

30

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Part I.—HISTORY, LITERATURE, &c.

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*Rough Notes on the Angámi Nágás and their Language.—By Captain JOHN BUTLER, B. S. C., Political Agent, Nágá Hills, Asám.*

(With seven plates.)

#### Introduction.

Of all the numerous tribes—Gáros, Khásias, Sintengs, Mikirs, Kacháris, Kúkis, Nágás, Singphús, and Khámtis—inhabiting that vast tract of mountainous country which hems in Asám on the south, the largest numerically, as it is territorially, is the “Nágá”. Under this comprehensive term is included the whole group of cognate races, dwelling along that broad stretch of hill and upland, which, roughly speaking, is comprised between the Kopili River, on the west, and the Bori Dihing, on the east, and which lies between the parallels of 93° and 96° East Longitude. This tract extends northwards to the low hills bordering the alluvial plains of the Districts of Lakhimpúr, Síbságor, and Náogáon, and overlooks the broad waters of that noblest of all Indian Rivers, the sacred Brahmaputra. In a southerly direction, we are at present unable to state exactly to what limit it may extend. We may, however, safely say that it lies between the meridians of 25° and 27° North Latitude. Our late explorations have clearly ascertained, that the great Nágá race does undoubtedly cross over the main watershed dividing the waters which flow north into the Brahmaputra, from those flowing south into the Iráwadi; and they have also furnished very strong grounds for believing that in all probability it extends as far as the banks of the Kaiendwen (Námtonái or Ningthi) River, the great western tributary of the Iráwadi. Indeed there is room even to believe, that further explorations may, ere long, lead us to discover, that

the Kakhyen and Khyen (often pronounced Kachin and Chin) tribes, spoken of by former writers (Pemberton, Yule, Hannay, Bayfield, Griffiths, and others) are but offshoots of this one great race. Yule tells us that “the hills west of Kalé are occupied by the Khyens, a race extending southward throughout the long range of the Yúmá-doung to the latitude of Prome”, and that “Colonel Hannay identifies the Khyens with the Nágás of the Asám mountains.” Again Dalton in his work on the Ethnology of Bengal tells us that “Karens are sometimes called Kakhyens”, and that “Latham thinks that word for word Khyen is Karen”, whilst Dr. Mason tells us “that it is a Burmese word signifying aboriginal”. Finally we have Major Fryer informing us in his late interesting paper “On the Khyen people of the Sandoway District”\*, that the Khyengs have a tradition that they came down many years ago from the sources of the Kaiendwen River. It will thus be seen that the question regarding the identity of these tribes is at present a difficult one to decide, and I consider that its final solution can be satisfactorily undertaken only when we have completed the explorations upon which we have been so busily engaged for the last six years. We have already succeeded in completing the survey of about 8000 square miles of a country, about which we previously knew scarcely anything at all, a *terra incognita* in fact, the greater portion of which had been unseen by European eyes until visited by those enterprising pioneers, our survey officers, who armed with the Theodolite and Plane-table very soon cleared away the huge blots which had for so long been permitted to disfigure our N. E. Frontier Maps. Thus it is obvious that any theory propounded at the present stage of our knowledge must be more or less based upon conjecture, a dangerous field of controversy which I wish to avoid, especially as a few more seasons of such work as we have done of late, must clear up the mystery in which this question has so long been shrouded.

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## CHAPTER I.

### Geography and History.

Of all the tribes—and they are almost as numerous as the hills they inhabit—into which the Nágá group is divided, the most powerful and warlike, as it is also the most enterprising, intelligent, and civilized, so to say, is the “turbulent Angámi”. This great division of the Nágá race occupies for the most part a charming country of fine, open, rolling hill and valley, bounded by lofty mountains, some of whose summits tower up to nine, ten, and even twelve thousand feet above the sea level. Their villages are generally placed on the more tabular hills of about 5000 feet elevation, and enjoy

\* Journal, As. Socy. Bengal, for 1875, Pt. I, p. 39.

a healthy, bracing climate, subject to neither extreme heat, nor cold. This noble tract of country is blessed with a most fertile soil, well cultivated, drained and manured, and the hill sides are often covered, I might almost say for miles, with a succession of fine terraces of rich rice ; and the hill tops are dotted over, as far as the eye can reach, with numerous large villages, whose comparatively enormous population might even claim for them the right of being called towns. Thus Kohima for instance contains no less than 865 houses, or say a population of over 4000 souls.

The Angámis proper, or "Western Angámis", as they have also been aptly termed, in order to distinguish them from the Eastern clans, to whom they are closely allied, hold 46 villages, all lying to the west of the Sijo or Doiáng River. Towards the north they extend up to the range of hills on which the Nidzúkhrú mountain forms a prominent landmark, and on the west to the low range of hills on which Samagúting, Sitekema, and Nidzúmá stand, whilst towards the south they are cut off from Manipur by the lofty Barráil, whose forest-clad heights make a splendid background to the lovely panorama in front. The 46 villages above-mentioned, contain a total of 6,367 houses, and cover a tract of about 30 miles in length, by about 20 in breadth, and are thus spread over an area of about 600 square miles. Now if we allow an average of 5 souls to each house, we here obtain a population of 31,835 souls, or roughly, in round numbers, say about 30,000 souls—figures which I believe a regular census would prove to be very near the mark indeed. And from these figures we may assume that we have here got a population of at least 50 to the square mile, which for a hill country, I need hardly add, is a very large average. This can be easily seen by a reference to the last Census Report of Bengal (1872), in which we find that even the Khásia Hills have only 23 souls to the square mile, the Chittagong Hill Tracts only 10, whilst Hill Tiparah comes last of all with only 9.

I may here explain that the total area of all "Nágá Land" *theoretically* under the political control of our Government is about 8,500 square miles, and I have roughly estimated the population in that area to be at least 300,000 souls.

It has been generally believed that the term "Nágá" is derived from the Bengali word "nángtá", or the Hindustani word "nangá", meaning "naked", and the specific name "Angámi" has also been credited with the same source. Another theory suggests the Kachári word "Nágá", a "young man" and hence a "warrior", whilst a third theory would derive it from "nág" a snake. However, be this as it may, the term is quite foreign to the people themselves : they have no generic term applicable to the whole race, but use specific names for each particular group of villages ; thus the men of Mezoma, Khonomá, Kohima, Jotsoma, and their

of much earthy matter due to the soft sandstones out of which they are derived. This and long surface weathering has led to their being well cultivated and terraced, but the original lines of larger angular blocks are still apparent. Through these moraines the present streams have cut their channels down to the solid rock, leaving the slopes at an angle of 45°, out of which project great masses of the subangular sandstones. The thickness of the moraine at Kigwémá is quite 300 feet at the terminal slope, and the length of the former glacier would have been four miles to the crest of range at Japvo. At the head of the Zullo, traces of this former state of things are shown by the even height at which large transported blocks of the tertiary sandstones lie up against the sides of the ravine, resting on patches of rubble. No part of the Barráil is more beautiful than that between Kigwémá and Sopvoma, looking up the lateral glacial gorges, with their frowning steep sides running up to the crest of the Barráil, which is for the greater part a wall of grey rock and precipice. Dense forest covers the slopes, but from their steepness many parts are bare, breaking the monotony of this dark coloured mountain scenery. Where the steep rise in the slope commences, the spurs are at once more level and are terraced for rice cultivation. Not a square yard of available land has been left, and the system of irrigation canals is well laid out. I have never, even in the better cultivated parts of the Himálayas, seen terrace cultivation carried to such perfection, and it gives a peculiarly civilized appearance to the country."

The Botany of the Nágá Hills has still to be described, but this is a speciality only to be undertaken by an expert, to which title, I regret, I am unable to lay any claim whatever. I must therefore content myself with observing that oak, fir, birch, larch, apple, and apricot, are all to be found here, besides numerous other trees common to Asám. Of orchids there is a very great variety indeed. Indigenous tea is found growing all along the low northern slopes at the foot of the Barráil. Among the jungle products I may mention bees-wax, India-rubber, tea seed, and several fibres, besides red, yellow, blue, and black dyes.

As with the Botany, so with the Natural History, we require men who have devoted their lives to its study, to do the subject justice. I will therefore not attempt to do more than furnish the following list of some of the chief among the wild animals that I am personally aware are all to be found in the tract in question.

1. Elephant—*Elephas Indicus.* These animals swarm throughout the Dhansiri valley, and are found all along the low ranges of the Barráil, but are rare in the high Angámi country.
2. Rhinoceros—*Rhinocerus Indicus.* } These two animals are rare,
3. Wild Buffalo—*Bubalus Arni.* } and are only to be met with in the Dhansiri valley.

4. Mithan—*Gavæus frontalis*. These affect the forest-clad shades of the lower hills.
5. Tiger—*Felis Tigris*.
6. Leopard—*Pardus*. The black and clouded species of Leopard are also occasionally met with.
7. Hill Black Bear—*Ursus tibetanus*.
8. Indian Black Bear—*Ursus labiatus*.
9. Badger—*Arctonyx collaris*.
10. Wild Boar—*Sus Indicus*.
11. Sambar Deer—*Rusa Aristotelis*.
12. Barking Deer—*Cervulus Aureus*.
13. Goral—*Nemorhædus goral*.
14. Civet Cat—*Viverra Zibetha*.
15. Tiger Cat—*Felis Marmorata*.
16. Common Wild Cat—*Felis Chaus*.
17. Pangolin—*Manis pentadactyla*.
18. Porcupine—*Hystrix leucura*.
19. Hoolook—*Hylobates Hoolook*.
20. Langur or Hanuman—*Presbytis Schistaceus*.
21. Common Monkey—*Inuus Rhesus*.
22. Otter—*Lutra vulgaris*.
23. Bamboo Rat—*Rhizomys badius*.
24. Common Brown Rat—*Mus decumanus*.
25. Black Rat—*Mus Rattus*.
26. Black Hill Squirrel—*Sciurus macrouroides*.
27. Common Striped Squirrel—*Sciurus palmarum*.
28. Gray Flying Squirrel—*Sciuropterus fimbriatus*.
29. Brown Flying Squirrel—*Pteromys petaurista*.

Among Game Birds I would mention the following :—

1. Peacock—*Pavo assamicus* (very rare and only in the plains).
2. Deo Derrick Pheasant—*Polyplectron tibetanum*. Very numerous in the plains, valleys, and low hills, but only where there is dense forest.
3. Derrick Pheasant—*Gallophasis Horsfieldii*.
4. Argus Pheasant—*Cerornis Blythii* (very rare and only on the Baráil Mountains at high elevations).
5. Jungle Fowl—*Gallus Bankiva* (?)
6. Hill Partridge—*Arboricola rufogularis*.

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9

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"It will flourish, if naturalists, chemists, antiquaries, philologists, and men of science in different parts of *Asia*, will commit their observations to writing, and send them to the Asiatic Society at Calcutta. It will languish, if such communications shall be long intermitted; and it will die away, if they shall entirely cease." SIR WM. JONES.

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