CHAPTER III

TRADITIONAL CULTURE OF THE LOTHAS

During the early part of nineteenth century some of the British colonial administrators such as T. C. Hudson (1911), J. H. Hutton (1921) and J. P. Mills (1922, 1926) made the first ethnographical account on the Naga society. It appeared to them that the Nagas were beginning to lose their distinctive features and were in danger of assimilating their traditional ways of life to certain aspects of western culture. Probably the emergence of such situation motivated them to record, each in his own way, the ways of life of the Nagas which are doomed to vanish.

J. P. Mills selected the Lotha Naga tribe and recorded their traditional way of life in origin as minutely as possible in 1922. Of course, previously an account on Lotha customs had also given by J. H. Hutton on pp. 362-370 of *The Angami Nagas* (Macmillan, 1921) and Dr. W. E. Witter on *Outline Grammar of the Lhota Naga Language* (Calcutta, 1886). This account provides us the traditional way of life of the Lotha people before the change has been taken place. A rapid change of culture among the Lothas begins from the time when they had come into contact with the British and Missionaries in the earlier time and with the various development opportunities in the post-independence period at later stage. Hence, the previous work been done by J. P. Mills on the Lotha tribe in 1922 is considered as the basis of the present study of culture change among the Lotha Nagas.
LOTHA WOMEN IN TRADITIONAL DRESSES
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A LOTHIA COUPLE IN CEREMONIAL DRESS
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The following brief account on traditional Lotha culture helps us to understand the customs and traditions of the Lotha people in the past.

Dress and Ornament
Dresses

The traditional dress like *rive* (commonly spoken of in Naga-Assamese as ‘*lengta’*) and mantle called *surhülm* were the only garment in the past days among the Lohas. The *rive* consists of a narrow piece of cloth ending with a broad flap. While putting it on, the narrow piece is wound once around the waist and joins at the back to form a sort of belt. Then it is brought through between the legs from the back, and up through the belt, allowing the broad flap being hung down in front. The flap is slightly broader. The *rive* is either white or dark blue with horizontal red stripes. It was the only garment for a man, but for boy’s first garment is the flap of one of his father’s discarded *rive* hung from a bit of string tied around the waist.

The *surhülm* worn by the women is bound slightly around the waist and the overlapping top corner is tucked in front of the right or left hips. The edge of the overlapping of *surhülm* is often ornamented with yellow orchid stalk. Among the Northern Lohas the *surhülm* is of black cloth with three narrow horizontal red stripes and a band of light blue embroidered with the red running across the middle of the cloth. The Southern women’s *surhülm* have no red stripes and the light blue band is broader and nearer to the top of the cloth. A girl attending five or six years may put on her first *surhülm* called *Konrosü* of white cloth with
dark blue border and a little red embroidery (*Lümthen-etssuk*) in the middle.

The Lotha body-cloths or shawls are of various patterns which indicates the number of ‘*genna*’ performed by the wearer. The first shawl of man is called *süümm*, for both boys and men who have not performed any social ‘*genna*’, but a man who has performed the first social ‘*genna*’ may wear the *Phangrhüp-sü*. It is a dark red cloth with broad stripes of red with a broader strip of white cloth, embroidered with very narrow black stripes, running across the middle of cloth parallel with the broad black stripes. Among the Southern Lothas the black stripes are narrower and a light blue band takes the place of white band. A Northern Lotha who has performed both social and head taking ‘*genna*’ wears a cloth called *Jümthe-sü*. Among the Southern Lothas, after performing the third social ‘*genna*’ is allowed to wear a shawl called *etha-sü*. A man who has completed the series of social ‘*genna*’ by dragging a stone wears a handsome cloth called *Longpen-sü*, a black cloth with bands of light blue about one inch broad, and three narrow lines of light blue at the top and bottom. A man of high status by dragging a stone more than once has four or five narrow lines at the top and bottom of his cloth, which is called *eslium-sü*. A very rare and prestigious cloth called *rikyu-sü* (enemy-frightening-cloth) is worn by a man who has taken enemy’s head and has performed a series of social ‘*genna*’. It is a dark red cloth with six broad red stripes, set close together at the top and bottom. The median band of white cloth is ornamented with a indigenous design representing human heads, mithun horns, elephants and tigers.
Unlike men, women clothes are rare. In putting of body-clothes of a woman, it is allowed to flung closely around the body so that the top outer corner lies over the shoulder or around tightly under the armpits. Unmarried Lotha girls usually wear a plain dark blue called *mok-sū* or *silpang*. On the night of her marriage, however, when she goes to her husband’s house, she puts on a very pretty cloth called *loro-sū*, a red cloth with a dark blue stripes, embroidered with big square of narrow white and red lines, giving a sort of tartar effect. But when her husband has dragged a stone called *long-zūi* she if may exchange her *loro-sū* for a *longpen-sū*.

**Ornaments**

A part from the body-cloth a man wears an ornament on any occasion when he wishes to be well dressed. In the hole of the helix of his ears a tuft of cotton wool are worn. Some other ornaments such as brass wire spiral, porcupine quills and yellow orchid stalk are also worn in the lobe of the ear. Armlets (*Khoro*) consisting of sections sawn from an elephant’s tusk is worn by man above the elbow. A man who cannot effort real ivory will sometimes wear *kboro* made of white wood, an imitation of the real *khoro*. Wristlets (*khekip*) of cowries sewn on cloth is worn by a man who has done head-taking ‘*genna*’. A red hair fringe (*khezūi*) is also worn on the wristlet.

Among the Lothas, a necklace composed of several strings of black beads made from the seeds of wild plantain called *eshe* and pendant of a red bead is commonly used by men. Sometimes cowried apron is also used by men for dancing purpose.
Lotha women’s ornaments are few and simple. Earrings are of plumes of pheasant bounded round with red or yellow orchid stalk. Necklaces made of plantain seeds, sometimes length-wise cut pieces of big conch-shell called *laküp* in front, are worn around the neck. Just above each elbow a thick round pewter armlets (*tivi*) and on each wrist a number of small flat brass bracelets (*rümüm*) are worn by the women. However, these ornaments are not indigenously made. They are brought ready made from the plains.

The full dress of Lotha warrior includes a wig, king-crow’s and hornbill’s tail feathers, pads of cotton-wool, sash, little basket and leggings. Lotha warrior wears on his head a wig (*dungkho*) made of either hair of the Himalayan black bear or the fur of the arms of male gibbon. The king-crow’s feather (*wotsi-emhi*) fixed on his wig signify the wearer’s status if he has done the head-taking ‘*genna*’ once, or if he has done it more than once, one hornbill tail’s feather (*Rüjüng-emhi*) is affixed for each occasion. A big pad of cotton wool is hung on his ears, and sticks in the lobe of his ear an ornament (*thera*) of scarlet-like feathers. Across the chest a sash (*Ryutsen*) is worn, but if he has dragged stone, two sashes are worn. A small basket attached with human hair called *Tssikyp* or *Tssükyp* in which the hair falls straight from the little basket, formed a tail-like dress is hung behind. The cowrie apron called *fitfo-rive* (cowrie-apron ‘*lengta*’) is also worn. An old ceremonial apron preserved as a heirloom by an old man of Akuk village is probably a specimen of the original type of this garment (Mills, J. P., 1922). The leggings called *Jori* or *Jorü* of plated red cane with a design in yellow orchid stalk is worn by a man during dancing ceremonies.
A LOTHA WARRIOR IN FULL DRESS
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Weapons

The main weapons of the Lothas are made of iron. Dao (lepok) is one of the most essential Lotha weapon which is used for every different purposes. It is used for falling trees as well as weapon in warfare. It is an all purposes weapon. Lepok is a straight-edged blade weapon of about twelve inches long and four inches broad at the top, narrowing down an inch or less at the base. The weapon is fitted into a bamboo handle which is tightly bound round with cane. Lothas have an obsolete type of dao. One of the most obsolete type of daos of the Lotha is known as Yandüng (king-size-dao). The most famous Yandüng is that of the Lotha hero Ranphan which is still preserved at Akuk village (Mills, J. P., 1922).

Another important Lotha’s weapon is the spear (Otsso). The spear is at the shaft decorated with a red dyed goat’s hair and sometimes human hair of a victim of head-hunting was also used in the past. There are different kinds of decorated shaft. The ceremonial spear carried by the religious officials is covered, almost the whole of its length, with long black and red dyed hair. One type of spear is called Tanro of which shaft is covered with red pile for about a foot of its length from the top. The other type is called Jovemo, the bottom shaft of which ends are in a deep fringe of dyed red hair. However, none of these shafts are of Lotha’s manufactured. They buy theirs from the Aos and Rengmas tribes. The spear is specially useful in warfare and tiger hunting.

The Lothas also used bow and arrows. The cross-bow (olo) is mainly used for shooting of birds and monkeys. It is made of hard wood. The arrows are pointed slips of bamboo with a little bit of hair-brush-
palm (*shavo*) fixed in a slit at the end as a feather. This weapon is effective up to about eighty metres. Lothas never used poison in their arrows.

In the olden days a shield called *Otssung* is always carried in war and at tiger and leopard hunts. It is made of a strong bamboo, sometimes a piece of buffalo’s skin dried in sun. Sometimes a piece of bear’s skin is stretched over a bamboo matting foundation. Lotha’s shields are of two types. The Northern Lotha shields are about four and half feet long and twenty inches broad with a rounded top and parallel sides but those of the southern Lotha’s are about the same size with a square and broader top. The battle shields were held firmly away from the body in order to check enemy’s spears which pierced them to prevent its reaching the body.

A strong cane war-helmet called *Kiven* are worn by the Southern Lothas as a protection for the head at tiger hunts and also at dances, which they often ornamented with various horns. But such helmets are not common among the Northern Lothas, except worn by the priests and a very senior warriors at the dance associated with the building of a new ‘morung’.

THE HOUSE

The Lotha houses are similar to each other. The walls are generally of bamboos and the roof of thatches (*lishii*) or palm-leaf (*oko*). The front portion of the house is semicircular with a door in the middle. The topmost roof of the house which slopes down the roof is bounded by several circlets of strong thatch fastened to the ridge pole, from where
A TYPICAL LOTHA HOUSE
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layers upon layers of thatch, sometimes dried palm leaf, are spread throughout the roof. In the middle of the projected roof is the bamboo post, which support the roof of the apse to meet the projecting roof of the main building. The porch (*mmphung-ki* or *kitajo*) is generally double roofed. The lower roof is like a special catchment for the porch and is separated from the main roof which projects upward. A Lotha house contains three sleeping rooms. The cubicle nearest to the porch is called *Lhurhyui*. The middle is called *Ohungo* and the back cubicle is called *tachungo*. There is no separate kitchen in a Lotha traditional house as cooking is done inside the same house. There is an open air platform called *Khantsingsa* or *Osa* attached in the rear in almost every Lotha house.

In the first chamber of the Lotha house are kept heavy articles such as pounding table (*Tsumpho*), liquor vat (*Ojen*) and pig's feeding trough (*Wokojakpfii*). On the wall of the front room are hung the feet of games which the owner of the house has killed. Spears are kept stuck in the ground at the main post. Along the sides of the inner cubicle are the small plank beds (*Tssingtso-pilng*) of the households. Around the hearth (*nehikvi*) are the small wooden stools (*evan*) about six inches high cut from one piece of wood. Most of the kitchen articles are kept on the bamboo shelves called *Pfiki* which is fixed to the beams of the house. Here are kept bundle of salt wrapped in leaves (*ma-khüng*), earthen pots (*Chonpfii*), basket of yeast (*Vinhti-nkhnip*), traps (*tsürhi*), mat (*ophiik*), carrying basket (*Phari/Okhiing*) and many other things. Lotha house contains very few drinking cups. Lotha cup is a folded plantain leaf or a bamboo mug. The usual type of dish is a shallow wooden one, with no
HOUSEHOLD IMPLEMENTS

BAMBOO 'CHUNGA' FOR CARRYING WATER

BASKET (Khang)

SPEAR

WINNOWING FAN

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leg, called *Ophi*. Some households also use a wooden dish on a raised stand called *Phikhyu*. In the bamboo matting of the walls are stuck daos and bamboo spoons called *Yenkuk* or *Otsüp*. The hollow bamboo, *Jüthi* or *Othi*, in which water is carried up from the spring or pond are kept leaning against the walls. Over the hearth is a suspended bamboo platform (*tsaphyoro*) on which dry meat and stuff and things as are in continual use are kept.

**MANUFACTURE**

**Spinning**

Spinning, like dyeing and weaving, is entirely done by the women. In the process of spinning, the seeds of the cotton are first extracted by being rolled on a flat stone called *Khongkho-nhyaklong* with a small stick, used as a rolling pin. The clean cotton is flicked with the string of an instrument called *loko* and the fluffed cotton is gently rolled between the hands into "sausage" and thread is ready to spin. Then the thread is spun on a spindle (*hümtsi*). The Lothas spindle is a very much primitive type. To spin the thread, the tip of the spindle is wetted with tongue. The spindle is then spun clockwise with one hand against the thigh. The "sausage" of cotton is held in another hand, and the end of it is laid against the wetted tip of the spindle till it catches and the thread (*oying*) begins to form. Thus the cotton is spun in this process until it forms into thread. The thread is next hardened by dipping in a hot starch (*tsotsu*) for about five minutes after which the threads are strung on a stick to dry. When the thread is ready for weaving it is wound into a thread-ball (*Yingchii-Kholong*).
Dyeing

The Lotha way of dyeing is done in a more primitive way. Generally, three colours such as red, dark blue and light blue are used for dyeing by the Lothas. Red dyeing is considered as a risky job for it is likely to bring on dysentery. Therefore the industry is carried on by only a few Lotha villages such as Akuk, Changsii and Okotso (Mills, J. P., 1922). To make red dye, the root of *Rubia sikimensis* (*Karung*) is pounded up with another leaf called *ntawo*. They are boiled in water and the thread is put in for a while in the boiling mixture. The thread is kept for three days in the pot and after which it is allowed to take out and dried. The result is red-dyed thread.

Dark blue dye is made from the leaf of *Strobilanthes flaccidi-folius* (*Khyimmii-vo*). The leaves are pounded and boiled with water. The thread is dipped in the mixture for about half an hour then is allowed to dry. The result is a navy blue-like colour. To make light blue colour the leaves which have been already boiled and used for making dark blue dye are drained and dried and kept for a year. They are then broken up and mixed with cold water and white ash and kept for overnight and after which the thread is put in and left for a day or more days if the dye is weak.

In the process of dyeing it is restricted for a woman to indulge in sexual intercourse or to eat beef, goat’s flesh, dog meat, dried fish, fermented soya bean or any sort of food with strong smell. If a man or a boy were to dye a piece of thread he would never again have any luck in fishing and hunting.
Weaving

Weaving is common among the Lotha women for every woman is expected to be able to weave cloth for her husband and children. The weaving apparatus are made of wood and bamboo called *Tsirho-Chunghung*. A beam (*tsikhüm*) of bamboo of about three feet long is firmly fastened to the wall of the house or any other suitable support in a horizontal position and at a height of about two feet from the ground. On this arc slipped two loops (*tsisi*) of bark string, in which is put the other bar (*ncho*) of the loom. The loops are set apart at equal distance to the breadth of the piece of cloth to be woven. The lower part is attached at both ends of the weaving belt called *ephi*. A thin stick of bamboo put across the strings is put in position. Then, towards the weaver, the lease-rod (*chunghung*) is put in close to the thin stick. Below the lease-rod the beating-sword called *tsitüm* is inserted. The twine which is to form the heddle-loops (*ena-zhii*) is then tied closely onto the left end of the beating-sword and laid along with it. Having arranged the apparatus in proper position the cloth is woven by following the weaving procedures.

Pottery

The Lotha traditional pot is round, and slightly contracted at the top, with a curved rim to facilitate being lifted off the fire. It is shaped by patting gently the pot while still wet with a flat piece of wood. The clay is usually obtained from the side of small streams. The clay is properly broken up and kneaded on a flat stone with a little water. After being left overnight it is moistened again and kneaded properly. The process of making pot is simple. The round base is first formed and on top of it a wall of clay is built and gently patted well on the base with one hand. The
SPINNING
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WEAVING
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pot is then shaped with the help of a small piece of flat wood (*Pfiutumphen*) held in the other hand. The pot is then put to dry in the sun while other pots are being made.

Having being dried, the pots are carefully taken to the platform of wood which is usually built outside the village or in the fields. The pots are then laid upside down on the platform of wood with twigs and hays piled on them and burnt. While burning the pots, the potter must maintain certain precautions, that is, she must not indulge in sexual intercourse and must not eat any sort of food with strong smell. If the procedures are not followed strictly, it is said, the pots being fired will go damaged. Among the Lothas, pot manufacturing is exclusively or preferably done by a middle aged woman.

**Blacksmithy**

Among the Lothas blacksmithy, which is a part time vocation for some of the people, is regarded an unlucky occupation. It is believed that no blacksmith lives long enough after he stops work. The vocation is, therefore, restricted to the family members of which have been blacksmith in the past and as a result of which the Lotha blacksmiths are few and far between.

Forges where agricultural implements and ceremonial weapons are made still exists in almost every Lotha village in the district although their number is disappearing. Though implements and weapons like spear-heads, daos, knives, scrapers, hoes are still produced in the villages for self consumption, some weapons and implements so required by the
Lothas are also produced and supplied by the neighbouring tribes like Aos and Rengmas.

The Lothas used only soft iron which is usually obtained from the plains of Assam. The finished product is tempered by dipping in salt or bamboo juice water.

The tools of the Lotha's blacksmith are simple. It consists of two sections of bamboo set up perpendicularly side by side in a clay base. Then into each of these is jotted a piston bound round all over with feathers. The bamboo-tubes, which is emerged together at the fire, are attached at each of the hole of the bamboo piston case. Then with the help of these pistons an efficient valvular action is performed by the assistant who holds one in each hand.

So attached in beliefs of misfortune with the whole trade of blacksmith that no house is ever built on any site of an old forge. To bring a piece of dross from a forge into a house would amount to cause illness to the households.

**Basketry**

The Lothas are expert in making basket of various types. Bamboo and cane work is an important industry which the Lothas inherited from their forefathers. Thus every Lotha is capable of making basket for the household, but the work of tougher things such as cane helmets is left to experts. Parts of their ornamental dresses such as fillets, leggings, head-gears woven of cane have a great artistic significance. Basket and mat in wide range are made of bamboo slit (omvū) for various household
purposes. For rough basket stripes of fresh bamboo is used but can is considered more valuable and is reserved for further use for making of articles which are meant to last longer time. For rough work a chequer pattern is used, for shield, cane helmet and grain basket a twill pattern is used. For Lothas no women are allowed to perform any basket work of any kind.

**Wood Carving**

Usually rough planks are hacked out with a dao. It is quite wasteful method as the whole thickness of a tree has to go to make each plank. Pounding table is made of solid tree trunk. Most artistic such as dishes with legs, saucers, platters and mugs are manufactured out of wood. The main post of ‘morung’ is carefully carved with conventional representation of hornbill’s and mithun’s head.

**Beads**

The Lothas are expert in making of traditional black beads (*eshe*) made from the seed of a particular species of wild plantain (*sheyu*). This kind of job is particularly confined to women and exists chiefly among the Southern Lothas. Both the ends of the seed are chewed off. Then the seeds are pierced with a bamboo needle and strung, and the strings are rolled on a flat stone till the bead becomes cylindered and polished.

**LIVESTOCK**

Mithuns (*tssiro*), which are regarded as a sign of wealth are no longer kept in large number by the Lothas. Large numbers of ordinary cattle (*mangsu*) are brought in from the plains. They are usually kept for
meat and breeding but Lotha never milk his cattle, simply, because it is not the custom to do so. However, he will drink milk if it is offered to him. The black and black-and-white breeds known as Süphi and Phyantso are regarded by the Lothas as indigenous to their country. Buffaloes (zhūzhū) are sometimes brought in from the plains but they are never bred by the Lothas and are useless for sacrificial purpose, as they are regarded as ‘stupid’ big beast. The cattle are not reared at home but allowed to run loose in the jungle. Every house has got pigs and it is meant for meat and sacrificial purposes as well. Goats are not reared in large number. White goats with long hair are considered valuable as this hair is sold to be dyed red and used for all kinds of ornaments. Dogs are reared mainly for two purposes, for pet as well as for meat. However, hunting dogs are never eaten by the Lothas. The Lotha fowls are of much resemblance to the red jungle fowl (Yipyaa). It is also reared for home consumption and sacrificial purposes as well.

FOOD AND DRINK

Rice is the staple food for the Lothas. Meat is preferred if obtainable, but the Lothas will eat most things in a little quantity. Their diet includes the meat of all domesticated animals and most wild animals, birds, fishes, bees and hornet grubs, large spiders, a kind of beetle, white ants, cultivated plants and innumerable jungle leaves and berries. Certain birds, animals and fishes are forbidden. The main reasons why certain birds, animals and fishes are not eaten are that either they are obviously unclear or because they are thought likely to impart their properties to the eater or to his children. But such type of tabooed foods are not restricted to the aged people and people who had no more children for it does not
matter what happens to them. Eating of wild dog may also cause raging thirst. There was a case in Akuk village of a man who could never sit without going out for a drink after being eaten just a little of the skin of such animal (Mills, J. P., 1922).

Lothas do not have much items in his food menu. The normal food item consists of rice, vegetables, bamboo shoots, dry fish and occasionally meat. The most favourite food is bamboo pickle (rüjon-machihan) made out of the hearts of young bamboo shoots pounded with water then dried and boiled when required.

Generally, meal is taken thrice a day. The first meal (enyathing-etso) is served early in the morning, that is, before or at sun rise. At noon the lunch (nshi) is served. The evening meal (mmyu-etso), the third meal, is served again at sun set. All the meals consist of the same food items as it was served in the morning.

Usually tea is not taken but instead soko or zütsü (rice beer) is drunk. He drinks rice beer both at meal and between meals. However, he may drink only water if he can get nothing else. Lotha drinks two kinds of rice beer, Zütsü and Chümcho. The purest form of rice beer which is extracted from the fermented stuff inside the liquor-vat itself is the zütsü. The fermented rice from which the zütsü has been drained off is put again into a pot and hot or cold water is poured into it. Then it is kneaded, and the result brew is Chümcho, a light beer.

The process of preparing rice beer starts with yeast (vümhi) which is mixed with the boiled rice to ferment in a basket lined with leaves.
Next day the liquor begins to run off and is collected in a hollow-bamboo (jiithi). This is the most potten form of rice beer called ziitsi. The fermented rice beer from which the ziitsi has been already drained off is mixed with hot or cold water and extract a lighter brew called chümcho. Thus prepared the rice beer by the Lothas.

MEDICINE AND DRUG

According to the Lotha traditional belief, when a person is ill it is generally ascribed to evil spirits (Tsüngrham) or the wandering of a patient's soul (omon). In such case a medicine man (ratsen) is called for to extract the foreign matters which are believed to have been introduced by evil spirit into his body and caused him sick.

For other physical illness the following remedy is applied. Fat pork is eaten as an aspirin. For an emetic, chicken dung and rat dung are whipped up with water and the mixture is drunk. For diarrhoea the roasted goats' hoof or the gall of either cow or pig is taken. For stomachache and intestinal worms an infusion of the nshidong (stereopernum-chelonoides) is drunk. For indigestion and stomach trouble a juice of wild lemon leaves (tssoshü-vo) is used. For cough the green pentagonal-shaped berries (yenkhothi/yingkhothi) are chewed. Bat's flesh is used as a tonic for sickly children. For headache the leaf of Bischoffia jarania (Kižhi-vo) is laid on the forehead. For minor wounds and cuts particular plants called yanpyaro or mhatysurhyu leaves are crushed and the extracted juice is applied to the wounds. For stomachache, chickenpox, and smallpox the juice of a particular berry called Thimpak is used. A lotion made from Khvărözhüt bark is used to
disinfect wounds. Soot is also applied for skin diseases. For burns the ash of the leaves of the *Woropendung* is applied. For dog bite a whisker of the dog which bit the man is burnt and put on the wound. To bring a boil to a head a little yeast is damped and rubbed over it and when ready it is lanced with a sharp splinter of bamboo. To get rid of warts a black and yellow beetle called *Potso-tssiro* (God’s mithun) is crushed on them. For a sprain of any kind the common remedy is to draw blood at the affected area, but for more serious sprain the swelling is cupped and the contaminated blood is drawn out.

As far as drug is concerned the Lothas do not have much varieties. Home-grown tobacco is preserved by drying the leaves in the sun for three or four days. Then they are stamped and rolled dry again. The result is a coarse smoking tobacco. The stuff is put in the short pipe called *mikhvi*kvi. Sometimes it is also smoke in a big pipe called *mirumikhvi*kvi. In this process all the smoke is drawn through the water, which becomes nothing but very dirty diluted nicotine. This liquid is carefully kept and sipped. Using of opium is unknown among the Lothas. Poison is extracted from the root of a common flowering plant called *Rhynza*. It is also used as rat poison by mixing it with the boiled rice.

**THE VILLAGE**

A Lotha village is generally built on the very top of a ridge. The site of the village must be easily defensible from a Naga point of view, and near a spring. To defend his village the Lotha used to dig a deep ditch cut across the ridge in a conveniently narrow place. The bottom and
A TYPICAL LOTHA VILLAGE
(To face p. 57)

THE HEAD-TREE (MENKIDUNG)
(To face p. 58)

VILLAGE LUCK STONE
(OHA-LONG)
(To face p. 69)
the edge of these were studded with sharp bamboo spikes (otssi). The inner defence was a stout fence of sticks and bamboos.

The village is built along a ridge and has main entrance at either end, with small path running down to the field from the side of the village. It consists one long street with a line of houses on each side facing inward. Along the side of the street are the ‘genna’ stone (longzi) standing in front the house of their owners. Every Lotha village has a sacred tree called Menkidung (head tree) on which the skulls of the killed enemies are hung, during the head hunting stage. The village luck-stones (Oha-long) are also preserved at the foot of the head tree. Every village is divided into two or more sectors called Yankho. Sometimes demarcation of the sectors are made according to the feature of the site of the village such as Hayili-Yankho in Akuk village (Mills, J. P., 1922). In some villages the sectors are demarcated by the division of clans such as Murry-Yanko or Kikon-Yankho in Wokha village (Mills, J. P., 1922). In every village there used to be a common bachelor’s house called Chiimpho.

The Lothas do not keep their rice in their houses like the Angami Nagas, but in a little thatched granaries (oson) which are raised on posts above the ground and in neat little group just outside the village. By this arrangement the food supply is generally saved even if the village is burnt.
THE MORUNG

The "morung" (Chümpho) is a common bachelors' house found in each sector of every Lotha village. It is the sleeping place for every Lotha boy from the time he first puts on his dao-holder till he marries.

The front parch of the Lotha "morung" is well decorated with figurines like birds and animals. The roof is low in the middle and curved up to join at the front and back. The roof is thatched with either thatching grass (lishii) or palm leaf (oko). The eaves reached almost to the ground and brought forward in a semicircle in front to form a sort of projected porch roof. The front post called Hünts'en is elaborately carved with conventional representations of mithun heads and hornbills. Behind it is another carved post called Hünts'en-Tachungo. The ridge of the "morung" is projected a few feet in front, and is ornamented with small straw figures of men and tuft of straw placed at regular intervals.

The inside of the Chümpho is not pleasant at all. It is rather dark, dirty, smoky and stuffy. The floor is leveled with earth and sometimes with bamboo platform. It has no window but on each end of the house is a door and a passage. On either side of the passage are cubicles with bamboo partitions, along the side of which are sleeping benches of rough-hewn planks or bamboos. Fire place is made in the middle of the house.

Outside the "morung" is a large platform of solid wood and on which the young people and their friends sit and relax.
A LOTHA MORUNG (CHÜMPHO)
(To face p. 59)
For the Lothas “morung” is the centre of all the village activities. Originally the “morung” was the fortress of the village where the warriors used to sleep and guard the village. It also served as a training centre for warfare as raids were planned and discussed in it. Besides, the young people also learnt the art of crafting and socialization during their ‘morung’s life. Traditional customs and norms of the society are imparted during their stay in the ‘morung’.

AGRICULTURE

The Lothas in general are agriculturist. Jhum is the main form of activation among the Lothas. The selected piece of jungle is cut and burnt, and the cultivated land for two years is allowed to go back to jungle, under which it remains for a period varying from four to fifteen years. But a man in short of land may cultivate each piece at short intervals. On average among the Lothas a piece of land is cultivated once in nine or ten years. The whole village cultivates in one block, each man having his own piece of land. Usually the jungle is cut between December to January. The creepers, bushes and saplings are cut close to the ground. Big trees are left standing, but branches are trimmed so that they shall not shade the crops of the field.

The field is left till March to let it dry. On the appointed day a man who is to start the fire is selected. Then the chosen person makes fire with a fire stick and sets the dry jungle a light. After which everyone joins in and sets fire the fields in a long line and allow it to sweep the whole field from bottom to the top. The next day is emung. After that the process of clearing of the field begins. The unburnt twigs are removed
A JHUM FIELD IN WOKHA DISTRICT
(To face p. 60)
while logs are collected to build a little barrier (*Oli-ejo*) to prevent the fertile soil from being washed away. The field is hoed with the help of digger (*Chukchii*) and is ready for sowing.

Before the first seed is sown a ceremony called *Rhyuven* is performed by the village priest (*Oyamo-Pviitii*). Having done the seedling ceremony, the villagers start sowing seeds in their fields. The process of seed sowing begins with a little digger (hoe) in one hand and a little hole is scratched in the ground and seeds rice holding in another hand are allowed to fall four to five seeds rice in the hole, which is filled in with a stroke of the digger. In this operation everyone helps each other on reciprocal exchange of labour. From the time the seed is sown and till the crops are ripened the farmers are kept busy all round the year fighting the weeds in the fields with the help of scrappers (*ehe*).

When the crops are half grown another ceremony called *Mvuthan-ratsen* is performed by the priest to prevent the crops being damaged by a small white grub (*ora*).

When the rice crops come into the ear a series of ceremonies are performed again to ensure a good crop. The ceremony of *Amungkhüm*, *Ronsynkhum* and *Likhüm* are performed in a series by this stage. In Akuk village *Ronsynkhum* ceremony is performed after the *Larvon* “genna”, but in other Lotha villages it may be done either before or later.

When the crop begins to ripe the farmer is kept busy protecting it from the ravages of beasts and birds. Wild animals are driven away by
shouting or clapping two pieces of bamboo together or blowing a bamboo trumpet (Pvi-Pvi). Sometimes scarecrows are hung in the field to scare away the birds from eating the crops.

Just before the crops begins to ripe the ceremony of eating the first fruit (ethan-etso) is performed by the priest first, and after him other households in the village. This ceremony ushers in the harvesting of the new crops. As soon as the crops are ripened about August another ceremony called lirithung is performed in honour of Ronsyu (God of blessing).

The crop is harvested with a sickle (Vekviro). The harvested crops are held together by one hand while the other hand cut the plants just below the ears. Then the ears are thrashed on mat outside the field-hut (iliki). The grains are temporarily stored in the field-hut. Then the grains are carried up as fast as possible. If the fields are a long way from the village, small temporary granaries (echen-ranki) are built half way the field and stores the grains till the field-hut has been emptied. The grains are carried up in a carrying basket called Okhyak and brought them home to be stored in the granaries.

Besides the rice, there are also a number of subsidiary crops like maize (Tsüngonrho), millet (oden), chilly (machi), job's tears (omūm), yam (mani), lentil (orho), soya bean (lünkyinmtsung), gourd (shümo), cucumber (lishakthi), oil seed (pentsü), black sesame (penjung), brinjal (khonhlyu) etc., are generally sown along the edge of the field or in patches among the rice.
Thus the agricultural activities come to an end by the month of November with the annual festival called *Tokhvì-emong*. This festival marks the end of the Lotha's agricultural operation for the year until the next round comes again about December.

**RELIGION**

The religion of the Lotha is of that type which is vaguely termed as Animism. He does not believe in Supreme God and hence he has vague concept about Supreme Being. However, the deities called *Potso* to whom he believes and sacrifices are some of them neutral and benevolent, but if they are not kept in good temper with proper sacrifices they are malevolent. He sincerely believes on what he conceives to be his religion and he cheerfully devotes to it and meet his end like a man when time comes. He considers these *Potsos* as nearest equivalent to High God. The *Potsos* who effects us resembles men in appearance.

**Divine Visit**

The *Potsos* are believed to have visited the earth from time to time and holds converse with the village seer (*Ratsen*). These High Gods comes down to the village at least once in a year and conveys the events that year the village is going to enjoy. Before the divine visit the attendant is sent a head who appears to the village *Ratsen* in a dream and tells him that the High God will be visiting him on such and such a day. On receiving the warning the *Ratsen* prepares for the forthcoming of *Potso* visit and refrains himself from eating of flesh of anything killed, though he eats meat dried before. On the night when *Potsos* are expected to come everyone in the village is advised to go to bed early and remain
silent. That night the *Ratsen* sleeps in a separate room in his house. Then the same night the *Potsos* comes and converses with the *Ratsen*, who was in a trance stage, in a language unknown to human and shows him symbolic articles such as tiger, yarn and rice etc., from which the future can be foretold. The symbol of tiger would mean the farmers fight with weeds of the field, yarn would mean entanglement or trouble of various kind, and if the yarn is red then it would mean that the village will experience bloodshed during the year. Rice symbolized a good harvest for the farmers.

In the next morning, after the divine visitors have left, the villagers would go to the house of the *Ratsen* to see the marks of the spear butts left on the floor of the house. They are easily distinguishable, it is said, from the ordinary marks of spear butts, for they are much deeper and smaller. The day after the divine visit is kept as *enung*, a day of rest from works, as a mark of respect of that event. In the same way all the Lotha villages would keep a day of rest from works as and when news of the divine visit reaches them.

The Lothas believes in the existence of several deities parallel to High God (*Potso*) and the harmful deities represented by the *Tsüngrham*, a demon. He categorizes the deities according to their nature and functions, some of which are discussed below:

**Ronsyu (Field spirit/Spirit of harvest)**

It is the godling of the agricultural realm. This godling is responsible for the fruitful yield of the field and is adored with praises
and sacrifices. Hence every village and every man is attached a *Ronsyu*, by whose favour the crops of the field are good and fruitful. It is believed that the *Ronsyu* may become stingy at times and withhold blessing if he is not pleased. Adoration with a pig and chicken sacrifice is made to this *Ronsyu* during seed sowing time and harvest, and also at mid year to invoke blessings for the year.

**Sükhyingo and Ngazo (Jungle spirits)**

These godlings are another benevolent gods. *Sükhyingo* and *Ngazo*, another jungle spirit who is practically identical with *Sükhyingo*, are the keepers of all the animals and birds. They grant and withhold the games to the hunters and food gatherers. *Ngazo* is said to have a twisted and stiff neck which cause him to look in one direction only, neglecting the others. Hence a person to whose direction the *Ngazo* turns is said to have blessed. One important characteristic of *Sükhyingo* is its association with the unseen spirit in all living beings. Therefore it is also believed that all living beings, whether human or animals have their *Sükhyingo*.

**Jüpvüö (Water master)**

*Jüpvüö* is the lord of water. This godling is believed to have a being like human with hairs of enormous length, who lives at the bottom of deep river or pool and uses human skulls as hearth-stones. Small offering is made at least once in a year to invoke its blessing for *Jüpvüö* withholds or grants the fishes of the water to the fishermen.
Lüngkumvü (Fairies)

The Lüngkumvü are a group of jungle spirits who are believed to have been inhabiting in a very dense and foggy jungles. They can be seen with human eyes in some occasions, and their speeches are often heard by human being. It is also said that these spirits speak all types of languages and dialects. The jungles are believed to be hunted by these wailing Lüngkumvü. A famous haunt is below the village of Akuk on the northern slope of the range (Mills, J. P., 1922). Men are often tempted to follow the wailings of these fiends. If they do will be affected with such madness that they think level ground is steep ground and steep ground level ground. These spirits carry human beings away from their homes to unknown destinations in the jungle and river. They never allow human being fall or injure while carrying them across deep ravines or mountains. They travel from one place to another carrying their victim for a number of days without food and drink but never allowed to die in their hands. Lüngkumvü are believed to have possessed a magical bag, which when seized from them they would become ineffective and would implore the man to return it and keep on insisting till it is returned.

Tsüngrham

The Tsüngrham are the evil spirits or demons who cause every sickness to human being. These invisible fiends who out of sheer malice causes sickness to men by detaining their souls or by intruding foreign objects like hair or bits of wood or small stones into their bodies, making it necessary to call in a Ratsen to extract them. These evil spirits are believed to have dwelled a remote uninhabitable places like spring, empty and hollow places and appears to man in the form of different objects
such as birds, animals or snakes and then disappears. A person who happens to encounter such spirits generally returns home sick and sometimes dies if proper sacrifice with chicken, egg, ginger and charcoal are not offered to redeem the soul of the victim.

**Beliefs and Practices**

The religion of the Lotha teaches no moral code. The blessings it offers to him are material but not spiritual. The virtue in this world is vaguely believed to be returned with joy and happiness in the next life. Yet many Lothas lead a clean, straight, honest and virtuous life.

**Divination and Omens**

The Lotha has different methods and devices to perform divination. He has several means to consult the omen. Killing of chicken by strangling is one way of performing divination as it is said to have furnished the means of reading the omens. The diviner seeks to know the will of the deities by way of reading the position of the entrails and position of legs etc. Another way of divination is to read the omen from the skins of pieces of ginger when it is cut off and fell from the hand. Breaking of egg is said to have furnished another means of divination, the omen being indicated from the falling of the shells. Omen is also read from the fire-thong. It is believed to be the most effective means of getting the omen, the answer being rendered by the nature of its bustings. Any happening associated the head-tree also provide an omen to the village community. If the tree grows well it would mean increase of population of the village, but if the tree withers, it would mean the reverse. Unusual falling of the branch is a sign of calamities or death
within the village. Therefore, for a Lotha by divination he seeks to know the will of the deities and assess whether an undertaking such as hunting, fishing is worth performing. This shows that reading omens play an important part in any expedition or venture in life.

**Dream**

Dream has a great significance and meaning in Lotha’s life. He believes that the souls of the dead spirit visits and communicates him in dreams, and his own soul leaves his body and wanders. Thus, if a man dreams that he is in a certain place he knows that his soul is under the influence of some evil spirits that it needs to appease them with sacrifice. To dream of carrying a child along the Road of the Dead would mean the child will die, and the dreamer may die too. But to dream that he is driven back by the dead men means that he will live long life. To dream of dead men is unlucky for it means that the dead men have come to call the dreamer. If a man dreams a successful hunt just the night before the hunting it is considered to be unlucky attempt for it means that the dreamer’s spirit has been out in hunting and driven all the games away. To dream of digging earth would mean death among the close relatives of the dreamer. In the same way every dream carries a meaning and predicts the future of a man that is to come.

Among the Lothas many dreams are believed to have certain symbolized meanings. For example, dreaming of water symbolizes real crops and plenty of harvest. Dreaming of fire symbolizes clear and sunny weather. To dream anything red such as red cloth or red spear symbolizes bloodshed and means that some one will get hurt.
Luck Stone

The *Oha-long* (luck-stones) are smooth, shiny, water-worn stone and varying in sizes. They are believed to have possessed certain supernatural powers for bringing good fortune to the keepers. *Oha-long* are of two types: village *oha-long* and family or private *oha-long*. Generally, village luck-stones are kept under the head-tree or at the foot of the main post of the 'morung'. Individual or family luck-stones are properly kept inside the house or granaries. Those kept under the head-tree are usually large, and on them the fortune of the whole village depends. The distinguish mark of luck-stone is that it should be round and smooth, and be found resting on the ground in little nest it has made for itself.

The private *oha-long* are of different kinds: fertility of offspring-oha, rice-oha, and money-oha. The fertility-oha which is kept at home by the family is meant to favour more family members rapidly. The rice-oha is kept in the granary. A good crops of the field and plenty harvest depends upon this particular *oha-long*. For a successful trade depends on the money-oha. The possessor of such stone which bring good luck in trade keeps it under his money.

The luck-stones are treated with great respect. They are carefully maintained and small offering is made to them during every harvest and *Oyan-tssoa* "gennas". During the *Pikhvčak* "genna" all the possessors of rice-oha inspects theirs with washed hands – both before and after.
Soul and Life after Death

Lotha considered that a man has two distinct souls called Omon and Mïingyi respectively. The Omon, which is visible in the form of the man’s shadow and shows its good sense by disappearing into him when the sky is cloudy. It leaves a man sometimes before death in cases of serious illness. It may just wander about, in which case it is often induced by the proper ceremonies to return, or else it may go straight along the Road of the Dead to the next world, in which case the man dies. The mïingyi leaves a man at the moment of death and go straight along the Road of the Dead, where it joins the Omon which has already gone ahead except in case of very sudden death.

The soul leaves a man at the moment of death and goes straight to the World of the Dead. The World of the Dead (echâli) lies under our earth. Here the dead lives like the living people. Those who had done good during their life time, leads a prosperous happy life and those who are not leads a life of poverty and misery. The entrance to the World of the Dead is through a cave called echükvi on the precipitous eastern face of the mythological mountain of Wokha hill called Tïyi-Phonglan. It is believed that every dead spirit or soul goes to the World of the Dead through this cave. Life in the land of dead is certainly not regarded as everlasting, but the Lotha do believe that there is life after death, though he is vague as to what the next stage would be. There are also some people who believes that man die again and become flies. Some other think every man passes through nine successive lives and then cease to exist.
Religious Officials

Every Lotha village has their own priest. This priest, besides performing the sacrificial rites of the household and village, is the custodian and interpreter of religious beliefs. He is also a fortune teller. The secrets are made known to him by the deities. Falling into a trance, a priest may experience some acquaintances with the spirits and convey the divine message to the people.

There is a distinction among the priests, sacrificers, sooth-sayers, diviners and medicine men in the sacredatal aspects. The priest (Pvitti) is the priest of the village. He must be without blemish in all respects. The office is either hereditary or charismatic, but once filled it is a life long position. He is the highest religious official of the whole village. He wields spiritual influence. He belongs to the priestly clan with a long standing repute in the society. A principal priest is associated by a junior priest called Yinga. He succeed to the office in the event of death of the senior man or priest of his own paternal lineage, the investiture being governed by colourful ceremonies. The priest performs important ceremonies such as inaugurating harvest undertaking, inauguration of sowing, founding of a new village and holding of other festivals. He is maintained by the seasonal gifts from the people during the religious ceremonies.

Ratsen (village-seer) is the medicine man or woman of the village. The post is hereditary or charismatic in nature and is held for life. He or she is the medium of divine communication to the people, as in the case of God's visitation as well as predicting events and diagnosing illness. He
or she also treats sickness and interprets dreams. In some way he or she acts as prophet, a surgeon and counselor of the village. He or she prescribed fees for the service to the people.

*Ha-vae* is another religious official who mediates dead spirits and their living relatives. This post is usually held by women. In the evening of a person’s death the family would prepare a sacrificial food and keep for the night at the house of the *Ha-vae*. The spirit of the dead person would tell his or her wishes to the living family, and the medium would pass the message along to the bereaved family.

Besides this religious officials, there are also other minister of lower circles, like those in charge of funerals, child initiations and family rites. Such minor officials are not appointed by the people formally but the persons concerned volunteer by virtue of their experience and age. They receives light fees in kind from the people served.

**Life Cycle Ritual**

In the olden days when a child is born in a Lotha family a “genna” sort of ceremony is observed by members of the family for six days for a male child and five days for a female. During those days they are restricted to go for any field work for themselves, but they can go to other’s field for work if required. The mother is also restricted to go out of the house or walk with people other than her family members.

Soon after the birth, the mother is given chicken soup and rice. This continues for about a week or so, till the mother was physically quite fit. In the case of a boy on the sixth day and girl on fifth day the
ears were pierced and a name is given to the baby. This ceremony is called *Ngaro-Mvüchuk* (child naming ceremony). During this ceremony a formal dress or head-gear is given to him or her.

As and when death occurs of a human being in the village a sacrifice of a chicken is immediately followed which is then hung above the corpse on the position of its head toward the corpse and it is necessary that its wings are kept on the walls of the house until after burial. If the deceased was an influential person then a dog tied with a string or rope is brought to the apartment where the deceased lies and the string or rope is tied to the hand of the corpse and the dog is killed and removed.

The corpse is then decked with full robes and enmeshed with precious ornaments and is kept inside the coffin. The coffin is hued out a tree. In some cases, the deceased is armed with weapons to be capable of fighting against evil spirits which seek to obstruct the soul in its journey to the land of the dead. The custom of killing a dog is to give the soul a companion and killing of the chicken is to scratch the path. The grave is fenced. Then over the grave the belongings of the deceased are kept or displayed by supporting them on a strong laid crosswise against the weight. Food is offered to the deceased in a basket. Torches of fire are kept on the grave at night time for six days for a man and five days for a woman.
CEREMONIES

Public Ceremonies

Among the Lothas the agricultural year begins with a ceremony called *Pickhvüchak*. Both the Southern and Northern Lothas observes this ceremony just before clearing the jungle in their fields. As soon as the *Pvüti* (priest) announces the day on which the ceremony is to be held, each “morung” boy prepares meat and cooked for it to be sacrificed. The night just before the ceremony is a restricted night and sexual intercourse is forbidden. On the day of *Pikhvüchak* ceremony every man of the village assembles at the place where the *Ophya* (a kind of ritual apparatus) is set up. The *Pvüti* puts an egg on the ground with a leaf on each side of the *Ophya*. Having placed ten little bits of pork and ten little bits of ginger on the *Ophya* the *Pvüti* would recite a prayer holding a cock in his left hand and a dao in his right hand. The prayer being ended the *Pvüti* cut the cock’s throat and takes the omens from its entrails and ties them on the *Ophya*. The rest of the day is given up to feasting. The next day is observed as *emung*, a day of rest from works. This ceremony is performed to ensure good crops and plenty harvest and also a high birth rate for the village.

The Lotha’s agricultural year is closed with the *Tukhvü-Emung* ceremony. The *Tukhvü-Emung* is an annual festival which usually lasts for nine days. Five days after he has given the notice of the ceremony the *Pvüti* with his associate called *Yinga* goes round the village and collects unhusked rice from every household. With some of the unhusked rice he makes *Soko* (rice beer) and with the rest he buys a large pig. The eight days from that on which the unhusked rice is collected is known as
THE TWO PVÜTIS OF AKUK COLLECTING RICE FOR THE TOKHVÜ EMUNG CEREMONY
(To face p. 74)
The next individual ceremony is the Epoetha ceremony which is performed inside the house itself. This ceremony is performed by an old man on behalf of the household addressing to a particular deity called Khyuham. To this deity he offers twenty three little pieces of meat and an egg along with a handful of rice, little Soko, and prays for the household that no sickness be fall upon the family members. Having done this he takes a little brand from the hearth and carrying basket containing the sacrificial articles, and goes out, of the house, calling on all evil spirits to follow him. As he goes out the household throws after him ashes and burning brands and shuts the door quickly and keeps it for a few minutes or else the evil spirits may come back and enter the house again. The old man goes outside the village fence and lights a small fire and spills a little Soko on the ground. Then he splits the bamboo hollow (Rapvil) in which he carried Soko and watches how the two halves falls. If both falls inside up or outside up the omen is good, but if one falls one way and one the other then the omen is bad.

Ceremonies for Illness

To the Lotha almost every illness is attributed to the malice of an evil spirit called Tsüngrham, who has either introduced some foreign matters such as hair or a little stone into his body or has caused his soul to desert him at a certain place. In such case, to enable the sick man restore his soul, a soul-caller (montsae) is required. For this matter a dog is sacrificed. Then the Montsae and the sick man, if he be well enough, go down to the spot indicated by the Ratsen. If the sick man be too ill then a near relative goes. On arrival on the spot the Montsae lights a fire
and a dog is sacrificed. Then they go back to the village, repeatedly calling the sick man’s soul by the man’s name to follow him.

When the *Ratsen* says that it was at some places in the jungle or village path that the patient’s soul left him and is being kept away by *Tsängrham* then things like pork, ginger, wild mint (*rarakhüm*), *soko* and chicken are offered to the spirit. Then six times, if the patient is a man or five times if she is a woman, he drops the two halves of the splited *Rapvä* (bamboo-hollow) together onto his dao, asking each time, “will he live or die?” If both the halves come to rest on the same side of the dao the illness will be a long one. If one falls on one side and one on the other the patient will either die or get well soon. Next, having tied the chicken’s wings together over its back and fastened a cowrie onto its legs, he tosses it up and catches it six times for a man and five times for a woman, then releases its wings and let it go into the jungle. Finally, he calls out the name of the patient eight times. On his way back to the village he keeps on calling the soul by the sick man’s name. The *montsae*, that night meets the patient’s soul in his dream and tries to persuade it to return home. If it cannot be persuaded to return then the patient die.

A person suffering from intermittent fever or some similar slight ailment gets rid of it as follow: He gets up from his seat in his house and puts any bits of rubbish, such as sticks or leaves, into an old carrying basket. Taking up this load he says a load, “I am going out to get somethings.” Having reached the outskirt of the village he hangs his load on a bush and says, “watch this; I am going to come back soon”. He then leaves the load with the illness watching it, as he thinks, and returns
home by another path. By this, it is believed, the illness leaves the patient and he gets well.

AGRICULTURAL CEREMONIES

Rhyuven Ceremony

The *Rhyuven* ceremony is the first ceremony associated with agricultural activities. This is performed before any farmer in the village has sown seed in the fields. The *Pvüti* will perform it first and next after everyone follows.

The *Pvüti* goes with his wife to the ceremonial spot and offers things like chicken’s meat, boiled or cooked rice, ginger, rice seed, seed of plants and *Soko* to the field spirits. Next morning the *Pvüti* sows six seeds of rice in his garden plot. Sexual intercourse is forbidden the night after this ceremony. When the last man has finished sowing the seeds the whole village observes one day *emung*.

Mväthän-Ratsen Ceremony

A yearly ceremony called *Mväthän-Ratsen* is performed by the *Pvüti* and his associate, *Yinga*, when the crops are about half-grown to prevent them being damaged by a small white grubs. This ceremony is performed only by the *Pvüti* and *Yinga*. On a certain day of which he has given previous notice the *Pvüti* with his associate collects unhusked rice from the whole village and with some of it he buys a pig. This he kills on the day of ceremony and going outside the village he lays ten pieces of meat and ginger placed on *Yutso* leaves to his right and nine pieces of meat and ginger to his left. The next day is *emung*. 
Ronsyukhüm Ceremony

*Ronsyukhüm* ceremony is performed in mid-summer of the agricultural season. During the *Ronsyukhüm* ceremony the field owner, along with his family, leaves for the field early in the morning, taking with him a live hen and a new earthen-pot. Having made a fire inside the field-hut (*Liki*) and after being eaten his mid-day meal with his life and family, he holds the hen by the wings with his right hand and walks around the outside of the field-hut, swinging the hen and calling out the names of all the different varieties of rice he knows, and asking the *Ronsyu* to bless him a good crop of them. He then strangles the hen and takes the omen from its entrails. The hen is plucked and cooked in the new earthen pot. This is not eaten by the members, but is taken back to the village and given to an old man of his clan. The entrails are put in the pot and buried behind the field hut. All then washes their hands and the proceeding ends with a meal that has been brought down previously.

Lanvon Ceremony

The seventh day after the *Amungkhüm-emung* is set aside for *Lanvon* (path clearing) ceremony by the whole village. During the six days proceeding the *Lanvon* day nothing may be sold or killed within the village or perform any “genna” such as *Potsokhüm* or *Echüi-enyi*. On the seventh day each working company (*Yingaden*) will kill a large pig. The next day is a general picnic and the whole village turns out to join in the clearing of the jungle from the path. There is much feasting and drinking on this day. The next day is *erung*. 
Eating of First Fruit Ceremony

Just before the crops begin to ripe the ceremony of Ethan-etso (eating of first fruit) is performed by the Pviiti first and after him by all the other households in the village. During this period no stranger may enter the Pviiti house, and selling and killing of domesticated animals and also bringing of meat into the village is prohibited. On the day of Ethan-etso ceremony the Pviiti kills a small pig outside his house. He does not eat this meat but distributes it to all the houses in the village in which there has been a death during the year. These portions are offered to the dead during the Echiti-envia ceremony. After killing the pig he goes into his house and in the presence of his family strangles a hen with a prayer to the Ronsyu that there may be good crops, no accident, no raids by the enemies and no prowling tigers. He takes the omen from the excreta and entrails in ordinary way. After that he cuts the rice sown in his garden plot during the Rhynven ceremony. This the Pviiti husks in silence. He puts a little of the grain on the sickle, on both his feet, against his forehead and on the hearth-stones. During the next day or two everyone goes down to his own fields and brings up little rice and with it he performs the same ceremony, except that no hen or pig is killed. A little of this rice is preserved and kept wrapped in a leaf at the bottom of the bamboo container. Such was the custom of the Lothas.

Harvesting Ceremony

On the day when he first go down to reap his crops each man performs at his field-hut a ceremony called Lirithiing in honour of the Ronsyu. He takes down with him the Ronsyu-ha (Ronsyu’s load) containing a cooked pig’s head, a gourd of Soko, an egg, a little salt, and
some cooked rice. Having arrived all the members of the working company (Yingaden) at his field he lights a fire with a fire-stick, takes four blades of thatching grass (lishū) and places six grains of rice on the threshold of the field-hut. He then cracks the egg over the six grains of rice and pours the contents into the leaf in which he wraps and ties it to the centre-post of the field-hut. Then he lights the thatching grass and prays to all the Rousyu of the hill side to come and help him, and the reaping begins.

SOCIAL "GENNA"

The social "genna" is a public feast in which the whole community attends. Generally, it is termed as "Osho" (feast of merit). Social "genna" plays enormously an important part in Lotha's life. Starting from the first small "genna" they are increased until the ceremony reaches at which two stones are dragged. Every "genna" entitles the performer to wear a certain distinctive cloth. The wealth and status of a man encourages one to perform a series of social "genna". It is therefore the ambition of every man to perform the full series if he possibly can. The process is that at the first stone-dragging ceremony one stone is dragged, and the second, third and so on till two stones are dragged. The whole series for a man to perform such "genna" is to give a final feast, to which even birds and beasts are invited. Rice and food were scattered on the ground for the village pigs and chickens, and a special share of meat and rice is taken down to the performer's fields and left there for the crows to eat. But it is so rarely reached by a man that it practically exists only in theory. This highest "genna" is called Hono-sho (chicken's "genna").
Usually in social “genna” a mithun is sacrificed, but sometimes a black bull may be sacrificed as a substitute, which is invariably spoken of as mithun. The following defects make an animal unfit for sacrifice – a hole in the horn, one horn deformed or shorter than the other, one horn missing, the teeth missing or broken, white mark on the body, white on the tail or forehead, deform hoof and white on the leg unless all four are white. It is believed that a man dare not sacrifice such blamish animal from Lotha point of view otherwise he may die. Under no circumstances may the flesh of an animal which has been sacrificed be eaten either by the performer or any of his household. It is believed that anyone who breaks this rule may go mad.

The series of social “gennas” performs by a Lotha are as follows:

The First “Genna”

The first social “genna” called Wozūtana or Ozhīyua is usually performed during the season when there is certain amount of leisure from work in the field. It is a simple “genna” which is performed by a man before marriage. He invites all the men in the village who have done Wozūtana, and kills a bull of any colour and distributes among the guests. Little present of such meat is also sent to the fellow-clansmen in neighbouring villages. The head of the sacrificed bull on such occasion is not kept. The man who performs this “genna” is entitled to wear a certain cloth called Phangrhiup.
The Second "Genna"

The second social "genna" is called Shishang or Shishangyua, but the Southern Lotha calls it Wozuyua. It is performed only after marriage. This "genna" is administered by the priest associate called Wokjung (pig-killer). On this occasion, a pig and a bull are killed in front of the performer's house. Part of the meat is divided up among the religious officials and the rest is given for feasting. The night is passed away with much eating and drinking, and singing of songs in which good wishes for the sacrificer are expressed. Next day about mid-day two small pigs provided by the sacrificer are speared by the Wokjung outside the house. The hindquarters of one are the prerequisite of the parents of the sacrificer's wife. The rest of the meat is eaten in the evening by the relatives in the village who have done the Shishang "genna". The Wokjungs each holds a cock and sing songs in which the good fortune of the sacrificer is desired. The cocks are then killed and the meat divided among the guests. The rest of the night is given up to singing and drinking.

The Third "Genna"

The third social "genna" is called Ethayua. Nowadays the tendency is to combine it with the fourth social "genna" at which a mithun is killed, or even omit it all together. The procedure is much the same as that of the Shishangyua "genna". This "genna" entitles the performer the wearing of a certain cloth called Etha-sii. A sign kept at the granary also indicates that the said "genna" had been performed by the owner.
The Fourth “Genna”

The fourth social “genna” is called Tsirotsoa or Tsiro-sho. A person who proposes to perform this “genna” sounds the matter to the announcer call Wotüng, who in turn gives public notice in the village. The rice is pounded with much singing and plenty of Soko is prepared for the occasion. On the day of the sacrifice a bull-mithun without blemish is tied up in front of the sacrificer’s house with its horns decked with a kind of leaf called Reziyn. Having recited a prayer by the Wokjung for the welfare of the performer’s family the mithun is speared by an old man and killed. The meat is divided as follows: the chest to the clans of the performer of the sacrifice, the hindquarters to his wife’s clan, the forelegs to the husbands of women of his clan (ejamphyoe), the meat of the head to the Wokjung, the tongue to the man who helped to buy the mithun and the lower part of the stomach to the old man who killed it. The performer must on no account eat any of this particular meat. The skull and the horns are kept in the “morung” till the sacrificer has dragged a stone (long-zü).

The Dragging “Genna”

Before the ceremony begins the man who proposes to drag a stone builds a temporary shed at the back of the house for the whole households to stay till the ceremonies are over. All being ready and stone selected, the Wotüng announces the date of the ceremony on behalf of the performer, who must remain chaste till the completion of the ceremony.

On the appointed day rice is pounded in front of his house by the Ejamphyoeeden with much singing and rice is prepared for the occasion.
“GENNA” STONE (LONG-ZÜ) TIED ON A BAMBOO FRAMEWORK READ TO BE CARRIED UP TO THE VILLAGE FOR THE STONE DRAGGING CEREMONY

(To face p. 85)
couple, who by this ceremony are made husband and wife, for along and happy life together. From this time on the bridegroom will work, as a part of paying marriage price, in the father-in-law’s house for a complete one year. On completion of one year’s time the groom will present five bundles of firewood to his bride to display on both of the bride’s door and it signifies that the girl is officially engaged. The most important part in Lotha marriage is groom’s slave-like work called Lomyaka in his father-in-law’s house for one complete year. This is the sign of proof that he is capable of maintaining a wife.

The Wedding (Yanpiyanthan)

The part of ceremony of making them husband and wife had already been done by the time of engagement ceremony. Now, four or five days later, after the engagement ceremony, the Lantssoa ceremony (road-making) takes place. In this ceremony the Ejanphyaeden (the husbands of women born in the bridegroom’s clan) and their wives fetch up all the fire woods which are left stacked in the jungle and heaps them up in front of his father-in-law’s house. The bridegroom kills a pig and gives about 14 Kgs of meat as bride’s meat (Hanlam) to his father-in-law to be distributed among the close relatives of the bride. This part is considered the most important Lotha’s custom during marriage time, for without which a man is not entitled to receive any Hanlam from his clan members. That night chicken is strangled and carefully observed how the excreta falls. If any remains in the vent it is bad omen indicating that the wife will die in child birth. The entrails also indicate which will die first, whether the first child will be a boy or a girl, and so on. Next day the fire wood heaped up in front of his father-in-law’s house is distributed among
the bride’s close relatives along with the portion of Hanlam given by the bridegroom as a present.

On the wedding day the groom builds a small house called Kithanro (a new hut) and kills a large pig and takes it to his father-in-law’s house. The head goes to the bride’s father, who also shares with other members of his clan the left fore- and hind-quarters. The chest and the right fore- and hind-legs are laid aside. The bride collects cotton from all married women of her clan, and gives them shares of meat from the chest in exchange.

The Lotha marriage procession takes place at night in absolute silence. That night the newly married couple along with his relatives proceeds for the newly constructed Kithanro. The marriage procession begins as follows: first the wife of a man of the bridegroom’s clan (Orhamvii or Omi) then the bridegroom in full ceremonial dress, followed by the bride in her Loro-sù (kind of marriage cloth) wearing for the first time, with the wife of another man of the bridegroom’s clan. Then the marriage party proceeds to the Kithanro. The couple sleeps in the Kithanro but sexual intercourse is restricted. The next day is restricted day and neither of the couple may go to the wife’s father’s house. On the third day they may go with a present of meat and are feasted there in return.

Three or four days later the ceremonies of marriage are completed by the Poniro-Ratsen (man-and-wife-priest). The Poniro-Ratsen use two elderly women, wives or widows of men who have dragged a
stone. A series of marriage rites are performed by these Poniro-Ratsen. They make four little parcels of leaf each containing eight pieces of meat, four each containing ten and finally two each containing thirty. These little parcels they put them in a little basket with Zütsül (purest form of rice beer). Then a cock is strangled and observed the position of its legs when it dies. If the right leg is down and the left up the husband will die first. If the right is up and the left down the wife will die first. If the legs are crossed the couple will quarrel. The excreta and entrails are also examined in the usual way. Then the Poniro-Ratsen puts eight narrow stripes of plantain leaf over each ear of the couple. Then the elder of the Poniro-Ratsen next takes a small basket and puts in it a pair of pewter bracelets and waves it in front of the couple and prays that the couple may be happy and have many children. From the house the old women will go to the Poniro-Ratsen-dung (Poniro-Ratsen tree), taking with them the basket containing small parcels of pork, chicken and soko, and leaves there.

Next day the Poniro-Ratsen comes again and takes the omen in the same way, except that hens are used instead of cooks. After swinging the basket containing the bracelets the elder Poniro-Ratsen observes an omen on the egg as she rolls its on a mat. Omens are drawn from the direction in which the pointed end lies when it comes to rest. If it points towards a hostile village the husband will get heads, if towards the plain money, if towards the house rice and if towards the Road of the Dead bad omen. The process is repeated eight times. A sickle is then slide along the mat eight times and omens are taken from the direction of its point, just as
they were taken from the direction of the pointed end of the egg. With this procedure the marriage ceremony comes to an end. The Lotha regarded the ceremony of the *Poniro-Ratsen* as a sort of initiation into marriage life.

**The Marriage Price (Loroe-man)**

The money which is paid by the husband for his wife is known as *Oman* (marriage price or *Loroe-man*). In average the Lothas have around eleven marriage price, which are divided into a number of items. They are paid in instalments. The first payment of all is known as *Chüka* (Re. 1), paid to her mother’s father or mother’s brother. The second item is *Ünzüii-man* (Rs. 8 to Rs. 10), paid to the girl’s parents as the cost of bringing her up. The third is *Ünvoyi-man* (Rs. 2), the price of not working in his father-in-law’s house. The fourth is *Kitsoo-man* (Rs. 2), the price of not building his father-in-law’s house. The fifth is *Hanlam*, the cost of pork given to the father-in-law at the *Hanlam* ceremony. The sixth is *Tssüüchü-man* (Rs. 2), paid in case where the bridegroom does not distribute wood to members of his father-in-law’s clan. The *Sontsso-man* (four annas), paid if the bridegroom does not build a granary for his father-in-law. The eight is *Tsoro-man* (Re. 1), the price of the bride’s breasts. The ninth is *Lentamo-man* (Re. 1), the price of intimacy with the bride. Man with land usually let the girl’s parents cultivate a plot of land once. If not, a tenth payment of one rupee or two rupees is made instead. The eleventh is *Otae-ettesso-man* (the price of feeding the bride’s brothers), the marriage price proper. This price is shared by the girl’s father and brothers. If she does not have real brother then it may be enjoyed by the cousin brothers. This price amounts to about two hundred
and fifty basket of rice or thirty rupees if paid in cash. The rice or money is paid in instalments, often at long intervals.

**Divorce**

There is no ceremony attached with divorce among the Lotha Nagas. If the wife leaves her husband with no fault of his, and runs away to her parents, then the full amount of the marriage price which they have received up to date, plus a fine of ten rupees should be paid to the husband. If she runs away to some admirer, then the aggrieved husband shall recover the full amount of marriage price, plus compensation amounting to fifty to hundred rupees, from whoever marries his run-away wife. In case if the husband turns out his wife with no fault of hers, then he cannot recover his marriage price. In such case he has to pay a fine of ten rupees to her parents or heirs. She can also claim the thread and the chicken she had brought with her at her marriage or their equivalent, together with her clothes and weaving apparatus. Any ornament given to her by the husband must be returned to him.

**FESTIVALS**

As far as general festivals are concerned, the Lothas have only two main festivals such as Pichwícchak-Emung and Tukhvi-Emung. The year officially opens with the Pichwícchak festival. This festival marks the beginning of the agricultural year. This festival is observed before the rice is sown. It is usually attached with ritual ceremonies by prayer and cutting of fowl's throat. During this festival the whole of the day is given up to feasting. The next day is kept as Emung and no one goes to the fields.
Then the agricultural year is closed again with *Tokhvû* festival. It is the harvest festival of the Lothas. The harvest is done, the grain full, and there is now time to enjoy the fruits of one’s hard labour. Friends and relatives are invited on this festival. Mithuns are killed, past offences are forgotten and ties are re-established and bonds of closer intimacy are discovered. This festival stretches for nine days. On the appointed day announced by the priest the whole households in the village contributes unhusked rice. Then a pig is killed and the day is given up to feasting and merry making. The main features of the festival are such as community songs, youthful dances, feast and fun. Young boys and girls engaged during the year are happily married after the *Tokhvû* festival. It is also time for renovating village gate, clearing roads, cleansing wells and repairing the houses.