

# ART AND CULTURE OF NORTH-EAST INDIA

L.P. VIDYARTHI



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# Art and Culture of North-East India

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## Preface

The Himalayas and the Culture of Himalayan region have always fascinated me, and it was in 1964 that I did my first fieldwork in the different parts of Western, Central and North-Eastern Himalayas. Since then I have been paying frequent visits and conducting field researches. My interest culminated in the establishment of the Centre of Himalayan studies at Ranchi in 1979, under the aegis of which two National Symposia were also organised, one at Ranchi in 1981 and the other at Dehradun in 1982 on Himalayan Ecology, Economy and Religion.

It was in view of this long standing interest that I accepted the offer of Publications Division of Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, New Delhi, to write a book on the Art and Culture of the North-East India. I then, intensified my visits to the region, doing both field researches and library work as well as participating in series of seminars held at Gauhati, Dibrugarh, Shillong and Kohima etc.

I was benefited not only from the feedbacks in the seminars, but also through prolonged discussions and exchange of ideas with professors B.M. Das, M.C. Goswami, and Dr. D.N. Mazumdar of Gauhati University. Professor A.C. Bhagwati of Dibrugarh, Dr. Parul Dutta of Folklore Research Centre, and Mr. Bordoli, Director, Tribal Research Institute, Gauhati. To them I express my thanks.

The discussion I had with Mr. L.P., Singh, I.C.S. (Rtd.) Ex Governor of North-Eastern States and Dr. B.D. Sharma, Vice-Chancellor, NEHU, also enlightened me a lot. The help and co-operation extended to me by Mr. M. Alemehiba of Naga Institute of Culture, Kohima and Professor B.B. Kumar of Science College, Kohima were also great and I offer my thanks to them. Professor B.B. Kumar also deserves mention for action as guest editor of the special number of Journal of Social Research exclusively devoted to the Naga group of people of North Eastern India. The papers received on different aspects of Naga people have also proved helpful in preparing the book.

I am grateful to Sri S.K. Choudhary, I.F.S. (Retd.) who patiently went through the manuscript and made scholarly suggestions.

I am thankful to Dr. A.K. Haldar and Mr. L.P. Prasad for their help in various stages of preparation of this book. The research team of Anthropology Department, Ranchi University particularly Dr. Y.K. Jaiswal and Mr. M. Nirula also deserve commendation for their intensive fieldwork in Nagaland, and providing me with latest 'field feel', at the time of completion of the book.

I am thankful to the Anthropological Survey of India, Calcutta, particularly its North-East station, Shillong and Dr. A.K. Danda, Acting Director of the A.S.I. who provided me many facilities as well as rare photographs. Mr. A. Hossain of Shillong also deserves my appreciation for equipping me with unique photographs.

**The Publications Division of the government of India particularly Dr. S.S. Shashi, Director, has shown extraordinary patience in renewing the contracts and for reminding me from time to time to complete the work. lastly, I thank Mr. Ramautar Prasad and Mr. M.S.N. Nair, who typed and retyped the script.**

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## Chapter I

### Researches on Art and Culture in North-East India

Due to importance of the North-Eastern Region of India from the point of view of tribal administration, the colonial scholars and anthropologists were greatly attracted to study the land and the people. This area was so different and distinct in terms of customs, manners and values that the British colonial administrators found it essential to know the people whom they were to rule. All these attracted not only the administrators, but the military personnel, travellers, missionaries, tea planters and a few others to this land of colourful tribes. During the formative period (1872-1921) a number of persons wrote about the tribes of this region, which were mainly published in the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, founded in 1774.

#### NOTES ON TRIBES

Among the early scholars mention may be made of Robinson<sup>1</sup>, an educationist and philologist who published notes on a series of dialects about Khamtis, Konyak, Singhpo, Doka and Mishmi. In a series of chapters running into 436 pages, Robinson describes the geographical setting of the area and its impact on the local inhabitants, the historical background of the people and their political implications, and the civil and social situation of the Assamese. In the final chapter, the life and culture especially of the Mishmi are described. Robinson's work provides the first details about the frontier region, though he pleads his ignorance of the tribes like the Abors, Daflas and others. Among other scholars who worked among the tribes of Assam, mention may be made of Major J. Butlor who published two volumes on "Travels and Adventures in Assam". During his stay of 15 years<sup>2</sup> he also published a long paper on the 'Angami Nagas and their languages', in the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal<sup>3</sup>. The two volumes written in the form of an adventurer's diary "aim at exploring a wild uncivilised foreign land", to make Assam better known, to remove some prejudices against it, and to preserve the memory of a remarkable series. The volume contains the description of the hills, specially of the Angami, Kuki, Mikis and Rangma Naga with whom he lived and developed intimate acquaintance.

Father Crick<sup>4</sup> travelled on foot with his cap and flute in the valley of the Brahmaputra and part of Lohit. Unfortunately, he was killed by a Mishmi Chief, and could not write much about his experiences in the valley of the Brahmaputra. Whatever he wrote, he wrote with sympathy and insight. Summarising, for example, about the Padam he says, "They are very active, jolly and lovers of freedom and independence, generous, noble hearted, plain speakers, more honest than the average oriental and yet overmoderate in eating". A number of other scholars like Peal<sup>5</sup>, Hodgson<sup>6</sup>, Campbell<sup>7</sup>, S.O. Bishop<sup>8</sup> and a few others wrote in a generalised manner about the Naga and other tribes of Assam. In addition to these notes by individual administrators, missionaries, and travellers, a great deal of notes were contributed to the Census Volumes of this region.

These notes, though providing the first source materials on the ethnography of Assam, suffer obviously from many shortcomings. Firstly, the ethnographic description is so generalised that it gets mixed up with the geographical description of the land, the natural setting and so on. Secondly, the specific mention of certain tribes is lacking. The statements have been made in a very simplified manner. Thirdly, the unit of the study is not designated and the description is extended to any length. Fourthly, the information is based on secondary sources, distorted, and sometimes prejudicial and contradictory. The frequent use of the terms 'uncivilised', 'wild', 'slavish', 'barbaric' and so on reflects their sense of superiority and lack of anthropological sense of cultural relativity. However, these notes and descriptive volumes provided the first set of exploratory information and prepared ground for writing exhaustive handbooks and monographs on the communities of this region. Some details of the phases of writing the handbooks and the gazetteers may be mentioned here with a view to bringing out the subsequent efforts of the administrators to study the people of this region.

#### REGIONAL HANDBOOKS

Under the scheme of preparing handbooks, the Government of Bengal and the Sikkim Government in collaboration with the Asiatic Society of Bengal assigned E.T. Dalton and H.H. Risley to prepare ethnological handbooks. As a result of Dalton's<sup>9</sup> efforts the Descriptive Ethnography of Bengal was published in 1872 and the 'Tribes and Castes of Bengal' in two volumes were released by Risley<sup>10</sup> in 1903. Dalton's handbook, as mentioned earlier, is based both on secondary sources and first-hand field investigation of each individual tribe.

Dalton's<sup>11</sup> work, considered from the standards set in his time is a very valuable contribution. In his days there were few anthropological principles to be followed and there was a complete absence of anthropological training. In spite of these limitations, Dalton's sympathy, his keen insight, and zealous spirit for enquiry enabled him to set an example for the ethnographic studies in India. Even today it serves as one of the best sources for supplying basic data for the study of the tribes of Assam, Bengal and Bihar.

The Tribes and Castes of Bengal, by H.H. Risley is the result of planning at Lahore in March 1885 at the Ethnographic Conference held under the aegis of the government. The Conference (held from 12 to 18 March) formulated some general lines of enquiry for the study of a comparative ethnography in different parts of India, including the Bengal Presidency. It was decided that the task of original enquiry be assigned to the district staff, which would be later supplemented with the references from books, reports and other publications. The conference prepared the objectives and the mechanism of enquiry and in these they tried to follow the methods and outlines prepared by a committee of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland in 1879. For an anthropometric scheme Risley sought the guidance of P. Tapinard and also his suggestions and instructions for dealing with the subject. Instruments were also supplied by him which could be applicable in Indian conditions.

Armed with vigorous anthropological training and tools, Risley as the Census Commissioner in 1891 collected, for the first time, rich field-data on the tribes and castes of Assam, Bengal and Bihar. Risley's approach was to emphasize the tribes and castes on the same level and for the first time he provided material not only about the respective tribes but also about the theory of the origin of castes, stratification of castes in Hinduism and Islam, totemism and so on.



Risley's interest in the study of the people extended far beyond the regions covered in the two volumes and as Census Commissioner of 1891-92 census he made a comparative study of the peoples of India<sup>11</sup>, in which he described the physical and social types to be found in different parts of India. This book deals with the different aspects of tribes and castes in a fairly comparative manner and attempts to present an integrated picture of the people of India. Although some of his conclusions have become doubtful and controversial in the light of recent researches in physical and social anthropology in India, it still remains a pioneering piece of comprehensive research. If he finds a critic in B.S. Guha<sup>12</sup> for using linguistic criteria like Aryan and Dravidian for the classification of races in India, he continues to be appreciated by S.S. Sarkar.

Besides the preparation of large-scale handbook, many minor works on the tribes of the North-Eastern Himalayas were published by a number of scholars. A very generalised and sketchy ethnographic note on the Lushais was contributed by Cole.<sup>13</sup> In course of the Census Operations the customs and manners of tribes like the Akas, the Daflas, the Mishmis, the Abors and the Miris had come to light. The social divisions, forms of government, the agricultural practices, and the means of recreation of the Akas were all looked into. The Abors were described as a polyandrous and a democratic tribe. The Miris divided into classes and sects were found trading with the above and the Miris of Lakhimpur shared elements of neighbouring Hindus in their religion.<sup>14</sup> Under the efficient and scholarly guidance of J.H. Hutton notes on the different hill tribes like the Lushais, Cacharis, Syntengs and the Hill Cacharis were prepared respectively by C.S. Muller, C.J.H. Gress, Harry Black, C.J. Hebne, Perry and Walker.<sup>15</sup> In the true spirit of the ethnographic tradition of that time, the respective tribes as such have been described by the different scholars without any pointed reference to local or regional variations.

#### DISTRICT GAZETTEERS

With the success in preparing the handbooks on tribe and castes of the different provinces, the British Government thought of preparing District Gazetteers under the supervision of some of the less experienced administrators. These District Gazetteers in addition to giving other information provide a considerable material on ethnography and deserve a pointed reference in tracing the development of anthropological research in the North-Eastern Himalayas.

As early as 1886 E.W. Dun<sup>16</sup> compiled the Gazetteer of Manipur under the royal patronage of the Manipur State. It was followed by publication of another gazetteer on North Lushai hills by A.W. David.<sup>17</sup> The preparation of these two gazetteers was an example for B.C. Allen<sup>18</sup> who was exclusively assigned the work of compilation of the District Gazetteers of Assam. A general pattern for compiling the information was laid down. The chapter on population in these gazetteers provides materials on the different tribes like the Nagas, the Mikirs, the Kukis, the Cacharis and so on. In general, the material was collected on the tribal modes of cultivation, village pattern, religion, material culture and such other aspects. The following gazetteers on the districts of the North-Eastern Himalayas with respective description in each, were prepared within a span of twenty-five years.

The preparation of the series of District Gazetteers, obviously reflects the efforts of the Government to produce literature for the information of the colonial administrators with the details about the smaller regions of the province. Here the unit of study has been reduced from the province to a district with a view to presenting details of the different aspects of the districts.

Volume	District	Date of publication	Tribes
I	Cachar	1905	Cachari, Kukis, Nagas, Mikirs
II	Lushai Hills	—	Koch, Rabhas, Lushais, Nokmas
III	Goalpara	1903	Rabha, Mech, Cacharis
IV	Kamrup	1903	Rabha, Koch
V	Darrang	1905	Cacharis, Rabha, Koch
VI	Nowagong	1903	Ahoms, Chutiayas, Cacharis, Mech and Miris
VII	Sibsagar	1906	Ahoms, Chutiayas, Cacharis, Mikir, Miris
VIII	Lakhimpur	1905	Ahmans, Chutiayas, Cacharis, Miris, Koch
IX	Naga Hills & Manipur	1905	Angamis, Lhota, Aos, Rengma, Kacha Naga, Kukis.
X	Khasi Jaintia Hills	—	Garos, Kharis, Mikirs
XI	Gadia, Frontier & Balipara Frontier	1928	Miris, Abors, Menyangs, Padam, Mishmis, Khamptis, Nagas, Monpas, Sherdukpen, Akas, Miris, Doglas, Apatanis, Hill Miris.

The ethnographic descriptions presented in these District Gazetteers, which form just a chapter in the Gazetteer is, obviously in the form of short notes. The information given is on the pattern of Dalton's, and Risley's short descriptions and the nature of information is also the same or similar.

#### TRIBAL MONOGRAPHS

In the District Gazetteers of later periods one finds a brief information regarding the tribes inhabiting the respective districts. Moreover, the government needed more material on the customs and ways of life of the different tribes. In order to meet these needs it was decided to publish independent monographs on the tribes of Assam including the tribes of NEFA. In the year 1904 the Government of Assam took a decision to bring together all the scattered and fragmentary information collected by the previous investigators and supplemented them with up to date information in order to publish them in the shape of monographs. The tribal monographs were to be prepared by persons, officials or missionaries, who, for a long time, were in close touch with the respective tribes. The proposal made by Sir Bamfylde Fuller, the then Chief Commissioner of Assam in 1902, was duly approved by the government of India.

Col. P.R.T. Gurdon, a Deputy Commissioner, was appointed editor of the monograph series as well as Superintendent of Ethnography in Assam. Gurdon with his long, close, and continuous acquaintance with the tribes like the Khasis, could carry on the work successfully for several years till he was relieved by an equally competent anthropologist, J.H. Hutton.

In order to set a model before the other workers Gurdon prepared a tribal monograph on the Khasi. The book<sup>19</sup> originally written and published in 1906 was thoroughly revised by the author in its second edition and published in 1914. This edition, unlike before was marked by certain amount of richness and authenticity. Gurdon's objective was to make the monograph on the Khasi a model for other researchers by providing all possible ethnographic details and to present a rounded picture of the Khasi culture. His data were specially enriched during the census of

1911. The physical appearance of the Khasi was compared to other tribes like that of Mundas of Chotanagpur. In the chapter on domestic life, the economic occupations, agriculture crops, hunting, fishing, foodgrowing, manufacture, pottery and weaving are described at length. The third chapter elaborates in detail the tribal organisation and the Khasi social system. The Khasis were divided into different States having autonomous organisations. The various institutions and customs such as Sardarship, marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption, land tenure and practice of human sacrifices have been described. The author while describing the life of the Khasi has made specific reference to the source materials and has given several case studies regarding their ordeals etc. Gurdon presents a detailed description and categorisation of the Khasi religion which according to him is animistic. The serpent worship, priesthood, the ceremonies held and the 'rites de passage', disposal of the dead and the practice of the megalith etc. have also been described. There is also a chapter on folklore and translations. It is the first monograph which deals with the land tenure of the tribe and the decisions in civil and criminal cases have been mentioned with reference to case studies. On the whole, the second edition of Gurdon's monograph was both rich in methodological leads as well as substantive description, obviously providing a model to the other monographers working with him.

Under the guidance and editorship of Gurdon and later of Hutton a series of sixteen monographs were written by twelve persons of which, ten were administrators, one missionary and another a medical officer. With the exception of S.N. Majumdar and another American missionary all these ethnographers are Europeans. These monographs have been prepared by them along with their administrative duties, and obviously suffer from several limitations, reference to which, has been made at appropriate places.

The next monograph under this series was published on the Naga tribes of Manipur by T.C. Hodson<sup>20</sup> in 1911. This monograph was the result of the author's collection of information made some ten years before its publication without any intention of publishing it. The monograph published under the order of the Government of Bengal and Assam is divided into five chapters dealing with social and domestic life, law and custom, religion and folktales. In the first chapter the different institutions are described with reference to the accounts presented by previous authors. In the description Hodson makes references to almost all the Naga tribes inhabiting Manipur. The book provides a description not only of individual tribes but also of the Naga tribes as a whole. Besides this monograph, Hodson<sup>21</sup> had earlier revised and edited a monograph on the Methies tribe. He filled in the gaps and made up to date the accounts originally prepared by Col. Gullock and Brown and published it as a full length monograph in 1908. The book divided into four sections is devoted to ethnographic descriptions of material culture, social and political organisation and religion. The last two chapters of the book deal with folklore, folktales, and linguistic affinities with certain other sources of information.

These two monographs by Hodson, further refined the outline and methods for the description of the tribes. The modifications made in the arrangement of chapters, later proved helpful. Though both these monographs were primarily based on secondary and library work, he obviously enriched the monographs by supplementary observations based on fieldwork.

Another significant point about these two publications is that the emphasis continued to be on territorial limitations and not on the tribe as the unit of study. The Methies and the Nagas

were selected within the political boundaries of the State of Manipur. The former represented several non-tribal communities practising Hinduism and caste hierarchy. The later included the Tangkhuls, Kukis, Maos and other Naga tribes. The descriptions however, are quite extensive and may be taken as exhaustive monographs on a group of tribes and non-tribes bearing common name.

The monograph on the Garo tribe of Assam was published by A. Playfair<sup>22</sup> in 1909. Playfair, a district commissioner of the Garo district for several years, learnt the language spoken by the Garos and conducted intensive research on both the hills and plains of Garo through their own languages. The monograph describes, on the pre-established pattern, the life and culture of the Garos and as the work is based mainly on field research the description is more detailed than the one presented by Hodson. The description of the Garo customs is more specific and at times he makes reference to the villages from where the materials have been collected. His knowledge of the Garo dialect enabled him to make a study of the Garo language and folklore in a more effective manner. He was also helped by an intelligent Garo priest in getting the materials on folklore and religious life, and may also have interviewed other Garos.

The monograph on the Cachari was written in 1911 by Rev. Sidney Endle<sup>23</sup> on the request of the Director of Ethnology, Government of Bengal and Assam. The work by Endle is based on his fortyone years acquaintance with the Cacharis. Endle's contact with the Cacharies was quite intimate, as in all parts of Cachar he established numerous village schools, built many church buildings and wrote a large number of books in Cachari.

Though the monograph on the Cacharis has been written within the same outline as provided by the Director of Ethnography, the main emphasis is on the folklore and linguistic studies of the Cachari. The book has further been enriched with editorial notes by P.R.T. Gurdon at appropriate places. In general, the Cacharis have been described as a semi-Hindu community and their institutions have been described on the basis of a detailed enquiry. The monograph, however fails to make any specific mention of the places or villages from where the material was collected.

Lieutenant Col. J. Shakespeare<sup>24</sup> wrote a comprehensive monograph on the inhabitants of the Lushai hills. The Lushais belonging to the Tibeto - Burman stock inhabit the interior hills beyond Chittagong (now in Bangladesh). The term is used to indicate many clans among whom the Lushais are also a specific clan. The monograph is divided into two parts. The first part deals with the Lushai clan, while the second part examines a large number of non-Lushai clans, like the Kukis, Thados, Lathas and others. Following the usual monographic style of description, the economic, social, political and religious organisations have been described in three chapters. The usual emphasis is on the folklore but elementary linguistic analysis have also been given the attention.

In Five chapters of part II is given, a brief description of the Jhum cultivators, semi-nomadic and other non-Lushai clans. In chapter I, more than a dozen other Lushai clans have been described; in the second chapter half a dozen tribes, influenced by the Lushai clans, are mentioned. In the third chapter, an ethnographic description of the old Kuki clans living in Manipur is presented. The concluding chapter includes legends, folksongs and a short note on the Lushai dialects.



Shakespeare's monograph on the Lushai and Kuki clans follows the traditional monographic model and presents a rounded description of a number of Lushai and non-Lushai clans. His approach, however, is somewhat distinct from the earlier efforts. Firstly, the book is adequately illustrated with objects of material culture, and secondly, it attempts to clarify the ethnographic status of a number of geographically scattered clans of the Kuki stock.

#### J.H. HUTTON

The regular flow of monographs on the tribes of the North-Eastern Himalayan region suffered a setback during the First World War. It was possible only, after the War, in 1921 for J.H. Hutton<sup>25</sup> to revive the series with the publication of his monograph on the Angami Naga. Hutton, an Anthropologist trained at Oxford, served in the Naga Hills for a long time. He learnt the dialects of some of the Naga tribes and with the help of several competent interpreters and investigators collected data for monographs on the Angamis and other Naga tribes.

Hutton has written this book on the model of the earlier monograph. However, the descriptions are more analytical, and the relevant and significant aspects of Angami culture are emphasised better. In the context of agriculture both the terrace and the Jhum cultivation have been adequately described and illustrated with examples from the two villages of Kohima and Viswama. For the first time the Angamis' terms of relationships, recorded in genealogical table have been collected and the pattern of inheritance has been described. The nature of crime and offence and the status of women are also described which incidentally were missing in the earlier monographs. Like Gurdon in his work on the Khasis, Hutton also undertakes an extensive description of the Angami religious beliefs and rituals, worship and festivals and *Gunas* (taboos) in the context of marriage and death. Magic, witchcraft and divination also find mention with possible elaboration. As regards folklore, unlike the earlier monographs, Hutton adopted the method of providing free translation into English.

A revised edition of this book,<sup>26</sup> 'The Angami Nagas', has been published recently with twenty-one pages of correction and additions by the late J.H. Hutton. The changes are not many—addition of a new preface, a few extra notes to the text, replacement of appendix IX on the orientation of the dead and the reduction of a few photographs. With these minimum changes, the book continues to give us the picture of the traditional Angami culture which is fast disappearing under the process of transformation.

In the same year Hutton<sup>27</sup> published another monograph on the Sema Nagas which was based on his eight years' experience at Mokokchung and Kohima. During this long period, Hutton learnt the Sema language and observed the Sema community and its individuals intimately. As an efficient administrator he used to settle all sorts of disputes of the Semas pertaining to the tribal customs. This further helped him in storing the information about their customs and culture. For the identification of local plants, he took the help of Botanists and for identifying unique birds he was aided by the administrator J.P. Mills. For collecting information and acting as interpreters, he had a host of Sema tribal chiefs and the Sema employees working under him.

As regards the frame for the ethnographic description, he followed monographs. In recording Sema folklore, however, he along with translations into English also recorded the original Sema text.



The materials on anthropometry, blood-groups and the Sema language have been put in a series of appendices. Taken together, these two monographs distinguished Hutton as an efficient and venturesome ethnographer, who could risk his life for the collection of facts and their verification. Though, in general, he follows the model of monographs laid down 15 years ago, he adds several new subjects like land tenure, position of women, kinship, terminology and so on. In addition to giving a picturesque description of the existing culture he also goes back in the tribal history of the Semas and the Angamis to establish the affinity of the Nagas with that of tribes inhabiting Asia and South-East Asia.

This book on the Sema Naga was also re-edited<sup>28</sup> and amended by the author himself and has again been available with the courtesy of the government of Nagaland. The revisions include the inclusion of two appendices: (1) one on the use of Sema tones, (2) additional notes in the text, (3) a new preface and (4) omission of twelve of the original photographs. Hutton, both in his new preface and appendix traces the Kuki Chin origin of the Sema. The present Sema tribe, according to him, resulted from a fusion of this invading race with the assimilated Sangtain, the former giving the Sema their constant urge for extension and migration, their political system, and belief in a single God, while the later contributed the form of ceremonial ritual, dress etc.

This new trend of publishing the old monographs which have been for long, out of print deserves special stimulation as it is likely to encourage the re-study of these tribals which are fast undergoing transformation under the impact of modern forces. The government of Nagaland as well as the Oxford University Press are to be congratulated on the production of these books.

Hutton's competence as an authority on the Naga tribe is also reflected in many papers published in a number of professional journals. In a series of notes in the Census volumes<sup>29</sup>, he attempts comparisons and establishes affinities among different Nagas and other tribes in Assam. He finds that the tribes in Assam migrated from several directions, the West, Southern China from the North-East. As regards the material culture, specially the weapons and implements the striking connection with the Indonesian types has been established.

J.H. Hutton<sup>30</sup> in a paper, 'Assam and the Pacific', compared the tribal cultures of the Polynesian and Melanesian Islands with those of the tribes of Assam. The Polynesian use of stone tools has a close parallel in the Naga hills. He also refers to the striking resemblance in shell ornaments etc. Such sporadic resemblances do not take us far. Any serious attempt to connect the two groups of tribes for establishing a total resemblance of cultural sequence should be based on a large number of similarities.

#### J.P. MILLS

Another administrator of equal competence and scholarship, J.P. Mills published his monographs on the Lhota Nagas in the same year when the two monographs of Hutton were released. Mills under the active supervision and encouragement of Hutton worked among the Lhota, for several years and published his book in 1922. While describing the Lhota culture, Mills was struck with the process of de-tribalization of the Lhotas, firstly under the influence of Christianity introduced by the American Baptist Mission and secondly that of Hinduism from the Nepalese settlers. In one village (Leshio) he noticed the absence of communal ceremonies for the last 20 years. The traditional youth dormitory Morang, had fallen into disuse, and the young men would not take trouble to repair the same. He however, reports that in a non-Christian village Sapatsho, the villagers rebuilt these buildings of the Morang and continued to use it.

The other monograph of Mills<sup>31</sup> is on the Ao, numerically the largest Naga tribe of Assam. Mills published his monograph on 'Ao' in 1926, while two other monographs on the same tribe, by W.C. Smith<sup>32</sup> an American missionary, and Dr. S.N. Majumdar<sup>33</sup> of the Indian Medical Service were published in 1925. These three works on the Ao, one by the British administrator, the other by a missionary and the third by an Indian doctor bring out the differences in their respective approaches and viewpoints.

Mill's description of the Ao is based on fieldwork during his stay as a sub-divisional officer at Mokokchung for seven years from autumn of 1917 to 1924. Based on his own close observation of the Ao culture, assisted by a number of European administrators and tribal employees as well as supervised by Hutton, the editor of the monograph series, Mills wrote a competent monograph on the Ao Naga. The author has made an attempt to estimate the social impact of the American Baptist Mission on the Ao society. He does not hesitate to bring to light the errors in approach of the missionaries towards tribal problems and suggests changes in their orientation. He criticises the arbitrary prejudices of the missionaries against all traditional customs, ceremonies and dances of the Ao on the plea that they belong to the old day of heathen dominance with head-hunting. Such a short-sighted and retrograde policy strikes at the very root of the whole social structure of the people, and its effects are bound to be unhealthy.

Smith's work on the Ao has emerged out of his primary interest in the Ao languages. His awareness that language and folklore need to be understood in the context of culture, coupled with inspiration from Hutton, led him to write a monograph on the Ao. This monograph was revised by several professors of the University of Chicago and specially by Prof. Frederick Starr who made a positive suggestion for the study of the Ao Nagas in relation to the Dayaks of Borneo and to the Igorots of the Phillipines.

Smith admits that several suggestions of Hutton have been incorporated in his monograph. He also accepts the fact that while he has generally followed the traditional model of monograph writing, certain departures, however, are evident. The chapters devoted to personal appearance, domestic life, social organization, and above all the place of Ao Nagas in the human family are all examples of this departure.

Smith analyses the extent and process of acculturation among the Ao Nagas. He observes that Christianity has forced the Ao Nagas to transcend their traditional norms. It has further brought about a new realignment. Smith goes on to suggest that the administrators should follow the principles formulated by ethnologists and sociologists as they occupy a vantage position conducive to the study of primitive peoples.

The third monograph on the Ao though not of anthropological significance and running into 55 short pages deserves special mention as it was the first to be attempted by an Indian National on the Assam tribe. The material for the book was collected when Majumdar was on duty in the Naga Hills. In his fieldwork he was assisted by his Naga bearer, and his brother, who was a student of the school at Mokokchung. The author has presented a generalised account of the way of life of the Ao which would satisfy only the general reader.

The third book by Mills<sup>34</sup> is on the Rengma Nagas which was published in 1937. This monograph is significant from several points of view. Firstly, it was written when J.P. Mills was honoured with the appointment as the Honorary Director of Ethnography in Assam after J.H. Hutton. Secondly, this work also concludes the series of monographs published by the





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