CHAPTER III

SOCIETY

FAMILY:

Family which grows out of biological needs is one of the universal and oldest institutions of mankind. Among the Maras, the family is the smallest but functional social group consisting of the husband, his wife and their children. It often extends to include the married children particularly sons and their children. The Mara family can be classified into nuclear and extended families.

Nuclear Family:

Ordinarily the family, among the Maras, is nuclear. Being monogamous, a Mara nuclear family is consisting of father, mother and children. In other words, they have a nuclear or primary type of family which is, by and large, a universal social grouping. Sons and daughters usually leave their parents after they get married. The nuclear family of the Maras is loose and brittle, and also elastic and feasible.

Extended Family:

An extended family of the Maras is merely a combination
of the two interdependent nuclear families comprising of parents, their unmarried sons and daughters, married son and his wife, and their children. It is bound by blood relationship. The extended one formerly prevailed mostly among the chiefly and wealthy families, and was characterised by polygamous marriage. Such a family was large and consisted of the grandfather, the grandmother, their sons and the later's families. Sometimes they lived in one big house or in a cluster of houses. The blood relationship in the extended family is bilaterally conjugal.

In the Mara family, the father was the head and he enjoyed full authority in the family. The children belonged to the father, and the mother had no share. The right to inheritance was reserved for paternal descent. The lineage was always traced by the paternal line. Father was the owner and protector of the family and of the household properties. He was the master of the household and was all in all in the family. He also acted as the priest. He was, thus, the controller of all social, economic and religious matters. It was the duty of the father, apart from his being the head of the family, to acquire implements for jhum cultivation. When the father was away for sometime in search of food and hunting, the mother looked after the household affairs.

1 Informant: C. Rodei.

2 Census, 1901, Vol.1, P.228.
Demand of labour for cultivation as well as management of household affairs created a sense of co-operation between father and son, and mother and daughter. Inter-personal relations was, however, maintained.

**SOCIAL ORGANISATION:**

Caste system is totally absent among the Maras. As they all ethnically belong to one social group, they were subjected to the same social organisation and social system. The structural organisation of their society was characterised by the tribal and clan organisation.

Class stratification was, however, very prominent and they were comprised of three distinct social classes viz. (1) the chief (2) the freemen and (3) the slaves. The chiefs (abeipho) and their families constituted the highest social class. Next to them were the freemen in the middle class (phoso) and the commoners' clans, machhie. The slaves (sei) consisted the lowest order of the society.

The social structure of the Maras was very much different from that of the Lushais. It was a vertical division of 'higher' and 'lower' units having their fixed position in the society.

The clan organisation of the Maras was determined by

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3 Census 1931, Vol.III, p.126
4 N.Chatterji : *op.cit.*, p.49.
lineage segmentation. Clan was the primary determinant of the social status in the society. The relative position of a clan arose from the degree of prestige attached to it. Clan was the basic factor of the social stratification. There existed a definite social gulf between the three social classes.5

Among the early Maras, the seven chiefly clans occupied the highest position commanding respect from all others and their social status was superior to the other two classes. They enjoyed certain rights and privileges in regard to marriage, dress habit, house pattern and other matters.6

The next social class was composed of the freemen. A freeman may be defined as one who worked for his own living and owed allegiance to no one. In this sense the majority of the Maras, probably more than 90%, were freemen. The freemen were again comprised of two types of clans, (1) the Phoso or clans and the middle and (2) the machhie or the commoners' clans which are mentioned in the Appendix A. The freemen played important role in the village administration as well as in the society. They could earn social distinction or status by meritorious deeds and not by birth. Any freeman who killed a large number of games and cut enemies, and one

6 Informant : S.Chhote.
who could produce large amount of grain such as maize, rice, millet, beans, etc. commanded respect from others. The richmen, great hunters and warriors were honoured in the society.

The sej (slaves) who form the lowest social class is defined by Lorrain as "unpaid servant bound for ever". "He was bought and sold, and was property of a master, who made use of him as he liked". Slavery was one of the oldest institutions among the Maras.

The Mara sej, equal to the Mizo sal or a captive made in war, was the real slave, not merely unpaid servant. The chiefs and wealthy men acquired slaves in several ways. Colquhoun writing about the Shan laws of slavery says, "slaves bought with money, by birth, left by legacy, by gift, those who become so from gratitude, voluntary slaves in time of famine and prisoners of war". A Mara slave was either a slave by descent or a slave by capture or a slave by summission.

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7 Informant : S. Thabau.
8 Grammar, p. 250.
10 J. Shakespear : op. cit., p. 50.
12 Grammar, p. 166. Also N. E. Parry : op. cit., p. 223.
However a man belonging to one's own clan could not be made a slave. There were two kinds of slaves, viz. the sei, a slave who lived in his master's house and the machhie saiza, a slave who lived in his own house. Both of them were absolutely at the disposal of their masters.13

The most common way of acquiring slaves was by capture in war or raid. Those captives became slaves of the captor and were known as hrasiesei.14 In early days, the chief's house was a common shelter for vagabonds and criminals. A person who surrendered or submitted himself to the chief or took refuge in the chief's house became slave known as zikhosei.15 Widows, orphans and poor men who could not afford their daily living submitted themselves to the chief, and became slave called chakasei16

A man who could not pay off his debt and fine became slave of the debtor or any other person, a chief or rich men who paid up his debts. Such slaves were called kaleisei.17 Lehman writes, "Bond slaves are a class of descendants of debtors who went into bondage but not into household

13 N.E. Parry : op. cit., p.224.
14 Marapa, p.69.
15 Ibid.,
16 Ibid., p.68.
17 Marapa, p.69. Also Grammar, p.166.
slavery". Many poor people with their offsprings became slaves to overcome their pecuniary difficulties. The chief and rich men kept a fairly large number of slaves over whom they exercised power of life and death. Condition of slaves were very hard, they were treated very unkindly and their social condition was however, different from that of free people. Slaves were regarded as the absolute personal property of their masters, and could be sold and purchased like any other possession. They were also given away as a part of married price (syuhra) payable to the wife-giver by the wife-taker. The eldest or the most favourite slave usually received seipawchyu, the marriage price of his master's sister or daughter. A freeman who wanted to marry a slave girl must pay first the price called sakhaipani to the owner.

KINSHIP

Kinship is the most important social bond of mankind. It is, however, a universal phenomenon that people are

18 F. K. Lehman: op. cit., p. 111.
19 N. Chatterji: op. cit., p. 49.
20 J. Shakespear: op. cit., p. 216.
21 MAT, p. 5.
22 Marapa, p. 69.
23 N. E. Parry: op. cit., p. 225.
bound in different groups by various kinds of kinship ties or bonds. Kinship pattern forms a major part of the whole social structure. It forms the basis of social relationship in the homogeneous societies and large families. The source of kinship is family which is obiquitous on earth. It controls family life social and interactions inter-human relationship and constitution of the society. It also regulates social relation of individuals in the family and social life.

W.J. Goode's classification of kinship organisation as patrilineage, clans and kindreds is also traceable among the Maras. The lineage is only one form of corporate kin group, and each individual is kin to many others. The primary organisation of the Mara kinship is kindred relationship by blood or marriage bound by patrilineage and matrilineage. This social relationship is closely connected with cluster of the same clan or clansmen. The principle of unity of lineage plays a significant part.

**Blood Relation:**

Blood ties form consanguineous kinship. It is the main characteristic of the inter-personal or inter-human relations and social interaction in the Mara family and society.

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The consanguineous kins are related through blood, and very close, direct and near. The bond between parents and their children and that between siblings is consanguineous kinship. Among the Maras, kinship is primarily and bilaterally traced and reckoned through the parents. It starts with the relationship of the parent with their children. The primary kins are thus the father, the mother and their children.

The father-mother relationship is closely conjoined by the parents-children relations which includes seven distinct ties such as father-son, father-daughter, mother-son, mother-daughter, sister-brother, younger-elder brother and younger-elder sister. These kins are closely related with the secondary kin of the consanguineous kins such as father's brother, father's sister, mother's brother, mother's sister, etc. Just as the father's brother's sons and daughters have the same kinship relationship between themselves, similarly also the father's sister's sons and daughters, mother's brother's sons and daughters and mother's sister's sons and daughters have the same kinship relationship between themselves. The different female kins are all "sisters" and the male kins are "brothers".

28 Ibid.,
29 Ibid., p. 73.
Marriage bond:

The bond of marriage creates affinal kinship. The affinal kins are closely related with the primary kins through marriage. By marriage a girl a man establishes family as well as kinship. He becomes brother-in-law and son-in-law of the wife-giver’s family. His wife also becomes sister-in-law and daughter-in-law of the wife-taker’s family. Thus a compact inter-human relationship is established between the wife-giver (paθ) and the wife-taker (ngazua). 30 This social relationship is closely conjoined by inter-personal relationships between and among the relations of the wife-giver and the wife-taker. Marriage thus creates a post of the kinship relationships.

The Mara society is patrilineal but prescription marriage is matrilateral. The early Maras, however, followed a prescriptive cross-cousin marriage system and married mother’s brother’s daughters. 31 This system undoubtedly exercised a notable influence on kinship terminology. The maternal uncle (pupa) is closely related to his sister with her children. He is nearly on a level with the parents. 32 The relationship between a man and his pupa, mother’s

30 Interview : N.Sotyu.
31 N.E. Parry : op. cit., p.295.
32 ibid., p.245.
brother or wife's father or wife's brother, is enduring one owing to the "alien" on sister's children and further owing to marriage payments. 33

Kinship regulated social relationship and also determined the distribution of the bride price, division of meat, etc. The distribution of meat may be shown as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recipient</th>
<th>Sharepart</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maternal uncle (mother's brother)</td>
<td>chest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married sister (ngazua)</td>
<td>hind leg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife's sister (nar8)</td>
<td>spine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brother or close friend (kei)</td>
<td>rib</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Mara system of relationship is classificatory.34 Their language is not rich in terms of relationship, and as such same terms are commonly used to designate many different relationships. Strict etiquette is observed in the mode of address. Grand father and mother are treated with

34 N.E. Parry: op.cit., p.237.
great respect and are always addressed by their grandchildren by courtesy as *ei mapa* meaning "my grandfather" or *ei manë* meaning "my grandmother". They are also addressed by persons of the same generation by the name of the eldest child of their eldest son, whether a boy or a girl, e.g. *Ngobedi mapa* meaning "Ngobedi’s grandfather" or *Ngobedi manë* meaning "Ngobedi’s grandmother". Married men and women address each other by the name of the eldest child whether a boy or a girl, e.g. *Ngobedi-pa* meaning "Ngobedi’s father" or *Ngobedi-no* meaning "Ngobedi’s mother".

The Mara kinship terminology has twenty seven terms to denote the pattern of relationships. Within the circle of close kin, the kinship system discloses the principle of bifurcate merger. The sex of the kin addressed is distinguished in all the cases except in case of the brother and sister when they are addressed by their siblings. Sex of the speaker is disclosed in terms of address. Wide range of terms is applied to relations of the paternal side. Descriptive terms of relationship are noted below:

M.S. = Man speaking  
W.S. = Woman speaking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms of relationship</th>
<th>English equivalent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mapa</td>
<td>Grandfather (paternal and maternal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manë</td>
<td>Grandmother (paternal and maternal)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

35 Grammar, p.35.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paw</td>
<td>Father, father's brother, mother's sister's husband.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nō</td>
<td>Mother, mother's sister, father's brother's wife.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupa</td>
<td>Mother's brother, wife's father, wife's brother.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pino</td>
<td>Mother's brother's wife, wife's mother, wife's brother's wife.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Para</td>
<td>Father's sister's husband, father's brother's sister's husband.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nond</td>
<td>Father's sister, father's brother's sister.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-u/uta</td>
<td>Elder brother, elder sister.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nanta</td>
<td>Younger brother, younger sister.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaw/Rilapa</td>
<td>Brother (W.S.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sitand</td>
<td>Sister (M.S.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saw</td>
<td>Child, son or daughter, brother's son or daughter (M.S.) sister's son or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>daughter (W.S.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tupa</td>
<td>Sister's son, father's sister's son, Father's brother's sister's son.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunand</td>
<td>Sister's daughter, Father's sister's daughter, Father's brother's sister's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>daughter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samo</td>
<td>Son's child or grandchild.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sahla</td>
<td>Great grandchild.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sachhua</td>
<td>Great great grandchild.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lapinä</td>
<td>Wife (M.S.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vapa</td>
<td>Husband (W.S.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piapa</td>
<td>Sister's husband, daughter's husband.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyunä</td>
<td>Son's wife, brother's wife.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patä</td>
<td>Maternal uncle or cousin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngazua</td>
<td>Married sister with her family (M.S.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nörä</td>
<td>Wife's sister's husband.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kei/unäw</td>
<td>Close-friend (M.S.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hao</td>
<td>Close-friend (W.S.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanö-mapan</td>
<td>Grandparent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nö-paw</td>
<td>Parent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sie-chaw</td>
<td>Sister and brother.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nö-va</td>
<td>Wife and husband.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonö-para</td>
<td>Father's sister and her husband.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinö-pupa</td>
<td>Maternal uncle and his wife, wife's parents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tu-saw</td>
<td>Sister's children, father's sister's children.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SOCIAL INSTITUTION:**

The social institution, according to Vaux, is the form in which the social life of a people finds expression ...
the institutions themselves exist ... for the sake of the society". Again, the institutions of a society will vary with time and place. The early Maras had several social institutions. The most prominent was the Laiphô.

Laiphô: The early Maras had no recognised bachelors' house like Zawlbuk of the Mizos. Among them there was no "long house" which was prominently associated with the patrilineal Tibeto-Burman peoples and others in the South-East Asia. Instead they had Laiphô, which had close similarity with Sawm of the Thados.

Laiphô may be defined as a group of young men who had formally chosen as sleeping place the house of any unmarried girl whom they admired most, and slept therein until the girl entered into wedlock with any boy. The Maras thus followed much the same practice as the Thado-Kukis. Laiphô was thus the house of a girl selected as a sleeping place for the young men.

Laiphô was well-organised and recognised social institution, and its structural organisation was

36 Roland De Vaux: op.cit., p.viii.
37 S.Das: op.cit., p.104.
39 William Shaw: op.cit., p.70.
characterised by group system. Young men could freely form themselves into a compact team or group selecting a house for their sleeping place. In every village there were several Laiphð groups depending on the number of unmarried girls. Each Laiphð group was known after the name of the selected girl. 41 If the girl's name was Nasai, the young men and their group were, known as Nasai Laiphð meaning "Nasai's friends".

The average strength of a group was feasibly elastic without any limitation. Young men usually selected the house for their sleeping place depending on beauty and behaviour of a girl, the economic status of the girl's parents who could provide facilities to the young men and finally the size of the house which could accommodate considerable number of young men. 42

Membership of Laiphð was not open to women. The selected girl and her parents were not counted as members of Laiphð, but it was free and open to all young men. A young man could join only one Laiphð group of his choice. 43 Thus the rule was "one membership, one group". A young man could,

41 Informant : C.Rodei.
42 Informant : S.Thabau.
however, transfer himself willingly from one group to another. Married men were not eligible for membership.  

Each Laiphō group was a unit of social organisation and was independent of the others. The organisation of Laiphō was temporary; it usually ceased when the selected girl was married. Laiphō was characterised by social interaction between young men and girl, and also between young men and the girl’s relations. Its administration was attached to the family organisation of the selected house. The girl’s father was the patron-guardian of young men. He provided them accommodation, plenty of rice beer and nicotine water, special feast, etc. Economic co-operation was maintained, and young men collectively worked together called lyureitla from one’s jhum to another in rotation. They also helped the girl’s parents. They also served multi-ferious needs of a village helping the poor families.

Laiphō house served a club of young men where recreational activities were organised. Young men wooed a girl with rigorous competition. Senior bachelor called satliauthēi was the leader of the group and was respected by young men. Drinking, singing, gossiping, wrestling, 

44 Informant: S. Thabau.  
46 Informant: T. Davi.
merry-making, etc. were the more prominent recreational activities. Laiphō house was not only a sleeping quarter and recreational centre but was also a place where a young man was shaped into a responsible member. It imparted training and taught sense of responsibility to young men. It also served for general welfare and security of the village.

SOCIAL POSITION:

In Mara society, women not treated inferior beings but were considered as weaker sex. They enjoyed equal freedom but did not enjoy equal right. In this patriarchal society men occupied important position and received more importance. As such, on the birth of male child, the father or grandfather blessed him saying "chapaw sa a ka ampa" meaning "a valiant who would become great hunter". But a female child was greeted with the words "chanē seita nata dawta a patu ampa" which means 'she would cost a mithun and a gong'. This indicates a social gulf between man and woman.

47 Informant: K. Pheito.
48 Zase: op. cit., p. 6.
49 S. Das: op. cit., p. 104.
50 Informant: S. Thabau.
Position of Man:

Men always occupied a higher and respected position in the family dominating the mainstream of the society. They were the builders and makers of the family and were solely responsible for their family affairs. Family descent and clan lineage was reckoned through male, inheritance, marriage, adoption, succession and other important prospective issues were settled by men.  

Men enjoyed right to political participation and also involved in the functional organisation of the village administration. They were warriors and took part in war. They were the defenders of the political and social institutions as well as protector of the village and villagers. The attitude towards men was often reflected by the following phrases:  

(1) Chapaw kyh na sawku kyh  
(Man can make his own way like a porcupine)  
(2) Chapaw bie ngiahrai hnie  
(Man’s word remains unchangeable like the footprint of a boar)  
(3) Chapaw haina ky vei sakhi rana ky vei  
(Man can justify himself like a barking deer)  

51 Interview: H.C. Sado.  
52 MHB, p. 64.
Position of woman:

The social position of women in the family and society was subordinate and inferior to men. However, they were the real home-makers, and all household jobs like cooking, carrying firewood and water, pounding rice and maize, etc. were done by them and inside the house she was supreme. In certain cases they also helped their husbands. They were, however, not mere household drudges.

The position of a woman was quite different since her childhood. She was closely attached to her mother. A woman was, however, restricted from taking active participation in the ritual ceremonies or sacrifice during her pregnancy. She was also treated unclean or impure during the period of menstruation. During this period her husband was too disqualified from performing certain ceremonies or sacrifices. Certain ceremonies such as Chakeiluaia, tlylia sacrifice, etc. could not be participated by women.

Socially women were considered and treated as weaker sex in the society. The attitude towards women was often reflected by the following adages.

53 N.E. Parry: op.cit., p. 276.
54 Ibid., p. 136.
55 Ibid., p. 371-375.
56 MHB, p. 63.
(1) Chanā 1ōh lei cha-ia luh lei
(Like a headless crab, a woman has no thought)
(2) Chanā sona tikhao haosa kia vei
(Woman’s wisdom cannot pass beyond the pool water)
(3) Chanā chhie na dawkia chhie ky vei
(A withered woman and a worse woman’s basket have some value)

That women were acquired by paying prices had subordinated their position.\(^{57}\) Her menfolk could treat her as they liked. A man who did submit himself to his wife or did not dare to scold or beat his wife was scorned by his friends as a coward or henpecked. Parry, however, noticed courteous attitude of men towards women and says that it was very rare to find a Mara who was brutal to a woman.\(^{58}\) Lewin remarks with surprise on courtesy with which a Mara chief treated the women in delightful manner.\(^{59}\)

SOCIAL RELATIONSHIP:

The early Maras society was simple, homogeneous and integrated. The structural organisation of their society was


\(^{58}\) N.E. Parry: op.cit., p.276.

\(^{59}\) Mild Race, p.163.
predominantly characterised by their social interactions and inter-human relationships. They enjoyed freedom and liberty in their social intercourse and social organisation.

Social visits formed a part of their life and there was no restriction on the number of visits, rather they were ardent lovers of social visits and were fond of keeping close social intercourse with their relations, friends, etc. As a matter of fact they never pass their time even a day without meeting friends. Both man and woman were free to visit their friends, relations and neighbours. Their social intercourse was basically characterised by intimate friendship, kinship, neighbour-hood, social interaction etc.

Visitors were usually welcome with warm courtesy, and were frequently given nicotine water by the host's wife or daughter. The hearth or fireplace was the sitting place of the visitors and the host especially during the rainy and winter seasons. They often diligently discussed various topics associated with their daily life and work.

Boys and girls mixed up freely, and maintained friendship. Young men made social visit (laisharei) courting a girl at night in the Laiphô house. Like men,

60 Informant: K. Nahlei.
61 Informant: S. Mokia.
62 Mylai Hlychho: op. cit., p. 74.
women made social visits and were also free to attend community feasts, ritual ceremonies, beer-parties and other recreational activities. They also made social visits to their relations in another village on ground of death, marriage, birth, etc. 63

DRESS HABIT:

Men’s Dress:

Dress of both men and women was simple during the pre-British days. Men generally wore cloth wrapping their body drawing over the left shoulder, under the left arm-let and leaving the right arm bare, while working they however, wore a course shirt. The wore the clothes like chylaopo, chynapo, pozapa, thathopo, viapo, zypo, etc. 64 As their lower garment they wore loin cloth, being wound round the waist dua kala covering the genitals. But on special occasions they wore the dua-ah. 65

Women’s Dress :

Women wore far more clothes than men. They wore a number of skirts and petticoats such as chynaho, hnora, 63 Informant : N.Sotyu.

64 N.Chatterji :op.cit., p.56.

65 It is a coarse cloth about 9.5 feet long and 1.5 wide. Its size is similar to the dua kala but is a much more ornamental cloth.
viahno, sisaihno, etc. The skirts and petticoats were held by metal belts worn round the waist. Women also wore a loose coarse blouse known as kaohrei, which was a sleeveless jacket with V-shaped opening on the front.

Ornaments:

Women were fond of ornaments. They wore bracelets, belts, necklaces, earrings, beads, cornilian buttons, coins, etc. The more favourites were brass belts called hrakha and chaiphiapa, spiral brass belt and white metal belt called saka. The necklaces were of cornilian (naba), bead necklace (sisai), and coin necklaces (naba), lavaw and the dapachhi. The more common variety of earrings were brass earring (takaray) and wooden earring (thorahy).

Head-Dress:

The head-dresses of men and women was entirely different, and were distinguished by coiffure, cloth and chignonic ornaments. Both sexes customarily kept their hair long. They believed that hair was the source of strength and prowess for which hair cutting was a taboo. A boy's hair was normally cut up at the age of about nine years or more.

66 N. Chatterji: op. cit., p. 56
67 Mylai Hlychho: op. cit., p. 305.
68 N.E. Parry: op. cit., p. 42.
69 S. Das: op. cit., p. 103.
and afterwards allowed it to grow on freely till his death. Woman's hair was never cut. Lunatics and poor slaves only had their hair cut. Any person whose hair had been cut was usually disqualified and debarred from taking part in ritual sacrifices, ceremonies, etc.

**Men's head-dress:**

Carey and Tuck classified the coiffure of the Chins into two distinct fashions viz., (i) the top-knot on the top of the head and (ii) the chignon on the nape of the neck. It was the same with the Maras. Men wore the turban or kept a top-knot by winding hair into a lofty horn-like projection over the forehead. Young men also wore this coiffure. They combed up and collected their hair into a bunch, then coiled many rounds into a large and lofty knot in horn-like projection over the forehead. They wore chignonic ornaments. A brass pairpin (sakia) ran through the hair knot, a lacquered comb (sathi) worn at the back of the knot and a bamboo pairpin (sanka-hro) ran between the comb and the knot. They merely wore a bit of rag round their hair knots on all ordinary occasions. They wore puggrees

70 N.E. Parry: *op.cit.*, p.33.


73 N.E. Parry: *op.cit.*, p.33.
khutho\textsuperscript{74} round their hair knots on important occasions such as festivals, wakes, ritual sacrifices and ceremonies. The khutho imposed hair-gear and also added a foot to the height of the wearer. The warriors who brought the heads of the slain could wear a prestigious insignia called chhytliia or rabo,\textsuperscript{75} a plume of red horsehair when dancing the Sawlakia.

This singular head-dress of the early Maras is connected with a legend which says that in the ancient days, a squirrel and a horned owl had a dispute, and the squirrel lost its temper and beat the owl's head, so that its head became all red with blood and assumed a frightful look. The squirrel became so terrified at this that he fled for his life and the owl devoured all the young squirrels. Since that time the Maras wore their hair high on the forehead, like the horned owl; and when they went to war they bound scarlet cloth on their turbans, so that like the owl, they may take heads.\textsuperscript{76}

\textbf{Women's Head dress}:

Women usually had chignon wound at nape of the neck.\textsuperscript{77}

\textsuperscript{74} It is a coarse cloth about 10 feet long and 1 foot wide. Young men's khutho is about 6 feet long and 1 foot wide

\textsuperscript{75} Census, 1931, Vol. III, p.127.

\textsuperscript{76} T.H.Lewin : \textit{op.cit.}, p.163.

\textsuperscript{77} N.E. Parry : \textit{op.cit.}, p.39.
Women could wear this coiffure after attaining puberty. There was no different mode of coiffure among the married women and maidens. They combed and collected the whole hair, then coiled round into a loose knot at the nape of the neck. They also wore some chignonc ornaments. A hairpin (sawkahr) ran through the hair knot, and a brass hairpin ran between the hair knots. Women also wore a typical head-dress called lakho on important occasions or when performing folk dances such as the Sawlakia, the Pakhupila, etc.

CUSTOMS AND MANNERS:

They practised uniformed customs which were as a general rule recognised and obliged by all. Their customs and practices were a part of their socio-religious life, and were also the fabric of their society. In their customs they differed from those of the Lusheis.

Marriage Custom:

Marriage was regulated by certain customs and traditions. The early Maras customarily followed a tradition

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78 N. Chatterji: *op. cit.*, p. 54. Also *Wild race*, p. 149.
80 N. Chatterji: *op. cit.*, p. 54.
of monogamy or marriage of a single spouse was in vogue. However, polygamy was prevalent, and men belonging to the chiefly clans and rich families freely married two or more wives. The major wife known as "nōbei", was superior to the secondary wife or concubine called "nōtho". Polyandry was not prevalent. Some chiefly clans followed exogamy in order to maintain matrimonial alliance with powerful clan or family.

Marriage was a purely civil contract and was generally arranged by the parents. Boys and girls had limited choice in marriage as there was great competition to secure a bride of good birth. The desirability of a girl depended on the social position of the parents, her appearance, character and chastity, were entirely subordinate factors. A good match did not depend on face and form, rather a girl was judged by the character of her work in the field and house. Female virtue was, however, expected.

Among the early Maras negotiated marriage was the most prominent system of marriage. As soon as the choice was made an intermediary called lyuchapa was to present the girl’s parents with a dao or brass pot as engagement called ..........

82 Informant: S.Chhote.
The next stage was marriage celebration. On the wedding day, both parties killed a large number of animals which were as a rule exchanged between them. In the evening about dark, marriage possession called amakia took place. After the bride and her party entered into the bridegroom's house, the ceremony called tipanie was performed. They spent the rest of the night in drinking and singing. The bride and her party returned back before mid-night. On the second and third days, the bride's party demanded bride price, and bridegroom paid as much as he could and owed the balance. On the fourth day, the bride finally moved over to the bridegroom's house. This was followed by miapali sacrifice, killing a white cock to ensure fertility and health after which the bride permanently stayed in her husband's house.

Among the early Maras, betrothal of children was quite common. It was arranged and celebrated like ordinary marriage. Remarriage was also permissible, and divorced husband or wife could remarry in ordinary way. Widow or widower also could remarry after the erection of the deceased's memorial. Remarriage between a widower and his

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84 Irene E. Hadley: 'A Lakher Weeding' Newsletter, 1934, p.5. Also Grammar, p.63.
85 N.E. Parry: op.cit., p.302.
87 Informant: F.C. Teihra.
deceased's wife's sister called akeipa, and between a widow and her deceased's husband's brother called lapin@khu were practised. Marriages such as arakhei, a boy eloped with a girl; kiahnao, a girl entered into a boy's house; asythlu, a boy stayed in the girl's house and ampa, a boy made a girl pregnant and married, were also common. A boy must pay the girl's father the atonement price hmiatla. The bride price was, however, realised as usual.

**Bride Price:**

Marriage was a most complicated and costly affair. The bridegroom paid the bride price to the bride's parents on wedding day and owed the balance which was to be paid later in installment. The price consisted of several major parts and each part comprised of a large number of subsidiary prices. The major parts were, as a rule, distributed amongst the wife-giver's relations who were customarily entitled to the same. Each claimant must kill a mithun or a pig without which he/she could not realise his/her claim. The prices were customarily realised in term of kind such as mithun, gun, brass pot, gong, beer-pot, axe, dao, etc. The following are the major parts of the bride price.

**Okia:** It was the main price and also the largest one.

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89 N.E. Parry: *op.cit.*, p.319.
(sōhra) and it governed the rate scale of all the other prices. It was determined by the status of clan. Its rate varied from brass gong called dawchhy to a mithun. The okia of the chiefly clans was customarily higher than that of the middle and lower clans. Usually entitled by the bride's father, it consisted of amapi (main price) and other subsidiary prices such as thuaso, sisazi, keima, machahla, chapawhla, chanōhla, sawhla and other hlasibas. Its claimant took amapi, sisazi, and other prices were distributed among his relations and friends.

Seipihra: It was another major price customarily taken by bride's father's brother. Its rate scale, composition and procedure were exactly similar to that of the okia. But the amount of each subsidiary price was smaller.

Chawchyu: It was the major price taken by the bride's brother and its rate scale, composition and procedure were closely similar to that of the seipihra.

Mahra: It consisted of several parts such as dawhra, mietheira, miepihra, mietōhra, rahōhra, raipihra.

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90 Informant: H.T.Phili.


92 Sisazi can be claimed only by a person who entitled to the Okia.
seicheihra, syuhra, seipawchyu, vaopihra, etc. These prices were divisible amongst the sons and brothers of the bride's fathers under the custom known as matlei which could be extended to the fellow clansmen. If the bride's father did not follow matlei or if each claimant did not kill a pig, subsidiary prices of each part could not be claimed.

Nôchyu: It was the major price which means "mother's price" meant for the mother's sister was inferior to that of the other main prices. Its composition and procedure were exactly similar to that of the other major prices but each subsidiary price was smaller.

Nochyu: It means "aunt's price" was taken by the bride's father's sister. The rate scale, composition and procedure were exactly similar to the Nochyu. Besides, she could claim tini consisting of axe, basket, belt, bracelet, brass pot, broom, cane-band, cane-mat, cloth, comb, dan, pairpin, necklace, piglet, pumtek, raw-cotton, skirt, etc. These were claimed during the marriage procession.

Puma: It was customarily taken by the bride's mother's

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93 Syuhra can be claimed by a chiefly family in term of a slave or its equivalent, likely a mithun. Seipawchyu is customarily received by the most favourable slave of the bride's father.
brother (pupa). It consisted of one main price (pumapi) and other subsidiary prices like phavaw, laokhyu, etc.

Additional prices: If the bridegroom belonged to another village, the following extra prices could be claimed.

Adyana: This means "welcome price". It consisted of several minor prices. It however, attached to each and every major part of the bride price, and could not be claimed independently.

Tlōma: Tlōma meaning "lodging price" where the bride and her parents got their accommodation during the marriage ceremony. The host where the bride was lodged could claim the tlōma, and if he killed a pig, several subsidiary prices could be claimed.

La-awha: If the bride’s party killed a fowl performing the la-anha ceremony on their way to ensure their health, the sacrificer could claim the price called la-anha.

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94 The laokhyu is paid first and foremost on the weeding day without which no other prices can be received by the claimants.

95 It is usually selected the house of the bride’s father’s clansman or close friend who may help the bride in future.
Customs at Birth:

As soon as a child was born a piece of cotton was tied about two inches from the child's navel, and then the umbilical cord was cut by an experienced woman with a sharpened split bamboo. One woman took the child and bathed it in cold water to wake it up, while other women helped the mother to get rid of the placenta, after which the mother was bathed in warm water and given food. The child was also, after bath, given warm water to drink. The next morning it was bathed in warm water and given breast-feed.

The birth of a child and the following days were full of ceremonials amongst the early Maras. Immediately after the birth of a child, an ao 96 called naw-khutlo was observed which lasted nine days if the baby was a girl, and ten days if it was a boy. During this period the mother must not leave the house, and when the father went off for work, he made a bamboo pin, placed it in the baby's hand saying: "you must not follow me to the place where I am going to work". This was done to prevent the child's soul from following its father which might jeopardise its life. 97

On the fourth day the child was taken into the village

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96 An ao is a restriction to be observed by the villagers or a family or an individual depending on the ceremony or other circumstances.

97 Chottapadhyaya Kamala Devi: op.cit., p.239.
street with a hoe for luck and a small pot containing cooked rice. The child’s ears were also pierced on this day with a lemon tree thorn or a porcupine quill, and some soldered ear-rings of cotton thread were placed in the ears. On the ninth and tenth day a ceremony called Radeido was performed at the spot where the child was born to ensure the child’s health. On this day the child was taken to its pupa’s house and shown to him. The baby’s hair was cut and was kept cut short regularly until the child was eight or nine years old. The child was named on third day by its parents or their relations. The name to be given was uttered and the leg of the fowl sacrificed was placed on the child’s hand. On the next day the child was given food masticated first by the mother. A baby’s food was always cooked in the separate pot until it was able to feed itself. When it was a month old, the baby was generally given a little rice beer as an introduction to drink. When a child had reached the age of two or three months a sacrifice called nwhri was performed to ensure the child’s health. When a baby could sit, its

98 Chottapadhyaya Kamala Devi: op.cit., p.239.  
100 Ibid., p.388.
mother prepared flour cake to ensure the child's growth and the same was done again when a child could stand.\textsuperscript{101}

Among the early Maras, a child was usually given two names, as the belief was that if a person had only one name God Khazopa may forget him or her.\textsuperscript{102} Children were usually named after an ancestor, great grandparents or grandparents. The names given were generally wise, great and famous, noted warrior or hunter in the hope that the child would acquire the outstanding qualities of its namesakes. Female children were commonly named after flowers, gold, etc.

Death and Disposal:

Early Maras believed that death was an awful destruction of life caused by Khazopa, or evil spirit, Iyurhripa who confiscated a man's spirit by cutting a link between the body

\textsuperscript{101} Interview : T.Dachei.

\textsuperscript{102} Chottapadhyaya Kamala Devi : \textit{op.cit.}, p.240.
and soul. Among, them the dead body was treated in the different distinct methods according to the nature and cause of the death.

Pithi : The natural death caused by fever or other illness was known as pithi. When a sick person was dying all relations were summoned to the house and they held him until he drew his last breath called huchha. As soon as death had taken place, shots had been fired off, the huge brass gongs were brought into play, and these boomed out the doleful knell of the dead. After this the body was washed with warm water, the hair was greased and tied, and the body was fully dressed as in life. The chin was wound up with a band of red cotton cloth and tied in reef-knot at the top of the head. The body was then placed on a stretcher (chhachhua), which was placed in a diagonal position against the wall.

Before this stretcher the deceased’s close relatives and friends wailed and cried with a heart-rending shriek, lamenting the dead. A song (athihla) was sung and athila dance was also performed. Outside the house a large number of men gathered round beer pots talking, chanting songs, loughing and jocking. The deceased’s relations held Riha, Riha ceremony is described in Chapter IV under ritual ceremonies.

103 Jungles. op.cit., p.155.
105 Riha ceremony is described in Chapter IV under ritual ceremonies.
a ceremony in honour of the deceased and several animals were killed for the feast. The villagers spent several days in feasting and drinking. This wake however continued for many days sometimes five days or more until the dead body was buried.

**Nawdo**: A baby born dead or died within a few days of its birth was known as nawdo or pawchhie. A boiled egg was placed on its right hand, the body was placed in an earthenware pot or wrapped in a cloth and was buried near the house. There was no Riha ceremony. If the dead aged between one and three months it was called sai, and the body was buried as usual. There was no Riha ceremony. If the dead was above three month old, a wake or Riha ceremony was held as usual. A dog was killed for this and its tail was buried with the dead. The belief was that the deceased's spirit would hold on the dog's tail following the path leading to the deadmen's village, Athikhi.

**Thichhie**: The unnatural death caused by child-birth or due to loathsome deases such as syphilis, leprosy yaws, small pox, etc. was called thichhie. In such cases Riha ceremony was not held. The corpse was buried in the same way.

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106 Interview: S. Thabau.
107 Jungles, p. 158.
108 N.E. Parry: *op.cit.*, p. 408.
as a sawiaw, and was never kept for more than one day. A woman who died in child birth was called vypi pai, and burial usually took place before sunrise. An axe was buried with the body. The belief was that the deceased's spirit was not allowed to go on the road used by others, and an axe was needed for cutting its own way to the dead men's village.

Sawyaw: The most awful unnatural death was called sawyaw. Persons who met accidental death or murdered by others, killed by tiger or any wild animal, drowned in river, fallen from tree, etc. were treated as sawyaw. A sawyaw body was usually placed on the floor of verandah and was buried outside the village after sunset. Riha ceremony was not held. Death due could not be claimed.

Burial:

The early Maras customarily buried their dead in the vault. There was no trace of either cremation or platform burial. They did not use coffin or rough plank. They wrapped the dead body with a piece of cloth and buried it prostrate in the vault grave. Chiefs and important persons had family

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109 Harapa, p.21. Also Informant: S. Mokia.
111 Ibid., p.407.
vaults called thlapi or ld-o meaning "stone house". It was generally dug outside village fence. A grave about six feet deep, eight feet long and six feet wide was dug. The floor, sides and roof were lined with stones; a small space was left as a doorway and was closed with a large stone. The family vault was usually opened when a family member died as pithi, and its doorway was customarily opened by the sister or sister's son of the person who was to be buried. The woman who opened the vault was entitled to take all article buried with the last corpse. This was called thupahama\textsuperscript{112} which means "the price of touching the evil-smelling remains".

A freeman who died pithi was buried in a vault grave called thlatô.\textsuperscript{113} It was generally dug outside the village fence. A pit about five feet deep, five feet long and three feet wide was dug. When this was complete, a vault just enough to hold the body, was excavated at the wide end of the grave. A vault was closed with large flat stone. If a person died as sawaw or thichie, the body was buried in a vault called thlaphei\textsuperscript{114} which was excavated at the length wise of the grave, and was closed with a log of wood or bamboo.

\textsuperscript{112} N.E. Parry : op.cit., p.411.

\textsuperscript{113} Census, 1931, Vol. III, p.128.

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid.,
Burial usually took place in the evening, and before the corpse was taken out of the house, the deceased's *pupa* made several cuts on beams and doorways with *dao* to frighten the evil spirit called *Chhôtełchiakampa*. After this, funeral procession took place, led by the *pupa*. He was followed by young men who carried a stretcher *chhachhua* and the dead body separately, and then the deceased's relations and friends. When the corpse was placed at the edge of the grave, the deceased's relation wife or husband as the case might be, tapped the corpse gently with his or her hands and said, "Don't worry about me, go off happily to *Athikhi*", and placed a little rice beer in the deceased's mouth. The corpse was lifted off into the grave and the *pupa* pushed the body into a vault, closed with flat stone. As soon as the *pupa* came out of the grave, the young men filled in the pit with earth, and laid a flat stone along the top of the grave. 115

**Death-due**: Death due called *ru* was customarily payable on the death of any married person. In certain cases, no *ru* could be claimed when a spouse died an unnatural death, accident or of yaw or leprosy or in childbirth. A man's *ru* was usually paid by his eldest son, 116 or if he had no son, by whosoever inherited his property, and it was payable to

115 N.E. Parry: *op.cit.*, p.401.
116 Grammar, p.64.
his pupa who was his mother’s brother. A woman’s ru was usually paid by her youngest son to his pupa. The claimant must kill a pig for riha for the deceased. The death due consisted of several prices such as rupi, pharam, raibô, bôta, seitla, pobu, atu, thuaso, etc.

Memorials:

The Maras never forget their deads. They showed great concern for erecting memorials something to hand down as inheritance to future generations. Only those who died a natural death (pithi) received memorials. A person without issue fearing he or she would soon die could erect memorial for himself or herself. Memorial was generally erected after sometime of death. It was usually erected during the period between harvest and burning of the new jhums. Several types of memorials are mentioned below.

Lobô was ordinary stone memorial to commemorate the deceased. It was flat-stone erected in a diagonal position on the grave or near the deceased’s house or outside village along the road.

117 N.E. Parry: op.cit., p.286.
118 Informant: S.Mokia.
119 N.E. Parry: op.cit., p.415.
120 Marapa, p.30.
Lôphei was an oblong platform formed of earth and rubbish of about six feet by four feet with two feet in height. Flat stones were laid on all sides, and the top was capped with flat stones. The size of a lôphei depended on the importance and also the wealth of the deceased's relations. It was erected on the grave or near the deceased's house or outside village fence on the approach road.

Lôdo was a square enclosed by four stone walls about the size of lôphei and was constructed on the road leading to a village. A passage was left, through which the path ran. It was generally erected to commemorate the deceased chief or important person. It was generally constructed outside village fence.

Tlatla was a platform about six to eight feet long and two feet wide with two feet high. It was usually constructed on the path leading to a village. It was generally made of wood. If the deceased was a man, skulls and tails of animals including birds being killed by him were hung round over the platform.

Phura, also known as phura pacho, was usually erected

122 Ibid.,
123 Tarapa, p.31.
in memory of the deceased chief or important person. It was of stone, pyramidal in shape about six feet high, and its bottom was a circle base about six feet wide in diameter.\textsuperscript{124} It was erected as memorial to men generally constructed outside village fence on the approach road.

\textit{Thori} was a wooden pillar of nine to fifteen feet long. Its upper part of about six feet was hewn into a shape having four straight sides, and was designed into four sections such body, neck, head and hair. Each part was decorated with geometric designs indicating heirloom goods and other possessions.\textsuperscript{125} \textit{Thori} was erected in memory of deceased chief or important person grave or near \textit{phura} or \textit{Ibo}. 

\textbf{RAIDS AND WARFARE :}

Among the early Maras, the common adage was that 'a man should drink, fight and hunt, and women and slaves should work.'\textsuperscript{126} The whole system of warfare was raiding, and the only tactics resorted to were the secrecy of their plans, the suddenness of their raids surprising the enemy and their extra-ordinary speed in retreating to their mountain.

\textsuperscript{124} Marapa, p.31.
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid.,
\textsuperscript{126} Informant : S.Thabau.
fastnesses. They were warlike tribe who frequently made assiduous raids against their neighbours. Before the British appeared in the hills, the Mara villages constantly fought with each other and with their neighbouring tribes such as the Thlatlas, Fanais, Khumis, etc.

The prime motive for war among the Maras was gain. It was not a question of annexing territory or subduing the weaker or smaller villages, but of obtaining booty in the shape of guns, gongs or any other portable articles.Raids were often caused by innumerable blood feuds which were handed down from generation to generation. Often these blood feuds originated in a quarrel over the price of a mithun, the ownership of a field, the division of inheritance, the price of a wife, etc.; the quarrel led to blows, the blows to blood. The feud was then started and blood was avenged in blood. Raids were also usually made to get captives for slaves and to take heads total subjugation of spirits of the slain by the slayers in the next world. The desire for headhunding frequently caused raids.

127 A.B. McCall: op.cit., p.43.
129 Ibid., p.205.
131 Ceremony, p.1.
The Mara warfare was characterised by the desire for gain on the part of elders and hope of glory and fame on the part of the warriors who longed for a chance of showing their daring enterprise with prowess and competent valour. Men and youngmen were generally involved in the wars. There was, however, no raiding season among the early Maras. After finishing each seasonal work in jhum field, the chief, village officials, warriors and youngmen usually held the council of war at the tlylia. The council of war headed by a chief was firmly vested with the power to declare war and also to decide the direction of war, selection of the hostile and warlike villages.

The warriors usually consulted various omens before they left for raids. The first omen was that at the tlylia ground a warrior sucked rice-beer juice through a syphon. If the juice moved straightly the omen was good. Another omen was that an egg, after making a small hole at one end of it was placed near the fire. If the white of the egg stood up straight when it came out, the omen was good. The third omen was a bird called bypi (Graucalus Macei). If it flew towards the direction of war, the omen was good. The medium called Khazohneipa was also consulted to foretell about the fates of the impending raids.

132 Harapa, p.49.
133 N.E. Parry: op.cit., p.209
The warriors organised themselves into a strong party. Before their departure, the leader of the raiding party ordered his men to take oath. Each and every warrior cut a stick and took oath saying his name, the names of his father, grandfather, ancestors and clan. After performing this oath, the warrior started marching towards the hostile village. Any warrior who failed to take his place in the van or rear-guard was openly disgraced and treated with scorn by his friends for the rest of his life. Before entering the hostile village, the warriors held discussion about the impending attack and their movement. Two or three warriors then moved ahead to the village and were followed by raiding party. The warriors then made incredible attack suddenly. When the fortune favoured them, they returned home safely with great success bringing captives and heads.

The raiding party usually entered the village in the early morning. It was, however, a taboo to enter the village at night. As the victorious approached the village, they fired up volleys displaying their arrival. The villagers immediately turned out to meet the raiding party beating gongs and drums, and the warriors were entertained with drink. After drinking, all of them entered the village.

135 Ceremony, p.1.
moving in procession, beating gongs and drums. The heads taken by the warriors were placed at the tlylia ground and the Ia ceremony was soon abbreviated.\textsuperscript{137}

HEAD-HUNTING PRACTICES:

Head-hunting was a tribal practice and is said to be found sporadically all over the world in one form or the other. It was being carried out at least for three reasons. First, it had been carried out not for the head's sake but for the sanctity of the head as the seat of the soul. Secondly, it had been done as an act of cannibalism\textsuperscript{138} with an intension to consume the body or part of the body in order to transfer to the eater or slayer the soul matter of the eaten or victim. Finally, the practice was associated with agriculture imbuing the soil with productivity.\textsuperscript{139}

The early Maras practised head-hunting which was a part of their life. They did involve in the killing of human beings and wild animals. They were, therefore, known to the out-siders as head-hunters or head-hunting people.\textsuperscript{140} They were notorious head-hunters who were delighted not only in the chase of wild animals but also in the chase of human beings.

\textsuperscript{137} Census, 1931, Vol. III, p.130.
\textsuperscript{138} J.H.Hutton : "Introduction", The Thadou-Kukis, p.5.
\textsuperscript{140} A.B.Lorrain-Foxall : op.cit., p.2.
beings by killing, raiding, looting, pillaging and plundering the hostile villages. They did not however carry it out as a mere game or hunting to threaten the peaceful life of other people. The main purpose of this practice among them was the religious sanction, and the prime motive was to obtain the soul substance of the heads for the future state of existence, the next world. They believed in a Heaven of joy called Peira, in contradistinction to the deadman's village, Athikhi, a counterpart of the Mizo Pialral. In order to reach the Heaven of joy in the future state of existence at death, it was considered for a man to obtain at least one human head and heads of each of the larger wild animals. The spirit of the slain would accompany the slayer as his slave to the next world when the slayer died. They desired heads to supply themselves with servitors in the next world. Any head, even that of an embryo would serve the purpose. The object of their inroads upon the villages was not to plunder but to kill and carry away the heads of many human beings as they could collect.

141 Jungles, p.162.
142 B.C.Gohain : op.cit., p.38.
143 Jungles, p.92.
144 Donna Storm : The Wind Through the Bamboo. 1983, p.23
145 Jungles, p.92.
146 B.C.Gohain : op.cit., p.38.
When a chief died the villagers observed mourning called *machhiesa* for a year or more, and during this there was no singing, drinking and dancing in the village. Heads were required for the *machhiepaina* ceremony which was performed to terminate the prolonged mourning and restore happiness to the deceased's relations and the villagers. The villagers, therefore, indulged in head-hunting in order to supply the soul-substance of the heads to the deceased's spirit. The *machhiepaina* ceremony was performed at the funeral of the deceased chief and heads were placed on the memorial post of the deceased. The belief was that the spirit of the slain would accompany the deceased chief to the next world as his slaves.

Head-hunting was a means to gain glory and valour. Heads brought by the warriors demanded great wake called *la* ceremony which is described in the Chapter IV. The warriors who slayed many heads could wear prestigious ignisia *chhytliya* or *rabb*, a red dyed horse hair plume of 1.5' feet long. They were honoured and admired by the villagers and were popularly known as *riapaw*, which means "great slayer of men and wild animals". The warrior desired to bring some tangible proof of his valour to his village folk.

147 N.E. Parry: *op.cit.*, p.207.
149 N.E. Parry: *op.cit.*, p.214.
In earlier days, it was not a custom among the Maras to carry the heads of women off. It was less honourable to kill women. But it became a constant practice in due course and it was a great advantage for a warrior to kill a woman who was pregnant, for it was considered as taking two heads at once. The women being valuable as slaves, were generally preserved and were rather taken to the village for slaves of their captors.

No doubt the Maras were traditionally enthusiastic head-hunters but they were not professional head-hunters. Thus head-hunting practice was a part of their life, and was carried out by the daring men and warriors in their lifetime.

As Lewin says:

If I go up the river I should never come down again as my head would be cut off and set on a pole by the Shendus (Maras)... a predatory and powerful tribe beyond British limit who feared neither man nor devil, and who by perpetual forays to obtain slaves, kept the whole frontier perpetual terror.

151 Informant: S. Thabau.
152 N.E. Parry: op.cit., p.222.
153 Ibid., p.205.