

R. H. Merrill

# GARO LAW.

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BY

Rev. G. D. Baldwin

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## INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

During my term of missionary service among the Garos, I have frequently, in the absence of any written law relating to their customs, been obliged to rely upon the verbal statements of people cited as witnesses, in order to pronounce a judgment upon various disputes of which I had been appointed arbitrator.

There is an evident danger in being thus beholden to verbal statements, particularly when the witnesses in the dispute are not known to be interested parties. This collection of laws and customs supplies a need I have often keenly felt. It is an attempt to get things down in black and white, and so have some standard by which to judge.

My grateful thanks are accorded to many Garos who have willingly put their knowledge at my disposal. I have drawn from those recognised by the Garos themselves as authorities upon prevailing practice. Chief among these is Chandra Mohan Marak, ex-Mozadar of

Baghmara. To him, in particular, as also to his son-in-law Karnesh Marak, B. A., do I owe a debt of gratitude, for their carefully correcting these laws for me, and endorsing them as authentic.

Sd./ C. D. Baldwin,

*Australian Baptist Mission House,*

*P. O. Hatsibganj,*

*Mymensingh District.*

Sept, 16th, 1933.

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TO

Rev. C D. BALDWIN,  
Birisiri Mission House,

I have examined these laws as submitted by Mr. Baldwin and find them to be correct. I would like to say that from my personal knowledge of cases judged according to Garo Laws and Customs, I can declare Mr. Baldwin as one who manifests a keen knowledge and insight into the Garo Laws and Customs.

Sd./ Chandra Mohan Marak.

*Baghmara, Garo Hills.*

28th August, 1933.

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I have carefully gone through the Garo Laws and Customs of inheritance and marriage as submitted by Mr. Baldwin and found them correct. The Manual will be of great service, and the Garos will gladly acknowledge it as such, as it has now supplied the long-felt want. The author displays a deep insight into the Garo Laws and Customs.

Sd./ Karnesh Marak. B. A.,

*Baghmara, Garo Hills.*

28th August 1933.

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## NOTES

### MACHONG—CLAN

Chra—male descendants of the mother's clan.

Nokchik—female descendants of the mother's clan and their husbands.

Manok—male relations of a man's mother.

Chatchi—female “ ” “ ” “ ”

Khim—a responsibility or obligation automatically devolving upon the respective manoks of any contracted marriage. Apparently there is no time limit. Failure to fulfil khim means a Rs. 60 fine, with the returning of all property to the mother-in-law or near relations.

Gro—a fine—is frequently not paid but there are contra, and contra contra-accounts kept for generations, and the women keep a special note of all this. Refusal to give gro means that no hospitality will be accepted at the hands of those who refuse.

## HISTORICAL NOTE.

### BONE PAANI NOKPANTE

Nokpante is Garo for "young mens' house", one of which is to be found in nearly every Garo village. It is here that the unmarried young men live together, Bone Paani Nokpante then, was such a young mens' house under the patronage of Bone Paa (the patriarch Bone). It is said to be situated on a huge rock measuring about 600 yards, like a tableland on the Misikokdok Hill, at Bonegiri, in Mouza No IV. Garo Hills. It is said that to this day, there stands a house which is both a meeting place, and rest-house for travellers. Near that Nokpante an excavation was made in the rock, in the shape of a gong (or rang) about 2' deep and 2' in diameter. This is to be seen to this day on the Dengga Hill, a part of the Misikokdok Hill. Misikokdok, by the way, means "six baskets of millet." My informant tells me that six baskets of millet were gathered from this sandstone rock.

This rock is the physical witness to an historical change effected by the Garos themselves. It marked the change from the

patriarchal system of marriage to that of the matriarchal which now exists. "Some 500 or 600 years ago" the Garos congregated at this spot, and discarded the the patriarchal system of marriage, and inheritance through the eldest son of the family, a custom which obtained among the ancient Garos. This change supports the theory that the Garos were migrants; it would seem they found the patriarchal system impracticable for various reasons, and that further, the matriarchal system would allow of their speedier acquisition of the territory of their choice. The congregation of the Bone Paani Nokpaute made some important decisions. They hold to this day. They are :—

(1) The adoption of the matriarchal system of marriage. The marriages were to be exogamous, and the inheritance, through the youngest daughter of the family. In the event of her being physically, mentally or otherwise unfit, or regarded as unsuitable by the parents and members of the clan, any other daughter of the clan, or the family, could be made the nokua or heiress of the whole property.



(2) It was decided that the nephew of the father should be the husband of his daughter, that is, full cousins. A daughter marries her first cousin on her father's side where possible. The reason for this was, that it establishes a family relationship between two clans, and further it prevents the property of one clan passing into the hands of another.

(3) An obligation ('akhim' or 'khim') was placed upon each contracting clan in each marriage. There is no time limit to this obligation. And this 'khim' is really the nucleus of various claims, which have given birth to the laws of inheritance among the Garos to-day. It needs but to be said here, that there are slight variations in Garo law, as customs vary according to tribe and locality.

The primary reason for this change from the patriarchal system to the matriarchal, was to prevent further absorption of the Garos by Assamese races, among whom the patriarchal system obtained.

The secondary reason was to prevent the passing of land from one clan to another. From

time immemorial, Garo children had adopted their mother's name. But as the male children inherited the property, land repeatedly passed out of the hands of one clan, into those of another. Thus, a Marak man, marrying a Sangma woman would involve the property of the Marak clan passing into the hands of the Sangma Clan. And the next marriage would reverse the transfer.

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## GARO LAWS.

LAWS OF INHERITANCE :—These laws which obtain among the Garos should not be described as heathen. They are national, and obtain therefore, among both Christians and heathen.

They may be considered as :—

- ( 1 ) General.
- ( 2 ) When there is a family.
- ( 3 ) When one is adopted.
- ( 4 ) Willed property.
- ( 5 ) Forfeited property.

### *I. General.*

1. It should be remembered that no Garo man can own property, in the matriarchal system which exists. Whatever a Garo boy may earn or receive, whether he be of age or not, is really the property of his mother or sisters. Should he marry, whatever he gets, will become his wife's property, or after her death, that of her daughter. In the event of

his mother's death, or that of his wife or daughter, or sisters, as the case may be, the property will become that of the nearest maternal woman relation.

2. No man has any right to sell, give, or remove any property, even in his own dwelling, without the permission of his wife, and in the case of her death, his daughters (of age), mother, or sisters, as the case may be. To do so is tantamount to theft in Garo eyes. In some circumstances a man can dispose of property for the benefit of the family, or in necessity, without having obtained the actual permission of anyone, but it is required that he act in good faith in the interests of the household. Silence on the part of his wife, sons, daughters and chras for a year or two is considered as their endorsement of his action.

3. Where the joint family system exists or is recognised in a homestead, there can be no question of dividing the property, which only arises immediately separation takes place. Generally the people separating themselves from the homestead are those who lose their right to the said property. They cannot be forcibly turned away without a meeting having been convened

for the purpose, and a division of the land being allotted thereat.

4. If anything is given to the bridegroom's family, it is called 'onchaka' ( a loan ) and the bridegroom's family must repay it.

5. Any property given over to a trustee or trustees, involves the trustee or trustees in giving an account of it, whenever required.

6. If one "machong" or clan desires to relinquish it's right to some property, or for various reasons is obliged so to do, in favour of another machong, there must be a meeting convened for this purpose in which both clans must be represented, and the transfer duly made.

7. When a bride is brought for a man's son, and to his house, it is expected that they should live and eat seperately from the father and mother. As soon as this separation takes place the mother-in-law should provide khoraki for six months, and a pair of bullocks ( this is a matter of desire. ) Among very poor people this rule is not observed, but where they are in a fairly good position this rule is observed but is not compulsory. ( This law is not operative

in the Garo Hills, where usually the bride's sister (nokna) and her husband may give some gift with the permission of the chras, or as her love, ability, and circumstances permit.)

8. A right (Akhim or Khim) exists forever, that is one machong can claim gro from another through successive generations.

9. Where a second marriage is contemplated the existing wife and chras must give their consent, before the second marriage is considered legal.

10. Where a wife deserts her husband and marries or lives with another man, she thereby loses her right to the property deserted by her (case at Goka 4 m. North of Baghmara). In a case such as the above, the property will temporarily be that of the deserted husband, who shall be compelled when desertion is proved, to marry a wife from his deserting wife's machong who shall then become the sole heiress of the deserting wife's property. If a man's deceased wife's chatchi fail to provide him with a wife, the property will revert to his wife's chra.

11. If a deceased wife's chatchi, have given Khim, and failed to provide a wife for the

husband, or if they refuse to give khim or to provide a wife, the man is free to marry whom he likes, but this does not give the wife any claim to the property unless she is of the same machong as the deceased wife, or has been accepted by the deceased wife's chachi.

12. If a wife commits adultery with a man and either man persuade her to poison the other, the mother of the poisoned man, or her nearest relation, can claim the property of the adulteress. According to some people the giving of gro between Rs. 300 and Rs. 500 is sufficient restitution. Usually the adulteress is disinherited; the property passes to the daughters of her husband ( and not of co-respondent ), but where there is no female issue, the women relatives of the adulteress decide to give the property, to the nearest woman relation. The adulteress chachi cannot compel the mansk of the poisoned man to provide a husband; but the mansk of the poisoned man can claim "akhim" should the adulteress marry outside the machong ( clan ) of the man poisoned.

13. A girl who marries from her father's machong, but goes to live elsewhere with her husband, cannot be considered the nokna except

if she has to do so for business conveniences etc.

14. Parents desiring to sell their property or mortgage it, should consult their major daughters prior to doing so. If the mother is sane, the children can assert no right, but if their mother should be imbecile or utterly invalid, they have a right, if of age, to nullify any such sale or mortgage.

15. If a man intentionally touches the breasts of another man's wife, he is liable to pay a fine of Rs. 5. If his intention be with a view to adultery, proof of which is taken for granted should the woman concerned deny conjugal rights to her husband, the fine imposed on the man may, be between Rs. 30 and Rs. 60.

16. Garo law permits a husband to beat his wife, but denies to her any right to beat him. Should she do this, the brother or other relatives of her husband are permitted to kill and eat her best bullock or pig as they wish, the loss of which must be borne by the wife. This is known as 'gitok chaa.'



## II. Family.

1. In a family one of the daughters is selected by the parents, to own her mother's property. She is known as the 'nokna,' heiress, (her husband is the nokrom). The choice depends upon the parents. But in the event of the father and mother disagreeing as to the choice, the mother has the right to insist upon her selection, i. e. the one she chooses must be considered nokna.

2. The nokna must marry from her paternal race, refusal to do which will exclude her from inheriting the mother's property. If a nokna refuses to marry the nokrom, the nokrom cannot force his claim to the marriage nor to the property. He may possibly claim Rs. 5 or so for defamation or insult.

3. If a girl selected to be nokna marry from her paternal race, yet goes away from her maternal property as 'bo' to another property, she loses her right to her mother's property which may be claimed by one or more of her sisters, who have married into their paternal race. If all the sisters of the nokna have married into the paternal race, they have equal rights to divide their maternal property after

the death of the mother and nokna.

4. Sisters of the nokna are known as 'agadi' and if they should marry into a machong other than that of their father they can make no claim to their mother's property. If any right is conceded, it is by favour of the nokna and chras, consenting perhaps to the request of the parents.

5. If a nokna dies without a daughter, her sister or sisters if any, or daughter of the sister receive the property. But if the nokrom marry one of his deceased wife's sisters, she will be heiress to the entire property. (Jiren and Saromoni-Taragora.)

6. If a nokna forsakes her property because of her father's misbehaviour or oppression, she does not thereby destroy her right to her property, (Girish's case), except she refuses to return at the invitation of the chras and nokchik to support her parent. If her father's oppression is intolerable she can demand separation. For this a meeting will be convened and separation granted, and under these circumstances she will not lose her right to the property.

7. If parents have no daughter, and desire to adopt one as nokna they shall first demand that one be provided from the machong concerned. If one cannot be provided, they can select one at a boithak and feast convened for the purpose. The girl selected in this case can be from any machong, and even no relation, but she must be of the same tribe as the wife; Marak or Sangma according to the clan of the adopting mother. This nokna thus adopted is the recognised heiress to the property, and her children will possess the property after her death.

8. If a man marries a nokna he virtually goes as 'nokrom'. Should he have a daughter by the nokna, but after his wife's death, marry a woman from her machong, his second wife cannot dispossess the nokna's daughter of her mother's property of which she becomes the legal heiress. Subsequent additions to the property will be the rightful possession of the daughter of the first wife.

The rule that the nokrom be of the same clan as that of his father-in-law has been violated especially among Christians, particularly when great difficulty has been experienced in securing a suitable nephew as son-in-law to

the father of the households, who seeks an educated and prosperous mate for his daughter.

Such a son-in-law, of whatever clan, is recognised as nokram in full possession of the right attached thereto, with consent of the family and his chras. Lack of a knowledge of this recognition among the Garos, has led to miscarriages of justice against both nokna and nokrom, when they have been disinherited by law.

9. If, in the above case, the nokna's daughter be a minor, the father may be her guardian. Should he marry his second wife from a machong other than that of his first wife, neither he nor his second wife have any right to the property. ( Alim Rema ) except his deceased wife's ehatchi concede any ( see 12 )

10. Where there are three daughters in a family, among whom one is the nokna, and the other two have married, and are living elsewhere, the inheritance depends upon the children born to each. If the nokna is childless ( daughters ) her sisters or her sisters' daughters may claim her property after death. No claim can be made by her sisters or their decendants so long as she is living, to her property. But

where the nokna has a daughter or a family and where her sisters are childless, she can, in the absence of any other closer claimant, claim the properties of her sisters for her children or for herself. If one of the nokna's two sisters is childless, then the third sister, but not the nokna, can claim the property of the childless sister. ( Joy Nath Kubi )

11. A father may be guardian to either his sons or daughters after the death of his wife ; but the nearest woman relation, usually the sister-in-law, will be considered the guardian of the minors, and the property to which they are heir, should the father wilfully marry from a machong other than that of his deceased wife. Further this woman guardian may take possession of the property to which the minor heiress has a claim, until she becomes of age. ( But see below ).

12. If a man wilfully marries a second wife who is of a different machong to that of his deceased wife, neither he nor his wife can claim the deceased wife's property, and may be driven away. It is customary for the deceased wife's relations ( chatchi ) to provide a wife from the deceased wife's clan—or accept from

another clan a proposed wife, thus preventing complications.

13. The second wife of a widower, can claim a share of the property of the deceased wife, or her daughters, before consenting to the marriage. Her claim is entirely decided by the chras' wish. If property is not granted her she may refuse to become his wife. Any property acquired prior to the second marriage cannot be claimed by the second wife, if there are children by the first, or even second marriage. In this case so long as the children of the first marriage are minors and not living separately as majors, the land is considered the joint property of all the daughters.

So long as the joint family system is maintained, the daughters of the first marriage can claim all the property prior to and subsequent to, their father's second marriage. They cannot however, claim the property conceded to the second wife. If the daughters of the first marriage take the initiative and voluntarily live independently from the homestead, they lose their right over the property, which will go then to the second wife. On the other hand, if the step-mother decides to live independently, then

the daughters by the first marriage can claim the entire property.

In the case of an Onchapa marriage, where the man marries two full sisters ( very rare ) they have equal claim to the property so long as the joint family system obtains, and there are no daughters.

Where he marries an old woman and her daughter, the daughter gets the property, only if her mother dies or separates.

14. If a widower marries a widow who has a daughter, the daughter can claim only her mother's property ( after her death ) but no property belonging to the former wife of her step-father ; nor can she claim property aquired after her mother's marriage, unless living as a joint family, with her step-father and daughters by the second marriage.

15. A mother is fully responsible to support her sons and daughters, till they are married. Any debt incurred by the sons and daughters, whether driven away or going away from the home, must, if claimed, be met by the mother, manok or chachi, as the case may be.

16. In the event of parents dying or

deserting, and thus leaving their sons and daughters, the orphan children must be cared for by the nearest maternal woman relation.

In the event of a man being widowed, his wife's sister or in her absence, the next of kin, is obliged to support him till death or marriage, unless he has a major daughter, who has to assume this responsibility.

When the wife of a "nokrom" dies, although his sister-in-law is obliged to support him, it is not usual to have the nokrom demand such support. He generally leaves the homestead.

17. In the event of a man having three daughters, the nokna has prior claim to all property. Of the other two, if one marries into her father's machong, but goes away bo, she thereby forfeits her property. If the third sister does not go away bo, although marrying a man other than her father's machong, her claim to her sister's (nokna's) property, when dead, shall be considered stronger than that of the remaining sister, even when she separates to live independently.

18. In the event of a wife dying, leaving to



her husband a family, among which there is at least one daughter, and he marry again, without consulting the relations concerned a woman from a machong other than that of his deceased wife, then he and the second wife may be driven away, and the nearest of kin to his deceased wife, usually the sister, can claim on behalf of her nephews and nieces the property of her deceased sister.

19. In the event of her mother dying, and a daughter refusing to support her father, she shares her property with her father to provide him with a livelihood. But if he marry again, or separate she can claim it all.

20. In the event of a woman's sons supporting her, she may with the consent of the chras and nokchik, give at most half of the property to her sons in return for their labour. They cannot claim it. On their marriage they forfeit it.

21. The chras and nokchik in assembly, cannot, without the consent of the mother give any of the mother's property to her sons, for the land would thus pass out of the machong.

It remains the right of the chras, should

circumstances make it desirable, to distribute the property among the daughters of a household, whether the mother or other rightful heiress be dead or living. This law operates in cases of imbecility or other serious disability, when the consent of the household cannot be obtained.

22. Where a son marries outside his paternal machong (if a Dual marries a Rema) and if his wife goes as bo, it would seem that Dual property passes into the hands of the Rema machong; but this is disallowed by Garo law. So the property is in trust, and is really the possession of the wife-to-be of the son expected by this marriage. That is to say, the son of this marriage will have to marry a girl of the same machong as his grand-mother (Dual) and she shall have to come to the household as bo, in order to keep Dual property that of Dual. The daughters of this marriage cannot claim the property. If there be a closer claimant however, then the grandson's wife, or the son's wife, or his father's wife, she can claim it. (This case is very rare, because of its complications.)

23. Among the Atongs and Duals a daughter can drive away her father or brother, if unwilling to care for either, but this is not so among the Abengs.

### III. *Adoption.*

1. When a girl or boy is to be adopted, a "boithak" or meeting must be convened for the purpose, and all the clans concerned must be present, the subsequent feast ratifies the adoption.

2. An adopted daughter shall have to stay with the man or woman who adopts her, and is responsible for feeding and clothing him or her till death.

3. If an adopted girl leave her adopted parents after staying with them two or three months, and does not return, she loses all right to the property of her mother. Though she forfeits her right to the property she forsakes on the one hand, yet on the other hand, her claim to the property, because she is a near relation, may in some cases make her the rightful heiress to the property. If the adopted daughter is oppressed, she can be separated by the consent of a special

meeting, and she shall thus retain her property.

4. If an adopted daughter is not taken from near relatives and departs from her adopted parents, the property to which she would have been heir, can be claimed by some woman closer related, whose claim would be greater than that of the adopted, but deserting daughter.

5. In the event of parents who have no children, dying, claim to their property is established by the performance of *sradhha* (death duties) by the nearest kinswoman, or adopted daughter. Failure to do this, destroys one's right. No right is maintained, however, if some poor relation unable to bear the expense of the *sradhha* at the actual time, promises at a *boithak*, to help in the death ceremonies, and later ratifies these promises in the event of a son performing his mother's funeral rites, (only when no other relation exists), he does not thereby establish any right to the property. He may, however, claim the actual expenses to which he has been put.

6. Suppose a man adopts a daughter, when

he already has a son. Then the chras and nokchik may give to that son such property, as they will, which when he marries goes to his wife.

7. One machong can adopt as their own machong a person from another with the consent of chras and nokchik ( Dineng ; for Rangsha, a Raksham was brought as Rangsha ). The girl thus brought will adopt the machong of the adopting machong, but must not be of the same tribe.

8. In a "sheka" marriage, the woman may be recognised as heiress to a property only after a boithak convened for the purpose.

#### *IV. Will.*

1. Inasmuch as no Garo man possesses property, he cannot strictly make a will. Yet, according to Garo custom, a man can make a will with the permission of his wife, and in consultation with the chras, in a " boithak " convened for the purpose. The wife's chatchi must have some token that the property has been thus given ; failure to provide this renders the gift illegal. Garo Christians have made

wills ; some have been recognised, and others not. They have been disallowed on the ground of being foreign to Garo national custom. I know of no Garo having made an affidavit disowning Garo national custom and making a will under the provisions of the Christian Succession Act.

### *V. Forfeited.*

1. Any woman merely staying with or 'kept' by a married Garo man, whose wife is living, is not entitled to any property.
  2. A husband whose wife has forsaken him to live with or marry another man, is in temporary possession of his wife's property, who, by her desertion has forfeited all rights to it. In the event of his having a daughter, a sister-in-law, or second wife, from his wife's machong, or if the chatchi provide a wife from a different machong, she has legal right over that property.
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### *Marriage Laws.*

1. Garo women must marry a man from their father's machong, when available.

2. A Momin may marry a Marak or a Sangma, but not a Momin. To do this stigmatises his off-spring as 'madong', a name that invariably produces a laugh, meaning as it does, one who marries his mother.

But some machongs, though different, yet come under the class Marak or Sangma. Parties of these different machongs can marry, and are not considered madong. If a Dio marries a Dio or Daring a Daring you have the pure madong.

3. A man usually marries his first cousin. Failing this the next of kin, and so on, but always on the wife's side.

4. In the cases where a married man has no children as a result of his marriage, he can claim his sister-in-law, or another female from her machong for a second wife. But this is usually done with the consent of the barren wife, or more often a child is adopted.

5. If a man's elder or younger brother dies leaving a wife, she can claim as her husband, one of the younger of her husband's brothers.

6. If a young man has married an old woman, he can claim as a second wife, a young girl, usually the daughter of the old lady, of the same machong.

7. After the death of a man's wife he is not free to marry at his will, but has to gain the permission of his wife's machong. If he wilfully marries without referring the matter to his wife's machong, then his mother, and in the case of her death his manok, has to pay a fine of Rs. 60 to jikchachi (deceased wife's relations). If the second wife be of another machong, she can never inherit the property.

8. In the event of a married man having committed adultery, yet staying with his wife, then the man's wife's mother or machong and the machong of the co-respondent institute proceedings. The manok of the guilty person, let us say in this case, the man will have to pay gro, which will be enjoyed by the manok



of the claimant. That is the wife will receive gro from her husband's manok, and the chatchis of the co-respondent. Generally the fine is Rs. 15/- to 30/- per head and is called Somalni 900.

9. If a man has sexual intercourse with any woman prior to completing the first sraddha ceremony ( generally after the paban ) of his deceased wife, the man's mother shall pay "mimang rashi" or "delang-rashi" a fine of from Rs. 5 to Rs. 60 in addition to a gro of Rs. 60 and four coras each. The man's manok will pay the fine to the deceased wife's machong, and they will realize also from the relations of the co-respondent.

10. In the event of a woman deserting her husband after having denied him conjugal rights, Rs. 30 to 60/- can be claimed from her as "torompia" ( equivalent to our "breach of contract" ).

11. When an engagement has been announced, and either party breaks it off, and marries another, the defaulting party has to pay a fine levied by the boithak.

12. A married man has the right to forcibly

take his nephew for his son-in-law, and detain him behind closed doors with his prospective wife.

### *Divorce.*

1. An engagement can be broken off by mutual consent. But if one party is guilty of breach of promise, a fine of Rs 5/- is imposed and realised.

2. In the event of a husband proving unfaithful to his wife she can divorce him, claiming Rs 60 and 4 coras from the manok of her husband, and the manok of the co-respondent.

3. Being a hermaphrodite (rebu) or either party being sterile, constitutes sufficient grounds for divorce.

### *Forms of Marriage.*

#### (1) DO-DOKA OR DOBUKNIA.

This is the principal form of marriage worthy of the name, and recognised by all Garos. According to this custom some alcoholic drink and two chickens are necessary. ( Male and female and one big cock (do rasong);

the rooster alone will be eaten, but only by non-relations of the marriage pair). The chickens are roasted and sacrificed by non-relations of the marriage pair, and eaten. In order to predict whether the wedded pair will be happy or otherwise, the entrails of the roosters are consulted. That is to say, if the hooks at the end of the long entrail should be of equal size and form, the future felicity of the wedded couple is ensured. The officiating priest smites the bride and bridegroom with the closed fist three times on the back, and this constitutes the marriage proper.

## (2) TU-NAPA.

This custom is prevalent among both heathen Garo and Christians to-day. According to this custom, the man or woman who wishes to marry, simply goes and lies beside the one of his or her choice. This is generally done with the cognisance of the parents, but not always. If the suitor (the one who enters the house to lie beside the other) is acceptable, sexual intercourse is indulged in; but if this is refused then he or she has to pay a fine--this again is realised through the women-folk (manok) of the suitor who has

thus given offence, and will be received and enjoyed by women kind of the one who rejected the matrimonial overtures.

(3) DOK-CHAPA OR ON-CHAPA OR (ONNA-CHAPA.)

This is the custom where an old woman, and a young woman are together married to the one man. Generally the old woman is the mother of the younger one, but both have equal conjugal rights. The old woman really has pride of place or precedence, and is heir to the property which of course after her decease goes to the daughter and co-wife.

Under this same heading one has to include that form of marriage known as NOKNARA, in which, should the old woman be childless, a young bride is provided along with her. The young bride will become heir to the property, but until such time as the old wife dies, is really a convenience for the purpose of seeing to the cooking and the more strenuous field work which the old wife is now unable to do. In the event of either wife dying, the machong relations can insist upon supplying another to take the place of the deceased.

## (4) SHEKA.

This is the custom whereby two agree to live together as man and wife. It is equivalent to our "elopement" (a) If the man and woman are both unmarried, generally no fine is imposed if free from the restrictions of akhim and they are allowed to live together ; but sometimes if the 'bichar' so decides, they are forcibly separated and each given a beating. (b) If one of the parties is married and the other is not, the women relations of the married party realise and enjoy the fine gathered from the women relations of the unmarried party. (c) In a case where both parties are married, the women relations of both parties have to pay a fine. This will be realised from the relations of the male party and enjoyed by the women folk of the husband with whose wife he eloped. The husband will also realise a fine from the women relations of his wife, which will be enjoyed by his women relations. In this case there is a fourfold fine, and a fourfold enjoyment thereof. If Rs 60 and 3 gongs ( rang ) are given, the couple are allowed to live together, as this "price" according to Garo custom is such as to bind the wife permanently to the man. She is, as it were, deprived thereby of all rights, and must forever be obedient and subservient

to her purchaser, the husband. If less than Rs. 60 and the 3 gongs is given, say for instance Rs. 20 the parties who eloped are kept apart and each punished sometimes with corporal punishment in addition to the fine imposed. If one brings a wife home, they have a meeting and generally and recognise wife as her.

Copies of "Garo Law" may be procured from

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