CHAPTER IV

RELIGION

The Maras are now all Christians. Christianity came to them along with the British. The pre-Christian religious life of the Maras was dominated by their belief in supernaturals and rites and rituals performed to propitiate the supernatural elements. However, lack of written records and other evidences makes it difficult to give an accurate picture of their early religion. The following account of their early religion is based on published literature, secondary sources and personal interviews of old and knowledgeable persons.

According to tradition, long ago while they were staying in the Chin Hills of Myanmar, they were over-owed by sorrows, sufferings and miseries. Their anxiety knew no bounds. They needed peace and solace. They, therefore, begun to seek for ways and means to attain these state of affairs. They reasoned that their fore-fathers must have worshipped mysterious powers, and they started offerings to nature by prayer. From this arose the practice of ceremonial offerings and sacrifices. Gradually the forms of worship and incantations were improved and enriched from time to time. This is

1 Interview: S. Thabau.
supported by the fact that the place names which are recited in their incantations are all now located in the Chin Hills of Myanmar. It is for this reason their present memory about ancient religion does not go beyond the period of their settlement in the Chin Hills.

Nature of Religious Belief:

The religious life of the early Maras were all restricted by taboos and superstitions arising out of their animistic beliefs. It was, a combination of the worship of ancestor, spirit and nature. The principal endeavours were dominated by propitiations and sacrifices to the spirits and supernatural powers which, they believed, had great influence over the destiny of men. The feature of animism was sometimes coupled with the belief in a supreme being usually invested with definite powers and functions. According to Hastings, animism is the doctrine which places the source of mental and even physical life in an energy independent of or at least distinct from the body.

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2 Grammar, p.v.
4 James Hastings : Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, 1908, p.535.
Supernaturalism:

The whole world, according to them, was populated by a host of spirits, good and evil. These spirits had great influence over human beings. They could be invoked, propitiated and even forced to help human beings by various magical means and practices. All human ailments, death, miseries, misfortunes, etc. were caused by evil spirits which were omnipresent as well as omnipotent. In order to keep them in good temper, they sacrificed several animals for them. Propitiation, ritual, worship, offerings, sacrifices, etc. maintained a harmonious relations between men and spirits. To the Christians, therefore, the early Maras were devil appeasers. The spirit worship was not a praise or thanksgiving to the evil spirits but it was solely an appeasement and of seeking favour.

Necrolatry: They believed in a reciprocal relationship between the dead and the living. The ancestors of the Maras had great influence over the living partaking in some shadowy way of the functions of both guardian angel and of originator of the human race. Hence ancestor worship.

5 ATI, p.65.
6 Jungles, p.104.
7 J. Shakespear: op. cit., p.221
occupied an important place in their religious practices. They recognised that a man's power was restricted and that he had access to limited areas, but through ancestor worship, his power increased and gained strength. 8

**Totemism:** They cognated themselves with animals and plants in the form of totems. 9 Such totemic animals and plants had helped the clan ancestors and as such they also had great influence over the living.

**Naturalism:** Early Maras believed in natural phenomena, and had great respect for nature which was associated with the power of darkness. They regarded the Sun and Moon as deities, who exerted influence over human being. They sacrificed livestock to the sky god at the commencement of the rains. 10

**Magic and Witchcraft:** They had general belief in magic and witchcraft to ascertain the proposed course of action and the appropriate sacrifice to be made for curing illness, disease, etc. 11

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9 N.E. Parry: *op. cit.*, p.234.

10 JASB, No.111, 1852.

Taboo: It formed the most significant part of propitiation, ritual, worship, offering sacrifices, etc.\textsuperscript{12} Taboos were of three types such as \textit{pana}, \textit{ao} and \textit{ana}. \textit{Pana} means "restriction" and was observed by individual household or villagers on the day of or after every sacrifice, ritual etc. \textit{Ao} means "rest" and was observed in the same manner as \textit{pana}.\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Ao} was associated with the more important sacrifices and rituals in the village life, and \textit{pana} was applicable to all sacrifices and events.\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Ana} means "prohibition" which commanded men to abide by socio-religious sanctions and was widely observed by the Maras in everyday of life.

The Concept of God:

The early Maras believed in the existence of one supreme being whom they gave the name of Khazopa,\textsuperscript{15} also known as Chhaohiapa, Chokhazo, Cho-y, Pachhapa, Lythapa, Lupi, and Vadaw.\textsuperscript{16} He was all powerful. He was the creator of everything, and dominated the all other spirits. He controlled the universe and destinies of man. He was both omnipotent and omnipresent, and lived somewhere in the sky

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13 Mylai Hlychho: \textit{op. cit.}, p.119.
14 N.E. Parry: \textit{op. cit.}, p.356.
16 Harapa, p.7. Also Grammar, p.191.
\end{flushright}
above. He was, therefore, known as Chôkhazo, meaning "God Above".

Khazopa possessed all human attributes. He was small in physique, brown in colour, almost hairless, and had strong anthropomorphic features. He was capable of having sexual union and had children. He ate food and drank rice-beer. Although he had human qualities, he was superior to natural laws and was immortal. As such, he had an immaterial wife and his children were immaterial. He regarded human beings much the same way as the human beings regarded ants. He was a just and benevolent. He never attacked men but dealt with them according to their behaviour. He rewarded health and wealth to those who spoke the truth and were very kindly towards their friends and neighbours. He punished with death those who were wicked or boasters, and who oppressed the poor. When they were in a state of fear they uttered, "Khazopa zaw mia a ngia mana" (God will have mercy upon us). But when miseries or misfortunes frequented them they said, "Khazopa a hie ha" (God is angry). If a couple enjoyed happy marriage life they said "Khazopa sahmia pati paty" (God appointed partners).

17 J. Shakespear: op. cit., p. 221.
19 John Whitehand: op. cit., p. 129.
They believed that Khazopa was the source of blessings, and in order to please him Khazopina sacrifice was usually performed.

**Spirits:**

The early Maras believed in the existence of spirits called lyurahripa meaning "minions to Hell". These spirits were powerful but inferior to Khazopa. They had great influence over animate and inanimate objects and living beings. They had great interest in the affairs of men. They lived in the jungle, mountains, rivers, pools, trees, rocks, caves, etc. They could exist everywhere, and the whole world was populated by the spirits, good and evil.

**Guardian Spirits:**

The early Maras believed in the existence of good spirits which they regarded as benevolent and good helpers of men, and could even bless men to become rich and prosperous. They assigned to each with different functions and duties to perform faithfully towards men. Each person was guarded by a good spirit as a watch or a protector. The good spirits were powerful but inferior to Khazopa. They were identified and given different names in their relations with human beings. They were visible and could be seen in the state of trance or awaken.

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20 John Whitehand: *op.cit.*, p. 129.

21 Information: S. Thabau.
Zo: They believed that every one had a guardian deity known as Zo, male in case of men and female in case of women. As a protector it moved always in close proximity to the person whom it protected. If it was displeased with the person, it handed him over to Khazopa or evil spirits called lyurahripa to kill him. If it was pleased it helped him to fulfill all his endeavours, grant him abundant blessings. Therefore, Zo da sacrifice was performed. The belief was that when a person died his Zo also died immediately, and when the later died the former also died, either of them could not survive alone.

Sakia. The Sakia was a spirit like Zo but of a less benevolent nature. Men had no Sakia but every woman had a Sakia. They believed that a Sakia was powerful than a Zo, and could cause barrenness. A barren woman who desired to have a child usually performed the Sakia sacrifice.

Lasi-lasa: Lasi-lasa also known as Lasino was a good spirit who lived in the jungle, but it could be seen in a state of trance. It had female characteristics, and had

22 Mylai Hlychho: op. cit., p.126.
23 N.E.Parry: op. cit., p.366.
24 Informat: T.David.
25 N.E.Parry: op.cit., p.379.
close connection with a hunter or other individuals. It was very powerful, and could make any male individual to become rich or great hunter. The Lasind spirits usually flocked in group in the forest and looked after wild animals. They were the guardian of wild animals. They did not cause death or other distresses to human beings.

Sakhia: Sakhia another good spirit having a male form lived in forest and it looked after wild animals, sometimes sat upon wild animals. It could be seen in naked eyes. It was powerful and could help a hunter to kill several wild animals.

Evil spirits:

Besides there were a number of evil spirits called Iyurahripa which were powerful but inferior to Khazopa. The Iyurahripas were the malignant demons who could cause death, illness, misfortune, etc. These evil spirits were the sources of all troubles and had great interest in destroying men’s life, possessions, etc. The Maras, therefore, sacrificed animals in order to keep them in good humour. These spirits had the capacity to take any form they liked, human being, wild animal or other forms.

26 Marapa, p.5.
28 R.A. Lorrain: op. cit., p.5.
Khasó: Of these the most superior evil spirit was the Khasó which lived in water i.e., river, pool, lake, etc., and was known as Tikhasó. It controlled all lesser ones which dwelled in water. Another powerful one which dwelled in rock, tree, mountain, etc. was known as Tlakhasó. It controlled all lesser ones which lived on land. They were, however, normally invisible, and lived everywhere. They had great interest to chase or seize men. The Maras, performed the Khahró or Kathlaobao sacrifice to please the evil spirits, Khasós.30

Saw: The another powerful but evil spirit was saw, which could cause sickness or misfortune. It was attached to men or women killed in war.31 The ceremony of la was usually performed over the heads killed in war in order to subjugate the evil spirits, saw. Some wild animals like tiger, leopard, etc. also had a saw. When a tiger or a leopard was killed, a ceremony called chakerlu-ia was performed in order to avoid the power of saw and also to subjugate the tiger’s saw.32

29 Marapa, p.5.
30 MAT, p.8.
31 N.E. Parry: op. cit., p.143.
32 Ibid, p.141.
Besides, there were many other lesser evil spirits, and their power and function in connection with human beings was inferior to Khasd and saw. They could be seen in naked eyes or in the state of trance. They could, however, chase or trouble men. These lesser spirits were given different names.

**Ahmaw:** The most aggressive lesser spirit was Ahmaw. It had great jealousy of other’s possessions i.e. any property, and attacked men by causing pain or illness, even led to death. A person who had such spirit was called evil eye.33

**Athlaw:** Another lesser spirit was Athlaw. It frequently appeared to men visibly at night. It usually, went on along the road or river at night and had the great pleasure of killing rats and insects.34

**Rahao:** Rahao, was another kind of lesser spirit, dwelled in the jungle, and flocked together in good number. They could talk and make great noise like men. They could chase or beat men.35

**Raw:** Raw, also known as Rawchhie, mostly lived in a

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33 MAT, p.8.
34 Harapa, p.6.
35 Harapa, p.5.
refuge dump where bones of animals killed were thrown off. It usually appeared to men in form of the deceased’s identity. It could chase or beat men and could even enter into men. 36

**Samarong**: It was the most crooked and ugliest of the spirits. It had female form and usually appeared to men. It sometimes threatened men. 37

**Thlachahmi**: Thlachahmi was another weaker spirit which often attacked men or livestock while sleeping at night. It could be seen in the state of trance. It could behave like men and also danced at night. 38

**Vahia**: It was also known as Hiava or Hera. It mostly dwelled in the groved stones or trees. It was ardent lover of smile. It, sometimes, threatened men. It could make man mad by seizing his soul. 39

**The Soul**: The early Haras believed in the existence of soul.
which continued to exist even after the death of destruction of the body. They believed that every body had a soul called thlapa that resembled his body and size but was invisible. The soul mostly resided in the body during day time, empowered the owner's heart. And at night when the body slept, it left the body and wondered here and there, thus caused dreams to occur. As soon as the person awakened the soul returned. The body was a repository of the immortal soul and was supported by respiration called hu, a link in shape of an invisible cord between the body and the soul.

Souls were of two kinds. The ordinary soul was called thlapa meaning "good soul". It did not disturb men or livestock. Some people were, however, unfortunate, and had malevolent soul called thlachhie. The thlachhie wondered at night and chased or harmed men or livestock with terrible nuisance. The Maras were ashamed of having a malevolent soul, and when the soul of the deceased made a perspective movement, they just told it not to visit them again.

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40 S.C. Dube: Tribal Heritage of India, 1977, p. 78.
42 N.E. Parry: op. cit., p. 352.
43 Interview: N. Sotyu.
The early Maras believed in a future state of existence or the next world, which was situated below the earth. When a person died his or her soul left the body by the mouth, crossed over the floor and left the house through the door. It immediately went up to the dead men’s village but soon returned and stayed back around the house for some lunar months. During this period a small portion of daily meal was set aside for the soul either near the hearth or on the grave of the deceased. After performing the Athipatyukhei ceremony, the soul, however, left this world for the abode of the dead.

In its journey, the soul had to pass through different stages. It went along the road which passed through very steep hills and then reached a very lonely place called Chhieratla. It turned back and looked to this world, and even saw its village, weeping as it was longing for human life. Hence it went forward with heavy heart. After crossing very long distance, it reached the Hawlypaka, which passed between the two huge stones. Every soul had passed through this gap on its way to the dead men’s village. The Hawlypaka

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44 N.E. Parry: op. cit., p.394. 
45 Athipatyukhei or Lopheiparai ceremony is discussed separately in the next page. 
46 N.E. Parry: op. cit., p.395.
was controlled by a typical spirit called Chhötlöchiakampa. It sent those bound for the Athikhi by the right-hand road while the sawvaw and thichhie were sent by the left-hand road to Sawvawkhi. The Chhötlöchiakampas were the spirits of men who had no sexual intercourse with women, and so were unable to reach Athikhi but were condemned to remain hovering on the road between this world and Athikhi. They had unpleasant habit of stealing cloth of any spirit making it naked.

They also believed that there was no second life for the dead but the spirit was immortal called hrozä, existing in the abode of the dead for a long time. They believed that there were three abodes for the dead namely, Athikhi, Peira and Sawvawkhi. Each of them was situated close to the other.

Athikhi: It was the dead men's village or the abode of the spirits of all those who died pithi. It was mostly occupied by the spirits of ordinary and common people who could not fulfill certain conditions during their life time on earth. It was thought that the Athikhi was much smaller than the earth. Everything was available but wholly an

48 N.E.Parry: op. cit., p.397.
49 Grammar, p.85.
imitation of the material world. Men were not equal in status and rank. Social system of this world was maintained. The spirit of a chief remained as chief, and the others were also held their own positions. Life there was full of misery and anxiety. The spirits could feel pain and hurt; they worked, eat, slept, etc.

Peira: The Maras believed in a Heaven of joy known as Peira which was better than the Athikhi. Peira was a pleasant abode of the dead and was very close to the abode of Khazopa. Here life attained complete bliss. There was no work or hardship. The spirits ate, drank, slept, etc. without labour. There was no pain and misery. They no longer desired for something, eternal happiness smiled upon them. It was, however, very difficult to reach Peira. If a man killed certain wild animals such as elephant, rhinoceros, tiger, bear, deer, wild boar, serow, etc. and also brought a human head, his spirit could reach Peira. A man who qualified the same was known as hropaki, and the spirit of his wife was also eligible to reach Peira.

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50 N.E. Parry: op. cit., p. 395.
51 Mylai Hlychho: op. cit., p. 152.
52 Jungles, p. 92.
53 J. Shakespear: op. cit., p. 222.
Sawvawkhi: The lowest abode of the dead was known as Sawvawkhi. It was the abode of the spirits of the victims of misadventure who died unnatural death. Sawvawkhi was a miserable abode. Life there was full of turmoil, misery, pain, etc. The spirits could, however, be recovered by their family by paying redemption price, i.e. sacrifice of animals, and thus transferred the spirit to Athikhi.

Reincarnation of Soul 1

The early Maras believed in the cycle of rebirth which could take place through different stages. The general belief was that the spirit first became a child and grew up into manhood or womanhood in the abode of the dead. Then, grew up on to old age and at last died again. When the spirit of the deceased died, it became a cloud and fell down on the earth in form of an earthworm. An earthworm was swallowed by a fowl and was digested and passed off in excrement. The rain water transported the excrement to the river. And if a man killed such a fowl and ate it or drank the river water, the spirit lived once again in form of offspring.

54 N.E. Parry: op. cit., p. 408.
55 Jungles, p. 95.
56 Ibid., p. 99.
57 Ibid., 100.
In case of the spirit of the chiefly family, cycle of the reincarnation was different. When the spirit died it became cloud and fell on various leaves of plants in form of dew. If a man ate such leaves, the spirit lived once again in form of off-spring. It was also believed that when a child died as nando or sai, its spirit reached the abode of Khazopa. Khazopa allowed the spirit to have re-existence, and sent it back to this world. The spirit became a bee entering into man's loin cloth, thus lived in form of off-spring.

Communication with the Dead:

The Maras believed that the spirit of the deceased had great influence over the living, receiving pleasure or displeasure from human actions. They were, however, impressed by reciprocal relation between the living and the dead. They believed in witchcraft through which they had communication with the deceased.

Addiharypa: When the deceased's relations desired to know about the dead, they consulted Khazohneipa or Apeithaipa who was a sorcerer. They killed a pig or a

58 Jungles, p. 100.
59 Interview : S. Thabau.
60 Mylai Hlychho : op. cit., p. 193.
fowl, and Apeithaipa drank the blood of animal killed. Some cooked rice, meat, banana, nicotined water, karao, etc. which were to be sent to the dead were consumed by Apeithaipa. Meanwhile, the deceased's relation told Apithaipa few words and songs which were to be delivered to the dead. After consuming food and drink, he started sleeping. While he was in a state of trance he reached Athikhi, met the deceased holding conversation. He delivered words, songs, food, etc. to the deceased. When he woke up he narrated clearly about the deceased. He spoke out some words and also sang songs which were sent by the deceased to its relations in the manner of the deceased's voice.  

Chhohia: This was another method of communication with the dead. When a person died sam-an the cause of which was not known, the deceased's relations performed chhohia. This was usually performed at mid-night. The dead body was first covered with a white cloth, and one of the deceased's relations stood up near the corpse saying the following words. 

Y! chhola, ei cha hia la y, mania vaw chho la,  
O ma cha thie ma, lyu ma cha thie ma?  

61 Harapa, p.7.  
Tima cha thie ma, tla ma cha thie ma.
Ahmaw ma cha thie ma, lyura ma cha thie ma.
O ta a cha thie kiatala chocho vaw so la.
Lyura ta a cha thie kiatala savia vaw so la.
Ti ta a cha thie kiatala chapa vaw so la.
Tla ta a cha thie kiatala chhohna vaw so la.
Ahmaw ta a cha thie kiatala sabu vaw so la.
Lyura ta a cha thie kiatala thotlawh vaw so ma y

(Oh! tell, I beseech you, you tell us
Does the house or the jhum kills you
Does the river or the mountain kills you
Does the evil spirit or the jungle kills you
If the house kills you, place here black shoot
If the jhum kills you, place here rice hush
If the river kills you, place here moss
If the mountain kills you, place here leaf
If the evil spirit kills you, place here hati
If the jungle kills you, place here a small piece of wood.)

The cloth covered with the corpse was then removed after saying the above, and some thing connected with the cause of death was found near or over the dead body.

**Rawsy**: The early Maras believed that when a person died *sanyaw* for unknown cause, incident or other consequence, or when the body of a *sanyaw* was not found, his
spirit wondered here and there searching its relations, and ultimately captured by evil spirit called Ra\textsuperscript{63}. When the deceased's spirit desired to reveal about the dead to its relations, the spirit being captured by the Ra\textsuperscript{6} entered into man or woman who was known to the deceased. As soon as the spirit entered into the body, man passed metaphysically into the state of trance. He started talking several subtle words. And when the deceased's relations asked him to narrate about the dead, he clearly explained the incidence, about the dead and reason of the death in form of the first person saying: "I am ... this and that ... such and such ...". This communication between the living and the dead was known as Ra\textsuperscript{s}y.\textsuperscript{64}

**RITES AND RITUALS:**

As mentioned earlier, the early Maras were animists, worshipped and appeased supernatural powers. They were, however, more concerned with Khazopa and evil spirits Iyurahripa than the good spirits. They portrayed evil spirits as malevolent beings which had influence over human beings as well as this material world. They believed that death, suffering, misery, misfortune, etc. were caused by

\textsuperscript{63} Marapa, p.6.  
\textsuperscript{64} Informant : H.C.Sado.
evil spirits, and as such they performed sacrifices and ceremonies in order to ward off the anger of evil spirits. They were constrained to sacrifice their livestock one by one until they were ruined.

Rites and sacrifices were the outward expression of the Mara religious beliefs. Depending on the circumstances, propitiation was made by sacrificing animals i.e. mithun, pig, fowl, etc. The ritual sacrifices were of three kinds such as sacrifice performed by a person for his own concern; sacrifice performed by a household for its own concern; and sacrifice performed by the villagers for the whole village. The first two were usually conducted by the head of the house, and community sacrifice was conducted by a person who was selected for the particular sacrifice.

**Khazopina:** It was the most important sacrifice performed by the early Maras. It was a propitiation to Khazopa with the object of pleasing him to bless the sacrificer and his family with good health, to give him good crops and fertile domestic animals and to make him rich.\(^{65}\) It was usually performed by each household when it was thought necessary as when any one of the family members fell ill or became mad, or if their domestic animal died. It was

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\(^{65}\) Mylai Hlychho: *op. cit.*, p.122.
also performed when the family occupied new house, or when adoption took place outside the family circle i.e. adopted person belonged to another clan.\textsuperscript{66}

\textit{Khazopina} was a household sacrifice and was conducted by the head of the house. It was performed at a suitable place either inside or outside the house. A pig or a fowl was usually killed for this sacrifice. Before the animal was killed, the sacrificer offered prayer to \textit{khazopa} intoning a chant which runs as follows:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Am/ Khazopa, Lytha am/ vao ta na ei cha chhy, Santeih vaw pathla la, nawteih vaw pathla la, Vao by vaw pathla la, am by vaw pathla la, Hnatla patlo la, zotla patlo la, Ko vei pa tlo la, chhai vei pa tlo la.}\textsuperscript{67}

(Oh, Kazopa oh, Lytha, I sacrifice this pig to you, Grant me sons and daughters, Grant me livestock Grant me health Grant me good crops.)
\end{quote}

After this recitation, the sacrificer placed some

\textsuperscript{66} N.E. Parry : op. cit., p.290.
\textsuperscript{67} Informant : S. Thabau.
quantity of rice beer and flour in the animal's mouth, and then pierced it with an arrow under the right shoulder. Certain parts of animals killed were set aside as phava for Khazopa. And meat was cooked and was consumed by the sacrificer and his family and also his other cognates or clansmen. Anahmos special utensils dedicated to the service of Khazopa were used.

Khazopina normally lasted for four days. The first day was called Khazopino the day on which the offering was made; the second day was Aruhlaono, the bones of animal killed were cooked and eaten; the third day was ao, and the fourth day was pana. During these four days, fellow villagers and strangers were not, however, allowed to entered into the sacrificer's houses. Few restrictions were, however, imposed on Khazopina sacrifice. Slave, concubine, bastard, murderer and a person whose hair had been cut short were not allowed to take part in the sacrifice.

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68 Certain parts of animal killed which were kept for Khazopa or evil spirits was called phava. If a fowl was killed its feather, tail, tongue, etc. were kept as phava. If a pig was sacrificed, its ear, penis, lips, tongue, etc. were kept as phava.

69 Anahmos, were not allowed to use for other ritual feasts and ceremonies.

70 Informant : T.Chhattha says that the sacrificer must not call out his neighbours during the period of ao.

71 N.E. Parry : op. cit., p.362.
Zakhapa: This sacrifice also known as Zakhapana was another important ritual. It was usually performed by the head of the house who was unable to perform Khazopina regularly. A pig or a fowl was killed and phavaw was set aside for Khazopa. The whole meat was cooked and consumed. When this sacrifice was performed the sacrificer and the family observed pana for the day and night.\(^{72}\)

Zoda: It was a sacrifice made by an individual to a tutelary deity Zo and was performed whenever it was thought necessary. It was to propitiate Zo with the object of ensuring health, fertility and good crops. A fowl was usually sacrificed. If the sacrifice was performed for the benefit of the wife, the husband must kill a fowl, and if it was performed for the benefit of the later, the former must kill a fowl. The phavaw was set aside for Zo. Children were not allowed to partake of the meat. Only a child, for whom the sacrifice was conducted, could partake the cooked meat. A concubine and her children, bastard, slave, murderer etc. were not allowed to take part in this sacrifice. The sacrificer and his family observed pana for the day and night, and during this period no one was allowed to enter the sacrificer's house.\(^{73}\)

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72 Informant: K. Nahlei.

73 N.E. Parry: *op. cit.*, 366, Also Informant: H.C. Ngosa.
Khahrô: It was also known as Kahrô or Kathlaobao. It was a sacrifice to the most powerful evil spirits Khasô, which dwelled in high mountain or hill, precipice, etc. called Khaisô. It was usually performed every year by the villagers jointly. Its object was to please the evil spirits to which they ensured good crop and fertile domestic animals, good health, prosperity and fertility. It was performed outside the village at any suitable spot from where the abode of Khasô i.e. hill or precipice was clearly visible.  

The sacrifice was usually conducted by a person called Azikôpa who was selected by the villagers. A man selected must be clean and healthy, not afflicted with syphilis or scabies. His womankind must also be free from pregnancy or menstruation. He was assisted by another person called Phiechhôpa. The Azikôpa intoned a chant to Khasô. A red cock and pig were killed, and phaw was set aside on a flat stone which was placed at the foot of a young tree. Women did not take part in it nor partake of the meat. The villagers observed pana on the day of sacrifice. The next day was ao and the third day was chhythyu, all men went to jungle for hunting. If they were successful in this, they

74 Marapa, p.10.
75 Ibid.,
observed ao or chhyan on the next day. During those restricted days, no stranger was allowed to enter the village.76

Ra-seichhoa: The Maras believed that the village with its adjoining areas and jungle forest were controlled by the spirits Khas6 and in order to appropriate them Ra-seichhoa also known as Ra-hrona was usually performed by the villagers jointly for the good health of the people and the fertility of land. The sacrifice was performed outside the village fence at a place from where all jhums were visible. It was conducted by Azikopa who was selected for this particular sacrifice. He intoned a chant to Khas6.

Vy, lyura tla la,
Seitö pata ei cha chhy,
Lahla tla la, lahnia tla la,
Lopu tla la, thopu tla la.
Hnatla mia piela, zotia mia pie la,
Kovei mia pie la, chhia vei mia pie la.77

(Oh, long live the land,
I sacrifice a he-mithun to you.

76 N.E. Parry: op. cit., p. 369
77 Marapa, p. 15.
Long live the far land,
Long live the near land,
Long live the hills,
Long live the forest,
Grant us health
Grant us good crops.)

A mithun was killed, and its meat was cooked and eaten. pharaw was set aside for Khasó. Women did not take part in this sacrifice nor partake of the meat. The whole village was pana on the day of sacrifice.

Tiylija: It was a community sacrifice performed every year to propitiate the evil spirits to make the villagers healthy and fertile; to give them good crops and healthy domestic animals. A pig and a fowl were sacrificed. Pharaw was kept for the evil spirits. The whole meat was cooked and eaten. Women were not allowed to take part in the sacrifice nor allowed to partake of the cooked meat.78

The sacrifice was conducted by Tiyliabópa who was selected by the chief and villagers from among the families who had settled in the village for several generations. He must be ceremonially clean, and his wife must also be free from pregnancy or menstruation during the sacrifice.

78 N.E. Parry: op. cit., p. 371.
Tlylia sacrifice lasted for four days. The first day was pana for the sacrifice, the next day was ao and the third day was chhythyu. If hunting was successful, ao or chhypana was observed on the fourth day.79

Sacrifice Connected With Sickness:

As the early Maras believed that sickness was caused by Khazopa or evil spirits lyurahripa which had power to seize man's soul. When a person fell ill, sacrifice was performed to please evil spirits so as to get man's soul released. The sick-man's family usually consulted a person called Litothaipa also known as Khazohneipa who had the power of ascertaining what sacrifice was to be performed. The more prominent sacrifices performed in connection with sickness are mentioned below.

Chawva: It was a sacrifice to Khazopa who caused trifling illness like tooth-ache, cough, etc. The sacrifice was performed to please Khazopa with the object of healing the illness. It was conducted by the head of the house. For this, a model house was made and fixed on to the roof of the house above the doorway. Inside this model house flour and

79 Harapa, p.11.
raw cotton were placed, and cotton thread ran between the model house and doorway of the house. The belief was that the sick-man's soul would climb down the cotton thread into the house after its return from the sky or hills and restored to its owner. A fowl was sacrificed, the meat was cooked and eaten. Phavan was kept for Khazopa. The sacrificer and his family observed pama on the day of sacrifice.80

Hmaoathy: It was believed that if the villagers had talked too much of about a person of his strength or courage or on other matters, the later would soon become weak and unhealthy. Such trifling illness called Hmaoba: meaning "evil lip that eats man" was ascribed to the evil spirit of men's lips. When a person suffered from this, his or her relations just said: "Ama hmao na a nie" meaning "He/She is eaten by their lips". A sacrifice called Hmaoathy meaning "casting out the lips", was performed in order to remove the evil spirit from the sickman. The sacrifice was conducted by a person of robust health called Baothaipa. A fowl or a dog was sacrificed in front of the sickman's house, by chanting incantation.81

As soon as the chant was completed, the Baothaipa then

80 N.E. Parry: op. cit., p. 460.
81 Harapa, p. 17.
threw a dog being killed for the sacrifice on to the verandah and said: "Take this dog and run away from here". The meat of a dog was cooked outside the house, children also partake of the meat.

**Parihriso:** The early Maras believed that snake had power of causing chronic disease called *parihris*. Swelling, sore, etc. were ascribed to the disease bearing spirit of snake. When a person suffered from such illness, a sacrifice called *parihriso* was performed. It was conducted by the head of the house. A dog or a fowl was sacrificed, the meat was never taken. The sacrificer and his family observed *pana* on the day of sacrifice, and during *pana*, no one was allowed to enter his house.

**Thla-aw:** The Thla-aw which means "calling of a wandering soul" was a sacrifice performed to please the evil spirits. It was believed that sickness, madness, etc. were caused by evil spirits by capturing man's soul. When a person suffered from sickness immediately after his return from hunting, *jhum*, etc. the thla-aw sacrifice was performed. Its object was to please the evil spirits thus released the soul. It was conducted by the head of the house by

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82 Marapa, p.18.

sacrificing a fowl. The sacrificer, then, went to the jungle to receive the wandering soul, and as soon as he reached the place from where the sickman returned last, he called out: "Come, come back. I come here to receive you." In this manner, it was believed that the soul of the sickman returned and reinstated in the body. The sacrificer and his family observed pana on the day of sacrifice. 84

**Sacrifices Connected With Barrenness:**

**Thla-awrua**: The early Maras believed that woman's barrenness, infertility, etc. were caused by spirits of her deceased parents being displeased with her. A sacrifice called Thla-awrua was performed. A fowl was sacrificed and its meat was cooked and eaten. Some meat and rice were placed on the graves of the deceased parents to please them. The sacrificer and his family observed pana for the night of sacrifice. 85

**Sakia**: Woman's barrenness was also ascribed to a spirit called Sakia. When a woman was found barren, a sacrifice Sakia was performed. This sacrifice intended to please Sakia. It was conducted by a barren woman. She sacrificed a fowl inside the house at the place where the

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84 Informant: N. Sotyu.
water-tubes were kept. A fowl was cooked and eaten. The phavan was thrown away through the hole of the floor. The sacrificer and her family observed pana for the day and night of sacrifice.86

Sacrifices Connected With Crops, Jhums, etc.:

The hills and jhums, the Maras believed were the abode of the evil spirits which had exerted influence over the fertility of land and agricultural productivity. Each stage of agriculture was marked by several sacrifices and ceremonies. Each sacrifice intended to please the evil spirits which were believed to have cause infertility of crops, famine, etc.

RialOchhie: It was usually performed when the jhums had been half cut and was performed by the villagers jointly, its object was to prevent people from cutting themselves by accident when cutting the jhums. For this sacrifice the fruit of the hog-plant dokao (Spondias magnifera, Willd) was collected, and the seeds of the fruit were fixed on to the arrows.87 At night, a fire was made in the village street, and the seed-stones were roasted in the

86 N.E. Parry :op.cit., p.379.
87 Jungles, p.118.
fire and fired off towards the sky from pellet bows by the children, saying: "Let famine fly away as the arrows fly with the dakao fruit". The whole village was ao on the next day.88

**Lyuhrona:** It was observed after the *jhums* were burnt. It was performed every year by the villagers jointly.89 Its object was to please the spirits to give them health, good crops, to prevent wild animals from eating the crops and to enable them to be successful in hunting. It was performed outside village. A *mithun* or a sow90 was killed, and a man selected for this sacrifice acted as priest.

The meat of the animal sacrificed was cooked and eaten, but not by woman. *Phava*i was kept for the spirit as usual. The whole village was *pana* on the day of sacrifice, and the next day was *ao* after which the villagers started constructing *jhum* huts in their respective *jhums*.

The third sacrifice was *Sachipachhua* which was performed after the paddy was all sown. The next sacrifice was *Chithla* which was performed after finishing the first

88 N.E. Parry: *op. cit.*, p.429.

89 It is also known as *lyurana* or *rah-napa*, and also known as *sabaopi*.

90 *Marapa*, p.13.
weeding called *mawkeipa*. A pig or a fowl was sacrificed with the object of pleasing the spirits which would make the sacrificer and his family healthy and also make the crops fertile. The fifth sacrifice connected with the crops was *Chhaomai*. Each family sacrificed a fowl to ensure fertility of crops. This sacrifice was followed by a ceremony called *Chakalai* meaning "driving out the famine". On appointed day when the night had fallen each house-holder took a large flaming firebrand out of the hearth rushing to the door and slid it swiftly back, then chanted a recitation. He, then, threw away the firebrand into the air in front of the house and ceremony was completed. This signified the cast away of famine.

The next sacrifice performed after the *Chakalai* was called *Sahrisa* which was held in the middle of September. The sacrifice intended to please the spirits thus making the paddy healthy and fertile. A dog or a fowl was sacrificed. The next sacrifice was *Lyuhmathaona*. For this the owner of the *jhum* sacrificed a fowl. The belief was that the spirit being pleased with this sacrifice made the paddy fertile and then sacrificer had to yield good harvest. After harvest each house-holder performed *Sakia* sacrifice. A white cock was sacrificed in order to save the souls of the *jhum* owner.

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91 N.E. Parry: *op. cit.*, pp. 432-434.
92 *Jungles*, p. 119.
and his family from wandering in the jhum. The next sacrifice was Samwa-awthie which was performed to please the spirit of paddy to increase and eke the paddy and also to prevent the paddy from weevils. A pig or a red hen was sacrificed. The sacrificer and his family observed pana on the day of sacrifice and the next day was ao. The last sacrifice performed in connection with the paddy was called Beipari-awthie. For this a red hen was sacrificed. The sacrificer and his family observed pana on the day of sacrifice.93

Birth-Ceremonies:

Nawkhutlo: Immediately after the birth of a child, the mother observed an ao called nawkhutlo lasting for nine days if it was a girl, ten days if a boy.94 During these ao days, the mother did not leave the house nor perform her ordinary work. It was to ensure the child's health and also to prevent the child's soul from wandering away from the house. It was believed that the soul of a child was very weak and helpless until it attained one month old. If the child's soul strayed away from home, Khazopa or evil spirit would seize it. The child's father did not, however, observe the

94 Jungles, p. 149.
naukhutld but whenever he went off to work he made a bamboo pin and placed it in the baby's hand and said: "You must not follow me where I am going to work". 95

**Radeido:** It was performed on the ninth day if a baby was a girl. The mother stood on the spot where the birth took place, and the father went under the house with a small leaf-basket held together with cotton thread. Two pebbles were placed in the basket, the thread was passed through the floor to the mother who pulled it up and placed it on the birth place. A fowl was sacrificed and the pharaw was placed in the basket. 96

If the child was a boy, ceremony was held on the tenth day. The father made a bow and arrow, and placed it on the ground just below the spot where the birth took place. The mother pulled this up with a cotton thread and placed it on the spot of birth. The baby's soul was thus lifted into the house. The fowl was sacrificed over the bow and arrow, and the pharaw was set aside. The next day was ao and after this the mother could perform her ordinary work. 97

**Nawhri:** The early Maras believed that every baby had

95 Chottapadhyaya Kamala Devi: *op. cit.*, p.239.
Na unhri a disease germs which could make a baby weak or ill. This disease was caused by the disease bearing spirit which had influence over the child's health. The Na unhri ceremony was usually performed when a child attained two or three months old. It was performed when the moon was waning. Its object was to purify the child by casting out the spirit of disease. It was usually conducted by the father who sacrificed a fowl inside the house or at the verandah. The child was anointed with the fowl's blood. The meat was cooked and eaten, and the phavan was set aside for the spirit. The mother and child observed ao on the next day. 98

Death Ceremonies:

Riha. The most prominent ceremony called Riha was usually performed only when a person died a pithi. 99 There was, however, no Riha for a person who died a sanwan or thichhie. Riha was a household ceremony performed by the deceased's relations in honour of the dead. The general belief was that the spirits of animals killed for the Riha would accompany the spirit of the dead to Athikhi. And if the deceased's relations failed to do the same, the spirit of the dead would become angry thus would cause infertility of

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98 N.E. Parry: op. cit., p.390.
99 Informant: T. David.
domestic animals. If Riha had not been performed, the spirit of the dead would wander here and there hunting the house, and would be soon captured by the evil spirits.  

As soon as death (pithi) took place, the Riha ceremony was held in the house of the deceased. The deceased’s relations killed several animals, mithun, pig, etc. and held a wake involving the whole in feasting. The deceased’s pupa also killed a pig which enabled him to claim death due, ru. If the more animals had been killed, the deceased’s spirit would become more happier and the wake would go on several days until burial took place. The period and pomp of ceremony wholly depended on the status of the dead and also the wealth of the deceased relations. During the wake, dancing, beating drums and gongs, singing, drinking, etc. went on all the time. The folk-dances like Athila, Rakhatla, etc. were performed by young men and girls in honour of the dead. The Rakhatla was performed each day as long as the corpse remained in the house. 

Thlathlyu: It was important ceremony connected with death. It was performed by the deceased’s maternal uncle’s wife pinda after burial. The pinda consoled the souls of the deceased’s relations. She brought a fowl and fermented rice Sahmahei. She sacrificed a fowl and smeared the big toe of

100 MAT, p.4.

101 N.E. Parry: op. cit., 405.
each with the fowl’s blood and also gave each of them a little fermented rice. This ceremony was performed to prevent the deceased’s spirit from seizing the souls of its relations. It was a mark of prevention. 102

Löpheiparai: The another ceremony connected with death was Löpheiparai meaning "erection of memorial”. It was usually held after a year or within a year of death during the period between the harvest and the mourning called machhiesa and also to have sitting together with the spirit of the dead called athipatyukhei. Memorials were first erected, and immediately after completing the erection, the deceased’s relations killed a mithun or a pig and prepared a feast in honour of the dead. The whole village involved in this feast. The Rakhatla dance was performed if was performed at burial rite. The Pakhupila dance was also performed if erection of memorials was done before the jhums were burnt. Women all had partaken of the feast inside the house while men on the verandah. When food was all consumed, men and women drank rice-beer called "raithli-sahma". It was believed that on this occasion, the deceased’s spirit would make the last visit to its relations and partake of the feast among them. The feast was thus treated as a mark of final separation of the deceased’s spirit from the living. 103

103 Informant : T.David.
Ja Ceremony:

Ja was the most prominent ceremony connected with head hunting. It was usually performed when the warriors riapaw successfully brought home the trophy. The ceremony was performed over the heads of victims with great pomp. The whole village involved in this ceremony which lasted for several days. On the first day a pig was killed for the feast and the warriors washed their hands in the blood of the animal killed. The first two days were spent drinking, singing songs and dancing the "Samlakia", the dancers made a triumphant march round the heads. The next day was sawpana. On the fourth day, the warriors took bath for purification.

The Ja ceremony was performed to subdue the spirit of the slain saw harmless to the slayer. It was believed that if ceremony had not been performed, the saw would render the slayer blind, lame or paralysed. The ceremony was, thus, performed to save the slayer from the power of darkness. The Ja ceremony also intended to insure total subjugation of the saw. It was believed that the spirit of the slain would accompany the slayer's spirit in the next world when the later died. The idea was certainly to transfer the soul-substance of the slain to the slayer.

104 Ceremony, p.1.
105 Ibid.,
106 B.C.Bohain : op. cit., p.75.
believed that if Ja ceremony was not performed, the spirits of the slain would go to Sawvawkhi. The Ja ceremony was, thus, performed to enable the slayer to attain invincible power over the spirits of the slain.