goods, this does not mean that a distinction cannot be made.

In so far as the Chin is concerned, agricultural activity is the mainspring of his economic system. Grain is eaten in the household, and as such is a consumption good ; it is given as food to hired labour in the fields, and as such is a production good used to produce more grain ; it is used in the Feasts of Merit, from which accrues a lifelong interest in the form of shares of meat at subsequent feasts given by others, and in this sense acquires the character of capital invested to produce interest. Indeed in the Feast of Merit one finds a triple combination of ends—consumption of food and drink for pleasure, capital investment, and finally use of the whole organisation of feasting as a means to secure supernatural assistance towards increased production. These facts underline the important point long recognised by anthropologists, that it is the *function* of the good, and not its *form*, that is the prime factor in determining its place in the local economy.

Of course goods used almost solely for production do exist, such as agricultural implements, and the Chin attitude to these will be examined in a later chapter. But we shall not see in this volume any indication among the Chins of a strongly developed effort to increase production through improvement in the means and method of production, though signs exist, such as the purchase of pitsaws to replace adzes in the making of planks and so increase the yield from their forests, that they

* Goodfellow. " Principles of Economic Sociology, " page 66, Chapter IV.

are not unaware of the possibilities in this direction, and are held back rather by lack of contact with better methods than by an innate conservatism.

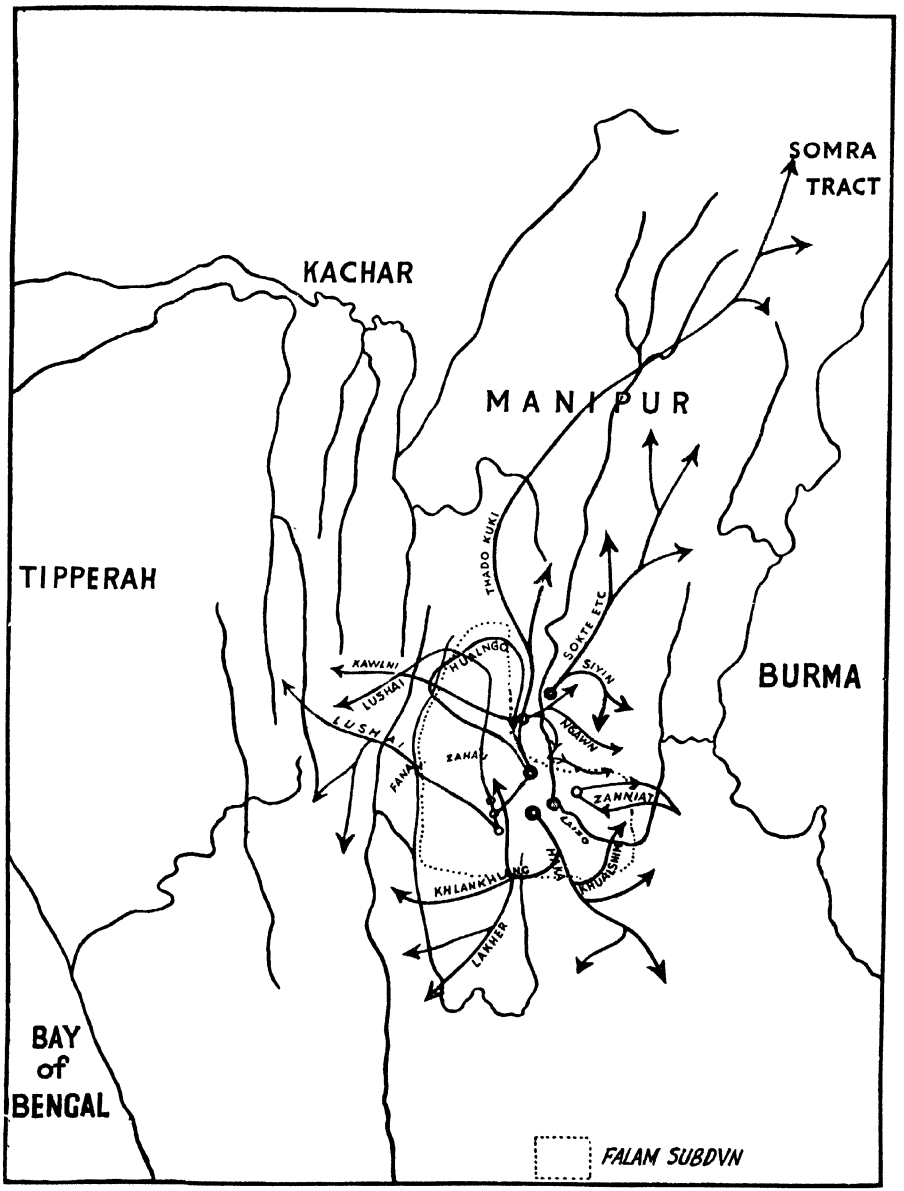
Let us now summarise the arguments put forward in this brief survey. Firstly we have outlined the nature of the variations in economic reaction between the Chin and the Economic Man of theory, naming isolation and the personalisation arising out of it as the prime causal factors. Secondly we have indicated that in the basic facts of his economy the Chin in no way differs from Economic Man : his resources are insufficient to meet all his needs : because he must exercise choice in their disposal his resources are grouped in a range of preferences : in making his choice he takes account of time and labour as well as material goods. We have added to this a note that in formulating his preferences he is guided by his social upbringing and restricted to some degree by his physical environment. Lastly we have suggested that his economic groups, from the family to the tribal area, are units of a single economic type and similar in function to the units of western economics: that the entrepreneurial functions of the traditional leaders differ quantitatively rather than qualitatively from our own : and that his resources can be divided in *function* if not in *form* into production and consumption goods.

All these points force us to two useful conclusions : firstly that, given a knowledge of the local cultural determinants in economic choice, *there is no reason why the fundamentals of economic theory should not be applied to the Chin economy with all the possibilities of forecast that makes the science of economics so valuable to western administrations*, and secondly that there is a *prima facie* case for believing that without a knowledge of these determinants sound economic guidance cannot be given to the Chins.

It is a sobering thought. We have occupied the Chin Hills for fifty years, but there is as yet no record of these vital facts.

## MAP II.

Red .. Lines of Migration of LUSHEI-KUKI tribes from SEIPI, below MUSHIP KLANG.
Green .. Lines of Migration of LAI tribes from KHAWRUA.
Mauve .. Lines of Migration of SIYIN, SOKTE and related tribes from CHIMNWE.
Yellow .. Lines of Migration of SHIMHRIN from SUNKHLA.
Blue .. Lines of Migration of NGAWN and KAWLNI from KAWLNI.
Blue .. Lines of Migration of ZANNIAT from and back to LOTSAWM neighbourhood.



## CHAPTER II.

## THE SOCIAL BACKGROUND.

The great area of tangled mountain ranges that separates Burma and Assam is populated by many diverse tribes. Excepting the plainsmen of Manipur, those living closest to Burma have been classified into three main groups :—The Nagas, the Lushei-Kukis, and the Chins, and it is one small section of the last group to which this monograph refers.

The Nagas occupy the northernmost position, their territory extending from the fringes of the Upper Brahmaputra valley down to the Plain of Manipur. The Chins occupy the southernmost area, from a line roughly coinciding with the eastern extremity of the Manipur-Burma Road, to the borders of Arakan on the sea. The Lushei-Kuki group peoples the centre—the Aijal area—with a long "tail" of Kuki villages extending north-east between the Nagas and the Chins to the Somra Tract west of Homalin on the Chindwin River.

The Falam Subdivision, in which live the people whose customs are discussed in this monograph, is situated in the centre of the Chin Hills District. Map I shows this area in relation to the surrounding country, and it will be seen that its position alone, many days march in either direction from the nearest mechanical transport on the roads of India and Manipur or the rivers of Burma, must result in a great degree of economic isolation.

Though known to us as the Chins, the people themselves do not recognise the name ; they are very closely related to the Lushai in the Assam Hills to the West, the Haka and Lakher tribes to the south, and the Kuki tribes to the north. Ethnographically and historically the area is of considerable importance, as almost all the villages claimed by the tribes mentioned above as their original homes are either within or close to the borders of the Falam Subdivision. Map II shows these mother villages and traces the approximate courses of migration from them to the present habitats of the migrants, in so far as these movements can be checked by tribal and recorded history.

The process of migration by whole tribal groups has continued right up to the present day, very many Hualngo having come into the Zahau tract since the annexation, and other similar movements having taken place throughout all the tribal areas. Its lesser counterpart, migration by households, is a constant phenomenon and will be referred to later.

Most of the earlier migrations were occasioned by tribal wars, and almost all resulted, in the long run, in the tribes which were pushed out from the centre appearing as slave-raiding and pillaging foragers on the borders of the civilised plains of Bengal, Assam and Burma. These forays were no child's play, as may be judged from the facts recorded in the Chin Hills Gazetteer and in Mackenzie's History of the North-East

Frontier, and their natural result was firstly the entry of punitive columns into the hills, and finally administration.

Since the life led by their ancestors must obviously have conditioned to a great degree the culture of the present day Chins, some account of their tribal history is desirable, and I have condensed this into the form of the statement which is shown opposite this page. (Statement A) I do not claim accuracy for the dating of tribal events noted in my chart. Great events are remembered by the names of the ancestors who took part in them, and it is on this basis that I have divided up the tribal record, counting four average generations to the century. In the last column come extracts from actual recorded history which can be taken as correct.

It is a savage record. Tribe after tribe fell to the sword of its neighbours as these, under the leadership of the various great men who appeared from time to time, combined in an ever-changing variety of political alliances. Heads brought honour to the warriors, and slaves wealth to the villages, either in the form of increased labour power or by the considerable prices they fetched in the local markets. Tribute poured in to the conquerors and the conquered had perforce to find still weaker enemies from whom to recoup their losses. Large villages stood in constant danger of spoliation by jealous neighbours, and small hamlets existed in the very shadow of death and slavery.

Of course conditions were not always so terrible that it was dangerous to venture from the protection of the village—there were long periods of peace and there is evidence that during these a quite considerable trade existed between villages—but internecine strife did result in the concentration of fields in areas easy to protect and close to the village, and it did effect a division of labour whereby the men had to spend a large percentage of their time on defensive and offensive effort. Even today dues are still paid to certain quarters in the large villages which undertook the duties of sentries for the whole community before the annexation.

I feel that here we have an explanation of much of the alleged laziness of Chin manhood. The real fact is that they have but recently been assimilated into the new economic framework wherein slave-raids and killing are barred, and agricultural labour must take its place. For years the old warriors have rested, as it were, on the dole. Their sons are the first to be trained from childhood in the new ways of life.

Again this inter-village warfare resulted in the village itself becoming a vital unit in all spheres of life, self-contained and self-preserving, and unquestionably much of the concentration within the village of economic exchange, political and legal power, and religious observance can be laid at its door. This in turn has undoubtedly affected the relative prestige in Chin eyes of the Headmen as opposed to the Chiefs, who before our time had little or no control outside their own villages, and whose fellow tribesmen might well assist their enemies in their destruction of the mother village, as did the outlying villages of Khuangli people when that Chief's seat was destroyed by the once paramount Tashon.

In the Table below, I give the tribes and the sub-tribes at present inhabiting the Falam Subdivision, of which the population at the 1931 census was about 40,000.

*Table of tribes of the Falam Subdivision.*

| Tribe | Sub-Tribe | Local Classifications | |
|---|---|---|---|
| SHIMHRIN | ZAHAU<br>LAIZO<br>KHUANGLI<br>SUNKHLA | *BIAR DUM* | *PAWI* |
| NGAWN | | | |
| KHUALSHIM | | | |
| TAWR | | | |
| ZANNIAT | ZANNIAT<br>SIPAWNG<br>TAPAWNG | *BIAR RANG* | |
| TASHON | | | |
| LENTE | | | |
| HUALNGO | | | *MAR* |

*Pawi* means those who wear their hair in a top knot and includes also many southern tribes.

*Mar* means those who wear their hair in a bun at the nape of the neck, and includes the Lushei-Kuki clans, and the Sokte and Siyin " Chins."

*Biar Dum* means the wearers of the black loin cloth.

*Biar Rang* means the wearers of the white loin cloth.

*Note* :—Although the Hualngo are a *Mar* tribe they are included in the *Biar Rang* because they are believed to be descended from a Tashon ancestor.

The chaotic changes that took place prior to the annexation, combined with a somewhat precipitate stabilisation of the political combinations existing in the early days, has resulted in a situation in the villages which makes it almost impossible to use any of the known terms of racial division without qualification. But the groups that I have named tribes have this in common—cultural and linguistic unity. They are not political or social units and only rarely function as economic units.

In the case of the Shimhrin, I have had to invent a name where none had previously existed. For the four sub-tribes of this group claim a common emergence from Sunkhla, and their customs are sufficiently identical with each other's and sufficiently different from those of other tribes to merit their being combined as one group for descriptive

purposes. I had some difficulty over the name. I suggested tentatively the cognomen *Sunkhla-suak* or *Sunkhla-hrin* (meaning come out of Sunkhla) but the first three sub-tribes noted in the list objected on the grounds that that would savour of subordination in a sense to Sunkhla village, and since they were both more numerous and more powerful than the remnants of the group in the mother village and had long since established themselves as independent units, they did not like it.

Eventually we decided upon Shimhrin, which simply means " born in the hot lands." All the Manipur River Valley tribes use this word as a sort of generic term for the people of this hot valley—*I have used it in a specific sense applicable only to the sub-tribes listed above,* simply to save myself having to say throughout " and the same applies to the Zahau, and the Khuangli, and the Laizo and the Sunkhla."

I feel it will serve no useful purpose to burden the text with a detailed account of all the clans which go to make up these tribes and sub-tribes. Differences in status due to membership of greater or lesser clans are of degree and not of kind, and where these have economic importance, such as the higher marriage prices payable for the daughters of certain Shimhrin clans, it is noted in the section dealing with marriage, and so on.

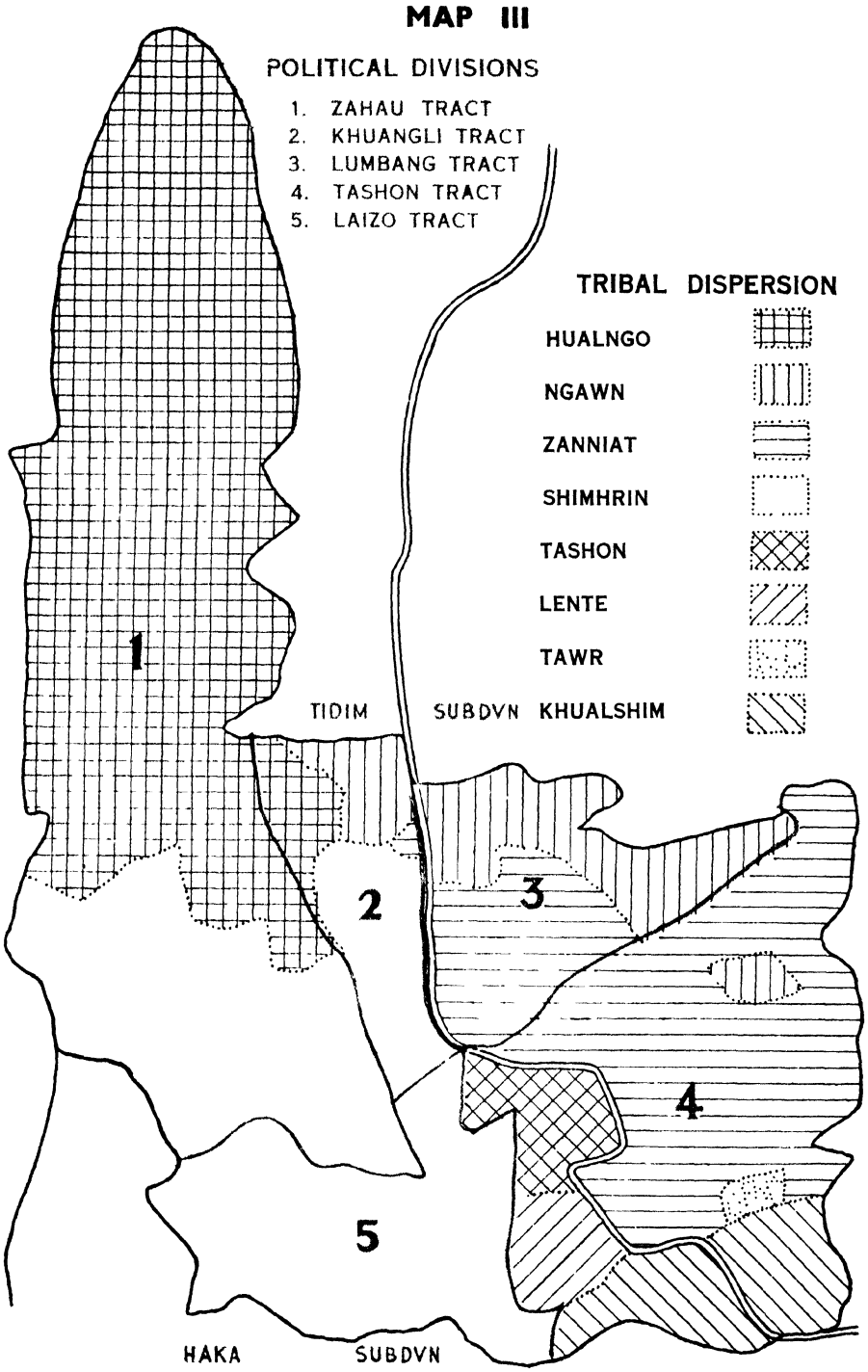
Prior to the Annexation the Zanniat* and the Tashon were democratic tribes whose villages were ruled by councils of elders (called *Nam Kap*) selected to represent village quarters or in some cases patrilineal extended families. These I have labelled the Democratic Group. The remainder were ruled by headmen from time immemorial †, and I have called them the Autocratic Group. While there is a fairly strong resemblance between the cultures of both groups as a whole, there is between them a certain difference in the detail of their customs traceable to their respectively democratic and autocratic political framework.

In the Autocratic Group the headmen of each sub-tribe are related to each other, often very closely, while those of the Shimhrin sub-tribes are similarly related to their respective chiefs. This gives these chiefs and headmen an added authority not shared by their contemporaries of Lumbang and Tashon.

As to the relationship between these tribes and their neighbours in areas contiguous to the Falam Subdivision, the Tawr and Khualshim both have definite cultural connections with the Haka tribes, the Tashon, Zanniat and in some respects the Ngawn, with the so-called Sokte and related groups in the Tiddim subdivision to the north, and the Hualngo with the Lushai to the west. The Shimhrin occupy a central position,

* In some extraordinary way this large tribe completely escaped the notice of the authors of the Chin Hills Gazetteer, who lumped them together with the Tashon.

† There is some doubt about the Ngawn and Lente. There are indications of elective headmanship or headmanship passing to all the main family groups in succession by generations.


MAP III
POLITICAL DIVISIONS
1. ZAHAU TRACT
2. KHUANGLI TRACT
3. LUMBANG TRACT
4. TASHON TRACT
5. LAIZO TRACT
TRIBAL DISPERSION
HUALNGO
NGAWN
ZANNIAT
SHIMHRIN
TASHON
LENTE
TAWR
KHUALSHIM
TIDIM SUBDVN
HAKA SUBDVN
1
2
3
4
5

both geographically and culturally, and readers of the Assam tribal monographs will note many points of resemblance between them and the Lakher, Lushai, and Kuki tribes.*

Map III gives the boundaries of tribal dispersion and the political jurisdictions of the Chiefs. It will be seen at once that there is little relationship between the two. These political jurisdictions, mis-named Tribal Areas, were created by Government in the early days after annexation, and no point would be served here in discussing the series of accidents and incidents which led to their existing in their present form. Those interested will find the details in the Chin Hills Gazetteer. It is important only to realise that these non-coterminous boundaries mean that some tribes have no chiefs of their own blood†, while all chiefs have non-related tribes other than their own to rule.

This artificial mixing had one effect very important in the sphere of economics—it increased a tendency (which tribal history proves to be inherent in all these tribes) to migrate from one village to another regardless of the tribe of the headman or chief controlling these villages. Except in the oldest villages, particularly in the Tashon, Lumbang and Lente groups where the *bul ram* individual tenure made it impossible for any newcomers to get any good land at an economic price, it is the exception to find all the villagers of one tribe. Almost all villages have a sprinkling of " foreigners, " and in some cases one finds as many as five different tribes represented in a small village of less than 30 houses.

In the Tribal Area under the control of the Zahau Chief, to which this analysis primarily refers, one sees many examples of the characteristically rapid assimilation of these " foreign " immigrants into the economic life of the tribe of the Headman. It will be shown in Part II how great a part is played in Chin economy by the Feasts of Merit, and these have a profound effect on this process of assimilation. A newcomer cannot divide his sacrificial animals up as he did in his old village, since to do so would deprive one or other of the local notables or " clubs " of their rightful share. Therefore to enter fully into village life and open for himself the channels of social advancement available to other residents, he must give feasts on the local model and abandon his own traditional series. Again most of the spirits to whom the Chins offer sacrifice are locality spirits, so that a change of home brings with it a change of religious observance. Often the only traces of a migrant's original custom are his personal and household sacrifices, the ritual even of these being modified by adjustments made to fit in with families with whom the newcomers have contracted marital ties. When whole groups migrate the practice of co-opting new spirits is often combined with

* From an economic view-point there is a remarkable resemblance between the central Chin tribes and some Nagas.

† The Hualngo and Ngawn, both fairly numerous tribes, have no chief of their own. The Lumbang and Khuangli Chiefs share most of the Ngawn, while the Zahau Chief rules the Hualngo.

retention of the old, thus one finds in the Lushai invocations* to old locality spirits in their Feasts of Merit what might almost be called historical evidence of tribal migration.

There is one important exception to this rule of rapid assimilation which must be included here since it affects the economic aspect of religion. I have noted in the table of tribes that the Chin divide the Chin and Kuki world into two main groups, *Pawi* and *Mar*. There are certain communal sacrifices in which *Pawi* only may participate, and this restriction therefore curtails to some degree the communal perquisites to which an immigrant of *Mar* descent can aspire in a *Pawi* village.

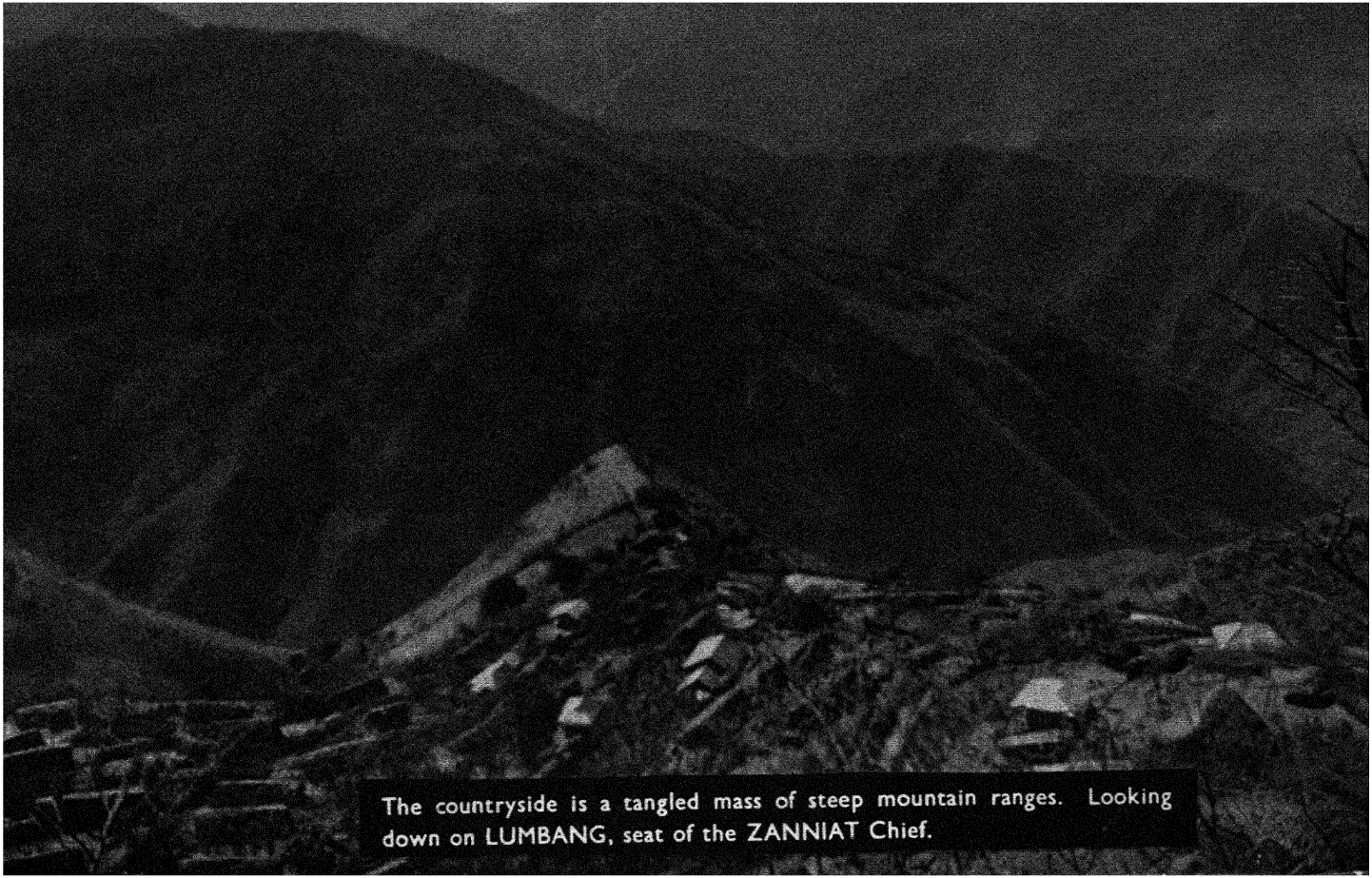
However, to revert to migration. The restless nature of the people can be gauged by the wealth of detail in the customs facilitating migration and protecting migrant's interests, and I will summarise these here in order to drive home this vital factor in the make-up of the Central Chin.

Firstly, under the custom known as *mi vaih thiar* the headman of any village is entitled to call upon his villagers to build a new house for an immigrant (if there is no good empty one he can occupy), to carry his goods free of charge from the old village to the new, to clear his fields for him (*hlawh suah*) and if necessary to supply him with grain (*rawl zaang*). For these services the immigrant places himself under an obligation to hold at least one of the Feasts of Merit before moving again. If he fails to do so the value of the work done for him is worked out in terms of labour hire, and a bill is presented to him on his departure. The rule applies even to grain given on arrival, unless the immigrant had stayed in the village up to the death of the senior member of his household. This provision is not as curious as it looks—later I will show that the mortuary feasts, particularly of a patriarch, involve the spending of a good deal of grain on beer for the entertainment of fellow-villagers.

In Chapters VII & XII I have recorded what happens to the stock and land of an emigrant. It is interesting to note that there is even provision in custom for the return of any man dissatisfied with his new home. *Provided he has no quarrel with his headman* he is entitled to the return of all his fields, including *saihremnam* land, and to the provision of a new house for him to live in if his old one has in the meantime been given away or sold for the village funds.

Immediately after the annexation the local officers were so disconcerted by the constant movement of the villagers that they instituted a fine known as *vaih man*, amounting to Rs. 10, which had to be paid to his chief by any emigrant out of a Tribal Area. Nowadays the fine is rarely exacted, but another restriction, that whereby a migrant

* See "The Lushei-Kuki tribes," page 71. Wherein several places are mentioned which lie within the boundaries of the present village of Seipi.



The countryside is a tangled mass of steep mountain ranges. Looking down on LUMBANG, seat of the ZANNIAT Chief.

forfeits all crops standing at the time of his departure, has been established to confine migration to the months after the harvest when moving is less trouble to all concerned.

This freedom under custom to migrate is now realised by everyone concerned to be a major safeguard against rapacity on the part of chiefs and headmen, but from an economic point of view it has also the prime advantage that it enables a man to move away if his share of public funds, as represented by the Council collections, is being squandered. I have no doubt that successful management of his communal resources would overshadow and mitigate many faults in any headman.

Naturally the effects of this migration on the kinship and social reciprocities is very great, but in all cases provision is made for broken ties, and these provisions will be described in due course together with the obligations to which they apply.

It is perhaps time to look over what has already been written, and to summarise the foregoing picture of disordered order. In brief I have described a collection of eight tribes, two of which are divided into several sub-tribes, living in an isolated mountainous country and until fairly recently under conditions of internecine strife. They are related culturally to their neighbours on all sides save the plains to the east, and they have been administered for about fifty years. Administration superimposed over the tribes chiefs whose political borders are non-coterminus with the tribal groupings. The tribes themselves are primarily cultural and linguistic entities, having no other functions, and can be divided into Autocratic and Democratic groups. Finally there is continual migration between villages and tribal areas coupled with a large degree of assimilation of immigrants into the culture of their new homes.

From this point I can describe shortly the nature of the power exercised by the chiefs and headmen and its effect on the sphere of tribal economics.

I have shown that the democratic tribes were originally ruled by councils of elders, and it will therefore be obvious that the two chiefs of this group, of Tashon and Lumbang, have no traditional backing for their authority. But this has little effect on their functions as chiefs, for as already noted even the autocratic group chiefs had little control outside their own villages before the annexation, in contradistinction to the democratic Council of Tashon which once exercised political sway over a large area of land and in a greater or lesser degree over all the tribes of this Subdivision and the Tiddim Subdivision.

Government has given its appointed Chiefs Appellate powers over all orders issued by their subordinate headmen, whether executive or judicial; has given them the duties of collecting taxes, for which they receive a commission of 10 per cent., and of implementing the wishes of

Government within the villages. As a corollary they have assumed the functions of economic *entrepreneur* in organising such tribal activities as the building of large bridges connecting one tribal area with another, the relief of distress when serious fires occur, the provision of coolies for Government work, and so on.

Alone among his fellows, the Zahau Chief has taken active and intelligent part in the modification of economic custom, in consultation with his headmen and their elders, when economic depression and other factors have made such a course desirable.

But the really significant political figures are the headmen. Not only have they judicial powers to cover all offences short of murder, but their executive powers are strengthened by their position as organisers, with their councils, of almost all communal activities. They control the daily life of the people in a much more direct way than the chiefs, all of whom are, incidentally, headmen (*khuabawi*) of their own village of residence. One must note that the Democratic headmen, like their chiefs, have no traditional backing, but in practice this simply means that in all their doings they lean even more heavily on their councils than do the Autocratic headmen.

Almost co-extensive with the headmen's powers are those of their village councils (*Klangpi*), without consulting whom no headman would organise any important work or settle any *cause celebre*. It is in considering the personnel of the village council that one comes first up against the system through which the tribal incentives to production are maintained and social advancement opened to all. For membership of the council (*Klangsuak*) is almost always gained through the holding of the Feasts of Merit, and since the Feasts of Merit give a vast deal of entertainment to the village as a whole, it stands to reason that the struggle for council membership brings much simple joy to everyone and ensures that even the most irascible members give solid cause for local popularity.

To our previous picture then, we can add the detail that the village is a more important economic unit than the Tribal Area, and that in most spheres of village activity the headmen and councils reign supreme, the chiefs standing in the background to right obvious wrongs and to undertake public works beyond the scope of village resources.

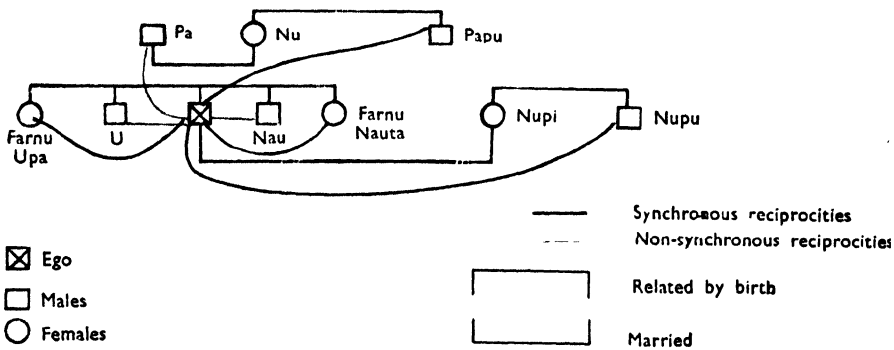
It now becomes necessary to discuss the social framework of the village itself and describe briefly the principles and laws which determine the way in which certain kinship groups act towards one another, and the reasons why such groups tend to form the personnel of villages (*khua*) and quarters (*veng*).

First and foremost are the laws of succession, descent, inheritance and marriage, and the principle of reciprocal assistance between relatives. Inheritance, descent and succession are patrilineal, and marriage patrilocal. The first observable tendency therefore is that each village

contains a number of patrilineally related males and their families, among whom the material resources of the village such as land, houses and so on pass by inheritance. But if the race is to survive man must reproduce his species, and since our Chin like all other races has a form of marriage tie carrying with it certain obligations, the nature of this tie becomes important.

The rules of consanguinity are few—only marriage between patrilineally related first cousins and nearer paternal relatives being barred—and there is only one class of preferred marriage, that of a youth with his mother's brother's daughter or any other girl paternally related to his mother. It will be seen that neither of these rules forces a youth to go far afield for his bride. Though polygyny exists, it is very rare indeed even among the Shimhrin and is frowned upon in most other tribes. For this reason I have left it out of this discussion—it is an oddity and does not approximate to a probable economic choice which might effect the general disposal of resources. In the vast majority of cases the household consists of a man, one wife, their children and perhaps their sons' young families.

DIAGRAM OF KINSHIP RECIPROCITIES.




The diagram above shows the principal figures in the kinship group created when a youth marries, and the lines along which specific mutual obligations flow. In it are EGO (the bridegroom) with his father, mother and maternal uncle, his brothers and sisters, and his wife and her brother.

It will be seen later that the characteristic difference in reciprocities between relatives-in-law and brothers and sisters on the one hand, and those between a son and his parents and brothers on the other is that in the first case the specific obligations* are balanced and synchronous (occurring at Feasts and other crises of life) while in the second they are not. Paternal relatives have to find the resources for a man's bride and

* To disillusion any who might think that these obligations are not willingly fulfilled, I may add that during my time in the Chin Hills murder was done because a man overlooked the claims of a woman to act as *farnu* at his feast.

to help him out of debt or trouble, and in return this group receives flesh dues at ritual killings by the man for as long as they live. This point will be mentioned again when I discuss the traditional forms of debt repayment.

For purposes of kinship obligations there are certain classificatory groupings. Paternal uncles are coupled with fathers, paternal male cousins with brothers in the *u le nau* group, sisters and paternal female cousins in the *farnu* group, precedence in both groups being based on closeness of relationship. Grandfather-in-law together with all patrilineally related males of a man's mother are called *papu*, though only one is "official" *papu* at the crises in life. The closest related of the others will, however, be available in order of blood precedence to take his place should death or migration make it impossible for the official *papu* to carry out his duties. The same applies to the *nupu* group, consisting of the paternally related males of a man's wife.

The effect of the reciprocities noted in the diagram is two-fold--firstly those pertaining to the patrilineal group strengthen the tendency already noted for a man to live in his father's village, while secondly those connecting a man and his relatives-in-law create another tendency, that of marrying within the village to facilitate carrying out of these duties. A detailed analysis of the marriages made in Klauhmun, a large old village which is the seat of the Zahau Chief, confirms these theoretical conclusions. Out of a total of 165 marriages checked, 134 were between residents of Klauhmun, and of the remainder most of the brides came from villages within a radius of very few miles.

The picture of family groupings within the village is thus thrown into perspective as a conflict of forces—traditional laws of mutual exchange between relatives encouraging the formation of endogamous groups of patrilineally related extended families inter-connected by marriage, and migratory tendencies continually threatening to break these up.

The result observable is that the big old villages tend to be endogamous, while the small new villages,* particularly in the Zahau Tribal Area, show a large proportion of persons whose marriages were contracted outside the village of residence. It is probable that when all vacant land is settled the advantages of endogamous grouping will reassert themselves, and that migration will decrease considerably.

So much for the kinship grouping in the village. A few words on the village specialists will complete my description of the personnel of the various groups.

These specialists consist of the priests and blacksmiths. In the Autocratic group both are in the nature of hereditary village officials,

* In a recent report on a Goitre Survey of the Chin Hills the authors deduced from an examination of six of these particular villages that 46% of marriages take place outside the village of residence. Had they taken Klauhmun itself the figure would have been 19%.

since they work for the village as a whole and are repaid indirectly by labour in their fields and shares of meat at various sacrifices in exactly as the same way as the headman. In the democratic group they are piece-workers, each getting a direct return for each specific job, as it were on a contract basis. These payments will be described in full in later chapters. In all cases the priests are concerned only with the sacrifices of the community as a whole.

The village group is now nearly ready to be put into its material setting. We see a number of households generally consisting of father, mother, and their children. These are grouped in patrilineal extended families which are in turn bound to each other by marriage ties. We note occasional blanks where emigration has extracted a few units here, and excrescences where immigration has added a few newcomers there. We find the group gets its implements from one specialist and its spiritual protection from another, that it is controlled by a headman (whose office has become by law hereditary in all tribes) who is assisted by a council consisting of those members of the group who have risen through the Feasts of Merit from the ranks of the humble.

Where the village is very large, so that the working of the group as a unit in all respects becomes unwieldy, we find that it is divided into hamlets, each with its own specialists and *khuate bawi* or hamlet headman, but that it still remains a village with one *khuabawi* and one council.*

There remains another important factor in the local culture, a factor which plays a fundamental part in regulating all spheres of village life—religious beliefs. I shall deal with the economic effects of the religious ideology in a later chapter and here content myself with the briefest possible summary.

Firstly let us consider the beliefs themselves. The Chins believe in the existence of supernatural beings with human characteristics which they call *khuavang* and *rai*, in evil spirits called *huai*, and in the souls of living men and the ghosts of ancestors, both of which they call *khla*. They believe that all these spirits appreciate good food and liquor ; that communication with them can be established by means of sacrifices for which mithan, pigs, fowls, goats or dogs are killed and large quantities of beer consumed, and at which ritual presentation of food to the spirits takes place. They believe also that the spirits live in the various *strata* into which the earth and sky are divided, this belief having a direct bearing on certain invocations and ceremonial practices.

*Pial Rang*—the Plain of Heaven—attainable only by great effort through the Feasts of Merit and Celebration†, lies in the sky, while the

* In some villages, such as Klauhmun, the number of men who qualify as *Klangsuak* becomes so great as to be a burden to their fellows, but this is rare. In such cases the headman selects a small " inner council " to advise him.

† See Chapters IX and XI.

abode of lesser ghosts—the *Mithi Khua* or village of the dead—is below the earth. This latter place is divided into many villages to which the Guardian Spirit allots new ghosts coming from the land of the living according to the manner of their demise.

Most important in its effect on temporal life is the belief that *a ghost retains in death the rank attained in life.* All ghosts pass through *Mithi Khua,* and there is a special system of examination whereby their earthly status is established and their place in *Pial Rang* or the *Mithi Khua* determined. It stands to reason that this belief is a powerful stimulus to temporal effort to advance in rank, *and since this advance can only be made in these days through the peaceful Feasts, which in turn demand diligent agricultural effort to produce the wherewithal of feasting, the diffusion of this stimulus through the whole economic life of the people can be clearly demonstrated.*

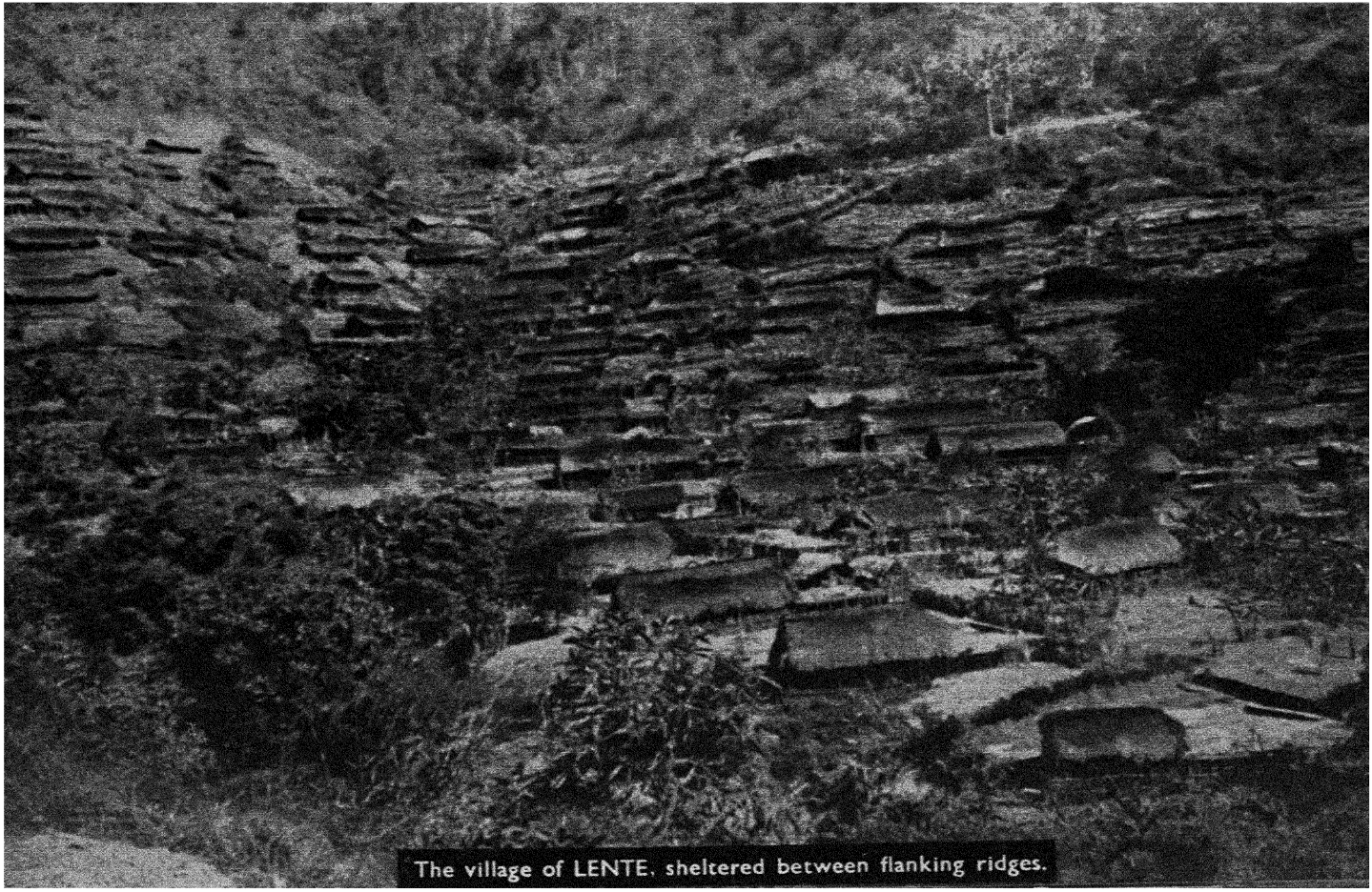
In the following chapters will be found many details of the various ways in which religious ideology determines local activities—from the rejection of Berkshire pigs (whose white patches render them unfit for sacrifice) and the acceptance of territorial restrictions on cultivation, to the traditional systems of disposal of capital and the methods of repayment of debt. It is true to say that every traditional economic choice open to the Chin has in it some element of religious bias, and this fact must be borne continually in mind when analysing the reasons for economic decisions in the hills.

With this brief outline of the religious background I will conclude the social descriptive, and this brings me to the village scene itself.

Most central Chin villages are sited part way down a hillside, generally in a position easily held against an enemy and well flanked by crags or ravines. Outside the village, lining the sides of the entrances, one finds the carved *khan* memorial posts that carry on them a pocket history of the life of the deceased, while further afield are the *hnar* or resting places—flat platforms of earth and stone well placed to rest a weary back after a stiff climb. These too are memorials to the dead.

The village itself may vary from a small group of about ten houses to a powerful collection of over 300 like Tashon, consisting of several *veng* separated by paths or ridges or ravines.

There is little attempt at village planning. Clustering round the *mual,* or place of sacrifice, the houses (except in the case of Hualngo, who alone build on the tops of ridges) cling to every indentation of the soil that affords a hold, with their length across the slope, the uphill half of the house having the earth as its floor and the downhill half being raised on stilts. Except for those of the headman and a few rich men, the courtyards (*tual*) in front of the houses will be small, perhaps a dozen yards square, with a platform of planks (*zaute*) projecting over the garden.



The village of LENTE, sheltered between flanking ridges.

Below each house is a small garden, generally enclosed in rough hedges of cactus or shrubs which overgrow and over-shadow the tiny sunken lanes that twist between, often worn down to a depth of many feet by the passing generations of man and beast.

Though there are minor structural differences in the houses of each tribe, they have in common their thick thatched roofs, their plank walls and floors set together without nails, their traditional division into the *insung* (inner room) and *inleng* (outer room), and their position athwart the slope of the hills with the fireplaces on the uphill half, usually resting on solid ground.

Here and there glimpses of the past are found—deep ditches hidden in the jungle round a village and gun pits at strategic points on the natural lines of defence that played so great a part in the selecting of a site. Occasionally the future obtrudes itself in the form of a rough slate or galvanised iron roof, but these exceptions are still rare enough to prove the rule of thatch.

To each house, radiating from a central aqueduct that is in some villages over five miles in length, come small water-courses made of split logs supported on Y posts, each emptying itself into deep tubs set under the shade of a tree in the courtyard. The supply is generally adequate and clean*, and the Hualngo habit of living on a hill top and drinking from a pollutable well is not appreciated by most of the other local tribes.

Though the Goitre Report quoted below comments on the good sanitation of Chin villages, giving the credit to the pigs that clear up human excreta, and on the absence of flies, it must be borne in mind that the tour about which the report was written was made from January to April, before the fly season really started. During the hot weather and in the early rains flies are everywhere—I have a note in my diary of July 1935 stating that while at Vazang writing up Ngawn custom one of the elders sat all afternoon on the verandah of the rest-house playing with my fly swat, and that in the course of it he separated his victims into seven neat piles with 100 flies in each. This rest-house is above and outside the village, and the flies mentioned were merely those which my beer-laden elders had seduced from the thousands round the *zu*-pots in the village.

But in the later rains and in the cold weather life in the hills is pleasant, the villages are cool and relatively clean, and the people happy and well fed on their new crops. Health in general was good until the practice of using local coolies to carry up rations for the Chin Hills Bn. of the F.F.† was introduced on the large scale. This was done as an act of kindness to inject some cash into the local economy during

* See " Report on Goitre and General Medical Survey, Chin Hills, 1940, " pp. 47/48. Government Printing Press, Rangoon.

† The Burma Frontier Force, which garrisons the outposts in the Hills.

the years of the great depression, but the thousands of men and women who went to Natchaung and Kalemyo in the plains brought back with them malaria and sometimes more dangerous diseases.

When epidemics do come, they spread and die with dramatic suddenness. I was in Haka when the smallpox came in 1934 and in Falam when cholera broke out in 1935. In both cases the village in which the disease originated was almost the only sufferer, though damage there was serious. In both cases the spread within the village was due to the mortuary ceremony held over the corpse of the first to die, when by custom relatives and friends came to the house to drink the fly-infested funeral beer and to paw and fondle the earthly shell of their friend and neighbour. Lack of knowledge of the way to recognise dangerous diseases added to this mortuary feast is sufficient guarantee that any epidemic introduced into a Chin village will soon decimate it. Happily other factors are at work. Except in the thickly populated area of the Manipur River Valley, villages are separated by miles of forest and it is therefore relatively easy to confine epidemics to the scene of their first appearance.

Taking the area as a whole the general impression that any visitor to the central Chin tribes will gain, especially if he has experience of other hill districts in Burma, is that the country is pleasant and open, the people well fed and hardy, and on the whole happy and contented.

Let us see what a day in the village brings to the inhabitants—say a winter's day in January, with the night temperature in the high villages falling below freezing point, and the sun rising on a cloudless horizon. At this season work is slack, the grain bins are still well filled, and the good and potent millet beer, as rich in cheerfulness as in vitamins, plentiful and freely offered. It is the season of gossip and visiting, of the Feasts of Merit and Celebration, and of much coming and going of hunting and trading parties.

As a rule the Chins are not particularly early risers, especially so in the winter when the sun does not appear over the mountain tops till nearly seven. The favoured direction for a village to face is east, so that it gets the sun as early as possible, and soon after the smoke of the morning fires rises out of the eaves one finds the menfolk coming out to sun-bathe on their *zaute* while they comb their long and much-treasured hair. In the meantime the wife will have set the breakfast cooked the night before on to the fire to heat, and the family sits down to its first meal at about eight o'clock.

By nine almost all the adults will have gone to the fields to continue in a desultory fashion the reaping or the threshing of the *thal* beans, and only the old folk left to mind the houses remain, warming their aged bones in the mild sunshine. The herd boys loose the mithan from the pens under the houses and follow their agile charges into the scrub jungle on the hillsides, while their lesser brothers and sisters play catch and hide-

and-seek among the hedgerows, or Tiger-and-Hunters and other bean games on " boards " scratched on the dusty surface of the court-yards.

Most people will leave their fields in the early afternoon and return to the village to enjoy a gossip with their friends, or perhaps attend a beer drink at one of their neighbours' houses. The young men go hunting, and the girls sit and weave or spin with their mothers, watched with keen interest by their little sisters—all of whom eagerly jump at any offer to try their hand at these fascinating pastimes of their elders. From the house of the headman comes a murmur of voices. One guesses by an occasional outburst of acrimonious wrath that a dispute is being settled by direct discussion, and that the wily elders are using the judicial beer with skill, blunting with many cups the keen perception of those likely to want too hard a bargain, stupefying the quarrelsome as rapidly as possible, and mellowing the moderates to the point where loss and gain become of no account, and peace and good fellowship the only realities.

From the ridge a mile above the village drifts down the faint echo of a gun shot, followed later by an irregular fusillade. A shout from far above electrifies the village. A bear has been shot—a *sahrang*.* The *lungpi** emerges in a trice from the maudlin gathering in the headman's house. " What's that ? " he bellows—" a *sahrang* ? " Confirmation comes from all sides. It is a man of his hamlet. The news clears the fog of alcohol from his mind. By thunder ! A *sahrang* is dead ! There will be a great feast this very day—all the hunters will be feted and fawned upon and he most of all : all will be gloriously merry and he the merriest. A new man again, he hurries off to put on some smarter clothes, the better to shine in the festival to come. The beat of gongs, the bursts of gunfire and happy laughter, and the extravagant boasting of the *khuate hla* tell the world that a *sahrang* is coming to the village, and that its skull will adorn the wall of a hunter without question the bravest, the cunningest, the most hawk-eyed and the most lightning swift in all the world.

The wife of this paragon finds herself in the maelstrom of a domestic crisis of the first order—how much beer is there in the house ? Not much, but thank goodness Mrs. Lal Bik down the hillside has just started getting ready for her husband's *khuangtsawi*† and will spare any amount on a promise of replacement. Then where's that young mithan ? Almost certainly that perishing herd-boy will have driven it up on to the highest ridge, where he can laze in the sunshine and survey the world of Chindom spread like a map before him. Messengers fly in all directions to apprise relatives and friends, and before long half the local world congregates at the lucky house, and the fun begins.

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* *Sahrang*, as will be seen in Chapter V, is the name given to a category of large game animals of which the bear (*savawm*) is one, for which a specially important Feast of Celebration is held. *Lungpi* is the title of the greatest hunter in the village.

† *Khuangtsawi* is the final in the series of the Feasts of Merit—see Chapter IX.

In a corner the hunter and the man who drew second blood ply each other with beer as rapidly as it can be swallowed, and one look is enough to be certain that neither will survive for long. The courtyard and the *inleng* of the house are packed with people, and the *insung* scarcely less so. Of the carcase of the bear and the mithan sacrificed in its honour soon nothing remains but a few bloodstained leaves and scraps over which the village dogs squabble and snap among the feet of the revellers. All has been divided among those entitled to a share. Practically every male is shouting at the top of his voice a panegyric on his previous hunting triumphs—he wants the world to know, but nobody listens. All are too intent on capping their rival's tales, all anxious that their own claims to fame will not pass unnoticed.

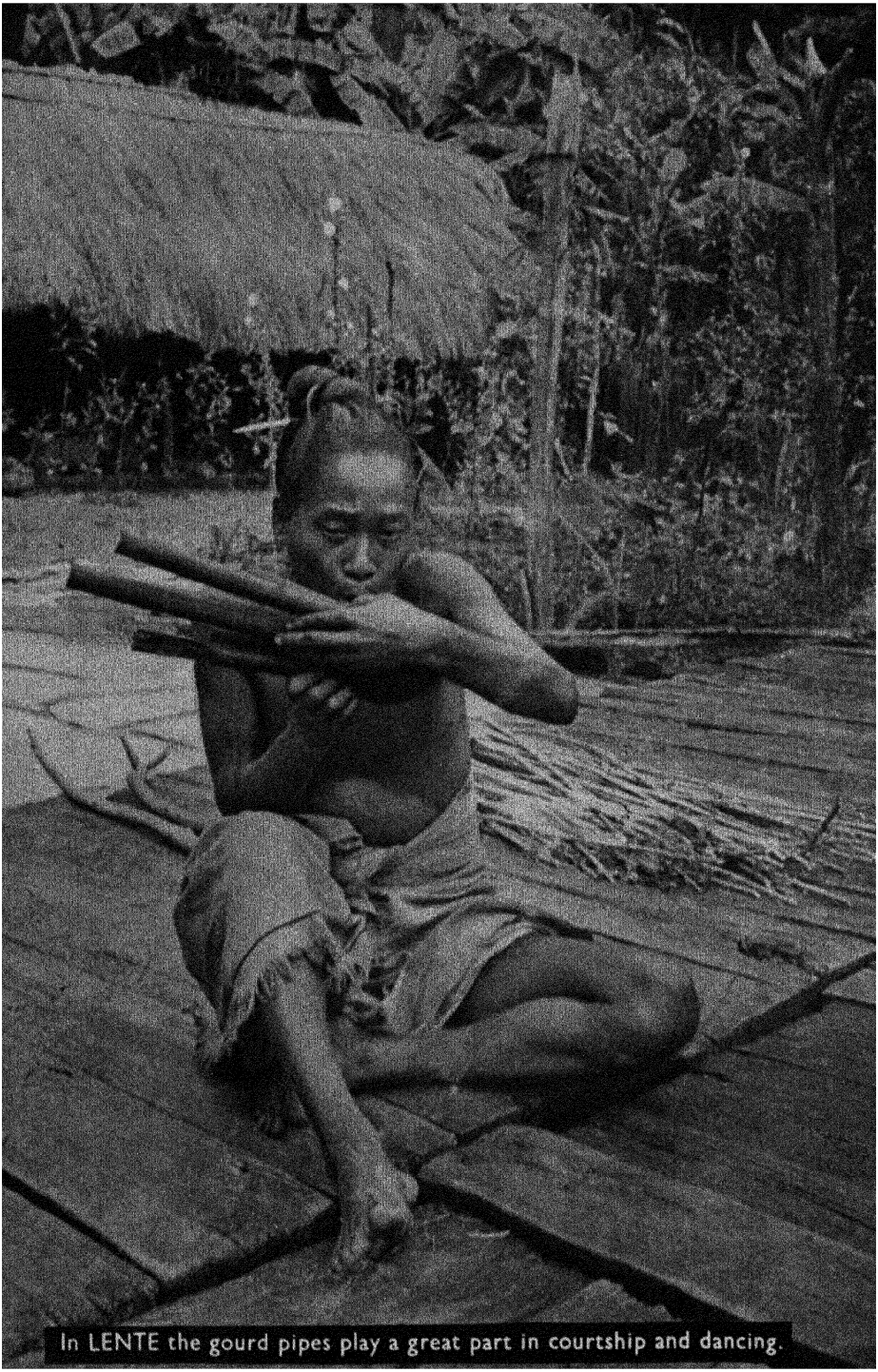
As the night wears on the milling crowd dwindles—here a mother with a suckling child slinks off to rest, there a maiden and her lover, the latter determined that if he may not seduce her at least no other shall take advantage of her beer-dulled inhibitions. The patriarchs lie where they fall asleep in the house and in the courtyard, careless of the gathering dew and the bitter cold of the dark hours. They have forgotten a world that often used them harshly; the lines of hardship and sorrow are smoothed from their faces, and their peaceful snores punctuate the singing and the chatter of the hardy spirits who keep the party going inside the house until the dawn.

In the other hamlets of the village which lie outside the circle of those invited to the feast, the afternoon has passed with a more usual quietude, and one has time to observe the normal pastimes of the villagers. One man is carving a *khan* to commemorate a brother while a small crowd watches and criticises with interest : another demonstrates to his stripling son the cunning set of nooses and snares : a third sits idly enjoying the spectacle of the blacksmith hammering a collection of old broken implements into new and serviceable ones. Here a basket-weaver plies his craft and there a half-wit girl is dully cleaning hemp. In one hamlet all are gathered round a house that has just been reroofed, thirstily gulping the beer which their grateful neighbour presses on them in quantities much larger than custom demands because his helpers have made so good a job of it.

As dusk falls the last loads of firewood are brought in and dumped in the yards and the great mithan slip noiselessly into their pens. A pig gulps its evening food without waiting for it to cool, and stands sucking the chill air into its scalded mouth. Slowly the smoke of supper fires spreads a veil over the village and for a while there is quiet.

It is soon rudely shattered : yelps of dismay are followed by shrill howls of delighted laughter—the *ih bur leng** groups are abroad, and on

* ***Ih bur leng*** (Lit. : sleep group stroll) groups consist of small parties of boys who sleep together in the house of one or other of their girl friends. They are usually youngsters who have reached the age of puberty.



In LENTE the gourd pipes play a great part in courtship and dancing.

this cold night the weapons selected for their armed foray are crude bamboo pumps to squirt icy water over their enemies, and hard cobs of maise to batter their frozen ears and backs as they fly madly from the ambuscade. These occasional night games are the true image of Chin warfare, and are always pre-arranged. The defending group as well as the attackers have a large fire going at their headquarters, at which to dry their drenched and shivering bodies, and their lovers come to watch the fun. The opening gambit is the despatch by the attackers of their *ral la* (Lure of the Enemy) usually a small and nimble youngster who can scamper in and out of unnoticed gaps in the hedges. His is a dual role —the first if possible to creep within range of his enemies' home fire and score a direct hit on one of them, or better still on one of their girls, thus adding insult to injury : secondly to make good his escape in such a way that he draws his pursuers into a trap from which they cannot escape without at least a ducking.

Once the first blow is struck the fun is fast and furious, capture and recapture sway the odds of battle. The corn cobs whistle through the air and land with agonising thwacks on the half-clothed bodies of the young warriors, hardly felt in the tense excitement of the moment. Eyes probe the darkness and ears strain for the faintest rustle of a leaf till at last one side or another penetrates its foes' defences and with shouts of triumph empties its water squirts on the girls by the fire. The war is won. The breathless youngsters wring their clothes and warm themselves, generally to part the best of friends.

By contrast to all this gaiety, and vastly the more touching because of it, comes the nightly homage of the bereaved to their dead. Always it seems the same, yet always is it different. A long dolorous wail echoes through the night, followed by the pitiful keening of a mother as she kneels before the family vault and cries to the cold stone to yield up her first-born. Step by step she recites the little life story, the endearing ways, the happy smile, the lingering fight with death. Others take it up, each mourning for their lost ones, and for a while the village rings with their drear sorrowing. It is very hard to listen to. Suddenly it ends.

But life goes on, the more fiercely to be enjoyed by the very emphasis on its narrow span. From right and left comes the gentle strumming of the *thingthang* and a queer lilt of song—youth must be served and maidens must be courted. Here and there a mother settling down to sleep has a last peep across the dim glow of the fireplace to the *khunral** to make certain that things are not going too far. But she is not really worried for she knows her daughters' favourite friends and has approved of them. At the worst it will only mean a slightly hastened marriage.

So let us leave the village scene. Its characters are strangely like those of our own world—some brave, some craven ; some good and just,

* *Khunral* is the bed on which the small children of the house sleep, and the unmarried girls. It lies across the main fireplace from the *khunpi*, the bed of the master and his wife.

others deceitful and unscrupulous ; vanity and cupidity go hand in hand with generosity and the humble heart. In it there is the universal compound of strain and ease, of laughter and tears, of want and plenty, and of living and dying.

But let us not forget this scene. The bare bones of economic fact are covered by its many coloured mantle, and throughout this dry tale of needs and the satisfaction of needs, of economic wants and economic choices, of the mysteries of capital investment and the profundities of scientific theory, I would have the reader carry in his mind's eye this vignette of real life and continually set my facts against its background.

# PART II

## CHAPTER III

## AGRICULTURE

In dealing with this first part of the economics of the Chins, that is, the productive aspect, I describe in their order of importance in Chin eyes the ways and means by which he obtains raw products from the jungle and foodstuffs from his field. The sequence is—agriculture, livestock, hunting and fishing, forest products and to round it off an examination of the tenure system which gives political and legal validity to these pursuits.

So far as the first three are concerned, I have made no attempt to separate the religious from the technical activities, as to do so would distort the true picture. For the Chin, like most primitives, has only a limited scientific knowledge and his religious and magical ritual is in reality a weapon of his own forging whereby he hopes to control to some degree the imponderable vagaries of Nature. To relegate this ritual to a separate part of the monograph would, therefore, result in a lack of balance in the agricultural perspective.

Preliminary to the survey of agriculture as a whole there is a short account of local conditions and of the typical divisions of labour, with notes on some alternative variations that are found occasionally. The group combinations connected with livestock, hunting and fishing are described in the sections under these headings.

While the general trend of change in this area will be summarised at the conclusion of Part II, each section contains an indication of the special tendencies which affect these particular spheres of productive and distributive activity, so that the reader will be able to carry forward with him an ever widening picture of the actual situation as it existed at the time these notes were made.

Throughout Parts II and III the custom of the Zahau is taken as the prototype, variations in other tribes being described where necessary to illustrate fundamental differences in social values.

*Physical background.*—The height of the mountains in the Chin Hills, rising as they do to 8,500 feet in this area, naturally results in wide variations of local conditions. Dominated by the parallel ranges of the *Len Klang* and *Letha Klang* which enclose the narrow watershed of the Manipur River, the most noticeable characteristic of the country in the Falam Sub-division is its steepness. Deep valleys rise to the very tops of the ridges and leave but little level land even for the building of villages. Indeed a small plateau of a few score acres between Khawpual and Botsung is the only naturally flat area in the whole Sub-division.

Climatic conditions differ sharply. The valley of the Run Va (Manipur River)—heavily populated from remote times, with its longitudinal alignment exposing it to day-long sunlight, its sparse vegetation and enormous rock outcrops—suffers from a harsh climate, grilling days alternating with shivery nights. But the east and west of the sub-division are very much milder, a heavier rainfall and stronger growth of forest keeping the temperature equable.

Though of course altitude has its usual effect, the divisions in the natural growth of forest correspond roughly to this climatic variation, pines (*Pinus Khassias*) and deciduous trees being most common in the Manipur River Valley, and evergreen species in the rest of the area. Water supplies are not too good, especially in the Manipur River valley, where annual burning has thinned the jungle so much that there is nothing to prevent the rapid surface run-off of most of the rain that falls. The annual rainfall is moderate, varying between 50″ and 90″.

*Sources of Food.*—Excluding food received in barter for trade goods, which I will deal with later, the Chin has three sources of food supplies:—the forest, the gardens in the villages, and the fields. In the streams and forest he fishes, hunts, robs the wild bees of their honey and collects wild fruits of many varieties. Pumpkins and melons, indigo and tobacco, cucumbers and ginger, chillies and mustard leaf make up the major part of the mixture of edible and useful plants that the gardens hold, root crops such as potato and *taro* sometimes being included, though these are more often planted in specially cleared areas by the sides of the village and field paths. Nowadays most villages in the temperate belt grow good varieties of plantain and orange introduced by officers and missionaries in the past. Onions and leeks are usually cultivated in a tub filled with earth dug from beneath the house rich with the manure of the mithan and pigs penned there.

But it is from their fields that the Chins, essentially an agricultural people, derive the bulk of their staple foods, and so it is to the fields that I devote the major portion of this outline of their productive activities. I have divided the subject up into the following parts :—the division of land ; rotational organisation : supernatural aid : crops and their seasons : organisation of labour : detail of implements and agricultural technique : harvest festivals : and finally an examination of existing changes and future trends.

*The divisions of land.*—The *Pax Britannica* has made it unnecessary for the Chin cultivator to worry whether nightfall will see him safely eating his evening meal at home or lying a headless corpse somewhere in the jungle, or perhaps worst of all, trotting along unfamiliar paths towards the distant village of his captor. The cultivations extend to the limit of the village boundaries, and if the fertility of the soil permits it every inch from the mountain top to the valley bottom will in its due sequence come under the hoe. As the variation of height between

these two extremes may be anything up to 6,000 feet with corresponding differences in temperature, the Chin classifies his land as cold (*zo*) or hot (*shim*) and plants his crops accordingly.

The territorial divisions are of two categories—the first to make regional rotation of cultivations possible and the second to facilitate allotment of a suitable area to each household in the village. The large divisions are called by the Chins *lopil* and these I will call fields. While the villages in the heavily populated Manipur River valley have in some cases as few as two *lopil*, the average number per village throughout the whole of the Falam sub-division is nearer four, and some of the villages on the eastern edge have as many as nine. The size of the *lopil* depends on the total area of land available divided by the rough amount required for the village at any one time.

The smaller divisions are called *lo* by the Chins, and will be referred to hereinafter as plots. Each *lopil* is divided into an irregular number of plots which vary greatly in size, shape, and fertility. Theoretically one *lo* is regarded as sufficient for one household to cultivate, but where sub-division has occurred this is not always the case. As will be described more fully under land tenure, most of these plots represent the areas first cleared of virgin jungle by the households of the original squatters, and cultivation titles are held over all except the very worst. In all tribes the village is the largest agricultural unit, each having its own lands, which the headman and council divide into *lopil*.

The boundaries between *lopil* are usually natural features such as ridges or streams, *lo* being delineated by lines of small stones, or in places which have come under the influence of the hedge-conscious European, by fences of cactus and other shrubs which serve little purpose but to keep the sun off a fairly wide strip of ground which would otherwise produce decent crops.

Apart from *lopil* set aside for cultivation purposes there is also a good deal of poor land on the ridges which is rarely if ever cultivated, and which forms the timber supply and main firewood plot for the village. In rare cases special areas of good forest are reserved for years, as the *tuklaw ram* of the Zahau, where *sagat* trees grow in profusion, and the fuel reserve of pine trees above the Khuangli Ngawn village of Saihmun. These are not, however, to be confused with the regular divisions of land into *lopil* and *lo* for agricultural purposes.

Later in dealing with herding customs I will describe in greater detail the area known by the term *siapil*—the fallow field set aside for grazing each rotational period.

*Rotational organisation.*—There are two forms of rotation practised by the Chin—regional rotation by cultivating fields in a set sequence, and crop rotation of cold weather beans.

The period for which any field is cultivated for a number of consecutive years depends almost entirely on the land available. In the areas inhabited at the time of the annexation this period was three, six, or even nine years in succession. In the centre of the subdivision where land is scarce the most common period is six years, but in the Zahau tribal area and the extreme eastern villages where land is plentiful, three years is more usual.

Invariably one field (the *siapil*) in rotation is set aside for grazing of the village herds.

The significance of the figures 3, 6, and 9, for regional rotation is to be found in the crop rotation. While the rains crops (*ful rawl*) are the same year after year, the winter crop of beans (*thal rawl*) is varied every year. The first year a field is opened for cultivation the *thal rawl* will be sulphur beans, the second year *phiang* peas and the third year runner beans. There are two varieties of sulphur bean, *thantre* and *busul*, and these are planted alternately in the sulphur bean year, so that the six year rotation would be 1. *Thantre* sulphur beans. 2. *Phiang*. 3. Runner beans. 4. *Busul* sulphur beans. 5. *Phiang* and 6. Runner beans.

The year in which *phiang* is planted is called the *phiang kum* or pea year, and it had considerable significance in pre-annexation days because " protection " dues and tribute from conquered villages usually took the form of a cow mithan paid every *phiang kum*, or third year in the *phiang* season. Here is an interesting indication of the importance of the linguistic aspect of culture. It is on record that this triennial tribute, called by the Chins *phiang siah* but transliterated in early days as *pyang sha*, was believed to have its origin in the Burmese words *paing*, (to own) and *sa*, (to eat). This construction naturally lent validity to the belief that the villages paying the tribute were in the full sense of the word subordinate to the recipient village, and its use as a criterion of division of the whole Chin Hills into different political jurisdictions under the Chiefs who received *phiang siah* has resulted in many anomalies.

While the Chin is well aware of the necessity of regional rotation of cultivation to allow for the natural regeneration of the soil, no reason is given for the crop rotation described above. This is not a *lacuna* of the " nothing to say " variety condemned by Prof. Malinowski in App. II of his " Coral Gardens and their Magic." I have made several enquiries but could extract no theory. One exception to this crop rotation system is found in the Tashon group of villages, who do not plant *phiang* though they are very fond of eating them. The legendary explanation of this state of affairs is that once upon a time a Tashon gorged so heavily on *phiang* that when he fell asleep replete, the outline of the peas could be seen through the distended skin of his stomach and passing fowls, spotting them, pecked their way in and so burst the unfortunate man's bowels.

*Supernatural aid and the limitations of technical skill.*—The synchronisation of sacrifice and technical effort in order to secure good crops is as

natural to the Chin as it to any other of the primitive peoples of Burma, and this fact must be remembered by all who wish to improve local agriculture. In this area the religious and magical effort expended is due to an almost complete ignorance of the origin of the various insect pests and blights that can damage crops, and the ways in which these pests can be defeated.

The Zahau definitely accuses only two types of insects of spoiling his crops, and even these he believes can be controlled only by sacrifice to the *rawl hring*, the crop-destroying spirits. Failures from all other causes are attributed to direct supernatural sources and control is established by means of seasonal sacrifices. Only at the Zanniat village of Lotsawm, notorious for its uncertain rainfall, is there a special rain-making offering. This is made when Lotsawm alone out of the surrounding villages suffers droughts.

To understand the local attitude towards agricultural magico-religious ceremonies therefore, one must first summarise the Chin's practical knowledge and determine where this ends and reliance on the supernatural begins.

I have described how he divides his land into the hot and cold levels, *shim* and *zo* : his own observations and the knowledge handed down by his forefathers show him that temperature has a direct effect on the productivity of the soil and on the growth of various types of grain, and therefore one does not find him planting paddy in his *zo* land, where maize will give him the best results, and *vice versa.*

Again practice tells him that the grey shale soil in certain areas gives better crops than poor sandy loams, and that the household supply of onions and leeks must be raised in tubs of rich soil specially suited to their successful growth. The deposit of a thick covering of ash from the annual burn and the operations of thinning and weeding demonstrably result in stronger and healthier crops, and the Chin does not try to evade these by substituting magical activities. But when one has said so much one has said about all there is to say.

By diligence the fields are got ready in time to be planted before the spring rains; by incessant hard labour they are weeded and thinned to give the seedlings *lebensraum* ; but if a plague of insects or a blight appears, the Chin is at the end of his practical resources. His only hope is to turn to the spirits, to invoke the aid of those that can help plants to grow and to bribe with a surfeit of food those which he thinks are attacking his crops out of spite.

His agricultural ceremonies in this way illustrate the general idea implicit in his other religious activities—he treats the spirits as men. His *lopil nam* and similar sacrifices are the spiritual counterpart of the *phiang siah* dues paid to temporal chiefs for protection and assistance, while the crop magic approximates to temporal bribes paid to appease and ward off enemies who covet his wealth or land.

The periodic sacrifices which I have called religious, since invocation for general prosperity is made to a third party, the spirits are five in number—the *lopil nam*, the *siapil nam*, the *faang tsi diil*, all three of which are communal, and the *lo vun* and *lo ar ah*, which are personal. In contradistinction I have called the three ceremonies of *faang no dawi* (to drive the young millet seedlings), *thal rawl zing* (to succour the *thal* crops) and the *rawl hring dauh* (to feast the *rawl hring*) crop magic, since a formula in itself believed to be potent is recited to achieve the specific object desired. Actually the *faang tsi diil* (millet seed ask) ceremony is a border line case : while it is intended to gain a specific object, good seed for the next year, the invocation more nearly approximates to those recited at the regular religious ceremonies. The fact that it takes place at the communal altar at which the *lopil nam* is held is also indicative of its difference from the magical ceremonies, which have their own altars.

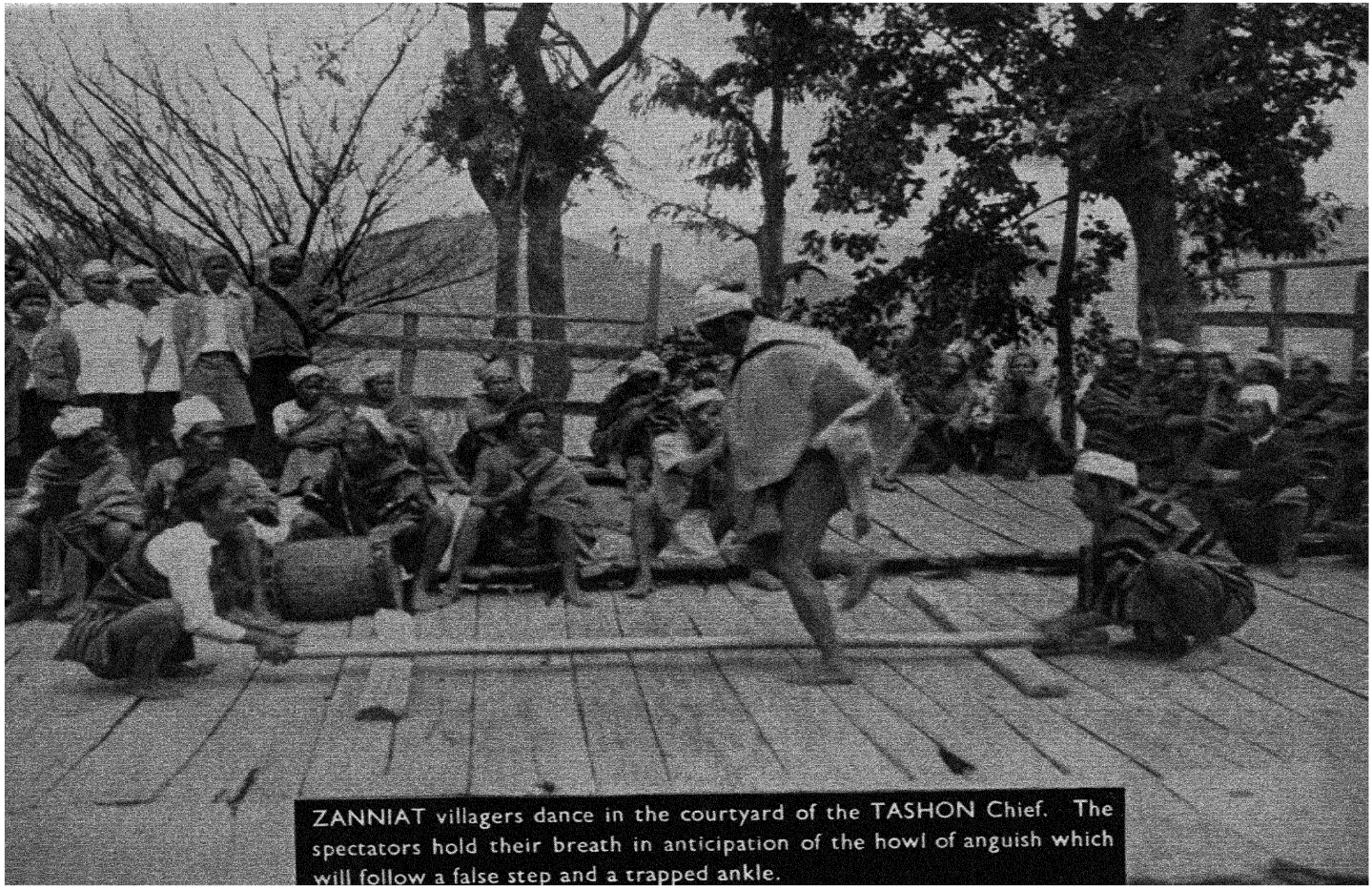
As the crop magic will find its correct chronological place in the section dealing with the agricultural cycle, it will suffice to describe here the first category, beginning with the *lopil nam*. I do not go into greater detail than is necessary to demonstrate clearly the practical effects of the sacrifices.

The *lopil nam* and the *siapil nam* are respectively intended as inaugural ceremonies of appeasement of the guardian spirits of the fields to be opened for cultivation (the *lopil*) and grazing (the *siapil*). They occur once only at the beginning of the 3, 6, or 9 years rotational periods for which the fields are used, and are carried out at a communal altar called the *lopil thumhmun*, of which there is one in each field. Both are expensive sacrifices usually entailing the killing of a mithan or large pig.

The *faang tsi diil* is an *annual* sacrifice at the same altar, and it is also a communal matter and relatively expensive, involving the killing of a large pig. The remaining two, *lo vun* and *lo ar ah*, are annual inaugural sacrifices to open each individual plot for cultivation. They are carried out at the commencement of each season at special small altars in each plot, two at the top and bottom respectively of the plot, and one at the cultivation hut.

No man can cultivate a plot in a field not opened by the *lopil nam* ceremony without grave risk of spiritual disaster, nor can he turn his mithan loose in an area unprotected by the *siapil nam*, for they would surely be killed on precipices or by wild animals. Similarly an individual must give spiritual protection to his own plot. The significance of these restrictions will become apparent when the agricultural importance of crop, area and grazing rotation is considered. They exercise a potent control in maintaining a system of great practical utility.

*Crops and Seasons.*—In describing the seasons and the staple and subsidiary crops I will again follow the divisions which the Chins themselves recognise.



ZANNIAT villagers dance in the courtyard of the TASHON Chief. The spectators hold their breath in anticipation of the howl of anguish which will follow a false step and a trapped ankle.

There are two main seasons—*ful pi* or *fur pi* being the rainy summer season (June to October) and *khua thal*, the dry winter months (November to May). The staple crops grown in these two seasons are known as *ful rawl* and *thal rawl* respectively. While all cooked food is known by the name of *rawl*, this term is applied in the raw state only to the staple foods —rice, maize, millet, beans and peas. The first three varieties are *ful rawl* or rains food, and the last two *thal rawl* or winter crops. The many varieties of roots, gourds, vegetables, etc., are each called by their specific names and are not included among the staple edibles known collectively as *rawl*. These must therefore be recognised as subsidiary foods, since the Chin himself so classifies them.

An interesting light on Chin evaluations of various crops is also shed by the presence or absence of crop magic. For millet alone by name crop magic is performed at various stages in the year's work. This statement requires elaboration. In areas where rice and not millet is planted *faang tsi diil* and *faang no dawi* ceremonies are performed with the intention of furthering its germination and growth, and maize is also believed to derive benefit from the sacrifice, but linguistically speaking the sacrifice applies only to millet. *Thal* crops are dealt with *in toto* in the *thal rawl zing* and *rawl hring dauh* ceremonies, while the subsidiary crops receive no magical aid.

The full list of the staple crops is as follows:—Rice (*faang tsang*), three varieties of millet (*faang*), maize (*vainiim*), two varieties of sulphur bean (*thantre* and *busul*), a type of pigeon pea (*phiang*), and black runner beans. The subsidiary crops are :—broad beans (occasionally planted in the *thantre* year), pumpkins, melons, *taro*, sweet potato, English potatoes, and gourds of various kinds.

The millet, maize and beans combination seems to offer greater resistance to impoverishment of the soil by over-cultivation than paddy, while the heavier rain of the paddy growing areas seems to make the ordinary (as exemplified by the Zahau) Chin planting system impossible,* as with more rain the *thal* bean crops grow so fast that they smother the immature *ful* crops.

*Division of agricultural labour.*—This section describes the way in which labour is organised and work distributed between the sexes, the kinship and other social groups. As will be shown later, there are some stages of the work in the fields when individual families work their own plots and other occasions when large groups work together. There are rich men who hire labour to work in their fields and others not so rich who have to persuade willing relatives to come and help, and so on, and it is the organisation of these larger groups that I want to describe most fully.

Though according to ancient tradition all work in the fields except the felling of trees was left to the women, nowadays men take almost as much part, as the pre-annexation necessity of mounting armed guards no longer

* *Thal* crops are not planted with paddy.

exists. Broadly speaking the clearing of jungle is always done by or with the assistance of the men of the house, planting and weeding by both sexes working together, scaring of birds by the children, and reaping by all.

*Hired labour.*—In most of the autocratic group villages hiring of labour for agricultural purposes is done, not directly between hirer and hired, but through the village council. The man wanting assistance applies to the headman, who details a specific number of workers. The hire-money is paid to the headman and is placed in the communal fund and used for purposes of communal sacrifice and entertainment. For this type of work only one person per house turns out in strict rotation, so that all take a fair share. The size of the groups sent to work vary from village to village but are constant in each village. The groups are called *seu**, and may be anything from ten to twenty persons according to the local rule.

Besides this availability of labour for hiring by rich villagers, the sending of a *seu* or two of workers to his plots is one recognised way of paying off a debt or a duty owed by the village as a whole to one of its residents. For instance a man supplying a mithan for communal sacrifice may be repaid in this way, or under the custom of *mi na hlawh sawm* (to work for the sick) the elders may turn out a *seu* or two to look after the fields of any man too ill to work at the critical periods in agriculture, demanding from him the customary price on his recovery.

The rules regarding the amount of labour which a *seu* of workers can be called upon to perform, and the return they get for it, are clearly understood. A typical example can be taken from the Zahau. There the act of sending by order of the council of a *seu* of workers, say for weeding, is called *sumhlawh khlawh*, and the actual weeding done by them in called *paamshiam hlawh* or *belh tuk hlawh* according to whether it occurs during the slack season of weeding the *thal* crops in October and after (*paam shiam*), or in the very busy season of the *belh tuk* weeding of the rains crops. The amount paid to the village council for one day's work by a *seu* of ten workers is Re. 1 for *paamshiam hlawh*, and Rs. 1-8-0 for *belh tuk hlawh*. Such a *seu* may be kept working in the field until dark if the employer so desires, but he must give them *zu* and the midday meal, and he may not load them with anything to take back from his plot to the village without paying overtime to the council at the rate of one packet of salt per *seu*.

One has only to watch these groups coming back each night from the fields, laughing and joking as they hurry home, to be quite satisfied that the system does not entail any great hardship from the Chin point of view. It saves the villagers having to find cash or kind for communal purposes, their labour being converted by the council into these commodities.

* *Seu* is a unit whether of hired labour or barter.

Some mention is desirable here of the system of labour dues. The headman, priest and blacksmith of the autocratic group receive on an average two days* free labour in their fields from each house in recompense for services rendered : the work is organised on the same system as the hired labour already described, each house sending *one* person only, for one day of *belh tuk hlawh* and one day of *paamshiam hlawh*. The recipient of this free labour, like the employer of hired labour, must provide food at midday and *zu* to refresh his helpers.

*Voluntary association in labour.*—As noted in Chapter II, village communities generally consist of a number of partrilineal extended families, and it is these groups of classificatory brothers, called *u le nau*, that one commonly finds associating together with their wives and children in work in the fields when occasion demands. In such cases the party works the plot of each member in rotation, the plot-holder on each day producing food and liquor. Much more rarely affinal groups work together. But besides these forms of association, one finds many other temporary groups not based on the blood tie, but on friendship or habitual companionship. For instance two *rual* bond-friends may help each other in turn. Very commonly youths belonging to one *ih bur leng* group will turn out to assist the household of the girls they are courting, this last being an interesting example of a situation which superficially should cause jealousy actually resulting in co-operation.

DETAILS OF AGRICULTURAL TECHNIQUE.

*Implements.*—The Chin's equipment of implements is fairly adequate and suited to local conditions. Compared to other relatively civilised hill-tribes of the Burma hinterland it may seem primitive, but the real test of value is utility. For agricultural work the list is :— *tawng mu*, the heavy Burmese working chopper : *mar khleh nam tawng*, a similar weapon of Lushai origin : *khlawh kawi*, an indigenous billhook : *hreiklung*, an axe : and *tu-teng* and *tu-hmui*, two kinds of hoe. The choppers and billhook described are used for the clearing of the jungle at the beginning of the cultivation season, axes rarely being necessary for other than virgin forest. The two hoes and the axe show some variation in manufacturing technique : whereas the common *hreiklung* and *tu-teng* consist of a straight haft with the blade set into it, the *tuhmui* has a haft with a fork projecting downwards at an acute angle, the end of which fits into a socket in the head. The latter method of fixing the head allows the blade to be rotated easily to any desired angle on the haft. Both hoes are short hafted and light, well suited to digging a thin topsoil on a steep slope.

*The agricultural cycle.*—The clearing of the plots for a new season's work usually commences after December, and often before the reaping of the *thal* crops when *phiang* is planted. Except when a new field is opened, clearing entails little more than weeding of the grass that has

* Since reduced by Government to one day per annum.

grown up since the previous years *ful rawl* crops were gathered a month or two before. On newly opened plots scrub jungle and grass are gathered into convenient heaps and left to dry before burning, while branches suitable for firewood are split and stacked along the side of the field path to be taken home a few logs at a time when required. Fruit trees, wild or otherwise, which grow on the plot are carefully preserved from damage by fire by clearing a ring of ground several feet in diameter of all grass and weeds. In the Manipur River valley large trees are usually pollarded year after year and form a not unimportant source of firewood, but the real value of this practice is that it enables a certain amount of regeneration through seeding to take place when the field eventually lies fallow, a few seedlings from the pollarded trees occasionally escaping the annual fires and growing up to the add their quota of leaf mould to the soil. At the clearing stage the husband and wife are found working the fields alone, or assisted by their children if they have any.

Unlike some other hill areas in Burma, there is no restriction here on the clearing of villagers' plots before those of chief or priest, and the most diligent are always the first at work. There is, of course, the restriction imposed in the first year of cultivation of a new field by the inaugural sacrifice to the Guardian Spirit, but once this is over it is every man for himself, and as soon as the individual has propitiated the spirit of his own plot with the customary annual offerings he can set to work clearing the undergrowth.

Following as soon upon the clearing as the drying of the wood and grass will permit comes the burning of all the rubbish on the plot. When a new field has been opened, and therefore there is much more dead jungle to burn and a much fiercer conflagration, the date of burning is fixed by the village council and due precautions taken to prevent the flames from doing damage to the village. But when it is simply a matter of burning up piles of grass and small scrub a man can do as he likes.

The ground is then ready for planting, and cultivators all over the hills watch the sky anxiously to try and forecast accurately the arrival of the *to ruah* or Spring Rains, which usually fall some time in March or April and last for a week or ten days. It is everyone's ambition to get the seeds in just before this rain, which will damp the ground sufficiently to cause germination to take place and the young plants to grow a few inches high before the commencement of the rains proper in June. But the *to ruah* is extremely fickle, sometimes early and sometimes late, sometimes so heavy as to wash away the seeds, sometimes so slight as to leave insufficient moisture in the ground to keep the seedlings alive until the June rains. More than any other factor, the *to ruah* affects the size and quality of the year's crops and so the anxiety of the Chin at this period is easily understandable.

Planting commences then, according to the rainfall, somewhere between the beginning of March and the middle of April and this operation is the first in which co-operative labour is employed. Large parties

numbering up to twenty men and women plant each other's plots in turn, the seed of the *ful* and *thal rawl* being put in at the same time. The system is almost always the same. The party lines up at the bottom of the plot, each person carrying his own supply of seeds of the *ful* grains : as they work slowly up to the top of the field they dig small holes two or three inches deep into which they drop a few seeds. Maize seeds are put in holes about 1½ to 2 feet apart, and the grain is sometimes but not always dibbled in and covered. Having reached the top, they reverse the process and work down to the bottom again dibbling in the *thal* beans at about the same spacing as that of the maize seed. The whole procedure is then repeated until the plot has been planted up.

Following the completion of planting, which again depends on the success of the *to ruah*, since a plot that has been washed out may have to be replanted as many as three times before success is achieved, there is a slack period until the first weeding. This is the favourite time for feasting and particularly for hunting, as the annual fires have turned the whole countryside into a blackened ruin on which any moving animal stands out like a lighthouse, and beats for game are the order of the day.

When the young maize and millet is an inch or two in height the magical ceremony of *faang no dawi* is performed, a young female sucking pig being sacrificed at the field altar, the *lopil thum hmun*, with a spell in which the millet is driven up (*dawi*) by the sacrifice and formula. The stage is then set for the first weeding and thinning of the young plants when they have reached a height of about six inches. This weeding and thinning is called *faang sah tseh*, and even strong good plants are uprooted if they grow too thickly.

The second weeding, known as *belh tuk* or *faang kut tuah*, takes place twenty days to a month after the first, and the millet is again thinned out until the plants are about three inches apart, and finally after another interval of twenty days or so comes the last weeding, or *faang tual*, and the remainder of the unsuccessful or empty-eared plants are removed. The more ignorant people lump all these weedings together under the one title *belh tuk*, and many had not even heard of the purist divisions given to me by the Zahau Chief, and corroborated by his elders.

During this period of weeding, lasting from the beginning to the middle of the heavy summer rains, the narrow and winding paths cut to the fields are thronged with busy workers. In the early stages, while good hunting is still possible, only the women will be found weeding, but later all hands turn to the work, which is the heaviest in the entire agricultural cycle. It is also extremely wet and uncomfortable, and although most workers wear a shield shaped covering over their backs to keep off the pouring rain, the fast-growing crops soon reach a height that makes it impossible to walk among them and remain with a stitch of dry clothing. At this season only one sees the grass skirts of the Ngawn girls, which keep them dry though they must be extraordinarily uncomfortable, for the

grass is the tough and sharp-edged *thetke*. Occasionally the back-covers described above are replaced by beautifully made sleeveless grass waterproofs from Haka or the northern hills.*

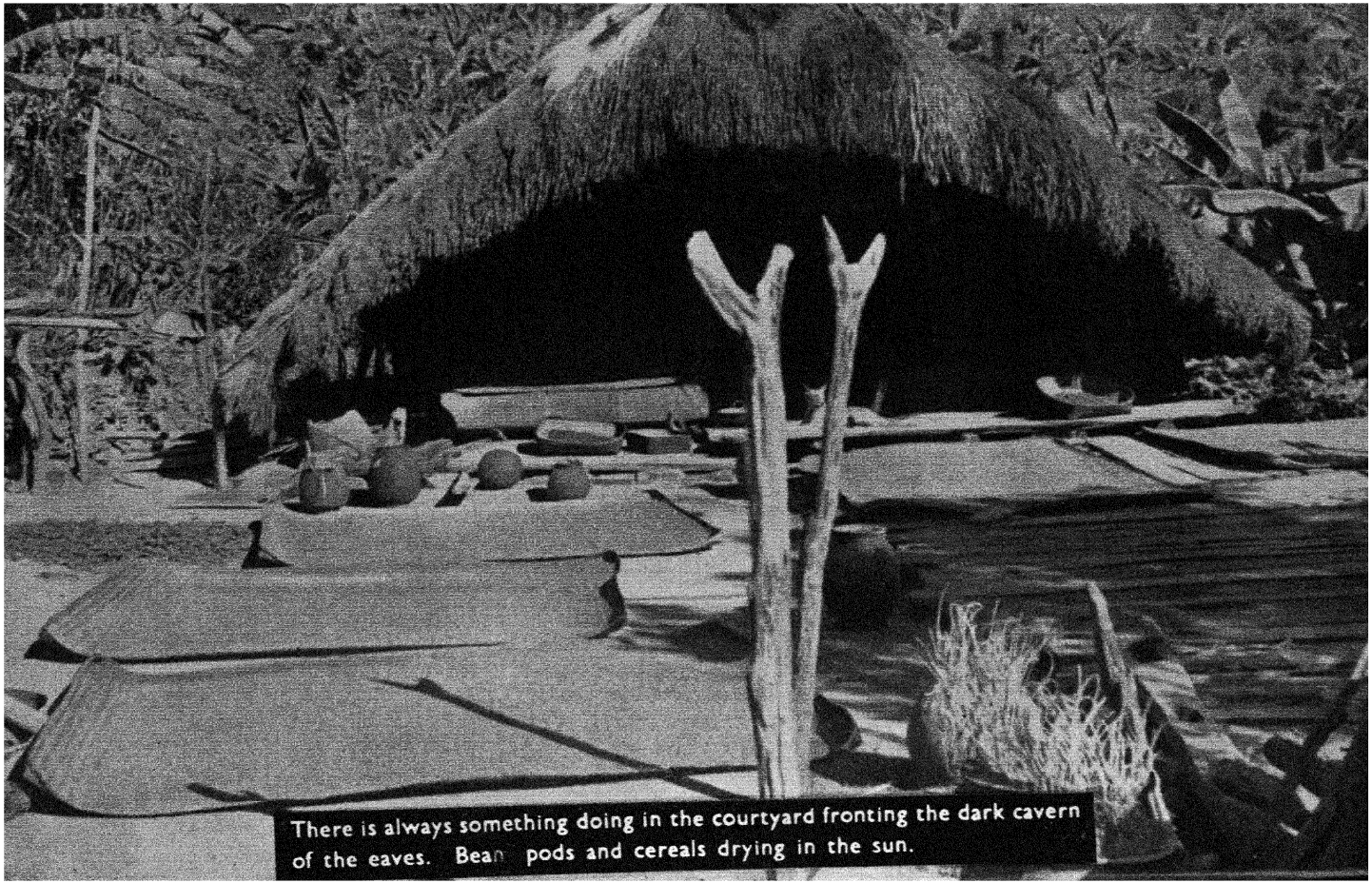
In working dress one comes across a striking example of detrimental cultural borrowing. The traditional dress of all the tribes in the Falam subdivision was a short skirt extending just below the knees, and in the case of unmarried girls and young matrons (except the Zanniat group) a coat. But contact with the plains has brought the Burmese ankle-length *longyi* into fashion in certain areas, and while this garment may look more graceful when seen at a festival or in the dry comfort of the home, one has only to compare the two fashions in the fields, where the long *longyi* presents a most be-draggled appearance, to realise that it is not only not much good for work, but may well cause harm. I did not have the time during my stay in the Chin Hills to make adequate enquiries into what effect the wearing of more clothes, characteristically a first gift of " civilisation " to primitive races, has had on the incidence of pulmonary diseases. Several writers on the Nagas have noted increases in disease through this cause, and the subject might be worth investigation.

Towards the end of the last weeding the millet begins to ripen and a period of incessant watchfulness commences. Myriads of parrakeets and Java sparrows mill round the waving crops trying to find a place to settle and eat in peace. Almost all the children of the village will be found sitting from dawn to dusk in the plot huts and shelters, pulling ropes of creepers or split bamboo to which clappers of every conceivable shape and size have been tied, or trying amid the laughter of their fellows to beat out the rhythm of a dance on the small wooden xylophones found in every hut. From every side there comes a continuous rattle of bird-frightening noises, accompanied by weird hoots and yells from the watching youngsters.

Besides feathered pests, even daylight sees the crops full of rats, mice, squirrels and monkeys, while night brings also the *sambhar*, the barking deer, and the bear to add to the troubles of the cultivators. In vain the poor man begs from the headman the loan of one of the village guns—now restricted by Government to one gun for every five or ten houses—everyone's need is as great as his neighbour's. Traps of all kinds are set, from those for large animals to miniature deadfalls for rats and mice. Sometimes local ingenuity rises to the occasion and flint-lock guns of a " Heath-Robinson " type are manufactured out of† G. I. sheeting and cane and flint. The sheeting is rolled and bound with cane to form the barrel, while the action is a perfect copy of the genuine flint-lock action, having bamboo springs substituted for the more normal steel. I have two of these weapons at present in my possession, and though I should not care to fire them myself, their condition proves that they have discharged their duty effectively if with no great lethal power. To the jungle animal I

* See illustration on page 109 of the " The Lakhers " by N. E. Parry.

† Galvanised iron sheeting.



There is always something doing in the courtyard fronting the dark cavern of the eaves. Bean pods and cereals drying in the sun.

don't suppose there is much to choose between a fright from a good gun and that from a bad, and at night there is little chance of being hit by either.

However, July and August bring agricultural troubles almost to an end, for the millet ripens and turns rich red or black according to its species, and the harvest season is at hand. Reaping shows the Chin at his most primitive, for it is a tedious and painful process. No knife of any kind is used, each head being plucked off by hand and dropped over the shoulder into a basket carried on the reaper's back, so that before long even the tough work-hardened hands of the Chin become cut and sore.

No sooner is the millet crop safely gathered than the maize ripens in August and September. In harvesting maize also the Chin use no knife, but tear the cobs off by hand, removing the outer cover and turning the inner ones back to act as ties when the cobs are eventually stored under the rafters of the house. In villages near enough to the plains of Burma to make the trade feasible, these outer covers of the maize cobs are carefully gathered for sale as cigar wrappers, but elsewhere they are thrown away in the plots. Garnering of the maize is the last step in the work connected with the *ful rawl* crops, and the *thal* season commences with the removal of the millet and maize stalks, to expose a thick covering of bean runners all over the plot. At this period the magical ceremony *thal rawl zing* (to succour the *thal* crops) is performed, a pig of at least Rs. 3 in value being sacrificed at the *thal rawl thumhmun* outside the village.

This first weeding of the *thal rawl* is called *paam shiam*, and no sooner is it completed than the revitalised beans sprout and flower with great vigour. The *rawl hring dauh* ceremony is now carried out to give further magical protection to the crop. The term means literally: "to feast the evil spirits that destroy the *thal* crops."

The intention of this ritual is to avert destruction of the winter crops by pests or blight, a dog of any sex or colour being offered at the *thal rawl zing* altar. There are two points of special interest connected with it, one being the fact that the victim is a dog, showing the connection in the Chin mind between the evil spirits‡ which attack man and crop, and the second is the absence of this ceremony in the year when the *thantre* sulphur beans are planted. This omission is due to the belief that the spirits think as men do, and that as men like the *thantre* beans so little that they will not even bother to steal them when opportunity offers, the evil spirits also will care for them so little that they will not bother to harm them. A final weeding called *lo suat* is given when the ground dries at the end of the rains, and the *thal* crops ripen between the end of December and the beginning of February, accordingly to altitude and species.

‡ Dogs are also sacrificed to protect human beings from certain ills due to sorcery.

Reaping depends on the variety planted. Runner beans are collected by cutting the stalk at the root and rolling up the thickly matted growth, which is then taken away and threshed in the bare space in front of the plot hut by beating with a stick. Sulphur beans of both varieties, having large and prominent pods which can easily be spotted, are plucked from the runner and heaped in suitable places to dry, the pods being cracked and the beans removed *in situ* when ready. *Phiang* plants are cut down and left to dry in the sun, after which they are carried away to be threshed in front of the plot huts like the runner beans.

With the harvesting of the *thal* crop the agricultural cycle ends, and work for the next year starts soon afterwards with the clearing of the ground. When *phiang* is planted, which does not ripen until the following March, the ground for the next crops is often cleared round the standing plants before they are cut.

It will be seen that the Chins, in particular the women, have a long year's toil to put in for their crops, and while it is only during the planting season and the weeding of the *ful* crops that the work is so hard as to be almost drudgery, there are only short seasons of complete respite in their agriculture.

*Storage of crops.*—The value that the Chin puts on his various crops is apparent from the method of storage. Millet is regarded as the finest eating and brewing grain, and is kept in the *insung*, or inner room of the house, in large woven bamboo receptacles known as *tsuawm*. These *tsuawm* are usually about four feet in diameter and the like in height, and they stand in a row along the downhill side of the house from a point opposite to the edge of the main fireplace of the *insung* to the back wall. This practice has given a specific name to the houseposts next to which these bins are traditionally placed, and where certain house sacrifices are performed. While the bins are used sometimes for beans; millet, and rice where grown, is most often found in them.

Maize is almost invariably strung up to the rafters of the inner and outer rooms, where, if the crop has been exceptionally good, one also occasionally sees bunches of millet that have overflowed from the *tsuawm*. Indeed one of the easiest ways of checking the prosperity of villages when on tour shortly after the crops have been reaped is to look at the rafters of the houses. Emptiness there is always a bad sign.

Beans of all kinds are treated with scant respect, *phiang* alone among the *thal* crops being properly appreciated, since it is not only regarded as very tasty to eat, but also commands a high price in the Falam bazaar. Long after gathering, the bean crop will be left lying in the plot hut, the owner secure in the knowledge that few would dream of stealing it. In dealing elsewhere with punishment for theft I have outlined some other aspects of the Chin's attitude towards his crops, and these facts taken in conjunction with the "banishment" of the

*thal rawl* ritual to special altars different from those used for millet, confirm the impression of the Chin's food preferences which one gains from his linguistic divisions.

The absence of separate granaries is one of the most potent causes of loss to the Chin, as in this relatively dry and windy area serious fires during the hot weather are of sadly common occurrence. A village fire becomes a disaster of the first magnitude because the food supplies for the current year as well as the seed for the next are devoured in the flames, together with all the valuables that might have purchased these basic necessities.

*Harvest festivals.*—There are two kinds of harvest festival—one a seasonal festivity in which the entire village takes part, and the other a special celebration of an unusually large crop. The first variety are known as *Faang-er* and *Dawngpui lam*, the first term being that used among the Shimhrin and the Tashon, and the last that used by the Zanniat and related groups. The second variety are called respectively *Faang za aih* (Lit. Celebration of a hundred baskets of millet) and *Buh za aih*, by the tribal groups mentioned above.

The reaping of *ful* crops brings the Chin to the end of his calendar, and the *faang er* and *dawngpui lam* combine the functions of harvest festival and the new year festival. There are some interesting differences in custom between the Shimhrin group and the Zanniat in connection with this festival, but description of these would be out of place here, it will suffice to say that these festivals, like ours, thank the supernatural guardians for services rendered and ask for better luck next time.

*Faang za or buh za aih.*—As the name implies, tradition demanded that the *faang za aih* should only be given for a crop of one hundred *han* (large baskets) of millet. Then the successful cultivator might publicise his diligence or wealth of slaves etc., by holding this dance. Perhaps in the days before the annexation a hundred *han* millet crop was sometimes achieved by men owning many slaves, but nowadays it is rare. As a result the *aih* is held even when the entire crop, including maize, reaches the relatively low figure of fifty *han*. The ritual is almost identical to that of the *khlailam*, first of the Feasts of Merit. Two pigs of at least Rs. 15 and Rs. 12 in value must be killed, and in addition to the traditional quantities of liquor for the *khlailam*, the feast-giver must produce an extra seven pots of *faang za zu* (the millet hundred beer). The disposal of the meat of the pigs killed also follows that of the *khlailam*, and the relatives and friends of the feast-giver must give the same assistance in labour and kind.

I have not witnessed a genuine *buh za aih* among the democratic tribes though I have seen a demonstration, and can therefore do no more than record the fact that this expression of pride in good husbandry exists among them as well as among the Shimhrin.

There is a Zanniat village dance called the *mualkhuar* which, though performed if possible triennially in the *phiang kum*, depends on a good harvest, some villages not having held it for fourteen years or more. Indeed it is so rare that although the hills have been administered for half a century I am the only European to date who has witnessed it. I saw the dance at Hmunli, the last animist village of Zanniat (all the rest are converted to the Pau Chin Hau cult) in March 1935.

It is said that the *mualkhuar* dancing was at one time repeated for four days in succession, but nowadays it is merely a matter of how long supplies of grain for beer-brewing will last and the duration varies from two or three to five days. It is no longer performed at Zultu because shortly after the last time it was held some 15 years ago some of the young men who took part died suddenly, and the village seer attributed the catastrophe to the *mualkhuar*.

There is a Tashon dance very similar to this, but I was not fortunate enough to see it. Both types like the *faang za* and *buh za aih* are advertisements of good husbandry and good luck.

*Uses to which crops are put.*—While I will not deal with this subject in full until Part III, some outline of the ways in which the Chin uses his agricultural products is necessary to give point to the outline of future trends with which I follow up this account of agricultural practice.

There is a sharp division between the uses to which a Chin can put his staple *ful* and his *thal* crops ; for while beans and peas serve only as food, millet, maize and rice can be brewed into beer, without which life is inconceivable to the average Chin. The subsidiary crops are grown primarily as food supplies though the various gourds are dried and used as containers such as water bottles, nicotine flasks, drinking cups and spoons.

In spite of the fact (see the Chin Hills Gazetteer) that some authorities are inclined towards a belief that the Chin thinks more of his beer than his food, it is absurd to doubt that the satisfaction of his nutritive needs, solid rather than liquid, is the mainspring of his agricultural efforts. It is, however, but one of many incentives, among which one must count the holding of the Feasts of Merit and Celebration, with their concomitant reciprocal kinship obligations ; payment of dues to chiefs and council ; economic benefit and fame ; exchange gifts or *rawl han* at weddings ; and so on. For almost all these purposes only the *ful rawl* grains can serve and it is for this reason that the Chin sets so much greater store by them, and scorns the equally nutritious but less economically useful *thal* and subsidiary crops.

This great variance in economic and social value is the critical factor in Chin agricultural production, and it brings me to an examination of the general situation as it is at the moment, and of possible future developments.

The men of HMUNLI dance the **MUALKHUAR.** Their plumes are feathers of the hornbill and the white cocks, the tassels of their ceremonial swords red-dyed goat's hair.

*Present and future.*—The fact that the Chin expends most of his energy on his *ful* crops, because he uses them in all phases of his life, is one of the reasons why new crops suggested by officials and missionaries do not always catch on with the speed that the latter would like. Such crops are of secondary interest to the Chin if he cannot utilise them for one or other of the many purposes I have outlined above, and so he does not give the willing attention necessary for their successful cultivation.

Take for instance fruit trees—while any Chin is glad enough to have a tree or two to plant in his garden in the village or in his plots, it is very hard to persuade him to take the business seriously and to devote a plot or two to the cultivation of fruit alone. His whole social background revolves round the use of millet and maize, and he cannot yet conceive of a life in which these two important crops would be acquired in a round-about way by trade rather than by the direct method of cultivation. Thus although the growing of oranges has been found successful and one finds a few trees in almost all the villages at the right altitude, no one has planted an orchard of them, even though the current price of one rupee for thirty oranges would make it a very profitable enterprise compared to the cultivation of ordinary crops.

Again the varied social utility of cereals means that the result achieved does not always fit in with the intentions of the introducer of the new varieties. An example of this can be found in wheat, which was brought into the hills in the hope that the Chins would eat it and so derive benefit in nutritive value over the existing species. What actually has happened so far is that as much as possible is sold in the Falam bazaar, and the balance is brewed into beer, of which it gives an excellent quality. But wheat is a cold weather, or *thal* crop, and cultivation of it means the abandonment of the bean crop rotation, with probably deleterious results on the soil. Apart from this I shudder to think of the effect upon Chin sobriety of an all-the-year-round cultivation of beer-producing cereals.

Then there are the potentially dangerous effects on agriculture of the rapid disappearance of animism before the Pau Chin Hau cult and the Christian religion. One of the most unforeseen effects of conversion from animism was an immediate reduction of the water supplies in many villages. The villagers having lost their fear of the *ti huai*, or evil spirits of the springs, proceeded to cut down for firewood the large shady trees which animism had preserved over all their village springs. This is particularly noticeable at Lotsawm, where the well above the village almost dried up altogether when the trees were felled, and some houses have had to move.

Another danger from the same source is the possible derangement of the regional rotation system as a result of the removal of the supernatural *tabu* on isolated cultivations which animism enjoined. Though there is evidence that the Chins themselves are aware of this possibility, since at Lumbang and other *Pau Chin Hau* villages an invocation to the Christian

God for good crops has taken the place of the old *lopil nam* and *siapilnam* sacrifices, the situation will want very careful watching.

In general it must be conceded that guiding the agricultural development of a people like the Chins demands a thorough knowledge of aspects of their culture far removed from the sphere of pure agriculture. Crops can only be introduced successfully here if and when a local use has been found for them : new cold weather crops will have to be accompanied also by a new method of preserving the fertility of the soil to make up for the loss of the beans, which seem to have this effect : removal of supernatural restrictions and sanctions may necessitate substitution of executive orders to achieve the same beneficial results, and so on.

Again the agriculture of an agricultural people is obviously the foundation of their economic system, and the one cannot be touched without repercussions on the other. For instance any very large increase of permanent cash crop cultivation would have profound effects, through the reduction of the beer-producing grains, on the Feasts of Merit which form at the moment the sole avenue of social and economic advancement for the Chin, and a whole new theory of social prestige would have to be evolved to replace the one that had been destroyed.

Many efforts made at agricultural improvement in various parts of the Burma Hills have failed for a so-called " inexplicable " want of enthusiasm on the part of those being helped, but after what we have just read, can we still use the word inexplicable ? For here is one primitive people demonstrably hard-working and intelligent in its uses of the resources available, which takes a pride in extra good husbandry (as witnessed by the existence of the *faang za aih* group of harvest festivals)—yet efforts to make them take up profitable lines such as oranges have failed, as also have all attempts to improve non-indigenous varieties of livestock. These failures were due to quite straightforward causes, but our researches had not yet discovered them. The remedy to this state of affairs seems to lie in a wider and deeper knowledge of our primitive societies.

I do not suggest that knowledge of the danger of change need turn us into reactionaries—on the contrary I believe that by examining the dangers carefully one can actually accelerate change in beneficial directions, while at the same time evading many of the pitfalls into which administrations fall at the moment. Too often the multiple aspects of modern democratic government tend to cloud our minds to the essential integration of all spheres of primitive life, and so we are apt to think that agriculture is a matter to be dealt with solely by an Agricultural Department, and to ignore the other social effects, some of which are outlined above, and thus defeat our own efforts at ordered development.

## CHAPTER IV

## ANIMAL HUSBANDRY.

*Types of stock.*—To the Chin by far the most important of his domestic animals is the mithan (*bos frontalis*), and for this creature alone is a sacrifice and a *Zarh ul* or rest day held at birth, as in the case of humans. While a man may have numerous other kinds of live-stock, it is by the number of his mithan that his wealth will be judged, for the mithan is the supreme unit in the economic sphere, in the payment of tribute in pre-annexation days, and in the scale of sacrificial offerings. For the rest, pigs, dogs and goats are indigenous, while buffalo, ordinary cattle and ponies have been imported in small numbers from the plains. The traditional rules connected with breeding and use applicable to the indigenous stock are not applied to recently imported varieties, which in this respect are not yet fully assimilated into the local culture. Description of the latter is therefore relegated to the final paragraphs considering the changes of stock and stock-breeding customs arising out of that greater contact with the outer world which administration has brought.

There is considerable variation in the number of animals owned. An enquiry* made in the Zahau Chief's village of Klauhmun shows a maximum of 30 mithan, 30 cattle and 10 pigs owned by the Chief himself against a minimum in the same village of three house owners with no stock at all. There are only 36 mithan owners in 165 houses and of these only 8 persons own more than three ; two of these men, the Chief and Tsawn Zam, accounting for 30 and 14 respectively. These figures do not necessarily indicate the number of animals actually under the owner's care, as the peculiar local purchasing systems facilitate dispersion of herds and enable an owner to get someone else to look after one or more of his animals in return for a calf.

The average of mithan per house over the whole village is less than one (121/165), the number of pigs being nearly 2 per house (309/165). The 97 cattle are owned by only seven men, the Chief himself having 30 of them.

From general observation on tour in the villages I feel that the average percentage of mithan owners in other villages corresponds roughly to the Klauhmun figures. It is very rare to find men owning more than five such animals. The figures for pigs vary considerably from year to year according to the success of the beer producing cereals, which, after having been fermented for liquor, form the backbone of Chin pig food. Another factor affecting pig production through grain production in general is shortage or otherwise of land, but with few exceptions a landless man is a rarity.

* Made for me in September, 1938, by Mr. E. A. Johnson, Burma Frontier Service. 32 widows' houses are excluded.

*Breeding and standards of quality of indigenous stock.*—In their Gazetteer of the Chin Hills (Vol. I, page 180), Messrs. Carey & Tuck have described some Chin beliefs regarding the species and origin of mithan which are of interest. In the Falam subdivision I did not come across any cases of people running their herds of cattle in the haunts of bison in order to breed mithan. Indeed in this area the last of the wild bison were exterminated long ago, except for an occasional wanderer from the plains that finds its way on to the long ridge running from the Saungdawn Klang to the Letha Klang. All breeding that takes place nowadays is between " pure " mithan or mithan and cattle. Personally I would hesitate to say that mithan are necessarily derived from crosses between cattle and bison. They are common in the Nung Hills in the extreme north-east of Burma, to which cattle have only been introduced within living memory, and which are several days journey from the nearest haunts of the bison. Undoubtedly there is a strong similarity between mithan and bison, the frontal bone and the straight horn being about all there is to distinguish the former from his powerful jungle relative, while a certain neatness of action, a grace and power that one normally associates with wild creatures, seems to set him definitely apart from the clumsy domestic cattle. But it is doubtful whether these points can be held to prove that he is derived from bison blood.

Whatever the origin, the promiscuous breeding which the Chin permits among his herds of mithan and cattle results in a fairly large percentage of piebald and skewbald crosses, a very serious matter owing to the importance attached by the Chin to colouration in animals.

While the shape of the horns, the depth of chest, the bodily configuration, and the weight and general fitness of his animals are all the subject of comment, the main criterion by which the Chin judges the physical excellence of his stock is its freedom from any of the numerous blemishes which would debar it from the use as a sacrificial offering. As will be seen when I come to describe the laws regarding the killing and maiming of animals, these blemishes are important from many points of view, and are worth describing in full.

In mithan any of the following deformities and oddities are a bar to sacrifice :—white or grey patches on the body above the knees, excluding of course the natural grey colouration of the frontal bone and the forehead ; a blind, defective, or discoloured eye ; a broken horn or hoof or tooth ; whorls of hair on the head ; an ear of which part has been torn away (slits are not a blemish) ; a tail that has been docked ; and incurable sores. Any sore which is still open and raw, or a broken bone which has not yet set, is a temporary bar to sacrifice. These blemishes are only taken into account at ritual killings at which an invocation is made to the spirits, and there is no objection to animals so marked being used at the mortuary feasts of *ruak hnah* or *khan tseh*, at the *nulam* feasts, or for the feasting of distinguished village guests. Thus they are not socially useless, but simply less valuable.

A KHUANGTSAWI feast at ZULTU, a ZANNIAT village. Two mithan lie bound ready for sacrifice, while the women on the right help their men to beat the **KHUANG**, the large xylophone in the foreground.

In the case of pigs the only blemishes that can save them from immolation on the altars of the spirits are blind or otherwise non-normal eyes, and patches of white on the body or legs. In this connection there is an interesting example among the Tashon of the way in which the Chin sometimes attempts to deceive the very spirits from whom he hopes to derive benefits through sacrifice. The Tashon will often sacrifice a pig with a little white on the hind legs without fear of consequences, because when pigs are killed one of the assistants has to hold it down by the hind legs, thereby hiding any offending patch of white in that area, not only from human eyes, but also from the eyes of the spirit invoked.

No blemish of any kind will preserve a dog or goat from the privilege of sacrifice, any shape or colour being suitable. The reason for this freedom from restriction can perhaps be traced to the fact that neither dog nor goat is ever offered in any of the prosperity sacrifices, these two species being reserved for appeasement of essentially evil spirits such as those which cause death by violence or accident.

Though strict custom demands that in the case of fowls only red, black, and white birds can be utilised for sacrificial purposes, in actual practice one finds that any reddish bird is regarded as red, and so on, and only grossly variegated colouration is held in disfavour. As in the case of mithan, no attempt is made at selective breeding of pigs, goats, dogs or fowls.

In the way they breed their pigs the Chins are similar to many of the other races of Burma. All young boars are castrated between the ages of one and two months, generally at one month, the wound being dressed with mixed pig fat and ashes and the skin sewn together with cotton, and it is during the weeks preceding this operation that they are used for breeding purposes. To overcome the disparity in size between these minute creatures and the full-grown sows, the latter are tied by the legs and spread-eagled with their bellies to the ground. That pregnancy occurs at all is a marvel. When judging a breeding sow the Chin always looks for a hollow back and a low hung belly, quite rightly believing that such are the signs of great fertility. But he does not realise that these deformities are the result and not the cause of excessive fertility, and that they merely tell the tale of an unremitting succession of pregnancies

*Uses of stock.*—Imported cattle and ponies are sometimes used for transport and riding, but no animal traction is employed. In the case of the indigenous varieties of stock the major uses are for sacrifice to the spirits and for food, though pigs and fowls have their sanitary value in Chin villages where a latrine means simply a hole in the floor of the house. Except in the case of a few Christian villages, no cattle or goats are milked, the average animist Chin still regarding milk as unclean.

One occasionally comes across a dog with more than average intelligence in hunting, but I saw no specially trained hunting dogs in the central hills. Such of these animals as are used in beats rarely course the

animal they put up for long, and the only useful purpose they serve is to yelp with excitement and thus add to the general disturbance. Apart from their main value as sacrificial offerings, dogs are appreciated as guardians of the house, and as cleansers of the posteriors of their owner's babies during the suckling stage. I became aware of this last and most curious use of dogs through the difference in the call used to bring a dog for his real food and the one to fetch it to clean up the baby's excreta, for which the cry of " Tseh ! tseh ! " is raised.

In view of the number of animals killed every year, there is a very large economic wastage of hides, the local people ignoring this potential source of considerable wealth. The skin of pigs is always divided up with the meat and eaten as crackling, and so is the hide of mithan killed for sacrifices with which an invocation is recited. Only in the case of animals killed in mortuary ceremonies or which die through accident is the hide removed and sun dried for use as a sleeping mat. It will be interesting to see whether conversion to the Pauchinhau cult, which retains the sacrifices but enjoins invocations to God instead of the spirits, will make possible the introduction of a trade in rawhide.

For sacrifice the drain on live-stock is heavy, but the effect is beneficial, as I will show when discussing herding difficulties. Among the Shimhrin ten pigs are killed to every mithan, on an average, but the relative figures are vastly different among the Zanniat and other democratic tribes, in whose Feasts of Merit as many as seventy pigs may be killed. As I have already shown in articles dealing with Chin Religion, so far as religious sacrifices are concerned, fowls and pigs are the victims for most of the personal and household sacrifices, while pigs and mithan figure generally as communal offerings.

Entertainment of village guests (*khual dar*) disposes of a considerable number of pigs in every village, but only chiefs or very wealthy men can afford to offer more than chicken flesh to their private guests, and in the main these have to be satisfied with the broaching of a pot of *zu* in their honour.

Nowadays there is a small trade in fowls between the Lushai villages over the Assam border and Falam, but apart from this, buying and selling for cash of indigenous stock is rare.

*Methods of acquiring live-stock.*—The somewhat complicated but nevertheless very useful systems of acquiring stock in this area are said to owe their origin to a belief that it is desirable to possess animals born under one's own roof. But there are other and more practical aspects—these systems enable a man with many animals to release himself of the responsibility of looking after some, (this being particularly important in the case of the troublesome mithan) and give a poor man a chance to convert time and effort into mithan " capital." However, it is safe to say that though a village council will purchase them for communal purposes, no individual will buy an adult mithan outright unless an urgent

crisis demands it. Not only are crises demanding sacrifice of a mithan with an invocation to the spirits extremely rare, but there is also a recognised borrowing system (*siakhuk tsawi*) and so the occasions on which mithan change owners for cash after birth are few and far between. In practice even the sudden death of a rich man, for whom mithan would be slaughtered at the mortuary ceremonies, rarely results in the cash purchase of mithan for the simple reason that, being rich, the dead man would probably possess several. The shooting of one of the *sahrang* big game animals by a relatively poor man is a typical occasion on which a mithan could with propriety be bought for killing at the *aih* in celebration. Again soldiers returning from Army service with pockets full of cash buy animals for feasts.

The same belief about birth applies to the acquisition of pigs, but with less force since the occasions on which they are offered to the spirits are not so important as mithan sacrifices, while they are used much more frequently for purposes of hospitality. Its influence can be found also in the custom whereby the owner of any animal or fowl which gives birth to or hatches young under the eaves of another person's house, must hand over one of the litter or brood to the owner of that house.

Faced with these considerations, the Zahau has evolved several ingenious methods of purchasing yet unborn generations of young animals, the mothers of which he feeds and tends at his own house, during the period of gestation. In the case of mithan the three methods are called *Sia su lei* (Mithan vagina buy), *Sia khalh hlawh*, and *Zaang khalh*, and they vary only in the number of calves born under the agreement before the " purchaser " gets the one due to him. For pigs, goats and dogs the system is called *vulh hlawh*. Almost similar systems exist among all the tribes in the area, the most important variation in practice being the period after birth of the calf which is recognised as the limit of time within which death, if it occurs, would be considered as *asung lut kirh* (re-entering of the womb), so that the dead calf would not affect the contract.

Of the mithan-purchase systems the *siakhalh hlawh* is the most commonly used, after which *sia su lei*, the most expensive form, takes precedence over *zaang khalh*, which is apt to drag on until the cow mithan dies and the purchaser never gets his unborn calf. The purchase prices paid under these systems were much below the traditional level at the time I made my enquiries, which was just after the depression in 1935-36. The cost of a *sia su lei* calf was only ten rupees plus one rupee for each month of pregnancy of the cow mithan at the time the agreement was concluded, and that of *siakhalh hlawh* calves only Rs. 3.

*Sia su lei*. This system is common to all tribes, and is known by the following names :—To the Zahau, Hualngo, Khuangli and Tashon as *sia su lei ;* to the Laizo as *sia sung lei ;* to the Zanniat, Sipawng and Tapawng as *sel su lei ;* to the Khualshim as *sia sung dawm :* and to the Lente as *sia zuat hlawh*. Among the Zahau the pre-depression payment under this system was fifteen rupees *plus* one rupee per month for every

month of pregnancy, usually about five, at the time of purchase. In general the purchaser takes over the mithan cow when five months pregnant, as this is the earliest stage at which pregnancy can be accurately diagnosed. Having taken over the animal he keeps it until the calf is old enough to be weaned, and during this period accepts all the responsibilities of the actual owner.

At the birth of the calf the purchaser carries out the traditional small ritual asking the protection of the spirits for it. If all goes well, at the time of weaning he will send for the owner of the mithan cow, and hand him back his animal after the ceremonial broaching of the *sia tsi zu* (Mithan seed *zu*) of which there must be at least two pots.

It is only when things go wrong that complicated issues arise, of which the most important is whether or not a dead calf is to be considered as *asung lut kirh*. If so the birth of the calf is treated as if it had never occurred, and the purchaser keeps the cow until the next calf is born. The following are the periods within which death of a calf is reckoned as *asung lut kirh*, in all cases the time being taken from the day of birth — Zahau—7 days : Khuangli—8 days : Lunghrawh—5, 10 or 15 days according to the contract : Lente—5 months : Bualkhua—6 months for a heifer calf—and 7 months for a bull calf : Tashon, Zanniat, Khualshim —8 months.

Should the cow mithan die before the purchased calf is born, the purchaser is entitled to dispose of the flesh to his own profit, the owner having no claim at all.

*Sia khalh hlawh*. This, the most favoured system, is similar in principle to the *sia su lei*, but the purchaser has to look after the cow mithan for several seasons and instead of getting the first calf born, he gets the third. The purchase price is considerably lower, being only five rupees among the Zahau. When the subject of the agreement is a mithan heifer the purchaser gets the second instead of the third calf, because he has to run the risk of the animal being sterile. The rules regarding *asung lut kirh* are the same as for *sia su lei*, but if the cow mithan dies the purchaser gets only a part, (which varies from tribe to tribe) and not all the flesh.

*Zaang khalh*. This is the very poor man's method. No purchase price is payable, a calf (the 3rd of a mithan heifer or 4th of a mithan cow) being given in exchange for looking after the cow until the calf which is the subject of agreement is born. In this case the rules of *asung lut kirh* follow those of the *sia su lei* system, but the division of flesh of cows which die before agreement is completed follows, as a rule, that for *sia khalh hlawh*.

*Sia khuk tsawi*. This means to " borrow " mithan, and animals are taken on these terms in almost all cases when a man has to find a mithan quickly, in preference to an outright cash purchase. In making repayment for them consideration is given not only to the increase in size of the

animal which would have occurred during the period that elapses between the date of borrowing and the date of payment, but also, if it is a cow, to the number of calves that would have been born to it during this period. Thus if a man borrowed a yearling bull mithan and could not make repayment for three years, he would have to hand over a four year old bull—if he borrowed a yearling heifer and could not repay it for six years, he would have to return a seven year old cow and four young mithan ranging one to four years.

Minor variations in prices paid under these systems occur throughout the subdivision, but no useful purpose would be served by noting them all here. They are subject to sudden changes when famine or plenty, or outside economic influences cause fluctuations in commodity prices.

It is interesting to note that the people in this area have not applied any of these systems, except the *sia khuk tsawi*, to the purchase of buffaloes, domestic cattle or ponies, all of which comparatively recent importations do not figure in the ritual sacrifices for which invocations are made to the spirits. One wonders if the future will see the application of the old purchase systems to the new animals, or whether the many assaults on the crumbling citadel of animist custom will result in the new system of outright purchase being applied to the old indigenous species of stock, as has happened in some of the Zanniat villages converted to the *Pau Chin Hau cult.*

*Vulh hlawh.* This, as I have noted, applies to pigs, goats, dogs and even chickens. When anyone wants to start raising a stock of any of the above species, he will apply to the owner of a sow, nanny-goat, bitch or hen, as the case may be, and ask to be allowed to look after the animal or fowl for the period of gestation or sitting, during which he will feed and tend it, and accept all the responsibilities of ownership. In return he receives half the litter or brood, the fate of odd numbers generally being settled by prior agreement. Here again one finds allowance being made where the subject of the agreement is a female of unproved fecundity, the person caring for the creature getting all the first litter in such cases. Among the Zanniat a sliding scale is fixed as follows for recompensing the care-taker : in the case of a young sow not yet pregnant when handed over, all the litter : in the case of young sow which is pregnant at the time of handing over but has not previously farrowed, all except one of the litter : in the case of a farrowed sow, pregnant or otherwise when handed over, all except two of the litter. The single exception to this rule of protection against possible sterility occurs in the case of goats : it is felt that as these animals attend to their own feeding and therefore require less trouble to look after, no such allowance need be made.

Under the *vulh hlawh* rules no purchase price is payable, but if the female taken over dies before dropping its young, the care-taker suffers a total loss as all the flesh must be handed over to the owner.

*Hnar seu.* Though this is not a system whereby a man can start raising a herd of his own, it represents one common way of looking after pigs, and therefore some mention must be made of it here. *Hnar seu* applies only to castrated male pigs and it is a partnership in fattening and sale. A poor man will look after and fatten such pigs on behalf of the owner until they have attained a given size or age, when they will be sold. The fattener takes half what is left of the sale price after the value of the pigs at the date of handing over is deducted. Should the pigs die before they are sold, each of the parties concerned receives half the flesh.

One of the most important points about all the systems I have outlined is that the person taking over charge of animals assumes all the responsibilities of ownership, and all the claims against such animals, whether for damage to crops or gardens, attacks upon men or other animals, etc., lie against the caretaker and not the owner.

To appreciate the significance of the rules which the Zahau have made to control the keeping of domestic animals, one must reconsider shortly some of the main points connected with agriculture. I have noted that the village lands are, for purposes of agriculture, divided up into fields, the boundaries of which, though they follow natural features such as streams and ridges, are not always fenced ; and that the boundaries of the plots within these fields are rarely if ever protected by more than a line of small stones or a thin hedge. I have also noted that these fields are cultivated in a set sequence, and that one field is always reserved in the same sequence for the purpose of grazing of cattle ; and is during this period called the *sia pil,* or mithan field. In discussing the uses to which agricultural products are put I stressed the importance of the staple *ful* and *thal* crops, particularly the former, and showed that these are always grown in the field plots, and rarely in the village gardens.

It follows therefore that organised herding is necessary to protect the unfenced cultivated fields and to keep the animals in the field allotted for them, and that less notice is taken of damage in the village gardens, where only subsidiary crops are grown, than of damage in the fields. As a result the rules in respect of mithan, which graze far and wide, are more complicated than those applicable to pigs and goats, which stay within the precincts of the village clearing.

For convenience sake the customs in respect of the lesser animals are given before dealing with the large task of explaining those applicable to mithan.

*Pigs, goats, dogs, fowls.*—Goats look after their own nourishment, while dogs and fowls get the scraps of the household meals. Pigs are generally fed on chopped wild plantain stalks and the grain from which *zu* has been brewed. Indeed the only occasion on which a pig gets a real filling is when a belated sense of sympathy prompts his owner to give him a square meal on the eve of his demise.

All these creatures are scavengers and roam loose in the village, and the Chin accepts the fact that his garden will suffer from their depredations. Theoretically the responsibility for preventing damage rests on the gardener, who may throw sticks and stones at trespassing animals and even kill or maim them without penalty. In practice such drastic action is rarely taken; a particularly annoying animal will be kept in check by its owner, to whom a complaint would always be made before serious punitive action was taken against the animal itself. During the time I lived in the Falam subdivision I heard of only three instances of the killing of trespassing pigs. A not uncommon sight is a thieving dog with a wooden yoke round its neck which prevents it creeping in through holes and corners in the neighbours' houses.

*Mithan.*—The natural habits of this species have a deep bearing on the methods of herding, and indeed, on the whole problem of economic utilisation of live-stock. Because they tend to be solitary rather than gregarious, more herd boys are required than for ordinary cattle. They move while feeding, sometimes covering several miles a day, instead of being content, like cattle, to graze in a comparatively small area. Because they feed as much on the leaves of shrubs and trees as on grass, they are much more difficult to herd, since they spend as much time in the scrub jungle as they do in the open grassy spaces that exist. But this habit of feeding on leaves has one prime virtue : while it increases the difficulties of herding, it obviates the necessity of encouraging the growth of grazing grasses to the detriment of agriculture, and sets the mithan in a class apart from other domestic animals. In the aggregate these peculiarities merely add to the incentives to feast-giving, for the maintenance of a large herd of mithan presents so many petty annoyances to the Chin owner that he will always give a feast and bring his stock down to reasonable limits.

The average man rarely keeps more than three mithan, a mother and her two calves.

Among the Zahau, whose custom in this respect is followed by most of the tribes in the autocratic group, the mithan owners of the village form a ring, one or more in turn supplying boys to herd the village mithan for one or more days in rotation. In other tribes each individual owner makes his own arrangements. There is a distinct correlation between these herding customs and the systems of assessing compensation for damage to crops. In the autocratic group where " rings " exist, the unit for purposes of compensation is the mithan owner, whereas in the democratic group the unit is the individual animal, except in the case of a cow with a calf of less than a year (*nufa*) which count as one unit. In other words, if thirty mithan owned by ten men from a Zahau village damage crops in the fields, compensation will be assessed on ten owners, while in a Zanniat village the compensation would be calculated on thirty animals.

Mithan found wandering are impounded and the owner charged As. 2 per day for maintenance ; if unclaimed they are used for village communal purposes. Knowledge of the herding system is also relevant in settling suits for " emigration costs." For the money due from a migrant who leaves his live-stock behind till he settles himself down in his new village (a common practice) would depend entirely on the system in vogue in the former place. If a ring existed he would only have to pay for herd boys on the day on which his " number " fell due in the rotation within the ring, whereas in villages where individual owners make their own arrangements he would have to pay for the retention of a permanent herd-boy.

Though shy with strangers, particularly Europeans, most mithan are gentle enough with their Chin owners, who habitually give them salt to lick to keep them tame and docile. Of course occasional savage animals do exist. The Zanniat believe that throwing a woman's skirt over the head of such a creature will shame it into feminine subservience. Every night the village herds are driven home and safely penned in the enclosures beneath the houses,* where they remain until after the villagers have eaten their breakfasts and gone to their fields the following day. They are then loosed and driven into the jungle. The time of their leaving the village has a special place in Chin chronology, being called *sia suak sang.*

When a new field is opened for cultivation, the next due for cultivation is set aside as the *sia pil,* and the sacrifice of *sia pil nam* is performed to protect the animals about to be grazed in it. For this the offering varies according to the potency of the guardian spirit of the field in question, a pig or a mithan being killed, and the spirit is invoked to guard the animals from disease, and particularly from the regrettably common fate of a fall down one of the innumerable precipices in the hills. The practical significance of this sacrifice will be studied under " Land Tenure."

*Sia lo fang* or *Damage to crops.*—As may be imagined, there is practically nothing which so infuriates the Chin farmer as having his crops eaten by someone else's animals. The bitterness tends to be the greatest in the villages with the strongest democratic tradition. While amicable settlement along traditional lines is the usual end to all such disputes on the west of the Manipur River, the Zanniat villages in the neighbourhood of Hmunli and Zultu developed so pernicious a habit of resorting to the spearing and hacking of trespassing mithan that I had to pass a local order raising the compensation for this offence to a flat rate of one hundred rupees.

As a rule violence is entirely uncalled for, and it has been my experience that no Chin will deny any persistent accusation that his

* Except in Hualngo villages where they are often kept under the *Zawlbuk* or youth's house.

mithan or cattle have been damaging crops unless the complainants are of a different tribe. Then other considerations, political and social, are apt to give rise to chicanery. This is particularly the case when Chins of the Tiddim subdivision, who are locally notorious for their meanness, are parties to a dispute of this nature.

One of the main criteria in deciding the amount payable for damage to crops is the estimated time the mithan have spent in them. In the Zahau area this is reckoned in units, of which there are two, *leh lang*, meaning a day or part of a day, and *zan riah hnawh* meaning a day and a night. Offences in the latter time category are rare because mithan are usually penned in the owner's house at night. But occasionally a man may be ill, or building a new house, or something happen of a nature that will prevent him from carrying out his duties to his stock, and they spend a night in the open.

On discovery of damage, the cultivators will try to find out from an examination of the tracks the number of the offending animals, and the direction in which they came and went. They are usually successful in establishing contact with the trespassing herd, and the next step is a visit to the headmen of the village in which the owner lives. If a *prima facie* case exits, the headmen will at once fine the offender in *zu*, exacting an eight anna pot of *zu* if the animals spent only a day (*leh lang*) in the crops and a two rupee pot for *zan riah hnawh*. If more than one owner's animals are involved, each is fined as above. One gets an interesting sidelight on Chin jurisprudence in these cases, for provided the offenders pay up at once without argument, the *zu* is drunk at their own headman's house, and they can share in the quaffing of it with the now mollified complainant. There is therefore a strong incentive to honesty on the part of mithan owners and diligent execution of his duties on the part of the headman. If arguments arise and the mithan owners cannot prove their innocence but yet refuse to pay, the complainant is entitled to seize any article of their's which he likes, and to retain it until such time as the offenders bring the fine in *zu* to him, and it is then drunk in *his* headman's house instead, and they get a very small share.

In all cases where the trespassing animals are so numerous that they cannot be counted or identified, all the owners of the village to which they are traced are liable to a fine in *zu*.

Among the Zanniat, Sipawng and Tapawng, where it is common to fence the boundary between the *sia pil* and the *lo pil*, a fine of one packet of salt or two rupees is exacted for every animal found damaging crops, a cow and its calf (*nufa*) being considered one unit for this purpose. In fact, throughout the subdivision there is a general convention that where cultivation is unfenced trespass by animals is punishable only by a fine in *zu*, whereas in cases where communal fences have been erected, a stiffer fine is leviable. In no case in this area except in the three Tashon villages is the fine assessed traditionally commensurate to the amount

of damage done, though I have come across isolated cases in all tribes where total destruction of a man's crops has led to enforced payment of compensation in grain.

*Injury to or by animals.*—Throughout the subdivision the death of a human being resulting from an attack by a mithan must always be atoned by the slaughter as *ruah hnak* of the offending animal, and giving of a *puan fun* blanket to cover the corpse of the deceased. This punishment serves two useful purposes—it rids the locality of a dangerous animal, and gives the deceased the highest honours at his *ruah hnak* mortuary feast.

Fighting between mithan during the rutting season is not uncommon, and if any bull is killed no compensation is payable except among the Bualkhua and Lunghrawh, where the owner of the killer must give his animal in exchange, though he is entitled to take away the carcase of the dead one and use it to his own profit.

Malicious injury deliberately inflicted by humans on any category of animal is not regarded as serious unless it results in death or one of the blemishes which are a bar to sacrifice : if either of these two disasters occurs, the offending person must give a similar perfect animal in exchange and take the carcase of the dead or the deformed and blemished body of the living animal for himself, as the case may be. Incidents of this kind generally arise out of the mischief of children stoning dogs, pigs, and such small animals, but occasionally a mithan found eating a valuable cloth (a goat-like habit common to this species, which cannot resist anything having the salty tang of sweat upon it) or habitually breaking into crops, is stoned and beaten or speared. Accidentally causing the death of a mithan is punished by an award of compensation of half the value of the living animal.

As a matter of fact the mithan's habit of eating or drinking anything salty is a fruitful source of trouble, because they continually break into fenced areas in which saltpetre is being boiled, and poison themselves by drinking the brew. The local attitude towards accidents of this nature varies; the Khualshim hold that the owner is alone responsible for the safety of his animals, whereas other tribes insist on the saltpetre manufacturer enclosing his plant in a fence strong enough to resist all intruders.

*Changes due to administration and the contact of foreign culture.*—It is on record on page 180 of Carey and Tuck's Gazetteer that at the time of the annexation definite indigenous types of goats, dogs and fowls were distinguishable, the first named being a long-haired variety which is excellently illustrated in one of the editions of the Gazetteer. Nowadays one sees only short-haired Indian goats. The sole local evidence of the original species, seen and photographed by the men of the first columns, are the *sawn* plumes and the red-dyed goats hair tassels on the hafts of *kingkawt* swords and on the brass discs that decorate the old-fashioned mithan-hide shields.

As for dogs, fifty years of administration by a long succession of peripatetic officials with Fox Terriers, Bull Terriers, Cockers, Springers, Clumbers, Curly, Flatcoat and Labrador retrievers, Salukis, Mastiffs and numerous other breeds have successfully obliterated the last traces of any indigenous species that may have existed, and the bewildering permutations and combinations of the canine species in this area have to be seen to be believed.

Of all the introductions arising out of administration which affect stock-raising and agriculture, by far the most dangerous is the *gwala* (dairy-man) settlement. These ubiquitous pests have followed in the footsteps of the British throughout the whole of Burma, and, judging by the many references to their misdemeanours in the series of books on the Nagas, throughout the hill areas of Assam as well. Would that we could say like Mills in writing of the *gwalas* settled in Rengma Naga territory, that they are " now happily expelled " (Rengma Nagas, p. 20).

These *gwalas* are pastoral people, their principal diet being milk and *ghi* : though they cultivate small gardens in the neighbourhood of their villages, their interest in agriculture is slight. They are Hindus, and therefore cannot even keep down their stocks to reasonable limits by killing and eating. To encourage the growth of grass for their cattle they burn the jungle every year with even greater thoroughness than the Manipur River valley tribes, and their ever increasing herds rapidly reduce the countryside to a bare ruin of eroded desolation.

Because they do not know anything of selective breeding, the large herds of cattle kept nowadays by the *gwalas* living in Burma can barely be classed as a milk producing strain at all, so meagre a quantity do they give. Nor are they of any use for draught or transport because they are too small and weak. Indeed it is the continual crossing with this breed throughout Burma that is ruining the excellent Burmese plough strains.

In other words, the problem of *gwala* cattle in the hills has all the usual difficulties found where pastoral and agricultural people live cheek by jowl, accentuated by the fact that Chin agriculture is almost entirely unfenced. The result is a continual stream of actions in court for damage to crops, with the attendant friction in both communities. Unlike the Chins, the *gwala* settler hotly contests all claims arising out of damage caused by his herds, and demands all sorts of impossible and ridiculous proofs of identity of each individual animal accused, as if it were indeed a bovine custom to go and feed in cultivated crops under the very nose of the irate farmer ! The existence of these settlers, from whom at the moment only the Chief gets a profit in the form of an annual rent, renders nugatory many of the traditional claims* to the land of the residents of local villages, which I shall describe under " Land Tenure."

* Footnote. (See also Native Policies in Africa by L. P. Mair, page 163.)

Already the *gwala* cattle have intruded into the domain of Chin religious custom owing to periodic efforts made by the local officers to keep the herds at a fairly reasonable level by enforcing the sale of any found in excess of sanctioned numbers. There being no one else to sell to but Chins, the *gwalas* had to put their prices down to a level which made the cow a practical proposition for killing at the mortuary ceremonies of *ruah hnak* and *khan tseh*, (when no invocation is made to the spirits) in lieu of the less meaty pig. No rich man would dream of permitting the substitution of a cow for a mithan at his burial, but beggars cannot be choosers, and the poor prefer cattle to the traditional pig since the cost per pound weight is about 75% less. There is also the fact that in this way one more pig is saved for ritual occasions when nothing else will serve. This is an excellent example of the exercise of rational economic choice by the primitive.

Luckily the replacement of Indians by Chins in the Chin Hills Battalion of the Frontier Force has reduced the numbers of goats kept, since these omnivorous and destructive feeders are hardly ever eaten by the local people, most of whom regard the flesh as nauseating. The very small numbers to be found in the villages are kept down by sacrifice, and there is no incentive nowadays to rear large numbers for immolation on the altars of the Gurkha deities. For the lighter side of local stock improvement one must turn to pigs. One of the only two blemishes which bar a pig from sacrifice is white colouration on the body. But this fact was not known to a kindly official who put himself to great expense importing English pigs to the Hills. When my chiefs and elders first heard of the importation they were very pleased, but when they saw the pigs themselves—crossbred Berkshires with large and conspicuous patches of white all over them—they lost interest at once. It is possible that the Pauchinhau cult will soon spread sufficiently in the neighbourhood of Falam to make it possible for the officer mentioned to achieve his dream of revolutionising bacon production in the hills. For his sake I hope so.

The apathy which the elders showed in this connection is characteristic also of their attitude towards any attempt to improve breeds which are not yet wholly assimilated into their culture, such as ponies and domestic cattle. The Frontier Force have in their day brought up prize stallions and bulls for this purpose, but there were few mares and cows brought to stud. The case of the bull was easy to understand because he was so tall and vast that most of the wretched little stunted cattle to whom he was presented fled headlong into the jungle in terror, leaving him to pine of unrequited passion. Even teachers and Christians who had learned to milk cattle could not get their animals served. But in the stallion's case it was pure disinterest. Very few Chins in the Falam subdivision possess ponies, and fewer still can ride with any sense of security. As a result they are not keen to produce a stronger and more fierily intractable breed.

In these examples of the effects of contact with foreign cultures we see the process of selective assimilation clearly working. The good pigs rejected because their colour would not fit into the local religious scheme ; the Indian cattle utilised for mortuary ceremonies because there was a practical gain to be made without any corresponding *tabu* having to be broken ; and so on.

Local religious ideology is still the prime factor conditioning local values in live-stock. Whereas it is possible to divide up the carcases of cattle or buffalo so that no breach occurs in the institutionalised systems of meat distribution*, the spirits have not yet signified their willingness to accept piebald pigs and skewbald mithan or cattle, and until that day comes, or the spirits are themselves deserted, Chin stock breeding will remain very much as it is today.

Much time and energy, not to say expense, will therefore be saved if those in charge of our more primitive tribes will set any ideas they may have on improvements in stockbreeding against the background of local custom, so that they can be seen in their true local perspective.

* See Chapter X.

## CHAPTER V.

## HUNTING AND FISHING

*Ideology.* To appreciate to the full the significance of hunting in Chin eyes, one must turn to his religious beliefs. In Chapter XII these are outlined, and here it will be sufficient to stress the fact that one of the pre-requisites of entry into Heaven is the holding of a certain number of Feasts of Celebration of Hunting successes. Without these beliefs the Chin's keenness on hunting would be very much less, and his expenditure on Feasts of Celebration would diminish enormously.

But in addition to this aspect of the ideology of the chase, there are obvious other reasons for the Chin's love of it. This is aptly illustrated from one of his proverbs—" To a man : war ; the hunt ; and the feast—to a woman ; work in the house and the fields." Especially in these days when head-hunting is gone does the chase provide the youth of the villages with an opportunity of proving their skill and courage, and there is always a keen demand for the loan of one of the village guns.

Quite apart from the religious aspect of the Feasts of Celebration, there is the very much sought after social position and economic advantage to be gained by the giving of these *sa aih.* With each one held, the holder rises in rank in the hunting clique till he becomes *Lungpi* or Mightiest Hunter and receives greater shares of the meat of subsequent kills by others in the village, and an ever-improving quality of beer at the *sa aih* feasts which he later attends as a guest. However, a description of these feasts and their economic implications will come in Chapter X.

The Chin divides the animals in his jungles into five main categories : the large carnivore (*pawpi* and *klavang*) big game animals (*sa hrang*) small game animals (*sa ngai*) : ill-omened animals (*sa huai*) and the small creatures, reptiles and birds (*hriva*). The nature of the return from the hunt, the splendour or moderation of the Feast of Celebration, and the type of purificatory ritual performed after a hunt all depend on which category of animal is killed. In addition to animals, there are certain species of snake, bird and bee, the collection of which is essential to entry into Paradise, and for whose demise an *aih* is held.

*Sa hrang.* In this category are included elephant, bison, *saing,* wild boar, and bear. Though the Gazetteer recorded a plenitude of all varieties, nowadays one finds only bear and pig in the hills proper. The others can be found in the foothills close to the plains and in the plains forest reserves, in which all Chins who can afford it try to get licenses to shoot. As soon as the death of a *sa hrang* is definitely established, the lucky hunter will start to sing the *khuate hla* or Song of Triumph, to apprise the world in general and his villagers in particular of his success. This is taken up by his fellows and the return to the village becomes a Roman

Victory March. The song is not sung for a tiger, which is believed to be a totem spirit (certain Sunkhla families claim descent from the Tiger and refer to it as *Ka pu*—my grandfather) and advertising its death might bring its relatives to exact revenge. Before he may again eat food, the successful killer of a *sa hrang* must perform the *thuai siah arr thah* ritual to protect himself from evil consequences. It is significant of the debased values of to-day that killers of mountain goats are also laying claim to the *sa hrang* rites in some villages.

*Sa ngai.* These are the lesser creatures—the sambhar, barking deer, serow, gural, etc., for which a *sa ngai aih* is held. They do not have the same honour accorded to them as their large jungle brothers, and in fact by custom an *aih* need only be given for the first of each animal of this category killed by any man. Usually, however, a decent desire to reward the beaters who helped him prompts most men to give at least a small celebration for every *sa ngai* he gets.

*Sa huai.* These are the bad animals. They include those always regarded as of a bad genus, and those of a good genus rendered individually bad by deformity or oddness. Some are held in very great fear and distaste; others are thought only mildly dangerous. It is interesting to note that the danger, except in the case of the loris, consists only in actually killing a *sa huai,* and no further harm comes from eating its flesh or hanging its skull up in the house. The loris, called *ni iang* (Hater of the Sun) is in a class by itself, and no Zahau will even look at one, let alone kill it. It brings the most grievous ill luck and is shunned completely. Its dislike of the sun is traced to its traditional friendship with the worm—the latter come on to the paths in thousands on frosty mornings, and are killed by the sun as it rises. Incidentally, the silence of the gibbons during the period of dark between an old and a new moon is also attributed to the loris, to whom the gibbons have to give the monthly tribute of a life at this period. They try to dodge this distressing obligation by observing strict and secretive silence, so that the loris shall not find them.

Of the other *sa huai,* the undernoted are the most unlucky. I give them in order of demerit.

*Tsaw vel.* This refers to sambhar and barking deer which grow very large in body but retain only small spiky horns about two inches in length, this deformity usually being accompanied by a mane of hair which may grow up to six inches in length. A death in the family of the shooter is believed certain if a *tsaw vel* is killed.

*Khlai khlawh.* This refers to animals with "crumpled horns." If one horn grows up and one down, as is common with buffalo and cattle, they are *khlai khlawh.* It is the next most lethal type of *sa huai.*

*Thau suak.* This refers to animals with hollow horns, tusks, or tushes. *Makna* or single tusked elephants are also *sa huai.*

In addition to the above, albino animals are *sa huai*, while it is also very unlucky if a horn or a tusk break off a wounded animal or if it should fall dead facing the way it had come.

*Hri va* : These include all the lesser creatures, none of which come amiss to the omnivorous Chin. Small things like mice, lizards and birds receive scant attention, but some *hri va* are held worthy of a Feast of Celebration. Although a feast is given whenever porcupines, monkeys, or large snakes are killed, the really important ones from a religious point of view are those at the taking of the *ruulngaan* snake, the *muvanlai* eagle, the *khuai ngal* hornet's nest, and the *khlia hniarr* or Paradise Flycatcher.

This concludes the short list of socially important wild animals and birds; for the rest of this section I will deal with the technique of hunting and fishing, and round the subject off with a note on the legal aspect and the general effect on agriculture and land tenure.

*Technique of hunting.* The central Chin tribes have only three methods of hunting—beating the jungle : still-hunting : and trapping. Though all three are popular, beating offers the greatest enjoyment to the greatest number, and is always resorted to when the season and the agricultural lulls permit.

*Beats for game.* These are usually arranged by the village hunting " elders." It is an interesting fact, which will be discussed again under Land Tenure, that there is no restriction whatever regarding the site of beats, even village boundaries having no effect. It is not uncommon in the dry season to see parties of twenty or so hunters off to have a week's *shikar* in jungles perhaps fifty miles from their homes. The extreme eastern and western strips of the hills, where the jungle is thick and the game relatively plentiful, are favourite haunts for expeditions of this kind. Noted *shikaris* and men with guns in local villages are almost always invited to join in when the actual beating starts, which reduces the chances of there being any complaints against poaching their coverts.

A small divination ceremony called *ram tawi arr thah* (Lit. : jungle beat fowl kill) is always held before any important beat. The organiser, who is usually the most experienced hunter in the village, will seize a fowl and keep it in a basket for sacrifice to the spirits of the locality in which the beat is to take place. It is killed as soon as the site is reached, and omens are taken from its nervous reactions on death. If the carcase lies motionless (most unusual in a hill chicken) it is bad, but if the head curls back two or three times there will be great rejoicing.

For a beat in a thickly populated area the party will usually include all the guns in the surrounding villages, and beaters from the actual area to be beaten, these men obviously being more familiar with local game tracks and runs than strangers. Most of the best beats in these hills are widely known, the really famous, such as the dense swamp grass

triangle in the Thio Valley below Pualbuk, being visited at a regular time each year, people from several days march around coming to join the fun. Dogs often accompany the beaters, and some are quite useful in starting game, but trained hunting dogs are non-existent.

The weapons used by the " guns " do sometimes include the old-fashioned bow and arrow, but in general they are flint-lock and cap guns of ancient British and French manufacture, with a sprinkling of breech-loading guns in the hands of headmen and retired government officials.

Hunting accidents are regrettably common. The dry open jungle forces game leaving the thickets to come out at a gallop, followed till it drops by a hail of miscellaneous bits of lead and stone from the guns, arrows from the bows, and even a spear or two. As the terrain is generally such that a straight line of guns and beaters is impossible to achieve, one or other group very often gets " browned " during the fusillade.

Though I have heard of occasions when tigers have been " ringed " and killed in these hills, the Chins rarely beat for carnivore, preferring to sit up over a kill or to trap them. At the same time they never hesitate to shoot at anything they see in the course of an ordinary beat, and show great courage in tackling dangerous animals which attack their companions. The present Headman of Duhmang is a witness to this. He was attacked by a wounded leopard in a beat and had his arm very badly mauled. He was saved by his brother, who gamely speared the infuriated animal to death while it was savaging the Headman.

Wild pig and bear are regarded as the easiest creatures to beat, as they usually run along well known tracks to escape, while sambhar and barking deer are held the most wily. These latter rarely come out where expected, and have an annoying habit of doubling back through the beaters. This seems to be especially the habit of animals living close to villages; indeed the best sambhar I ever shot in the hills made a gift of its head for that very reason. I was " walking " a disputed boundary with a large crowd of about seventy villagers trailing behind me, when just over a small hillock we came upon this magnificent stag standing staring at us at a distance of about thirty yards. As I hurriedly put a ball cartridge into my twenty-bore he apparently made up his mind we were a line of beaters trying to put him down to the guns, and came towards us at a trot, passing through the line about five yards away from me.

The only reason for which a beat will be abandoned half-finished is injury to a man, either from attack by an animal or, more frequently, when he is shot by one of his fellows. Usually things come to a happier conclusion, and the party returns rejoicing. This is especially the case when a *sa hrang* is included among the victims, as it means the holding of a mithan *sa aih* and extra 'lashings' of beer for all concerned. On such occasions guns will be fired off on the way back to the lucky man's village,

and the womenfolk, guessing the reason, will run out with pots of foaming *zu* to meet the returning party at the nearest *hnar* (resting-place) above the village.

*Still-hunting.* This is a favourite pastime with young men who can borrow guns during times in the year when there is no beating in progress. Boys start their training in this type of hunting by stalking every furred and feathered creature that comes within striking distance of their pellet bows. The youths sit with guns or bows and arrows in glades or near game tracks or salt licks, and wait for something to appear. Those who know their country well will often stalk game in its known haunts, the pinnacle of achievement in this field being the classic spearing of a wild boar in its lie-up.

*Trapping.* As in all other forms of hunting, a man is not bound down to his own village terrain in trapping, but in actual practice he rarely goes far afield. The need for informing inhabitants of other villages usually deters the Chin hunter from setting dangerous pitfalls, etc., outside his own village lands, while the ease with which small animals and birds can be stolen and hidden generally encourages a man to set his small traps conveniently where he can visit them.

As to the variety of traps used, these vary from tiny miniatures designed to catch mice and birds to great deadfalls for tiger and bear. They form a very useful means of adding to the daily diet of the average Chin home, and must therefore be considered an important factor in the sum total of productive economic effort.

In the following paragraphs I give short descriptions of the various types of trap used, but those interested will find very full accounts and excellent illustrations of almost exactly similar types used among the Lakher Chin on pages 146 to 157 of N. E. Parry's book "The Lakhers."

*Bird traps.* The commonest method of trapping small birds is by the use of bird lime. This is called *tsik khling*, and it is prepared from the sap of two local species of *ficus* called *hmawng* and *hlup*. It is very effective in action. For larger species from parrakeets to pheasants, horse hair or cord nooses are set on the branches and tracks they habitually use, or in little spaces cleared in the jungle undergrowth in which a single bean is placed as a bait. At some villages ingenious "bow" spring traps with cord nooses are used for birds and small animals.

*Animal traps.* There are five main varieties which exist in most villages, though technological variations occur throughout the sub-division.

*Fel, mankhawng.* These two terms apply to the same kind of trap, a deadfall in which a large log is propped over a game path along which two lines of stakes have been driven to restrict lateral space. A trip-line across the path springs the trap. This type is commonly used for tiger,

leopard and bear. Tiny miniatures of it are used, in combination with a low close fence sometimes a hundred yards long, to trap rats, voles and porcupines along the edges of the cultivations.

*Kar.* This is a spring trap with an arrow or spear as the missile. A large bamboo bow is set in the jungle 3 to 10 feet back from a game path, the " arrow " being a spear or a six foot bamboo sharpened to a point. A trip-line springs it. It is set for all kinds of large game, while a variation of it, the *meithal kar*, in which a gun supplies the weapon, is most commonly reserved for tiger. This last type is generally baited with meat from a kill.

*Hrum.* This is a simple pitfall. It was commonly used for elephant in pre-annexation days, and is now hardly ever seen.

*Pal pelh thang.* This is perhaps the most unusual and interesting of the Chin traps. It consists of a small hole in a game path, about 6″ round and 6″ to 12″ deep, in which is laid a noose of tough cord or creeper, which itself is attached to a strong sapling bent over to the required height. The hole is carefully covered with small bamboo slivers and earth, and guiding fences and pieces of wood set to encourage the placing of a foot in it. Any animal treading in the hole is yanked off its balance by the sapling and held helpless with one foot high in the air. This trap will hold anything that has no teeth to bite itself free, up to and including sambhar. It is obviously identical with the *sari* trap described on page 150 of Parry's book.

*Hngawng awh.* As its name implies, this is a strangling noose set on a track, one end being fastened to a heavy log. It is used mainly for porcupine.

*Khuh rep.* This box trap is a favourite for monkeys raiding the cultivation. It is a tiny hut with only one door, which closes behind the victim when he sets hands on the bait inside.

*Khlak.* This see-saw trap is remarkably effective, especially against monkeys and leopards. A long and carefully smoothed log is pivoted like a see-saw with the meat-baited end poised over a declivity, to give as long a drop as possible. Underneath it the ground is studded with fire-hardened bamboo stakes which transfix the victim as it slips off the end of the tipping log. I have personal knowledge of two tigers caught with this form of trap.

*The laws of hunting.* These may be divided into two groups—those affecting the community as a whole, such as the rules governing public safety, trespass, and the payment of *ramsa:* and those affecting the individual, such as the claims to first and second " blood." I will deal with them shortly in that order.

*Public safety and trespass.* As already shown, there is no such thing as trespass in Chin hunting, and so the only real public necessity

which the hunter must study is that of public safety. He may set his traps anywhere without any restrictions but those imposed by common sense to avoid accidents to humans and domestic animals. For instance, the *sia pil* or grazing ground obviously must not be cluttered with pitfalls or other traps that would decimate the village herds, while traps dangerous to humanity would be set far away from the common paths and all people in the locality warned of their presence.

If a man were killed in a trap by accident, the setter would have to provide his *ruahhnak* mithan and *puanfun* shroud, but no fine would be exacted for the death of a domestic animal unless culpable negligence had been proved on the part of the trapper.

*Payment of ram sa.* This is a due, generally consisting of a hind leg of the wild animal killed, payable to the Headman of all Zahau controlled villages. It forms part of the Headman's rights over the land and its products, and where the kill is made locally it works quite straightforwardly. But as already noted—beats sometimes take place miles from the hunters' home village. In these cases, in theory, the payment is controlled by the village of residence of the man who killed it and not by the place where the animal was killed. It does not matter if the hunters are 50 miles from home, *ramsa* is still due to their own headman. In actual practice, however, commonsense and equity prevail and the carcases are divided up and eaten on the spot with those of the local villagers who have helped to beat, only the heads and a few titbits being saved to take home for the performance of *sa aih.*

*Personal claims and rights.* It is important that the reader should realise that the claims which are now described, though they appear of slight importance to us, are very close to the heart of the Chin, one door to whose Paradise is opened, as we have noted, by success in hunting. So close are they, indeed, that to say falsely that a man did not actually kill an animal he claims, (*sa kah hnawm*: animal shoot belittle) is an offence punishable under Shimhrin tribal law by a comparatively heavy fine.

First and foremost among personal claims is that of the drawer of "first blood" to the head of the dead animal. The man who gets the head is the only one who can perform the *aih* in celebration, thereby gaining spiritual and temporal advantage. It is a matter of the first importance to a Chin, and he will go to great trouble, and often, as will be seen, great danger to get his just deserts.

Usually in beats everything is straightforward, but sometimes two men shoot simultaneously, and so on, and an argument arises. On these occasions the elders and experienced hunters will hold an enquiry *in situ*, examine the carcase and the positions of the guns, and try to arrive at a conclusion by deduction from facts. When this is impossible, the elder of the two claimants gets preference, it being held that the other will have more chances to come. Sometimes a galloping animal is

subjected to a volley from a number of men all standing on the same side of it. In such cases the head is allotted on the vote of those present either to the eldest " gun " or to the last to fire, whichever is held the most deserving.

Incidentally " first blood " does not necessarily entail the flowing of blood. The first hit, however faint a scratch, even on hoof or horn registers first blood.

There is one important proviso, which is one of the main reasons for the determined way in which a Chin will follow wounded animals, even dangerous carnivore. The claimant to first blood must remain on the trail until the animal is dead. There is no drawing back for him even though the wounded creature goes on for two or three days before being brought down. Many a Chin therefore bears the scars of the " follow up."

Second in the private claims comes that of the *sangsuan pa*, or second blood. While he may not hold an *aih*, second blood gets a very substantial share of the meat of the dead animal, and also a special pot, holding about a dozen quarts of the best ale, all to himself at the *aih*. The *sangsuan pa* can establish his claims in two ways—either he may actually draw second blood, or, following up a mortally wounded animal, he may be the first to find the carcase. In recent years a special custom has been established for the *sangsuan pa* when a bear is killed. Provided he is up on the bear while it is still alive and inflicts a wound, he is entitled, in addition to other things, to the bear's gall bladder. This is a specific reward for the courage required to tackle a wounded bear. The gall bladder will fetch anything from Rs. 3 to Rs. 10 in Falam bazaar.

In the case of trapped animals, the head always goes to the setter, a trap being *bul ta*, or private property ; provided that where a wounded animal gets away, the trapsetter follows it up till it is dead. An exception occurs in the rare cases where a village acting as a community sets a whole series of traps for a troublesome tiger or leopard. In such a case the Headman gets the head, and, if he has himself performed the *Pawpi vui* (Tiger's Burial) he can make a present of it to whoever he likes.

There is even a *sangsuan pa* in trapping, as sometimes a timid trapper will send someone else to look at his traps when he is expecting a still living and angry animal to be found. His deputy gets a joint called the *akawng khlak* as his fee. The flesh of trapped animals, known as *thang awh sa*, is distributed in exactly the same way as the flesh of victims of a beat.

Such are the hunter's personal claims—and by them he builds his reputation till at last he stands proclaimed *lungpi*, honoured among men and already half-assured of a place in Heaven.

*Fishing.* Contrary to the glowing expectations raised in the Gazetteer, there are (from the Chin view-point) few worth-while

pools in the small streams which run through the central hills, while the only big river, the Manipur River (Run Va) is too deep to be poisoned except once in the year at the tail end of the dry weather. Fishing expeditions are therefore uncommon, and individual effort, for some reason, practically non-existent except in the Zanniat and Khualshim villages where casting nets imported from Burma are now used.

Annual poisoning expeditions do take place in the following rivers besides the Run Va :—the Thio Va, Lai Va, Lah Va, Tiphei Va and Khlairawn Va. But these are small affairs, not to be compared with the Tashon fishing of the Run, when enormous cat fish weighing over fifty pounds are taken. Only at Klawrzan (indicating Haka connections) are women allowed to accompany fishing expeditions.

In all cases there are only two methods used to poison the fish; either the sap of the *hru pi* or *huai hang* creepers or the sap of the *khiang* tree. Small bamboo and grass dams are made to catch stupefied fish, and these are lined with expectant youths. When creeper is used it is simply beaten to shreds on rocks at the head of the pool, the juice running straight downstream while handfuls of mud are thrown into the water to thicken it, as it is believed that this aids the stupefaction of the fish. The bark poison takes a little more preparation. It is damped and pulped with sand and mud in a special place near the pool, and then a number of youths carry it all and dump it at once into the water. As the fish float to the surface they are grabbed and put into baskets to be shared among all present when the game is over.

There are few legal difficulties attached to fishing, and no sacrifices before or after. This is a pointer to the correlations between law and religious ideology in Chin life. Where religious belief plays its part in any enterprise, there is a correspondingly greater seriousness and complication of legal restraint.

The rivers are free to be fished to anyone who will take the trouble. Villages do not claim water rights in the streams running through their boundaries, and at one time even a casual onlooker to a poisoning drive could go up and help himself to a fish to take home. Nowadays only actual participants share the fish.

*Effects of hunting and fishing on agriculture and tenure.* The foregoing pages have shown that hunting and fishing, particularly the former, are keenly followed for the following main reasons :—

(*a*) They both form an important means of adding meat to the daily diet.

(*b*) Hunting offers one avenue of social and economic advancement to the individual.

(*c*) Success in hunting is essential to spiritual fulfilment.

But what is the practical effect over and above a desire to own guns and decimate the local game ? The first and foremost result where game

is scarce is an added desire to burn the jungle annually, not only in conjunction with beats, but in order to lessen the undergrowth and make aiming easier.

In the chapter on Forest Products I note that a need for good thatch is also one reason for burning, but that excuse does not cover *indiscriminate* burning of the whole of a village area. When we first tried to stop the annual fires in the Falam Subdivision in the year 1936, we found that in almost all cases of disobedience it was the village hunters who were responsible. It was impossible in the first attempt to make them realise that it was in the very areas where jungle burning was not countenanced, that is, in the extreme east and west of the Subdivision, that game was most plentiful and famous beats most numerous.

This annual burning crops up in every aspect of production as a danger of the highest degree. Its results are in the main very wasteful and the sole entries on the credit side are better thatch and easier shooting. How to stop it with the least disturbance to public life is the main problem unearthed in this sphere of production. Where collecting game trophies makes all the difference between going to Heaven or to Hell, it is obvious that caution is desirable in making that collection more difficult, but where the choice lies between destruction of the land by which the people live their temporal lives and increase of the trouble required to reach Paradise, I feel there is only one answer.

Making that answer palatable to the Chin will provide much interesting food for thought for the officials responsible. They may get some unexpected help from the spread of the Pau Chin Hau cult, which flourishes most strongly in the very places where burning is most persistent.

## Chapter VI.

## FOREST PRODUCTS.

It will simplify an understanding of the part played by forest products in Chin life if we divide them into three groups :—firstly, those that are eatable by human beings; secondly, those that are usable in the village; and lastly, those that are saleable either in the raw or manufactured state. The first and second are obtainable everywhere throughout the area in varying degrees of plenty, but workable quantities of the third group are so rare that where they do exist they have enabled specialised village industries to thrive.

As in other spheres, religious ideology plays its part and imposes many restrictions.

The trader must take care that he does not enter his host's house with something that is *tabu* to him. Among certain Zanniat villages no one may take beeswax or *lac* into a house, though others collect wax from the bee cliffs at Ralum and Nimzawl. The Lente group have the same fear of beeswax, and it is interesting to note that in both cases the fear applies only to the wax of the *khuepi* bees, which hive on cliff faces and caves and other strange looking places. Such are regarded as the likely abode of a *ramhuai*, or jungle sprite, and indeed the only good hiving place in the Khuangli tract, on the hill called Lungpi, is never touched because it is believed to be the home of Khawhrum, the senior land spirit of the area.

The fear of disturbing the resting-place of spirits also affects the choice of timbers for house-building. Any extraordinary oddity about a tree is thought likely to draw the attention of the spirits as well as of men, and all such trees are suspect. Each type is given a specific name, the most malevolent being *tek khlak* (thunderbolt struck) : and *thinghreng* and *thingsaili* (tree tied and tree bow) both these types having trunks which have split and then grown together again, leaving a loop. Less dangerous types (though any may harbour a hobgoblin) are the *khlankhla mei* (kingcrow tail) which has two trunks of equal size : the *thinghri zelh* (tree creeper bound) ; the *va bu suang* (bird's nest making) a tree with no lower branches and a symmetrical head of small branches and twigs such as birds delight to nest in ; the *thing rial-aw* (tree rubs together) trees that squeak and groan in the wind ; and finally all trees with bottle-shaped bulges in the trunk.

Myth also plays its part in controlling collection of forest produce. For instance the necessity of clearing the grass and weeds away from the roots of wild fruit trees is imparted to successive generations of children through a myth concerning the dove. They are told in ancient days when all birds talked and acted like men, the bird folk were summoned

one day to clear the grass from the roots of the fruit trees in their land and all obeyed except the slothful dove. For its laziness the dove was forbidden to eat fruit ever again. The truth of this legend is evident in the fact that even today doves are never seen eating fruit on a tree!

I will not try to separate from their context all the legal restrictions applicable to forest products because these vary so much in individual cases. Many of the details are noted under land tenure, particularly in the case of thatch grasses, but those which are necessary to complete the picture of how extraction takes place are included here.

*Eatable products.* The Chin rarely returns to his village empty-handed from the jungle; men will always be found with a log or a plantain stalk or something of the sort, and the women with their baskets full of firewood or edible roots, fungi and berries. The Gazetteer gives an imposing list of 15 wild varieties of fruit trees indigenous to the hills, but to the best of my knowledge many of these were cultivated in village gardens. Of the rest, of which the fig is favourite, the Chin takes good care, protecting them from fires where these are common.

As soon as the fruit is ripe enough to pluck, the villagers flock to all in turn picking as fast as possible to try and beat their rivals' harvest.

Wild taro and other roots form a not inconsiderable addition to the daily diet, which also owes a good deal in the way of flavouring to the various aromatic leaves, *reptilia* and grubs that the daily hunt for firewood brings to the larder—bee and hornet grubs being very special favourites among the Shimhrin. Honey is greatly prized in all but a few villages, and is used in the making of specially satisfying meal cakes called *vai kan* and *vainiim kan*, both favourite picnic foods.

Apart from honey, which will be described with beeswax, none of these wild foodstuffs is subject to any restriction on collection unless it grows in a plot actually being cultivated. The lucky man or woman who finds them takes them home.

*Usable products.* Of these the most important are the materials of housebuilding—timber and thatch. Wild bamboo is practically non-existent in the Falam Subdivision, and in almost all villages the walls and floors of the houses are timbered. This fact aggravates the annual burning problem. Regeneration of timber forest is much slower than bamboo, and the yearly destruction of seedlings and distortion and stunting of growing plants due to fire is reducing available supplies in some areas at an alarming pace.

Paradoxically enough, it is the very areas with most to lose by destruction of forest that are conserved the least. Whereas the Zahau on the west and the Zanniat on the extreme east punish the burning of jungle under customary law, the Tashon, Central Zanniat, Sipawng, Tapawng, Khuangli and other tribes and sub-tribes of the Manipur River valley strongly resisted a proposal to institute this essential restriction.

Here it is said that burning is essential for a good thatch crop, but at present there is no effort to restrict burning to thatch grass areas, or to reserve only sufficient for the annual needs of the village. It is not hard to guess what the future of these unprotected areas will be. Already erosion has scoured away topsoil to a degree which makes agriculture difficult. In some places, as at Lianrih, where about $\frac{1}{4}$th of a square mile of good land was carried away in one swoop, serious landslides have occurred. Timber required for house-building is becoming increasingly hard to find; large areas can be searched in vain for a single tree more than a few inches in diameter.

While the ever-increasing population continues to take a correspondingly heavy toll of the largest trees, the annual burning, by destroying what seedlings there are, prevents any natural regeneration from occurring. The most aggravated example of this timber shortage in the Falam Subdivision is to be found in the Lumbang-Parte-Kulzam group of villages in the south-west corner of the Lumbang Tribal Area. Young men of thirty can remember the day when it was possible to cut trees giving planks 12″ wide on the hill between Lumbang and Parte, but nowadays such trees are not to be found within ten miles of this neighbourhood, and the whole group is compelled to cut its housebuilding timber in the lands of Lunghrawh. Since Lunghrawh is the northern limit of the Lumbang Chief's lands, and the timber-seekers are already within five miles of the border of the Tiddim Subdivision, exhaustion of the remaining supply will take very little time. Unless re-afforestation is taken very seriously, the Lumbang group will be *buying* timber for house building from the Tiddim Subdivision within another decade.

It is unfortunate that the central Chin has to date been very wasteful in his method of extracting planks from his forest trees. He hacks out one or at most two planks from each tree, using only axe and adze in the work. During my time I introduced pitsaws in the hope of improving this situation and many villages bought them.

*Sagat* and teak trees, which are always reserved, are most prized for timber exposed to the soil and weather, while pine is favoured for planks and walls. The giant trees of the once virgin jungle on the hills are nowhere to be found, though in some villages, notably Tsawngthu in the Khuangli Tract, one can see immense planks measuring over a yard in width and dozens of feet in length, mute reminders of the old days before annexation made destruction of even the most distant forests safe and easy.

There was, up to the time of recording these notes, no restriction on cutting trees other than *sagat* and teak on *klang ram* or free village land, even village boundaries having no effect, but in the Manipur River Valley this idyllic state of affairs is not likely to last many more years.

With regard to thatch, for which the legal restrictions are described under Land Tenure, the main trouble lies in the fact that patches of

LENTE pottery. The whole process is by hand, the wheel being unknown.

*thetke* grow in odd places all over the village land—a constant temptation to set a fire going. In Bualkhua a successful attempt has been made to introduce roofing of a coarse local slate, but in most of the central area the problem of how to get thatch without burning the whole jungle will remain one of the worst worries of the administration.

Of the other usable products, perhaps the most in demand is the wild plantain, the stalk of which forms the basis of every Chin pig's daily meals, and the root of which is a useful emergency human ration. Luckily the plantain grows in profusion everywhere. For pig food the stalk is cut just below the leaves and at ground level, and then chopped up into slices and boiled with fermented grain and other household scraps.

The juices and saps of some creepers and trees provide poisons, while another creeper called *kangdam*, when stewed, produces a fluid used for washing burns. Local " quacks " extract a variety of medicines from herbs, roots, and barks, this science being worth an article in itself.

*Saleable products.* These include clay for pot-making, the *ruangal* bamboo used in mat and basket making, beeswax, salt, and *lac*, only the first four having a relatively high commercial value.

Pot-making clay occurs in workable deposits in Tashon and in the nearby Lente group, both having a flourishing barter trade in pots, though strangely enough each has a different technique in pottery. A due is paid for extraction of the clay, but almost all householders in the villages concerned share in the trade, and there is no attempt to make a " corner in clay." Tashon pots are usually made for liquor storage, while the finer texture Lente pots are made in a variety of shapes for cooking purposes as well, the two village groups supplying almost the entire needs of the subdivision.

It is possible that instruction in the simple technique employed by the Chinese might encourage those two villages to produce the cheap Chinese roof tile, at any rate for home use, and thus relieve the thatch problem.

The *ruangal* bamboo, much prized for mat-making, is a very small and tough variety found in and about the Climatic Reserves* at heights of 6,000 ft. and over. Only the few villages like Duhmang and Tisen which lie close to these regions can get sufficient quantities to carry on a small export trade. *Ruangal* mats are popular all over the central area, and also find a ready sale in the contiguous plains villages. Canes suitable for basket making are fairly plentiful, and this home industry exists in every village, almost every village producing its own needs.

The wild honey bee known as *khuepi* is common in only a few swarming sites, but where it is found there are always a dozen or so

* Reserves on the crests of the main ridges, introduced with a view to conserving rainfall.

weighty combs well worth the trouble of taking. Among the Zahau these are the property of the local village headman and they may not be touched without his permission. Organisation of the wax-hunt is done by the headman, young bucks taking part being rewarded with the grubs and the honey. A scaffolding is erected, at the cost of many stings, so that the combs can be reached and then the bees are driven out with fire and smoke. It is an unskilful and wasteful process, prodigal in minor casualties, but it gets results. The wax combs and their contents are carried home to the headman's court, where they are boiled and strained after as much of the honey and grubs as possible have been extracted. The legal rights to wax are described under Land Tenure, almost all being sold in Falam Bazaar or to the plains.

Though salt is found in the Hills, the quantity is small and does not meet a fraction of the total local needs. The quality is also inferior to bazaar salt but its lower cost encourages extraction. Salt springs are rare except in the Zahau Tribal Area where there are several, the most famous being the well at Klauhmun, the Chief's seat. Klauhmun salt is not only useful for cooking but is a proved specific for goitre if taken in medicinal quantities.

Small parties from all over the countryside, including the Lushai Hills, come to boil salt at these wells, and the rules appertaining to them are strictly observed. A purification sacrifice, in some cases every 3 years and in others every 6, is carried out at all wells by the local headman. He and his Village Fund receive dues from those boiling salt, in return for this ritual, for the duty of keeping the well cleared of rubbish and in good running order, and for supplying a rest-house for the visiting salt boilers.

The technique is simple. The brine is measured in five-span pots called *darbel*, one *khawn* or packet of salt being by tradition the residue of six *darbel* full of brine. The working unit is in all cases except at Klauhmun taken to be one village party during one visit, and the due payable (*tsipa*) amounts to two *khawn* of salt per unit-visit. Of these the local headman gets one *khawn* and his Village Fund the other. The value of a *khawn* of salt is As. 4 at the well.

At Klauhmun the unit is *harr khat*, that is one fireplace for boiling. The Chief's due (*tsipawl*) here is assessed as if he were an additional member of every party working at a *harr*. Supposing that of two *harr* one is worked by four men and the other by six, the Chief's share will work out at one-fifth the total production of salt of the first *harr*, and one-seventh that at the second. About twenty households of Klauhmun take turns to keep a hut built and to see that the well is cleared, for which they get a *khawn* of salt from each party using the well during their turn of duty. The Klauhmun Council also claims 2 *khawn* of salt from " those present " at their well on any occasion when they hold a communal sacrifice or entertain an important village guest.

Excepting the last, these payments are on the whole equitable, for the villagers get no more than their just due for services rendered, while the sacrifice at the well alone costs the headman the value of many packets of salt, tradition demanding a pig at Zahau wells and a goat at Hualngo wells.

A last example of the completeness of arrangements made for sale boilers can be found in the *bel man*, the standard charge made for the hiring of a boiling pot to those who don't want to bring them. This also consists of one packet of salt per unit-visit.

*Lac* was exported at one time in small quantities, but it is many years since market values made this a paying proposition. It is there for extraction if and when the market improves.

This brings to an end my account of local forest produce. Let us consider what additions it has made to the impression already gained of the life of the Chin. Firstly there is evidence of considerable additions to the human diet and unlimited supplies of pig food; secondly there is evidence of still complete independence of imported materials for house-building—the Chin builds his house without nails, using considerable ingenuity in his carpentry, and so this relatively expensive importation is not necessary—and finally there is proof that in many spheres of household material needs such as pots, baskets and mats, the Chin can satisfy himself, *as it were at his own doorstep*, by barter or labour.

Except in the case of supplies of housebuilding materials, the future outlook is reassuring. And even shortage of timber is only serious in the main valley of the Manipur River; elsewhere there is enough and to spare.

## CHAPTER VII.

## LAND TENURE.

In this analysis of local land tenure I follow humbly the excellent lead given by Malinowski in " Coral Gardens and their Magic." In his book Professor Malinowski has uncovered what must be regarded as the fundamental factor in any land tenure enquiry, that is, the fallacy of attempting to assess tenure from its legal aspect alone. He writes (Vol. 1, page 31) " We would lay down at once the rule that any attempt to study land tenure from a legal aspect alone must lead to unsatisfactory results. Land tenure cannot be defined or described without an exhaustive knowledge of the economic life of the natives." Again (Vol. 1, page 319) " The complications of land tenure go further than this. As we know, the purely economic uses of land cannot be separated from rights of settlement, political claims, freedom of communication and transport ; from territorial privilege connected with ceremonial, magical and religious life. No doubt the economic utilisation of land forms the solid core of all these privileges and claims. But land tenure must be conceived in a more comprehensive manner : it is the relationship of man to soil in the widest sense ; that is, in so far as it is laid down in native law and custom and in the measure in which it controls political life, affects the performance of public ceremonies and gives access to opportunities for recreation and sport. Man's appointed and culturally defined place on his soil, his territorial citizenship, his type of residence, and those rights which underlie the various uses of his soil form an organic whole of which the economic exploitation is but a part, albeit the most important part."

It is with this concept of land tenure in mind that I outline the effect on the tenure system of the various aspects of Chin life. Malinowski's warning is not without practical application here. Previous enquiries into land tenure in the Chin Hills have been confined largely to the question of right of alienation. In all cases one finds the two terms " communal ownership " and " private peasant ownership " in juxtaposition as if by them alone one could give an accurate definition of the existing state of tenure. In the first place, it is difficult to understand what is meant by " private peasant ownership," for even in individualist England absolute right of ownership does not exist. For instance, if the public weal demands it, Government can force a person to vacate his land on payment of an arbitrary scale of compensation. Conversely, land belonging to a primitive society in which no individual rights of any kind exist has yet, I believe, to be discovered.

The trouble of course arises out of the official necessity of finding portmanteau terms which will describe two opposite groups of systems in one of which individual rights are predominant and in the other

community rights have priority. But while these portmanteau terms facilitate the writing of reports, they also facilitate errors of misconception, and can only be employed satisfactorily after the multitudinous details of all types of tenure included in each category have been recorded and classified.

In the Falam subdivision the two Chin expressions *Bul ram* and *Klang ram* have been translated respectively as " privately owned land " and " communal land." The wider meanings which the Chin himself attaches to these terms have passed unnoticed, and thus rights of alienation have been recorded as valid where in fact no such right exists, simply because of a misconception of the *local* meaning of the term " *bul ram.*" I would never have been able to understand the intricacies of Chin tenure had I oriented my enquiries on these terms as popularly translated because *klang ram* is governed by many rights of individuals, while all *bul ram* is subject to certain rights of the community and the members thereof.

But if this problem is approached by investigation of the relation of Man to Soil in the broadest sense, rights to alienate, to cultivate and inherit land, rights to the collection of wild fruit and thatch, beeswax and timber, firewood, etc. rights of hunting without restraint, of making paths and aqueducts, of digging for potting clay, etc. come to light through the study of the relation to the land of man in all his functions. Thus the right varies when the individual is considered as son or daughter, husband or wife, mother or father, member of a wider group based on kinship, residential, political, economic or religious ties, as chief or priest or sorcerer, as agriculturist, hunter, potter, blacksmith or basket-weaver, and so on.

Even the most rabid anti-theorist among " practical men " must admit that enquiry on such lines must yield more accurate results than mere investigation into legal rights of ownership based on the assumption that distinction between communal and individual ownership is all that is necessary for an understanding of land tenure. The problem of whether or not so comprehensive an examination must result in a mass of information impossible to disentangle will be solved in course of this chapter.

The subject is dealt with as follows :—first come detailed lists of the traditional rights of the chief, headman, priest, *khawnbawl* (senior elder, Zahau), the blacksmith, the village council, the village community, and the individual in his capacity as cultivator : this list is followed by an examination of the various principles controlling the rights above named and finally there is an account of land tenure as it worked in 1936, of modern innovations and the type of problem which is likely to face the administration, and of the way in which an analysis on these lines in itself discovers the means by which such problems can be overcome.

It is necessary first to refer back to the distinctions made in my first article on Chin tenure ("MAN" Vol. II, No. 56) between the autocratic and democratic tribes. While minor variations in tenure exist in each tribe, it will simplify the whole problem to contrast the ancient forms of tenure in these two groups before describing the changes that have occurred and the variations which exist.

In this respect I do not want to give the impression that I am trying to reconstruct a hypothetical zero point in land tenure. The two types of tenure to which I refer as the ancient systems still exist in certain parts of the Falam subdivision, and can be studied at the present time. I do not believe in the reconstruction of cultural zero points, partly because really valuable historical evidence, that is evidence based on observation by experts, is almost impossible to obtain, and partly because I would never know when to stop in my march back through history. Even where tenure has changed almost out of all knowledge within the past century, sufficient traces of the older systems remain alive to make it possible, by a comparative study of these scraps of living history, to formulate a fairly clear idea of what change has occurred.

At the same time I have not neglected the evidence of history where such could be checked with a reasonable hope of accuracy. In general I have adopted the principle of comparison between tenures which have changed to varying degrees from an acknowledged common source of which living people have actual knowledge. For instance, villages within the Khuangli Tribal Area, though of the same sub-tribe, show considerable variations in tenure, changes having occurred within the memory of living men. Again the tenure in the mother village of Khuangli itself now differs from that in the Zahau Tribal Area in certain respects, though the original tenures, as exemplified in some outlying villages of the Khuangli sub-tribe, was identical to that of the Zahau.

*Differences between autocratic and democratic group tenures.*—Broadly speaking, the differences between the old tenure systems in these two groups are as follows :—

In the autocratic group the chief and headmen have certain definite rights in the land over and above their rights as resident householders and cultivators, and in addition certain restrictions exist regarding the inheritance of cultivation titles. The first difference is readily understandable and no further reference to it will be necessary here. The inheritance difference lies in the rule in the autocratic group that hereditary land titles may only be possessed over one plot in each rotational field by each head of an individual family, whereas in the democratic group cultivation titles are heritable in any number.

For the purpose of detailed comparison of tenure in the two groups I examine the systems of the Zahau and the Zanniat. I do so because in the Zahau tribal area, which has been least in contact with modernising influences, and which suffered least in the tribal wars that occurred in the

half century preceding annexation, there exists a form of tenure which is admitted by the other Shimhrin sub-tribes to be the prototype of their own ; and because it is among the Zanniat villages that one finds most evidence of the oldest systems of tenure of the democrats.

*List of rights and claims.* Zahau. Autocratic Group.

1. *The Chief of the Tribal Area.*—In describing what he calls his own lands, that is to say the lands under his political jurisdiction, the Zahau Chief will say " *Keima ih ram* ", meaning " My land." In Government documents this right of referring to the land as his own has been noted by the expression " the Chief is Lord of the Soil." This distinction from the descriptive term " owner " was made in order to prevent the chief or his successors from ever laying claim to absolute ownership of the land with rights of alienation by sale, and the traditional rights of the chief have been fixed in perpetuity at their proper valuation in this respect.

In pre-annexation days, as well as in the period immediately following annexation, any person wishing to found a village in the land over which the Zahau Chief claimed political jurisdiction or " protective rights ", had to pay to the Chief a due called *Khua man* (Lit., the price of the village) consisting of a full grown mithan. This payment resulted in a *transference of the Chief's rights as a headman* to the person founding the village, subject of course to territorial restriction to the area allotted for cultivation purposes to the new village. In other words, having paid his mithan, the newly created headman could exercise rights and claim dues in the village under his control which were precisely similar to the rights and dues claimed by the Chief *as headman of his own village of Klauhmun.* That, at least, was the theory of the transaction; actual practice varied somewhat from this ideal. While headmen of newly formed villages to this day assume for themselves the rights and dues of old, the Chief is no longer permitted to collect *Khua man,* and the right of permitting foundation of new villages is now vested in the Deputy Commissioner of the Chin Hills District. This official gives permission, or withholds it, subject in principle to the desires of the Chief, to certain rules regarding the minimum number of houses which will occupy the new village, and to the allocation of land.

In addition to this fundamental payment for transference of rights based on his "Lordship of the Soil," the Chief exacted from certain villages a tribute of grain from each household, the quantity varying from village to village.

Originally some villages of Hualngo escaped payment of this grain due to the Zahau Chief because they had paid *Khua man* to the then paramount Tashon Council and established villages in Zahau-claimed lands under Tashon protection. But when in later years Government broke up the Falam subdivision into the tribal areas now existing, the Zahau Chief claimed and was given the right to collect a tribute in grain

at the rate of one *rel* (about 7 lbs.) per house per annum from all villages in his jurisdiction which had previously paid tribute to Tashon. This right has since been confirmed as applicable also to new villages founded in his jurisdiction.

Inherent in the Zahau Chief's claim to Lordship of the Soil is the potential right of extraction of timber and other produce of the jungle such as thatch, etc., from lands of any village in his jurisdiction, and it is this right which is the basis of the custom of the whole tribal area combining to build the Chief's house when required, each village bringing its quota of house building materials from its own lands.

Such other rights as the Chief possesses are held in his capacity, not as tribal chief, but as headman of his own village of Klauhmun, and I will therefore go on to describe the rights of the headman in Zahau villages.

2. *The village headman.*—Theoretically speaking, the Zahau Headmen have an absolute right of division and disposal, sequestration and re-distribution of land within their village boundaries. Actually other rights and principles which are noted hereinafter interact with this absolute right and restrict it within easily definable bounds.

The right of disposal of land by the headman does not in any sense mean that he is entitled to sell it or rent it, or even to loan it to persons not resident in his village. His first duty as a headman is to see that every resident of the village has a sufficiency of land to cultivate, and thus his disposal right is in effect nothing more than a charter for his interference in the disposal of land according to individual rights. This will be seen more clearly when examining the claims of the individual member of the village community.

Disposal rights of land can be subdivided into (*a*) the right of distribution of unoccupied* plots, (*b*) the right to split up large occupied plots into smaller units if and when increase of population or shortage of land requires such action, (*c*) the right of partitioning rotational fields (*lopil*) into plots (*lo*), (*d*) the right of delineation and alteration of the boundaries of rotational fields, (*e*) the right of granting permission to cultivate specially reserved areas such as *tuklaw* lands where *sagat* trees are common.

Other rights exercised by the headman on behalf of the village community include the right to direct construction of village communal works such as aqueducts, roads and bridges, the building of houses for new immigrants, etc., all of which have their bearing on land tenure because, though an individual may have cultivation titles over certain areas, such titles will be inoperative if public welfare demands that a road or aqueduct or school shall be constructed across or on the plots concerned.

* These are called *Lo lawng.*

Perquisites of the headman which accrue out of the devolution to him of the Chief's Lordship of the Soil include the right to have his house built free by the village, the right to the flesh due called *ramsa* consisting of either the saddle or a hind leg or in some cases, both, of any wild animals killed in the chase, the right to collect a due on all salt boiled at springs in his tract ; and the right to take the third boiling of wax from the hives of wild bees found in his jurisdiction, the rule being that wax from such hives is boiled and strained off three times, the first two boilings (which are the largest) going to the village council for utilisation as communal wealth.

Other rights* less directly attributable to the headman's claims to the land and its products, but nevertheless bound up with the economic uses of land and the forest and agricultural products thereof, consist of the customary dues at feasts (*sa siah*) ; in some villages a measure of grain per household (*rawl rel siah*) ; and two days per household per annum of free labour in the headman's fields (*lo hlawh*). They compensate the headman for absence (on village affairs) from his own agricultural duties.

Finally there is the *Lohual*, consisting of one pot of rice or maize beer, which must be paid by every cultivator at the beginning of each cultivation cycle, as a " talking price " when plots are being claimed before a rotational field is opened for cultivation.

3. *The Khuatelal, or headman of a quarter* (*veng*).—In certain large villages there are divisions or quarters known as *veng*. The headman of the village may transfer some or all of his rights to any person whom he may appoint as headman of such a quarter, the nature of the rights so handed over depending entirely on the amount of assistance which this petty official renders to the headman. It has become a habit in many villages not large enough to be subdivided into quarters to appoint *khuatelal* or *khiing* to assist the headman, and to try and squeeze out of the village a few extra dues to compensate these men for their trouble. This indeed is a recognised way of sharing the perquisites of headmanship with patrilineal relatives out of the main line of succession. According to Zahau custom a *khuatelal* is entitled to the concession of a free house as well as the headman if the latter chooses to bestow this favour upon him, but this matter has never been threshed out, and it seems doubtful if many villages could be persuaded to accept this addition to the totality of dues and duties rendered by them to their ruling hierarchy.

4. *The Sadawt or Village Priest.*—As already noted, in many cases the headman and the *sadawt* are one and the same person. According to ancient custom, where the two offices are combined only one set of rights to dues, that of the headman, is operative, but in isolated cases headmen have tried to get away with both. The Zahau Chief is strongly in favour of combining the duties whenever possible, to reduce the dues paid by

* These rights have been considerably reduced in recent years.

his people, but in some cases physical deformity debars a headman from communing with the spirits and another man must be appointed to the priesthood. Elsewhere I have described the duties of the *sadawt* and the reasons for rendering him services and payment in kind. Like the flesh dues to the headman, these dues are but indirectly connected to claims to the land, but in view of the fact that ritual has an important bearing on agriculture, payment to the master of ceremonies must be regarded as an essential item in the sum total of expenditure on labour and kind which controls land exploitation in this area.

The perquisites of the *sadawt* among the Zahau include two days free labour (*lo hlawh*) in his fields every year from each house, the flesh dues of animals sacrificed by him, and in some cases a contribution of grain from each household in the village or quarter on whose behalf he performs sacrifices.

5. *Blacksmith.*—In the Zahau Tribal area the blacksmith is, as it were, a village official. That is to say he works for all alike on a basis of equality, and is paid (by all households) a rate of dues which is fixed by the village headman and his council. These dues consist of two days *lo hlawh* in his fields from every house, and flesh dues from animals killed at the Feasts of Merit and of Celebration. The last are differential payments based on quantitive investments in kind at feasts—thus rich men with better and larger plots requiring more agricultural implements pay more than the poor man who gives no feasts, and the hunting clique pay more than non-hunters, to compensate for repairs to guns, etc.

6. *The Khawnbawl.*—This individual approximates to a private secretary to the headman. He is usually the most influential elder in the village council, and his main duties are to assist the headman in the distribution of land and the apportionment of village duties. His sole perquisite over and above that of other elders of the council is a claim to preferential treatment in the allotment of plots reverting to the headman for disposal, or in the distribution of plots in specially reserved areas of *tuklaw ram.*

7. *The Klangpi or Village Council.*—In practice certain traditional duties and rights of the headman devolve upon the village council, such as the right to demand timber and other materials required for communal works. In addition the council, as the organising body for communal work, as the consuming personnel in communal sacrifice, and as the participant group in communal entertainment, has the right to collect grain and liquor from each household for the furtherance of these activities, as well as to demand payment for extraction of thatch from areas close to the village. All these collections and payments vary from village to village according to local conditions, but are rarely enough to create disaffection because every young man aspires some day to enjoying them himself. Of course exceptions exist. At the Chief's village of Klauhmun, where membership of the council has risen to over eighty

men in a total of about 197 households (including 32 widows), the heavy drain on non-council members is the subject of much adverse comment, particularly by the Chief himself, who realises the dangers inherent in so lopsided a situation but is disinclined to take action which would make him extremely unpopular with many of his most influential co-villagers.

All agricultural products are subject to occasional taxation for the support of indigent persons at the instance of the council, and it is interesting to note that needy people even of neighbouring villages sometimes get succour through this custom.

I have mentioned the payment of *lohual zu* under the headman's rights. In practice many headmen allow their councils to collect this liquor and use it for entertainment of village guests, thereby reducing the incidence of village rates in kind. This is but one of the many examples one can find to prove that all primitive overlords are not greedy autocrats whose only pleasure in life is to squeeze the last atom of profit they can out of their subjects.

8. *The village community as a whole.*—It will have been noticed that up to this point rights to land have taken the form of sanctions to collect taxes or dues in kind, and to organise utilisation of the soil. I have found it necessary to include mention of these dues here to demonstrate the essential difference between the claims of the commoner and those of the ruling hierarchy—in the first case claims are manifested in a direct way, in the right to cultivate a particular plot of ground, etc., while in the second case rank adds to the direct claims of a cultivator the indirect rights of an organiser. All the chiefs and headmen in this area possess cultivation titles like any other villager, and according to custom these titles are subject to roughly the same restrictions as those of the commoner. Much of what follows in describing the claims of the community and the individual villager applies therefore with equal force to the persons whose extraordinary claims have already been noted.

As a resident member of the village community the villager enjoys a great many rights which are of fundamental importance to the true understanding of land tenure. He has the right to collect fallen dried timber at all times and in all places; to cut housebuilding materials such as posts and planks in cultivated areas; to pick wild fruit and cut standing dead timber and banana trees in cultivated areas which are lying fallow; free right of way through any part of the village lands for any purpose, including fishing and hunting; the right to use paths and water-holes, to graze his herds (subject to the restriction of *Siapil nam*) over any area not actually under cultivation; and the right to cut thatch. I have left thatch to the last because special rights apply which vary slightly from one area to another. Generally speaking, in all uncultivated and fallow areas thatch is the property of the man who cuts it, subject to the following provisos:—(*a*) that if anybody weeds and tends

a patch of thatch grass so as to encourage growth of a strong crop, he acquires priority even over the extraction rights of the headman and the community and (*b*) that in any thatch areas so close to the village as to be in great demand, the village council has the right to demand a small payment in beer. The special claims outlined in (*a*) and (*b*) seem to involve an element of conflict, but in practice any person unwilling to pay in *zu* for the right to extract thatch in (*b*) areas would not weed them, and so no trouble arises.

It need not be stressed that these varied rights greatly facilitate housebuilding, collection of fuel, tending of live-stock, and the other innumerable duties which make up the daily life of the people. Without them life would soon become intolerable—yet they are rarely if ever noted.

9. *The individual member of the community.*—In this section I outline the rights which all villagers possess, not so much as members of the community, but as individuals. First and foremost there is the right to sufficient land to cultivate to satisfy bodily needs. This is applicable even to those least considered members of the community—childless widows and orphan girls. The headman must provide land for all or his people will migrate elsewhere. Secondly there is the right of the male to inherit cultivation titles. Land over which such hereditary cultivation titles exist is known among the Shimhrin and Hualngo as *saihrem nam* and *sumhmui lu* land. The first term applies to plots of which the cultivation titles are based on the " squatter's rights " of the original founders of the village, and the second term to land over which " first-clearing " rights were established by the cutting of virgin jungle by later immigrants to the village. The distinction emphasises descent from the oldest families in the village and implies no difference in tenure. Among the Khualshim both varieties are called *Pu ro lo*, meaning " ancestor's heritage plots."

Although through the principle of patrilineal inheritance hereditary cultivation titles may, theoretically, come in any numbers to lucky individuals, it is the practice in the Shimhrin tracts (except where the *hul ram* tenure, which will be described later, exists) to restrict acquisition of these rights to one plot in each field, the excess balance accruing through inheritance going to the headman for redistribution to the needy. This transaction is subject to the important proviso that the inheritor has the right to pick the best plot out of all to which he may have claims in each of the village fields, and that after he has taken his pick, patrilineal relatives living in the same village who happen to be dissatisfied with the plots they have already got can exchange these for others which they prefer out of the ones discarded by the inheritor, those finally rejected going to the headman.

A point of importance in connection with these cultivation titles is that in pre-annexation days it was the custom for holders of titles to the best land to pay the major share of any untoward expenditure which

fell upon the village community. This will be mentioned later when describing the causes of change in tenure.

10. *The actual cultivator.*—Before the cultivator can enter his land he must pay to the headman the " talking price " of *lohual zu.* This price is payable once for each cultivation cycle, that is for the whole period of three, six or nine years during which any particular field is cultivated. It can in no sense be considered as a rent, since it only amounts to about 1/100th of the total value of the yield per annum. It is essentially a lubricant of the discussion of partitioning of vacant lands, " remembering " of cultivation titles, and periodical public recognition of rights in land.

During the period of cultivation of a plot the cultivator has the right to the crops grown on it, subject to the tribute and rates in kind already enumerated. He also has prior claim to any thatch grass growing on the plot during the years he cultivates it, and during the first season that it lies fallow. He has the sole right to pick wild fruit growing on the plot during the years of the cultivation cycle, and to cut plantain trees for pig-food during the same period, these rights being based on the fact that clearing of the plot induces a strong growth.

This concludes the list of the rights to land, *but it must be realised that it is not possible by a study of these alone to reach full appreciation of local land tenure.* For there are a number of principles which interact with and in some cases modify these rights, which give the social sanction to all land titles, which have caused changes in tenure, and which therefore must be considered at the same time.

*Principles affecting rights to land.* Zahau. Autocratic Group.

A. The principle that " Lordship of the Soil " can be acquired by conquest. It is on this principle that the Zahau Chief bases his rights to land and to the exaction of *khua man* from founders of new villages. It is the sanction for Government's interference in problems of land tenure if and when desirable.

B. The principle that public welfare takes precedence over private rights. This is the sanction for exercise by the headman of his right of redistribution of land, and it comes into operation when he is required to find land for newly married couples, for immigrants to his village, or for people who have shouldered a debt for the benefit of the community. As will be seen, however, other and less commendable principles sometimes overrule principle B.

C. The principle that clearing of virgin jungle establishes a perpetual right of cultivation. This is perhaps the main conviction in Zahau tenure, since it is the sanction for the hereditary cultivation titles which in themselves form the only inducement to the villager to improve his land holdings by permanent works such as terraces.

D. The principles of patrilocal marriage and patrilineal descent, succession and inheritance. These determine the lines of devolution of land titles which are heritable. It is through the principles C and D that the individual member of the village community establishes his particular claims.

E. The principle of communal sacrifice to the spirits of the land. The way in which religious ideology organises agricultural activities among the Zahau has a very important bearing on land rights. The belief in " Spirits of the Fields " restricts cultivation to such fields as have been formally opened by propitiation of the guardian spirits. The necessity of an inaugural ceremony to ensure good crops prevents individuals from working isolated plots which are outside the area specifically covered by the protection of the ceremony. There are a great many practical advantages in this organisation of work within a given area. It renders fencing of cultivation infinitely easier where only one communal fence is required for a considerable area; it means that one field path is sufficient to serve a large group of plots; it simplifies rotational cultivation of the village lands, and ensures that large areas will always be open to grazing. One other factor which in these days of peace is no longer worthy of serious consideration is that of protection from enemy attack. There is little doubt but that this system of working plots in one block made for far greater safety in the pre-annexation days of head-hunting and slave-raiding. The effect of principle E on land rights is best shown by the following example:—A certain man whom I shall call X lived in a village with lands divided into five fields, each of which was worked in rotation by the whole village for three years at a time. Now although there were five fields, X, whose family had but recently come to the village, only held cultivation titles over three plots, one each in fields 1, 2, and 4. When therefore the village was working fields 3 and 5, X had to take his chance with whatever vacant plot in these fields the headman made available for him, and however bad they were he could not grow crops in any of his own plots in fields 1, 2, and 4, though these were all lying fallow, because these fields had not been opened for cultivation by appeasement of the guardian spirits.

F. The principle that Rank can outweigh other claims to land. Generally speaking the only cases where the operation of this interferes with existing rights is when the son of a chief or headman migrates to another community and is by reason of his birth appointed a quarter headman. In such a case some wretched villager would be relieved of the best fields in the village lands, and a general post in cultivation titles would result so that the most influential men would retain the best fields left after the patrician newcomer had got his lion's share. In the apportionment of specially reserved lands in the rare cases where these are cultivated, rank by birth as well as social rank acquired through feast-giving etc. would entitle the holders to preferential treatment. In all cases where it was possible, principle F would be invoked to protect men of rank from the operation of principle B, and only the danger of

malcontents emigrating would restrain a headman from pandering to the wishes of his most influential subjects.

G. The principle that title-holders to the best plots must bear a correspondingly large share of the burden of village debts. Of all the factors connected with land tenure, this principle has been the most conducive of change, as will be seen when I come to discuss the causes of modern variations in tenure. It is sad to reflect that one of the first manifestations of contact with western cultures in primitive tribes is a weakening of the bonds of mutual assistance by which these small groups fortified their social structure and thus ensured their continued independent existence.

This concludes the statement of rights and principles governing tenure in the autocratic tribes, and I shall now deal with the democratic group.

*Lists of rights and claims.* Zanniat. Democratic group.

1. *Claims of Chief.*—The Chieftainships of Lumbang and Tashon, in which territories the Zanniat villages lie, were both created by Government after the annexation, and there is therefore no such thing as the Chief's claim to land. Though at the present time both these chiefs receive dues of grain and other natural commodities from their villages, these dues are in no sense based on a right to the land and therefore to the produce of it. In the case of the Lumbang Chief, the dues were granted by Government as a recompense for the work involved in administering the tract. The case of the Tashon Chief is more complicated. The dues paid to him, and now recognised as part of the perquisites of chieftainship, were at one time paid to the defunct Tashon Council. When for administrative convenience that democratic institution was broken up and Tsawn Bik, father of the present Chief and most influential member of the Council, was appointed as Chief of the Tashon Tribal Area, these dues were diverted to his personal use.

Most of these Tashon dues arose out of the Tashon-Zanniat war, when the Tashon rallied their more warlike neighbours and put most of the Zanniat villages to fire and sword in revenge for the murder of over 80 Tashon elders in cold blood at the village of Lotsawm. When in later years the survivors made peace and returned to the sites of their old homes, their position was virtually slavery and they had to perform numerous unpaid duties for, and pay enormous dues to the still smarting Tashon Council. Some of these dues Government permitted the Zanniat to commute for a cash payment when the Lumbang Tribal Area was formed and a Zanniat Chief appointed at Lumbang. Others form the present Tashon Chief's dues.

It can therefore be seen that neither of the two chiefs of the democratic group has any claim to "Lordship of the Soil" like the autocratic chiefs.

2. *Claims of headman of village.*—Here again changes have occurred through administrative action. In pre-annexation days the democratic villages were governed, like Tashon, by councils of elders (*Nam Kap*) selected for their wisdom and social prestige to represent either village quarters or patrilineal extended families. On government taking over the hills it was held too unwieldy a system to cope with the increased administrative responsibilities, and so the prominent individuals of the day were appointed headman, succession going to their legal heirs. Dues in the form of free labour were granted to them as a reward for their extra duties, but these dues are not based on claims to the land.

However, in actual practice the duties connected with land which the headman has to perform closely resemble those of a headman in the autocratic group, since the allocation of vacant lands, once the responsibility of the council, now tends to devolve upon him.

3. *Claims of the village council.*—The rights of the council in the sphere of land utilisation can be traced in its claims to rates in kind consisting of stipulated measures of grain and pots of *zu* payable by all households, including those of members of the council themselves. While in no case could the council claim the right to sequester and redistribute plots in the manner possible in autocratic villages, on certain occasions, acting with the consent of the whole village, councils such as that of Tsawngkhua organised the sale of a large portion of the village lands to a neighbouring village, utilising the sale proceeds for communal purposes. The councils could and did organise distribution of land over which no cultivation titles were held.

4. *The village community as a whole.*—With the exception of minor variations in the rules regarding the cutting of thatch, and the restriction imposed by a single order of the Lumbang village council forbidding the cutting of pine trees in their jurisdiction without permission of and payment to the council, the rights of the village community are precisely as described for the autocratic group.

5. *The individual member of the community.*—Here again there is an almost exact identity with the claim under this head in the autocratic group. There is, however, an interesting difference in the method in which provision is made for the needy to have access to cultivable land. In the autocratic group hereditary cultivation titles are restricted to one per field, the balance going to the headman for redistribution, but in the democratic group no such restriction exists, and hereditary titles (on *ngawtawn ram* or *saihnem ram*) can be accumulated over any number of plots. But, and this is a very important point, the title-holder is not permitted to refuse access for purposes of cultivation to any person wanting to use fields which the title-holder himself is not using. The parallel effect of these two systems will become more apparent when the practice of land tenure is examined.

The elders of BUALKHUA, pioneers in slate-roofed stone-walled houses.

6. *The individual cultivator.*—Under this heading also claims are identical with those in the autocratic group, though the dues paid on agricultural produce are considerably less.

Such are the claims of the democratic group. It will have been noticed that no mention is made of the priests, who in this group number nine to each village. This is because they get no dues except a share of the animals which they kill on behalf of the village community, as a reward for the duties connected with ritual. In this connection it should not be noted that almost the entire Zanniat tribe has been converted to the Pau Chin Hau cult, and in a few years, perhaps even by now, village priests will have disappeared for ever.

*The principles effecting rights to land.*—In this respect there are fundamental differences between the autocratic and democratic groups. Principles A, B and F, which loom so large in the Zahau tenure, do not exist among the democrats, except in so far as the headmen have assumed the old council function of arranging distribution of unclaimed plots. Principles C, D and E operate in exactly the same way as they do in the autocratic group.

So much for the rights and principles of land tenure in the democratic group. This concludes the outline of the old systems from which all existing tenures in the Falam subdivision have sprung, and brings me to the final assessment of the working of these conflicting claims and principles in the present day, curbed as they are by administrative action, and modified by educational propaganda and the effect of Mission proselytism.

*Land tenure in practice.*—So far no mention whatsoever has been made of the areas called *bul ram*, in which individual rights of alienation of land by sale have come into being. This term must be carefully used, for while in the autocratic group it connotes individual right of sale of land, in the Tapawng and Sipawng villages it describes fields over which only a right of cultivation is held, having superseded for conversational purposes the traditional term *ngawtawn ram.* Perhaps the very use of the word indicates a tendency to conversion of the old rights to the new—certainly some villagers in this area have instituted a sort of private due of *lohual zu* from persons cultivating plots which they cannot use, a due which would be only too easy to convert into an ever-increasing rent.

At any rate nowhere does *bul ram* mean more than that title holders have the right to sell or rent their land. Though it represents the furthest point of advance towards " civilised " conceptions of the right way to own land, I am thankful to say that none of the other dreadful concomitants of civilised tenure have encroached upon the freedom of Chin village life—as yet there are no trespass laws, no closed shooting and fishing rights, no stoppages of rights of way with landowners and land-workers belabouring each other from either side of a barricade.

The villages where individual right of sale and renting of land is recognised are :—Tashon tribal area : the Tashon group, the Lente group and Hmunli. Lumbang tribal area : the Lumbang-Parte-Lati-Kulzam group, the Vazang Ngawn group, Bualkhua and Phaizawl. Laizo tribal area : the Laizo seven villages, Sunkhla and Ramkhlo. The Khuangli tribal area : Khuangli and Khuangli Dihai. The Zahau tribal area : Zakhlir.

All these villages are grouped across the centre of the subdivision, around the once paramount village of Tashon. My enquiries into the origin of *bul ram* convinced me that it is of comparatively modern growth, and that even in Tashon, where it is supposed to have originated, there are distinct traces of an older and less individualised system analogous to those described in the foregoing pages of this chapter. For instance in Tashon rent for plots is payable, not to the individual claiming ownership and who works the plot when he so desires, but to the eldest surviving male of his clan resident in the village. In the Lumbang, Khuangli, and Laizo tracts it has appeared within the memory of living ancients. In the Laizo seven villages it is only at this moment in process of evolution.

Although not the Chief of the Laizo Tribal Area, the Headman of Hmunpi is in the eyes of his fellows the senior member of the ruling clan in Laizo, and as such he exercised a right of distribution over all the land in which the seven villages are situated, and the *lohual zu* was in all cases delivered to him. Now he claims that this right of distribution is in fact absolute ownership, carrying with it a right to collect rent.

Right of sale has already brought with it the evil of absentee ownership, as in the Tashon, Lumbang, and Vazang Ngawn groups sales of land are recognised even when purchasers live in other villages of the same group, which may be several miles away and which in all other respects are autonomous units. Elsewhere right of sale is restricted to transactions between people living in the same village.

Apart from the vital right under the old systems of all persons to have sufficient land to cultivate for their needs, the existence of this right of sale has not made any fundamental change in most of the claims and principles of traditional usage. It is still permissible everywhere except at Lente for villagers to collect dry timber for firewood without hindrance, and to cut thatch in fallow fields : people can still hunt and fish where they want and graze their cattle where they like. In Lente and Tashon, both famous for pottery, potters have to pay an annual due for the right to extract clay, but it is questionable whether the blame for this payment can be laid at the door of the *bul ram* tenure, as destruction of a good plot by digging for clay would probably give rise to claims for compensation in any village.

But in its effect on the average level of poverty of the poorer people, and the contentment of the community as a whole, *bul ram* is the most pernicious influence in Chin life.

In my outline of the old systems of tenure among the autocratic and democratic tribes I have stressed the fact that both these systems still exist today in many villages, and that in effect both have produced similar results. Principles C and D in both cases enable the villagers to retain their rights over plots which their ancestors cleared of virgin jungle. There being no right of alienation by sale an individual is prevented from making a profit out of his land titles, while at the same time claims 9 (autocratic) and 6 (democratic) *ensure that every resident in the village has a sufficiency of land for his needs.*

But where the right of sale exists there is nothing to prevent a wastrel from losing his entire patrimony of lands, to the detriment of his successors, as well as his other material wealth. Claims 9 and 6 noted above cannot operate in conjunction with an individual right of sale and renting, and thus there are many villagers who have no land and a few who have much, which results either in migration or in a large and discontented body of landless rent-payers such as exists in Tashon. At present *Bul ram* encroaches where the land is poorest—in an area where the fertility of the soil is such that it is only by the hardest of work that a man can gain for himself sufficient food to last himself and his family throughout the year. Obviously therefore the reduction of the production-work equation by addition of a rent, which will probably be levied in kind, is an extremely serious matter. The whole problem of changes in tenure towards individualism is fraught with the gravest danger, not only to the people themselves, but to the security of the province of Burma as a whole, which cannot afford to be enclosed in a horseshoe of inaccessible hills inhabited by a dissatisfied peasantry.

But before discussing modern problems in detail, I propose to examine such changes of the past as are susceptible of accurate analysis, in order to show if possible something of the mechanism of these transitions, and thus facilitate the task of forecasting future developments. In so doing I shall be repeating much of what I have already written in the article already referred to in " Man ", but as that excellent publication may not find its way into the hands of the administrators for whom this monograph is primarily intended, this course is unavoidable.

For my first example I take the Khuangli tract, in which the tenure varies from *bul ram* with a right of sale to the oldest known form, that existing in the Zahau tract and already described in full in the first part of this chapter. It clearly illustrates the operation of principle G, through which the title-holders of the best plots, in a much greater degree than the ordinary villager, had to bear their share of payment of indemnities necessitated by a serious tribal defeat or other calamity.

Some thirty years before the annexation the Khuangli sub-tribe, together with its vassal villages of Ngawn, was called upon by the then paramount Tashon to pay a very heavy indemnity for an abortive attack on the Zahau village of Rallang. The fine was exacted as was customary at the time, in mithan, gongs, guns, and other valuable articles.

The mutual obligation system demanded that the holders of cultivation titles on the best plots should put up the major portion of this untoward payment, and, it being held that possession of the best plots was synonymous with material plenty, these men were ordered to pay their share. Material riches, however, were not always co-existent with rights over the best land; the wealth normal to a person having productive plots might have been dispersed temporarily by the holding of one of the great ceremonial feasts, or by supplying wives for several sons, or by sacrifice for illness. In such cases of inability to pay, others who volunteered to shoulder the burden were rewarded by the headman with an exchange of plots, the men who paid up taking the plots of the men who could not do so, and *vice versa*.

While outlying villages escaped further disasters, thereby preserving their tenure, Khuangli itself went from bad to worse. Exaction of still more fines so impoverished them that the villagers actually found themselves without sufficient material wealth to pay bride-price for their wives, and so cultivation titles became transferable in this connection. The continued use of land titles as bride-price units loosened the old strict rules governing tenure and a new conception of land was evolved. It was no longer solely a means to the end of satisfaction of hunger: it was negotiable property.

This conception brought with it a realisation that it was against the personal interests of individuals to allow others freedom to cultivate land over which they held cultivation titles. Such plots, swelled in numbers by unorthodox additions through bride-price for which there was no special ruling under customary law, exceeded in many cases the traditional quota of one plot per field. The practice of renting these plots became general, first for pots of liquor (on the analogy of *lohual*) and then for greater prices, and now the only remnant of the old regime is the prohibition of sale by an emigrant, whose plots revert to the headman for disposal with the poor lands on the high ridges. Right of cultivation has been metamorphosed into right of alienation. This is an interesting example of the way in which the old order has to give place to the new when unforeseen liabilities make continuance of it impossible. The necessity of settling huge public debts creates a disequilibrium in tribal economics, and hitherto unknown uses of various rights are created to make up the balance.

Other changes have been caused as a result of direct administrative action, among which the most outstanding examples are those resulting from the delineation of village boundaries soon after annexation. At that time our knowledge of the people and their dialects and customs was at its minimum, the country was still in a state of ferment, rebellions and rumours of rebellion being the order of the day. A number of the real headman and elders were in hiding for fear of arrest by Government, and most of the interpreters were plainsmen of doubtful character whose chequered careers had led them into the hills as a refuge. It was felt

that village boundaries had to be demarcated with the utmost despatch to simplify administration and facilitate the construction of roads, etc. In the circumstances then prevailing the most accomplished liars often came off best in the negotiations and enquiries that preceded demarcation.

A good example is to be found in the village of Lotsawm, in the Tashon Tribal Area. It was at this village that the murder of the 80 Tashon elders already noted took place, and though the village had been burned and the inhabitants compelled to spend many years in exile in the Kale valley, the hatred felt by the Tashon had not yet died down at the time demarcation took place. When consulted by the administrative officers about the Lotsawm boundaries, the Tashon elders misrepresented the facts and a large part of the Lotsawm lands were maliciously included in the boundaries of Tsawngkhua, a neighbouring village of Zanniat who had remained friendly to the Tashon during the time of their trouble.

Subsequent growth of the population having caused an acute land shortage, the unfortunate villagers of Lotsawm had to buy back from Tsawngkhua some of their own ancestral lands. This area, purchased by the community as a whole through its council, with money raised by a house to house collection, was reserved as communal. The right to permit cultivation of it was vested in the council, cultivators having to pay one pot of beer as " talking price." At a still later date further expansion of population necessitated another hunt for land, and as no more was obtainable from Tsawngkhua, Lotsawm had to turn to Hmunli, where the *bul ram* tenure exists, with the right of sale vested in the individual. The purchases in this case were very different from the first, as individual families bought for their own private use isolated plots within the Hmunli jurisdiction.

Thus at the time I made my enquiries there were three forms of tenure co-existent in Lotsawm, that is, one in which absolute right of disposal was vested in the individual (*Bul ram*), one in which sale was prohibited but restricted rights of gift and inheritance were vested in the individual (*Ngawtawn ram*), and one in which all disposal rights were held by the community through its council (*Klang ram*).

I discussed the matter of the plots of *bul ram* bought from Hmunli with the Lotsawm elders, pointing out to them the danger of having in their lands a few plots for which the title-holders could demand rent, a situation which would inevitably create dissatisfaction among those who had titles over more *ngawtawm ram* (see democratic right No. 6), than they could use themselves. Living as they do cheek-by-jowl with Tashon, the people of Lotsawm are fully aware of the methods by which the Tashon Chief has increased his land holdings in his own village to over a hundred plots, and it was easy to convince them that it was better that those having individual disposal rights by sale should relinquish them rather than risk the gradual degeneration of village conditions to the level reached in Tashon. Subsequently a conference of all

householders in the village decided that the plots of *bul ram* bought from Hmunli should be regarded as the *ngawtawm ram* of the purchasers, thus protecting both the individual and community.

Incidentally these sales of land were made without reference to Government, and are typical of the apparently innocuous transactions often occurring among primitive people which, if they pass undetected, can have dangerous repercussions in the economic life of the tribes.

As a final example of changes in tenure I shall take an instance which resulted not from ancient tribal wars or modern administrative interference, but simply from the introduction of the *Pax Britannica.*

It being no longer necessary after the annexation to live for purposes of self-protection in large villages and to cultivate only those fields which admitted of easy defence, pacification of the country started a rush for the hitherto untenable lands on the borders of the Lushai Hills, the Tiddim subdivision, and the plains of Burma. While the majority of the migrants who went to this empty territory were actuated by motives arising out of land shortage or high rents (where *bul ram* existed) in the mother village, a large minority had other and less creditable intentions.

The Ngawn of the northern half of the Khuangli Tribal Area were the first to move in large numbers. It will be remembered that these villages had shared with Khuangli the burden of a huge fine just before the annexation and three or four of the emigrants, seeing an opportunity of capitalising their land titles in the parent village, claimed that the gongs, guns, mithan, etc., which their fathers had subscribed towards the communal indemnity were in fact purchase prices paid to the headman for the land they received, and not shares payable under a traditional system of reciprocal obligations. They brought the matter up before the Government officials and urged that these payments had gained them the right of disposal of their land by sale on migration.

Being few in number, and unable to give any precedent for sale by migrants, they lost their case, but in the meantime the headman had in revenge counterclaimed the right to seize the land of emigrants and dispose of it as his own private property instead of adding it to the public lands available for cultivation by any who needed a plot. This resulted in all holders of cultivation titles in the village (who had hitherto remained neutral) becoming so nervous of their own vested interests that they joined the emigrant *bloc* in any attempt to get the tenure classified and recorded as " private peasant ownership." This case clearly illustrates the impossibility of settling disputes regarding tenure as a unit divorced from the other multiple institutions of society, and it emphasises the necessity of a complete knowledge of institutionalised obligations within the society as a prerequisite to the evaluation of land rights.

To revert to the story of the migrations. The immigrants into empty territory were not restricted as to tribe, and so Ngawn have migrated into the jurisdiction of the Lumbang Zanniat Chief, Hualngo

into Zahau lands, Khualshim into Tashon lands, and so on. In the single case of the migrations into the Zahau area, largely due to the political acumen of the present Chief and his father, adherence to the Zahau system of tenure has been made a condition of settlement, and uniformity exists. But in other tribal areas where the chiefs are " creations " of Government with no land rights outside the boundaries of their own villages, considerable confusion has arisen through each migrant tribal group trying either to transplant its own ancestral tenure, or to invent some other more suited to what it considers its needs of the moment.

These experimental tenures tend to be extremely individualistic, the squatters aiming at establishing a right to disposal of the lands they have cleared, so that if ever they wish to move again, they can sell out. Even in the village of Duhmang, which was founded long after the annexation, the villagers now lay claim to a right of sale of the land they cleared of virgin jungle.

To realise the full implications of these claims, one must first consider the *raison d'etre* of the new villages. Government rightly demanded a say in the disposal of lands which were uninhabited at the time of the annexation, and it has been the generally accepted intention that these vacant lands should be utilised to counteract overcrowding wherever this should occur. Such lands were therefore opened to migrants crowded out of their own villages without any payment as purchase or rent. But if immigrants are to have the right to introduce whatever form of tenure they desire without restriction, there will be nothing to prevent them from clearing large areas every year (though they would get good crops if newly cleared fields were cultivated for two or three years) for no other purpose than to establish a right of alienation by sale on the largest possible area in the shortest possible time. Later immigrants would then have to pay for land given free to the original squatters, and the whole intention of Government would be thwarted. As a matter of fact this is precisely what has happened up to the present time.

The existing situation as regards change in this area can be summarised on the following lines :—

The *bul ram* tenure sanctioning a right of sale by the title-holders has become established over an area roughly one sixth of the whole subdivision, and there is danger of it spreading to newly occupied areas if no check is applied ; that while the origin of *bul ram* cannot be attributed solely to any cause, the unbalancing of tribal economics must be watched in this respect : that where *bul ram* exists unequal distribution of plots, absentee ownership and high rents follow : that collection of such rents whether in cash or kind tends to lower the labour-produce ratio below safe economic limits, thus creating dissatisfaction : that the schools, in which efforts are made to encourage interest in permanent

cultivation, tend to disparage the traditional systems of tenure and aim at complete protection of the small landowner (presumably Providence will look after the rest) by advocating adoption of the *bul ram* tenure: finally that the Mission and their vigorous though unwanted offspring, the Pau Chin Hau group, by aiming at the destruction of the existing religious beliefs, may undermine the rotational organisation of agriculture by communal sacrifice and cause incalculable disturbances in the life of the people.

All the lesser variations in tenure in the Falam subdivision lie between the "old" systems described and the *bul ram* system.

So far throughout my description of tenures I have omitted, for the sake of simplicity, any mention of the term *klang ram*, so often used in contra-distinction to *bul ram*. Like many other Chin terms, *klang ram* has a specific as well as a general meaning.

While only a few villages with small populations and extensive lands have large fertile areas over which no cultivation titles are held, every village has a certain percentage of poor land for which no one troubles to claim titles. Such "unclaimed" areas are *klang ram* in its *specific* sense and they are the nearest approach to communal land that exists in the Chin Hills. Here the newly-weds and the newly arrived, the widows and the orphans scrape a poor but independent living from the soil until inheritance brings them better plots or incapacity forces them to enter some other person's household as unpaid helps, where they get a roof and the run of their teeth in exchange for their labour.

In its *general* sense the term *klang ram* is applied to all areas in which *bul ram* giving a right of private disposal does not exist. For instance the Zahau Chief will say "*Keima ih ram klang ram asi*" meaning "My land is communal land;" in other words it cannot be bought or sold, but is utilised in the best interests of the community as a whole. When so used "*klang ram*" includes land over which cultivation titles are held, such as the *saihrem nam, sumhmuilu*, and *pu ro lo* of the autocratic group, and the *ngawtawn ram* and *saihnem ram* of the democratic group.

Discussion of land tenure with Chins is always apt to be complicated by indiscriminate use of the term in both its senses, and half the misconceptions common about local variations in tenure can be traced to this cause.

I have now given enough detail to make it possible to examine the extent to which an analysis of tenure on the lines laid down by an eminent anthropologist can be utilised to solve the practical problems of the administrator. In the central Chin Hills the first issue is—what should be done about individualistic tendencies; is *bul ram* and private right of sale to be encouraged or checked? A decision on this point automatically answers the questions as to what type of tenure should be fixed for new villages founded in lands vacant at the time of the annexation.

The protagonists of the *bul ram* tenure argue that it is an essential pre-requisite of successful exploitation of the land, and that no person can reasonably be expected to make permanent improvements to his land when there is an ever-present danger of eviction. Superficially this would appear to be true. It can be said with justification that the autocratic group tenure I have outlined gives too much freedom to the headman to abuse his powers by nepotism and favouritism in the granting of plots, but it must be remembered that the occasions on which a headman can justify interference with cultivation titles without causing immediate litigation are very few and far between. At the same time the individualistic tenures are not free from abuse; Lower Burma is a standing example. Here* during lean years when cash for the payment of taxes has been almost impossible to come by owing to the failure of the staple crops, unscrupulous headmen and elders in the *bul ram* areas have been known to force their people to surrender to them plots worth many times the value of the tax, under threat of action on behalf of Government for default. Such transactions, bearing as they do the outward semblance of legal purchases at an opportune moment, often go undiscovered.

My analysis of the tenure of the autocratic group shows that the only right which renders cultivation titles insecure is No. 2, the headman's right of re-distribution of plots. But this right is beneficial to the community as a whole when exercised through principle B, and it is only when principle F operates that trouble is caused. I have never come across a case of villagers violently objecting to subdivision of their plots when such action was necessitated by an increase in population. Again in the democratic group tenure described there is perfect security for the title-holder, while the community is protected by the rule that title-holders cannot prevent others from cultivating plots which they are not using, if all unclaimed lands of the village are already distributed and some cultivators still remain without plots. But the Zahau tenure described is a major source of the power and prestige of the Chief and headmen, and as such it plays its part in consolidating the political structure of the tribe. As the right of disposal emphasises the existence of the headman, so the right of inheritance emphasises the family bond and carries the process of stabilisation a step further into the kinship system. While the prohibition of sale precludes also the squandering of the sources of food, the prevention of rental welds the social structure by accentuating the obligations of the *haves* toward the *have-nots*. Must so satisfactory a tenure be disapproved simply because all headmen are not saints and some have hungry relatives ?

Personally I do not think that this need be so, for consideration of the facts shows that there is a middle course which will not only put an end to the evils attendant upon the introduction of *bul ram*, but will protect the interests of the cultivation title-holder while at the same time preserving the best elements of the old tenures.

* In the central Chin Hills.

Tribal wars now being a thing of the past, major communal crises involving the payment of heavy indemnities are no longer likely to disturb by their occurrence the existing distributions of land, and in addition an established monetary system renders it possible nowadays to spread the payment of small fines in easy gradation throughout the community. Except therefore, in the rare cases where increasing population means that everyone must use less land, the right of the headman in the autocratic group to redistribute *occupied* lands has become redundant, and remains only as a possible source of abuse. Restriction of the headman's right solely to such cases as mentioned above would remove the last danger to the holder of cultivation titles without robbing the " Lord of the Soil " of any of his prestige, or preventing him from extending occasional favours to his relatives and helpers through preferential treatment in the allotment of *unclaimed* plots. The human but troublesome principle F would thus be put out of harm's way. At the same time inclusion of a payment similar to the Kachin " *n'gun japhu* " (lit : strength price) to compensate those who lose land improved by terracing etc., would remove the last valid objection to subdivision of plots for the public weal.

Organisation of tenure in the new polyglot villages along such lines would diffuse the authority of the somewhat artificial political hierarchy through this important aspect of the life of the people, and do something to prevent the headman's office from degenerating, as it appears likely to do there, into a mere echo of the voice of higher authority. It would also preserve wide areas for future expansion by curbing the activities of budding real-estate speculators, while retaining in Chin life that arch-enemy of the greedy, unscrupulous, and bullying headman—freedom for the villager to find " a better 'ole."

## CHAPTER VIII.

## TRADE AND WAGE EARNING.

So far we have examined extraction of raw products of the jungle, and the farming system, which form the bases of Chin life. Let us see what we have. We have seen the Chin raising his staple foods in his fields and augmenting them with vegetables from his garden and flesh from his herds and the wild creatures. We have discovered his sources of wild fruit and honey and unlimited pig food, and his means of getting the wherewithal to shelter himself and his family from the elements.

We have seen with what ingenuity he has organised co-operative effort when such can be used to relieve the tedium of agricultural labour, how he guards against " sweating " this labour, and how by this system he insures himself against illness in critical periods. We have seen something of the responsibilities in the productive sphere of the priests and headmen and elders, and much of the duties and privileges of the common man.

We have seen how his actions in all these activities are not only governed by legal rights, but restrained by political and religious precepts, and stimulated by social and economic advantage. We have traced points of conflict where the attainment of one end, such as easy hunting, militates against success in another direction, such as the preservation of timber supplies.

Last not least we have shown by this study of laborious detail the close integration of all aspects of Chin production. It remains only to sum up the acquisition of cash and goods through trade and wage labour which, though they are important, still touch but the fringe of the true productive activity of this agricultural people, and which for this reason I have left to the very last.

Though it was inevitable, I think it can be said truthfully that when Government annexed the Chin Hills it had to inject cash into the then existing subsistence barter economy mainly in order to make the payment of taxes possible. The early administrators had no means of coping with taxes paid in the local " goods," mithan, pigs, chickens and *seu* of iron, and so they had first of all to introduce money* by giving paid work to the people, and then to collect it again in tax.

On more than one occasion when world economic depression put the few cash-gaining local products such as *lac*, wax and mats out of

* Cash did exist in the Hills prior to the annexation, but the indications are that it was not circulating as a local medium of exchange. It seems probable that what there was had been looted in the plains or received as payment for slaves and goods sold in the plains, and that it was concentrated mostly in Tashon and the Zanniat villages who dealt direct with the plains villages.

the market, a further special effort had to be made to inject more money into the local economy for extraction through the infinitesimal annual tax of Rs. 2/- per house, and the rationing of military posts, the maintenance of roads, and so on was given to local coolie labour. But so far as my experience has gone there is never much surplus money left over after these circuitous transactions have been concluded. However, money has taken hold in the hills, and begun to circulate in a rather sluggish manner. Recruitment to the Army and other Defence Services was opened to the people many years ago and relatively large individual capital holdings have come into being. The way in which these are used is discussed later in Part III. Trade has always existed, but has been modified and extended since the annexation. At the time the first British columns were entering the Chin Hills the paramount village of Tashon had reached its zenith, and its rise to power coupled with its geographical position enabled the inhabitants to establish a stranglehold on trade from east to west which has not entirely disappeared even to this day. Always a powerful group of several hundred houses, the Tashons commanded the lower reaches of the Manipur River valley and the best bridges and fords in the central area. Because they stuck to their large communities and did not split up into small vulnerable hamlets they were always strong enough to survive and counter even the assaults of the vaunted Hakas to the south, and a natural skill in diplomacy coupled with an alliance with the Shans of the Kale valley enabled them to establish their will over all the land from the Phau Va near the Haka country to the borders of Manipur.

Their authority did not extend to administration of the vassal tribes but it did include " protective custody " of the whole area, so that if any tribe behaved badly the Tashons could and would organise a punitive expedition, composed of the toughest men in all the other tribes under their control, to smite the offender. Being sound traders, the Tashons realised the great advantage this situation gave them and soon had all the east and west trade between the Lushai and central Chin hills and the plains concentrating on their village. They forbade the through passage of any goods, so that they extracted a middle-man's profit from every slave, every packet of salt, every mat, every blanket, every ball of wax or *lac*, and from every piece of iron and basket of grain that passed through the central hills.

They achieved this business ideal not only by a show of force, but also by terrifying* the tribes of the interior with wild tales of the horrors of disease and sorcery awaiting any bold enough to visit the plains, so that almost all carrying east of the Manipur was done by their Zanniat tributaries. It was unnecessary to add to the timidity of the plains people, who would in any case never venture into the hills.

* This fear of the haunted plains has persisted in many areas up to the present, and in the old days it had the effect of turning the raiding forays of the central tribes towards north and west rather than east—into the country of the Lushai, the Thado, and the smaller tribes of the Tiddim Subdivision.

In the exchange deals at old Tashon the original units were the *tsi zawl* (a packet of salt) and the *thir pek* (a slab of iron with a hole in it, sufficient for 4 hoes) which were of equal value; the *vawkthia seu* (a piglet with a chest measurement of two handspans from the tip of the middle finger to the tip of the thumb) worth two of the lesser *seu* or one *puanrang* (white blanket); then came the *khuai tsuai* (cake of beeswax) equal in value to 2 *vawkthia seu*, and lastly the *siapi* (cow mithan) valued at 40, 50 or 60 *vawkthia seu* according to the numerical strength of the mithan herds, which often were decimated by rinderpest and other epidemics. The last item shows that even in pre-annexation economics the law of supply and demand had its expected effect on some exchange values, though the adjustment was not as exact as in the case of fully "priced" economics.

At Tashon packets of local salt brought in from the west for sale in the plains were broken up and sold by measure (*berh bu*), eight of which were supposed to weigh one viss, though the tribes of the interior had grave suspicions on this score. Cotton was weighed for sale on a balanced rod which had three notches to which the fulcrum could be moved to give three weights:—60 *khiing, arpi khiing* (hen weight—50k) and 40 *khiing*. The linguistic significance of these names is not now known but the coincidence of the figures 60, 50 and 40 occurring both in this and in the pricing of mithan may hold a clue.

So far as enquiry today can get at the truth, it seems probable that the *seu* price units of the central hills owe their origin to the Tashon middlemen, who needed a medium of exchange which would enable them to assess their rate of profit. This would explain the partial application of pricing in *seu*, and the existence of straight barter deals in trade goods which, like the Lente pots, did not have to pass through Tashon to the markets of the interior.

By 1936 the situation had changed considerably, through trade and inter-village trade both being much freer than of old. Some of the east and west trade still stopped at the Tashon bottleneck, in spite of the fact that their control over the eastern tribes no longer existed and that many hundred individuals of the latter had survived visits to the plains to carry rations for the Frontier Force. But the extent of the reduction in their profits can be seen in their Feasts of Merit. In their heyday during the last half of the 19th century the full list of the traditional feasts in Tashon was about 20, whereas nowadays even the richest men have not progressed beyond the first five.

In the main, trade throughout the central area is still on a barter basis. Manufactured goods such as pots, mats, and blankets are exchanged for grain, but with every year that passes the amount of cash imported into the hills by ex-soldiers and others leads to a steady increase in the cash transactions. Perhaps the greatest single factor in forcing the transition from barter to cash transactions is the annual house-tax, which remains the only necessary object unattainable by any means save

production of cash. Though in 1936 this was only Rs. 2 it amounted to roughly Rs. 15,000 for the Falam Subdivision. This sum took a great deal of finding, and goods were sold for cash which would otherwise have fetched a better value in kind.

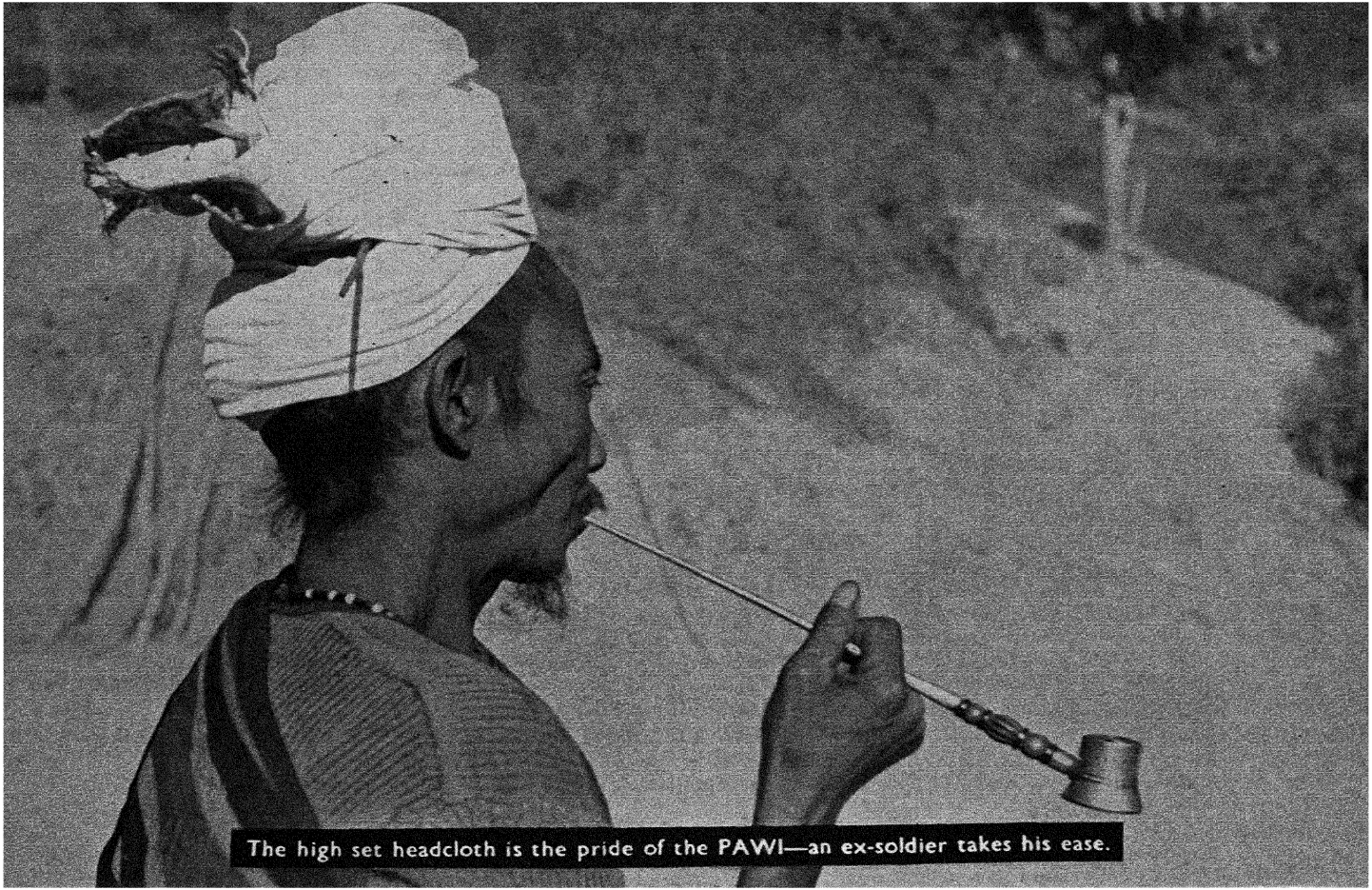
There is a continual movement of petty trade between the villages, blankets from the Laizo seven villages, salt and beeswax from the Zahau tract, new weapons and implements from the Haka village of Vanha, and pots from Lente and Tashon going in all directions. The principal products flowing from west to east are *puanpi* blankets, *darbel* metal pots, pigs, fowls (to Falam), mats, wax and lac : in the reverse direction go Burma salt, rice, iron for hoes, cotton thread (to Laizo) and the knick-knacks of the bazaars. As a corollary to settled conditions inducing a more widespread inter-village trade there is an incipient rebellion against the old rules of hospitality ; people on the more commonly used routes are beginning to feel the strain of feeding a continual stream of traders. If they cease doing so they will in turn cause profound changes in the general values in trading ; a man will have to take account of his expenditure on food and lodging *en route*, and prices of all trade goods will rise in consequence.

Partnership in trading ventures (*puak hlawh*) is frequent ; the commonest procedure being for the sleeping partner financing the business to advance an amount of cash or goods against an agreed return in a specified time. When an animal is the subject of the deal, the partners work out the terms in great detail, allowing even for the responsibility for any creature dying in the short time between the date of a commission purchase and the date of delivery to the purchaser. In such cases the buying agent must produce the horns and ears of the dead animal to prove that he bought the specified size and kind, and that it had really died recently. For *puak hlawh* ventures no interest is charged on cash returned if the agent was unable to find the article desired or attain the object in view, even if a considerable delay occurs. This is not so much lack of appreciation of the interest bearing value of time in finance, as a recognition of the difficulties attached to getting what one wants in the scattered and unsatisfactory markets represented by the hill villages.

We have noted that the place of trade in the local economy is merely marginal* to the main body of wealth production, and we can now pass from its quantitative importance to its qualitative significance as one of the media through which cash is finding its way into the local economy.

In Part III it will be shown that the whole trend of evidence on Chin distribution and consumption points towards a conception of wealth in terms of disposal of goods rather than accumulation of them, and we must therefore start off first with an examination of how transition to a cash economy will affect this trend, and what part trade is playing in the matter.

* More quantitative evidence might prove that in the case of Laizo, Lente and Tashon this is not the case, and that without their trade in blankets and pots these villages would not get food to live, but it holds good in most villages.



The high set headcloth is the pride of the PAWI—an ex-soldier takes his ease.

Firstly there is the fact that trade with the Falam bazaar is increasing the use of cash, and that the mere existence of a medium of exchange negotiable in all markets in itself opens up vast new fields of economic choice. Secondly there is the fact that most of the goods offered for sale by the bazaar shops are articles not absorbable into the ordinary Chin channels of utilisation of resources. Thirdly there is the fact that competition between the two main fields of choice must result in some diminution of the resources going into the traditional channels (or the shops in the bazaar would go bankrupt). Fourthly there is the fact that each such diminution will devaluate to a corresponding degree the system of investment through feasting, since what goes into the bazaars is obviously not coming back in the form of shares of meat and liquor as interest for feasts previously held. Fifth and lastly, the bazaar purchases, because they cannot be absorbed in the same way as indigenous resources, tend to add to the total of unspent goods accumulating in the houses, and throw emphasis on the wealth of possession instead of the traditional wealth of "disposal."

This does not mean that no bazaar products are of any use to the Chin—galvanised iron sheeting alone, ugly though it is, may yet be the saving of the thatch burning situation—but articles such as torches, second-hand European coats, solar topies, umbrellas, tables, chairs and the like, which only take the place of cheaper and hardly less effective local objects, are examples of the type of thing which pride of possession alone is bringing into the economic picture.

In his reaction to the increased purchasing power of money the Chin is not alone. Many writers* on the tribal economics of Africa have drawn attention to the serious consequences of this change in values from pride of utilisation to pride of possession. Everywhere it has brought with it that veneration for accumulated resources which is one of the worst characteristics of western economic thought; everywhere it tends to widen out of all knowledge the visible gap between rich and poor, and destroy the relative contentment characteristic of societies in which a man is called rich by virtue of what he spends, so that, paradoxically, in becoming rich he has to make himself "poor" by spending lavishly on his still poorer neighbours.

There is no denying that the transition from the ancient barter trade, which aimed at supplying the necessities of the local economy, to the new cash trade which increasingly ties Chin economy to the markets of the world outside, is actually taking place, and that it is potent with danger to the traditional avenues of spending. There is also no denying that the existence of wage earning opportunities is accelerating the transition. There is a need for much more attention to this aspect of rural economics throughout Burma if we are to avoid the tragedies of Africa, where the partial collapse of tribal life and values under economic pressure has resulted in many abuses.

* L. P. Mair, I. Schapera and many others in their books, and in articles in "Africa," the Journal of the Institute of African Languages and Culture.

# PART III.

## CHAPTER IX.

## ECONOMICS OF THE HOUSEHOLD.

In view of the fact that the household is the basic and most important unit in the Chin economy it is essential to drive home the principal difference in function of resources used in this and in the larger units, and the part played by the reactions within the household in determining the nature and working of these larger units. In the first place it is in the household that the critical question—what must we eat to exist—has to be settled. In the second place the individuals of the household, by virtue of sex or seniority, put forward many diversified claims both to participation in the "existence minimum" of home consumed resources and to specific shares in the available surpluses.

The nature and quantity of the surpluses available after settlement of the "existence minimum" formulate subsequent economic choices in the household itself and determine the larger groups which will be called in to assist and share in their disposal. The larger groups themselves may increase or shrink. The wish of a son or daughter may add a new constellation of relatives-in-law to the kin group, the irascibility or greed of the parents alienate a patrilineally related group to the point of severance of relations, and so on.

This description therefore begins with an account of the relative position of the individual members within the household, their respective duties and responsibilities and the rights that go with them. This is followed by a short restatement of the ways in which the household acquires its capital—a house, fields, gardens and implements—the organisation of productive activity and the storage of the agricultural products which loom so large in the local economy. Then comes a description of consumption in the home, the ways of cooking and the balance of diet, the types of beer and their uses ; the provision of clothing and shelter, and finally an outline of the surpluses which form the subject of distribution and consumption in the kinship, *veng* and village units which are dealt with in subsequent chapters.

We have noted that the average household consists of a man and his wife and children.* It is the duty of the man to succour and support his wife and family, to provide wives for his sons and arrange husbands for his daughters. It is the duty of the wife to serve and obey her husband, to till his fields and breed his children, to supply him with

* In the Goitre Report of 1940, (p. 77) 2.6 is given as the average number of surviving children.

nicotine water†, to feed and clothe her family and to guide them all in the way of good living. To the children falls the duty of respecting their elders and assisting in all their works.

Side by side with these duties goes a long list of privileges of which I give the main points. The man has the right to the last word in disposal of the family resources; the wife has the right to speak her mind in the family council, the right to equality in status in the Feasts of Merit‡ and the right of joint participation with her husband in their household sacrifices. All the children have the right to food, shelter and protection and in addition daughters may claim the production of *rawlhan* when they marry and sons the bride-price of their wives. Their specific duties and privileges towards each other are expressly provided for in the rules of inheritance and *ruangpawm* pairing.* The acknowledgment of the woman's share in household production is implicit in the ruling that her children inherit all "capital" in the form of land titles, livestock and other goods acquired during her period of cohabitation with the master of the house, and also in the division of household property on divorce.

All these reciprocal obligations within the family interact to one main end—to produce enough to feed the family and leave a surplus for personal and social ends. For whatever one of the privileges we take other than the right to be fed, we find that fulfilment demands use of surplus goods. Whether it is a Feast of Merit or a *Nulam* feast; bride-price or *rawlhan*§; sacrifices for prosperity or illness; all require the expenditure of grain or livestock or both. But some stock must be kept for breeding and some grain as seed for the next year, and on top of this an average family of five persons will require about 2½ *han* (say 200 lbs.) of grain a month as subsistence.

It will be seen therefore that there must be loyal cooperation, hard work and sound management if the surplus is to materialise, and that between the numerous rival claims there will be much anxious inter-comparison before the fate of the surplus can be settled. The wife and also adult children will always be consulted in the matter, but the husband has the final word. The arguments do not always go smoothly, but divorce and the severance of relations known as *khak* are standing reminders to all parties that there is a limit to selfishness and greed or squandermania.

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† All Chin women incessantly smoke hubble-bubble pipes, the nicotine impregnated water being given to the husband as a stimulant. The liquor is held in the mouth a few moments and then spat out. It is said to be very refreshing, and is the first thing offered to a guest.

‡ When a man who has already held some of the Feasts of Merit marries again, he must go through the *Nulam* (Woman's Dance) series till his wife is brought to his own level of seniority before going on with the main series.

* Division of property and the *ruangpawm* system are described in Chapter XIII.

§ Grain gifts to newly weds from paternal relatives of the bride.

# TABLE OF NORMAL DEBITS AND CREDITS OF A ZAHAU HOUSEHOLD.

| | DEBIT. | CREDIT. |
|---|---|---|
| Social | (*i*) Government Tax.<br>(*ii*) Chief's Due. | (*i*) Political, legal, and social security, main roads and bridges.<br>ditto. |
| | (*iii*) Headman's Dues.<br>(*iv*) Council Collections.<br>(*v*) Effort in public work | (*ii*) Organised public work in village, village roads and field paths, water supply, house, help in adversity, controlled agricultural practice, including land to cultivate. |
| | (*vi*) Priest's Dues. | (*iii*) Spiritual protection, as unit of whole community. |
| | (*vii*) Blacksmith's Dues. | (*iv*) Agricultural implements and weapons. |
| | (*viii*) Expenditure on Feasts. | (*v*) Community life and amusement, *hausa sa* and beer. |
| Kinship | (*i*) *Dues to Paternal kin. | (*i*) *Help at all crises in life when capital expenditure is necessary, such as marriage, payment of fines, etc. Right to inherit land titles, house and stock. |
| | (*ii*) Dues to affinal kin. | (*ii*) Help on all ceremonial occasions. |
| | (*iii*) Agricultural assistance to kin. | (*iii*) Agricultural assistance from kin. |

* In a later chapter these two balanced units of the kinship reciprocities will be examined in connection with the *tefa* system of debt repayment. When in need of help as noted in the credit column, Ego will go to his paternal kin. If they are unable or unwilling to help him he will have to appeal to an outsider to undertake this kinship responsibility and will in return give to this outsider, whose ***tefa*** " son " he becomes, the dues otherwise payable to his paternal relatives.

| | DEBIT. | CREDIT. |
|---|---|---|
| Household | (*i*) Time and labour spent on agriculture, hunting, fishing, gathering forest products. | (*i*) Crops and livestock; fish and meat of wild animals; fruit, honey and other forest edibles, *lac*, *ruangal* bamboo and other forest products used in trade. |
| | (*ii*) Time and energy spent on paid labour. | (*ii*) Cash for tax, coloured cotton yarns, needles etc. |
| | (*iii*) Cash or kind loaned or sold. | (*iii*) Interest or profit in cash or kind. |
| | (*iv*) Goods, labour and time spent in household and personal sacrifices. | (*iv*) Spiritual protection for the household and individual members thereof. Kin gatherings. |

In the Table above I have condensed the normal debits and credits of a Chin household into a form compact enough to show what items of expenditure *must* be faced and what can shelved until prosperity comes. Into the first category go items (*i*) to (*vii*) of the Social Dues, item (*iii*) of the Kinship Dues, and items (*i*) and (*ii*) of the household debits, with number (*iv*) under this head an ever-present possibility if illness occurs. The remainder of the dues, including the flesh dues to the Headman and Blacksmith which are not separately shown, are payable only when feasts are given and in this sense amount to a super-tax on surpluses.

To summarise the ways of acquiring the means of production and shelter, we can take out the relevant sections of the Table. For instance the Social Credits include provision by the community through its headman and specialists of land to cultivate, a house, implements and an organised system of agricultural production; the Kinship Credits show the right to inherit both titles to good land and live-stock and the privilege of agricultural assistance from relatives. We have noted all these in detail in Part II, and here we need do no more than underline the fact that the balance shows remarkably good returns in Credits against all items in the Debit column. With no expenditure in cash the average villager can acquire all that he needs to live, and a large proportion of his debits—the flesh dues—are payable only if and when he has sufficient surplus to hold feasts.

The detail of storage of grain was described in Chapter III and here we need only examine the problem of disposing of perishable goods which, when ready for consumption, must be got rid of at once. These include

fruit, vegetables and meat. Lacking almost all knowledge of drying or pickling large quantities of meat and vegetables, the Chin must eat up all at once or do without. So far as fruit and vegetables are concerned this means nothing more than that there are seasons when he does without. He knows how to dry fish, but for beef or pork the situation is very different. His difficulty is not that he can only get meat seasonally but that most of his stock is so bulky that it is quite impossible for the individual family to consume it themselves. We therefore find, firstly, that there is a well-organised system of disposal through sacrifice and traditional sharing, which protects the producer from the type of consumer who waits till an animal is killed before saying " Sell at my price or let it rot "—and secondly that the meat of large animals does not appear often on the menu.

But the absence of beef and pork from the average Chin diet does not mean that he gets no animal protein—I have noted in Chapter VI that grubs, reptilia, small mammals and birds add a good deal in the way of flavouring and some vitamins to the daily diet.

In the recent survey* of local diet it was found that while the calorie count was high the vitamin content was low, particularly with regard to vitamins A and C. This might be expected in an area where butchers do not function and where green vegetables are few in variety and inadequate in quantity. Fortunately for the Chin his beer is rich in vitamin B and since even children drink it from their earliest years there is no great deficiency noticeable in this direction.

From a knowledge of what the Chin eats and the high calorie content of the average diet one can assume that quantitatively he does not do so badly—a tribute to his skill as an agriculturist, for no expert would classify the central Chin Hills as a particularly rich agricultural area—and that whatever other effect arises out of his satisfaction of needs through use of surpluses in public feasts, it does not generally result in undernourishment in the home. In this connection it should be noted that most feasts are given in the latter part of the dry season, and that therefore there is a period of extra good feeding with super-charging in animal protein and vitamins A and B just before the period of hardest work, the beginning of the agricultural year. Similarly sacrifices for illness result in a temporary enrichment of the family diet at a time when bodily resistance most needs building up.

A remarkable fact in previous studies† of Chin diet is that no mention was made of methods of cooking other than boiling. Boiling is undoubtedly the most common way of cooking, but other means are used when some picnic rations are prepared, and as cooking technique has a profound effect on food values and on the problem of food preserva-

* See page 90 " Report on Goitre and General Medical Survey, Chin Hills 1940."

† See page 181 " Chin Hills Gazetteer " and page xiv " Report on Goitre and General Medical Survey " 1940.

tion on journeys, I propose to go into some detail in this connection. In the following paragraphs I give the Zahau names for various dishes.

*Travel rations.*—Nowadays these are regarded in the light of picnic snacks, but in pre-annexation days they were the most common forms of cooked food. Then every village stood in danger of a raid and in certain seasons every man, woman and child in the hills had to be prepared for battle or instant flight. The travel rations consist of *saang, faang fun, vai kan* and *vainiim kan.*

*Saang.*—A millet called *faang klawr,* which is remarkable for its extreme tackiness when cooked, is used for *saang.* After husking the grain is soaked in water for a night and then pounded again until the grains burst. It is then wrapped in banana leaf into convenient sized packets, each representing one meal for one man, and put into a pot of boiling water to cook. The packets can be stored for a considerable time, especially in the dry weather, the sticky cakes remaining wholesome for two to three months.

*Faang fun.*—This is a variation of *saang,* marrow or brains being mixed with the grain. Owing to the meat content it can only be kept a short time and must be stored where the air can get at it and not in the packets in which it is cooked.

*Vai kan.*—The name means roasted millet, *faang klawr* again being the variety used. The grain is soaked in water for a minute or two to damp it thoroughly and is then steamed as if to prepare it for fermenting, after which it is spread on mats to dry in the sun. In the final stage of preparation the swollen grain is roasted in a *peibung** until it bursts like puffed wheat. The whole is then pounded with salt or honey and made into convenient lumps which are taken on hunting parties, etc. *Vai kan* is regarded as the best of all foods for " sticking to the ribs " but it is very dry, especially the salted variety, and for this reason is not used during hot weather in areas where water is scarce.

*Vainiim kan.*—As the name implies, this is roasted maize and it is prepared in exactly the same way as *vai kan.* Occasionally when it is to be eaten the same day bananas are pounded into the grain as a change of flavour.

*Daily food in the home.*—The forms of cooked food which are now described are those usually eaten at home, where liquids can be stored. It is probable that the reason that previous investigators described boiling as the only form of Chin cooking is that they saw only food eaten in the home.

*Thiah var.*—This is the commonest food of the present day and it is generally made with maize, millet being reserved for beer preparation

* The *peibung* is the traditional grain roasting pot, shaped rather like a beer pot but with a large hole in one side. Its very existence proves the antiquity of the roasting method of cooking.

or the travel rations. The maize is pounded to break the grains and then sieved and boiled in water. It is eaten with any sauce that is going, after the liquid has been drained off. When consumed as a broth with the water in which it is cooked it is called *ti sawp*, and if pumpkin and other leaves are added as flavouring it becomes *buh ber*. A plain rice broth made like *ti sawp* is called *tsen tserh*, this also being convertible into *buh ber* by the addition of aromatic leaves.

*Sawh tsiar*.—This is a hot-pot, a little meat being first boiled down and finally various grains being added and stewed in the broth. A slightly more richly flavoured variation which is a prime favourite with Chin women is called *haang er*. *Haang er* is made during feasts, all the water in which meat is boiled being kept and reboiled with grain as a thick broth.

*Pawng hut*.—This is the useful method of cooking the *thal* beans. The beans are mixed with a little *faang klawr* millet and steamed in a double pot, newly gathered beans cooked in this way being regarded as the tastiest of all vegetable dishes. Incidentally one may note here a stage in the preparation of the *thantre* and *busul* sulphur beans for the pot which is the bane of all touring officers. Sulphur beans are poisonous unless soaked in water for some time before eating. They are first boiled in a pot specially reserved for this purpose and then taken to the nearest stream to soak for two days in running water in a wooden trough. After this soaking they are recooked and can then be eaten without ill effect. The stench of sulphuretted hydrogen given off during the soaking period is enough to turn the strongest stomach.

*Relishes*.—There are many of these, made of all manner of things from mushrooms to dried fish, but the commonest is a sort of pork essence called *sa thu* (Lit. rotten meat) which has the smell and taste of Bovril. As the flavour is strong a little goes a long way and the Chin is therefore able to spread the benefit of a little meat over a long period. A quantity of *sa thu* is to be found kept in a *kheng kum* wooden platter on the rack above the main fireplace in almost every Chin home. When fresh supplies are required a little pork is cooked and placed damp on a platter. An equal mixture of salt and *sa thu* is sprinkled over it, followed by a few drops of hot water, and the whole is pounded into a paste. It is then left on the rack to simmer and ferment and is ready for use in about three days. *Sa thu* finds a place in most meals eaten at home.

So much for the culinary art of the Chin. While he has no great variety, he knows enough to make special dishes for specific occasions, and to alter the flavour of his otherwise monotonous diet by the use of relishes derived from the products of the forest and the rivers.

The other main household use of grain is in the preparation of beer, and I will now go on to describe the varieties of beer, and their uses. Fortunately distilled liquor is rare except among the Laizo villages who learnt this fatal skill from their Haka neighbours. Many a scarred face

lacking an ear or a nose is grim reminder to the Hakas of the bloody scuffles which are so common at their feasts. It is to be hoped that administrative action will prevent the spread of stills throughout the mountain villages. The main point is that distilled spirit has no traditional standing in this area and no place in the ritual at feast or sacrifice, so no further mention need be made of it.

In the central Chin Hills there are three recognised types of beer :— *zu ha*, made from first quality cleaned millet : *zu pi*, made of husked millet mixed with its chaff : and *vainiim zu*, made from maize. *Zu pi* is the commonest and this quality is the standard below which pots of beer supplied in kinship and social reciprocities may not fall. A pot of *zu pi* is not referred to, as one would think, as *zu pi bel khat* (*zu pi* pot one) but simply as *zu pi khat*, this being the unit for all petty village fines. A pot or two of *zu pi* will be found in almost every house, as it keeps as long as three years without serious deterioration, if stored in a dry place.

*Zu ha*.—Though strictly speaking the name refers to a beer made from pure millet, a mixture containing three parts of cleaned millet to one of cleaned maize will pass under this title. In preparation the cleaned grain is steamed in a perforated *bel* over a pot of water and spread out to cool when cooked. A cake of yeast is then powdered and sprinkled thinly over it and after careful mixing the grain is put into a *zu bel*.* It is left for a night or two with only a cloth over the top, to allow the gases of fermentation to escape, and the top of the *bel* is then sealed with layers of plantain leaf tied over the neck. Though at a pinch *zu ha* will keep for a year, it is generally prepared about a month before it is to be consumed.

*Zu pi*.—Except that after pounding the millet is mixed with its chaff before going into the pot, the preparation is exactly the same as for *zu ha*. The liquor is less sweet and potent than *zu ha* and costs about half the price, a *bel* being worth one rupee at the time these notes were made.

*Vainiim zu*.—This is made of pounded maize, which after being soaked for a day to soften is treated like the millet used for *zu ha*. Like *zu ha*, it will not keep for long and is therefore prepared shortly before use. This *zu*, being the cheapest, is most often used in the home on day to day occasions.

The purpose to which the *zu* is to be put is the guiding factor in the method of broaching. When it is to be given to the elders at a feast a straight tube† is stuck down into the grain with two marks on it just above the grain level. Water is poured into the pot till it reaches the top mark and each drinker sucks at the tube till the liquid falls to the second mark, when more water is added till the first mark is reached

* A special tall type of pot used exclusively for beer, it holds on an average two *rel* measures (Zahau) of millet, producing about 15 pints of beer.

† *Zu* served this way is called *zu peng*, while siphoned *zu* is called *zu klawr*.

again and another drinker takes his turn. For the *hoi polloi* at feasts and for ordinary occasions beer is siphoned into bowls and ladled out in cupsful. Siphoning mixes good and bad qualities and does not appeal to connoisseurs.

All the varieties of Chin beer are cheap and clean and all seem to have a strong nutritive value, since it is quite common to come across old men who have lived on little else for years. Expert opinion has emphasised its value in supplying vitamin B, while its position as a bringer of good cheer in Chin lives is unchallenged. It is not very potent and those accustomed to it can drink alarming quantities with little effect on their sobriety. Though there is a certain amount of drunkenness and some illicit amours and festal scuffles can be attributed to its use, I am convinced that *zu* is at present more of a blessing than a curse to its drinkers.

It is now possible to see more clearly what place household consumption takes in the disposal of local resources. The nature of the daily food makes one point quite clear—*that the killing of mithan, cattle and pigs is not part of the normal routine,* and that for daily nourishment the Chin depends more on his fields and forests than on his stock. We might therefore say that his stock represents a surplus largely used outside his household consumption. The next point is how much of his grain he can expect to save as a surplus. I have noted in Chapter III that even a 50 *han*§ crop of grain will be celebrated by a *faang za aih* dance, and therefore it is reasonable to regard a crop of anything from 50 *han* upwards as bumper. I have also recorded 30 *han* as the minimum quantity of grain necessary to support an average family, and 20 *han* therefore emerges as the surplus of a good year, with the normal average surplus something below it.

In general it will be found that the *thal* crop is kept solely for consumption in the home as it cannot be used for the manufacture of beer, and as much as possible of the *ful* grain crop is converted into beer (at about 3 pots to the *han*) for use with surplus live-stock in the various reciprocal activities which will be described in the next chapter. Incidentally fermentation of grain for beer does not waste the solid residue ; this by-product is added to the pig food and gives strength and substance to the unappetising bulk of banana stalk which is the other main ingredient.

The normal* farming surpluses may therefore be said to consist of whatever stock has reached slaughterable age during the year, and staple

§ A *han* is a large basket holding from 50 to 80 lbs. of grain.

* The villages of the Manipur River Valley are worse off, on the whole, than those of other areas. The relatively heavy population and consequent overcultivation, the constant jungle burning and its attendant erosion, and the prevalence of private peasant ownership and high rentals, all contribute towards reducing the work/produce ratio to so low a point that in many places coolie work must be done to augment the results of agricultural effort.

cereals which may be anything up to 70 *han* out of a 100 *han* crop, but which in the average household is more likely to lie between 10 and 20 *han*. In abnormal cases crises such as a death in the household may entail slaughter of breeding stock and even consumption of seed grain.

But in addition to the production and consumption of food within the household, there is the joint utilisation of the house itself, the implements and weapons, the firewood and the clothes woven by the women, and so on. The fact that so much of life's necessities can be produced at home in most villages tends to overshadow the existence of trade, wage-earning on a small scale, and the sale of forest products as the means of producing small cash surpluses left over after tax has been paid. I did not make any detailed quantitative examination of this surplus, having concentrated almost exclusively on the farming system, and thereby missed important evidence on the degree to which cash has entered the local economy. I invite the special attention of my contemporaries to this error of omission.

We have noted that certain villages specialise in the production of articles for barter or sale. Tashon and Lente produce earthernware pots, Duhmang and Tisen *ruangal* mats, the Haka village of Vanha metal implements, and the Laizo villages cotton blankets. All of these activities impose special conditions on the household economy of the manufacturers. Pot-making and weaving are women's jobs, mat-making and smith's work the crafts of men. While these crafts take up a good deal of the " leisure " of the craftsmen and craftswomen, they do not entirely oust agriculture from their annual labours. Every craftsman tills a field, and the percentage of the household time spent on each productive activity depends largely on the extent and fertility of their land. Where plots are large and fertile they receive the bulk of the effort ; where land shortage or sterility pinches the family budget, the alternative sources of income are exploited more fully.

Thus one finds the Laizo seven villages spend more time on their blanket weaving, and Lente and Tashon more time on their pottery than Duhmang and Tisen, both of which have large fertile lands, do on their mat-making. In Laizo, Lente, and Tashon specialised local handicrafts serve to produce, through barter, foodstuffs to make up the *farming* deficits, whereas the Duhmang matweaving and the normal weaving cloth activities in all villages serve to provide necessities other than food. Though the household decides what percentage of its resources will go in daily food and what is surplus, it must not be supposed that the household acting alone can decide what is to be done with the surplus. It does not exist in an economic vacuum any more than an individual does ; and the fact that their related families give feasts, enjoy additions through birth and marriage and suffer loss through death means that any householder is liable at any time to be called upon to meet one or another of the many traditional liabilities to his kin, which naturally

imposes restrictions on his available surplus. It is true that he *can* refuse at the cost of severance of relations, but such action would be dictated more by a psychological than economic factors, for it entails a good deal of loss of 'face' and would only be resorted to where a deep animosity existed. In the majority of cases a great effort would be made to meet whatever obligations arose, even at the expense of solvency.

At the same time households who propose to give Feasts of Merit, at which kin reciprocities reach their maximum, would unquestionably take into consideration the prosperity and other commitments of contributing households before deciding on the date of their feast. It would not do to try and hold a feast at a time when those bound to help were not in a position to do so. There is the safeguard that reciprocities at feasts are well balanced. Any family able to get along without assistance from an indigent relative would do so without rancour, simply retaining for home use the meat that would otherwise have gone to the defaulter, but this course would obviously place a greater strain on the feast-givers' resources.

Before concluding this chapter I will draw attention to its shortcomings, since these must be faced if better work is to be done in the future. First and foremost is the lack of a detailed quantitative record of daily diets—a lack which cannot be avoided when enquiries depend upon the spare-time activities of a peripatetic official—and secondly there is the lack of biochemical evidence on the balance of diet. True the administrative officer who keeps his eyes open can make fairly accurate guesses about food supplies, but while this may help him to decide whether relief measures are necessary, it will not enable him to devise a cure for dietetic ills. The chemical content of soil and water affects the nutritional value of foods and thus biochemical examination of all is necessary. The seasonal fluctuations in quantity and quality of the daily meals are meaningless unless examined in relation to the synchronous output of energy in work and play, and collection of this data means daily contact with the consumer group throughout the year. The nature of available surpluses and the mechanisms of economic choice can only be computed accurately on a full quantitative knowledge of the total resources of a given group and a detailed record of crises affecting each individual household, its kin and its co-operating residential group.

In short, if adequate information is to be acquired, it must be collected by a specialist in sociological investigation with adequate co-operation from the biochemist. This chapter therefore serves but to underline the inadequacy of even a conscientious administrator's enquiry. The physical welfare of the peoples of the Scheduled Areas will depend largely on whether this issue is faced squarely in the future and adequate investigational staff and equipment applied to nutritional problems.

However, one thing we have found clearly demonstrated. A normal Chin† household can expect, in a normal year, to have available for use over and above the " existence minimum " a fairly substantial surplus at least in live stock and cereals. We know that there is no refrigeration and little trade in meat, and that feasting is going to play a great part in the disposal of the surplus because the animals to be killed are too large for a single household to consume. The Chin's answer to this situation will be found in the following chapter.

† Again we must except certain tracts in the *bul ram* areas of the Manipur River Valley.

## CHAPTER X.

## THE ECONOMICS OF SOCIAL OBLIGATIONS.

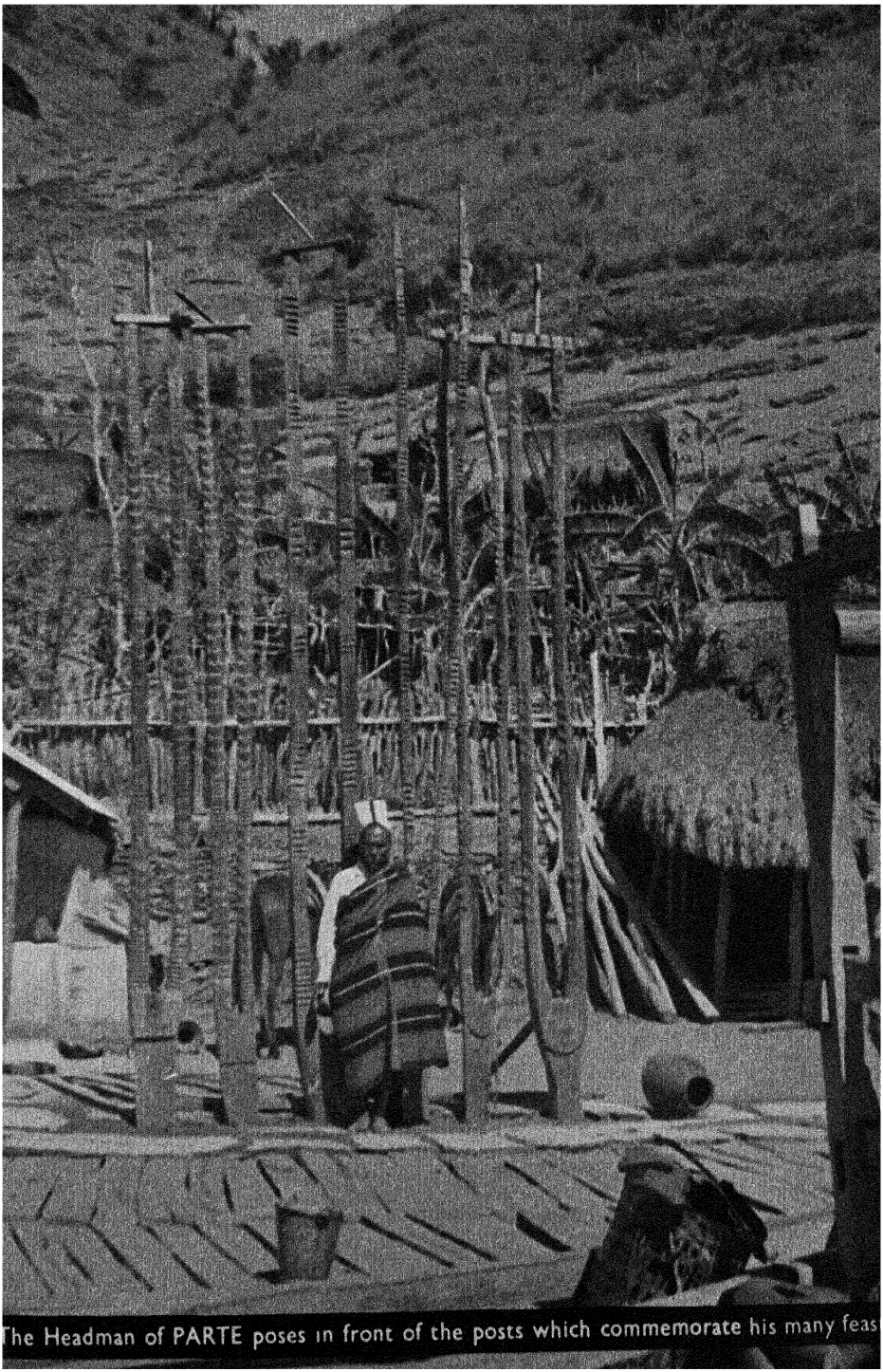
This chapter covers so wide a field of Chin activities that only by the aid of a short summary and many synoptic diagrams will the reader be able to carry through all the detail that follows the general picture necessary to maintain perspective.

Thus I devote some pages to generalities of which the detail appears in later parts of the chapter.

Firstly I must recapitulate the main points of the preceding chapters, particularly the second, and note that almost all economic processes are operated through the medium of social institutions, that the village or *veng* as the case may be is an almost autonomous unit within which the headman and his council provide law and order, the priest spiritual protection, the blacksmith implements and weapons, and finally bond-friends, kindred and fellow villagers cooperative help in all the major economic operations.

It will be realised that all these varied forms of assistance will not be repaid in exactly the same way, and that for the relatively large labour help received by any individual he will have to repay not only labour but also goods. It follows from the very nature of the resources available that payment is most likely to take the form of meat and drink and that therefore feasting must play a great part. What we have already noted about the live stock of the Chin and his lack of knowledge of meat preservation makes it plain that if he is to eat beef and pork at all he must find others to share the carcase with him, and that if he is to receive a value out of the kill commensurate with his ownership rights he must devise some method of getting back at least an equivalent amount of meat in later shares of animals killed by those who took part in his feast. We can therefore expect to find that feasting is well enough organised to gain this end.

This is indeed the case, for there can be few primitive races in which the reward of effort through feasting is carried to so great a degree of complexity and counter-balanced equilibrium. But institutionalised feasts are not the only occasions when reciprocities play a part. At all crises of life, at marriage and the birth of children, in poverty and wealth, in sickness and death they are brought to bear to soften the blow or add



The Headman of PARTE poses in front of the posts which commemorate his many feas

to the rejoicings, and since these crises must happen whereas feasts may not, the detail of them must come first in our description. To do this we must fix the position of the householder *vis-a-vis* his neighbours.

Every householder may be said to be the point of intersection at which four main circles meet—the village community circle, the kinship and bond-friend circle, the membership circle of the Feasters' Club and the membership circle of the Hunters' Club. Place of residence, lineage and marital ties determine for him the first two circles, while good husbandry¶ and hunting skill gain him admittance to the remainder. It is the first two circles that supply the help and organisation necessary to give the householder precedence in the last two circles, through which alone he can aspire to temporal power and spiritual fulfilment.

I have shown in the Table of Household Debits and Credits in Chapter IX one item on the debit side which is worth elaboration here to round off the general picture. This item is the council collections. These collections afford a good example of differential taxation, of the application of the principle of super-tax in a primitive community. For purposes of the council tax represented by these collections, society is divided into three social grades—those who must be exempted on the grounds of incapacity† for agricultural work or temporary poverty,† those who can afford to give grain but have not been able to hold feasts, and those who can afford to give feasts.

The principle of collection is by rota—articles required by the council being collected one at a time as required from each household in turn, and as neither rank nor wealth can gain exemption even the headman and his councillors must pay their share. The collections made on all householders except the first group are *zu khai*, *arr khai*, *vawk khai* and *tha hlun*. The first three contributions are a pot of beer, a fowl, and a pig respectively, beer and fowls being taken without payment and pigs being paid for at their market value. *Tha hlun* is a collection of grain which is disposed of by the council to pay the price of pigs and mithan expropriated for communal entertainment or sacrifice.

In addition to the *khai* and *tha hlun* contributions feasts-givers of the third group have to pay for the great economic and social benefits accruing from Feasts of Merit by a graded series of " permit " payments. These

¶ Among the Zahau only every young man becomes a member of the Feasters' Club as soon as he moves into his own house, though his share of meat is infinitesimal. Elsewhere membership can only be gained by giving the first of the series of Feasts of Merit.

† Lepers are exempted all collections, while newly-weds moving into their own house are exempted for one year.

are noted in the statement below and it will be seen that they may be made either in cash or kind.

*Statement of Super-tax on the Feast of Merit.*

| Name of Feast. | *Sumsuah**. | *Khlakkawng**. | *Sawng hmuah nak**. |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Sarual* (1) | Re. 1 .. | 1 large pot of beer. | *Nil.* |
| *Khlailam* (2) | Rs. 2 .. | 1 large and 1 small pot (*nufa*) of beer. | 6 small pots *Zulam* 6 small pots *tar zu* beer. |
| *Tsalhau** (3) | Rs. 2 .. | 1 large pot of beer. | Do. |
| *Sia thum thah* (4) | Rs. 2 .. | 1 large and 1 small pot of beer. | Do. |
| *Siahrathah* (5) | Rs. 2 .. | Do. | Do. |
| *Khuangtsawi* (6) | 1 *state* for the first and Rs.15 for each subsequent feast. | 1 large pot of beer. | Do. |

*Note :* * *Sumsuah* (Lit. wealth produce) is traditionally followed by the payment of *khlak kawng*, which is alternatively known as *sumsuah ahnuklun* for this reason. *Sawng hmuah nak* is the price of assembly on the *sawng* day of the feasts. *Tsalhau* is not really one of the series of the Zahau Feasts of Merit, but it is held by some as an extra and so is given in its local order of precedence. There is one more payment of beer to the elders called *pu zu phawi* but this is not a tax on the holder of the feast; it means simply that two of the 10 pots of beer brought by the feast-giver's *pu* which are the perquisite of the elders, must be delivered before the feast.

The existence of these differential imposts on feast-givers is in line also with the whole trend in the reciprocal kinship obligations, which become more and more heavy with the progression of the Feasts of Merit. They indicate the great keenness to progress in this field, as no Chin would assume such expensive obligations unless the reward was commensurate.

In order to clarify the situation at this stage I outline in synoptic diagrams the effect of the various institutionalised activities through which the consumption of most marginal surpluses is regulated, and I take these in the following order:—firstly the personal and household sacrifices, secondly communal sacrifices, thirdly marriage and the birth

of children, fourthly the mortuary ceremonies, fifthly the Feasts of Celebration, and lastly the Feasts of Merit.

First and foremost of the impressions given by these diagrams is that of a transmutation of labour, management and goods into social, religious and economic privilege, dietetic advantage and kinship or public entertainment. The whole series shows many remarkable examples of conversion of physical factors into psychological values, perhaps the most obvious characteristic of primitive economies. *Secondly there is the definite indication that wholesale condemnation of sacrifice and feasting would deal a death-blow to the local economic system,* and lastly a clear realisation of the many considerations that will have to be taken into account if we ever have to start rebuilding a Chin economy on the ruins of animistic ritual.

The remainder of this chapter discusses in detail the facts summarised in the diagrams on the effects of marriage, birth, death and the Feasts, commencing with the reciprocities at marriage which is the foundation of all households and of all the ties of kinship. The detail of religious activities will be dealt with in Chapter XII, and the summary includes them simply to outline their existence as part of the total of reciprocal obligations arising out of social institutions.

The marriage obligations can be divided into three categories :— the provision of the marriage feast, the *man* or marriage price, and the *rawlhan* or presents of grain given to the newlyweds by the recipients of marriage price. A further optional marriage transaction called *saanman rel* is described separately because, though it involves reciprocal action, it is a means of preserving and not of forming the marriage ties, and takes place only when a man seems to be contemplating divorce.

*The Marriage Ceremony.*—Excluding the single pot of betrothal beer (*manthah nak*—price fix to) which the groom or one of his nearest paternal relatives takes as an offering to lubricate the initial discussion of the marriage price, the first debit on the marriage account is the large pot of *manmak zu* taken by the groom and his party to the wedding. The bride's family must produce at least a like amount and generally produce far more, while all guests to the wedding are expected to bring a small pot of beer with them to help things go with a swing.

A pig called the *vawk ah* is required for the feast, the size being proportionate to the wealth of the contracting parties. Among the Zahau the cost of this pig must be shared by the groom's family (which has to find it) and the bride's family. Units of price are never halved and in the event of the pig costing an odd number of units, say Rs. 7 ; the groom's family will pay only Rs. 3 to the bride's family contribution of Rs. 4. Half of the flesh of this pig is handed back to the groom's party to take home and divide among the groom's paternal aunts and sisters, the other half being the perquisite of the paternal relatives of the bride, who form the bulk of the guests at the wedding.

At the ceremony there follows the ritual killing of a fowl, (the *ar tsuk*) the carcase being the perquisite of the groom's rual.*

After a good deal of drinking and very little eating the bride sets off to her new home with the groom's party. On this journey she must by tradition (Zahau) be decked in certain ornaments consisting of a *sawilukhum* headdress, *fau* armlets, *bannaal* bracelets, *faudawn* bangles, a *kep* conch shell hung at the nape of the neck, and *rangkha* and *elkiim* waistbelts. These adornments, which eventually go with her daughters on their marriage, are essential, and a bride not possessing them must borrow some for the occasion and her family must pay to the groom their cash value, which at the time I made my enquiries was :—*sawi lukhum* Rs. 2, *bannaal* Re. 1, *fau* Rs. 4, *faudawn* As. 8, *kep* Rs. 2, *rangkha* Rs. 2, and *elkiim* As. 8. Here we have an important example of the application of cash values having a direct effect on production. Since it has been possible for people to pay cash instead of handing over the real article, manufacture of some varieties has almost ceased, and a dwindling number of heirlooms is borrowed on all sides.

In addition to these and other optional ornaments such as valuable beads on her person, the bride must take as gifts to the groom's *farnu*† at least ten *tai awk* cord belts and a like number of *tir dawh* metal pipe-cleaners. Of these the *ruangpawm farnu*‡ receives *hranghra* or five pairs each consisting of one *tai awk* and one *tir dawh*, while lesser *farnu* receive five mixed units in which either *tai awk* or *tir dawh* may predominate. The number of these gifts varies directly with the value of the *manpi* or main price, as do also the number of cloths presented to the bride by the groom's family, which are laid (*puan pah*) along the path she treads towards his house, sometimes for dozens of yards. The most obvious way of gauging the social importance of a Zahau wedding is by these cloths, which are often very valuable.

So much for the wedding; a pig is killed and the price and flesh equally divided; a fowl is killed which goes to a bond-friend; beer is supplied and drunk largely by paternal relatives of the bride who share the half pig and the bride-price to come; the bride takes ornaments and gets cloths in return; the newlyweds are started off with *rawlhan*. A worker is lost by one family and gained by another, and a new kinship circle is formed wherein both halves have much to gain by the assistance of the other.

*Marriage price.*—The provision of goods to pay the marriage price of wives for its sons is the joint responsibility of all males of a patrilineally

* *Rual* is a bond-friend with whom specific obligations are exchanged at all the crises of life. The majority of men choose their *rual* on marriage. Similar bond-friends exist among the Lakher (vide page 274 of " The Lakhers " by N. E. Parry), the Lushai (vide " The Lushai—Kuki Tribes " by Col. Shakespeare) and the Nagas (see " The Rengma Nagas " by J. P. Mills).

† *Farnu* are classificatory sisters and the term includes real sisters and paternal female cousins.

‡ Body-paired sister (see Chapter XIII) the closest related of the *farnu*.

related extended family. For this they can expect a share of the bride price of each other's daughters and a wide range of perquisites.

The value of the marriage price demanded for a girl varies according to her own physical perfection and character and the social status of her parents. In physical perfection beauty counts for less than childlessness. Virginity plays no part in the matter, but parturition is held to lower the sexual value of a girl and there are many ways in which this devaluation is expressed when describing a man who marries such a girl, of which the Zanniat term "*ar ruh ei*" (to eat the bones of a chicken) is perhaps the politest. Good humour and diligence will go far towards redeeming other drawbacks, while health and strength are of paramount importance.

Social status in all tribes is determined by the fame of the paternal line and the number of Feasts of Merit the girl's father has given. Among the autocratic Zahau some stress is laid on the blueness of the blood, the Zahau and Hlawntseu clans taking precedence in this respect, followed by two other groups of which the senior is composed of the Bawithang, Tuallawt and Khalthang clans.

The marriage price itself is divided into two parts—the *manpi* or main price and the *mante* or lesser prices—the *mante* rising in value in relation to the *manpi*. The *manpi** varies from one small mithan for a poor man's child to seven full grown mithan in the case of a handsome and hardworking maiden of the Chief's blood. The units of the *manpi* are *siate* (young mithan), *siapi* (cow mithan) and *nufa* (a cow mithan and its calf). The main price of a patrician girl will never fall below one *siapi* however ill-favoured or lax in morals she may be, while the *manpi* of a middle class girl will vary between one *siate* and two *siapi*, and that of a poor girl of a lowly clan between one *siate* and *nufa*.

In the statement below, which gives the 1936 values of the *mante*, there is a very interesting example of the ease with which the Zahau changes his customs. The figures are in certain cases corrected, and I have given them exactly as they stand in my notebook. These corrections were made after my first record of *mante* had been completed, as the Zahau elders took the opportunity,† afforded by a general meeting called by me to check up my custom notes, to revise prices which they felt weighed too heavily in those years of depression. One price, the *fei tserek* (*tserek* spear), was abandoned because this type of spear is so rare nowadays as to be almost unobtainable.

* There is a sharp division here between the democratic and autocratic tribes. Marriage price is very low among the democrats, as low as 6/- to 10/- for the Lunghrawh, 20/- to 40/- for the Bualkhua and the Zanniat and 14/- to 54/- for the Tashon.

† This raises a point of great administrative significance. Much of the tendency towards conservatism among our hill tribes is due to lack of neighbourly contact. If opportunities are given for elders to meet, many reformative measures once found impossible become practicable and even easy. All have the opportunity of meeting the most enlightened and progressive of their tribe or race and a spirit of emulation is engendered.

All the prices cut or abolished were payable to male relatives of the bride, those payable to female relatives being left unmodified. Only one price was raised.

*Statement of relative values of Manpi and Mante ; Zahau*

| Value of Manpi in mithan. ½ is one *siate* and 1½ is *nufa.* | ½ | 1 | 1½ | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Name of *mante*, values in *seu.* | | | | | | | | | |
| 1. *Pu man* .. | 2 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | *Siate* |
| 2. *Mankhler* .. | 2 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 10 |
| 3. *Ta man* .. | 1 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 4. *Manlak* .. | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| 5. *Semipawk* .. | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| 6. *Bawifa man* .. *Salpa man* .. | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| 7. *Naupuanpuak* .. | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| 8. *Kiang hrawlh* .. | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| 9. *Thuai khlak* .. | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 10. *Fei tserek* .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. |
| 11. *Buhtiso man* .. | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 12. *Puanpi* .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. |

*Note :* Recorded on 6–4–36. The *puanpi mante* was abolished because, being payable long after the death of the bride concerned, when witnesses were scarce, it caused much litigation.

It will be noted that I have used plain figures to denote the value of the various prices. Prior to the annexation money was not used in the hills and values were reckoned in *seu* units of which there were several. The *seu* used in determining *mante* was usually the *vawkthia seu**.

Nowadays various tribes have put their own value in cash on this *seu*, which in some areas is two rupees, but among the Zahau was, in 1936, one rupee. The figures given in the Zahau table of prices can therefore be read either as *vawkthia seu* or as rupees.

In the following paragraphs I deal with each price in turn, showing the traditional method of disposal.

* *Vawkthia seu* is a young piglet.

*Pu man.*—This goes to the *pa pu* of the bride, her maternal grandfather (or uncle if he is dead). The *pu* is entitled to claim (and usually does) 1 *seu* over the standard rate of *puman* when the bride is the last unmarried daughter of the family to which he is *pa pu.**

*Man khler*—It is customary for this price to be given to the elder brother of the bride's father, or at least to a male in the patrilineal line senior to, or equal in generation to the bride's father. No clear reasons can be given for this and one's informants fall back on the statement that it would be unseemly for the bride's brothers to receive it. I failed to investigate the linguistic significance of the name of the price, which might have given some indication as to this necessity for going back a generation.

*Ta man.*—This name implies " brother's price," but actually the *ta man* is paid to the patrilineal relative next in seniority to the recipient of *man khler.*

*Man lak.*—The " odd price." It goes to no particular person by tradition and the family usually arrange to give it to the most needy.

*Semi pawk.*—This small price is disposed of as in the case of *man lak.* Again I did not investigate the linguistic significance of the term, though *semi* is a shortening of *sia mi*, or *mithan's* eye.

*Sal pa man.*—(Lt. " slave's price ") or *bawifa man* Lit. " bawi's price. " † The disposal of this price is curious. If the bride's father is a slave (*sal*) or a *tefa*, the price is paid to the owner or benefactor as the case may be, who shares an interest in the bride as her adoptive father. But strangely enough it must be paid even though the father of the bride is neither *sal* nor *tefa*, in such cases going to another of the patrilineal relatives of the bride.

*Nau puan puak.*—The " child blanket carrying price." It is supposed to be a recompense for carrying and looking after the bride when she was a baby, and is paid to the bride's elder sister, or failing her, to a younger sister or to a patrilineally related girl cousin. It is customary in such cases for the recipient of the current bride's *nau puan puak* to see that on her marriage her own *nau puan puak man* is in turn paid to the bride.

*Kiang hrawlh.*—The " walking stick." This is an iron walking stick used by old women. It is covered with white metal (*ngen*) and ornamented in the case of those whose husbands have given the Feasts of Merit up to the *Sia hra thah.* The price goes to the bride's mother even though she may have been divorced. If a mother dies before her daughter's marriage the *kianghrawlh* goes to the girl's stepmother (*nu i*).

* This is supposed to compensate him for the fact that he has drawn his last dividend in that quarter.

† *Bawifa* and *tefa* are synonymous. For description see Chapter XIII.

*Thuai khlak.*—The " underneath loosed." This is a small female piglet given to the recipient of the *man pi.* It is intended to be released under his house and to breed for him, so rehabilitating his fortunes after loss of the bride.

*Fei tserek.*—The *tserek* spear. This subsidiary price used to go by agreement to one of the bride's patrilineal relatives who had not received any of the foregoing prices. Payment was recently abolished by general agreement among the elders.

*Buhti so man.*—The " Food hot water price." This is payable to the step-mother of the bride if the latter's real mother is alive but divorced. In such a case the step-mother would not get the *kianghrawlh,* and this price is to compensate her for the trouble entailed in preparing the food for the wedding feast of another woman's daughter.

*Puan pi.*—This is the " big blanket " price. It is a very thick cotton blanket with the threads looped on one side like a turkish towel. Its existence is indicative of a healthy trade connection in pre-annexation days between the Zahau and the western tribes in the Lushai Hills, for it is only among the Lushai that the *puan pi* is woven. It was customary for this price to be paid by the bride's son after his mother's death, but as many arguments arose over it the elders decided to abolish it.

The recipient of *man pi* is entitled to take all of the *man te* which are shared by patrilineal relatives of the bride (Nos. 2/6, 9/10 and 12) that are left over when each living close relation has received one price.

So much for the payments* made by the groom's family towards acquisition of his wife. There remain the counter gifts of grain from the bride's family to the groom or to his father if the young couple propose to live in the latter's house. These are known as *rawl han* (grain basket) and consist of stipulated numbers of *han* basketsful of grain, the minimum quantity varying in direct proportion to the amount of *man pi* paid for the bride. While many parents take a pride in doing their daughter handsomely in this respect, there are occasional defaulters and custom allows the groom to deduct the value of the *rawl han* not paid up from the balance of the marriage price, at the rate of one rupee per *han.* If a paucity of relatives results in one man receiving more than one of the *man te,* he is expected to give *rawl han* only for the largest of the prices he receives.

As is usual in most Chin transactions, the *rawl han* need not be paid up until the *man* for which it is the return is paid, though by its nature it would seem to have been intended to enable a young couple to set up house immediately after marriage.

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* It sometimes happens that a husband can never raise the marriage price for his wife. On these very rare occasions the children of the union become *man lo fa* (marriage price not paid children) and are recognised as of the clan of their mother's brother, who will adopt the sons and who will receive the *man pi* of the daughters.

In the table appended below I give again the exact record in my diary, showing modifications made by the elders.

Table of quantities of *rawl han* payable.

| Name of *man* | Value of *man pi* | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | ½ | 1 | 1½ | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 Mithan. |
| *Man pi* .. | 5 | 10 | 15 | 20 | 30 | 30 | 30 | 30 | 30 *Han* |
| *Puman* .. | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 5 ,, |
| *Man khler* .. | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 5 ,, |
| *Ta man* .. | .. | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 ,, |
| *Kianghrawlh* .. | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 ,, |

*Note :—Rawl han* was payable for the other lesser *man te* on the same scale as shown above until 6-4-36, when the Chief and his elders reduced many of the *man te* by common agreement. It was arranged then that where the *man te* was reduced to or below 2 in value no *rawl han* would be payable.

In addition to the *rawl han*, any recipient of a *man te* of 7/- or more in value would normally give to the bride a hen to start off her stock of fowls. This gift, like the *rawl han*, has the motive of establishing the household of newly-weds.

It is now possible to get some idea of the whole picture of the marriage exchanges and to assess the amount of money that actually is " paid " for a wife.

Let us take the case of a girl whose *man pi* was an average price of one *siapi*. At the time of my enquiries the standard price of a cow mithan was held to be Rs.40. Add to this the total of column three in the statement of *man te*, and we get Rs.65. In addition to this price the groom's family have to supply one large pot of *zu* (*man man zu*) worth Rs.2 and they have to pay a share of the cost of the wedding pig. If we put on this a reasonable value of say Rs.9, the groom's family must pay Rs.4. This brings the gross total of this expenditure to Rs.71. In return for this the groom receives the *rawl han*, in valuing of which we must put the normal cost of a *han* of grain at Rs.2. Column 2 of the table of *rawl han* gives us a total of 17 *han*, worth Rs.34. In addition to this there is the cost to the bride's family of the wedding feast, of which their share in the price of the pig alone would be Rs.5. I have noted that at the wedding the bride's father must produce at least one pot of *zu* as good as the *man man zu*, so that the minimum expenditure is Rs.2 under this head. Likewise the recipients of *Pu man*, *Kianghrawlh* and other *man te* must contribute a pot of *zu* of similar value, bringing the minimum expenditure on beer to Rs.18. The total expenditure on the bride's side is now Rs.57. If we add to this the value of the ornaments and presents the girl has to take with her, that is Rs.12, the total rises to Rs.69.

In other words, after taking all factors into consideration we find that the equation cancels out, both sides, expenses being about equal, and we can therefore dispose once and for all of the theory that payment of marriage price by the average Zahau in any way approximates to the purchase of a wife. The equation would lose this balance when a large *man* is paid, through the provision by rich people of many cloths for *puan pah*, but the correspondingly greater feasting, richer ornaments and clothes sent with the bride, and similar factors would prevent the disparity in expenditure being too great.

The " buying a bride " school of thought sometimes bases its arguments on the fact that if the bride were not " bought " there would be no repayment of marriage price on divorce. This is not borne out by experience among the Chins, who state quite frankly that the reason for demanding back the marriage price lies mainly in a desire and hope that by this threat, added to the fine imposed by the council on a woman divorcing her husband, the woman will be persuaded not to divorce her husband, and that loss of the reciprocities gained through payment of his marriage price will deter a husband from abandoning his wife too lightly. In other words the equation remains balanced as long as the couple remain together, and is unbalanced when divorce occurs.

Like all " sanctions " which attempt to force a man to do things he is not always inclined to do, it is not infallible and divorce is perhaps rather too common among the Shimhrin and Hualngo, where as a rule 10% of men have divorced one wife. A count taken among the Ngawn elders whom I had called in to Vazang one day showed that 50% had divorced one wife and 5% had divorced two, but all admitted that a village count would yield a much lower figure since they themselves were a rather naughty selection of old men*.

*The post-marriage reciprocities.*—It will be seen from the diagram in Chapter II that marriage creates a circle of persons bound by tradition to assist the newly married young man throughout his life, and the first of the obligations which falls upon them is that of giving a present of cooked food when the newly weds move into their first house. This ceremony is called *in halh*. Nowadays rather slack people are beginning to give raw instead of cooked food, but the habit is frowned upon by sticklers for etiquette.

At the birth of the first child the recipient of the mother's *man pi* is required to give a feast in its honour when he first goes to view the infant. This is called *nau man*, the price of the child. Here again the value of the *man pi* is the criterion by which the decent minimum expenditure on the feast is judged—if the *man pi* was a *siapi* or under, the grandfather would take along a *rel* of millet, a fowl and a large pot of *zu* at least, but if he had received more than one *siapi*, he would be in

* It is remarkable that the tribe allowing the greatest freedom to youth—the Zanniat—has the highest record of successful marriages.

honour bound to take along a pig of at least three fists in girth. At this feast it is the custom for the proud parents to give a party to all the neighbours' children, and the recipient of the *man pi* has to take along with him sufficient hard-boiled eggs, meat, and salt to flavour the grain supplied. Many pots of beer are broached by the parents, and if the family happens to be wealthy the grandfather may even contribute a cow or a mithan to be killed in addition to the customary pig.

Following upon the ceremonies connected with the birth of the first child, and usually a year or two after marriage, there may come the discussion known as *saanman rel** (*saan* price settling). Sometimes delayed for many years and avoided always in the case of happily married couples, *saanman rel* is used to force the hand of any husband whose good intentions towards his wife are in doubt. This discussion feast, which is given by the wife's father at his own house, is prelude to the payment by the groom of a further marriage price called the *saanman*. Naturally if in the meantime the husband and wife have been quarrelling and the husband is contemplating divorce *mak*, he will not want to add to his divorce liabilities and will have to declare at or before the feast his intention to get rid of his wife. This results in a divorce†, the woman remains in her father's home *and the husband relinquishes his claims to return of the marriage price.*

*Saanman* varies, like all subsidiary prices, in accordance with the *man pi* paid. If the *man pi* was from 4 to 7 mithan, *saanman* is one *siapi*, if from 3 to 1½ mithan (*nufa*), one *siate* is payable, and if 1 mithan, 7 *seu* is payable. For *man pi* of a *siate* there is no *saanman.*

The quality of the feast given at *saanman rel* varies in proportion to the *saanman*, a fowl and beer being offered where the 7 *seu* price is paid, and pigs of varying sizes where a *siate* or *siapi* is expected. Incidentally if a pig is killed the host must give a new skirt to his daughter and a new blanket to her husband. Here we have an interesting example of the social effects of the Feasts of Merit, for if the host is a poor man who has given no feasts he need give his son-in-law only a homely *zaudi puan*, but if he has held a Feast of Merit, his gift must be the more expensive symbol of the Feast giver—the *vai puan.* This the young man will keep to wear when he is entitled to it, or to give to a relative if an occasion such as death arises.

The discussion at *saanman rel* is not so much about the amount of *man* as the likelihood of it being paid at all, for as I have said, it is used

* *Saanman rel* does not occur outside the Shimhrin tribe.

† The contrary to a divorce *mak* is called *taan.* It is applied to all cases in which a wife divorces a husband for mere dislike, and also to the divorce by the husband of a wife who commits adultery. When *taan* occurs all marriage prices except the *puman* are returned, and in addition the woman's guardian is fined *lungkhen* (see Ch. XI) by the elders of the husband's village. When divorced *taan* a woman gets no share of the household property and also loses her children, no *nau um man* (suckling price) being payable for any infant she cares for till weaned.

to frighten a groom to his senses when he is in the mood for seeking a divorce. The ceremony shows good psychology; usually a man will not divorce his wife when required to do so suddenly, and if only he agrees to pay *saanman* this extra liability more often than not encourages him to stick to his wife.

*The mortuary obligations.*—This brings us to the first of the crises at which reciprocities outside the kin circle are involved—the crisis of a death in the family.

At the mortuary feasts of *ruak hnah* (mourning) and *khan tseh* (erection of memorial post) all relatives must visit the house of mourning and bring pots of beer; in return some receive shares of the flesh of animals killed, others a cash payment known as *lukhawng* which I deal with first. The *lukhawng* due is interesting in that it accentuates the claims of the maternal line, that is to say, when a man dies it is payable to his mother's brother, and when a woman dies it is payable to her brother. The *pu* to whom *lukhawng* is payable must take with him one large pot of *zu* (*khlan khen zu*) when he goes to make his claim, and the amount which he receives varies directly with the number of Feasts of Merit that the deceased had given, or if she is a woman, that her husband had given. The variations of *lukhawng* are shown in the list below.

| Scale of feasts given. | Amounts payable as *lukhawng*. | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | For a man | | For a woman | |
| | Old scale. | New scale. | Old scale. | New scale. |
| | Rs. a. | Rs. a. | Rs. a. | Rs. a. |
| No feasts .. .. | 2 0 | 2 0 | *nil.* | *nil.* |
| *Khlailam* .. .. | 5 0 | 3 0 | 2 0 | 2 0 |
| *Sia thum thah* .. .. | 7 0 | 5 0 | 5 0 | 3 0 |
| *Sia hra thah* .. .. | 15 0 | 10 0 | 7 0 | 5 0 |
| *Khuangtsawi* .. .. | One *siapi*. | One *siate plus* Rs. 10 for each repetition up to a total of Rs. 40. | 15 0 | 10 0 |

*Note.*—A *kawl thah* feast counts in considering *lukhawng*. In the case of men, Re.1 extra is payable for each *tsal hau, thah thuan* or *nu lam* feast given in addition to the main series.

The new scale is one introduced a few years ago on the instigation of the Chief, at a meeting of all his headman and elders. The reason for it was, as in the case of reductions of marriage price and *rawl han*, the increasing difficulty found in meeting obligations during the period

of the economic depression. The only persons other than the mother's brother of a dead man and the brother of a dead woman who (if they exist) receive *lukhawng* are the *bawi pa* (" father " of a *bawi* or *tefa*: see Chapter XIII) and the *va te pu**. The *lukhawng* payable for a *tefa* varies according to the degree of his debt to his benefactor, while that of a *va te pu* is Rs.2. This is in addition to the *lukhawng* payable to the real *pu* for whom the *va te pu* deputised.

Death from leprosy or at the hands of an enemy absolves the deceased's heir from payment of *lukhawng* for either a man or woman, and in the case of a woman's death without bearing a son has the same effect. This last is because tradition demands that *lukhawng* for a woman shall be paid by her youngest son, from whom the claim must be made during his life-time if it is to be held valid. If he pre-deceases his mother without male issue the amount can be claimed from her next youngest son. It sometimes happens that if his mother dies while a boy is too poor to pay her *lukhawng* when claimed, the debt may drag on until his death, but in such a case his heir would be liable for the amount. The remarriage of a youth's mother to a second husband absolves him from all responsibility for her *lukhawng*, which would then depend on whether or not she had a son by her second marriage.

On a death in the family, the *farnu ngai* (sisters or closest related girl cousins) of the head of the house must assist at the lying in state and burial, and must bring with them specific gifts. These consist of :— From the *farnu upa*—a *puan fun* shroud, which will be a *zaudi puan* blanket if the deceased had given no feasts and a *vai puan* blanket if he had, Rs.2 in cash towards the cost of the *ruak hnah* pig, and one large pot of beer known as *thi zu* (death beer) or *lu bul* (head-ownership) : from the *farnu nauta*—Rs.2 as *ruak hnah* and *thi zu*, but no blanket: from the *rawlsuang farnu*—a *dah* or sword, though nowadays this gift has fallen into abeyance.

Penalties attach, as always, to non-fulfilment of both sides of these reciprocities. If the pig killed by the relatives of the deceased is worth less than Rs.3, thereby reducing the flesh to be given to the *farnu*, the two who give a cash present for this purpose may reduce their contribution by Re.1. If the shares of flesh due to the *farnu* are not handed over to them they may reduce their gifts by a commensurate amount. Contrarily if the *farnu*'s gifts are below standard they will be given less flesh.

But they may not in any circumstance reduce the quantity of *thi zu* as this is drunk by the men who beat the gongs and drums for the *mithi lam*. These men have the right to demand their beer and may even go and bring some from elsewhere if the quality is bad, the *farnu* responsible having to pay for this better *zu* through the court of the headman.

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* Adoptive *pu*.

For the *ruak hnah* and *khantseh* a pig, mithan or a cow may be killed, the former varieties being the traditional victims for a poor and a rich man respectively and the last a new innovation resulting from the enforced sales of surplus cattle by Indian dairymen settled near the District Headquarters. The amount of beer supplied to fellow villagers at the mourning varies very considerably, but nearly everyone gives as much as he can and so a death always causes temporary impoverishment in a family.

The distribution of flesh at the mortuary feasts is shown in Carving Chart I. There are many points of interest connected with this—for instance it will be seen that the political and specialist dues appear for the first time. When discussing these dues with the Zahau headmen in 1936, I found that a large majority of them had voluntarily foregone the collection of the due on pigs killed at *ruak hnah* and *khan tseh* because only poor people killed pigs and they were generally so small that if the political dues were taken in addition to the relatives' dues very little was left for the inmates of the stricken house. This illustrates the fallacy of the commonly held belief in the rapaciousness of all hereditary chiefs and headman. At my suggestion the remaining Zahau headmen also agreed to drop the dues on pigs at *ruak hnah* altogether, but they all stuck to their right to collect the due of mithan flesh, killing of a mithan being held a voluntary blandishment of wealth not demanded by custom, and therefore justifiably taxable.

CARVING CHART I

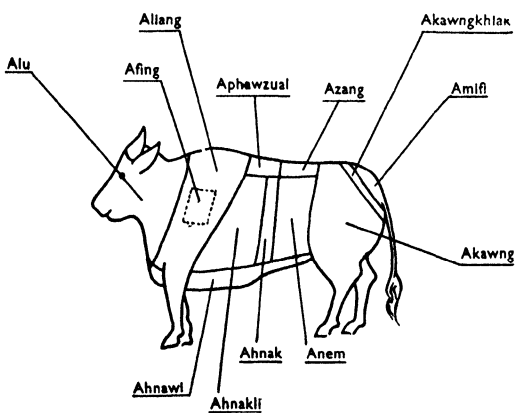
DIVISION OF MEAT AT *Ruak Hnah* AND *Khan Tseh.*

*Patrilineal Relatives* :

Father, brothers and uncles share: *Alu* and *Amifi*.

Sisters and other *farnu* cousins, to a total of three, get, in order of precedence :—

1 *akawng*
1 *aliang*
*aphawzual*
1 *afing*




*Relatives-in-law*: Mother's brother and wife's brother share the innards known as "*pusa*" and get one *akawngkhlak* each.

*Village officials get* :

Headman: *azang* and 1 *ahnak li*.

*Khuatelal*: 1 *ahnak*.

Blacksmith : 1 *ahnak li*.

*Feastgiver's household gets*

*ahnawi* 1 *akawng*
1 *aliang* 1 *afing*

*Workers at Feast share ;*

1 *ahnak*, 1 *anem*, and the offal, consisting of *athin*, *apumpi* and *aril*, of which the senior and junior *farnu* get a little.

*Paternal relatives share* :

Father, brothers and uncles share :— *Alu* and *Amifi*.

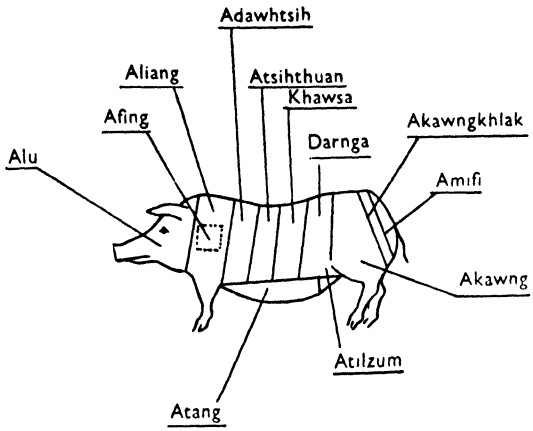
1st *sister* cousin gets 1 *akawng*

2nd *sister* cousin gets 1 *aliang*

3rd *sister* cousin gets 1 *afing*

*Feast-giver's Household* :

uses *ahnawi*, 1 *akawng*, 1 *aliang*, 1 *afing*.




*Workers at feast* :

share 1 *atsihthuan* with feast-giver's two *rual* bond-friends, and take the *atilzum* and the offal noted above.

*Relatives-in-law*: Mother's brother and wife's brother share *pusa* and get 1 *akawngkhlak* each.

*Village Officials share* :

Headman gets : 1 *adawhtsih*, 1 *atsihthuan*, and *khawsa* and *darnga* off one flank.

Blacksmith gets 1 *adawhtsih* and shares with the *khuatelal* the *khawsa* and *darnga* off other flank.

*Note* :—The Zahau Chief and his Headmen agreed to give up their pig flesh dues at *ruakhnah* and *khantseh*, as a relief to the very poor, during my term of office in Falam.

In addition to the ordinary mortuary ceremonies just described there is one called *pual thawh* held only in the case of very rich men. It is an organised hunt to add to the ghostly following of wild animals which the deceased will take with him into the *mithi khua*, and especially to try and complete for him the total of animals which are necessary to qualify him for Heaven (*pial rang*). As a different group is concerned in the *pual thawh* a special distribution of meat takes place which differs from that at the *ruak hnah* and *khan tseh*.

The organisation of the hunt is carried out by a selected leader called the *bawl pu* and the rank and file are divided into two groups—the *pual kiil* and the *sen pi*, the first consisting of a selected even number of assistants at the *pual thawh*, and the latter of the beaters in general. Of the heads killed by the *sen pi* in the hunt, the first in each category up to but excluding the carnivore and elephants, goes to the credit of the deceased in whose name the hunt is held. Of the heads killed by the *pual kiil*, all go to the credit of the deceased. Of all game shot the *pual kiil* share one hind leg of each animal, and the balance of the flesh, after removal of the largest of the hind legs as *ramsa* for the headman, is shared among the *sen pi*.

The larger of the animals killed by the heir of the deceased in honour of this hunt should by ancient custom be a mithan, but nowadays ordinary domestic cattle bought from Indian settlers are sometimes used. For this default however, a price is exacted and the giver of the feast may not demand the head of any animal larger than a sambhar from those shot by the *sen pi*.

Carving Chart II shows the division of the meat of the *pualthawh* mithan and it is worth noting that the Headman's share is very much larger than in the case of the obligatory *ruah hnah* and *khan tseh*, the *pual thawh* being strictly optional. I feel it necessary to stress these slight variations in dues to demonstrate the existence of the differential taxation in kind which is characteristic of the Zahau.

CARVING CHART II
DIVISION OF MEAT AT *Pualthawh*.

*Patrilineal Relatives*: Father, brothers and cousins share:—*Alu* and *amifi*.

*Farnu upa* gets 1 *Aliang*, *Rawlsuang farnu* gets 1 *afing*.

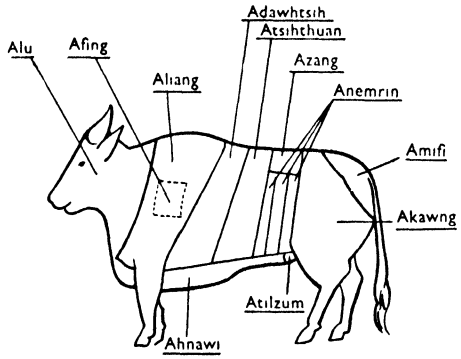
*Village Officials*:

The Headman gets:— 1 *akawng*, *atilzum*, *azang*, *adawhtsih* and 1 *anemrin*.

*Relatives-in-law*:

The *Khuatelal* gets 1 *aliang* and 1 *anemrin*.

The Blacksmith gets 1 *anemrin*




Mother's brother and wife's brother share the *pu sa*.

*Feastgiver's household*:

*Ahnawi*.

*Akawng*.

*Assistants at the hunt and the feast*:

Helpers at feast share the *athinril* and the offal described in Chart I.

The *lungpi* of the hunt, the man who shoots most game, gets *atsih thuan* and 1 *afing*.

The man who shoots the head used for the *pualthawh* feast gets *ahrap*.

*The Feasts of Celebration*.—I have indicated in Part II the effect on Chin production of a belief that the spirits of animals killed will accompany their slayer into the Land of the Dead, and in Chapter XII further angles of this belief will be explained. So far as this part of the descriptive is concerned I confine myself to the actual reciprocities that take place when a game animal has been shot.

In Chapter V, I described four kinds of *aih*, as these Celebration feasts are known :—the *hriva aih* for birds and small beasties, the *sangai aih* for lesser game animals like barking deer and sambhar, the *sahrang aih* for the large game animals, and the *pawpi vui** and *klavang shiar* for the large carnivore. There is one more type now obsolete—the *ral aih* celebrated over the head of a fallen enemy. All these *aih* vary in importance directly with the nature of the animal killed in the hunt, the average cost in each case rarely exceeding the following amounts :—for *hriva aih* Rs.15 ; for *sangai aih* Rs.25 ; for a *sahrang aih* or *pawpi vui* Rs.75. In each case the figures given are based on the exchange values of mithan, pigs and beer in 1936.

The *sangai aih* is the first of what are known as the *lungpi aih*, which count for seniority in the competition to become *lungpi* or Mightiest

* The term *vui* (burial) is used instead of *aih* for tiger as they are believed to be the ancestors of certain *Sunkhla* clans. For leopard the *aih* is called *klavang shiar*, to avoid ostentatious boasting which might lead the leopard clan to take vengeance on the hunter—in this case *vui* is not used because the leopard is not a human ancestor.

Hunter, and the first held for each of the *sangai* game species is called specifically the *kut seh aih* (Lt. : Hand-blooding *aih*).

*Hri va aih.*—A small pig will be killed only when this *aih* is held for a *muvanlai* eagle, a *ruulngaan* snake, a Paradise Flycatcher or a nest of *khue ngal* hornets. For other small creatures only beer is supplied for the guests and there is no traditional division of the beer into specified qualities and quantities except for one special pot of *meithal zu* (Lit. gun beer) set aside for those who lend guns to be fired at the feast. But good manners usually result in the host brewing at least sufficient beer to give his guests a couple of flagons apiece.

*Sangai aih.*—It is usual to kill a pig not less than half grown for this *aih*, and the beer is divided into four groups—one pot for those who have already held an *aih* similar to the one in progress, one or more pots of *thal zu* for those who lend guns, *lung iang zu* for those who have given a *sahrang aih* and *sen zu* for the multitude. At *sangai aih* all the *zu* is siphoned into bowls, but the first three groups have the best quality and the quantity of *lung iang zu* must be sufficient to give all those entitled at least 2 *hai* gourds apiece, on pain of a fine of up to 2 large pots if the supply is inadequate. Once the party has got going the feast-giver and the *sangsuan pa** sit opposite each other with a small pot of beer apiece and toast each other in a constant succession of drinks until one has fallen asleep overcome. It is a matter of some pride to be the survivor of this severe test of a stout head.

*Sahrang aih* and *Pawpi vui.*—For these great *aih* a man must kill at least a full grown pig or a mithan if he can afford it, and supply a large quantity of beer which is divided into five categories :—the *sia hau zu* (mithan kill beer) for those who have previously killed a mithan at a *sahrang aih* : the *hrangkhawn zu* (large game celebrate beer) for those who have killed a pig at a *sahrang aih* : the *savawm* or *ngalhriang zu* (bear or pig beer, the name varying according to the animal for which the *aih* is being held) for those who have given a similar *aih* : the *meithal zu* for those who have lent guns ; and the *sen zu* for the *hoi polloi.*

Here for the first time we come across the finer distinctions in beer-drinking, for of these five groups the three lesser ones must be satisfied with siphoned *zu klawr*, while the aristocrats of the hunting world who are entitled to *sia hau zu* and *hrangkhawn zu* drink *zu peng*, each taking his turn at the pot in strict order of precedence in the Hunters' Club. Of these the *lungpi*, greatest hunter and *aih*-holder of them all, takes the first draught from each new pot, when the beer is at its most potent best.

As an example of the material and psychological value of leadership in the Hunters' Club, let us consider the perquisites and rights of the *lungpi* at such a feast. He is the guest of honour and gets the first helping of the *sia hau* and *hrangkhawn* beer, and also of the *meithal* beer if he lends a gun ; he gets the choicest food at the feast ; his prowess and

* " Second-blood " see Chapter V.

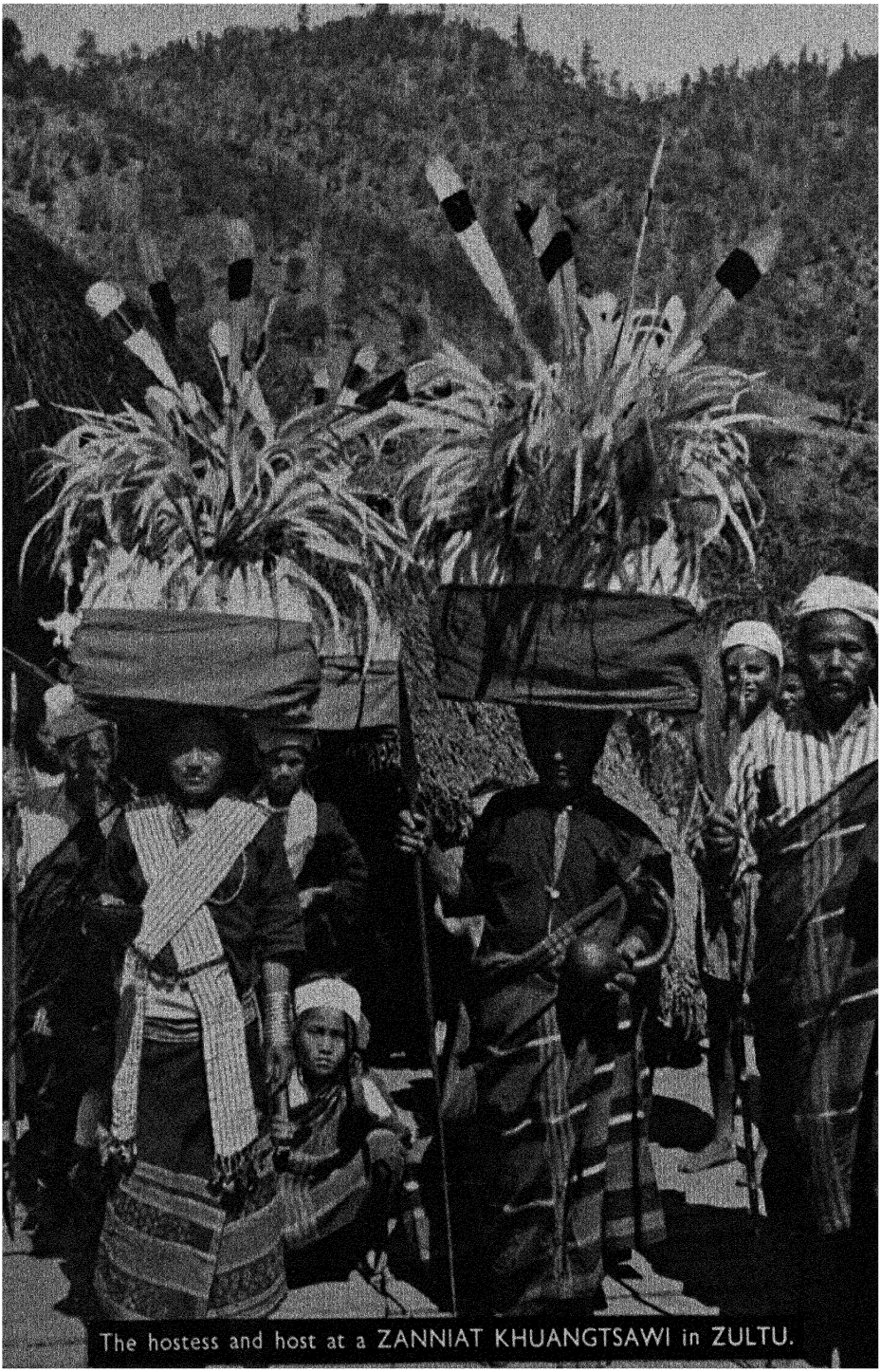
generosity is extolled in the most extravagant possible manner by himself and others who toady to him in the boasting competitions that are a feature of every *aih*. He takes precedence of everyone, including the headman and even the Chief himself if he be present; his fame rings through the village and all his rivals are filled with envy. In other words, he is fussed over in a way calculated to turn the strongest head, and has a very good time indeed. He is a minor pinnacle of earthly glory; all his fellow men long to follow in his footsteps and in this way many economic pursuits are set in motion, many hunts and deadfalls planned, much extra energy put into the growing of grain and the herding of mithan.

Lesser men enjoy a correspondingly milder degree of fame and adulation and a slightly inferior quality of liquor, and it is no exaggeration to say that this last fact alone is a considerable incentive to progress in the Hunters' Club. For there is no doubt of the fact that the Chin knows his beer thoroughly and is very outspoken in his criticism of bad brews. To be compelled to drink the poor *zu klawr* with the multitude round the *sen zu* pots is for a Chin elder as grievous an experience as a glass of tonic port would be to an English connoisseur. The carving of meat of the mithan and pigs slaughtered at *sa aih** follows much the same lines as in carving charts I and II, but game animals are shared by the headman, blacksmith, gun-owner "second blood" drawer, the beaters and the shooter and his relatives. A reference to the Statement of Effects opposite page 119 shows that all recipients of shares of meat have rendered specific services to the feast-giver in the past and it remains only to describe the immediate help given on the holding of the *aih* by bond-friends and relatives.

The two *rual* or bond-friends must each supply sufficient beer to give all guests present two gourdsful apiece, that is, about a pint and a half all round. It is a very useful donation. The kinship group contribution depends on whether or not an *aih* is held. When there is no *aih* and nothing but the meat of the game to divide, only close patrilineal relatives including one *farnu* share meat, together with the mother's brother and wife's brother of the successful hunter, each of these bringing a pot of beer when they come to claim their due. But when an *aih* takes place three *farnu* are invited to assist and each must contribute more pots of beer in exchange for the larger share of meat they receive, the two *pu* also having to provide more *pu zu* for their enhanced perquisites. The *pu zu* goes to the senior members of the Hunters' Club and must therefore be of the best quality, while that of the *farnu* goes to the *sungkla*† and their companions to lighten their nightlong vigil and brighten their songs.

* As an example of the quantitive investment of livestock in the Feasts of Celebration, 167 householders of Klauhmun had in their lifetimes killed 250 pigs and 53 mithan at *sa aih*.

† The *Sungkla* are two virgins selected to sing traditional songs until dawn breaks. Other girls and youths join them in the *insung* of the house and accompany their vocal efforts.



The hostess and host at a ZANNIAT KHUANGTSAWI in ZULTU.

*The Feasts of Merit.*—These feasts, of which I deal only with the Zahau series in detail, are the corner-stone of the Chin economic structure. The largest proportion of the Chin surplus resources are utilised through this channel and in them the Chin finds the major portion of his psychological and spiritual satisfactions. They embody the most complicated reciprocities and offer to the holder the most finely adjusted ranges of economic benefit and the shortest cut to temporal power. The penalties for non-fulfilment of obligations on the one hand, and the rules of transference of Feasters' Club membership seniority from one village to another on the other hand, both show the high degree of importance which these benefits hold in Chin eyes.

Description presents a difficult problem. Only the help of bond-friends and relatives makes the holding of the feasts possible, but an account of what they give is valueless unless compared with what they get, and what they get is in turn governed by the vested interests of the *hausa pawl* (Lt. sacrifice animal men—the members of the Feasters' Club) progress among whom is one important *raison d'etre* of the whole series. For this reason I put the cart before the horse and give first a short outline of the feasts and the entirety of benefits accruing, and follow this up with the detail of the reciprocities largely condensed into the form of statements.

The Zahau series of Feasts of Merit ending with the *Khuangtsawi*, known collectively as *tsawnlam*, are divided into three groups called respectively *lam te* (small dance), *lam pi* (large dance), and *nu lam* and *thah thuan* (woman's dances).

They consist of the following :—

| Name of Feasts. | Number of days duration. | Rough Max. cost : Rs. | a. |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Lamte* .. .. .. .. | .... | .... | |
| *Sarual* .. .. .. .. | *Nil.* | 15 | 0 |
| *Sarual rualhran* .. .. .. | 1 | 25 | 0 |
| *Lampi* .. .. .. .. | .... | .... | |
| *Khlailam* (Grain Dance) .. .. | 5† Figures do not | 75 | 0 |
| *Siathumthah* (3 mithan kill).. .. | 6 include days | 125 | 0 |
| *Sia hrathah* (10 mithan kill) .. | 6 of *rul kulh*‡. | 175 | 0 |
| *Khuangtsawi* (*Khuang* carry) .. | 10†† | 250 | 0 |
| *Tsalhau*¶ .. .. .. .. | 1 | 75 | 0 |

† Nowadays the *Arrtsuk ni* and the *Sawng ni* of the *Khlailam*, once the 4th and 5th days respectively, are amalgamated into one, thereby shortening the whole duration by one day.

†† This figure includes 3 days at the opening ritual of *khuangphawh* and 7 days at the *khuangtsawi* feast proper.

‡ *Rultekulh* are days of confinement within the house and abstention from all work which are observed in some of the Shimhrin clans.

¶ This is an optional extra feast at which either a bull mithan or a buffalo may be slaughtered.

The *Nulam* and *Thahthuan* simply repeat the main series from *Khlailam* to *Siahrathah*, and take place only when a man loses his wife through death or divorce, and marries another. He then has to hold the repetitive series until his new wife is brought up to his own level of seniority in feast-giving. There are only 2 days of beer-drinking at these women's feasts.

The statement of personal advantages in feast-giving which is given below shows at a glance the general picture, and it should be studied against the background of village life which I give in the Introduction. The feasts form the greatest and almost the sole means of communal entertainment; they give the whole village a welcome change from a humdrum existence, and afford the youths and maidens an opportunity of making the acquaintance of others from neighbouring villages who come over to help in the capacity of kinsmen of the feast-giver or as participants in the dance. They offer a fine opportunity for discussion in friendly circumstances of many petty squabbles and disturbances of a domestic and inter-village nature, and are thus a useful safety valve in Chin life.

*Diagram of graded effects of Feasts of Merit.*

| Name of Feast. | Social Obligations. | Kinship Obligations. | Economic Gains. | Social Gains. | Religious Gains. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Khlailam*.. | Flesh Dues to :— Headman, Blacksmith, 2 *rual*, Assistants at feast (*Ruai kla*). | Flesh and other dues to :— Relatives. | Return in work, protection, etc., from people in Col. 2, Assistance in kind and labour from people in Col. 3, ever increasing share of *hausa sa* as member of Feasters' Club. Increasing bride price for girls. | Prestige increasing with every feast. | After death rank equal to temporal rank. |
| *Sia thum thah.* | Do. | Do. | Do. | Right to wear *vai puan* blanket. Eligibility for Council membership. | Do. |
| *Sia hra thah.* | Do. | Do. | Do. | Do. | Do. |
| *Khuang tsawi.* | Do. | Do. | Do. | Membership of Council. Right to make window in house and erect hut on *zaute* verandah. Right to wear *khuang puan.* | Eligibility for *Pial rang*, the Highest Heaven. |

*Note* :—Quite apart from the practical advantages of progressing in this series of feasts, there is a compelling spiritual incentive in the promise made in the sacrificial invocation at each stage that the next stage will be attempted without delay. This is one of the reasons why all villages welcome an immigrant who has already started the series; they know that he will make every effort to give more, and they will share in the jollifications.

To amplify the statement of effects of feasting and that of the personal benefits accruing, it is necessary to detail the items noted under the two headings " flesh dues at feasts " and " help in labour and kind at the feasts." The former includes four groups of flesh dues :—those to the *hausa pawl* who by virtue of previously having given feasts of the *tsawnlam* series have acquired a lien in order of membership seniority on certain joints at the current feast, those to the political authority and blacksmith for indirect services rendered, those to the bond-friends and those to the kinship group. I deal with these four groups *seriatim.*

*Hausa pawl* perquisites. These do not stop at the flesh dues, but include specific numbers of pots of liquor—all the best quality and served as *zu peng*—of which the *pu zu* supplied at the feasts by the *pa pu* (mother's brother) and *nu pu* (wife's brother) of the host form the backbone. It will be seen in the diagram on pages 143/5 that this *pu zu* amounts to four pots at the small feasts and ten large pots at the important feasts—about 60 pints and 150 pints respectively. Since the *hausa pawl* in the average small village will not number more than 25, this quantity gives them a good start.

As to the flesh dues,* as the series of feasts progresses the *hausa pawl* receive larger and more numerous joints, finally getting about 50% of the total amount of flesh available. This is shared in strict order of seniority in feast-giving, the *hausa pa*† taking the largest joint, generally the hind leg of a mithan, a few other seniors getting lesser joints and the junior members receiving diminishing cuts off the remaining meat.

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* See Carving Chart III.

† Among the Zahau alone a young man becomes a member of the Feasters' Club from the moment he moves to a separate house, though his share of meat is infinitesimal. In other tribes membership can be gained only by holding the feasts. The senior member is called the *hausa pa* in the tribes east of the Manipur River, whereas among the tribes in the Tiddim Subdivision to the North the term is applied to the headman. This fact tends to confirm historical evidence that the Tiddim tribes were democratic until the northward advance of Khuang Tseo (see History) and his Shimhrin army, who superimposed many Shimhrin customs on the conquered tribes. Prior to this event there are indications that headman of northern tribes were in fact only senior members of the village council, which in turn was composed largely of the senior *hausa pawl.* In other words, he was the *hausa pa* in the sense which this term connotes among the democratic tribes in the Falam Subdivision.

## Carving Chart III

Showing the proportionate distribution of flesh between Kin, Village Officials, and the *Hausa Pawl*

at

*Khlai Lam*

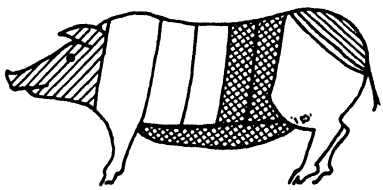
(First of the larger Feasts of Merit).

*Dues to Kindred—Marked in line shading.*

1. Father. 2. Brothers and paternal cousins.

3. Sisters and paternal female cousins.

4. Mother's brother. 5. Wife's brother.



*Dues to Village Officials—Marked in cross hatch.*

1. The Headman. 2. The *Khuatelal* (2nd headman). 3. The Blacksmith.

*Dues to the Hausa Pawl—left unshaded.*

The *hausa pawl* are the men who have previously given feasts in the Merit series. In the larger feasts the share of the *hausa pawl* increases progressively, while those of the others remain almost constant. This is because kin and officials get shares from only one animal—*hausa pawl* share in all killed.

*Note*:—In this division of meat we find payment being made for three different reasons. The kin receive shares for help in kind, the village officials for organisation, and the *hausa pawl* for having invested capital in earlier feasts at which the present feast-giver has participated.

'As a consequence of gaining the top ranks of Feasters' Club membership, a man opens for himself through elevation to the village Council avenues to a further wide range of economic advantages including participation in entertainment of village guests and communal sacrifice, both of which yield a fairly constant supply of beer and meat. Finally there is an annual feast called *hausa tawn*, in the nature of a club dinner to which only members are invited. At this again senior members get the best of everything, though funds for it are collected from all and made up by fines which will be described later, inflicted on persons who fail to produce the traditional quality or quantities of beer at feasts in which they take part.

Additional proof of the importance in Zahau eyes of progress in the Feasts of Merit can be found in the very existence of the *kawl thah* (Lit. Burman killing) custom whereby a man who has surplus livestock but is temporarily short of grain for beer may hold his feast by instalments. We have noted that there are several days of beer-drinking at each feast, and if one or more of these is curtailed the feast becomes *kawl thah* and the host has to pay to the *hausa pawl* a forfeit called *lambawng* (Lit. dance pawn) annually, until the missing beer drink is held.

*Lambawng* is assessed at Rs.2 each if the *pu zu* or *sa tsan zu* is missing and Re. 1 each if the *sia hau zu* or *tual phiah zu* is withheld. Total absence of beer at a *kawlthah* feast entails a forfeit of Rs.6* per annum for a *lam pi*, Rs.3 p.a. for a *nu lam* and Re.1 for a *lam te*. An alternative system of assessment is based on these totals with deductions for each day of beer-drink given. Thus one day's beer means in the case of *lam pi* a diminished forfeit of Rs.5 p.a. with the first year free, while two days' beer reduces this to Rs.4 p.a. with the first year free.

As a final note on this subject there is the custom whereby migration (which we have seen is common) is prevented from depriving a man of his seniority among the *hausa pawl*. Should such a man migrate after holding say the *sia hra thah* in his old village, he must at once inform the *hausa pawl* of his new village and on proving his case he is permitted to buy himself in at his old rank by holding a special entertainment for them known as *kheng hnin* or *lam thang* after his first *sarual* feast there.

So much for the Feasters' Club. Though membership is the high road to the Council it does not give admittance to the exclusive circle of the Hunters' Club and *vice versa :* the *hausa pa* and the *lungpi* retain paramountcy only in their own spheres. But membership does open the door to a relatively high degree of social progress and thus this Club holds pride of place in local eyes. With this general picture completed we can proceed to examination of how the material for the feast is collected, and what happens to the remainder of the meat after the *hausa pawl* have had their share.

*Flesh Dues to the Headman and Blacksmith.*—These are shown in carving charts 1 and 2 and do not vary much for feasts. Since we have already noted the services rendered in return, all that need be examined here is the linguistic significance of the terms applied to the Headman's share. His two pieces of flank of pig are called respectively *khawsa* and *darnga*. *Khawsa* is a corruption of *khua sa* or Village Meat, and its payment emphasises his position as the political leader. *Dar nga* means

* Assessment of *lambawng* in cash is a comparatively new innovation. Traditionally it is payable in pots of beer which the *hausa pawl* are entitled to collect as soon as the new year's crops are harvested. If a man migrates owing *lambawng* he can be sued in the village courts for the amount due during the year he left, the remainder being cancelled. Death cancels *lambawng*, though the widow will receive her husband's share of *hausa sa* for one year after his death.

gong hire, and is really intended to compensate the headman for the loan to the feast-giver of the rare *dar* gongs used in the dances at these feasts. These *dar* are so hard to find that many villages have to make do with substitutes of Burmese manufacture, but the payment of *darna* to the headman still continues in spite of this.

*Mutual obligations with bond-friends.*—A man must have two *rual*, and these are selected from among childhood friends at the first crisis at which their help is necessary, generally at marriage. No man who has not already become *rual* to two people can well refuse an invitation to become a bond-friend; in fact such an invitation lightly turned down would result in the fine known as *rual hnawm man* (Bond-friendship belittle price). *Rual* must always help each other; they must present a small pot of beer and a fowl (*rual khau tsawi*) when their bond-friends build a new house or have an addition to the family, and must take a similar present to commiserate (*rual khla hnak*) if they suffer a death in their household.

At the Feasts of Merit the two *rual* of the host each supply sufficient beer to give all present two drinking-hornsful apiece; each kills a dog or other animal for the guests to eat (*rual tuar*), and between them they supervise the work of the *ruai kla* (hired helpers). In return for this they share a moderate portion of meat and each receives a small payment called *rual ar thah* (friend's fowl kill) amounting to Re.1 for lesser feasts and Rs.2 for the *khuangtsawi*. With the thoroughness characteristic of Zahau reciprocities there is even provision for inability to carry out bond obligations. Where this inability is genuine and due to a temporary impoverishment nothing is said, but if due to avoidable causes the offender is fined. In this connection there is a rule governing bond-friend obligations due from a migrant. It sometimes happens that a man 'A' gives feasts at which he receives the statutory help from his *rual* 'B', and then migrates before 'B' gives a feast at which he can help. In such cases A must pay to B *rual tuar man* (*rual* help price) amounting of Rs.2 for each feast owing. A similar compensation of Re.1 known as *rual sazang man* (*rual* "saddle" price) is payable in the extremely rare cases where a poor man, who could not help at his bond-friend's feast through poverty but was in compassion given his share of meat, migrates without recompensing his friend for his kindness

*Kinship reciprocities.*—These may be divided into four parts:—the assistance in labour given to the feast-giver and the traditional quantities of beer and livestock brought to the feast on the one hand; the flesh dues given by the host to his kindred and the *that man** (kill price) on the other.

The relatives who receive dues at feasts include the patrilineal male relatives, (*u le nau*) the classificatory sisters (*farnu*), the mother's brother

* *That man* is payable to the mother's brother (*pa pu*), wife's brother (*nu pu*) and the classificatory sisters (*farnu*) who help at the feasts.

and wife's brother (*pa pu* and *nu pu*). The characteristic difference in the reciprocities between the patrilineal male relatives and the others named are that, excepting the *khualdar*, the former do not help at feasts but render assistance at all other life crises, whereas the last three do help at the feasts and receive a *quid pro quo*.

As the amount of work to be done increases with the magnitude of the feasts, the number of helpers varies accordingly. The *pa pu* and *nu pu* assist on all occasions, but the classificatory sisters called upon are only three for feasts up to and including the *sia hra thah*, whereas for the *khuangtsawi* the number is increased to six. The three *farnu* who act at all feasts are called the *farnu ngai* (real sisters) while those extra called in for the *khuangtsawi* are called the *hlamhlawh farnu* (working sisters). Both groups of three are divided into three ranks, the senior in each group being called *farnu upa* (sister senior), the next *farnu nauta* (sister lesser) and the *rawlsuang farnu* (cooking sister). All these ladies work as a team and with the help of the host's two bond-friends manage the hired workers (*ruai kla*) who come to do the heavy work in exchange for the run of their teeth and a small cash payment.

In the statement which follows, the detail of the kinship reciprocities is recorded for each of the feasts in order of importance. It must be remembered that the liquor supplied by the *nupu*, *papu* and *far nu* must be the finest quality *zu ha* as it is destined for specific groups* who can enforce addition or substitution if the beer is lacking in quantity or flavour.

Distribution of *zu* is the special responsibility of the Wine Butler† (*zu shia*) whose duties require a knowledge of the orders of precedence, an endless perambulation in search of empty drinking cups, and a sound appreciation of good liquor.

*Statement of Kinship Obligations at Feasts of Merit (Zahau).*

| Name of Feast. | Nature of Relationship to Feast-giver. | Gives. | Receives. |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Sarual Rualhran* | Patrilineal kindred .. | *Nil.* | Flesh dues. |
| | Mother's brother .. | 2 large pots *zu* .. | Flesh dues. |
| | Wife's brother .. | 2 large pots *zu* .. | Flesh dues. |
| | *Farnu kla* .. | .... | .... |
| | *Upa* .. | 1 large pot *zu* .. | Flesh dues. |
| | *Nauta* .. | Do. | Do. |
| | *Rawlsuang* .. | Do. | *Nil.* |

* See page 145.

† The work of the *zu shia* is not "professional". Any knowledgeable relative is eligible.

*Statement of Kinship Obligations at Feasts of Merit (Zahau)*—contd.

| Name of Feast. | Nature of Relationship to Feast-giver. | Gives. | Receives. |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Khlailam* and *Faang za aih*† | Patrilineal kindred .. | *Nil.* | Flesh dues. |
| | *Pa pu* .. | 2 large pots *zu* .. | Flesh dues + *that man* 5 *seu.* |
| | *Nu pu* .. | 2 large pots *zu* .. | Flesh dues. |
| | *Farnu klu* .. | .... | .... |
| | *Upa* .. | 3 large pots *zu* .. | Flesh dues. |
| | *Nauta* .. | 3 large pots *zu* .. | Do. |
| | *Rawlsuang* .. | 1½ (*nufa*) pots *zu* .. | Do. |
| *Sia thum thah* and *Sia hra thah.* | Patrilineal kindred. | *Nil.* | Flesh dues. |
| | *Pa pu* .. | 5 large pots *zu* .. | Flesh dues + *that man* 5 *seu.* |
| | *Nu pu* .. | 5 large pots *zu* .. | Flesh dues. |
| | *Farnu klu* | | |
| | *Upa* .. | 4-5 large pots *zu* .. | Flesh dues. |
| | *Nauta* .. | 3 large pots *zu* .. | Do. |
| | *Rawlsuang* .. | 2 large pots *zu* .. | Do. |
| *Khuangstawi* .. | Patrilineal kindred .. | *Nil.* | Flesh dues. |
| | *Pa pu* .. | 5 large pots *pu zu.*<br>1 large pot *zu* as *bualsuah nak.*<br>1 large pot *zu* as *sum dil nak.*<br>1 pig, 1 packet of salt and 1 *rel* of grain. | Flesh dues. *plus that man* of 1 *siate*, 1 *vaipuan* blanket, one *hni* shirt, and 1 *thuai khlak* sucking pig. If more than one *khuangtsawi* is given a total of 15 *seu* is payable as *that man* in each case. |
| | *Nu pu* .. | Do. | Do. |

† The Dance of Celebration of a bumper crop described on page 43.

*Statement of Kinship Obligations at Feasts of Merit (Zahau)*—contd.

| Name of Feast. | Nature of Relationship to Feast-giver. | Gives. | Receives. |
|---|---|---|---|
| ***Khuangtsawi*** .. | *Farnu ngai.* | | |
| | *Upa* .. | *Sia hnawng tuar, i.e.*, one pig, 1 packet salt, 1 *rel* of grain, 1 pot *sum dil nak zu* and sufficient *zu* to give all *ruai kla* or helpers 2 *hai* each. | Flesh dues + *That man* 10 *seu.* |
| | *Nauta* .. | Do. | Flesh dues + *That man* 8 *seu.* |
| | *Rawlsuang* .. | A twice farrowed sow and *zu* as above. | Flesh dues + *That man* 5 *seu.* |
| | *Hlamhlawh Farnu kla* | | |
| | *Upa* | 4-5 pots *zu* .. | Flesh dues only. |
| | *Nauta* .. | 3 large pots *zu* .. | Do. |
| | *Rawlsuang* .. | 2 large pots *zu* .. | Do. |

One of the *u le nau* patrilineal group acts as *Khualdar* for the feast given. He has to see that guests find accommodation and must supply them with beer each night.

*Penalties for non-observance of kinship reciprocities.*—The very fact that these reciprocities so nearly balance out will make it obvious that it is not often action against defaulters needs to be taken. But the sanctions exist if required, and are worthy of record. We have already noted the severance of relationship (*khak*) as the worst that can be done in this connection, but it happens that this drastic action cannot be taken against either the mother's brother or the wife's brother. This does not absolve them from trouble however, because as I have shown in this chapter their contribution in beer goes to the senior members of the Feasters' Club, who will fine them (*hun lo ai*—" not bringing fine ") if they default. Incidentally if they live far away the feast-giver himself has the responsibility of actual delivery of the beer from the homes of his *pu* to his own house, and if the absence of *pu zu* is due to his shirking this responsibility the elders will fine him instead of his *pu*. Production of inferior quality *pu zu* is fined (*pu khlak*) in pots of beer varying from eight annas to Rs.2 in value according to the degree of poorness, and if this is not handed over at once to be consumed at the feast the cash equivalent is deducted from the *that man* due to the offender and added to the fund maintained by the Feasters' Club for their annual *hausa tawn* dinner.

Sometimes pilfering dogs or other animals sneak away one of the pieces of flesh due to a kinsman and if this happens compensation known as *salung kal kirh* (animal heart return) must be paid, the rate being Re.1 for each share of pig flesh and Rs.2 for each joint of mithan.

When the real *pu* lives too far away to attend a feast the host may appoint a substitute known as *va te pu* (little bird *pu*) to take their place, these substitutes giving and receiving the traditional reciprocities.

*Meat division at the Feasts of Merit.*—The carving of animals at feasts follows strictly traditional lines, each group or individual getting the exact joint specified by custom. The greater the feast the more the animals killed and the larger the joints into which they are carved. All animals to be sacrificed must be brought to the house of sacrifice and kept in the household pens for one night before the ritual, and the numbers required in each case are :—

| Name of Feast. | Pigs. | Mithan. |
|---|---|---|
| *Sarual Rualhran* .. | 1 pig worth Rs.5 .. | *Nil.* |
| *Khlailam* .. | 2 large male pigs ..<br>1 female piglet ..<br>1 male piglet .. | *Nil.* |
| *Siathumthah* .. | 1 female piglet .. | 1 bull mithan.<br>1 cow mithan.<br>1 young mithan (either sex). |
| *Siahrathah* .. | 1 sow .. .. | 1 bull mithan.<br>1 cow mithan.<br>1 young bull mithan.<br>1 young mithan (either sex). |
| *Khuangtsawi** .. | 2 large male pigs.<br>1 sow.<br>1 pig supplied by *farnu nauta*.<br>1 twice farrowed sow supplied *rawlsuang farnu*.<br>2 pigs supplied by *pa pu* and *nu pu* respectively. | 2 bull mithan.<br>1 cow mithan. |

For *Nulam* and *Thahthuan*, which repeat the *Khlailam, Sia thum* and *Sia hra thah* for a new wife, the number of pigs killed is reduced to 2 in the first case and while the mithan killed at the others remain the same in number, animals with blemishes can be utilised because no invocation is made to the spirits.

Throughout the description of Carving and Meat division I have kept to the Zahau custom. Though the detail of the joints and precise pieces given to various recipients varies from one tribe to another, all

* Of the pigs, 1 male pig and 1 sow are killed at the *Khuangphawh* or opening ceremony held in the harvest festival season immediately preceding the holding of the *Khuangtsawi*. A male goat is also killed at *Khuangphawh*.

have in common the *hausa sa* and the shares to patrilineal relatives, mother's brother, wife's brother, *farnu* and *rual* of the feast-giver. Only among the democratic tribes are the headman and blacksmith's perquisites absent, these pieces being added to the *hausa sa.*

In the Carving Charts undercuts are marked with dotted lines, the patrilineal kinship dues in cross-hatch and the political and specialist dues in line shading. Unmarked in the diagrams are the " lights ", which at feasts go to the *nu pu* and *pa pu*, each getting half. These consist of the heart (*alungkal*), the lungs (*atsuawp*), the kidneys (*akaileng*), the spleen (*ala*). The liver (*athin*), the stomach (*apumpi*) and part of the intestine (*aril*) are generally cooked and eaten by the helpers at feasts, while the long intestine is used for the making of blood sausages, at least one of which goes to each recipient of a share of the meat.

The business of carving is under the supervision of a hired expert known as the *sa lai kai* or *salai at*, whose duty it is to make the first symbolic incision in the belly of each animal killed, and to see that the assistants carve the various joints correctly.

This outline of the social obligations thus comes to an end, and we can summarise their total effect on the economic system. Firstly we can appreciate in detail now what it means to be the point of intersection of the four social circles mentioned in the opening paragraphs of this chapter. We see that a man does not give or take in marriage without help from his related neighbours, nor does a life come or go without their practical participation in joy or sorrow. We see above all that although the individual householder is the focal point of all festive occasions he can not by any manner of means hold these feasts on his own resources. The contributions in beer alone—the *rual zu*, the *pu zu*, and the *far zu*—to say nothing of the large quantity produced by the *khualdar* at the greater Feasts of Merit—amount to a very considerable proportion of the total expenditure at sacrificial occasions. Add to this the manual help, and in certain feasts the gifts of live-stock, and we can see that all sacrifices are to a greater or lesser degree the result of co-operative effort.

In these circumstances the whole body of the activities described assumes the shape of a joint enterprise designed to control the distribution and consumption of resources, having as manager the holder of the sacrifice, and as the profit-sharing participants the four social circles, each of which draws a dividend commensurate with the extent of its investment of time and resources in the enterprise itself.

If we concede this point, the conception of sacrifice as *waste* of resources disappears at once, and we are left with nothing but admiration for the ingenuity with which the intricate details of individual and group shares are worked out, the foresight which provides for almost all possible contingencies, and the wisdom which has prompted the elders from time to time to modify their rules to meet changing economic conditions.

## CHAPTER XI.

## THE ECONOMICS OF JUSTICE.

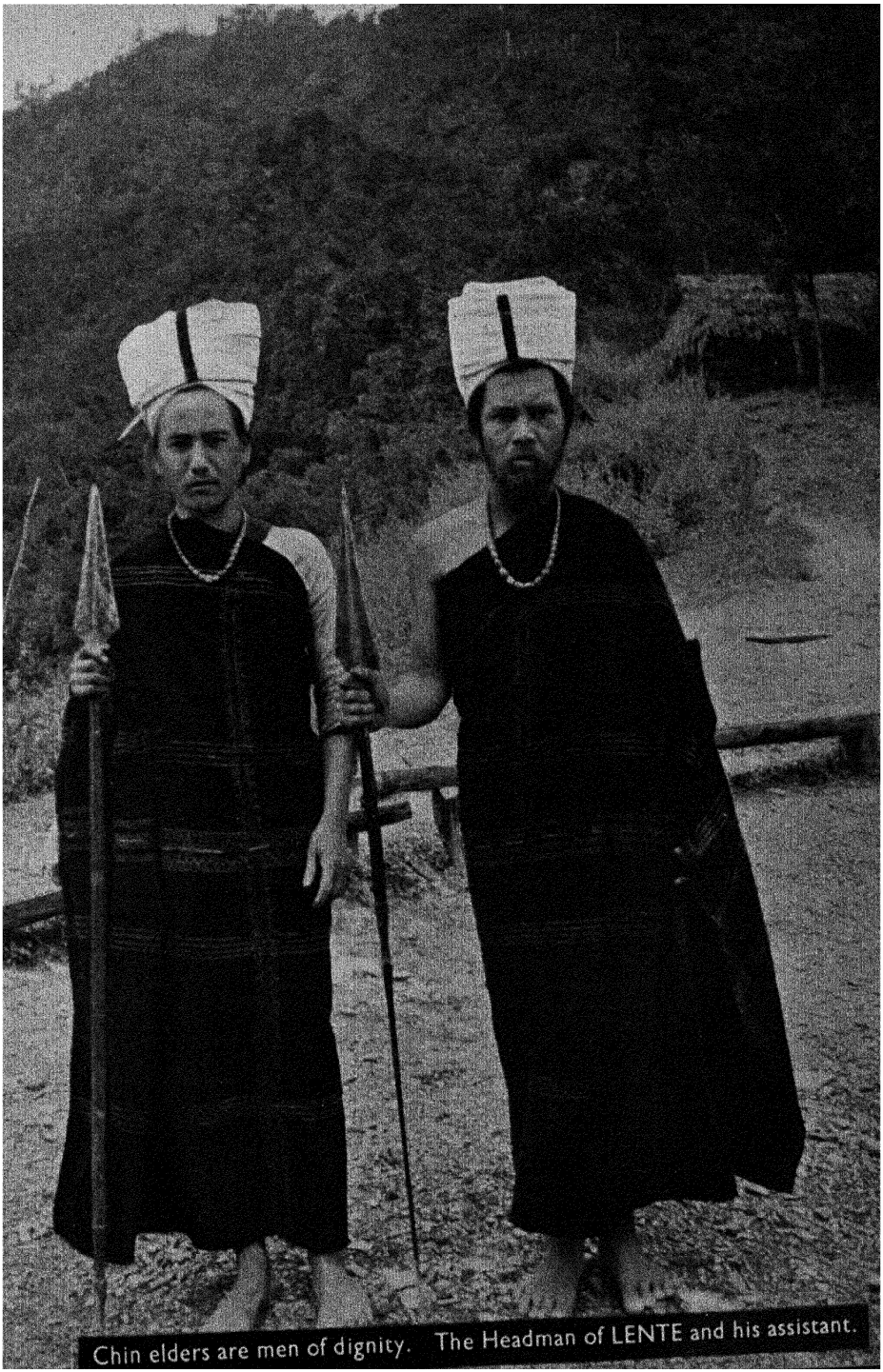
Before studying the detail of Chin justice it would perhaps be as well to consider one or two general questions* respecting primitive justice which are still the subject of some misunderstanding. These questions are :—what is the motivation of obedience to custom, and to what degree do the norms of primitive conduct differ from our own ? Opinion on the primitive attitude to law ranges from the conception of the lawless savage,† to whom only might is right, to belief in the figmentary " collective conscience " which imposes on primitives a natural obedience to their tribal customs. Both extremes ignore the balance of positive inducements to obedience and retributive penalties for disobedience in all societies, the very existence of which is proof that everywhere there is a recognised path of virtue, that the individual is apt to stray from it and must be brought back again by the lure of the one and the fear of the other. Our own jurists dwell too much on the penal aspect of justice and as a whole the civilised world prides itself on a grossly exaggerated gap between its standards and those of the primitive.

So far as the Chin is concerned the whole of the evidence in this paper underlines the fact that obedience to laws and customs owes at least as much to the positive inducements as to the penal sanctions. Whether it is a matter of kinship obligations, behaviour towards neighbours or respect of property, we find that an expectation of reciprocal returns, goodwill and good reputation play an important part in keeping the average man within the bounds of the law. As to the norms of behaviour—the Chins like ourselves grow up and marry, love and quarrel with their families, compete with each other for honour and position, condemn age for its stranglehold on political and social power and youth for its bumptious precocity. Though their wedding ceremony differs, and the blood of pig and fowl passes for certificate and ring, yet the marriage takes place for the same reasons as ours—to give legal sanction and protection to the cohabitation of man and wife, and to legitimise the off-spring of the union. Though many marriages are happy, divorce occurs, and for the same reasons as in our own society-breach of sexual restrictions, incompatibility of temperament, cruelty or desertion. Though habitual crooks are almost unknown, thefts occur and men are tempted by hunger and cupidity. Even kleptomania exists, though it passes under the less dignified title of incurable thieving.

In other words, in spite of a great number of superficial differences in the outward standards of behaviour, there is a very broad basis of

* One of the clearest expositions of these is to be found in Professor Malinowski's introduction to Dr. Ian Hogbin's " Law and Order in Polynesia."

† See page 205 of Chin Hills Gazetteer by Carey and Tuck.



Chin elders are men of dignity. The Headman of LENTE and his assistant.

similarity between Chin norms and our own, and if we look for the similarities rather than the differences we can go much further towards understanding why their laws are obeyed and *vice versa*, because we shall inject into our estimations the sympathetic tolerance which we show to our own foibles, and the measure of reverence we give to our own principles of honour and propriety.

With this in mind, we can go on to consider what we mean by equity, for the local principles of fairness must be faced if we are to appreciate the significance of Chin jurisprudence. Do we mean by equity something which *we* have built up on the foundations of western civilisation—a compound of English Law and what *we* call fair play? Or do we visualise something that takes its colour from any cultural background, something that can and does vary with purely local considerations of what is right and wrong? This is no idle question. The charter* of administrative control of customary law states specifically that that law shall be administered "having regard to justice, *equity*, and good conscience." It is therefore pertinent to insist on clarification of this issue as a pre-requisite of our analysis of Chin justice. For the support or modification of the local laws is merely one facet of the main body of administrative responsibilities, and if, as I shall show in this chapter, law, religion and economics are inextricably interwoven it follows that amending the law will have far-reaching consequences in these other spheres. Thus our notion of what is equity is shown to be of prime importance; our efforts to guide the people towards progress depend largely on whether or not we gain their willing co-operation and this in turn depends on the extent to which our conception of what is fair coincides with theirs.

This chapter purposes to give the Chin a fair hearing: it is an objective examination of the Chin viewpoint, an account of what constitutes an offence in Chin eyes, of the social and economic consequences of offence, of the nature of punishment and the means of execution of orders, and of the results of punishment under tribal law. Throughout the whole, emphasis is laid on the economic aspect, which will be found to loom very large indeed.

It is often argued that there is a fundamental difference between the primitive and his civilised contemporary in the application of justice because there is no distinction in primitive eyes between what we call criminal offences and civil wrongs: because the former has no clearly defined Courts of Justice, codified law or police forces to implement legal decisions. This chapter will demonstrate that though executive and legal power are vested in the same persons—the chiefs and headmen—yet justice is done: though no one has yet written, thank goodness, a Code of Chin Law, the law is known: though there are no uniformed policeman at the corners of the village lanes, orders are implemented. It will be found, indeed, that Chin justice varies from ours only in the

* The Chin Hills Regulation.

degree that his culture differs from ours, and that in many respects it shows an enlightened congruity which will bear comparison with judicial practice in any land.

The central Chin divides his offences into three main groups*:— Offences against the person, including physical and psychological injury; offences against property, including theft, damage or destruction; offences against the spirits or against spiritual values, including the breach of ritual restrictions, defilement of the spirit altars and so on. Each of these groups is in turn qualified by two standards of enormity— whether the offence is remediable by payment of compensation from the injurer to the injured or whether such an excess of violence or turpitude has been shown as to render necessary an additional village fine.

In the preceding chapters we have seen something of the local concepts of material and spiritual value, the nature of the work man must do to live, the form and ideology of his ceremonial occasions, and the effect of all these on his economic processes. Now it remains to study what happens in the economic sphere when any of these values, occupations and ritual occasions is thrown out of gear by the commission of an offence.

*Offences against the person.*—These include culpable or accidental homicide, permanent or temporary physical injury, wrongful confinement, rape and sodomy†: injury by sorcery and cursing, defamation of character, belittlement of temporal achievements and the divulging of secrets confidentially imparted or overheard.

The economic consequences of offences in this category vary from the loss of a worker through death or incapacity; the loss of reputation, prestige, seniority and the economic advantages that go with them; the loss of friendship or patronage through idle gossip, to the loss of health or sanity at the hands of a sorceror. In each case the condition arising out of the offence can be assessed in terms of economic goods— the expenditure on mortuary feasts and sacrifice for health, the diminution of *hausa sa* and the inferior beer at feasts resulting from loss of social position,‡ the cost of exorcising evil spirits, and so on.

* Offences against the "State" are not recognised by the Chin as a separate category. For instance an offence against the Chief is treated as harm to an individual, not to the community, while an offence involving defilement of village altars is treated in exactly the same way as an offence against private altars and so on. In pre-annexation days the village was the "State", and individuals resident therein were closely bound by kinship ties to each other. Treason and kindred offences were therefore practically unknown.

† Of very rare occurrence, and then only in tribes which have had contact with the *mar* tribes of the Lushai Hills to the west, among whom this offence was at one time not uncommon.

‡ I have noted in Chapter V the offence of *sa kah hnawm* (belittling a hunting exploit) as a result of which a man might lose seniority in the Hunters' Club. In the same way questioning a man's achievements in the Feasts of Merit may reduce his seniority among the *hausa pawl*.

*Offences against property and property rights.*—These envisage all the offences which we class under theft, misappropriation and cheating, wilful and accidental damage or destruction of goods, land, houses and livestock ; adultery, which is an infringement of a man's property rights in his wife, and non-payment of the reciprocities noted in Chapter X. All these again are readily assessable in terms of goods or cash, even adultery *.

*Offences against the Spirits or against spiritual values.*—We have noted that the local people sacrifice a considerable member of animals at altars in the house, at the *mual*, at the *hnar* resting-places, at the field altars and at the altars dedicated to the locality spirits. In all cases it is believed that the spirit will appear to partake of the *sa serh* spirit food and therefore any act such as the tying of a cloven hoofed animal at or near the altar (which will make the spirit expect a sacrifice), burning of a cooking fire (which has the same effect), damage or destruction to the trees round the altar or the skulls or animals fixed thereto (which will annoy the spirit), must be atoned for by an immediate sacrifice of the customary offering to the spirit so enraged.

In the same way at most sacrifices there are certain restrictions called *zarh ul* during which either the householder, his family or the whole community, as the case may be, must refrain from specific types of manual effort and must exclude strangers from the house or village. Forcible entry into a village or house on such occasions would entail repetition of the sacrifice, and is therefore punishable at least by the payment in compensation of the value of the animal offered.

Finally there are the restrictions on the use of another's head-comb (specially among the Shimhrin), the ban on taking *lac* into the houses of certain clans and on taking beeswax or gongs into others, the ban on sitting, sleeping and especially sexual intercourse on the *khunpi* (main bedstead) of another person's house, and so on. In all these cases also it is possible to arrive at an exact assessment of the economic damage done in terms of goods. The offences entail either repetition of a sacrifice defiled or the holding of a new one in atonement ; the offender must provide the animal offered† and thus the problem of punishment raises no difficulty.

In his punishments for crime the Chin can stand comparison with any race. In all cases in the central hills only fines or compensation are inflicted, bodily injury and death are not included in the list of

* The fact that a marriage price is payable makes exact calculation of the consequences of adultery an easy matter.

† We must note that the cost of beer and food consumed at feasts which have been spoiled cannot be charged to the defiler. It is rightly held that the food has been consumed and enjoyed by the participants and therefore they have no 'grouse.' Only the spirit has been cheated or insulted and so only the sacrificial offering regarded as his perquisite is payable. This is a nice example of Chin equity.

traditional deterrents. This very important fact will be referred to later when summing up the relative advantages of customary law over the Penal Code. Only two cases are known in tribal history of the execution of a fellow villager. Both of these occurred in Tashon, the sentences being carried out by throwing the bound victim into the Manipur River. One of these two unfortunates escaped and lived afterwards in a Zanniat village. A custom known as *bawrh*, which sanctions the pummeling of any person becoming a public nuisance, would seem to contradict this suggestion of the absence of corporal punishment in the official Chin list. Actually *bawrh* is never ordered by a headman and is always the result of a spontaneous outburst against an unpopular person, usually at a beer-drink when people get together and tongues are loosed.

In pre-annexation days the most serious punishment ever inflicted was *ram* (also called *luangpi klak*—to bring down the ridge-pole) which entailed banishment and the confiscation of all property. Since in those days of internecine strife every household was of great value for protective if for no other purposes, it will be realised that *ram* was not lightly ordered. After the annexation it fell into disrepute and is now obsolete.

Of the fines of today I give below, in diminishing order of severity, those current among the Zahau. In all other tribes one finds the same names for fines, but though the qualitative content remains similar, quantities differ from one tribe to another.

| | |
|---|---|
| *Siapi.* | A large cow mithan, in 1936* valued for legal purposes at Rs. 40. |
| *Siate.* | A young mithan, valued at Rs.20. |
| *Lungkhen or Khenpi.* | 1 four fist pig, 5 pots of beer, 1 *han* of grain and 1 packet of salt. Valued at Rs.15. |
| *Khente.* | 1 three fist pig, 5 pots of beer, 1 *han* of grain and 1 packet of salt. Valued at Rs.10. |
| *Zupi nga.* | 5 pots of beer. |
| †*Raw rel lawh.* | 1 or more *rel* (small basket containing about 7 lbs.) of grain. |

When any case is heard the complainant will take a pot of beer to the .headman's house to oil the wheels of discussion. This is the *thu dil nak* (word ask for).

Disposal of fines varies from tribe to tribe. In some all goes to the complainant as compensation, the trying elders being satisfied with the *thu dil nak* beer ; in others the greater part goes in compensation to the

* These arbitrary valuations do not necessarily correspond with the market values at the time. For convenience sake cash values of traditional fines have been fixed from time to time by the Deputy Commissioner of the Chin Hills.

† *Rawl rel lawh* is the fine usually inflicted for disobedience of council orders to turn out for communal labour. Lesser fines down to one small pot of beer valued at As. 8 are inflicted for minor offences, but these have no specific names.

offended party, and the lesser is retained by the council. In such cases valuable articles such as mithan and pigs will go as compensation, while the elders will retain the beer, grain and salt for use in communal entertainment. In some bad cases a double punishment is awarded covering both compensation to the injured and a large fine payable to the village council.

This problem of the disposal of fines has been much discussed in the past. Experienced officers have argued that allowing elders to participate in sharing the proceeds of their own judicial orders increases litigation because unscrupulous elders stir up trouble in order to raise fines. Some Chins agree, but many others argue in precisely the opposite direction, saying that if all the fines were paid as compensation to injured parties there would be a profit in litigation and a much greater incentive to sue. It is simply a matter of opinion at the moment, but quantitative evidence based on detailed enquiries in one or two villages would probably be worth collecting.

One thing is certain—if a headman and council want to wax fat they must keep as many villagers as possible, and to do this they must keep the peace and reduce quarrelsome litigation to a minimum. For this reason it will be found that in awarding punishment for an offence the elders rarely inflict the maximum applicable. Because they have to live with both parties to the case their main objective is restoration of harmony, the granting of just sufficient economic balm to assuage the wounded without permanently antagonising the wounder. To this end they take into account not only the facts of the offence itself but also the age, sex, rank, wealth and kinship groupings of the contending parties, the likelihood of emigration of disaffected persons, and a hundred and one other factors known only to those having an intimate day to day contact with all concerned. Thus their orders are always placatory—the sublimation of that genius for compromise once believed the hallmark only of Perfide Albion.

In considering the economic consequences of punishment under tribal law the first obvious point is that the fines represent large enough a proportion of the average householder's capital to be a powerful deterrent. For it will take from him at least the surplus with which he hopes to build up his economic future, and if he has had a bad year may mean that he must appeal to his relatives for help. The result is that the patrilineal kindred who may be called upon to help are always anxious to keep a man away from trouble that will touch their resources, while both they and the relatives-in-law are equally concerned in preserving him from loss of the surplus which will produce feasts in which they can share.

In other words, the infliction of loss of goods added to a closely knit reciprocal aid system among kindred makes all of them partial sureties for the good behaviour of each individual in the group.

The second main point is that the proceeds of fines inflicted on recalcitrant individuals have a twofold effect—they compensate the injured party to the extent of any outlay in sacrifice or replacement value in goods, and they increase the resources for communal purposes in the hands of the elders. The first effect re-establishes calm and the second reduces to some extent the calls made on all householders in the form of the *khai* and *tha hlun* collections mentioned in Chapter X.

The third and last important point is that execution of sentences is cheap and effective and there is no expensive jail administration to pay for at the cost of higher taxes. Provision for refusal to pay fines imposed is made in the *lamkhlang pal man* (road below go price) which consist of an addition of from 1 to 5 *seu* to any fine which the elders have to collect by force.

We can now consider the effect of the extension to the Chin Hills of the Indian Penal Code, which has been applicable since the annexation. On the one hand our system of imprisonment, corporal or capital punishment, entailing as it does reprisal against the offender rather than redress of the economic consequences of offence, cuts right across the basic principles of Chin justice and is therefore not properly understood by the people. On the other hand the mere threat of the horrors of corporal punishment or banishment to a jail in the sorceror-hunted plains does lend some measure of support to the tribal customs and very definitely encourages amicable settlement of disputes. *In other words the application of the penal law to actual cases is less effective than its mere existence as a potential alternative method of trial and punishment.* It can be argued that it is not necessary to whip or imprison offenders; that the Penal Code leaves it open to a trying magistrate to inflict a fine which can be paid as compensation, but I do not think anyone will maintain that this expensive and roundabout system is in any way preferable to direct punishment by the elders.

The crux of the matter is that the Penal Code envisages offences as infringements of a codified law, expressly torn out of their context by the Evidence Act, whereas the courts of the elders regard them principally as acts resulting in economic loss, often to a group of relatives unconnected with the actual commission of the offence, and in this sense little different in essence from an accident. Whereas we forgive and forget accidental killing or injury, the Chin does not, and in such cases either the funeral mithan and shroud (*ruakhnah* and *puanfun*) or the expenses of spiritual "treatment" such as *khla kawh* must be paid. The award of additional punishment for deliberate acts rests entirely on the turpitude evinced by the offender, and as I have already pointed out, reprisal against him always tends to take second place to finding a solution satisfactory to the village community as a whole.

The procedure in application of the Penal Code is even more foreign to the Chin than the punishments inflicted under it. The Chin village court is composed of men who have grown old with all the parties to

most cases, of elders who know a thousand things about the contestants, things which to them are essential factors in an equitable settlement but which the Evidence Act would rule out as irrelevant. All witnesses are examined in each others' presence and there is little or no attempt to evade punishment by trickery, and the spectacle of an offender getting off scot-free because of some technical fault in presentation of the case is as unknown as it would be ridiculous.

Contrast this scene with that in an official court. The presiding officer is one whose cultural setting is completely alien to that of the persons coming before him, who may not even know the local dialects, and who, in these days of rapid transfer, can have but little general and almost certainly no personal knowledge of the facts and persons forming the background to the dispute. It is inevitable that the decisions reached will rarely if ever satisfy the canons of Chin justice, which we have seen owe so much to an intimate knowledge of the local culture and the village personnel.

Of course there are the rare instances where inter-tribal cases, or cases concerning persons who are not Chins occur.* But even these, involving as they do two different cultural backgrounds, are more easily settled under customary law than the harsher Penal Code. I have often felt that the main reason for the very high percentage of convictions in hill murder cases is due almost entirely to the fact that all witnesses know they are not being asked to condemn a man to a horrible death. They are therefore more willing to testify. Similarly in all except the very rare premeditated cases (Blessed is a narrow gap between Haves and Have-nots !) the offender rarely attempts to escape the consequences of his crime.

We can sum up the situation in the central hills by saying that customary law is enforced almost entirely through the medium of economic exchange, that it is preferable to the Penal Code because it aims at re-establishing the economic balance disturbed by offences in a manner likely to satisfy the community as a whole, that in procedure it is cheap because it is executed on the basis of village autonomy and through the heredity officials and the traditional councils, and last not least, it is successful in attaining the result desired, for *there is very much less crime in these hills that in most other areas in Burma.*

We can see clearly that local economics are inextricably bound up with local justice, and *vice versa*, and underline the main contention in this book—that from an administrative point of view a detailed knowledge of the local economy is an essential pre-requisite to understanding any other sphere of local life.

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* There are very few non-Chin residents of the Chin Hills District, and their immigration is not encouraged for many reasons.

## CHAPTER XII.

## THE ECONOMICS OF RELIGIOUS RITUAL.

In all the preceding chapters the religious aspect of local economic pursuits has been studied in its proper context, and my purpose here is to describe the purely religious sacrifices and examine the effect that these have on Chin economy as a whole. By purely religious sacrifices I mean those which are not merely a part of a greater social ceremony, but which themselves form a separate entity, designed to secure spiritual protection for the holders.

Though religious ritual is one of the main channels of consumption of local resources it must never be forgotten that the spirits are believed to control material prosperity and since it is felt that the ceremonies I am about to describe must be made if material progress is to be achieved, they may be regarded in this sense as an important part of the sum total of production. By giving the local people spiritual strength to persevere in their temporal effort and in some ways actually controlling agricultural practice, the ceremonies play a profound part in inducing and modifying productive activity.

Take for instance, the distinction between the sacrifices here described and those at Feasts of Merit and other occasions such as marriage and birth. In all cases the invocations and the ideological content are closely similar, but the former differ in function. They are intended mainly as an insurance against ill, while the latter are in addition in the nature of remembrancers of rank, status and legitimacy.

The tribal spirits as well as the form of religious ritual vary from one tribe to another, but the ideology and the material objects used in sacrifice are common throughout all. In every case the spirits, whether of the earth or below the earth, of the sky or of the springs, whether good or evil, puissant or negligible—all have in common their human characteristics, pleasure, jealousy and spite ; all can be contacted through the medium of invocation and appeased by the offer of a bribe of spirit food (*sa serh*).

The recognised guardian spirits receive a regular tribute of sacrifice while the lesser ones are ignored until illness or disaster can be attributed to their influence; the offerings vary from mithan to piglets, from beer to fowls, dogs and goats, the last being reserved in most tribes for the appeasement of essentially evil spirits ; all tribes believe in an after life in which the ghosts of their ancestors live as men and—most important from a temporal view-point—all believe that rank on earth determines rank in Paradise.

It will be conceded therefore, that a description of the religious ritual of one tribe will suffice for our purpose of studying the economic aspect of all. As usual I keep to Zahau as the prototype.

In common with the other central tribes, the Zahau religious ceremonies may be divided into three* categories :—

(*i*) Personal, (*ii*) Household and (*iii*) Communal, that is, pertaining to the community whether it be hamlet or village. In the first two cases the resources are found by the individual household and disposal " managed " by the head of the house ; in the last category resources are found by the village as a whole and management is conducted by the village priest.†

In view of the fact that the economic unit concerned is the same for both personal and household sacrifices I deal with these two groups together, giving first a summary of the sacrifices and then examining the effect on the household budget. This is followed by a similar study of the communal sacrifices, after which the effects of the advent of Christianity are described and the chapter concluded by an estimate of future probabilities based on the facts given. Prediction is always a risky business, particularly so in the sphere of religion, but the risk must be taken if we are ever to find out whether or not forecast is possible at all and, if so, to what degree.

*Personal Sacrifices.*

| Name of sacrifice. | Creature killed. | Object of ritual. |
|---|---|---|
| *Nau rai* (once in life) .. | 2 fledgling chickens .. | To introduce a child to guardianship of spirits. |
| *Khlan luh* .. | Sucking pig .. | Appeasement of ancestors' spirits. |
| *Pipu luh* .. | Red Cockerel .. | |
| *Hring dauh* .. | Red Cockerel .. | To protect against cursing and sorcery. |
| *Uwi hring* .. | Dog .. | |

* I have not included in this chapter a number of magico-religious ceremonies performed to cure sickness of various kinds. For many the householder himself conducts the rites, but for some of the more important a Lushai (*mar*) *puithiam* is hired to divine the spirit aggrieved and conduct the sacrifice. The spirits invoked include *kawlhrang* (Lit. : Greed of the Burmans), which causes sore throats and dumbness, *Hrikhlang* (which causes pains in the bones and joints), *Sente Nu* and *Sente Pa* (who cause deep festering sores), *Tsang* (who causes pains in the ribs and backache), *Tsuk* (who causes toothache), *Hrisa* (who causes stomach diseases and venereal disease), *Sakhal* (who causes pains in the head), *Bul Khluk* (which causes malaria), *Phuung* or *Pi Nu* (who causes madness and delirium) and many others. At most of these ceremonies the offering is inexpensive, a fowl or a sucking pig or a dog, and a characteristic of many of them is the use of clay model mithan, gongs, guns, slaves etc., to bribe the offended spirits.

† In the Zanniat Villages as many as 9 priests officiated in the pre-Pauchinhau days, these sharing a good deal of the sacrificial offering.

*Personal Sacrifices*—contd.

| Name of Sacrifice. | Creature killed. | Object of ritual. |
|---|---|---|
| *Khla kawh* (annual) .. | White cock for males, red hen for females. | To recall the spirit when wandering. |
| *Vawk khla kawh* .. | A 4 fist pig after feast of *Sia hra thah.* | |
| *Khal* (once in life) .. | A suckling pig .. .. | To avert death by accident. |
| | *Household Sacrifices.* | |
| *Nutar rai* * .. .. | Male pig every 2 years after first Feast of Merit. | For general prosperity in the household. |
| *Nutar sia rai* .. .. | One mithan and 1 male pig after *Sia hra thah.* | To *Nutar Tha Nem.* Do. |
| *Khawzing* * .. .. | As for *Nutar* sacrifices | As above: to the *Khawzing* spirits. |
| *Khawzing sia rai* .. | | |
| *Hnuai te* .. .. | 1 once farrowed sow, 6 years after first *Nutar* sacrifice. | As above: to the "Lesser Underneath" spirit. |
| *Hnuai pi* .. .. | 1 twice farrowed sow, after *Hnuai te.* | As above: to the "Great Underneath." |
| *Tsung le leng* .. | White Cockerel and small kid. | As above: to the *Van tsung* spirit. |
| | Sucking pig. | As above: to the Rih Lake spirit, a month after the *Van tsung* offering. |
| *In le mual* .. .. | 1 male piglet and 1 once farrowed sow. | Purification of house after completion of the whole series. |

* When a man has given the *Sia hra thah* Feast of Merit and must sacrifice a mithan to *Nutar* and *Khawzing*, the pig sacrifice noted first is not abandoned, but follows on the month after the mithan kill. This is called *ahnuklun* (after follow). All the main mithan sacrifices of the Zahau have an *ahnuklun* pig sacrifice, and some pig offerings are followed by a fowl *ahnuklun*. In such cases the *ahnuklun* is regarded as an integral part of the first ceremony and not as a separate unit. There are generally restrictions on the movements of the householder between the two offerings.

The essential difference between the Personal and the Household Sacrifices is that the former (except for *khla kawh* and *vawk khla kawh*) occur only once in life or during periods of illness, whereas the latter take place in a definite series which is synchronised with the Feasts of Merit. In the case of *khla kawh* it will be noted that as soon as a man has held the *siahrathah* feast the sacrifice becomes much more important and expensive, as is the case with the *nutar* and *khawzing* household sacrifices.

The significance of these increases in the cost of private sacrifices after two mithan feasts lies in the belief that by virtue of his increased social prestige a man will attract a correspondingly greater enmity and jealousy of the spirits unless he gives them still greater a share of his sacrificial meat. This supposed need for a balance between the offerings to the household spirits* and the man's own progress reaches such a pitch that after *siahrathah* the whole series of household sacrifices from *nutar sia rai* to *in le mual* must be repeated between each subsequent Feast of Merit.

Apart from an increase in animal proteins and yeast in the diet, the economic effect of all the personal sacrifices except *vawk khla kawh* is not great, as the offerings are insignificant in value and the entertainment to the household small. But in the case of *vawk khla kawh* and the household sacrifices other than *vantsung* and *rih* the situation is very different. At all these the fellow members of the patrilineal clan (who are therefore protegees of the same group of spirits) are invited to join in the feasting and much beer must be supplied in addition to the sacrificial meat.

The interspersion of the household sacrifices between the Feasts of Merit has the important effect of giving the patrilineal line a greater share of the surplus of individual households in the clan than they would ordinarily have got, because between each village entertainment (at which we have seen patrilineal kin would receive only moderate shares of meat), there are a number of sizeable feasts at which they alone participate. As a corollary the interspersion also slows down progress in the Feasts of Merit themselves, making the final stages of qualification for high temporal and spiritual rank incomparably more difficult, and thinning very considerably the numbers of those who reach the top. This in turn reduces the numbers eligible for Village Council membership, thereby effectively reducing the cost of communal ceremonies at which these gentlemen share food and beer.

*The communal sacrifices.*—There are five categories in the village of Klauhmun, which I have taken as my example, consisting of three groups and two single sacrifices. The groups are *mual rai* (also called *Thawng Pa rai*), the *khawhrum rai* and the *khawpawn rai*, and the single sacrifices those of *misen rai* and *phung sia*.

* For further detail on this subject please refer to my article " Some Social Effects of the Religion and Sacrifices of the Zahau Chins " J.B.R.S., Vol. XXVIII, Part III, 1938.

*Mual rai.*—These consist of seven sacrifices at various times each year at which either a male pig of at least three *seu* in value, or a pot or more of beer is offered to the spirits. The times and offerings are as follows :—

*Faang er* (after harvest of *ful* grain in Sept./October) —a pig.

*Van sar* the moon after *faang er*—beer.

*Kut* the moon after *van sar*—beer.

*Tar tsan* the moon after *kut*—beer.

*Sa tuah* at the end of the sowing in March/April—a pig.

*Thawi lak* two moons after *sa tuah*—a pig.

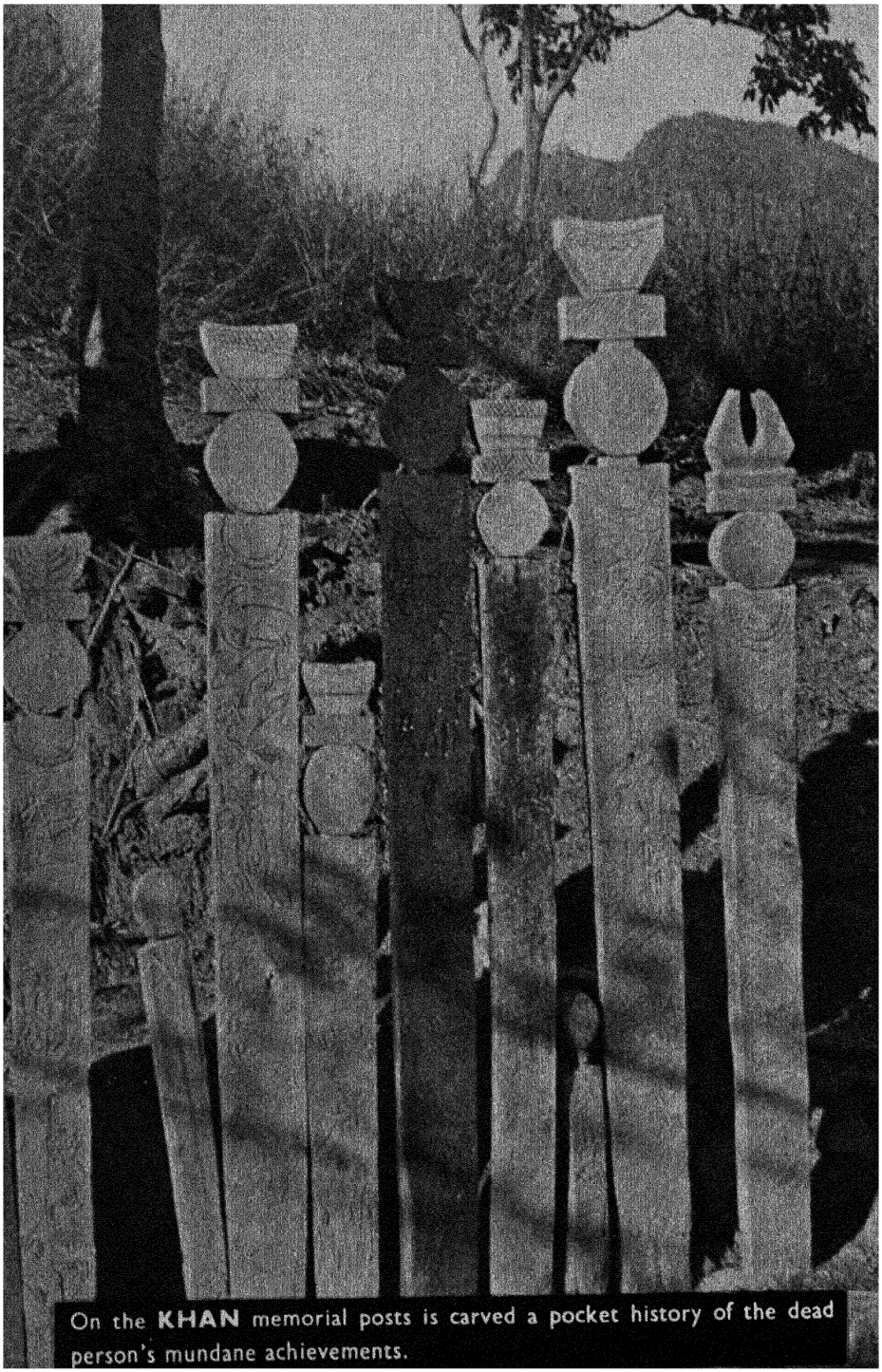
*Tual bawm* the moon after *thawi lak*—beer.

It is significant that the three pig offerings occur at the beginning, middle and end of the agricultural season, an indication of the extra care taken to keep the spirits happy during the period most critical to Chin welfare. In all these ceremonies the invocation is made to the spirits *Pa Thawng* and *Nu Ngen.*

*Khawhrum rai.*—At these sacrifices the invocations are made to the *khawhrum* spirit (*khua hrum:* village guardian) and the group consists of four ; the *san suak thiam* (generation come out know), when a new priest takes office ; the *kum ruk thiam* (six year know) the *kum thum thiam* (three year know) and the *kum tin thiam* (every year know—also called *ti fur thiam,* the " rains know.") The names indicate the purpose of the sacrifices ; they mark the passage of time with a periodic appeasement of the main spirit of the village lands. The animal killed depends on the village locality, as in each case the *khawhrum* might be different, though in the case of the Zahau villages which have spread from Rallang the spirit invoked is always *Uwi kiu pa.* The least that may be offered to the *khawhrum* is a large male pig and the most a full grown mithan followed by a pig at *ahnuklun.*

*Khawpawn rai.*—These consist of three sacrifices called *khawthen* (village clean), *hnar thawi* (rest-place sacrifice) and *dawh hna* (water spring sacrifice). The first two occur annually, a once farrowed sow being killed at the new year (*kum vuai*) for *khawthen* and a sucking pig followed by *ahnuklun* of a fowl in the cold weather for *hnar thawi. Dawh hna* occurs once in six years and in the case of Klauhmun a twice farrowed sow is offered to the spirit of the village spring.

*Misen rai.*—This sacrifice, at which only a small female sucking pig is offered to the *misen rai* (fire red spirit), is nevertheless one of the most carefully observed in the Zahau year. No person with any physical blemishes (*a him lo mi*) may be present and the *zarh ul* period of ritual abstention from work is the most strictly enforced of all. This is natural in view of the extreme danger from fires in the dry weather.



On the **KHAN** memorial posts is carved a pocket history of the dead person's mundane achievements.

*Phung sia.*—This sacrifice is held after the harvest of the *ful* grains in the first year of a new field and the animal offered will be a pig or a mithan according to the nature of the *khawhrum* offering to the spirit of that particular locality.

To this list must be added the agricultural sacrifices already described in Chapter III and then we can work out the general economic effect of these communal sacrifices as a whole.

The detail recorded above shows that in a village where the *khawhrum*, *phung sia* and *lopil nam* offerings are mithan followed by *ahnuklun* of a pig, a six year cycle (containing two normal Zahau 3 year *lopil* cycles) would entail the killing of 14 mithan and 49 medium or large pigs. These would probably average out at not more than Rs.25 and Rs.10 per animal respectively, even on the most ambitious scale, giving us a figure of Rs.840 for the cost of live stock for six years—Rs.140 per annum. Since the nature of the sacrifice depends on the locality spirit and not on the size of the village, it is obvious that the larger the village the less the incidence per household of its bill for communal offerings.

The policy long adopted in the Chin Hills of preventing the formation of small villages has therefore had a beneficial effect at least in this aspect of local economics. Where a large village is divided into several hamlets it will be found that the communal sacrifices occurring at the hamlet *mual* are held independently by each hamlet, whereas the territorial sacrifices held at field altars and other locality altars are organised by the village as a whole, all hamlets jointly participating. Consumption of the flesh and beer at communal sacrifices depends to some extent on the nature of the feast, but in the main the elders and priests get the lion's share of the flesh and the best of the beer. As a rule only men can attend and therefore the consumer-benefit is confined to a relatively small circle.

*The effect of Mission activities.*—Up to the time these notes were taken the A. B. M.* was the sole one operating in the central hills and of all the tenets followed by this Mission the only one which had any real effect on the progress of the Christian faith was the prohibition of beer-drinking and feast-giving. No one who has read through the fore-going pages, particularly the chapter on social reciprocities, could doubt what the result of such a prohibition would be. The people simply ignored the Mission and only 3% became converts to Christianity over the course of several decades.

But while converts did not increase, the Mission teachings had the not unforeseen effect of awakening the Chin to imagined defects in his own social system. Of these the collections for communal sacrifice, bringing as they did only a remote and indirect benefit to the individual villager, seemed one of the worst. The result has been, as elsewhere throughout the world, the appearance of an indigenous variation of Christianity better suited to local conditions—the *Pau Chin Hau* cult.

* The American Baptist Mission.

By 1936 almost the entire Zanniat tribe had been converted to this cult and a total of about 27% of the whole population of the Falam Sub-division professed allegiance to the Chin Prophet. There was every sign of its continued spread and the first converts west of the Manipur River had already appeared in the Khuangli tribe before I left Falam.*

In the Khuangli villages where it appeared, the Pauchinhau cult first manifested itself publicly in a refusal by the converts to subscribe to the annual communal sacrifices. The participating animist elders objected to this very fairly, on the grounds that the new converts had not entirely eschewed the tribal spirits and continued to carry out household and personal sacrifices, at which we have noted that all the flesh and beer is consumed by the household and its patrilineally related kinsmen. It seemed on the face of it an economic rather than a religious conversion.

This postulate raises a very important issue. In view of the demonstrably far-reaching effects religious changes have in the economy of primitive peoples like the Chin, should not Missions operating among primitive peoples make it a rule to formulate and implement a policy of economic re-establishment for their converts ? Such a policy would seem to be an essential for peace in the future and in framing it the primary consideration would be how to tie in the loose ends of the new Christian economy into the existing structure so that converts remain part of the social whole.

In conclusion let us summarise the main points of this Chapter. Firstly we see that personal and household sacrifices result in a sharing of food within individual and extended families as the case may be; that this sharing with extended families is on a reciprocal basis ; that as a result of this sharing, the balance of distribution of meat between the householder and the village officials and *hausa pawl* on the one hand, and the householder and his patrilineal relatives on the other, is evened out to a large extent ; that this evening-out process slows down progress in the final stages of feasting and puts a brake on eligibility for membership of the village council. Secondly we see that communal sacrifice is on a scale that might in the case of small villages impose quite a serious burden on the household budget ; that because there is no reciprocal distribution of meat the villagers do not see any immediate and tangible benefit derivable from

* Mr. E. A. Johnson, Burma Frontier Service, informs me that the Pauchinhau cult had by 1941 spread to the Zahau tract—in my time a stronghold of animism not breached by any foreign ideology. He also mentioned an interesting point connected with it, that in several Zanniat households the children were converts to Pauchinhau while the parents still followed the ancestral spirits. There is a wide field of research awaiting attention here, for such a split within the household should theoretically create grievous squabbles about the disposal of family resources and throw much light on the nature of personal ownership in this area.

these sacrifices. Lastly this indirectness and vagueness of benefit in communal sacrifices makes them a likely target for exponents of new ideas in religion, in contrast to the reciprocity-encouraging personal sacrifices and feasts, which can withstand change because of their concrete and visible profits.

We see that the close interweaving of economic process, religious ideology and ritual has affected profoundly the progress of Mission activities and resulted in the creation of an indigenous religion combining what are in Chin eyes the best of both worlds.

In Part II we have noted the very real agricultural advantages accruing from the religious restrictions imposed by Animism, in Chapter X we have outlined the enormous impulse given to productive activity by the existing beliefs in the after-world. These are factors far too important to be idly dismissed. It seems that the administration will always have to be prepared to secure by executive order the social benefits which animism preserved, should either Christianity or the Pauchinhau cult succeed in displacing the traditional beliefs altogether.

This is not so terrifying as it sounds, for the evidence indicates that the Chins themselves are by no means unaware of the dangers of religious innovations. The substitute *lopil nam* sacrifice of the Zanniat followers of Pauchinhau still continues to give validity to the regional rotation system, though the invocation is now made to God and not to the locality spirits : a personal order of my own restored to Lotsawm the immunity from tree-felling round the springs that the *ti huai* had preserved for centuries before the advent of Pauchinhau. It is simply a matter of alert watchfulness on change *and a knowledge of where that change is likely to come first and what its effects may be.*

## CHAPTER XIII.

## WEALTH, POVERTY AND DEBT.

The main trend unearthed by the examination of local economics up to this point is that wealth is computed less in terms of actual possession than in terms of what economic position a man has gained through consumption of his wealth along traditional lines. In other words the important end is not the amassing but the spending of resources, and the very important result is a continual narrowing of the margin between the *haves* and the *have-nots*—a narrowing which has a profound bearing on the general level of contentment in the central hills.

In this section I describe the laws governing the possession and transference of property, the causes of poverty, and the means used by the community and the individual to alleviate distress. To simplify matters these subjects are subdivided into the following :—(*a*) the types of property and the gradations of value ; (*b*) persons and groups entitled to own property ; (*c*) the laws of succession and inheritance ; (*d*) the extent and nature of poverty, public relief and private aid ; (*e*) debt—the traditional forms of borrowing and the *tefa* system.

(*a*) *The types of property and the gradations of value.*—The reader will by this time have become familiar with the bulk of the possessions of the Chin. His immoveable property is soon listed, consisting only of his field-plots, his garden and his house. Moveable property ranges from the crops in his fields to the personal ornaments he wears, the grain, the live-stock, the weapons and implements, the women's pipes and weaving gear, men's pipes and nicotine gourds, gongs, clothes and bags, beads and bangles, rings, earrings, hairpins and combs, the furniture and great storage bins in the house, the pots and pans and drinking horns, the traps, the snares and in some areas casting nets. All these have appeared in their proper context in preceding chapters, and little remains to be done here other than summarising the gradations of value.

In this respect it will be realised that there is a fundamental difference between articles which are consumed in the daily life and those which are passed on as family heirlooms from one generation to another. The latter acquire a sentimental value out of all proportion to their market price. But almost all the Chin goods have one important characteristic in common ; they have a higher local value than they command in the markets of Burma because they fit into the local economic scheme and can be utilised therein to satisfy wants which, like the goods themselves, are conditioned by the physical and cultural environment. Thus we find mithan and pigs valued at prices which would be unobtainable in Burma, and clothes highly valued for their social significance which command no sale at all in the plains.

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A safe test of the normal value in Chin eyes of all articles is to be found in the punishment inflicted when they are stolen. For instance, the most serious offences are the theft and slaughter of mithan (*sia phil*), and the theft of gongs (*darkuang ru*) and guns (*meithal ru*), for which the traditional punishment was confiscation of property and banishment, and which even today are punishable under Zahau tribal law by a fine up to 2 *siapi*. Thus these objects are shown to be the Chin's most valued possessions. The next in the scale of thefts are those punishable by a fine of *khente** to *khenpi** which include the filching of ceremonial cloths and ornaments, the thefts of *ful* grain from the bins (*tsuawm taw kheng*) and fowls (*ar phil*). This category includes also the theft of carcases from traps, and punishment for infringing a man's "property rights", in his womenfolk by adultery or rape: only rarely in such cases will the fine exceed *khenpi*. Least in the scale of thefts are *banhla bawr ek* (to steal a bunch of bananas from a plant), *khlai kuang ru* (to steal sulphur beans from a soaking tub), and the like; this group including petty thefts of *thal* beans from the field-huts, matches, wooden pipes and other small articles, which are punishable by a fine of 3 to 5 pots of beer.

Heirlooms are in a class by themselves, as for example the famous ten heirlooms of the Zahau Chief's family, consisting among other things of a couple of brass fishes and an old European glass paperweight—for which a war was waged in the reign of Khuang Tseo—and the *fei thiang* (spear immaculate), a simple leaf headed wooden-shafted spear which has been sanctified by use in mithan sacrifices, and is now borrowed for this purpose by Zahau feast-givers from several villages round the Chief's seat at Klauhmun. Theft of articles of great sentimental value like these naturally results in a correspondingly heavy punishment.

(*b*) *Groups and individuals entitled to own property.*—In discussing land tenure we have noted many ways in which the village community exercises a degree of joint ownership of the village land, and also certain rights enjoyed by patrilineal extended families over land titles held by individual families. We have seen that where there is no *bul ram* the migrant may not sell his house and that this reverts when vacated, like his land, to the village community, both these instances illustrating one main principle in the traditional ownership of *immoveable* property—the principle that ownership rights can be claimed by the individual only as a *resident* member of the community. For so long as he remains in the village he has a powerful occupancy right to his house, field-plots and garden that carries with it all† the benefits of ownership exclusive of the free right of disposal.

In addition to the interest in land titles, the patrilineal extended family exercises some proprietorial rights in the moveable property and expectations of each of the individual families of which it is made up. For instance, disposal of heirlooms outside the extended family would

* See page 152.

† Subject to the provisos mentioned in Chapter VII.

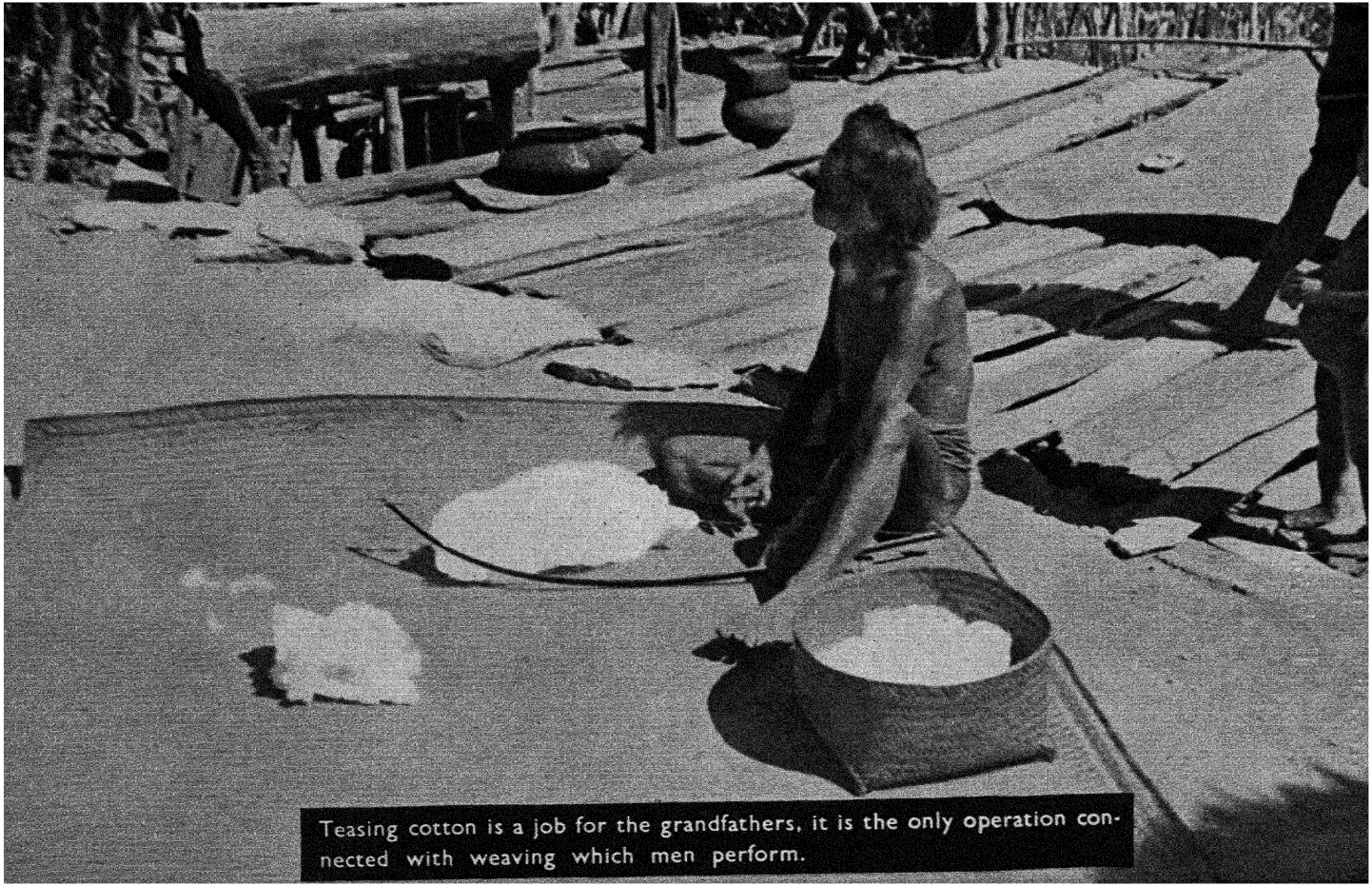
raise an outcry, and mutual participation is expected in the payment and receipt of marriage price, the clearance of debt and so on. But these claims do not constitute ownership as we understand it, and the individual is at liberty to break free of all restraints if he is willing to risk the opprobrium attached to such a course. The very existence of the *tefa* system is itself an indication that patrilineal relatives do not or cannot always do all that is expected of them.

Within the bounds imposed by these restrictions of law and good faith, the household will in all normal circumstances be found in joint ownership of the household property ; conferring together when disposal of resources is necessary ; freely borrowing the household utensils, implements, weapons and ornaments ; jointly consuming the products of the field-plots and garden.

Not until a crisis overtakes them does one become aware of individual claims. For instance, a rupture of marital relations through death or divorce at once throws the limelight on the ownership rights of the sexes ; then the woman's personal property is found to consist of the ornaments and clothes she brought with her as a bride (*nunau thuawm*), her clothes, her hoe, her pipe and her spinning and weaving apparatus. The circumstances of the crisis determine whether or not she must relinquish some of these and what share she can claim of the fruits of the household's agricultural labour. A critical factor is whether or not she has borne her husband a child. If she dies after having children, her daughters, if any, will inherit all her *nunau thuawm :* if she dies without issue, her *nunau thuawm* is divided equally between her husband and her closest male relative : if her husband dies before she bears him a child and she returns to her home, she may take only half her property and the remaining half goes to her husband's heir. But should she be divorced by her husband without fault (*mak*), she may take not only all her *nunau thuawm*, but also half the cotton and two-thirds of the cotton thread in the house, as well as one-third of the total grain in the house and plots, subject to a maximum of ten *han*.

In this division we gain some insight into what the Zahau men think of their womenfolk : they expect them to bear their children, but they acknowledge their value in the field of production and assess their share at. 33 per cent of the household's general agricultural production, 50 per cent of the work of producing and harvesting cotton, and 66 per cent of the total labour used in the production of cotton thread. The estimates are not unjust.

It follows from the preceding paragraphs that the remaining household property belongs to the householder himself, or to his sons. The dividing line between the share in household goods of a man and his adult son is not clear-cut. Theoretically everything belongs to the father and he may do what he likes with it, but in actual practice the sons gradually acquire possessions which are recognised in the family as their personal property—weapons and implements, goods and



Teasing cotton is a job for the grandfathers, it is the only operation connected with weaving which men perform.

live-stock earned by wage labour or herding mithan, a special necklace given by their father or an uncle, or a lesser marriage price. These they take away with them when they set up their own house, together with a share of the household food stocks computed on the amount available and the quantity received as *rawlhan* for the bride. It is not uncommon to find the father of an adult family, if his judgment is failing, relegated to a small hut in the courtyard, while his eldest son occupies his house and administers his estate.

By its very nature cash earned by individuals generally remains their personal property, since it can readily be spent, and almost always is spent, to satisfy personal wants outside the normal run of village possessions; coloured thread to embroider her clothes is a woman's common choice, while a man may choose an electric torch, pair of shoes or the ubiquitous khaki shirt. Cash is not yet bound up closely with the whirl of social reciprocities which we have seen exercise so strong an influence on the disposal of indigenous resources, and it therefore does not affect the family as a whole to the same degree, nor require the same concerted thought about spending on the part of all members of the household.

Apart from its utilisation in the various traditional ceremonies outlined in the foregoing chapters, the main channel by which property changes hands is inheritance, and I will go on to describe the rules governing this aspect of property rights.

(*c*) *The laws of succession and inheritance.*—There is a strong resemblance in the custom in all the central Chin tribes, and I give the points of this resemblance first, following this with a detailed description of Zahau inheritance and winding up with a note on the salient differences occurring in other tribes.

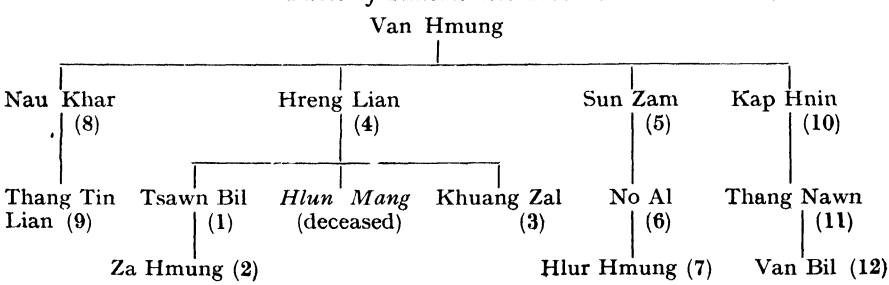
First and foremost are the facts that no woman can inherit property from a man, though we have seen she can do so from a woman, that an heir inherits debts as well as assets, that *khak* severs the right to succeed and inherit as well as other ties, and that testamentary disposal contrary to the traditional course of inheritance is invalid if contested by the rightful heir. The last *proviso* is noted because it is not uncommon for old men to try and secure for a favourite rather more than his rightful share, by getting the heir to reach an agreement with him in the presence of the elders. It is felt that good manners alone would forbid the heir from openly crossing an aged relative even if he disagreed with him, and such arrangements are held to have been made under duress and are never upheld unless the heir so desires it. This does not prevent a childless man choosing his own heir provided the choice is made with a view to mutual help. But such a man is bound first to ask his paternally related males to give him a son to adopt and help him in his house, and only if they refuse can he select anyone he likes, even a slave, and instal him in his *menage.*

The most interesting characteristic of the Zahau and some other inheritance systems is the *ruangpawm* (body-pairing) custom whereby

certain pairs of brothers and of brothers and sisters* are recognised as having priority claims upon each other. A knowledge of the *ruangpawm* pairs is absolutely essential to an understanding of the devolution over several generations of family property. The general principle is that all brothers are paired for purposes of inheritance, the senior pair being the eldest and youngest sons, the next being the second and third sons, then the fourth and fifth, and so on. Where there is an odd man (as for instance Kap Hnin in the second Inheritance Table below) he is called *tse lak*. Later in Table III, I note the special rule applying to *tse lak* if a man happens to have only sons by two major wives in succession. When a man dies without male issue, his property goes to his *ruangpawm* and follows that person's line : if he has no living *ruangpawm* brother, the genealogical tree is examined and the nearest *ruangpawm* connection, that is, his father's, grandfather's or great-grandfather's *ruangpawm* is found and that line declared heir to the property. The Tables which follow illustrate clearly the working of the *ruangpawm* principle, the serial numbers indicating the persons who in turn would inherit if those more closely related to the legator died before the property came up for disposal. The main effect of the *ruangpawm* pairing is the prevention of too large an accumulation of property in the hands of one branch of a family ; where it does not exist the estates of childless men all go to one brother.

In the Zahau pairing system, the death of a young man creates difficulties in certain circumstances, and the special rules applicable deserve examination. A youth dying before a child has been born to him (sex of child being immaterial) is said to die *thi suul*. Only a *thi suul* death breaks the pairing system and necessitates re-organisation of the *ruangpawm*. For instance suppose there are three brothers A, B and C. A and C become *ruangpawm* from the moment C is born, B being *tse lak*. B can become the *ruangpawm* of the surviving brother only if either A or C die *thi suul*.

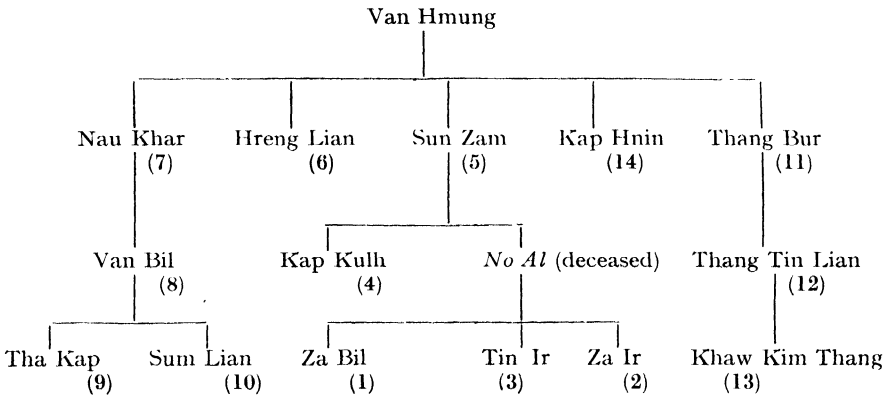
*Table of Inheritance No. I.*




* The *ruangpawm* system is applied also between classificatory brothers and sisters, to determine who shall be *nupu* to the girl's husband and who shall receive her *manpi* if she marries after her father's death. A woman's *ruangpawm tapa* (paired brother) is responsible for her behaviour if she has no father or husband, is heir to half her personal property if she has no children, and all if she has a son but no daughters.

Table No. I shows what happens when the deceased is *tse lak*. In the absence of a *ruangpawm*, Hlun Mang's property goes to his elder brother Tsawn Bil and down his line, thence to Tsawn Bil's *ruangpawm* Khuang Zal, thence through the father's generation to the descendants of Hlun Mang's father's *ruangpawm* Sun Zam. If this line has died out the property goes to the descendants of Hlun Mang's father's eldest brother Nau Khar and finally to the line of Nau Khar's *ruangpawm* Kap Hnin.

*Table of Inheritance No. II.*

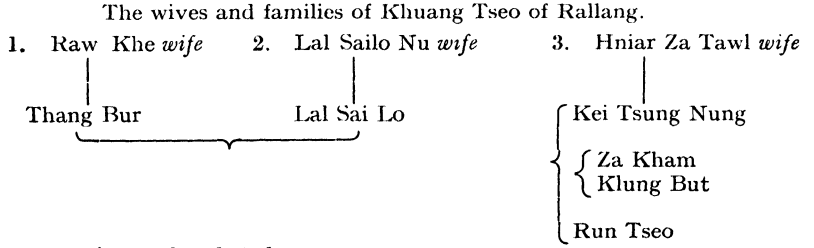



In Table No. II I have illustrated the effect of being a closely related *tse lak*, or odd man out. It will be seen from the fact that Kap Hnin is number 14 on the list of heirs, that being *tse lak* can sometimes result in a man losing all hopes of inheritance from any of his brothers or cousins. In both Tables I and II one notable fact stands out—that where a line dies out and no *ruangpawm* exists, search for the next heir is always made through the eldest son of each generation.

There is one important exception to the rule that the eldest son gets all the property; the house and one plot of land go to the youngest. This point will be raised again later.

*Table of Inheritance No. III.*

The wives and families of Khuang Tseo of Rallang.




*Ruangpawm* pairs are bracketed.

The Zahau Chief Khuang Tseo married in turn the three ladies named in Table III, all of whom were *nuhma* or major wives, having been married after the divorce of their predecessors. The history of the persons in this Table illustrates not only different variations of the

*ruangpawm* system, but also gives an actual example of the way in which an astute woman can increase the heritage of her own children. Being only sons of *nuhma* in each case, Thang Bur and Lal Sai Lo became *ruangpawm*, the sons of the last family pairing in the normal way. Where a man has children by more than one major wife, the heirlooms go to the eldest and property acquired during the life of the deceased is divided up so that the eldest son of each wife gets the property accumulated during the time his mother and father lived together. When Khuang Tseo married Hniar Za Tawl she persuaded him to establish his eldest son at Klauhmun, his second son at Tserhmun and finally, just before his death, *to move his own village of Rallang to a new site.* Because the new Rallang was founded during *her* period as wife, it went on the father's death to *her* own eldest son Kei Tsung Nung, thus raising him to the status of *khuabawi*, and Thang Bur got one village less out of the family estate. As to the remaining property: all the villages, slaves, gongs, mithan, etc., which Khuang Tseo had possessed up to the date of his divorce of Raw Khe, went to his eldest son Thang Bur: the property acquired during the period of his cohabitation with Lal Sai Lo's mother went to that youth, and everything acquired after her divorce went to Hniar Za Tawl's eldest son Kei Tsung Nung.

So much for the Zahau rules of inheritance concerning the children of *nuhma*. In order to show what happens to the sons of *nu sun* (lesser wives), I have taken again an actual example—this time the family of the present Zahau Chief Thang Tin Lian. Thang Tin Lian has married three wives, one *nu hma* called Hniar Tsuai, and two *nu sun* called Men Zing and Sen Kip, his family of sons by these three ladies being shown in the Table appended. One characteristic of the sons of these *nu sun*

*Table of Inheritance No. IV.*

Thang Tin Lian.
Married.

| 1. Hniar Tsuai (*nu hma*) | 2. Men Zing (*nu sun*) | 3. Sen Kip (*nu sun*) |
|---|---|---|
| Tial Dum* | Ral Dun | Lal Bik |
| | Sum Mang | Thang Tsem** |
| | Za Hre | Mang Bur |
| | Ral Lian Sum | |
| | Sai Ling | |
| | Khla Khar | |

The *ruangpawm* pairs are bracketed.

* Has no *ruangpawm* because the son of a *nuhma* cannot be paired with the sons of *nu sun*.

** *Tse lak.*

is that, because their mothers are of equal status (since they live together), all their children are regarded for purposes of inheritance as if they were full brothers. In the absence of a child by a *nuhma*, the eldest of all the sons of the *nu sun* would take all the immoveable property except the house and one plot, which would go to the youngest of all. For instance, if Tial Dum were to predecease his father, his eldest half-brother would become heir to the villages, title, and plots of the Chief. In the case of the Chief's house, which is built for him *qua* chief by the whole of the Tribal Area, it has been ruled by Government that it shall go to the son who succeeds to the Chieftainship and not to the youngest son, unless it so happens that the office of Chief passes out of the family into a collateral group for any reason. But in all cases where the house is an ordinary timber and thatch Chin dwelling, the youngest son would get it, and in the case of the children shown in Table IV this would be the youngest of the last two groups.

As to the division of property acquired during the period of cohabitation with *nu sun*, the very fact that more than one can co-exist at the same time makes the rules different to those for *nu hma*. To take the case of the Chief's wives—if Men Zing and Sen Kip outlive Hniar Tsuai, their eldest sons would divide equally between them all the property acquired by the Chief between Hniar Tsuai's decease and the death of the first of the two lesser wives, after which the eldest son of the surviving wife would inherit all accretions to the family fortunes. In the few other cases where *nu sun* exist however, it is usual to find them installed in separate houses, each with its own garden and field-plots. Such separated families would be regarded as individual units, and though the eldest son of the *nuhma* might claim mithan and gongs or other valuables in their possession, the house and agricultural land would almost certainly go to the *nu sun's* children.

Throughout all tribes the son of a *nu hma* takes precedence over the son of a *nu sun* or a natural son, though even the last named takes precedence over his uncles and cousins. In the absence of legitimate or natural sons a man may adopt an heir. As already noted procedure demands that he first asks one of his patrilineal relatives to enter his house. In the event of none of them being willing, he can adopt any male he likes. A *khla kawh* ceremony introduces the adopted son to the household spirits, and from then onward he takes part in all the household ritual.

A most interesting actual case of the loss of property to a family through adoption and exercise of the prerogative of *khak* is to be found in Klauhmun history.

A man called Khaw Klir Thang had no sons, and had failed to persuade any of his relatives to look after him, so he bought for 30 *seu* a slave called Lian Leng and installed him in his house as his son and heir. When Khaw Klir Thang died his *u* (an elder classificatory brother)

Thang Kual claimed the inheritance, but the elders held that Lian Leng had been duly adopted and was therefore the heir. In his annoyance at this, Thang Kual severed relationship by *khak* with his adopted relative. Lian Leng died shortly thereafter, leaving his property and that of Khaw Klir Thang to his own son Hrang Kham. Now it so happened that Hrang Kham was the *salulai bawi* (see *tefa* system) of the then Zahau Chief Van Nawl, and as he also died young and without heirs, the property he had inherited passed to his *bawi pa*, Van Nawl. Through all this Thang Kual remained a helpless spectator, while his kinsman Khaw Klir Thang's property passed irretrievably out of his reach as a result of his own hasty anger. Had he not severed relations with Lian Leng, he would have inherited the property of Hrang Kham having, as a paternal adoptive relative, a better claim than the *bawi pa* Van Nawl.

There are certain bars to inheritance and succession, particularly the latter. A leper may not inherit, nor a *cretin*, nor anyone so dumb or deaf or blind as to be incapable of carrying out the normal duties of life. As regards succession to priesthood in the Zahau Tribal area, broken teeth or nails, missing joints, deformities of any kind, casts in the eye, and " cow's licks " are sufficient to vitiate the strongest blood claims.

Inheritance carries with it certain definite and important obligations. The heir must support unmarried members of the deceased's family and must pay the *man pi* for his sons' wives provided that these live in his house and help him with his field and other work. When the rightful heir has been passed over on grounds of idiocy or other incapacity, the man who gets his property must support him for the rest of his days.

So far I have made no mention of what happens to the family of a man who dies with minor heirs. The custom is similar throughout the central area ; the widow remains on in her husband's house, tills his fields and looks after his children, and usually occupies a position of honour even after her sons have grown up. Her management of the deceased's estate is not entirely independent, for the *ro veng* (Lit: inheritance sentry), who is usually the man next in the line of inheritance after the deceased's children, will see to it that she does not dispose of valuable articles like gongs, guns and mithan without a family conference. In theory the *ro veng* is there to see that a young and flighty widow does not fritter away her children's patrimony, but personal experience in epidemics and similar crises shows that the majority of Chin women have a deep devotion to their families, and in reality the *ro veng* simply watches to see that he gets his due if the deceased's male children should die young, a regrettably common occurrence in these hills.

Misuse of her deceased husband's property by a widow is actionable in the village courts, the defendant being her *ruangpawm tapa* (body-paired brother) who is responsible for her actions after her husband

dies. If a widow accepts a lover in her deceased husband's house, the *ro veng* will turn her out and take over both the property and the children.

There is one small point of interest in connection with this responsibility of a widow. Should she in the course of the years succeed in amassing live-stock and other articles in excess of those she received in trust on her husband's death, these will pass on her death to her youngest son, whose duty it is to pay her *lukhawng*.

INHERITANCE CUSTOMS AMONG THE OTHER CENTRAL CHIN TRIBES :—

*Laizo sub-tribe :*—Identical with Zahau.

*Khuangli sub-tribe :*—Inheritance is the same as Zahau in all respects save that *ruangpawm* pairing cannot be broken once both the boys concerned have assumed the *biar* (loin cloth).

*Hualngo tribe :*—Ultimogeniture is customary, but all other rules, including the *ruangpawm* system, are identical with Zahau. This is important to note as in the past many of the Hualngo Headmen, *all of whom are youngest sons,* have tried with some success to persuade administrative officers that there is no *ruangpawm* system and that *youngest* sons inherit all the property of all brothers who die without male issue. This is a typical example of modification of custom to suit individual ends. Every order requires the most careful consideration when customary law is involved, or permanent injustices are built on unhappy precedents in isolated cases.

*Bualkhua tribe :*—Identical with Zahau custom.

*Lunghrawh tribe :*—Ultimogeniture is the rule. There is no *ruangpawm* pairing.

*Ngawn tribe :*—Ultimogeniture is the rule, and there is no *ruangpawm system.*

*Zanniat tribe :*—Identical with Zahau system in theory, but in many villages that have close contact with Tashon through the Chief Van Hmung, Tashon customs are beginning to overlap the Zanniat tradition. In Zultu all brothers share alike in their father's estate provided they get on well together, but in cases where disputes arise the traditional custom is followed.

*Tashon tribe :*—Primogeniture is the rule, but there is no *ruangpawm* system; the property goes to the eldest and the house to the youngest of all the sons of *nuhma.* The Tashon Chief's extremely unorthodox marriages have created a situation which will cause great confusion when he dies. He has three *nuhma,* who are sisters, all living in his house at the same time, and in addition also had two *nu sun.* The Chief does not wish to distribute his property in accordance with traditional usage and this decision coupled with the fact that his marital adventures have no single precedent in his tribal history, will make an amicable settlement almost impossible. Since the *bul ram* tenure exists

throughout all the villages inhabited by this tribe, absentee ownership and inheritance of plots in the lands of villages other than the heir's own is permissible.

*Khualshim tribe* :—The system is the same as that of the Tashon, but in the absence of *bul ram*, land titles can only be inherited in the village of residence.

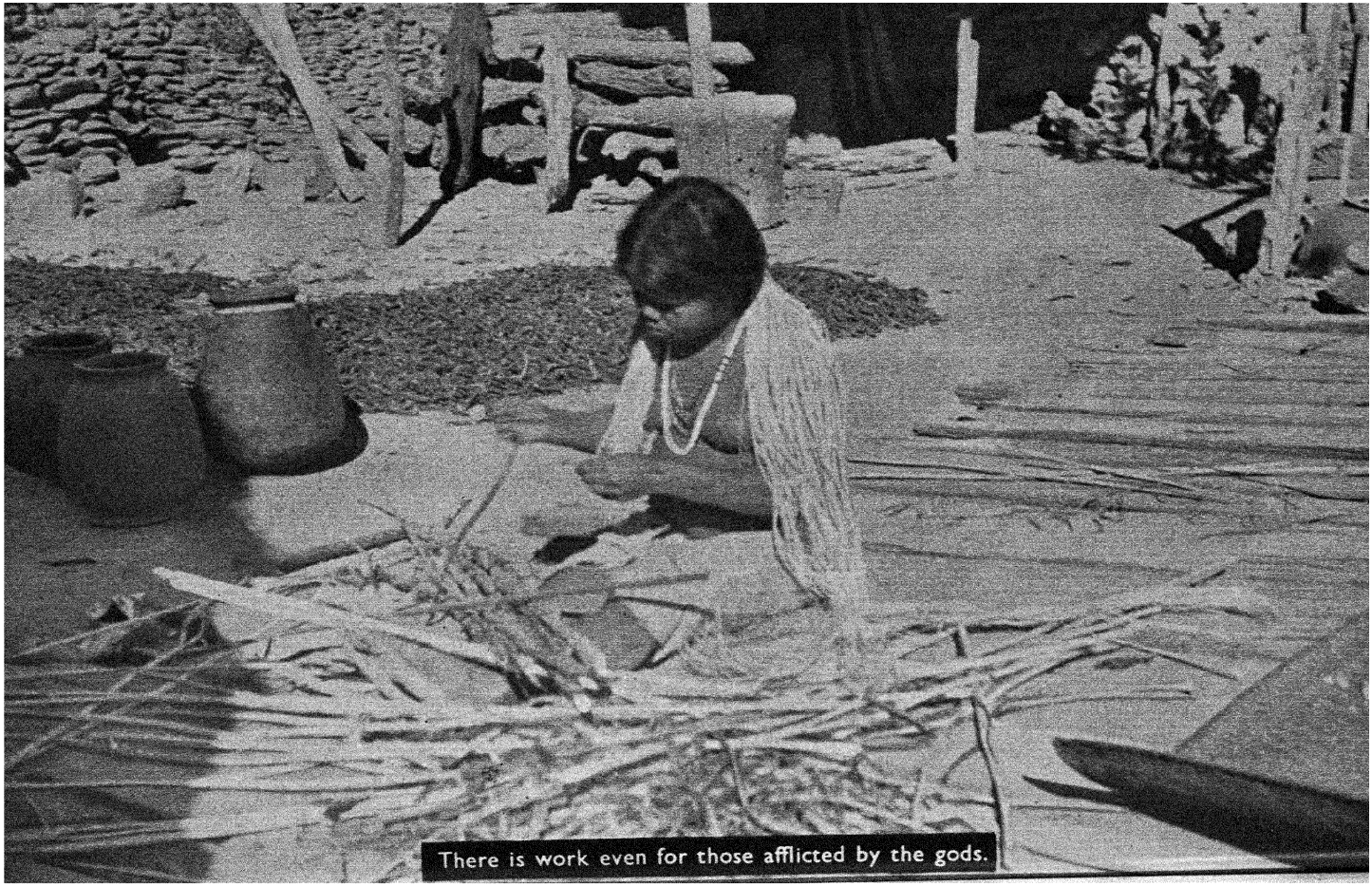
*Lente tribe*:—This small group has a custom that is a peculiar mixture of the two extremes of Tashon and Zahau; *ruangpawm* pairing is customary only between the eldest and youngest sons, the property of brothers who die without issue going to the eldest brother in the first case and if he is dead, to the youngest brother.

This concludes the description of inheritance, and it would be as well to sum up the main points, as they have a direct bearing on the nature and extent of poverty among the tribes discussed. The outstanding fact is that though one son may get the bulk of property and another the family house, the heir must support indigents and minors and assist remaining brothers in the acquisition of a wife. When we add to this the obligation of the community, as represented by the headman (except where *bul ram* tenure exists), to supply residents with sufficient land to cultivate and newlyweds with a house (*klang in*), it will be realised that all children find a home and that all men are usually provided with the three essentials to their comfortable existence—shelter, land, and an industrious helpmate.

Women are more easily settled, for they are of great economic value to any household and therefore need never lack a home or a husband.

(*d*) *The nature of poverty: public relief and private aid.*—In spite of the safeguards which I have outlined in the preceding paragraph, however, it is still possible for poverty to exist, though for reasons which we will now examine it never reaches the depths of degradation common in the plains and actual starvation in the midst of plenty is quite impossible. There are aged people whose families have died out, widows and orphans with no male kin, men who have severed relations with their kindred, normal families who have had a succession of unlucky harvests, and so on. An insight into the provision made by custom for these unfortunates is essential to an understanding of Chin economics as a whole, because *freedom from the bogey of starvation is perhaps the greatest asset that any economy can offer.*

There are three main alternatives for the very poor :—if they are strong and healthy and there is a reasonable chance of rehabilitating their fortunes they may borrow grain or other goods on payment of interest, or they may become *tefa* to someone in exchange for a loan ; if frail they may enter another person's household as a *hnen um* (servant who gets a roof and the run of his teeth in exchange for his labour) this being the commonest fate of the aged ; or they may try to fend


There is work even for those afflicted by the gods.

for themselves with the help of an occasional collection of grain from their co-villagers. This grain collection is called *rawl veh* among the Zahau ; when the headman and his council think that it is necessary they will issue the order and all households supply their quota, generally a small *rel* basketful.

These alternatives literally banish unemployment in the hills, for there is always more work to be done than people to do it. At the cost of a slight fall in social status no person need lack food, shelter and a reasonable minimum of clothing. The fate of the *hnen um* is not always happy, but in the main they have a happier life than European servants. They live and feed with the family they serve and with comparatively few exceptions are treated on a basis of equality.

It is only on the occasions when the crops of a whole village fail that the situation of the poor becomes critical, for they have no reserves to fall back on and their neighbours have nothing to spare. Then malnutrition exposes them to every disease that passes and the casualties are heavy. It is true that the active can make do till the next crop with jungle roots and bulbs, but the children and the old soon fade away. In the Zahau tract there have been many occasions when one village has helped another in such circumstances, and where such help has not yet materialised in other tribes it is for want of organisation by tribal and governing authorities, for the central Chin people are not ungenerous.

On the whole poverty is temporary and is neither severe nor widespread where land is free. It is only where the *bul ram* tenure exists and a man has lost his land that he has no alternative but to live almost permanently in debt or to migrate.

(*f*) *Debt and the Tefa system.*—Of all Chin institutions the *tefa* (or *bawifa* as it is also called) system has been the subject of the grossest misconceptions. For many years after the annexation *bawifa* were believed to be slaves in the full sense of the term. It was not till later, when it was discovered that the *bawi pa* (*bawi* father) as the creditor is known, had none of the control possessed by a slave-owner over the daily life of his *bawi fa*, that it was realised that the term slavery would have to be discontinued. But at the same time considerable administrative pressure was brought to bear to end a system which in official eyes seemed an unpleasant one with a strong smack of slavery about it. It was not until I began this examination of the reciprocities connected with feasts that its real significance emerged, and it could be regarded as a system of borrowing which not only enabled a man to escape becoming a servant, but also relieved him of the severe drain on his day-to-day resources which straight loan transactions entailed.

These loans are described first in the ensuing paragraphs, the better to display the advantages of the *tefa* alternative. The fact that traditional interest rates exist does not mean that a man can never

get a simple loan from a friend or relative free from interest. They are the terms on which cash or goods are loaned to persons with whom the lender has no sentimental ties and who he knows have means to repay. Transactions of this kind occur most frequently among the wealthier villagers who need extra grain for a feast and so on.

*Klaisun lei thang* (Lit: Tashon buy grow).—The name of this form of purchase on account traces its origin to Tashon, once the main trading centre of the central area. The amount due is doubled annually, and the record of tribal history shows many instances of *klaisun lei thang* debts due on so small an object as a sucking pig eventually reducing the debtor to genuine slavery. It is no longer common since annexation has cut the Tashon trade bottleneck.

*Sum pa* (Goods borrow).—This means the borrowing of a quantity of goods on agreement to repay a fixed amount by an agreed date. In default the lender is entitled to add any penal rate of interest he likes to the original principle. In the same category is *tangka pa* (money borrow), these two being the common forms of borrowing today.

*Sum thang kala dan* (Lit: riches grow foreign custom).—As the name implies, this is the latest innovation—borrowing on a fixed monthly rate of compound interest from the Indians in the Falam Bazaar. Fortunately it is not yet common in the villages.

*Khlai pa* (Lit: grain borrow).—This is a grain transaction on the lines of *Klaisun lei thang*, the amount repayable doubling annually. In the old days of internecine strife when the faint-hearted sometimes preferred debt to a chance of losing their heads in the cultivations, this exorbitant demand was not uncommon. Nowadays it is very rare.

*Rawn suah* (Lit: Level come out).—This also is a grain transaction, carrying with it the annual payment of simple interest in kind. It is a common form today.

In all the grain transactions, the end of the financial year is reckoned to be the date of harvesting the next crop of grain of the type borrowed, that is, August for millet and September for maize and so on. The special terms used for the year are *a let suak* for *khlai pa* debts and *thum hruai* in the case of *rawn suah* debts.

The borrowing customs governing live-stock have already been described in Chapter IV and I need do no more here than draw attention to the fact that they also, like all the transactions noted above, contain one outstanding factor which in Chin eyes render them much less satisfactory than borrowing under the *tefa* system. In all cases the principle and interest must be repaid out of the borrower's day to day earnings. In this way they not only mean much hard work to produce a surplus over home consumption, but they also prevent the debtor using that surplus in Feasts of Celebration or Merit, which would bring him in steady economic returns.

*The tefa* system.*—This is where the *tefa* system comes into its own, for the debtor may continue to hold feasts while repaying his debt—in fact it is only through the feasts that the majority of his payments are made. Thus he kills two birds with one stone; he satisfies his creditors' and his own needs at the same time.

Put shortly, the *tefa* system involves co-option of the *bawi pa*, the creditor or benefactor, whichever one likes to call him, into the patrilineal line of the *tefa*. By doing for the *tefa* something which his patrilineal kindred should be doing, the creditor establishes a right to specific shares of the reciprocal gifts normally passing from the *tefa* to his patrilineal kin. To clarify the position we must refer back to the Statements of Effects in Chapter X and to the kinship obligations as a whole. We see that it is the duty of the patrilineal kindred to help in the payment of debts, marriage price and other major commitments; in return for this they share the bride-price of daughters and receive flesh dues at feasts and so on.

When therefore a man asks his patrilineal kindred to help him in any of the above ways and they are unable or unwilling to do so, he must borrow the amount from a third party. If in so borrowing he undertakes to become the *tefa* of his creditor, repayment becomes simply a matter of transferring to the creditor certain specific gifts *which would otherwise pass to the defaulting patrilineal kin.* In other words, the *tefa* himself does not pay back the debt; the patrilineal kin who should have helped him suffer this obligation. It is the perfect example of how to make the man who should have loaned you money pay the interest on the loan he did not make.

There are several degrees of *tefa* corresponding to the amount of the debt for which the co-option is made. Among the Zahau there are four degrees, the names of these being (*i*) *tuangsuak bawi*, (*ii*) *salu lai bawi*, (*iii*) *satang bawi* and (*iv*) *rawlthing bawi.*

*Tuangsuak bawi.*—This applies generally to *tefa* who have lived in the house of their creditor as indigent orphans or as *hnen um* and who have asked to be set up in a separate household complete with wife and plots, just as if they had been the creditor's own children. The amounts payable to the creditor from the *tefa*'s patrilineal kindred's perquisites include :—the *bawi fa man* on the marriage of a daughter†, the largest head of the animals killed at his Feasts of Merit, and *lukhawng* of 5 *seu* on the *tefa*'s death. There is one proviso—if the *tefa*'s natural father

* The name and the detail vary from one tribe to another in the central area, but the function of the system remains the same. In the Shimhrin tribe alternative names are *tefa* and *bawi fa*. The Hualngo use the term *bawi fa*, the Zanniat group *tseengfa* and the Ngawn *shila*, like the northern tribes. The rest of the central tribes use the word *tefa* only.

† *Bawi fa man*, as I have noted on page 125 is not an extra payable only when the girl's father is a *tefa :* it is always present in the marriage price, and if there is no creditor it goes to the girl's *man tso* relatives.

is still alive when the co-option of a creditor takes place, the latter gets the second largest instead of the largest head at feasts. This preference is not given to any other paternal relative : after the father's death the creditor takes his place in the *tefa*'s family line and gets the largest head in perpetuity.

*Salu lai bawi.*—The name means the " *tefa* who pays the middle head." It would need a loan equal to the *tefa*'s main marriage price (*manpi*) to justify co-option of a *salu lai* creditor. . In addition to the middle head of those killed at his *tefa*'s feasts, the *salu lai* creditor receives *bawi fa man* and *lukhawng* on the same scale as the *tuangsuak* creditor. In this connection there is an interesting change of custom to record—up to 30 years ago the *lukhawng* of a *tuangsuak bawi* consisted of a spear and the fill of the largest grain bin in his house, while that of a *salu lai bawi* was only 2 *seu*. The then Zahau Chief Van Nawl, who had so many *tefa* that keeping track of their payments gave him trouble, altered the *lukhawng* in both cases to a flat rate of 5 *seu* to avoid confusion.

*Satang bawi.*—This applies to co-option for a debt rather less than *manpi*, and the *tefa* must pay the standard *bawi fa man*, *lukhawng* of 2 *seu*, and the third largest mithan head or the *atang* (hence *satang bawi*) of the largest pig killed at feasts.

*Rawlthing bawi.*—This term applies to persons who are living on the borderline of want and who lack the strength or means to support themselves entirely. In such cases they make arrangements with their creditor for supplies of food when in need, for which he gains partial co-option into the paternal line. *Rawlthing bawi* do not have to give *bawi fa man*, but they must pay a *lukhawng* of 2 *seu* and the rump (*amifi*) of the largest mithan and the stomach (*apumpi*) of the largest pig killed at feasts.

Pending repayment of the debt or the redemption price, *tefa* of all categories except the last pass on to all their children the status of *tefa*, since the creditor and his descendants have been co-opted into the *tefa*'s paternal line. It was this fact that led officers in the early days to regard the system with distaste, but their distaste was based on the mistaken view that sons of *tefa* had to keep on paying for their father's debts, whereas the actual fact was that the paternal relatives of the *tefa*'s son continued to lose a portion of their perquisites as a result of the family's failure to carry out their obligations in the first case. The essence of the whole system is that the borrower and his sons *do not* repay the debt; it is their defaulting relatives that have that pleasure. In the case of *rawlthing bawi* only the heir becomes *rawlthing bawi* to his father's creditor's family.

Co-option of a creditor into the paternal line also affects the devolution of inheritance, for in the absence of other male heirs, property will go to the deceased's creditor or *tefa* as the case may be. It is noteworthy that the *tuangsuak bawi* with the greatest load of debt is regarded

as the closest " related " and takes precedence in inheritance over his less indebted contemporaries and *vice versa.*

In addition to the normal rich man with a lot of *tefa,* one often comes across a poor man with few relatives and a lot of creditors to whom his status ranges from *tuangsuak bawi* to *rawl thing bawi,* each creditor taking a diminishing share of the perquisites of their *tefa's* patrilineal line.

*Suak man.* This is the term applied to the price of release from the status of *tefa,* which nowadays has been fixed at one cow mithan (*siapi*) if the *tefa* wishes to break the association and *lungkhen** if the creditor takes the initiative, the amount in both cases being payable by the *tefa* to the creditor. In pre-annexation days the process was much more difficult, and in the case of the *tuangsuak, salu lai* and *satang bawi* the creditor had the right to three complete sequestrations of their worldly goods before they gained their freedom from their obligations.

It is possible for the son of a *tefa* to refuse to accept this status, but if he does so he may not inherit his father's property, as his share will go to his father's creditor.

At one time or another I discussed with the elders of all tribes the continued survival of the *tefa* system† in spite of official disapproval, receiving in every case the answer that what is necessary will remain however much you try to stop it. It is a fact that up to the date of taking these notes people continued every year to become *tefa* to meet their financial obligations, particularly immigrants from Tashon coming into the Zahau tract after losing their plots in Tashon owing to the existence of the *bul ram* tenure. I have noted under Land Tenure that a series of poor crops in the *bul ram* areas often results in the seizure for debt of the plots of poor people, who in bad years have to borrow food and who thus lose their most valuable possession—their land—generally after disposing of all their moveable property in order to keep body and soul together. Faced with starvation, they move into the Zahau tract where land is free, and in order to set themselves up with the other necessities of life, become *tefa* to any wealthy Zahau who will go to their assistance.

At the time I checked my notes just before leaving Falam in 1936, I took a census of *tefa* in some areas of the Zanniat and related tribes. I found that out of the 200 households at Bualkhua over 170 were *tefa* of one degree or another, while in Lunghrawh 50 out of 120 households were *tefa,* the creditors in all except 11 of these cases being residents of the Chief's village of Lumbang. The difference of 43% between the Bualkhua and Lunghrawh figures (85% against 42%) is in all probability accountable for by the fact that the land in the former village is *bul ram,* whereas in Lughrawh the land is free to all villagers. This confirms the conclusions about *bul ram* and its influence on public wealth which

* See page 152.

† For Naga comparison see page 388 " The Sema Nagas " by J. H. Hutton.

I made in Chapter VII, and I feel that this connection between the proportion of *tefa* and the existence of *bul ram* would well repay enquiry in other areas in the Chin Hills.

Though I have not made specific enquiries on this point, it is probable that the Zahau Chief Thang Tin Lian has more *tefa* than anyone else in the central hills, the number in 1936 exceeding 400, of whom about 150 lived in the Lushai Hills of Assam. The Chief remarked that of the Lushai Hills *tefa* only 50 continued to pay their dues, the rest having taken advantage of Government's refusal to recognise the system as imposing a legal debt. From the *tefa* who do pay dues the Chief receives an annual income of about Rs.200 a year in *bawi fa man* and *lukhawng*, but against this must be set an annual drain on his resources in supporting those who have met hard times. Quite a fair proportion of the Chief's grain due (*rawl rel siah*) goes to support indigent *tefa* in outlying villages of his tract.

In Chin eyes non-payment of *tefa* dues is an offence punishable by a fine known as *salu man* (animal head price) amounting to two *seu* for each mithan head, 1 *seu* for each pig head and ½ *seu* (valued nowadays at As.8) for each mithan rump or pig's stomach not paid up.

The bearing of the *tefa* system on modern religions in the Hills is interesting: conversion to Christianity carries with it abolition of feasting, and so it is impossible for a Christian to become a *tefa*. He must therefore contract debts on one of the more expensive bases, and suffer accordingly. The Pauchinhau cult permits feasts and converts do not suffer this serious disability of their Christian contemporaries, this being one more reason for the greater popularity of the local cult.

The picture of local property, poverty and debt is now complete enough for some conclusions to be drawn. The first point is that ownership on a purely individual basis is much less pronounced than among western peoples and that in daily life members of a household, of an extended family, and of a village community exercise varying claims on the main body of material objects used, in a way that makes divisions of personal ownership obvious only in time of crisis.

At the same time, the fact that articles in the home are used by all members of the family does not mean that they have not got their own pet cloths, pipes and weapons any more than the borrowing of his father's bicycle by an English boy constitutes proof of joint ownership. It is rather that limitation of resources tends towards a freer interpretation of mine and thine, and that the absence of alternatives makes it the more desirable to spend the resources of the family as a whole in joint enterprises like feasting, from which all get a share of amusement and pleasure. The fact that individualism in possession is more pronounced in the case of cash earnings, which permit exercise of a wider economic choice in spending, tends to indicate the way in which an encroaching monetary economy is likely to effect the Chin concept of ownership.

The next point is that while provision is made under custom for the relief of poverty on a limited scale, the machinery of relief extends only to the bounds of the village community in most tribes, and this unit is not large enough to cope with crop failures covering the whole village lands. The donation of *rawl veh*, properly organised on the basis of tribal areas, has in it the essence of a sound insurance against this most common of local calamities and might be worth developing.

Thirdly there is the undoubted fact that the *tefa* system offers the least painful way of debt repayment and is in almost all respects less rapacious a bargain than any of the indigenous straight loan transactions or the usurious lendings of the shop-keepers in the Falam bazaar. It is of course inextricably interwoven with the traditional feasts and cannot exist without them. The fate of the *tefa* depends on the feasts and if the advent of cash undermines the feasts, it will also destroy the one method by which the Chin can borrow without getting caught up in the whirlwind of compound interest, mortgage, foreclosure and abject poverty which besets the spendthrift and unwary cultivators of the Burma plains.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## CONCLUSION.

In concluding this survey of the Chin economy I have in mind two main considerations, the administrative viewpoint, and the viewpoint of the social scientist. The first official question asked about any administrator's work on tribal customs is—" What use is the information for purposes of administrative forecast and legislation ?" whereas from the social scientist the question takes the form—" Of what value is the information in the volume for perfecting the theory of the social sciences ? "

Though an attempt has been made to please both worlds in so far as presentation of facts is concerned, my speculations have been confined mainly to the administrative sphere. For in Burma there is a real necessity to put forward the case for disinterested study of tribal structures on the widest possible scale, preferably by the social scientists themselves, at the least by officials with a scientific basis of training. Until very recent years there was little attempt to record a sound background of knowledge against which current problems of the administration could be studied in their true perspective. Busy men cannot delve through the files of several decades to collect a context for each case presented for decision, and as a result one finds many instances of orders passed which, while in themselves fair enough conclusions on an individual set of facts, have proved disastrous when reviewed in the light of the culture as a whole.

Throughout this volume attention has been drawn to ways in which this lack of a background has affected various aspects of administrative effort in the central Chin Hills, and here I would state firmly that a Burma-wide summing up of the case for scientific enquiry into the cultures of all our primitive tribes would show the same result for other parts of the Hills.

Thus one finds in one area that a mistaken conception of an institution somewhat similar in outward form to a mild slavery has resulted in hasty " emancipation ", which in turn has ended in the economic ruin of both the so-called " owners " and the so-called " slaves "; or in another that a simple order permitting the cash commutation of dues in kind has at once readjusted the relations between chiefs and their people in a radical way, so that the latter no longer get back in feasts what they give in grain, and the Chief, in becoming a moneyed capitalist, is gradually estranged from the life and interests of his subjects.

Primitive economies of the nature of the Chin economy, closely integrated as they are to religious, legal, recreative and other social activities, form but part of a whole which must be controlled as a whole if they are to be controlled smoothly at all. It has been my object to

demonstrate in the Chin field the nature of this control and the responsibilities of the controlling personnel, from the administration downwards.

As to the purely economic aspect, I have not ventured, in view of the haste with which this chapter has had to be concluded, to follow up the many interesting sidelights on the theories of primitive economies which the Chin situation gives us. The facts recorded must for the time being speak for themselves, though I hope later to be afforded the opportunity of a detailed theoretical examination of them. But the question remains—how to condense the facts in a way best calculated to suit the social scientist.

If comparative study of " primitive " economics is to be facilitated, the first essential is the use of a common basis of record. For this reason I have summarised the factual evidence in the foregoing chapters in the form suggested by Firth*, that is, against a list of indices of classification.

Firth's indices include :—

(*i*) The dominant technique of production, with reference to the relative frequency of the various techniques employed.

(*ii*) The system of exchange, considering the amount of dependence upon external markets, and the existence of internal markets.

(*iii*) The existence of a price system. Here it may be necessary to distinguish a non-price type from others with an embryonic, a partial, or a fully operative price mechanism.

(*iv*) The system of control of the means of production, by reference to the forms of ownership, and inequalities in the possession of resources.

(*v*) The system of regulation of consumer's choices.

(*vi*) The nature of the ties between the participants in the economic process—the degree of personalisation involved, control by factors of tradition, ritual, etc.

To this list one might add a note on the existence or absence of provision for the setting aside of " capital " in cash or kind with intent to improve the means of production. This seems a definite step from static to progressive economics, and knowledge on this point is essential to any plan of improving agrarian finance in the hills.

(*i*) *The dominant technique of production.*—Chapter III will have made it obvious that agriculture is the basis of Chin economics. Not even in the specialist pot-making villages of Lente and Tashon is there any attempt to gain sustenance solely by means of a craft. In all cases handicrafts supplement normal agricultural activity—they do not replace it. Less than half a dozen Chins keep bazaar shops for a living, and even these cultivate a field-plot in their village, the womenfolk staying there for the agricultural season.

* " Primitive Polynesian Economy," page 356.

Agricultural technique is of the simplest. There is no mechanisation, nor even animal traction. The fields and gardens are cultivated by hand with the crudest of iron implements. With few exceptions the products of the soil are carried back to the village on the backs of the cultivators themselves, and the processes of threshing, winnowing and pounding are all carried out by hand without the aid of mechanical contrivances.

The same simplicity is apparent in other productive activities. Planks for housing are hewn from trees with axe and adze in the vast majority of cases, though it is possible that by now the pit-saws which I introduced in 1936 are having their effect in this sphere. Weaving, as the illustrations show, is done by hand with the simplest of looms. The smiths work with a hand-operated feather-lined plunger bellows, and so on.

There is room for much improvement in the means of production without altering the methods; the surplus water running off from the ingenious water-supply systems would in itself supply the motivation for the pounding of grain and the blowing of bellows, if a little inventive skill were brought to bear on the matter. The introduction of the Yunnanese loom and potter's wheel would reduce local effort enormously, and both are easy to make with local materials.

As to the relative frequency of alternative techniques in the main productive sphere—the answer is that to all intents and purposes there are as yet no alternatives.

(*ii*) *The system of exchange.*—In an area as isolated as the Falam Sub-division, where inter-communication between villages is even now largely by foot, there is naturally a very large dependence on internal markets. Chapter X has presented a fairly comprehensive picture of the way in which the Chin has created stable internal markets within the village for his surpluses, of which the agricultural surpluses form the bulk.

Much of his resources is devoted to the unavoidable payments and ritual connected with marriage, birth, death and illness. The fact that social progress can only be achieved through feasts means that he need never wonder what to do about his spare grain. The importance of hunting successes gives him a useful pointer on how to use his spare time. The distinctive blankets worn by holders of the great feasts provides a market for the blanket-weavers of Laizo, the universal need for mats, storage baskets, implements, and pots for cooking food and brewing beer assures a market for the products of the mat-weavers, the smiths and the potters.

The only articles for which the Chin is dependent to some degree upon the outside world are cash, iron and salt. Chapter VIII has outlined his methods of obtaining these. The effort to acquire them stimulates handicrafts and wage-labour, but on a small scale which presents no competition to the normal agricultural livelihood.

(*iii*) *The price system.*—I have discussed in Chapter VIII the way in which the pre-annexation trade bottleneck at Tashon affected the methods of exchange. Though there is no detailed evidence on the point, it seems likely that the existence of this bottleneck—this exchange market wherein the goods of the barter economies of the western hills met the products of the money economy of the eastern plains—was the cause of the partial price system based on *seu* units which I have described. Barter is still the main method of exchange in village trade in the hinterland, and it is significant that such trade as escaped passing through Tashon was on a barter basis and not on a *seu* price basis.

Whatever the cause, the *seu* price system established itself in and about Tashon, and as far west as the Zahau villages, where we have noted that the marriage prices were reckoned in these units. An important point is that a cash price system seems to follow most readily into the areas where the *seu* pricing exists, and in these areas one finds nowadays, as in the case of the Zahau marriage prices, goods and chattels being valued alternatively in *seu* or rupees. The exchange value of the *seu* in rupees is not constant throughout the whole area—a good worth one *seu* is valued at Re. 1 in the Zahau area and Rs.2 in the Zanniat villages to the east. There is a need for deeper enquiry than I was able to make into the significance of this variation. It is possible that it represents the difference in the value of local goods in the " closed " local market of social reciprocities and in the " open " markets of the bazaars in the plains and in Falam. The Zanniat villages have better opportunities than the Zahau for disposal of goods to the last-named markets.

The Chin price system can, therefore, be said to vary both regionally and qualitatively. Barter takes place everywhere, exchanges based on the *seu* unit in some areas. A money price system is also seeping in everywhere, but more rapidly into the *seu*-using areas than into the barter areas.

(*iv*) *The control of the means of production.*—Since the basic productive activity is agriculture, and even the raw products of mat-making, weaving and pottery are derived from the land, it stands to reason that control of the land carries with it control of the productive system. In Chapter VII we have examined this control, and shown that most of the land in the Falam Subdivision is " managed " for the benefit of the community as a whole by the village headman, only one-sixth of the area having the *bul ram* individual tenure. In Chapter XIII we have seen how the inheritance system works, by which the titles to cultivate land pass from father to son, and we have examined the ownership of the implements of production within the household group.

These studies show that production is controlled in the larger economic field of the village by the headman, whose duty and privilege it is to see that all households have plots to cultivate, water to use, forest produce to collect for home consumption or sale, paths and roads to facilitate transport, and so on. Having been provided with these basic

necessities, utilisation is the responsibility of the householder, who may confine effort to what his own household can accomplish, or who may call in his relatives or friends on a basis of mutual help, or hire labour from the village as a whole. In other words, management of the means of production is found both on the village and the household scale.

In the *bul ram* areas alone one finds control of the means of production, *i.e.*, the land, vested in the hands of individual landlords with no responsibility towards the village as a whole nor to the individual residents thereof. Here we find also the abuses common in the plains of Burma wherever absentee landlords or non-cultivating landlords exist—a gradually rising scale of rents, a diminishing margin of profit for the actual cultivator, a widening gap in the possession of resources and an increasing momentum in the tendency for land to pass from the small to the large owner as each economic crisis hits the district.

The way in which goods are consumed and the local accent on the riches of consumption rather than the riches of accumulation between them tend to prevent the average individual from accumulating large resources, other than land, even in the *bul ram* areas, but important exceptions exist. Both the Tashon and the Zahau Chiefs have large cash savings (upwards of Rs.20,000 each in 1936), in the first case partly raised by rather questionable land deals, and in the second by the sale of grain sent in as tribal dues. In both instances the large store of local resources represented by these sums has been lost for good to the local economy. Instead of returning the tax grain in the form of feasts, they convert it into cash of which their villagers see nothing more. The Chiefs have realised the need for higher education for their sons if the latter are to hold their own in a local world dominated by " smart Aleck " plainsmen, and have accordingly adjusted their attitude towards their people. This tendency will increase unless radical changes are made in our educational and administrative policy. It will be held in check to some degree by the fact that the Chiefs and many other rich men have acquired, by virtue of past feasts, the greatest stake in the dividends of the local system, but the vastly greater profits of getting one or more sons into lucrative Government or other posts will tell in the long run.

(*v*) *The system of regulation of consumer's choices.*—Chapters X and XII have described in detail the intricate social reciprocities and the religious background, which play equally large parts in determining consumer's choices in the Chin village. A man must progress on earth if he is to progress in Heaven. This is not quite so complete a reversal of our own teaching—" The last shall be first etc."—as might be supposed, for we have seen that progress means expending one's earthly goods for the benefit of the many through the feasts and other ritual observances. If we add to this desire for a better place in the next world the social and economic benefits derived from the feasts, we can see at once that the pull towards using resources on feasts is very strong indeed. In fact it is so powerful that the vast majority of Chin ex-soldiers and other

wage-earners put the bulk of their money into feasts on their return home, in spite of the much propagandised temptation to buy G. I. sheets for roofing, woolly clothes and blankets, and other bazaar products.

Though the administration and the Mission have in the past worked hard to make the Chin realise the benefits of putting a tin roof on his house and warm clothing on his children, though much adverse criticism has been poured on the institution of feasting and in particular on its concomitant beer-drinking, though the Army and the Frontier Force have used extensive propaganda to encourage their men to save for savings sake, the social organisation of the villages has proved stronger than all. It is as well that it has, for we can now see what risks we were taking in trying to break down an economic system of considerable merit before we had even understood it, let alone found a substitute.

As to petty casual cash earnings, I have already noted in Chapter VIII that by their very nature these are more than likely to be spent outside the traditional system—the first " choice " in this connection being the enforced payment of house-tax—and that most finds its way into the bazaar at Falam in exchange for salt, iron, coloured thread and other gewgaws.

In short, the local consumer's choices are still determined to a very large degree by the cultural background. Though a man may have to decide between many alternative choices within the cultural context, choices in which the size, sex, health and prosperity of his own and related families will play a large part, he will rarely have to choose, or have difficulty in deciding on the choice, between avenues of expenditure within and without his traditional system, especially so far as utilisation of his farming resources is concerned.

But the thin end of the wedge of a cash economy has already been inserted. The mere handling of cash, so much more easily negotiable than the village products, is conducive to idle spending, and pride of possession of the fallals of the plains will not be long in following.

(*vi*) *The ties between participants in the Economic Process.*—In Chapter II, I described the make-up of the average village in this area. There we saw that the village is the largest agricultural unit, and that it is also the largest unit in the traditional consumer groups. Within it are smaller groups related by blood or marriage which form the consumer units in lesser economic arrangements such as marriage, mortuary feasts, and household sacrifices. Least of all is the individual family unit. The inter-relationship of the participants in the economic process therefore vary according to the magnitude of the effort—co-members of a single family, blood and marital relations, co-residents of a hamlet or village, as the case may be.

In almost all traditional economic processes concerning the livestock and cereal surpluses *the system is wholly personalised and deeply controlled by tradition and ritual.*

It is only when one deals with the disposal of forest products such as lac, wax, mats and with inter-village trade, all of which are as yet minor factors in the local economy, that one comes across depersonalised transactions more in line with modern economic deals.

(*vii*) *The accumulation of capital to improve production.*—This, as we understand it, does not yet exist in this area. Perhaps the reason for this lack of progressive foresight lies in the nature of the physical background. Nowhere is the land flat enough to make ploughing easy; almost every place where there is heavy pressure on the land suffers from a shortage of water so that the making of irrigable terraces presents great difficulties. The heavy hoes of the market are less suited to local conditions than the light local ones, and the bazaar axes fail for the same reason, and so on. The Chin sees little scope for improvement in production techniques, and therefore does not try to save to that end.

But there *is* scope for profitable investment in improved methods of carriage, threshing, and storage of grain, and it is to these aspects of agriculture that we should first turn in our efforts to teach the Chin the benefits of improved technique.

*The future of economic development in the Central Chin Hills.*—This summary has shown us a static economy, largely dependent upon traditional local markets, only partially tied to a money price system, highly personalised and closely controlled by tradition and ritual. We are presented with a picture of a rural economy which is in many ways highly satisfactory but which is vastly different to that prevailing in Burma proper, and which is therefore likely to be subjected to increasing pressure towards change as better communications and the spread of education, Mission proselytism and propaganda increase.

It is as well that we should examine our responsibilities in this connection with the greatest care, for the collapse of an economy so closely tied to the social structure must inevitably bring social chaos. Any attempt to transform the Chin rapidly into a cash-cropper dependent on selling his produce to the outside world might well entail provision of a new system, other than feasts, of letting him get on socially both in this world and the next. Any success on the part of the Missions in their attack on the Feasts as Animistic orgies will have the same result even though the productive system remains unchanged. Where communal beer-drinks, reciprocal entertainment, and social prestige go hand in hand, it is impossible to deal with Christians as though they lived in a vacuum; they have relatives at whose beer-drinks they must help, for the relative's sake if not their own; they have village specialists to whom they owe traditional dues, and so on.

I feel that in this particular area there is a strong case for maintenance of the existing order; the Feasts are at least a safe market but little affected by the economic cataclysms which sweep the wide world outside the hills. Modernisation here should aim, not at changing the old order,

but at improving it. With better varieties of cereals, new and more numerous fruits and vegetables properly acclimatised to the locality, and finer breeding stocks of indigenous animals, a great difference could be made in the local diet, and through that, in the general standard of health. By improving the methods of handling, transporting, and storing crops much labour could be saved for use in other directions, to say nothing of the immense potential saving of grain from destruction in the present disastrous village fires, which non-combustible roofing materials would go a long way to prevent. By improving the cotton crop, introducing wool production where feasible, and using better types of loom of local manufacture, sweeping benefits could be produced in the field of clothing. By instruction in the curing of hides a sizeable new industry could be established without any really significant change in the reciprocities at feasts, by the use of pitsaws the consumption of timber can be reduced by 75%. By widening the basis of the village custom (*rawl veh*) of giving a standard donation of grain to those in need, so that this form of mutual help would operate on a tribal and perhaps even a sub-divisional scale, the sting could be taken out of many local calamities. By re-organising and modernising the "*tefa*" system this method of cheap borrowing might well be brought to a new pitch of usefulness.

There are a hundred and one ways in which knowledge opens the door to improvements in all spheres of life, but the essential factor is that the knowledge be detailed and comprehensive. We have seen that in many spheres efforts at improvement have been made in the past, but that most have failed because their sponsors have not studied the local situation first.

We are apt to aim too high in our initial efforts—forgetting that assimilation of novelties cannot bridge too wide a gap between the old and the new—and above all we place too little reliance on the common sense of the local wiseacres in choosing their own lines of development.

What is wanted is deeper and ever deeper knowledge on our part, coupled with a much greater degree of coöperation with and consultation of the elders, so that by our superior scientific knowledge and our facility in abstract reasoning we can present their problems to them in a clearer light, and by their greater local knowledge they can then advise us in the right steps to take.

We have too often assumed that we knew best in all things—both spiritual and temporal—and grievously underestimated the wisdom of those who formulated tribal custom in the past. They had to build a structure that would last—and it has lasted. It will require all our ingenuity, all our patience, all our sympathy, and all our determination to see ourselves as others see us, to do just what these ancient greybeards did—fashion a social and economic structure for the Chins that will not only be flexible enough to mould itself to the stresses and strains of an ever more modern world, but strong enough to stand the test of time.

# GLOSSARY

PHONETIC NOTE :

The spelling of the Chin words in this paper follows the official practice in 1936. With the exception of those noted below, all vowels, consonants and combined sounds have their accepted phonetic values.

The letter *h*. This is used in two ways—to indicate an aspirate and to denote an abruptly ended syllable. As an aspirate it is written, as it is pronounced, before the consonants *l*, *m*, *n* and *r*, as in *hlawh*, *hmuah*, *hnar* and *hruai* : and after all other consonants, as in *khai*, *thau*, etc. To denote an abruptly ended syllable it appears at the end of it, as in *hlawh*, *hmuah* and *Tsawnghawih*.

The combined letters *ng*. These are always sounded as one, as in king.

The combined letters *aw*. These have replaced the long *o* in the old style of writing, as they give a better indication of the actual sound. Thus the old word *poi* is now written *pawi*, which is pronounced as if the two sounds *paw* and *i* were run together.

*Ahnu klun :* The literal meaning is " behind follow." The expression is used mainly to describe the second half of religious ceremonies held in two parts. See Chapter XII.

*Aih :* Is the name given to a Dance of Celebration. The Dance of Celebration of a hunting success is called *sa aih*, or more specifically *sa hrang aih*, *sa ngai aih* and *hri va aih* for large game, small game, and birds or reptiles respectively. The old dance over an enemy's head was called *ral aih*.

*Bawi :* This word has conflicting meanings in various parts of the central area. Among the Shimhrin and Hakas it indicates a Chief or Headman, as *Bawipa* or *Khuabawi*. Elsewhere, and especially in villages with Lushai connections, it means a *tefa* (See Chapter XIII) a debtor from whom the creditor receives a proportion of the patrilineal kinship dues.

*Biar :* The loincloth, always worn with ends hanging long in front. The colour is one indication of the racial group of the wearer. (See Chapter II).

*Bul :* The word means " privately owned " in so far as private ownership exists in this area. It appears in conjunction with other words, as, for instance, *bul ram* (privately owned land) and *bul ta* (a privately owned article).

*Faang :* Millet.

*Faangtsang :* Rice.

*Far nu :* A sister or patrilineally related female cousin. When selected to help at feasts, they rank, in order of the closeness of blood relationship, as *farnu upa* (senior *farnu*), *farnu nauta* (lesser *farnu*) and *rawlsuang farnu* (cooking *farnu*). Either 3 or 6 officiate at the Feasts of Merit and Celebration.

*Ful pi :* Also called *fur pi*—the season of heavy rain. The crops grown in this season are called *ful rawl*.

*Han :* A large carrying basket, holding 60 to 80 pounds of grain. Crops are generally estimated in *han*.

*Hausa pa :* In the Falam Sub-division this term means the senior member of the " Feaster's Club "—the man who has progressed furthest in the Feasts of Merit. In the Tiddim Sub-division it means a headman, though there in reason to believe that in ancient days the headman was always the greatest feast-giver or *vice versa*.

*Hausa pawl :* Members of the " Feaster's Club "—men who have held Feasts of Merit, and who are entitled to share in the *hausa sa* at feasts.

*Hausa sa :* The shares of meat, set aside from all carcases of animals killed at Feasts of Merit, which are divided among members of the " Feaster's Club " in order of seniority.

*Hnar :* Resting places, made with flat stones, made on village paths in memory of celebrated men.

*Hlawh :* To work under agreement, as in *puak hlawh* (joint trading venture), *sia khalh hlawh* (a mithan purchase system), *lo hlawh* (labour in the fields by order of the headman).

*Hrin :* Birth, line of descent, as in *Sunkhla hrin*, people descended from the original inhabitants of Sunkhla village.

*In :* House. The inner room of a house is called *insung*, and the outer room *inleng*.

*Intek :* Members of the household.

*Kawl :* Burmese : Burma is *kawl ram*.

*Kawl thah :* Literally means " Burman killing." It refers to the holding of a Feast of Merit without giving the stipulated quantities of liquor to traditional local groups, for which, till the liquor is produced, an annual due is payable to the village council.

*Khai :* A house to house collection of chickens (*arr khai*) beer (*zu khai*) or pigs (*vawk khai*).

*Khak :* To sever relationship with one's relatives. Only the mother's brother and wife's brother cannot be disowned by *khak*. The act is effected by saying to the party concerned—" *Ka lo khak* " (I disown you) in the presence of the elders.

*Khan tseh :* To erect a *khan*, or memorial post to the dead. These are of carved wood among the Shimhrin and Hakas, and sometimes of stone among the Hualngo and Tashon. On them are recorded the highlights of the deceased's history. They are set up by the roadside at the entrances to the village.

*Khente :* Fourth highest in the series of traditional Zahau judicial fines. (See Chapter XI).

*Khlailam :* The first of the major dances in the Zahau series of Feasts of Merit.

*Khlan :* The family vault. In the case of the Shimhrin this is usually a stone-lined cavity in the bank on the uphill side of the courtyard in front of the house.

*Khua :* Village. Hence *Khuaman*, the price payable on founding a village ; *khuabawi*, village headman ; *khuatebawi*, 2nd or " little village " headman.

*Khuangtsawi :* The greatest of the Feasts of Merit. I feel this should be written *kuang tsawi* (log carry). The Ngawn and Zanniat cut a large wooden log for the dance, which is hollowed like a xylophone and beaten for the dancing. The Zahau fix a miniature one into a sort of sedan chair on which the feast-giver's wife is carried about in the final stages of the feast.

*Klangpi :* The village council.

*Klangsuak :* The men eligible for council membership. Among the Shimhrin this means those who have given certain of the Feasts of Merit.

*Kum :* The calendar year.

*Lam :* To dance. Also means a road or path.

*Lo :* A plot in a field of cultivations. The village fields are called *lo pil.*

*Lukhawng :* A due payable after death among the Shimhrin.

*Lungkhen :* Third highest in the scale of Zahau judicial fines.

*Lungpi :* The greatest man in the " Hunter's Club," that is, those who have given Feasts of Celebration of hunting successes.

*Man :* Price : *Manpi* and *mante* are the great and lesser marriage prices.

*Mar :* The Lushei-Kuki and Tiddim Chin groups—those who wear their hair in a bun at the nape of the neck.

*Mithi lam :* The Dance of the Dead.

*Mual :* The main altar of the village or hamlet, at which the communal sacrifices are held.

*Nau :* Younger brother (of a man). *Nauta* means younger or junior.

*Nu :* Mother. A cow and its calf are known as *nufa*, which term is also applied to a large and a small pot of beer, when given together as a present or a fine.

*Pa :* Father.

*Pawi :* The Shimhrin and Haka tribes—those who wear their hair in a top-knot.

*Phiang :* A type of pigeon pea grown once in three years in the dry season bean crop rotation.

*Pial rang :* The Plain of Heaven.

*Pu :* Paternal grandfather and ancestors. *Pa pu* means mother's brother, and *nu pu* wife's brother.

*Puan :* A blanket. The common blankets are plain white (*puan rang*) and black (*puan dum*). Blankets of different colour and design are worn by men who have reached various stages in the Feasts of Merit.

*Ral :* Enemy. Also sometimes used to denote the other side of a valley, for example, *run ral* means " the other side of the Manipur Valley (Run Va)."

*Ram :* Forest, land, when speaking of village lands, forest reserves, etc. Jungle is called *hramlak*. *Ramsa* is the term applied to the due of flesh, payable among the Shimhrin on all wild animals killed.

*Rawl :* The staple foods, that is, the cereals and beans.

*Ruak hnah :* The Mourning Feast. Among the Shimhrin the corpse of the deceased is placed in a seated position, with its back against supporting posts (called *rem*) in the *insung* of the house, where it remains in state, dressed in its best, till the ritual is over. The Ngawn used to desiccate their dead in the *insung*, like some tribes of the Tiddim Sub-division.

*Rual :* A bond friend. Among the Shimhrin, each man must have two, with whom many reciprocities are carried out at all the crises of life.

*Ruangal :* A type of bamboo (*rua*) which grows at about 8,000 ft. altitude. It is tough and pliable, and is used to make the best baskets and mats.

*Ruangpawm :* Literally—body-paired. Brothers and sisters and other classificatory relations are so paired for purposes of kinship obligations.

*Sa :* Meat. It is used in combination with other words a great deal. For instance, *in sa* (the flesh dues paid at feasts), *ram sa* (the flesh due on wild animals).

*Sen pi :* The *hoi polloi*, the multitude of the unprivileged at feasts.

*Seu :* A unit in barter or in hired labour.

*Shimhrin :* Literally—born in the hot lands. This is a name I have given to the cultural group of which the Zahau, Khuangli and Laizo sub-tribes are part. All claim Sunkhla as their place of origin, and all are very closely connected in every detail of their culture.

*Sia :* Mithan (*Bos Frontalis*), the cattle of the hills. A bull mithan is called *siatsang*, a cow *siapi*, and a calf *siate*. The field set aside each cultivation season for grazing is called *siapil*.

*Sia hra thah :* Lit. 10 mithan kill. Second greatest of the Zahau Feasts of Merit.

*Sia thum thah :* 3 mithan kill. Third largest of the Zahau Feasts of Merit.

*Siah :* A due in kind. For instance the Zahau Chief's due of grain from each house in the tract is called *rawl rel siah*. Again the dues paid for " protection " to Tashon, every third year when the *phiang* peas were planted, were called *phiang siah*.

*Tapa :* Term used by a woman referring to her brother.

*Tefa :* A debtor who has incorporated his creditor into his patrilineal line, and who repays his debt by giving the creditor a share of the dues of the patrilineal kin. (See Chapter XIII.)

*Tha hlun :* A house to house collection of grain for communal purposes.

*Thal rawl :* Crops grown during *khuathal* (the dry season), meaning the beans crops which flower and ripen after collection of the *ful rawl* cereals.

*Thi :* To die.

*Ti :* Water.

*Ti kuang :* A wooden water tub.

*Ti va :* A stream or river.

*U :* Elder brother (of a man)

*Upa :* Elder or senior.

*Va :* A bird. *Va bu* is a bird's nest.

*Vaih :* To migrate.

*Vainiim :* Maize.

*Vawk :* A pig.

*Veng :* A hamlet, or quarter in a large village.

*Zarh ul :* Period of abstention from work after a sacrifice.

*Zu :* Fermented beer made from millet, maize or rice. The distilled spirit is called *zu reo*.

# INDEX

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