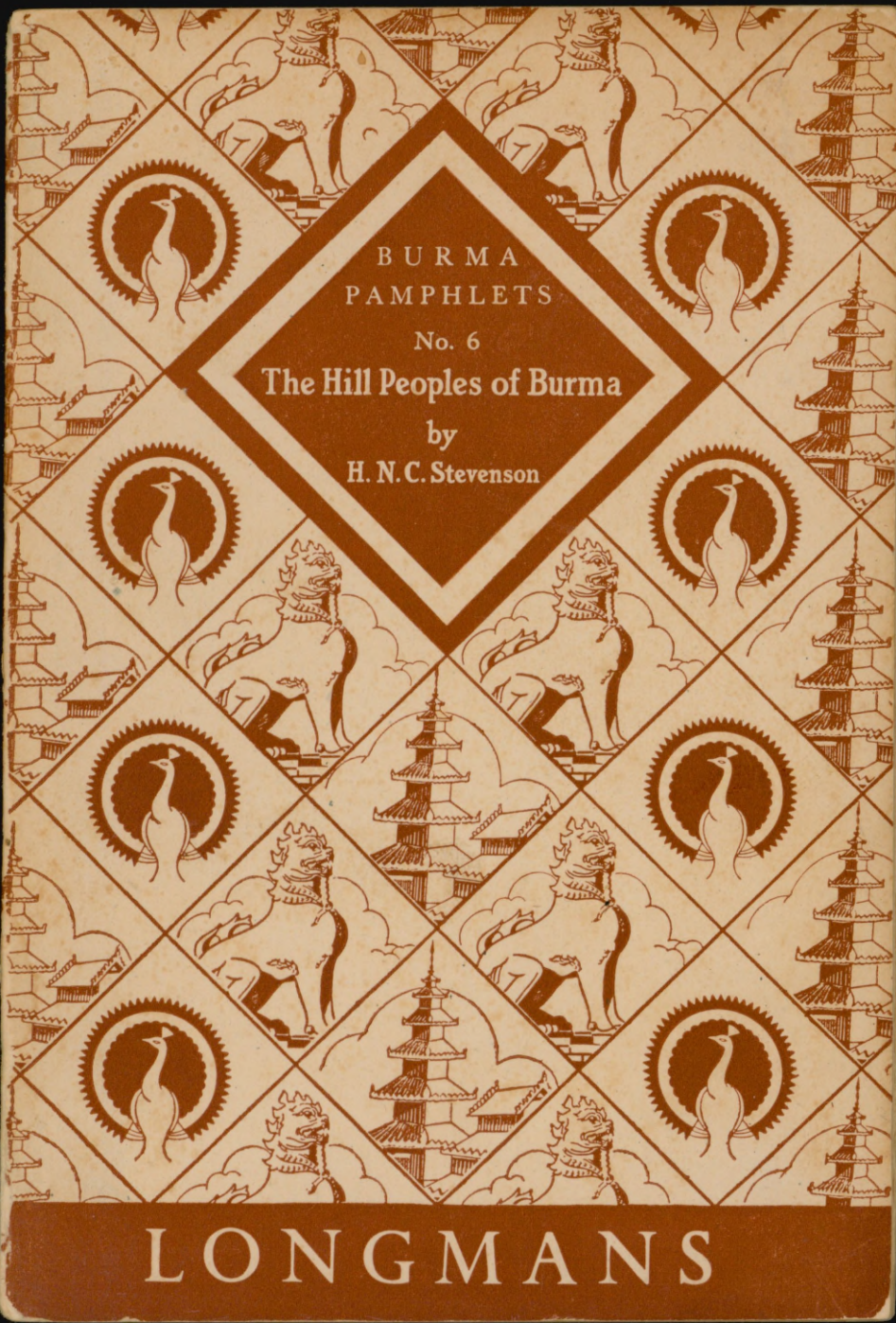
BURMA
PAMPHLETS
No. 6
The Hill Peoples of Burma
by
H. N. C. Stevenson
LONGMANS


CHUNGKING
R. Yangtzekiang
CHINA
Yungning
Szechow
R. Salween
Sadiya
Ft. Hertz
R. Brahmaputra
R. Chindwin
R. Mekong
Myitkina
Mogaung
Kunming
R. Lungkiang
R. Sikiang
Shillong
IMPHAL
INDIA
Katha
Bhamo
Tamu
R. Ganges
Lashio
Hanoi
Gulf of Tongking
HAINAN
Maymyo
Mandalay
CALCUTTA
Monywa
Myingyan
Pakokku
Pagan
Taunggyi
Chittagong
Chauk
Yamethin
Buthidaung
Akyab
Magwe
Loikaw
ARAKAN
R. Irrawaddy
Pyinmana
Toungoo
Chiengmai
R. Mekong
R. Menam
FRENCH INDO-CHINA
Prome
SIAM
(THAILAND)
Hue
BAY
OF
BENGAL
Bassein
Moulmein
TENASSERIM
Ye
BANGKOK
Tavoy
R. Mekong
SAIGON
ANDAMANS
MERGUI
ARCHº
Port Blair
Gulf of
Siam
N
NICOBARS
Kota Bharu
Penang
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SUMATRA
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Lumpur
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KEY
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Railways
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BY

H. N. C. STEVENSON

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A NAGA CHIEF

THE HILL PEOPLES OF BURMA

INTRODUCTION

Burma has been called a racial melting pot, and this is indeed true. The map shows that the country lies between two very great and ancient empires, India and China. To the north are Tibet and the great Central Asian plateau, the founts from which most of the main migrations into Burma have flowed. To the east and west are lesser kingdoms and states such as Siam, French Indo-China and Manipur. Most of these great and small states have in the past been at war at one time or another with Burma, and all have had their effect on the dispersal of the peoples of the country.

In ancient days the whole of northern Burma and a large part of southern Burma were vast wildernesses of almost uninhabited forest country, an immense "Eldorado" waiting for colonization and therefore quite naturally the envy of more populous neighbouring states. Only the central riverine area of the Irrawaddy and a few other valleys were occupied by populations worth the record of historians. The existence of these empty spaces facilitated large migrations, from the earliest known times, out of the mountainous territory in the north into Burma proper. Whether these southward movements were due to a search for *lebensraum,* or to wars in the Central Asian plateau, or to mere *wanderlust,* we cannot say, and indeed conjecture will do little good now. The greatest of these migrations, in historical sequence, were the Mon-Khmer, the Burmese and the Shan. All were on a very considerable scale and out of them arose a series of bloody wars for

possession of the rich plains. The pamphlet 'Burma Background' describes shortly the ebb and flow of these conflicts and it will be realised that the effect on scattered rural populations must have been one of constant flight, resettlement and intermixture.

In addition to these larger migrations there was a constant flow of smaller groups from north to south and, arising out of the battles in the plains and other factors, lesser but quite important movements, east, west and north within Burma, by small tribes driven from their original habitats. A very interesting factor in these migrations was the possession of firearms. Prof. Pearn* has described how the capture of the French guns and gunners at Syriam so strengthened the Burmese army that it was able to carry out considerable and successful attacks on neighbouring states. The "Great Kuki Invasion" of Tipperah in Assam in 1860 and the westward migrations of the Lushais and other tribes in the belt of mountain country between Burma and Assam arose out of the acquisition of flint-lock guns by the Haka tribes of the central Chin Hills. The new weapon upset the local balance of power so much that the Hakas were able to drive the Lushais and Kukis out of their ancestral lands and thus start the latter on the predatory land and head-hunting expeditions to the west and north, which eventually led them into contact with the plains of India and brought them under British administration.

Besides these important factors in racial movements and intermixture, lesser reasons also complicated the whole situation. On past occasions large numbers of

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* See Burma Background, No. 1 in this Series.

captives taken in battle were settled in the territory of their conquerors, as happened in the case of the Manipuris transplanted in the Mandalay district and, in a lesser degree, the Portuguese and French gunners housed in Shwebo. Then there were the penal settlements such as that at Mogaung, to which recalcitrant subjects were sent by the Kings of Burma ; the small groups who accepted the "protection" of more powerful immigrants instead of fleeing with the main body of their people ; and finally the relatively modern influx of refugees from Yunnan, escaping the unsettled conditions and internecine strife that have characterised that province in the past two decades. These racial "islands", or the traces of them, exist to this day to confound the ethnographer.

The main result of this confusion of external and internal strife, the search for empty spaces, and the feuds among the kings and princes of early Burma, is that the whole country is a mass of small pockets of mutually hostile peoples, speaking languages which vary sometimes from village to village within a single tribe, and having customs which differ in minor details to a bewildering degree. Much of this difference is due to the nature of the physical environment, since heavy jungle and mountainous country do not make for good communications, and isolation has had its usual effect of enhancing regional development on individual lines. This development is, for the same reason, along the lines of economic and social divergencies rather than along the lines of racial division. Thus those who possess firearms, means of irrigation, wheeled or animal transport and other aids to easy living are far more advanced than fellow members of their race who have not acquired these material advantages.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE TRIBES*

The reduction of this ethnological chaos to an intelligible order has exercised historians and ethnographers for many years, and attempts have been made to classify the races of Burma on linguistic, physical and other bases. These attempts have so far proved both conflicting and confusing and for this reason have not been used in this pamphlet, in which geographical distribution has been used as the main criterion of grouping.

Burma consists of a long narrow belt of fertile and relatively flat country comprising the lower basins of the Chindwin, Irrawaddy and Sittang rivers, surrounded by a "horse-shoe" periphery of massive mountain ranges, which include the Shan plateau. Outside this periphery, between the mountains and the Bay of Bengal, is Arakan, while on the long tongue of Lower Burma that extends down the western side of Siam lies Tenasserim.

The two major racial groups of Burmese history, the Burmese themselves (9,627,196) and the Mon or Talaing (now only 336,728), live entirely in the central plains, the Irrawaddy delta, in Arakan or in Tenasserim, while a large proportion of the Karens live in the Bassein district of the delta.

The hill peoples described in this pamphlet numbering three and a half millions and occupying just over 40% of the country, live in the mountainous periphery of Burma. This area is divided for administrative purposes into the following main divisions. The Arakan Hill Tracts, the Chin Hills, and the Naga Hills between Burma and Assam ; the Kachin Hills in the north, between Burma and Tibet

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* See map on inside of back cover.

A GROUP OF HAKA CHINS

and Burma and north-west Yunnan ; the Shan States and Wa States between Burma and south-west Yunnan, Burma and French Indo-China, and Burma and north Siam ; and lastly the Karenni States and the Karen Hills of the Salween district, between Burma and Siam.

Within each of these administrative zones are found, grouped together under such "portmanteau" terms as *Chin, Naga, Kachin, Shan* and *Karen,* a very large number of tribes more or less related to each other and overflowing all the natural boundaries into Assam, China, French Indo-China and Siam.

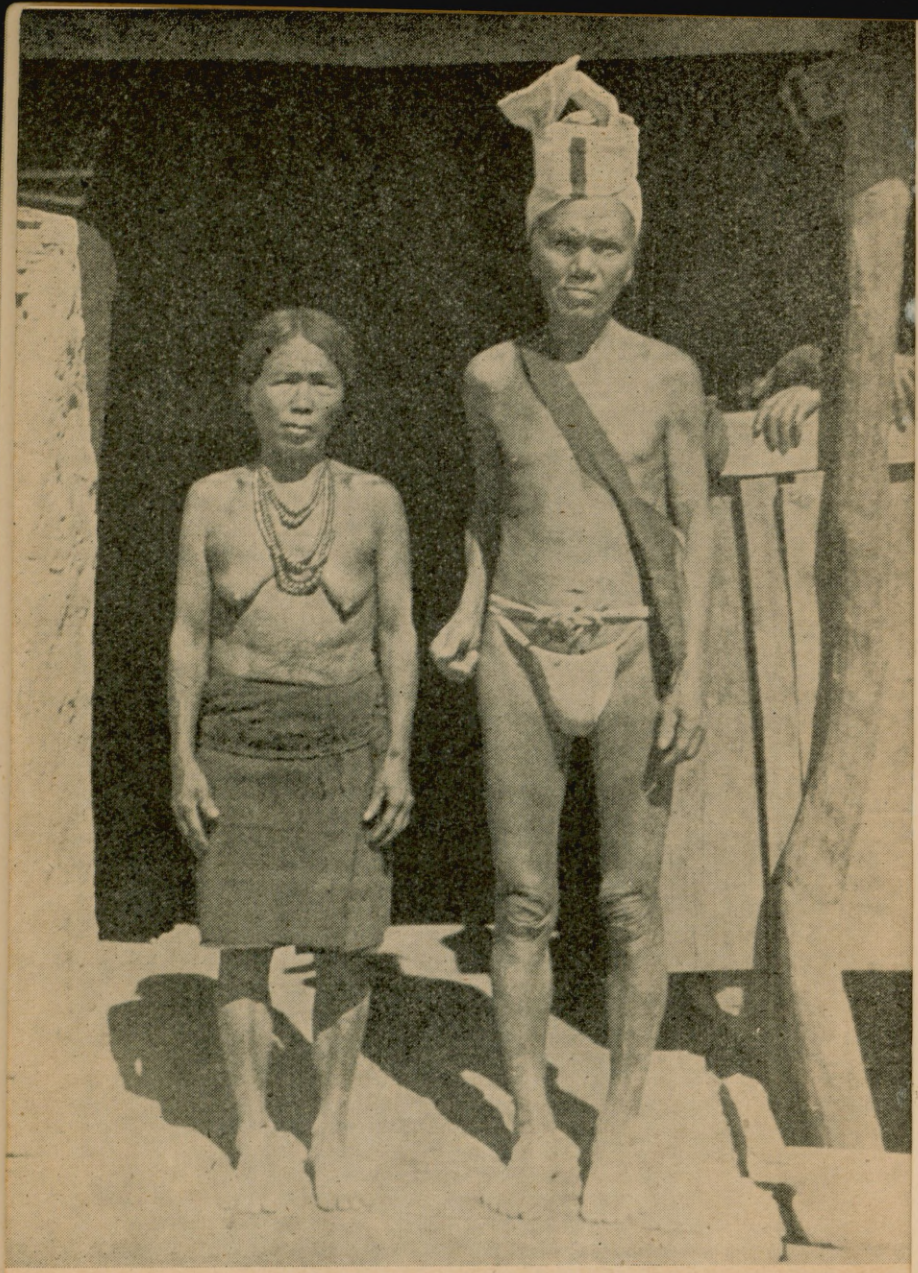
THE CHIN HILLS AND THE ARAKAN HILL TRACTS

The northernmost boundary of Chin occupation in Burma is the Namwe Chaung in the Somra tract of the present Naga Hills district, while the southernmost villages are far to the south in the hills west of the Prome district. The total Chin population is approximately a quarter of a million. Starting from the north, there are *Thado Kukis* in the south Somra tract and the north of the Kamhau Tribal Area in the Chin Hills. Then come the *Kamhaus, Yos* and *Vuite* of the Kamhau Tribal Area, and south of them the *Sokte* and *Siyin,* all of these being in the Tiddim sub-division. West of the Tiddim sub-division, and on the western slopes of the Inbuk Range, is a long narrow strip of the Falam sub-division, inhabited by *Hualngo* and various other peoples. The rest of the Falam sub-division is inhabited by the *Shimhrin* tribe, consisting of the *Zahau, Khuangli* and *Laizo* sub-tribes, and numbering altogether some 20,000 : the *Zanniat* tribe of approximately 7,000,

and the lesser tribes of *Tashon, Tawr, Lente* and *Khualshim,* the last overlapping into the north-west corner of the Haka sub-division. The north of the Haka sub-division is inhabited by the *Hakas* themselves and their close relatives of the *Klanklang, Khualhringklang* and other tribal areas ; the south by *Zokhuas, Zothungs, Senthangs, Marams* and others. All of these northern and central tribes are closely related to each other and to their neighbours in the Lushai Hills of Assam to the west. All of them, with the exception of the south Haka tribes, claim as their original homes a handful of villages on the west bank of the Manipur River in the northern tip of the Falam sub-division and in the southern part of the Tiddim sub-division.

In appearance there is a sharp division between the northern groups and their Lushai cousins on the one hand, and the Falam and Haka Chins on the other. The northerners tie their hair in a bun at the nape of the neck, wear a broad cloth round the waist, and are known as *Mar,* while the Falam and Haka Chins wear a long narrow loin-cloth, tie their hair in a top-knot and are called *Pawi.* The languages and customs of all are closely connected, a characteristic dialectical difference being variations in the initial consonants of proper nouns. For instance, the Falam tribes call the Manipur River the *Run Va,* their land *ram,* and an enemy *ral ;* these are converted in the south of the Tiddim sub-division to *Ngun Va, ngam* and *ngal,* while further north they become *Gun Va, gam* and *gal.* The *Marams* of south Haka are identical with the *Lakhers* of south Lushai.

The wearers of the nape "bun" belong to what are called the *Lushai-Kuki* clans, and the wearers of the top-



ANCIENT CHIN DRESS

knot to the true Chins, though both groups come under the official title of Chin for administrative purposes.

The *Lushai-Kuki* tribes and some of the Chin tribes have hereditary tribal chiefs and a political aristocracy, but a large number of the central and southern Chins were ruled, in pre-annexation days, by democratic political organisations. Each village of the democrats had its own council, members of which were elected to represent either the main families in the village, or the residential quarters, or the vested interests of the feast-givers ; and each was virtually autonomous. The Kanpetlet sub-division, the most southerly in the Chin Hills district, is divided up into several *chaungs* or valleys, each of which is administered by a *Chaung Ok,* or "Ruler of the Valley", nominated and paid by Government.

The Kanpetlet sub-division of the Chin Hills district and the Arakan Hill Tracts are inhabited by a considerable number of tribes, including the *Chinbok, Chinbon, Matu, Yindu, Kami* and many smaller groups. These two areas contain the wildest of the Chin tribes, some of whom have come under British administration only within the past twenty years, and are among the least known sections of the whole of the Burma Hills.

The clothing of Chin women differs little in its modesty from north to south except in the length of the skirt ; but even the shortest skirt is never immodest, so expert are the wearers. The dress of the men can be said to dwindle from little in the north to still less in the south, and the sex exhibits a magnificent resistance to the wide climatic variations to which it is exposed.

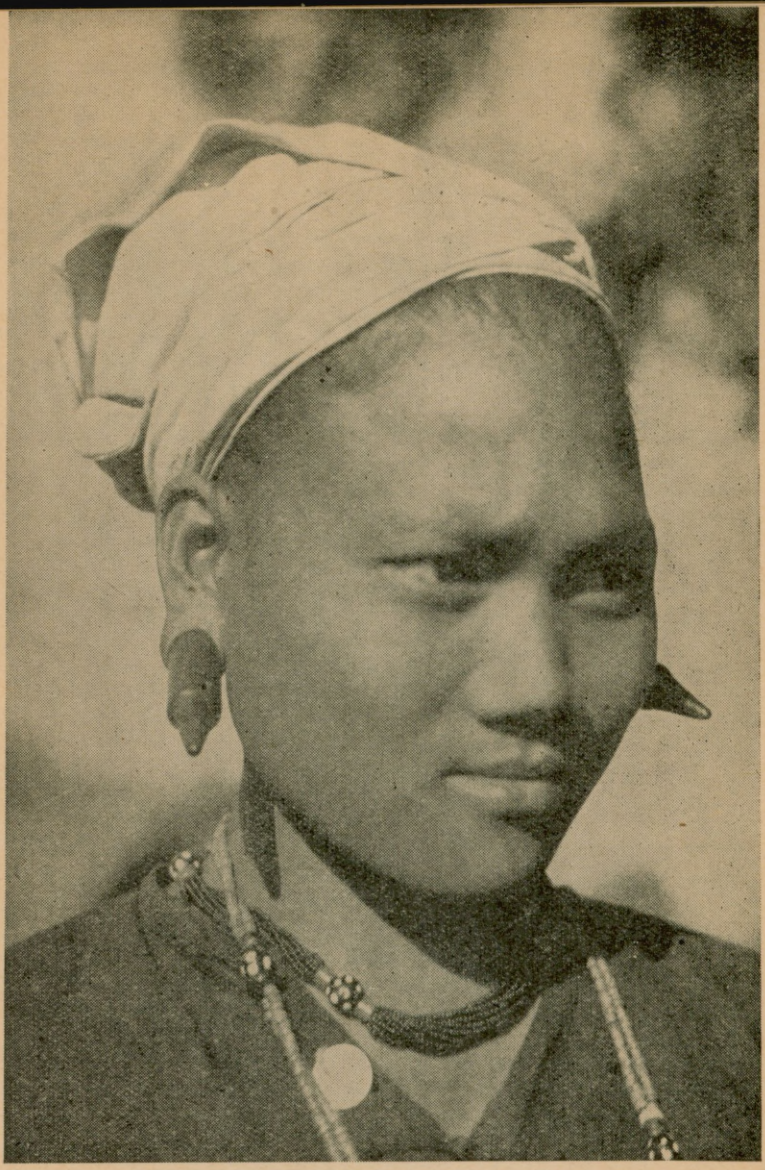
The central and northern Chins have so far proved the best quality fighting material, the *Thado, Hualngo, Siyin,*

Zanniat, *Zokhua* and *Haka* in particular having distinguished themselves in the present war against the Japanese.

THE KACHIN HILLS

The Kachins, numbering over four hundred thousand in Burma, occupy the large horseshoe of territory extending from the Hukawng valley eastwards along the Tibetan frontier and then down the Chinese frontier as far south as the Kengtung State. The main body of the race occupies the inhospitable mountainous frontier fringe between Putao in the north of the Myitkyina district, and Lashio in the Federated Shan States. The Kachins overlap into Assam on the west—they occupy the hills overlooking the Dihing river—and into Yunnan on the east. The language of the Kachins of Assam and Yunnan is identical with that of the main group in the northern Burma hills and despite a lengthy period of separation from the parent body the customs have remained the same, particularly in Assam.

The traditional ancestral nidus from which the Kachin tribes emerged is invariably indicated by them as the headwaters of the Irrawaddy in eastern Tibet. The original name of the race now known as Kachin is Jinghpaw or Singhpo and the name itself is said to be of Tibetan origin, being derived from the Tibetan term *sin-po* (a cannibal). The Kachins, who possessed no written language until some 50 years ago, have always insisted that they descended from the Tibetan plateau about 1,200 years ago and entered what is now northern Burma ; the complete lack of any written history makes it extremely difficult to associate any time factor with this descent but tradition,



HKAHKU KACHIN GIRL WITH AMBER EAR ORNAMENTS

carefully handed down from one generation to another, maintains that the descent took place some 50 or 60 generations ago. This fighting group descended upon Burma and occupied the northern hills to the exclusion of Chins, Palaungs and Shans. The Chins were forced to the west, the Palaungs to the south, and the last remaining descendants of the once-powerful Ahoms almost exterminated. The Hukawng Valley gets its name from the innumerable mounds in it where the corpses of the Shans slain by the Kachins were cremated ; *ju-kawng* in the Jinghpaw dialect means "cremation mounds".

Once the Kachins had established their right to the northern hills by the eviction of the former inhabitants they set up their own tribal institutions and settled down to consolidate their gains. These tribal ties, which exist up to the present time, were probably established chiefly for protection against their enemies. Ever a warlike group, it was unlikely that the Kachins would settle down to a peaceful existence merely because they had acquired a sufficiency of land to permit of their practice of shifting cultivation ; and so it transpired that they spent much of their time in inter-tribal warfare and in attacking the Burmese and Shan groups in the plains. British rule brought peace and a settled existence to the Kachins.

The generic term Kachin is the racial name for the tribes also known as *Jinghpaw*, *Hkahku*, *Gauri*, *Lashi*, *Maru*, *Nung* and *Atzi*. The geographical distribution of these tribes is in most cases definable ; but the true *Jinghpaws*, who far outnumber all others and are both morally and intellectually the most advanced, are found generally throughout the wide arc of hills stretching from the Naga Hills in the west to the centre of the Shan plateau. The

Nungs are found in the far north-eastern corner of Burma and occupy the upper reaches of the N'Mai river north of Htawgaw ; the *Lashis* and *Marus* are mainly concentrated in the Htawgaw sub-division, though occasional villages of them are met as low down as the northern Shan States ; the *Atzis* are rarely found outside the Sadon sub-division ; and the *Gauris* are in the main grouped in the Sinlum sub-division.

Besides the Kachin groups in the Kachin Hills are Yawyins (*Lisu*) and Shan-Chinese (*Shan Tayok*) : these people moved into the area from the east and did not follow the general north to south movement of the Kachin tribes. Both Yawyins and Shan-Chinese are more allied to the Chinese in their customs than to the Burman groups. In appearance the Kachin is not unlike the Gurkha ; he has the oblique eye and tendency to high cheek bones of the Mongolian. The average height of the men is 5′ 4″ ; despite this apparent lack of height, the Kachins, both men and women, are of sturdy build and are possessed of wonderful courage and cheerfulness. Throughout the past two years of their resistance to the Japanese this courage and cheerfulness have not deserted the Kachins ; they participated actively in the war against the Japanese even after their country was overrun, and the Japanese have suffered grievously at the hands of this gallant people whose long traditions of guerilla warfare have made them expert in harassing an enemy in the jungle.

THE SHAN STATES

The Federated Shan States are the homeland of the Shans. These people, however, range from Singkaling

YAWYIN VILLAGER
THE YAWYINS ARE ALSO KNOWN AS LISU AND LISHAW

Hkamti in the upper reaches of the Chindwin river to the eastern border with Siam. In the furthest north they are to be found in the plains of Hkamti Long and scattered groups are to be found in Central and Lower Burma. There is, however, a considerable difference in the language spoken by the Shans of the Shan States and that spoken by the settlers in Singkaling Hkamti, Hkamti Long and Hsawngsup (Thaungdut) State which lies on the right bank of the Chindwin river 40 miles below Homalin. This difference of language is due to the close contact between the Shans and their neighbours who in the case of Hkamti Long are the Kachins and allied tribes ; in that of Singkaling Hkamti the Kachins and Nagas ; and in the case of Hsawngsup State the Burmese of the Upper Chindwin and the Nagas and Manipuris of Manipur State. Not only is there this noticeable difference of language but the customs, dress and mode of living of these Shans have been so affected by their environment that little of what is truly Shan remains.

The Shans, or *Tai*, are of the same racial stock as the Siamese. At the collapse of the Pagan dynasty in the closing years of the 13th century a wave of Shan immigration into Burma was in full swing, and for the next two hundred and fifty years the Shans were the dominant race in the country. 'The Shans,' says Harvey in his *History of Burma*, 'swarmed south, east, and west. In 1229 they founded the Ahom kingdom of Assam along the Brahmaputra river, about the same time they made themselves felt in Tenasserim, in 1294 they raided north Arakan, and in 1350 they founded the kingdom of Siam—Siam is the same word as Shan, and she is simply the greatest of the Shan States.' Today the Shans are the most numerous

race in the whole of Indo-China, numbering eighteen million. Over a million of these live in the Shan States of Burma.

The Shans are a charming people and the women are particularly attractive. As to dress, the men wear jackets similar to those of the Burmese, but instead of the *longyi* they wear loose-fitting trousers called *Shan baung-bees*. The women wear a tight-fitting jacket with long sleeves reaching to the wrist, and a skirt of locally woven light-hued silk. A silk turban completes a very colourful and attractive dress. Both men and women are given to tattooing ; the women use it sparingly but most of the men are tattooed from neck to knee.

Like most of the hill people the Shans are agriculturalists. They have not quite the same hardiness as the Kachins and confine their villages to the lowlands and valleys. They have fine groves of oranges and are expert growers of tea, coffee, tobacco and, in recent years, tung. They are excellent weavers of both cotton and silk, and are also fine silversmiths and blacksmiths.

Like the Burmese the Shans are Buddhists but less strict, although they have the reputation of being even stauncher supporters of their religion. Shan monks don the yellow robe but enjoy greater freedom than their Burmese brethren of the Sangha. Like the Burmese too the Shans are a happy, pleasure-loving people, hospitable and friendly. They are great hunters and gamblers.

There are thirty-two Shan States covering an area of 56,000 square miles. These states are legally British territory, but the ancient method of government by chiefs or *sawbwas* has been maintained. The states vary in size from Kengtung with 12,000 square miles of area and a

A SHAN CULTIVATOR

population of 226,000 to Kyong with 24 square miles and 2,500 people.

The Shans are a people with a written script of their own, and with a history and a literature going back for centuries.

The Shan States are an ethnographer's paradise, for, apart from the Shans who live mainly in the lowlands, a large number of tribes find their homes in the hills. Amongst the hill tribes are Kachins, who form a large percentage of the population of North Hsenwi State and the Kodaung Hill Tracts ; various tribes of Karens such as the Red, White and Black ; the *Inthas* (lake-dwellers) or leg-rowers of the Inle lake in Yawnghwe State ; the *Taungthus* whose women wear black clothes and turbans ; the *Padaungs* whose home borders on Karenni and whose women wear the brass rings which give them their giraffe-like necks ; the *Hkun, Lem, Lur, Ekaws, Miaos, Muhsos* or *Lahus* of Kengtung State, the *Was* and *Palaungs*.

The ruling family of Kengtung is *Hkum*. These *Hkum* people are very similar to the western Shans except that their features are more Chinese. They are fairer in complexion and slighter in build than the average Shan. They inhabit chiefly the Kengtung plain but in recent years have spread over most of the State. Both men and women are astute traders.

In villages perched on hill tops we find the *Kaws* or *Ekaws*. These with the *Lahus* form the majority of the population of the hill tribes and are the most warlike on our eastern border. In the early history of Kengtung State we find a combination of these two tribes fighting against the Siamese whose invading armies they completely defeated in the 'fifties'. The *Ekaws* are particularly

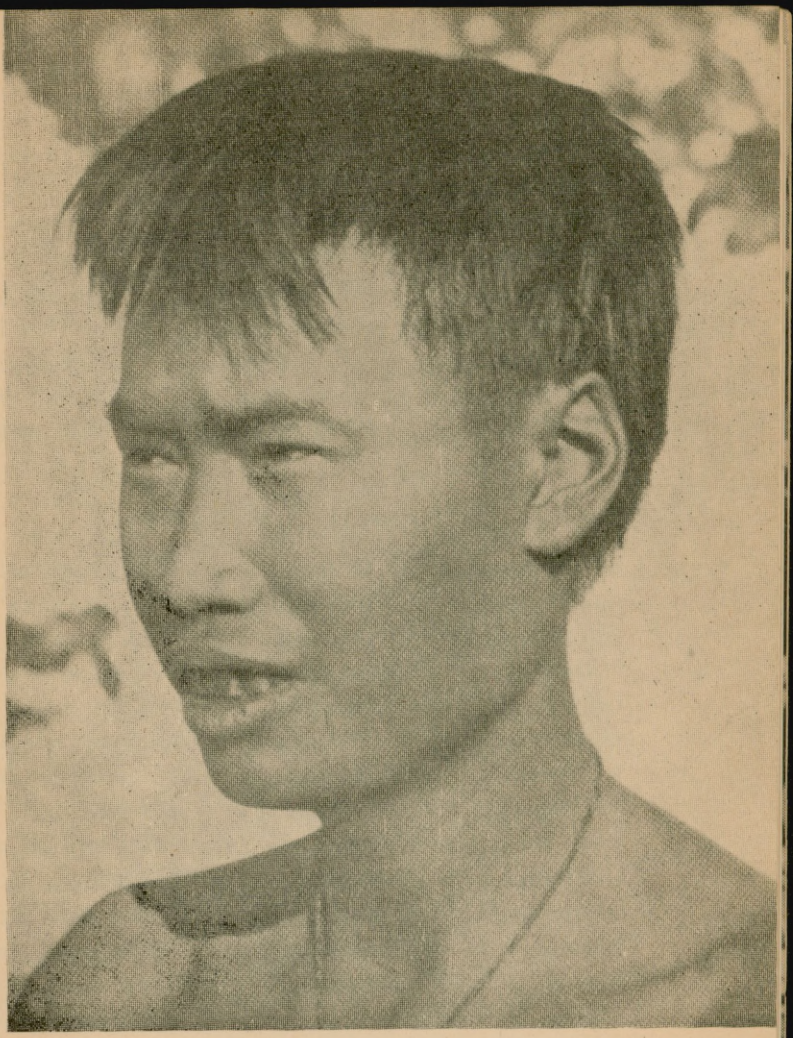
destructive and wasteful cultivators ; they practise shifting cultivation and when they have completely denuded a hill-side of vegetable cover and thereby left it exposed to soil erosion they transfer their village to another site, preferably one with an area of virgin jungle, which they then proceed to reduce to an equally unproductive condition.

The *Lahus* or *Muhsos* are another spartan and war-like people ; they wear dark blue clothes. The *Lahu* levies have a fine record of fighting in the present war.

The *Was* are found on the frontier between the Shan States and Yunnan, principally in the area known as the Wa States, an extremely hilly district bordered on the west by the Salween river. They are the most primitive of all the peoples of Burma. Head-hunting is still regarded as necessary for their fertility-rites at ploughing time, though this is being strongly discouraged. In an average year sixty to a hundred heads used to be taken, and rows of skulls are still placed in avenues near their villages. The people are suspicious and unfriendly to strangers, but at certain points bazaars are held every five days and these are treated as neutral ground. The *Was* are expert at building stockades and using booby traps and *panjis**. Some *Was* have settled in Kengtung and Manglun, and have abandoned head-hunting. These are known as "Tame *Was*".

The *Palaungs* are closely related to the *Was* and are found chiefly in Tawnpeng State. Their women wear blue jackets with red collars, skirts with cane hoops round their waists, and gaiters.

* The *panji* is a sharp bamboo with its point hardened by fire, planted point upwards and aslant in jungle paths and elephant grass, in the hope of piercing unwary enemies.



A WA TRIBESMAN

Each of these tribes might be described in detail, but this would be beyond the compass of a pamphlet of this size. Except for the Shans they are all animists, worshipping the spirits of nature, trees, etc., and greatly fearing the spirits of the dead. This pamphlet attempts to deal with them generally, describing in broad lines their common features and main differences, yet giving some idea of the large number of tribes inhabiting this most interesting and fascinating part of Burma.

THE NAGA HILLS

The Nagas inhabit that remote mountainous region which separates north-western Burma from Assam. Their country extends from the Patkoi range in the north to the Thaungdut State in the south and from the Assam frontier in the west to the Chindwin river in the east. Their tribal distribution throughout this long strip of country is fairly well-defined though there are local variations in the tribal names ; the *Tanghkul Nagas* mainly occupy the southern portion of this area ; the *Para Nagas*, actually the same group as the *Kalyo Kengyu Nagas* who are so named because of their habit of building slate roofed houses, are generally found in the central portion of the territory ; and the northern belt is chiefly populated by the *Konyak* and *Rangpan Nagas*.

In 1941 there were approximately seventy-five thousand Nagas in Burma and the greater portion of this number came under a gentle form of regular administration only in 1940. As a very judicious system of indirect rule was instituted from the onset of British administration the Nagas have retained intact their tribal organisation and

institutions and are, therefore, entirely free from those outside influences which have had such a disturbing effect on the tribal institutions of most Burma hill races.

The centre of most village activity is the Men's Club and here is discussed every event of importance to the community. In this council chamber raids are planned, cases are tried, and all questions affecting the welfare of the village are decided. Inside this club house is the village gong. This gong is made by hollowing out a tree into a form not unlike a canoe. The opening along the top of the gong is left at about 12″ or 18″ and the ends are carved in the form of *mithan* horns and human figures. This large drum is beaten with pestles not unlike those used in the pounding of rice, and its dull booming echoes over the hills. The drum may be beaten merely because the village is happy; but it is also beaten as a warning of an approaching raid or as a call for assistance. Coupled with the alarm system of the drum is a system of village look-outs. These look-outs are usually huts built either in high trees or on bamboo stilts and when raids are expected a watchman is constantly on guard. A careful watch is certainly needed as the Nagas know the value of surprise in making their raids. Their usual practice is to approach a village and lie up in the jungle surrounding it for the night prior to the day for which the raid is fixed. Just before dawn one part of the raiding group makes a rapid entry into the village and collects as many heads as possible before the alarm is properly given. The second section of the raiding party has stayed back in the locality of the village granaries, usually about 200 yards from the village. As the first party completes its work and prepares to retire the second party fires the granaries and thereby provides a distrac-

LAHU GIRL FROM KENGTUNG STATE WEARING SILVER ORNAMENTS

tion which covers the retreat. This form of direct attack is only possible when a village has not been properly protected. In addition to watchmen in look-out towers the Nagas make great use of *panjis* as a means of preventing unwelcome approaches to their villages. They are also skilled in the use of the flintlock gun, the spear, and the bow and arrow. Even a rudimentary piece of artillery is not unknown to them. A large bamboo, strengthened by lashings of leather and cane, is charged with gunpowder and loaded with pebbles, pieces of scrap iron, nails and wire ; this rather alarming weapon usually fires its first round successfully but after that grows eccentric in its behaviour.

Lest it be thought that the predominant feature of Naga life is the pursuit of war it should be mentioned that the people are, in their everyday life, extremely light-hearted and given to festivities. Tribal dances are frequent, particularly during the crop season, and on these occasions the entire village devotes itself to pleasure and all other activities cease. Any visitors to a village at the time the festivities begin are kept there until the end ; but during the period of the dance no visitor is allowed to enter the village. Adequate indication of the holding of a dance is given to all passers-by ; large branches of trees and barriers of foliage are placed across the entrances to villages. If an individual house is holding any kind of celebration a similar closure of all entrances is effected with foliage. The use of jungle foliage enters into many features of Naga life in addition to its use for house decoration and closure in festive times. It is used, for example, by delegations approaching a village with a request for peace. This delegation of defeated chiefs or their inter-

mediaries approaches the victorious village singing dirges and waving the branches of trees over their heads ; this indication of a desire to discuss peace is usually respected and discussions take place. If the peace terms are accepted the branches are left at the feet of the victors ; but if any matter connected with the peace remains for further consideration the peace delegation returns as it came, waving its branches.

The dress of the Naga men is rudimentary and consists only of a small girdle, from which a flap about 6″ wide is looped to cover the genitals, and a cotton blanket which is loosely thrown over the shoulders. On ceremonial occasions the men also wear an elaborate head-dress made of woven cane and decorated with wild boar tushes, plumes of dyed goats hair, and sometimes a large polished brass plaque in front. Both men and women wear bead necklaces and ivory and brass bracelets. The women's dress consists of a narrow skirt, extending from the waist to about 8″ above the knee cap, and a cotton blanket thrown over the shoulders.

Like the other hill tribes of Burma the Nagas have played a gallant part in the present war against the Japanese. They helped in the evacuation from Burma and since then have continued their active support to the Allied forces operating in their country.

THE KAREN AREAS

The Karens belong to the Tai-Chinese wave of immigration into Burma, starting from somewhere in Yunnan or Nanchao and settling in the hills east and north-east of Toungoo and later in the southern part of the Arakan

STRIPED KAREN WOMAN FROM MONGNAI AREA

yoma north-west of Bassein. During the peaceful years of the British occupation many of them, abandoning their ancient fear of the Burmans, came down to live in the plains, especially in the Irrawaddy delta and the Tenasserim division. They are a dour, industrious people with solid character and honesty, though often without a great deal of initiative. The national costume of the men consists of short black trousers and a tunic, while the women wear a similar tunic, of somewhat more elaborate weave, over a petticoat. This costume has been discarded by the Karens who live in the plains, though the men generally wear the long trousers common among the Shans and Chinese.

According to the 1931 census there were 1,367,673 Karens in Burma. The two main divisions are *Sgaw* accounting for 518,040, and the *Pwo* accounting for 478,824. The *Pwo Karens* who live mainly in the Irrawaddy delta area are called Talaing-Karens by the Burmans, as they have mixed considerably with the gradually disappearing Talaings or Mons. Many of these live around Bassein and in the villages stretching from Bassein to Henzada. The *Sgaws* are often called Burmese-Karens. Another comparatively large group is the *Bwès* who still keep to the hills around Toungoo and in Karenni.

The Hill Karens retain their old shyness and build their villages away from the main tracks. They are however very hospitable, make keen hunters especially if they can get hold of a gun, and have a great name for honesty. In Karenni live a great variety of races, including *Red Karens, Black Karens, Striped Karens* and many more. Karenni embraces three states, Bawlakè, Kantarawadi and Kyebogyi, each governed by its own chief who stands

in treaty relationship to the British Crown. In the plains the Karens come under the normal system of administration, but the influence of the elders is very strong in the Karen communities.

The original religion of the Karens was Animism, the fear and worship of spirits, and this is still the prevailing religion. But Christian missions have made great progress among them and over 250,000 have been converted, largely by the American Baptist Mission. Through Christian missions the Karens have received education and many of them are in good positions in government service or with European firms. The women make excellent hospital nurses, school teachers and nannies. Like the Chins the Karens have a tendency towards religious syncretism and in 1866 a Karen named Hpo Pai San formed a new cult which combined elements from Christianity, Buddhism and Karen national and religious customs. Karens are easily led in such matters, and in 1933 a Karen named Thompson Durmay founded a similar sect and persuaded many simple, devout Christians to throw away their bibles. But in spite of such idiosyncrasies the Karens make very fine Christians, noted for their stern observance of the sabbath and their large measure of self-support. The success of Christianity among them owes much to an early tradition of belief in an eternal God named Y'wa. The knowledge of Y'wa was said to be contained in a book which Y'wa's eldest son, the Karen, unfortunately lost. Tradition said that one day it would be brought back by the white brother from across the sea. Karens see in the arrival of missionaries from the West, bringing with them the Bible, the fulfilment of this ancient tradition.

Until the coming of missionaries the Karens had no

BLACK KAREN BOY AND GIRL

script and consequently no written literature or history. But they had traditions handed down from one generation to the next, some of which like the collection of the bones of Karens who had died and been buried away from their homes are very similar to those in the Old Testament. This similarity has given rise to an interesting theory that the Karens had been influenced by Nestorian missionaries, who are known to have visited China in the sixth or seventh century. The American Baptist missionaries who started work among the Karens after the First Burmese War invented a script for both *Sgaw* and *Pwo*, based on the Burmese script.

During the Japanese invasion the Karens stood firmly by their British friends, and after the withdrawal of the allied troops many of them must have suffered for their loyalty. They deserve well of us in the reconstruction of Burma, but their best welfare would probably be served by a really happy relationship with the Burmans, though it is doubtful if the Hill Karens are ready for this yet.

GENERAL CHARACTER

To the stranger the first impression of the hill people may be one of surliness and suspicion. Women and children, and even men, often fly into the woods and hide at the sight of the intruder. But this state of affairs very soon changes on acquaintance, and has already disappeared in all areas in which contact with neighbours has been opened up by administration, so that the chance accosting of a tribal enemy by mistake no longer means a hurried scamper to safety or an even more hurried death. Indeed, one of the strongest general characteristics of these tribes

is their ability to inspire in those who know them well an affection which goes far beyond the usual ties binding a civil servant to the people he serves. This is largely due to the fact that the highlanders themselves offer a loyalty to the British Government and its officers which commands a like respect.

Because head-hunting exists in a few unadministered areas and human sacrifice once had a place in the religion of a very small minority, the whole of the tribes have lived, in the past, under a sinister cloud of mystery. As late as 1937 an article appeared in a certain periodical ascribing the exotic practice of cannibalism to the Kachins, who have never even collected the heads, let alone devoured the corpses, of their fellow men ; while in general all the tribes have been given a very false reputation for a degree of primitiveness bordering on the savage.

In fact these people are among the most law-abiding to be found in any country ; they are simple small farmers and have most of the virtues and vices of small farmers wherever they are found all over the world. Comparison between the various hill tribes themselves and between them and their neighbours in the plains is often distorted by over-emphasis on the civilization of the chiefs and the aristocracy. The Shan States are a typical example. Here, because some of the greatest chiefs have been educated in England or in English schools in Burma, the Shans and their hill tribes as a whole are believed to be on a vastly higher level of civilization than the Chins and Kachins and Nagas. In reality, the basic level of life in the villages, particularly in the villages of the hill tribes in the Shan States and those elsewhere, is almost uniform throughout the whole of the Burma Hills.

A KAW WOMAN FROM KENGTUNG

Everywhere the people are broadly similar in character. All live by agriculture, and this uniform means of subsistence naturally gives some uniformity to their culture. They are, like all small holders living in isolated districts, suspicious of strangers, hidebound by tradition, slow to accept change of any kind ; honest-dealing among themselves, loyal to their friends, treacherous towards their enemies. The women are very emancipated and take an active part in running home and village life. In many areas polygyny is countenanced, but as a general rule a man has only one wife. Family life is on the whole happy and contented and the children are looked after to the best of their parents' limited knowledge of child welfare.

Family devotion is constantly demonstrated in the times of stress which so often overtake jungle communities. Famines due to crop failures, violent epidemics of disease and other such catastrophes show the hill people at their best. There is no desertion of the sick and weak, however terrifying the plague, there is no abandonment of children because the food will not go round. All take their fair share of whatever troubles befall, and face their misfortunes with a dour fortitude.

Everywhere in the hills, including the Shan States, it is still the general rule that the rich valley paddy-lands are occupied by Shans while the smaller hills tribes practise shifting cultivation on the hill slopes, though some, notably the Kachins, have moved down to the valleys in large numbers in fairly recent years to cultivate paddy and sugar. There is a clear division in social characteristics discernible between the inhabitants of these settled and prosperous lowlands and the hard-tried and sturdy moun-

taineers. The latter are more industrious, for hill agriculture, involving as it does the annual clearing of new fields often in virgin jungle, is a full twelve months' job. Their lack of resources makes them mutually interdependent in a way that is no longer found in the plains, where a man can gain his subsistence solely by his own efforts or those of his immediate family. In the hill villages, family, clan and village life are very closely knit, and though the higher levels of individual prosperity found in the plains are absent, the lowest level of social and physical well-being is such that starvation in the midst of plenty is an impossibility. The degree of superficial civilization is also affected to a great extent by the possession of permanent irrigated cultivation. Wherever this is found the people lead more settled lives and have more leisure at their disposal for the development of the artistic and recreational aspects of life.

POLITICAL FRAMEWORK

Politically, the hill areas of Burma are administered under a system very different from that obtaining in the plains. To start with there is no Ministry, and the Governor of Burma is personally responsible to the Secretary of State for the whole administration. The channel of administration descends from the Governor through the Defence Department, the Commissioners, Deputy Commissioners, and Assistant Superintendents to the traditional rulers of the people. Where such rulers govern large populations or considerable areas of territory, such as in the Shan States, a generous degree of autonomy has been granted to them, up to and including limited financial

autonomy within their own jurisdictions. In the Shan States a Federation was formed to administer such departments of local government as could be dealt with more conveniently on a larger scale than by the State, and each State contributes a certain proportion of its revenue to the Federal funds. Representation on the Federal Council depends on the size of the State; the largest are permanently represented by their rulers, while the lesser States are represented by rotation.

Elsewhere in the hills the people are administered by their own Chiefs, Headmen or Councils as the case may be, though autonomy is confined at present to judicial autonomy in all matters not affecting non-tribesmen, with the exception of cases of homicide or dacoity. It has been the policy in the past to interfere as little as possible with the life of the people, and because of this policy it has been feasible to leave very large areas under the control of a very small number of Government officers. This absence of interference has also had the result of maintaining at considerable strength the power and influence of the traditional rulers.

Though in some areas, such as the southern Chin Hills, democracy was carried to the point where each man lived in his own field hut and obeyed no orders but those of his own immediate senior relatives, in most tribes the political hierarchy is hereditary aristocracy, headmen controlling villages with the help of their councils, and in their turn being controlled by a Chief who is usually a scion of the senior family of the clan or tribe. The application of the hereditary principle to the political leadership greatly strengthens tribal government, as it adds family loyalty to the residential ties by which the leaders are bound to their

people and their people to them. The absence of other claimants to the headmanship frees village life from the friction and discord which seem to be a concomitant of the elective system of headmanship in the plains.

Within their respective jurisdictions the headmen of villages are the most vital units in the whole administrative system. The practice of communal religious activities, communal construction of village and field paths, communal organisation of cultivation and live-stock grazing : all of these lead to a considerable measure of public control of private enterprise and activities within the village. By virtue of his position the headman is the "Manager" of these village activities and as such his importance both to the Central Government and to the people cannot be overestimated. Much of the prosperity of the village, its orderly existence, its preparedness against natural disasters such as famine or pestilence, and its contact with neighbouring villages, depend to a great degree on the energy and initiative of the headman.

In general, it can be said that the chiefs and headmen discharge their multiple and difficult responsibilities with great dignity and fairness, and that local self-government in the hill tribes is a very real foundation upon which the higher levels of administration can rest with security.

RELIGION

In the Burma hills the basis of religion is a combination of ancestor worship and Animism,—that belief in warlocks and were-wolves, fairies and gnomes, the terrifying spirits that hide in dark caves and gnarled trees ; and the powers of light and darkness and other natural phenomena,

which preceded Christianity in all the lands of Europe. In the Shan States and a few small areas elsewhere Buddhism has taken root, especially among the Shans and Palaungs, but everywhere it is superimposed upon Animism and has not wholly replaced it. The hill tribes have been contested for by the Christian Missions for half a century and the results of their activity are now widespread. Side by side with normal Christianity, selective assimilation of religious precepts has had its usual effect of the spawning of new religious forms more acceptable to the people than the pure teaching of the priests. Perhaps the outstanding example is the Pau-chin-hau cult* in the Chin Hills, which has claimed, in the past two decades, some 30% of the total population in the Manipur river valley between Tiddim and Falam. Religious fervour among converts to Christianity tends to be in direct proportion to the novelty of their conversion and the competition of rival sects, but everywhere among Christians the Sabbath is Scottish in its severity. The Western notion of the Church as a temporal power is eagerly accepted by local converts and is perhaps the main bone of contention between the spiritual and temporal leaders in the hills. The stranger to the hill village quite often appeals for help to the village preacher, singling him out because he is generally the most highly educated and sometimes the only educated person

* A chronic Chin invalid called Pau Chin Hau had a dream in which he said the Lord appeared to him and told him that he had no objection to feasts and moderate beer-drinking. He directed Pau Chin Hau to inform his fellow villagers accordingly, and gave him detailed instructions as to the ritual to be followed in worship. After the dream Pau Chin Hau recovered from his illness and proceeded to found this new cult.

in the village. Thereby he antagonises the chiefs and elders, who feel that they are the proper persons to approach.

However, excepting in the Shan and other Buddhist enclaves, the vast majority of the hill peoples still cling to their ancestral gods. The nature of their beliefs and the form in which they express them are of great importance, for these beliefs exert a powerful influence over their day-to-day lives. In all Animist areas the spirits are believed to have the same characteristics as human beings, the same tendency to be good to those they like and to frustrate and pester those who earn their displeasure. Acting on the logical assumption that such spirits will be just as amenable to threat and blandishment as their human counterparts, the Animists, through their religious ritual and sacrifices, do what they can to appease those spirits they fear and to browbeat the lesser supernatural beings they feel will submit.

These sacrifices are the channel through which the bulk of the surplus resources of the family are utilised, and they therefore have a very deep bearing on the economic life of the people. The casual observer of village life often draws the erroneous conclusion that the holocausts of village livestock and the gargantuan beer-drinks at the feasts are a pure waste. Closer inspection reveals a very different state of affairs. In all tribes the participants in these festivities are regulated by custom, and the feasts are a means of repayment of obligations and benefits which the host has received or expects to receive from his guests. Often a large portion of the raw material for feasting is supplied, on a traditional scale, by the guests themselves. At any rate there is no such thing in any Animist village as

ZANNIAT CHIN VILLAGERS PREPARE FOR A SACRIFICIAL FEAST

a feast from which the feast-giver gains no highly desired temporal or spiritual advantage. Sacrifices are of very different natures ; some are propitiatory in times of illness or calamity, others are stepping stones in social life and, like the Feasts of Merit of the Chins and Nagas, carry a man from the position of an ordinary householder to membership of the Village Council and all its attendant rights and privileges.

In all tribes sacrifice of an animal to the spirits means simply that small symbolic portions of various joints are offered on the spirit altars, while the householder and his guests eat the rest. In all cases an outward and visible sign of sacrifice, a stake or stone or skull, is set up to commemorate the offering. Interference with the site of a sacrificial altar, and in some cases the tying up of a cloven hoofed animal near it, means that the local spirit will be angered, and will demand a sacrifice, for which the intruder will be called upon to pay. Strangers should be warned, therefore, to keep away from sacrificial altars, skull posts and other places sacred to the spirits.

Though the ritual of Animist sacrifice may have in it some element of the comic in Western eyes, it is a serious matter for true believers and is deserving of a corresponding respect. The Animist regards a number of Christian observances as equally odd, but he is usually polite enough to keep his thoughts to himself.

LAW AND ITS ENFORCEMENT

Throughout the hill areas the customary law of the people is upheld, except where such law exceeds the bounds of civilized precepts. Exceptions are rare and apply

only to punishments for sorcery and other misdemeanours now unfashionable in Western eyes. Except in the Shan States, where Chiefs of States and some of their magistrates have criminal powers up to and including the right to pass a death sentence, the infliction of any punishment other than a fine or an order to pay compensation is confined to the Central Government officers. This does not in fact entail any reduction of the traditional powers of the Chiefs and Headmen because, in most tribes, orders to pay compensation were the only traditional form of punishment used. Indeed it can be said that with few exceptions the only alternatives open to the committer of an offence were to pay compensation or in default to make himself liable to a feud which might develop into a blood feud. Such feuds between individuals were common enough in the Kachin Hills in pre-annexation days, because even in those times the clan system of the Kachins facilitated movement between villages over quite considerable areas. On the other hand in the large villages of the Chin and Naga hills, whose inhabitants rarely met neighbouring villagers except on the field of battle, feuds, where they existed, tended to be between whole communities and not between individuals.

In all the hill tribes the main basis of the prevention of crime is collective responsibility. Whenever a crime is committed, the offender alone is not liable for compensation. The family, the clan and even the tribe are held jointly responsible for the acts of all individuals in the group. The result of this is an extremely low crime rate, very much lower than that in the plains of Burma. Every potential criminal, every irascible clansman likely to create a breach of the peace, is watched by his fellow clansmen and kept away from mischief.

A KACHIN GIRL

In the eyes of the hill peoples all crime is primarily economic in its significance. Whether the offence be theft of an article, maiming of an animal, adultery or homicide, the result is assessed in terms of its economic consequences and compensation awarded to the injured party accordingly. In this way the latter is able to replace his losses and peace is restored. This reduction of crime to economic terms is characteristic even of punishment for offences in the nature of sacrilege. Any act hostile to the tribal spirits entails a sacrifice to appease them, and the punishment for the sacrilege is based on the cost in cash or kind of the ritual necessary to restore spiritual harmony again.

The vast majority of disputes in the hills are settled by the village Headmen, only a small proportion going to the Chiefs, and a still smaller number on appeal from the Chiefs to the Central Government officers who are empowered in this respect. All persons not members of a hill tribe are liable to the laws of Burma proper, but in practice, even when one party to a dispute is not a hillman, settlement under customary law is generally acceptable. The trial of cases in the village courts has none of of the solemn dignity of the Old Bailey, but what is lacking in pomp is more than made up in human interest and impassioned oratory. The Court sits in public, the judge and his assessors, the accuser and accused, the witness and interested spectators all sharing the floor. A pot or two of good beer is broached by the accuser to oil the wheels of discussion, and friend and foe share the libation while threat and counter-threat, fierce argument and honeyed blandishment sway the odds of justice. There is rarely any denial of the fact of an offence ; the disputations centre

on the scale of compensation payable, the one side demanding the maximum while the other offers the minimum, with the Court watching cannily for an opportunity to strike a balance which will come near to satisfying all parties.

Enforcement of their own orders in regard to compensation is the duty of the Chiefs and Headmen themselves and it is only on rare occasions that the Central Government officers are called upon to exert their influence.

On the whole the legal picture in the hills is one of law-abiding people doing their best to live without infringing their neighbours' rights and privileges, receiving their justice promptly and equitably if somewhat bibulously, in the courts of political leaders residing in their own villages. The system is cheap, decentralised, and effective enough to maintain crime and quarrelling at an extremely low level. This does not mean that there are no habitual litigants—bush lawyers who remain a perpetual irritation to all their neighbours—nor does it mean that all tribes eschew litigation. Some tribes are notorious for their love of legal battles, and some men spend the bulk of their days preferring appeals to one or another of the local judicial authorities ; but these are the exceptions.

EDUCATION

Education as it is understood in the West is sadly lacking throughout the hills and in the main such education as exists is obtained at monasteries and Missions side by side with religious instruction. Throughout the Shan States and in Buddhist villages elsewhere, the village *Pongyi* is the teacher, while in other areas Christian Missions of various denominations, some of them established for

KAREN SCHOOLGIRL WEARING KAREN COSTUME

half a century, supply education and religious instruction on the Christian basis. Government schools are very few and far between ; in some places a single village school with a couple of masters has to serve a population of tens of thousands. The lack of educational facilities has slowed down "progress" in the hills enormously, but the effects of over-rapid progress in other primitive areas as a result of unbalanced "forcing" of local development through education indicates that the hill peoples of Burma have perhaps been spared worse ills by having to wait for education until this era, when both administrators and educationists are much more widely awake to the dangers of the wrong types of training.

However, the lack of schooling in "the three Rs" by no means indicates a lack of training as good citizens. From infancy the children of the villages are constantly learning by precept and practice the way of life of their people. The boys are taken hunting and shown how to make traps and snares, the girls sit watching their elders spin and weave, cook and carry, and the average adolescent in the hills is a highly practical young person fully capable of coping with most of the needs of his present life.

One of the greatest educational problems is how to give academic education to the children of scattered rural communities of this nature without taking them away from the environment in which they learn the other multiple duties that go to make up their adult responsibilities.

MEDICINE AND PUBLIC HEALTH

It is true to say that in all the hill districts hardly one man in a thousand lives within reasonable distance of a hospital and modern medical treatment, while public health

officers are conspicuous by their absence everywhere except in the Shan States. It was fashionable in the past for people living in the hot plains of Burma to describe the hills as a healthy paradise in which diseases of the plains find no place. The great evacuation of 1942 has changed all that and the hill areas are known for what they really are—the home of malarial mosquitoes more deadly than most, the haunt of leeches so fantastically innumerable as to have become a legend, the stamping ground of typhus ticks and the place of sneaking winds which strike down the unwary with pneumonia.

The hill tribes themselves have acquired a certain immunity to some of their endemic diseases, but malaria in the hill valleys continues to decimate those hardy souls who venture there to practise irrigated cultivation. This has been the cause of the failure of Kachin efforts to colonise the flat paddy lands in the foothills of many parts of the Bhamo and Myitkyina districts ; efforts in which some clans have persisted until 3 or 4 whole families have fallen victims to their efforts to maintain continuity of occupation of a single field.

To the hillmen all ailments are the result of the attentions of sorcerers or evil spirits of one kind or another and so sickness is treated by the extirpation of the sorcerer, by counter-sorcery, or by the sacrifice of a fowl or pig or a larger animal to whichever spirit is divined by the village Medicine Man to be the cause of the trouble.

In their dealing with the supernatural causes of disease the hill peoples show the same beliefs in the human characteristics of the spirits that are implicit in their other religious activities. The offending spirit is bribed with a surfeit of the flesh of sacrifice and sometimes, in sly deceit-

fulness, by the offering of small clay models of slaves, guns and cattle which the offerer hopes the spirits will mistake for the genuine article.

There is little doubt that the indigenous systems of treatment of wounds and disease are well worth an exhaustive study. It may happen, as happened in Africa, that very far-reaching discoveries, such as that of the effect of malaria on certain types of insanity, might reward the search. In any case such an enquiry would throw exceedingly valuable light on the best methods of grafting modern ideas on to the traditional beliefs of the people. So far only one such attempt has been made.*

The lack of knowledge of how contagious diseases are communicated has led in the past to tragic consequences in many tribes in the hills. There have been occasions when smallpox or cholera have cut down as many as 75 per cent of the inhabitants of a village, while leprosy and venereal diseases have spread far more widely than would have been possible had the hill districts received more adequate medical attention. This is one of the aspects of administration in the hills which has been grievously neglected in the past and which must therefore claim first attention in the future.

ECONOMIC LIFE

With the exception of the few thousands of hillmen who find permanent employment in the mining areas, the

* "Tribal Beliefs concerning Tuberculosis in the Hills and Frontier Tracts of Assam" by Colonel E. S. Phipson, C.I.E., D.S.O., M.D., F.R.C.P., late Inspector-General of Civil Hospitals, Assam, 1939.—*Assam Government Press.*

armed forces and other public services, the vast majority of the hill peoples live by agriculture in one form or another, and an understanding of what agriculture means to them is essential to an understanding of their lives and characters.

Though ribbon development of villages along main roads has made its appearance in certain parts of the Shan States, as a general rule the location of the village depends upon its convenience as a centre from which the village lands can be tilled. Sometimes, where the tribal lands are extensive and the population small, the village itself is moved every 4 or 5 years to a new site more convenient for the areas under cultivation.

In a few areas, such as the Tiddim and north Falam sub-divisions in the Chin Hills, the discovery of local slate and rock formations easy to handle has resulted in the building of large numbers of permanent well-built cottages with stone walls and slate roofs, but the bulk of the houses in the hill villages are made of thatch and bamboo or, where bamboo is scarce, thatch and timber. In most tribes the water supply is a spring or a well, often some hundreds of feet below the houses which cluster round the hill-tops, but some tribes locate their villages with the water problem in mind, and lead running water into every house by means of split log aqueducts sometimes several miles in length ; these "piped" supplies get a thorough aeration as they flow in a long series of little falls from one half log to another, and are generally very pure.

The shortage of good markets in which to dispose of their goods, coupled with the lack of variety of the goods themselves, has resulted in the formation of subsistence economies throughout the hills ; that is, the people produce

PALAUNG GIRL

the necessities of their daily lives in their fields and gardens and out of the forest in which they live.

In many areas the land is so poor that agriculture will not wholly support the people, who have to go to the plains and do coolie-labour at certain seasons. There are also areas where natural difficulties, such as too heavy rain, plagues of rats, and other factors, make gaining a full subsistence extremely difficult.

Except among the Shans and tea-growing Palaungs there is an absence of great accumulated wealth in all hill tribes, not because there are no resources to accumulate, but because wealth is assessed in local minds in terms of expenditure and not hoarding. For instance, most tribes have as part of their religious organization a series of feasts which they believe bring prosperity to the giver, and a man is reckoned rich in proportion to the number of feasts he has held. Thus it is only by spending what he has got that the villager can acquire the reputation for wealth. In short, custom ordains that a rich man use his resources in such a way that, while the spending brings considerable joy and simple liveliness to village life, the gap between the "haves" and the "have-nots" is constantly narrowed. The social unrest and bitterness always found where there are vast differences in individual circumstances are thus absent.

Every house in the hills is a miniature farm. Each has its own fenced garden producing a variety of vegetables, herbs and other plants such as indigo which the household needs; each has its own lands in which the staple foods of the household are produced; each has its pig and its chickens and its cattle, buffalo or *mithan*. As in any English village the thoughts of the people are concentrated on the fields and animals which give them their livelihood,

and the conversations in the evenings over the village fences differ little from those in farming communities the world over. The neighbours discuss the excellence of Laphai Gam's crops, the size of Maran Tu's pig, and the Satanic ingenuity of Ja Nawng's goat, which finds its way into the most jealously-guarded preserves.

In the fields one finds only a limited variety of staple crops planted ; rice where the climate is warm and wet enough, or where terraced, irrigated cultivation is feasible ; and millet, maize, buckwheat and beans in cold or dry districts. The types of crops in the fields are regulated by the uses to which they can be put in the life of the people, and for this reason new crops are commonly refused or neglected. For instance, cereals are used not only in the cooking pot but also in the beer pot, and indeed certain types of rice and millet are grown specifically for brewing into beer, and therefore it is little use trying to introduce soya bean as a substitute for them. Though soya may be full to the brim with every vitamin needed by mankind, it cannot make beer.

Many primitive communities have evolved systems of wet and dry weather crop rotation which are well-suited to their terrain and which enable them to get continuous crops out of quite poor soil for as long as 9 years at a stretch. Usually these rotations consist of a cereal crop during the rains followed by a bean crop in the dry season. Here again one finds an example of the way in which misguided innovation can have disastrous results. Wheat was introduced many years ago into parts of the hills. But in Burma wheat is a dry season crop and therefore had to be planted as a substitute for the cold weather beans. This meant double cropping of cereals each year with no bean

TAUNGTHU WOMAN

crop to restore the fertility of the soil, and the village fields lost their fertility at once and had to be abandoned.

Because they have found their traditional system of cultivation comparatively successful in their local environment, the hill farmers accept all innovations with great reserve if not actual hostility. It is only 40 years since the Kachins of Prangkhudung debated the night long whether or not they should take the life of the Catholic priest who planted coffee in his garden there. This infamous act had coincided with a crop failure and was held to be the cause of it. Fortunately humane counsels prevailed, the priest survived, and his coffee now provides this area with an income of several thousands of rupees a year.

The same principles of selective assimilation apply to livestock. Animals which cannot be used in the daily life, and that means animals not suitable for sacrifice to the spirits at the feasts, are not wanted because no local use can be found for them and the people have not yet got into the habit of eating their pigs and goats and fowls in any but the traditional way of sacrificial feasts. A well-known and amusing failure in introducing new stock occurred in Falam in this decade, when an officer imported, at his own great expense, a pair of mottled black and white Berkshire pigs, whose progeny he hoped would revolutionise the bacon and pork situation in the hills. What he did not know was that pigs with patches of white on them are unacceptable to the Chin spirits, and so his well-meant experiment was a complete failure.

The agricultural year in most hill areas is a very long and arduous one. Where there is sufficient land to enable extensive regional rotation of cultivated areas and a strong re-growth of forest, each new field entails the felling of

large trees and the chopping and burning of a mass of undergrowth before the ground itself can be tilled to receive the year's seed. Where land is scarce and forest growth sparse the situation is hardly better, for the ground is matted with a dense growth of rank grass that is even more difficult to eradicate than the heavy forest. Clearing of the fields usually begins in January or February, and from that time until the final bean crops are weeded in December the cultivator has little rest.

Almost everywhere cultivation is carried out with a small light hoe, as everywhere except in the Shan States the ground is too steep for the use of animal traction. The seed is planted, the fields weeded and the crops reaped by hand. The harvest, far from seeing the end of the work in sight, is only the beginning of a long period of heavy labour of carrying back the crops from the fields to the houses of the farmers. This is almost always done in great baskets on the backs of the farmer and his family, and the distances between fields and village are often as much as 6 or 7 miles of steep mountain paths.

Throughout the season during which his crops are ripening the hill farmer and his family must mount guard over them to drive away the innumerable furred and feathered pests which would otherwise rob them of their year's work. Parrakeets and Java sparrows appear in their thousands over the ripening grain and the air is filled with the loud catcalls of the youngsters and the staccato clacking of the multitude of bird-scaring clappers which the farmers erect on corners of their plots and work from their field hut by means of long strings of creeper or split bamboo. At night a great variety of jungle creatures, from the elephant to the mouse, add their depredations

to those of the birds during the day, and the dark hours echo with the boom of flint-lock guns.

In addition to what they grow in their fields and gardens and rear in the homestead, the hill peoples obtain a quite considerable proportion of their daily food from the forests and rivers of their lands. All tribes except those which have been converted to Buddhism are very keen and successful hunters. By far the most acceptable present to any hillman is a gun, and Civil Officers on tour spend their lives trying to think out adequate reasons why every applicant should not be given one. Those who have no guns use bows, cross-bows, pellet bows, spears, pitfalls, dead-falls and a multitude of other traps to capture or kill the beasts of the jungle, and the diet in the villages receives a constant addition of meat from this source. And large animals alone are by no means the last of the living creatures which the hillman hunts in his jungles. Snakes, lizards and the grubs of several species of wild bee and hornet are relished, while every edible fruit, root, shoot and fungus finds its way to the cooking pots in the village.

The technique and relative importance of fishing depend largely on the nature of the rivers. Where these are manageably small one finds weirs built across them with fish traps in the gaps through which the water flows. Elsewhere the pools are sometimes poisoned with a stupifying sap from various creepers and barks which grow in the hills ; or casting nets and rods and lines are used. In one part of the Kachin Hills near Bhamo, hooks are baited with leaves that grow by the river side and, provided that neither the hook nor the leaf are touched by hand in the process of baiting, the success achieved will satisfy the

wildest dreams of any angler and refute for ever the theory that fish cannot smell or taste the human touch.

The forests produce, in addition to supplementary foodstuffs, a great variety of other articles useful to the hill people in their daily lives and also in their trade with their neighbours. Salt is to be found in many areas, sometimes containing so high an iodine content as to be a specific for goitre. *Lac* was collected in a great many areas in the days before the market price fell below profitable levels, and wild rubber was also once collected. The houses of hillmen are built entirely with local forest products, great ingenuity being shown in the way in which joints and ties are effected without the use of nails, even where the houses are constructed of timber. A very large proportion of the bamboos and canes used by the Forest Department to make the timber rafts are obtained in the hill districts, and this work provides a considerable number of hillmen with part-time wage labour.

Because of the self-sufficing nature of their way of life and their freedom from the ills attendant upon being tied to world markets, the hill peoples enjoy a relatively stable economic life. But there are two very important factors which go to make up this stability, and which are worthy of some attention. The first of these is the system of land tenure, and the second the system of rural "finance" by means of reciprocal obligations between members of families, clans and residential groups.

It is well-known that the greatest misfortune that ever befell rural Burma was the destruction of the communal or communally controlled forms of tenure which existed in the past and which ensured for every villager the right to sufficient land to cultivate for the needs of himself and his

TWO TAMAN GIRLS FROM THE UPPER CHINDWIN

family. Fortunately the hill districts have escaped this calamity except in very few and relatively small areas. In most tribes the land is held in trust for the people by the Chiefs and Headmen, each village having its own recognised agricultural area. Whether the regional rotation of cultivation takes place annually or after a space of several years, the general rule is for each household to occupy in the new cultivation zone the plot which it cultivated in that zone when it was last used. The right to cultivate these plots is in most cases hereditary and interference with occupation is not tolerated unless an increase in population in the village demands that everyone shall use proportionately less ground for himself.

The hill tenures carry with them very many important community rights, which include the right to collect timber and thatch for house-building, to hunt and fish at will throughout the village lands, to graze domestic animals on the public lands and to pass without hindrance or fear of trespass everywhere desired in search of forest products. The rights and principles by which public and private interests in land are controlled vary, of course, from one tribe to another, but there is a uniform freedom from the abuses, such as absentee landlordism and high rents, which are characteristic of a tenure system in which too much stress is laid on private rights.

With regard to rural finance, it is a common mistake to believe that because there are no banks and no recognised money-lenders, there is no use to be found for capital and there are no debtors and creditors. In a subsistence economy it is often found that the bulk of the transactions in the village are conducted in terms of barter and in closely knit tribal communities it is generally the rule to

utilise surplus resources, which consist mainly of grain and cattle, etc., through the medium of feasts entailing reciprocal obligations of various kinds. For instance one finds in some tribes that the village receives its temporal protection from the political leaders, its spiritual protection from the priests, its weapons and implements from the blacksmiths, and that it pays for all these specialist services either by periods of communal labour in the fields of the specialists or by means of traditional shares of meat from every animal sacrificed at a feast or killed in the hunt. In this way the specialists are rewarded without the passing of any cash tokens. In the same way one finds that the paternal relations of householders are rewarded, for their assistance in the past by way of contributions towards the householder's marriage price and so on, by giving in return special joints from the flesh of sacrificed animals. Among the Nagas and the Chins feasting is used as a system of capital investment ; that is to say, a large proportion of the meat and the best of the beer at all feasts is reserved for those who have previously given feasts, these persons receiving shares of meat and drink in direct proportion to their seniority among feast-givers, which in turn depends upon the extent of their investment of grain and livestock in feast-giving in the past.

Every householder is bound, by systems which of course differ from tribe to tribe, to give help to his relatives and fellow villagers on a traditional basis, and he in turn can expect to receive an equal amount of assistance. Thus when a youth wants to get married and must pay a marriage price he can expect assistance from his paternal relatives and must in turn assist them when they have a son looking for a bride. Or a man reduced to debt

SHAN-TAYOK OR SHAN-CHINESE WOMAN FROM NAMKHAN

because his family has suffered a series of illnesses for which sacrifices were necessary can turn to his paternal relatives with an equal hope of assistance. In either of these two cases failure to help the person in need would result in the latter going to someone outside his circle of relatives and borrowing from them, and in return paying to the creditor the shares of mutual help, both in labour and kind, which he would normally have given to his relatives had they fulfilled their obligations towards him. In most hill tribes the villagers assist each other in the building of houses, the planting and harvesting of crops, and other occupational crises when many hands are needed. All of these various types of organised mutual assistance relieve the individual of his heaviest burdens, and on the whole the hill peoples can live a full and satisfying life in which the fear of heavy debts, or of crises likely to lead to heavy expenditure, is mercifully small.

THE FUTURE OF THE HIGHLAND CLANS

There are two equally important points of view from which the future development of the hill districts of Burma must be studied if successful progress is to take place. One is that of the hill people themselves and the other that of the people of Burma proper.

Raising the cultural standards of a primitive people without undermining the whole of their social structure is one of the most difficult tasks which an administration can undertake. In a recent pamphlet entitled "The Aboriginals" Mr. Verrier Elwin has described the devastating effects upon the primitive peoples of India of misguided interference with their mode of living. Almost all modern

writers about Africa and Polynesia deplore the unplanned way in which the civilization of Western peoples has been foisted on to the native races with little or no thought for the consequences.

In general the sequence of events has been something like this. Missionaries and traders have discovered new fields of effort and in order to encourage interest in their projects they have used every possible inducement to turn the people's attention from their own traditional pleasures and possessions to the works of God or the "products of the looms of Lancashire". "Education" and a smattering of English became the prized possessions of a few preachers, traders, clerks and other underlings of the newcomers, to be used as a lever wherewith their possessors could force their way ahead of their fellow tribesmen in the social scale.

Thus in a short time the standards of the West, or rather a debased version of them, took precedence over the local standards, and the fashions of clothing, drink, marriage, sacrifice, mutual help and a hundred and one other things changed in a flash. At the same time no alternative was offered for the systems of mutual help based on blood and residential ties which have been described here and which owed much of their existence to the traditional patriarchal management of village life by the political leaders. The phenomenon of detribalisation appeared everywhere ; men became like fish out of water, unable to identify themselves with either the Western peoples whose culture they aped or their forefathers whose culture they had so foolishly thrown away. The break-up of the tribal system led to all manner of abuses ; land-grabbing on the grand scale by the chiefs who had once

been the trustees of their people, rapacious money-lending by rich men who at one time would have been bound to share their riches with their fellow villagers on just and equitable terms of mutual help, and the wholesale exploitation of the physical resources to the exclusion of long-term interests of the dwellers in the land.

If the hill tribes of Burma are to develop in a way which will be to their benefit and which will give to Burma that priceless boon, a prosperous hinterland in which available public funds can be devoted to progress instead of to the maintenance of great armies of suppression and defence, the dangers of detribalisation and over-rapid assimilation of the wrong types of foreign culture must be avoided at all costs. In this connection it is important to remember that the cultures of the Burmese, the Indian and the Chinese are just as foreign to these hill peoples as the cultures of the West.

On the other hand there is no need for pessimism, no need for people to fear that the hill tribes will be kept as museum specimens of primordial custom. It is little more than a hundred years since the last Acts of Enclosures were being passed in England and the rural inhabitants of our country were torn from that communal cultivation of their lands which was so similar to the systems existing in the hills of Burma today. What is required first is painstaking research into the existing cultures, for research has in the past been almost non-existent in the hills, which few social scientists have visited and where the administrative officers have charges so huge that very few can find the time for extra-official enquiries.

As to the viewpoint of the people of Burma proper, two problems of immense importance are involved. Firstly,

there is the problem of preventing the hill districts of Burma developing into the counterpart of the North-West Frontier of India and thus saddling the finances of Burma with an immense burden of defence expenditure. Secondly, there is the problem of conserving the water supplies and forest reserves of the hinterland of hills, so that, on the one hand, there will always be a sufficiency of forest products to meet Burma's needs and, on the other, the outflow of water from the mountain regions will not become in time like that of the de-forested and devastated mountains of Yunnan, from which immense floods sweep on to ruin the rich acres of the coastal plains and to devastate millions of homes.

In the past the tendency has been to keep the expenditure of Government funds in the hill districts at a level commensurate with keeping the tribesmen under control. One of the primary motives in taking over and administering the hills was to prevent the tribes raiding the prosperous plains ; but within the last few years Government has recognised its responsibility for improving the condition of the peoples. Since the people themselves live on a subsistence basis with very little external trade and very little use for a monetary system beyond the payment of their taxes to the Central Government, lack of capital precluded far-reaching economic development of any kind. As in every other economic proposition, a seed of capital must be planted in the hills before a profit can be reaped, and the production of capital for the development of the hill districts will be one of the first essentials of any reconstruction programme.

But rural reconstruction in the hills presents the administration with many other problems peculiar to the

PADAUNG WOMAN FROM THE SHAN STATES

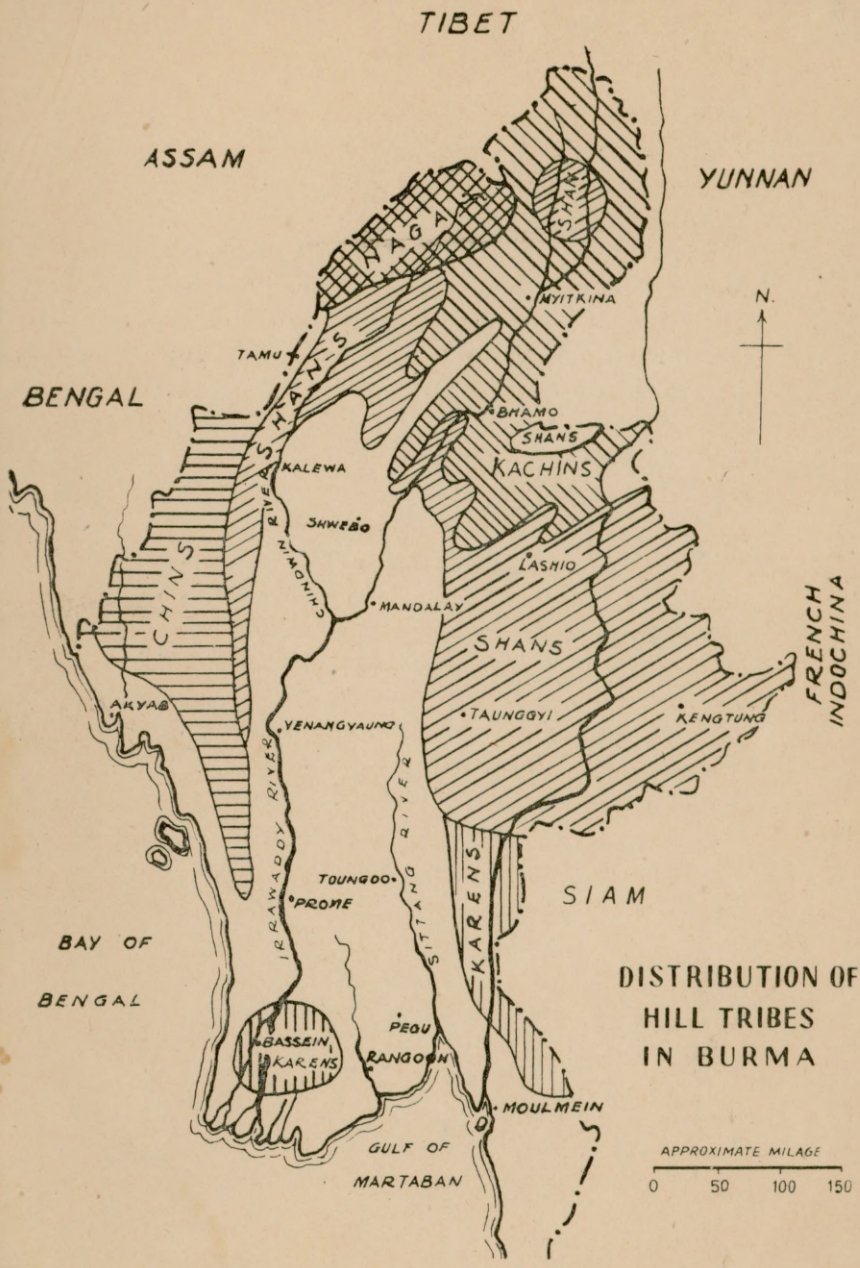
environment. Of these, by far the most vexatious is the problem of overcoming the combination of vast distances and almost complete lack of adequate communications. The great hold which the now illicit opium trade took on the hills between Burma and Yunnan was the result, not solely of the fact that there were great markets for opium to both east and west, but also of the fact that opium is one of the few products which has a very high value in relation to its weight and therefore can be exported by pack animals or coolies for great distances without any serious loss of profit. Any attempt to introduce cash-cropping into the hills will have to take into account the importance of the price-weight ratio.

Undoubtedly the present and future campaigns in Burma will result in a number of new arterial roads, but most of these roads will point, like the spearheads of the advancing armies, straight along the path of those armies' advance and will not take into account the economic needs of the countryside through which they pass. Much work will have to be done in the construction of feeder roads and the planning of improvements in local production before these new communications will yield any benefit to the people.

On the other hand the development potential in some of the hill districts is very high indeed. There are vast hydro-electric opportunities, immense areas of good forest, tens of thousands of acres where terraced cultivation would enable a much larger population to find a good subsistence, whole districts in which only the sketchiest prospecting has been done for mineral wealth. There are the huge areas at present under cultivation in which the development of new crops has been left hitherto to the haphazard fumb-

lings of amateur agriculturists, sometimes with results bordering on the disastrous, as in the case of the heavy erosion in the potato-growing areas of the Shan States.

All of these and many other inter-related problems were examined in 1942 by a committee of Frontier Officers convened by the Governor of Burma for that purpose. The recommendations of that committee were far-reaching in all respects but the implementation of these recommendations will depend entirely on finance. Although, largely by virtue of their stout efforts as guerilla fighters, quite large sections of the hill tribes of Burma have been kept free of the Japanese aggressor, all have suffered grievously as a result of the events of the past two years. The magnificent contributions made to the war effort by these hill peoples, both in labour and in actual combat with the enemy, will be the subject of a separate pamphlet in this series, and here it is necessary only to note that they have displayed from the beginning of the war with Japan the highest loyalty and devotion to the Empire's cause. Common justice demands that the sacrifices they have made on our behalf should be repaid by a great effort on the part of the British Commonwealth to give them the financial and technical assistance necessary to carry them forward into prosperity in the post-war world.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