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# SOLUNG

(A Festival of the Adis of NEFA)

*Edited and compiled*

*by*

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## INTRODUCTION

A look at the map of India shows that the great Himalayas stretch from the north west to the north east. This signifies the unity of the country. The Himalayas have from time immemorial excited the imagination of poets, philosophers and Saints. In the first cants of Kumarasambhava, Kalidas the poet of poets says, 'The great Himalayas stretch to the north of India like Gods. It stretches from the west to the east like a rod meant for measuring the earth.'

The North East Frontier Agency is a part of the north-east Himalayas as the name signifies. This is perhaps the area of which little is known to the rest of the world and to modern India today. This was not a 'Hidden Land' to the people living in India long ago neither was it a land of Himalayan Barbary. It was definitely not the land described by Mulla Danesh of Herat and copiously quoted by some writers. It was the continuation of the Himalayas from west to east. It was the same familiar Himalayas of which the oldest book Rigveda sings : "The Himalayas are immovable and have been standing for ages." The Atharbaveda says, "O Mother Earth your mountains your snowcovered mountains and your forest be useful to us". The Gita says, "I am like the Himalaya amongst stationary elements".

The Brahma Puran says, "The Himalayas are the kings of mountains," and Matsya Puran, "The

tops are covered with snow, thousands of falls and rivulets flow out and the forests are dense". The Mahabharat, "The Himalayas were dense in different coloured birds who had various kinds of songs" and Kalidas says, "To north of India stretch the Himalayas like Gods from West to East like a measuring rod meant for measuring the earth".

This amply illustrates that the physical and natural beauties of the Himalayas were well known to Indians long ago.

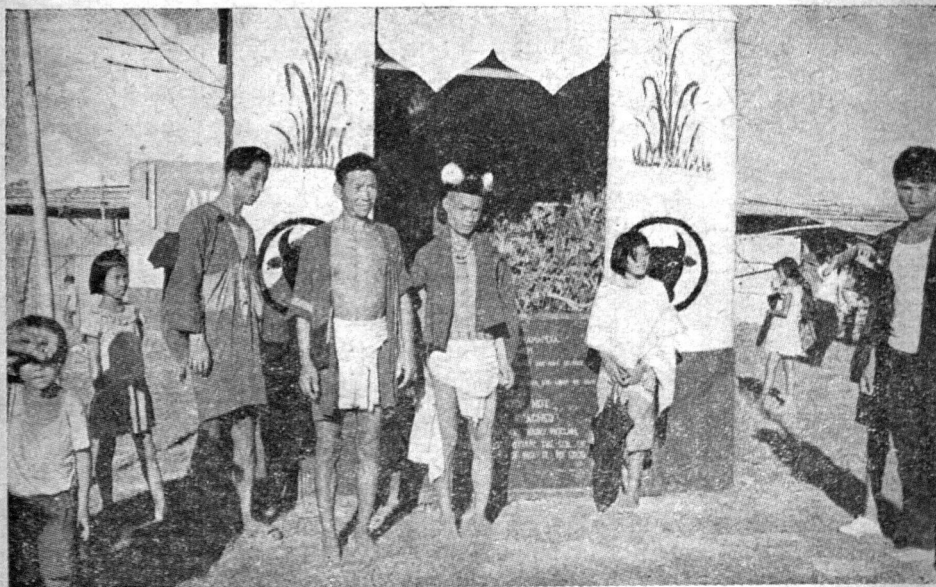
It was in the lap of these Himalayas that culture and civilization of the highest order arose. The Himalayas are full of beauties of nature.

In these Himalayas is situated what is administratively known as the Siang District. This is inhabited by a number of tribes who call themselves Adis. They are united by the same language which is spoken with a few variations, throughout the area. Not only language but culture, religions and ceremonies point out to the unity of all the people.

Siang has further been divided into two areas for the purpose of administration. The one is administered from Along and the other from Pasighat.

The main tribes that inhabit this area are Padams, Minyongs, Gallongs, Pasis, Pangis, Shimongs, Ashings, Pailibos, Ramos, Boris, Bokars, Tangams and so on. There are 116 villages in which about 36 thousand people live.

The Himalayas are in their full glory and beauty in this part. The forest clad hills, the snow clad mountains and thousands of rivers, streams and falls make it one of the most beautiful area. The biggest river Siang lies in the area like a garland.



*The altar for the Solung festival at Pasigbat*

It is the river that rises near Mansarober in Tibet and flows for a long distance in Tibet before entering into India near Kepangla.

Siang is a district of songs and dances. The people here have a long tradition of beliefs, religion and culture.

Nature, the beauties of nature and grandure of the Himalayas is very much present in the belief of the Adis. The Himalayas are the source of all food, water, materials of which houses are made and so also the culture.

The Adis perform many festivals. All time is song and dance time but there are special occasions on which the various festivals are celebrated. Solung is one such festival. It is generally celebrated at the end of the sowing season. There is none whose heart will not leap up in joy on seeing the green shoots of paddy coming up in vast fields. Before the planting of paddy everybody had worked hard in cleaning the jungle and ploughing, fencing, cleaning channels and preparing the fields. This is a hard job and every one feels tired of the work. A time of relaxation and enjoyment is welcome after all this.

In his "Aspects of Padam Minyong Culture" Shri Sachin Roy—(now Dr Sachin Ray) has mentioned that Solung is an agricultural festival performed after first and final weeding of the paddy fields. According to him the Adis perform two Solungs—Lune Solung which also called Taku—Binnyal, after first weeding and Luttor Solung after final weeding. The two festivals are described by Shri Roy in the following way—

"After the first weeding all the women of the village perform Lune Solung or Taku-Binnyal in

their respective houses. This festival has all the paraphernalia of Mopun excepting that two pieces of ginger are stuck on an arrow planted near the house. Then a chicken is sacrificed near the granary and the blood is strewn round the granary and the body of the bird is kept inside for a whole night. The feathers are taken out and planted on the ground near the granary. In the night dances are organized by the girls and Miris sing Solung Abangs, rhapsodies on the origin of crops.

Just before the final weeding the Adis perform the Luttor Solung festival for propitiation of Togupyogam and Agam. It is meant for the prosperity of the cattle. All the families that possess mithuns bring them home from the jungle and tie them to the posts in the yard in the front of their houses

Every family then sacrifices pigs and chickens according to its means, and the sacrificial meat along with pieces of ginger is offered to the spirits. A bow and a few arrows are hung over the door of each house. At night every owner of mithun makes it a point to hold a feast of apong and rice. Sometimes this festival continues for four or five days. The climax of the festival is the Solung dance, performed each night near the moshup. The Miri sings about the evolution of the crops, and mithuns and the girls follow him in chorus and dance to his tune".<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>. Ref. Sachin Roy '*Aspects of Padam-Minyong Culture*' Shillong 1960, pp. 133.