

# North Indian Notes and Queries :

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### POPULAR RELIGION.

196. **Snake Worship in Kulu.**—In Bathár village, Kothi Nagar, there is a snake deity called Bāsú Nág (basná=to dwell). The story is that the deota Bāsú Nág had a wife Nágani, who, when near her delivery, took refuge in an unbaked earthen vessel. A Kumhár came and lighted a fire underneath it, whereupon seven young ones were born, who ran all over the country. Nágani then became a woman with the tail of a snake. The seven sons were (1) Shirghan Nág, who came out first (Sir?) and went to Jagatsukh; as did (2) Phál Nág, who lives now near the Phál Nalá; (3) Gosháli Nág, lives at Goshál; he is called andhá or blind also because he lost an eye in the fire. (His other name is Gautam-Rikhi); (4) Káli Nág, who got blackened, went to Raisur Kothi; and (5) Pili Nág, the yellow snake, was the smallest of all, and went to a village near Baqar; (6) Sogu Nág went to the Sagu Kohl, a precipice near Ralha; and (7) Dhunbal Nág (Dbum-Rikhi), so called because he came out of the spout in the jar from which smoke came and went to Halaw.

It may be noticed that most of these have distinct names, while the rest have only the names

of the places in which they now live; but Goshali Nág is also called andhá, though the latter name seems little used now.

The proverb in Kulu runs: A Hára Nág, a Hára Narain, so that there are ten other snake-temples in Kulu.—*H. A. Rose, C. S. : Kulu.*

[Is not Bāsu=Vásuki, the snake king?—ED.]

197. **Kali Auri.**—In Kulu there is at Harchandi village at Nathán (K. Nagar) a temple to Káli, the idol consisting of a stone or image (auri). The word "auri" means a picture, monument, &c., and is commonly applied to the stone put up on end by a man in first visiting one of the numerous passes in Kulu, e. g., auri Dhár means the "Ridge of the Monuments." Such stones are very numerous on all passes in Kulu, and are set up on the occasion described, and a sheep or goat is killed and given to the companions, or some food is distributed. It is said to have once been customary to write the name on the stone, and the shapes certainly suggest the idea that once they were carved roughly in human shape.

The Devi Kali is said to have put the stone as her image at Harchandi.—*H. A. Rose, C. S. : Kulu.*

## ANTHROPOLOGY.

206. **A Curious Kol Festival—Chota-Nagpur.**—In October, 1880, I witnessed at Ranchi a curious sight of bands of Mundá girls, wearing turbans, going about in procession armed with sticks, spears, and axes. All the girls of a village so equip themselves and make a descent upon the next village to the east, carrying off whatever fowls, kids, pigs, and lambs they can secure. The village thus devastated takes its chance by sending a similar expedition of Amazons to the next village eastwards, and so on. Retaliation is forbidden, nor is any resistance offered; and, moreover, it is quite legitimate for the invaders to seek their booty wherever they may be concealed.

This festival, called *Jani-sikár*, takes place once every twelve years, and is supposed to have been started by a Rájá of the Nágbandi family, named Ganes Sâhi, in the twelfth year of his reign. The origin of the custom is thus described in a *Leko Git*, which is sung on the occasion:—

*Báro bachharé Rájá jani-sikár.  
Bainik mundé Rájá pagri bândhây.  
Gorhé nipur Rájá háthe bálám.  
Bainik mundé Rájá pagri bândhây.*

"In the twelfth year (of his reign) the Rájá originated the custom of *Jani-sikár*. He put a turban on his sister's head and tied tinkling silver ornaments to her feet, and armed her with a spear; and thus she went forth."

On this occasion a great deal of drinking and merry-making is indulged in by both the men and women. The song quoted above does not contain a single Mundári word. It is composed, like many other songs, in Nagpuri-Hindi.—*Sukumár Haldár, B. A., Settlement Officer, Burdwan, Bengal.*

[A curious hunt like this is described in Grierson's *Behár Peasant Life*, p. 401. Other examples would be interesting: Also see *N. I. N. & Q.*, II, 766.—ED.]

207. **On the Durability of Hæmatite Drawings on Sandstone Rocks.**—I discussed before the Asiatic Society of Bengal, in September, 1884, the durability of hæmatite drawings on sandstone rocks.

In that paper Dr. King, Superintendent of the Geological Survey, gave some important evidence on the preservation of the outlining on sundry unfinished cornices which had been done in red ochre on an ancient and now ruined temple near Pallianpatt, Nizam's Dominions, the ochre-staining being apparently quite fresh.

I now desire to draw attention to a similar and even more valuable piece of evidence from the greatest temple built in all time, the approxi-

mate date of the building of which is accepted over the entire civilized world. I allude to the Great Pyramid.

Mr. W. M. Flinders Petrie, in his valuable and ingenious paper on the mechanical methods of the ancient Egyptians, "JAI G. B.," Vol. XIII, pp. 88—109, states that the ochre stains used in facing, &c., on the limestone and granite blocks used in the Great Pyramid, are in perfect preservation at the present day.

Assuming that the pyramids, temples, and tombs of the fourth dynasty were built sometime before 2400 B. C., we have 4286 years as the present known limit to which ochre stains will endure in dry climate.

The climate of the North-Western Provinces is not unlike that of Egypt, except in the matter of rainfall.

Mr. Petrie states that "for marking out their work the Egyptians generally used red ochre paint, just such as is daubed on all boxes sent by Railway at this day in lieu of paper-labels." On the sides of the 43 granite beams which roof the King's chamber and the spaces above that, the workman's lines may be seen marked in red about half an inch wide.

It was also used for dressing surfaces flat, and is to be seen on all prominent points of the casing stones of the Great Pyramid.

In my paper on the recent existence of Rhinoceros Indicus in the North-Western Provinces and a description of an archaic rock-painting from Mirzapur representing the hunting of this animal—J. A. S., Part. II, Vol. LII, p. 56—I gave a short account of the character and nature of the paintings and an extremely cautious estimate of their age; that estimate is now clearly too low.

I will therefore provisionally suppose them to be 3000 years old. The original paper,—a short account of the petrographs in the caves or rock shelters of the Kaimur Range, an abstract of which I now send,—has not been published.

I will only repeat that these drawings afford an unread volume on the arts, dwellings, weapons, food and religion of an unknown savage race, who have in all probability been absorbed in the mass of the great Hindu people.

If an inhabitant of this planet were to reach Mars, and as the sole record of a burnt-out civilization were to discover a volume of an illustrated paper of the day—a Martian Graphic—he would perhaps be in a similar position to estimate the civilization of the Martians as an intelligent anthropologist should be face to face with these drawings.

Many of them, however, are in a faded and decayed state; others are being rapidly covered with a deposit of carbonate of lime or of smoke, and a last cause is the falling in of the rock shelters.—*J. Cockburn.*

**208. Kumaun—Arithmetical Puzzles for Boys.**—One of the favourite modes of sharpening the power of mental calculation among children is as follows :—

The senior boy asks the smaller boys to perform the following calculation mentally :—To the number of sons in any family add the number of parents, *i. e.*, two. Multiply this by two and add one to the product. Multiply the whole by five and add to this the number of daughters in the same family. Each boy works this out mentally and gives the result to the senior boy, who mentally deducts 25 from this, and tells the number of sons and daughters of the respective families. This is an old puzzle in the form of a Sanskrit *sloka*, which would be somewhat represented by the following jingle :—

Add together father, mother, sons ;  
To twice this number add one :  
Multiply by five and daughters add,  
Subtract twenty-five, O puzzled lad !

Every boy has to learn the first three lines by heart, but the fourth line, which is a key to the whole, is never given to him.

For instance, Mr. and Mrs. A have three sons and four daughters. The boy will say "1 and 1 and 3 make 5. Twice 5 is 10. 10 and 1 make 11. Five times 11 is 55, which, added to the number of daughters, makes 59. The result 59 is given out, the whole calculation being mental only. The senior boy deducts 25 from this, and the result is 34. The first digit shows the number of sons, and the second digit the number of daughters. As long as the 4th stanza or key is withheld from the boys, they will work it with unceasing zeal and interest.—*Pandit Janardan Dat Joshi.*

**209. Kumaun—Combat of Slings and Origin of Dev Temple.**—About 30 miles from Almora is a hill called Dedhurá (Debidhurá or the hill top of goddess). There is a sort of cave in the hill which is regarded as her temple. The origin of temple is as follows :—

Bhim Sen, one of the Pandavas, was playing at dice with an old woman. While they were playing Bhim Sen saw that the old woman's hand suddenly became moist and water began to drop from it. Bhim Sen enquired the reason of it, but she refused, and told him that it was ungentlemanly to pry into another's secrets. Bhim Sen persisted the more. She said she would tell the reason, but that he would miss her. Bhim Sen insisted on knowing the secret at all cost. She began :—"I am the goddess. I assumed human form just to have a game. A merchant's ship was sinking and, in his great distress, he invoked my assistance. I stretched out my hand and saved the ship." Hereupon the goddess went towards the rock and instantly disappeared. Bhim Sen

forced the rock open with his *gaddá* (mallet), but the goddess went to Pátála (the lower regions). There is a slit on the ground inside the cave. When the worshippers of the goddess offer a pice it goes down the slit with a ringing noise. From that day it is called Dedhurá or Debidhurá, and there is a carved figure, such as the natives use in dice-playing, still to be seen on that rock.

On Saloná (15th Srávan) the opposite factions of Mahrá and Phartyáls collect there and begin a mimic warfare with volleys of stones and slings. In old times a few persons of both factions were killed or wounded and the goddess was appeased. The wounded persons were scourged with nettles and recovered. Scourging with nettles is the only remedy a hillman uses for blows, contusions, sprains, falls, &c., and it cures him at once by free circulation of blood. It was a sort of mimic warfare, and intended perhaps to test the strength of the parties. Victory in this was a divine indication of victory all round the year. These ignorant people say that since our Government stopped this practice they have seen nothing but cholera, pestilences, &c.—*Pandit Janardan Dat Joshi.*

[I have given some instances of these semi-religious fights in my Introduction to the Folklore and Popular Religion of Northern India.—Ed.]

**210. The Bawariyas.**—The lizard mentioned in note No. 124 is the *usar sanda* or scourge-tail (*Uromastix hardwickii* : Gray), and is with the monitor lizard a staple article of food among the Kanjars and Kúchbandias as far east as Allahabad.

*Uromastix* is a desert form, and does not extend east of Allahabad, though extremely common at that station, particularly on the parade ground and the ravines in the vicinity. They are mainly herbivorous, but do not refuse insect food, and I have often seen one leave its burrow to clumsily chase a butterfly. The object of rustling the wisp of grass is, I should say, a ruse to induce the reptile to believe that some insect was passing its burrow. The *sanda* is easily caught by a horse-hair noose placed over the opening of his burrow, which is always of uniform shape, and the exact size of what would be a mid-section of the reptile. The *sanda* is in great repute as a restorative and aphrodisiac, and even high caste Hindus, such as Bráhmans and Rajputs, boil them down into a strong soup. I have known Kanjars carry them as far south as Banda, where they are unknown, and fetch high prices, and my brother, Mr. William Cockburn, if I remember right, told me he saw one thrust down the throat of a sick bullock. The *sanda*, like most other reptiles, possesses wonderful vitality, and will live months without a particle of food or water, and with its spine broken. It is