

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF THE MINYONGS



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L. R. N. SRIVASTAVA

**SOCIAL ORGANIZATION
OF
THE MINYONGS**



Dr L. R. N. Srivastava

**DIRECTORATE OF RESEARCH
Government of Arunachal Pradesh
ITANAGAR
1990**

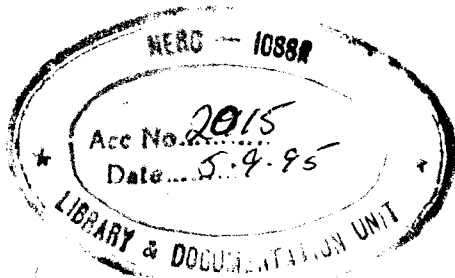
Social Organization of the Minyongs—a book written by **Dr L. R. N. Srivastava**, a former District Research Officer, Pasighat and presently Professor, National Council of Educational, Research and Training, New Delhi - 110016, and Published by **Dr P. C. Dutta**, Director of Research, Arunachal Pradesh for and on behalf of the Government of Arunachal Pradesh.

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306.850934
ZRI

First Published : 1990

Price — Rs. 82.00



Printed by :
Annada Printing House
A. T. Road,
Jorhat - 785001



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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

I. DISTRIBUTION AND HABITATION

The Minyong form a large group within the broader framework of the Adi tribe formerly known as the Abor. They inhabit a large part of the central and south-eastern Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh. The villages are situated in the valleys and on the banks of big rivers like the Siang, Siyom, Simang and their many tributaries. Their parent and the biggest village Riga is situated on the right bank of the Siang having over 300 houses. In the Siang valley there are such important villages as Pangkang, Riga, Parong, Sitang, Dosing, Pangia, Kebang, Rottung, Babuk, Rengin, Tarak, Yemsing, Balek, Riu, Komsing, Jorsing, Pangee and Sissen. A considerable population of the Minyong is also distributed in the Siyom valley in Bongne, Kerang, Paksing, Jomo, Jomlo, Mori, Rolging, Mopung, Molom, Koreng, and Lokpeng villages. In the Simang valley are such villages as Pareng, Sine, Yingku, Yibuk, Supsing, Lishing and Meshing. The Minyong are dispersed in 80 villages with a total population of about 20,000. Their villages are generally small with an average of about 50 houses. The village is almost invariably found in a small compact area, as the small number and size of houses and their proximity to each other do not require much space. A village is generally approachable from one side only, high hills or deep ravines preventing approach from the other three sides. The villages were purposely built so in order to prevent the entry of enemies during the days of inter-tribal feuds.

This was an important reason for the Minyong area remaining virtually isolated for a long time. The mighty Brahmaputra river which flows along the southern boundary of the Minyong area, the formidable hills and an almost total lack of any communication did not allow people from the plains to set foot on the Minyong villages. This geographical isolation led to social isolation and the Minyong and their neighbours could not develop a real understanding for each other. Each

one was suspicious of the other. The Minyong did not allow any outsider to enter their villages and were happy and contented in their isolated villages.

In spite of the difficult terrain in which the Minyong villages are situated, the people manage to build permanent houses which require major repairs only after three or four years. A Minyong house is built on wooden piles at a height of one to ten feet from the ground. One can enter the house through a notched log. The floor and the walls of the house are made of split bamboo and the roof is thatched. There is only one hall in the house which serves the purpose of bedroom, dining room and kitchen. In the middle of the house is the fireplace where food is cooked and around which the inmates of the house sleep. Attached to the house is the pigsty latrine and in front is an open platform where work, which cannot be performed inside the house due to intense darkness, are performed. The absence of any window in the house is conspicuous. It is feared that, if there is a window, spirits would enter the house and trouble the inmates.

The fireplace built in the middle of the house divides it into two parts: *rising* and *kodang*. As one enters the house the former is on the left hand side and the latter on the right hand side. The left side of *rising* is reserved for the guests and visitors. Women are not allowed to sit there. The right side and the front portion is for the married men and women to sleep and the back side is for unmarried boys and girls. Similarly, *kodang* is divided into four parts—the first is used for keeping vegetables and feed for the pigs, the second is for keeping the cooking utensils, the third is the place where rice beer is brewed, and the fourth is reserved for offering sacrifices to gods and spirits and for keeping ritual things.¹

Each family has its own granary built, along with others, in a corner of the village away from the dwelling house. It is a much smaller structure than the house but built on the same pattern.

The most pretentious structure in a Minyong village is the boys' dormitory known as *dete*. The myths of origin of the Minyong dormitories show that these are their most ancient institutions and were built to give a ritual feast for celebrating the acquisition of yeast exacted as fine by one of their ancestors from another ancestor who had

indulged in incestuous sex relation with his sister. The past and the present functions of the *dere* have been to impart to the newly initiated boys training in sex, to act as a venue for the village council, a place for making hunting and fishing implements, a guard house and a resting place for the visitors to the village.

There is no formal initiation ceremony to admit the boys into the *dere*. As soon as they start putting on loin cloth they are automatically admitted to the *dere* and retire from it after they are married.

The *raseng* is the girls' dormitory. It is comparatively a small structure built in a corner of the village. As soon as the girls become nubile they start sleeping in the *raseng*. They receive here from the elder girls of the *raseng* training in the secrets of sex. They invite their boy friends there at night. It is in the *raseng* that they choose their husbands. A lot of sexual liberty is permitted to the girls within the *raseng*. A girl also learns the art of weaving under the aegis of this institution. After she gets married she retires from the *raseng* and goes to live with her husband.

Another institution in the Minyong villages is the *retek*. It is meant for the old men of the village. They gather there, talk, gossip and weave baskets, fishing nets and such other things which do not require any hard labour. They also go round the village during daytime when it is almost deserted keeping a watch on the houses and cautioning the inmates against the danger of fire.

In many villages the *raseng* and *retek* have been abolished. The *dere* also is languishing and dying a slow death.

II. ORIGIN

The Minyong believe that they have originated from Pedong Ane². The earliest known ancestor of the Minyong is said to be Keyum. In the Minyong genealogy the names of these two ancestors are universally found—the name of Keyum at the top of the genealogy and that of Pedong twelve generations later. All the Minyong remember their genealogy from Pedong; though a few of them also remember from Keyum³. But it is not very clear whether Pedong Ane and Pedong of their genealogies are one and the same person though many Minyong believe them to be so. It is clear that Pedong Ane was a

woman but none of the known ancestors of the Minyong was a woman, except, of course, Pedong referred to earlier who is said to have married Konki Botte. Whatever may be the identity of these persons, mythical or real, the Minyong universally believe that they have descended from Pedong Ane,

Janbo is a village about 40 miles to the north of Riga, the parent Minyong village. Here there is a tunnel-like structure which is known as *nigeng*. Every Minyong interviewed asserted that the first Minyong took birth in this tunnel. So positive and sanguine they are about this belief that they consider that not only the Minyong but all human beings evolved there and from there different groups of people migrated in different directions, founded their own villages and settled there. The Minyong too, after living there for sometime migrated from Janbo further south and gradually spread out to a number of villages.

III. MIGRATION

In spite of the two broad theories of migration of the Minyong from the Indo-Tibetan borders or the Brahmaputra valley to their present habitat, it seems less likely that the Minyong either migrated from the north or from the south. Their *abang*⁴ contains no reference to their migration to south from across the border or to north from across the Brahmaputra river. These narratives do contain references to their southwardly migration from Janbo *nigeng* and not from across the Indo-Tibetan border.

Having migrated from Janbo the Minyong came down to Riga and settled there for a considerable period. When their population grew and the land could not sustain them, various reconnoitring parties were sent southwards in search of land. These parties had either to come back without any success as the areas surveyed by them were already populated by other tribes, or they had to fight these tribes when they were in a position to fight and then settled there. Gradually one village after the other was founded and a part of the population at Riga was transferred to these villages. The migrating families dispersed themselves as far south as they could go, sometimes even up to the bank of the Brahmaputra.

The Minyong families are even now migrating from north to south. The land in the north is less fertile than it is in the south. There is

very little scope of practising permanent cultivation in the northern area and the density of population is becoming thicker in relation to the available land and the yield. In south many families have reclaimed land and converted them into permanent rice fields. This possibility has further attracted many families in the north to come down to south. This exodus has naturally resulted in an increase of population in the southern area and has given rise to pressure on land. Considering this the people of the southern area have decided to restrict the movement of the people from north to south. The following decision of their village council shows how strongly they feel about these migrations.

Decisions of the bango kebang^b

In order to bring about a solution of the problem given rise to by the coming of a large number of people from other *bangos* of Siang into the Bogo *bango* area, a *bango k bang* was held on the 5th April, 1960 at the premises of the Political Office, Pasighat. The members present in the *kebang* discussed at length the question of migration of people to Rani village as well as to Bogo *bango* area. After a long deliberation, the *kebang* arrived at the following decisions.

1. Migration problem in Rani village.

(a) The *kebang* declared the expulsion rightaway of six persons namely, Sharvashri Padek Yao, Taro Taggu, Tago Tatin, Tasong Talom, Taso Taggu and Tagong Mobe from Rani and hence they were asked to leave the village without further delay.

(b) People, who have settled in Rani before 1959, would be allowed to live in the village, but, henceforth, no fresh migrant would be entertained.

(c) Sharvashri Diring Tatin, Nokong Tatin, Tani Mije and Tanyong Padung should pay their *motak* (a land-tax paid once by an immigrant to his landlord) to the Bogo *bango*.

2. Right of migration of people from other *bangos* of Siang.

(a) People from Nugo *bango*, Kebang-Rotgong *bango* and Adipasi village are given the first privilege to migrate into the the Bogo *bango* area. This proviso has been made by the *kebang* in keeping with the

historical and traditional practice of the Adi. But people from these areas too would not be allowed to settle in the Bogo area without the consent of the *bango* concerned.

(b) The *kebang* discouraged the migration of people from upper Minyong *bangos*, Padam *bangos* and Gallong *bangos* to Bogo *bango* area. If anybody from these *bangos* comes to settle in the Bogo *bango* area, he must take consent of the *bango* and should be registered in the office of the Political Officer, Pasighat.

3. Checking of fresh migration in the Bogo area.

(a) In order to check fresh migration of people, the *kebang* fixed 1959 as a date after which no migration would be allowed. People already migrated before this year will be allowed to settle here without the consent of the *kebang* and the Administration.

(b) No *gam* (the superimposed village headman) would be allowed to entertain immigrants without the knowledge of the *bango kebang* and if any *gam* fails to comply with this order, he would be dealt with by the *bango* with a strong hand.

To execute the above decisions, the *kebang* urges the Administration to take up necessary steps and thus tackle the problem confronting the Bogo *bango*.

IV. RELATIONS WITH THE NEIGHBOURING TRIBES

The earlier history of the tribes inhabiting Siang district is full of accounts of inter-tribal feuds. The tribes mostly found themselves engaged in it. The Minyong too have their own history of the feuds in which they indulged. The tribe was so much prone to fighting that even the flimsiest reason, as will be seen in the subsequent paragraphs, gave rise to feuds. Capture of *mithuns*⁸, slaves, kidnapping of women and children were the most provocative reasons for launching feuds. Sometimes a call from a neighbouring village to help in a fight against one or the other village also forced the viallages to take part in the raid even though they were not directly benefited by it. But the tie of the clan, or village or tribe compelled them to take sides with one or the other village because nobody knew when one will be in need of a similar help from other villages. Sometimes a raid was

organized in such a manner that it threatened the very existence of the tribe against which it was to be launched. Smaller tribes always remained in danger of being attacked, and to protect themselves they invariably sought the help of the major tribes. The Panggi are such an example. They are concentrated only in five villages and their population is not much in comparison to that of the Minyong or the Padam with whom they were in a perpetual state of war. But they always repulsed the attacks of the Minyong or the Padam with the help of the Simong who militarily were very powerful.

Riga, Komsing and Kebang, all Minyong villages, were very renowned for their military prowess, and people from these villages well equipped with arms raided the neighbouring villages, looted their cattle, *dangki* (a big brass bowl) and other properties, captured slaves and returned to the village with the booty. After a successful return from a raid a great feast was given to the villagers and the booty distributed.

The captives were made slaves of the individuals capturing them. These slaves were the living property of the family, could be bartered and given out as gifts. Generally, the bride-wealth was given in terms of slaves. All social, economic and religious liberties of the slaves were curtailed. Intermarriages between the slaves and the master were strictly forbidden and any sexual liberty taken by a slave with any female member of the master's family was punished very severely, at times even with death. To enforce discipline amongst the slaves the masters were often harsh to them and could even kill them or throw them in river after tying their hands and feet.

In those days passing from one territory to another involved a great risk. Any person trespassing the boundary of any other tribe when caught, was kept in stocks and was released only when adequate ransom was paid by the members of his family or clan.

The Minyong quite often instituted trade blocks for the purpose of preventing other tribes from coming to the markets in the south-eastern areas for purchasing their necessities, especially salt. These trade blocks inconvenienced the neighbouring tribes a great deal and when the stress was too much they had to fight their way through

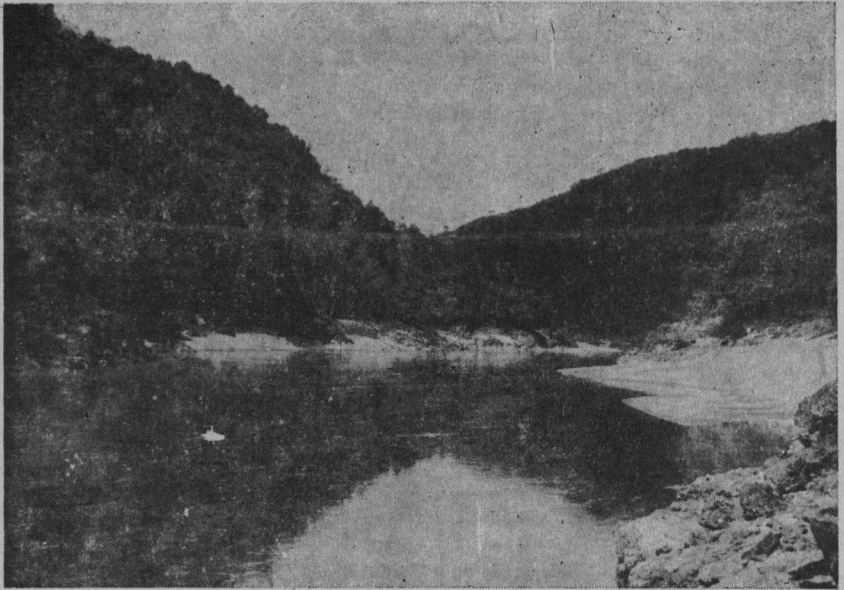
the Minyong country and go to the markets. These were some of the main causes of intertribal feuds and the Minyong derived great benefits out of these trade blocks. Salt was one of the most important items of their trade and when the trade blocks were successfully maintained by them they could sell salt at the rate of one slave or one *mithun* for every load (about 20-30 kilogrammes) of salt.

The relations of the Minyong with their neighbouring tribes like the Padam and the Panggi were far from cordial. Riga, Rotung and Kebang were situated on the main trading route and the trade blocks instituted by these villages under the direction of Riga caused a great hardship to them, especially to the Panggi, who had only two alternatives : either to pay the excessive price demanded by the Minyong or to fight their way to the markets and get their things there at the normal price. Whenever an occasion arose when the Padam had to fight the Minyong, the former got support from the Komkar who were supposed to be the vassals and ally of the Padam. The Panggi were the worst sufferer as they had to fight alone with the Minyong and their position of being sandwiched between the Minyong and the Padam made them more vulnerable to attacks. These trade blocks and intertribal feuds were much rampant towards the end of the nineteenth century and continued till the end of the first quarter of the twentieth century and in some areas even much later than that.

Trade parties were often ambuscaded and looted and their members killed or captured. This gave rise to a chain reaction of attack and counter-attack. The simple principle was 'life for life'. If one individual of a village was killed his death had to be avenged at any cost by killing any one from the offending village, not necessarily the killer. Thus nobody was sure when he would be killed as a measure of revenge taken against his village or tribe. From the following paragraphs it will be seen how the Minyong fought with their neighbouring tribes, the reasons of their fight and the consequent result of it.

Minyong (Riga) versus Padam

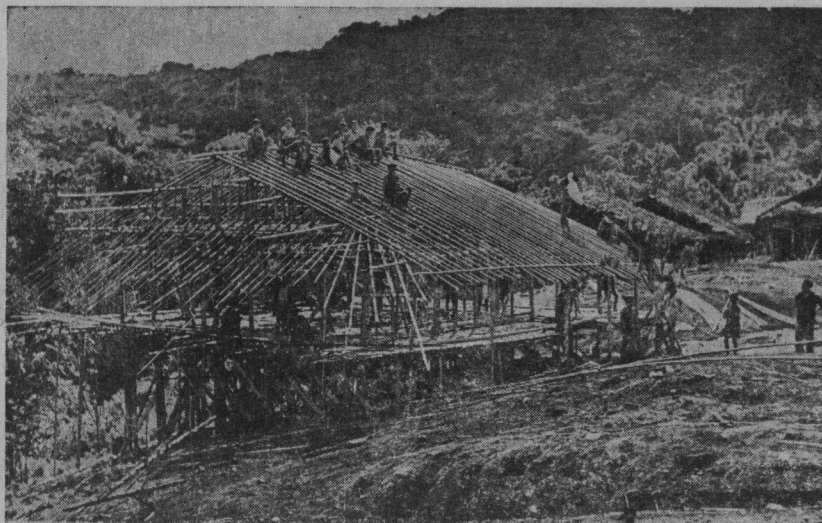
Perme-Meba-Balu-Lupir⁷ of Perme clan lived at Damro, the parent Padam village. He was very rich and influential. Once Mansi-Sikep of Sitang (Minyong village) who was also a rich and influential person



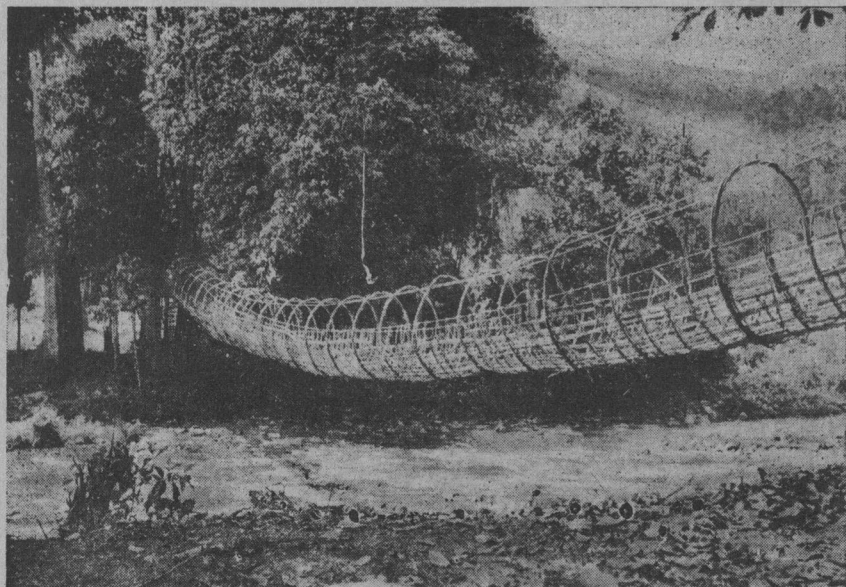
1. Crossing the formidable Siang on a cane suspension bridge is an experience of a life-time ; the bridge is a remarkable engineering feat



2. A Minyong village, perched on the hills, blending with the serenity of the landscape



3. Building a house is a community affair. The type of building material and community participation make their architecture unique in style



4. There is no loss of aesthetics and contact with the environment in the production of even utilitarian objects as in the case of this suspension bridge made of cane, bamboo and wire ropes

in his village, visited Damro. Balu-Lupir wanted to make friendship with him. Between Damro and Geku (a Panggi village) there was an *ampe dumbang* (a place for taking rest when going for hunting). Mansi-Sikep proposed that both of them should put on bead necklaces, take their *arem* (costly metal plates), bring their *mithuns* with them and have plenty of *apong* (rice beer) as a good gesture of friendship and should meet at the *ampe dumbang*. Mansi-Sikep had bad motives in his heart but cunningly he did not give any indication of it. Balu-Lupir came prepared with all the paraphernalia, his slaves following with the cattle. But Mansi-Sikep carried only bead necklaces, a sword and a jar of *apong*. Both reached the rendezvous at the appointed time. Mansi-Sikep drank *apong* from his jar and then offered it to Balu-Lupir. While Balu-Lupir was drinking *apong* Mansi-Sikep took the opportunity and beheaded Balu-Lupir with his sword. At that time the cattle and the slaves of Balu-Lupir had not arrived there. Mansi-Sikep took away all the beads, *arem* and other properties of Balu-Lupir and decamped from there. When the slaves of Balu-Lupir arrived there they found their master killed. They set out in search of the murderer. They reached the Minyong village of Riu and questioned them about the identity of the murderer. Riu people, however, expressed their ignorance about him. The slaves then crossed the Siang by raft at Riga and arrived Parong. Parong also could not give them any information. Then they went to Sitang, the village of the murderer, but the villagers did not give them the truth and said that they had nothing to do with the crime nor did they know who was the culprit. But indirectly they hinted that, that day Riga had killed a pig and was having a feast, that possibly they were the culprit and to celebrate the kill they were having the feast. The slaves, without going into the details of the matter, were convinced that it was Riga village which was responsible for the murder of their master and they carried this information to their village. The Padam were greatly enraged at this and prepared for launching an attack on Riga. Since Riga was the biggest and most powerful village, they had to make adequate preparations and seek help from their friends. They first approached the Miri and invited Pegu-Gutu-Tusik and Dole-Lebang-Bangkang and requested them to make boats, in which they were well-versed, for crossing the Siang to attack Riga. They also requested Janbo village to help them. Janbo

people were famous fighters and they borrowed the services of Noke-Keyor, a renowned fighter. Riga was unaware of all these activities. All this combined force of the Padam came to Riu, another important and powerful Minyong village, and asked them whether they would help their Minyong village of Riga or them (the Padam). The *kebang* of Riu sent its representative to Riga for consultation. Riga people advised them either to be neutral or to take sides with the Padam. Now this was a peculiar situation. The Padam and Riu villages are situated on the same bank of the Siang while Riga is on the other bank. The Padam were too many in number in comparison to the Minyong of Riu and were able to inflict a severe casualty on them any time they wanted, and in such an event Riga could not have come to their help. Considering this, Riga advised Riu to take sides with the Padam but there was a mutual understanding between them that as far as possible they would try to avoid killing each other. Lisin Jerang and Hisin Muije were the two most powerful and influential men in Riga and they were the leaders of war. During the encounter that followed the Padam killed, besides many other, these two men. They also burnt the whole village. After ravaging and devastating Riga the Padam captured all their cattle and came down to Parong village for a rest. Parong, which was also a Minyong village, did not resist them for fear of reprisals, and, instead, entertained the victorious party with feast and *apong*. The Padam then returned to their villages. This action of Parong was against their own people. The case of Riu joining the enemy was considered a strategy, but this action of Parong was considered treachery, and Riga, even though it was ruined, was strong enough for the tiny village of Parong. It raided Parong, burnt the village and drove all its inhabitants out of the village. This gave Riga a little satisfaction so far as taking revenge was concerned. They could not lay their hands upon the Padam but did much damage to Parong, even though a Minyong village, which had behaved in the way it did.

This event shows that murder of one person could lead to a feud on a large scale and result in the killing of many persons. It would appear from our viewpoint that Riga and Parong were ruined for no faults of theirs while Sitang, the guilty village, remained unpunished. But from the principles of tribal warfare the actions taken by all the parties were justified. The Padam did not consider it worthwhile taking all the trouble of tracking down the real culprit. So long they could

lay hands on some of the *Minyong*, from whatever village, their purpose was served. Riga men, in their turn, might have taken revenge from either the Padam, the raiders, or from Parong villagers who helped the Padam or from Sitang who was the actual culprit. Since they could lay their hands on Parong, they exacted their retribution from them. Now it was with the Parong to take revenge either from the Padam or Riga or Sitang, whichever was more convenient to them and thus the chain reaction continued.

Minyong (Riga) versus Karko

Sometimes the cause of a feud could be just the expansionist tendency of a particular village. Riga, the biggest *Minyong* village, was everyday growing bigger and bigger and could no longer accommodate the inhabitants. For this they wanted more and more land. The Karko who did not have much population were having enough land. So Riga decided to attack Karko and grab its land. They asked Riu to help them which the latter did. The combined forces of both the villages attacked Karko in its own village. Talo Tamuk, Tannung Ering, Tatan Jamo, Tigyor Pasi all from Riu who were famous fighters killed one man each from Karko village.

Minyong (Riu) versus Padam

How misunderstanding on the part of an individual or a group of individuals led to a feud is described in the following account of the fight between the *Minyong* of Riu and the Padam.

Jono Ronku lived at Parong. He had a sister Jobar Ronku. Jobar Ronku was married to Nitong Darang of Riu. Once Jono Ronku went to Damro as a guest. While paying visits to some of the houses there he happened to visit the houses of Bangkong Perme and Tinmuk Pertin. They, however, were suspicious of his visit, and, having failed to get any indication of his motives, tried to know the same by divination. It was revealed in the divination that if Jono Ronku had come to the village with a bad motive, the beer offered to him would highly intoxicate him and he would lose consciousness. When beer was offered to him he was actually highly intoxicated which confirmed the fears of the two Padams. They, therefore, decided to do away with him. They lured him to the bank of the Yamne river to see if the *porang* (fishing trap) had caught any fish. All three of them slept at night in

a small house built near the bank of the river. But Jono Ronku was more than a match for them. He could scent the foul play which the Padams intended to play on him, and so while the others got tipsy and slept, he kept awake. When he was confident that the others had slept, he took out his dao and killed both the Padams and immediately left the village. After running for the whole night he reached Riu and took shelter in his sister's house. Next morning the Padam could come to know of the murder of the two men and set out on the trail of the murderer. The trail led them to Riu and without asking anybody or making any investigation they concluded that somebody from Riu had killed their two men. This was enough for them, so far as revenge was concerned. Jono Ronku coolly came out of his sister's house and went to his village. The Padam then invaded Riu and killed Konkir Ering, Kopak Ering and Bilom Tabuing, the three most powerful men of the village. On the Padam side, Lumi-Miko-Kobang and Nupum-Pumling were killed. Many other people were killed but the informants said that they were unimportant persons and nobody now remembered their names.

Riga-Parong (Minyong) versus Kebang (Minyong)

Riga, who was always hardpressed for more land was not content with a fight with the Karko for land, and decided to attack Kebang, one of the most powerful villages in the lower Minyong area, to grab their land which, however, was impracticable because Kebang was far from Riga and their land could never be occupied by the latter. However, Riga asked Parong, their immediate neighbour, to help them in the fight. Though Riga had a good numerical strength, they never ventured to come face to face with Kebang because the latter was also a powerful village. It is reported that the whole Yembung river which flows below Kebang village was coloured red with the blood of the fighters killed. Both sides were very strong and a good number of men were killed. Seven important fighters of Kebang were killed. They were Dudang Padung, Kukep Padung, Jodang Tamuk, Tapok Darang, Tajong Tabuing, Fakor Talo and Bajir Jerang. Five fighters of Parong who were killed were Pakpon Tapak, Tepak Tatik, Lotem Mesar, Rikep Dupak and Rilung, a slave. One full *magling* (company or battalion) of Parong came to fight, out of which, it was said, only six men could go back to their village. Parong was the worst sufferer,

Minyong versus Bori

For all the tribes in the district salt was the most prized thing and they were prepared to undergo any hardship and pay any price to get salt. As salt could be procured either from the Tibetan areas or from the markets in the foothills (Assam), different parties at different times went to procure the same to market whichever was nearer. Very often tribes living in the upper area including the Bori instituted trade blocks and prevented people from the lower areas from going there and getting salt. This often led to skirmishes and inter-tribal feuds. As they could not live without salt they had to fight the tribe instituting a blockade whether they were a match for it or not.

There is a land known as *kerak* near Bomdo village. The people there are the Ashing. It is said that a little rock salt was available at this place and the Karko, Simong and other people from upper villages used to bring salt from there, and sell the same to the lower Minyong at a higher price. They did not allow the lower Minyong to go and get salt directly from there. In such cases the Minyong used to go to the Bori area through Lishing and Meshing villages in the Simang valley and get salt from there which were comparatively cheaper. The Gallong used to get salt through the Tagin.

There is a hill, Kaying, near Dosing village. At Tarak village there lived two brothers, Matum and Maying, known to be very brave. Dosing took up this hill for their jhum cultivation. Matum and Maying were apprehensive of the Dosing people cultivating on this hill as they thought that if they could come up to Kaying hill it was not unlikely that one day they would come up to their village (Tarak) and occupy their land for cultivation. So they decided to fight with Dosing. Dosing men came to know about this and without consulting anybody or asking help from anybody they, one night, stealthily went to Tarak village and killed many people. Along with many important people Maying, Mobang, Boki and Todi, who were rich and influential, were also killed. Matum escaped and fled to Bori area and settled at Bogu, a Bori village. It is said that Matum and Maying along with others who were then settlers of Tarak were actually Bori but had migrated to and settled at Tarak. The Bori, at the instance of Matum, instituted a trade block against the Minyong. It has been

already said that the Minyong used to bring salt from the Bori and now, when the Bori stopped their visits to their area, they were in a very bad position. The Minyong pleaded that they had not killed any Bori and the people at Tarak were not known to be Bori, but the Bori asserted that the Tarak people were in fact Bori and the Minyong had by their act of treachery betrayed the good faith of the Bori and so they would not like to see their faces. As the Karko and Simong had already instituted trade blocks against the Minyong, this action virtually paralysed them and caused them great inconvenience. This compelled the Minyong to live without salt for a long time but when they could bear no more they started eating the ash of the bark of *siil* and *jonkeng* trees. But this could not help much and ultimately they were forced to take some decision. As they could not lay their hands upon the Bori, they wanted to punish Dosing. Only Dosing had taken part in the raid and for their fault all the Minyong villages were being penalized. Further, Riga, their parent village, held that Dosing had not taken permission from them and so it was decided to impose a fine of four *mithuns* on Dosing. They immediately captured four of the Dosing *mithuns* and killed them and ate them. But even after Riga had exacted fine and killed the *mithuns* of Dosing the situation did not improve. Now Dosing clamoured for a solution of the problem. They held that since Riga behaved like their parent in exacting fines and maintaining order in the tribe, it must now take steps to get salt for the Minyong villages. This argument appealed to all the Minyong villages and they forced Riga to arrange for the supply of salt at any cost. Riga then collected one *mithun* each from the villages of Riu, Mopit, Komsing, Jorsing, and Pangee and started to negotiate with the Bori for treaty. They argued that it was all due to misunderstanding by the Dosing over the manoeuvres of Tarak and they did not have any support of the Minyong villages. They offered to compensate the lives of the persons killed in the feud in terms of *mithuns* and requested that the previous condition of trade be restored. The Bori did not agree to this reconciliation and the blockade continued. Riga now took a different attitude and held that since all this trouble was created by Dosing, they should go to the Bori and try to make settlement. Tuyor Lomtung and Lompik Talom, the two leaders of *kebang* of Riga insisted that Dosing should go to the Bori and hold a *kebang*. Minpon

Muibang, Muyor Tamut, Mullun Tamut and Mutgom Komut, the *kebang* leaders of Dosing, invited the Bori for a *kebang* in their village. The Bori came down for the *kebang*. Dosing put their case before them and killed 20 pigs in their honour. When the Bori left they were given another *mithun*, besides the previous five, and a brass plate. The Bori agreed to lift the blockade and the supply of salt was resumed.

Minyong Versus Gallong

When Maying was killed and Matum fled away to Bori area after the feud mentioned above, some of the villagers from Dosing went and settled at Tarak and began cultivating their land. Virtually all their land was captured by Dosing. The place where Boki was killed is still known after his name and is near Jomlo and Mori villages. All the important persons who were killed have left a place named after them. Yamboo (not Yembung) stream was named after Maying, Gadi hill after Tadi, Tarak after Gorak. All these places were occupied by Dosing. Munmong Tamut and Muso Tamut, both brothers, and Lollin Muibang were the important persons who migrated to Tarak.

When these men settled at Tarak, the Gallong village of Kombong invited them to live with them as friends. When these people went to Kombong with many others, the Kombong men killed them all. The reason for this unprovoked murder was not known. Another important man killed was Dubang Padang. This greatly enraged Dosing and they invited Riga and Pankang and fought with Kombong and killed many of its men.

When the Minyong joined hands and started for a raid against Kombong they came to Jinning (a mixed Gallong and Minyong village) on the way and asked them whether they were going to help them or not. If not, they would kill them all. One Kartung Jinning was very cunning and he promised at that time that he would help the Minyong but when the actual raid began he started killing the Minyong in the village. He returned a little earlier to his village and with the help of the villagers formed a stockade at a landside and when the Minyong returned from the raid he again killed many of them. Mekong Muije killed Tato Kombong and in turn was killed by Kartung Jinning. Tanying Jinning killed Tayi Muije of Dosing.

Riga (Minyong) versus Riu (Minyong)

Apart from kidnapping, trade blocks and desire for occupation of land, there is also an instance where a little joke led to a feud in which many lives were lost. Renyok Talom of Riga had a wife Gobar Muije. Gobar was not satisfied with her husband and fled away to Sibum, a Panggi village, accusing that her husband was ill-bred, illegitimate and impotent. It was on this last remark that villagers of Riu made a joke with Riga and asked how many more of them were impotent. This enraged Riga and they raided Riu, killed Tikshung Tatic, Tigreng Tatic, Binging Tabuing, Binkyam Tabuing, Killing Taki, Kiap Taki, Basung Siram and Bangong Siram. While going back to their village, Riga captured eight Riu *mithuns* and took them away. Now it was the turn of Riu to take revenge but Riga was gone and they found that they were not a match for them, so they raided Sibum village where Gobar had fled away telling that it was all because of that village that the raid had started. Riu also captured eight *mithuns* from Sibum. In the raid between Riga and Riu the Panggi were prepared to help Riu, though. The place of fight was Dirgi Yibe near Komkar village. A little before the fight Riu sent salt to Riga which the Panggi misunderstood as an alliance between Riga and Riu against them and they deserted Riu and left them to fight alone with Riga. This was another reason for Riu to attack the Panggi village of Sibum which was nearest to Riu.

Thus it is seen that the causes of raids were varied and different. It varied from trifle quarrels or jokes to capturing of *mithuns* or slaves. In many cases a raid was launched to counteract a supposed attack on the offending village. The principle of revenge was typical of their own. So long as the lives lost or animals killed were recompensated in equal measures it did not matter which village got involved in taking revenge. Quite often innocent persons or villages had to suffer simply because they were weak or lay in the vicinity of the raiding village. The responsibility of taking revenge from some other village to make their loss good was thus thrust upon them.

The relations of the Minyong thus were not very cordial with their neighbours. Sometime they even fought with their own people to meet their own needs, and living conditions were thus greatly

made insecure. Nobody knew when he was going to be ambuscaded and killed or his wife or slaves kidnapped and *mithuns* killed. This perpetual danger and fear lurking in their minds made them aggressive and quite often they killed people, whom they even did not know, just as a measure of protection for themselves. This endless vendetta greatly affected the relations within and outside the villages and an air of suspicion always hung in the minds of the people. This affected the trade greatly and only those tribes got advantage out of trade which were strategically better placed and could, at the point of their fighting force, institute trade blocks. Social relations were also affected as one's activities were always confined to one's own village and this led to the marriage ties being established in the same village. As a matter of fact, this impeded the whole growth of the tribe and the Minyong, like other neighbouring tribes, remained confined and isolated to their respective villages and never came in contact with the world outside and benefited from the knowledge and experience of others.

This isolation and lack of understanding of the outside people made the Minyong suspicious of them. And so whenever an outsider set foot in the Minyong villages he was either discouraged to go further, threatened or even killed. They looked with suspicion every move of the then government and either defied its orders or fought with it. The history of the relations of the Minyong with outsiders and the government during the period from early nineteenth century to the early twentieth century is full of accounts of their fights with the government. The accounts of their relations with the British government for about 125 years, and the rapid progress they have made since Independence are given in the following section.

V. RELATIONS WITH THE GOVERNMENT AND OUTSIDERS

From 1825 to 1900

Captain Bedford was the first who attempted to have a contact with these people in the year 1825. People were suspicious of the strangers visiting their country and did not want to lay their country bare to the curious and searching eyes of the strangers. Bedford could proceed only up to Pasighat from where he was turned back by the Pasi, the ally of the Minyong.

The Miri, another tribe, inhabiting the south-eastern part of the district were treated as vassals of the Minyong and Padam, the two most powerful tribes in this part of the district. This relation of the overlord and subject continued for a long time and apparently the Miri appeared to be satisfied with the existing condition. They also acted as the go-between of these tribes and, as a matter of fact, they derived their name Miri from this act.

In the Siang, Dibang and a few other rivers there were gold veins and the Beheea, who were Hindu, were engaged in gold washing. They were settled in a few of the islands of the Brahmaputra and the mouth of its northern tributaries. The Government of Assam derived a considerable revenue from this gold washing. The Adi^s considered themselves the masters of these Beheea and very often compelled them to pay tribute to them in exchange of their freedom for gold washing. In the beginning, to avoid any unpleasantness, the Beheea also, like the Miri, accepted the absolute control of the Adi over them and paid whatever tribute they were asked to pay.

But the oppression of the Miri and the Beheea by the Adi soon assumed unbearable proportions and the Miri, in despair, left their villages and migrated far down and settled on the northern banks of the Brahmaputra. Some of them migrated to as far as Sadiya in the east and to the banks of the Subansiri in the west. The Beheea also tried to throw off the Adi domination and many of their villages migrated far down to the south, where, they thought, they were out of reach of the Adi control.

These actions of the Miri and the Beheea caused a great setback to the economic structure of the Adi life as they no longer received the services of the Miri nor any tribute from the Beheea. This greatly infuriated them. They used to surprise these refractory villages, kidnap or kill a few, get everything they could lay hands upon and run back to the hills. This often involved the peaceful settlers of the plains. The Government did not want that the peaceful citizens should live in a constant fear of being raided, kidnapped, or murdered. One section of the Adi tribe asked the Government to send back a particular Miri village to its original settlement as it had caused, by its migration, a great loss to the Adi trade and economy.

The Government was eager to maintain peace and so Captain Neufville, Political Agent, persuaded the Miris in 1927 to return to the hills and necessary financial assistance was sanctioned to help them in settling at places where they could serve the Adi in the manner they used to previously. On getting surety by two Adi Chiefs and a promise not to exact any taxes the original Miri village returned to its old settlement. It is debatable whether this action on the part of the Government was correct but perhaps the situation and the circumstances warranted it and the Government had to yield to the demand of the tribes in a genuine effort to maintain peace.

At the same time Lieutenant Wilcox landed at the confluence of the Siku and the Siang rivers and from there proceeded to Mebo, a Padam village. From there he tried to visit Kebang, then one of the most powerful Minyong villages, but again the Pasi, the friend of the Minyong, repulsed him, and he had to go back.

Motivated by some prospects of gain which was best known to them the Adi asked in 1835-36 permission to settle in the plains. A big crowd of about 200 Adi actually proceeded to the plains and wanted to settle there. They were willing to obey the laws but were not willing to pay any tax. People in the vicinity of the area where they wanted to settle and the officers posted in that area were apprehensive of the behaviour of the Adi and they feared trouble from them. The permission was refused. But in 1837, the Adi settled at Bomjur disregarding the order of the Government.

At that time different people held different opinion about the behaviours of the Adi. The Adi, however, proved that, in spite of the permission for settlement refused to them, they might be of help to the Government. There were causes for trouble in the Mishmi, Khampti and Singpho areas and this culminated in a fight with the Government in 1840 when the Adi took sides with the Government and fought these tribes.

This gesture of the Adi brought soaring hopes in the minds of the administrators, and it was presumed that the Adi would continue to maintain friendly relations. In 1847 it was decided to establish trading posts on the banks of the Siang and for this Captain Vetch

called the people for a negotiation. The Adi, in good gesture and to show their friendly behaviour to him, set free all the captives they had previously captured. The negotiation, unfortunately, failed because the old and long outstanding demand of the Adi to send back the refractory Miri villages to their original settlements was not accepted.

This friendly relation, however, did not last long and in 1848 an ugly incident took place. The Adi, as they used to do in the past, kidnapped a few gold washers. Captain Vetch was again sent to the hills. This time not to have a friendly negotiation but to secure the release of the kidnapped men. He had a small troop with him and he could intimidate the Adi into releasing the captives. For this humiliation the Adi reacted in a different way. When Vetch and his party were sleeping at night in their camps the Adi attacked them but were driven back. Now it was Vetch's turn to take revenge and he set fire to their village. This action gave a death blow to the harmonious relations existing between the tribes and the Government. Had Vetch not acted in this way it would have been possible to make a good friend of the Adi when their friendship was much needed in order to enlist their cooperation in maintaining peace and order among other tribes. But, instead, the Adi turned into an enemy and reports of their outrages started coming down to the plains causing thereby worries to the Government. This year was also marked by the sending of a small punitive expedition against the Minyong of Ledum village.

In 1851 many Adi from the upper areas came down and settled at Dijmoor. The Government, what to speak of interfering with their settling there, helped them in purchasing their implements of husbandry. On the one hand the Adi of the upper hills were being helped by the Government and on the other those of the lower areas were continuing their outrage on the Beheea gold washers. 'As Government now farmed out the right of gold washing (for the vast sum of Rupees 80 per annum), it felt bound to protect the Beheegas from such encroachment, and orders were given that an escort should accompany them to the Dihong, and a guard be permanently stationed at the mouth of that river. An effort was still however, to be made to establish an annual fair for the conciliation and profit of the Abors; and proposal to tax the

Miri villages near the Dihong, north of the Brahmaputra, was negatived as likely to annoy the paramount tribes. These measures were designed to combine the advantages of a strong and of a conciliatory policy ; but they were not fully or fairly carried into action. It is doubtful whether their intention was ever properly made manifest to the tribes concerned. The guard only remained on the Dihong for one season, and the Abor trade was lost sight of amid the pressure of other more urgent matters.' (Mackenzie 1884 : 34)

1858 was an eventful year. The Minyong of Kebang and Romkang attacked Sengajan, a Beheea village only six miles from Dibrugarh, on 31st January. About a dozen people were killed and the raiders returned to their villages with the booty. This action was considered as a revenge on the Beheea who had severed all relations with the Minyong by migrating to other villages and refusing to return when asked by them or to pay any tribute as demanded by them. Captain Bivar was sent as Political Officer to Pasighat where he made his base. Captain Lowther, with 16 of the Naval Brigade, 16 Local Artillery, and 104 Assam Light Infantry was sent for his help. The expedition proceeded against Kebang in March 1858.

Kebang village is situated at a great height and from the level track one has to encounter a very stiff climb to reach the village. Romkang was then a mixed village whose inhabitants have now migrated to Tigra and Balek villages and this village no longer exists. There is another village Romkong, which is more popularly known as Sissen and is on the opposite bank of the Siang in front of Kebang. There was a confusion as to which was the actual village which took part in the massacre. As the later events will show, Romkang, however, was punished rightly or wrongly in the subsequent years. It was more likely that Romkang was responsible for it as it was easier for Kebang to approach Romkang on the same bank of the Siang and not very far from it than Romkong (Sissen) which is separated by the great Siang river which is hardly crossable at that point either by boat or raft.

This was a serious affair. A punitive expedition was forthwith ordered. Besides the fighting force, it consisted of a caravan of

transport of 120 boats, 150 porters, and 12 elephants. The force advanced from the bank of the river up the hill. The difficult climbing, absence of proper road and the inaccessible character of the area caused a great hardship to the force. The Minyong of Kebang had a very advantageous position from where they could watch all the movements of the force and could easily stop its advance. The force failed to sustain these hardships and when it was within half a mile of the village the Minyong attacked in full force and succeeded in uprooting it. The force had to turn back and came down to the bank of the river. Another attack on the same night completely demoralised the force and its men fled away to Pasighat and then to Dibrugarh. About 20 people were killed. The casualty on the Minyong side was not known. Possibly it was far less.

This caused a great loss of face for the Government and the Minyong were greatly encouraged with their success. The Padam tried to act as mediators but it bore no fruit. The Government wanted unconditional surrender of the Minyong which they were not prepared to do. This forced the Government to organize another expedition in 1859. Both the civil and military authorities joined hands in making the expedition a success. The force under the command of Colonel Hannay and Colonel Reid advanced with a pretty good strength. But the main object of the expedition was again frustrated. The force decided not to advance to Kebang after it reached Pasighat. It satisfied itself after burning two villages, Romkang and Mongku, both mixed villages comprising of Minyong and Pasi population. These villages offered some resistance but were easily overcome and the force returned to Dibrugarh.

The result of the expedition was that the Pasi tried to maintain friendly relations with the Government, for in 1860 they made formal offer of friendship which the Government accepted. But the Minyong would do nothing of the sort. The behaviour of the Beheea was still a cause of irritation for them. They had disobeyed their Minyong overlords and, as a matter of fact, given substantial help to the expedition of 1859. The Minyong wanted to take revenge on them. They also wanted a revenge for the burning

of their villages of Romkang and Mongku. In 1861 the Minyong attacked a Beheea village lying on the south bank of the Brahmaputra and as near as 15 miles from Dibrugarh. These Beheea had earlier migrated from the north bank of the river, after getting scared of the 1858 massacre. It was assumed that a few Miri villages lying on the banks of the Brahmaputra near the Minyong's land had helped them in planning and executing the massacre in 1861. It was suggested that, since the Miri had helped the Minyong in the raid, the former should be forcibly asked to migrate further south so that they could be placed out of reach of the Minyong. But since the Miri had helped the Minyong not out of love or sympathy but out of fear, it was decided that they should be given protection rather than be deported.

The Government was now seriously thinking of dealing with the Adi. Different types of advices started coming from different quarters. In the meantime, an expedition was sent under Lieutenant-Colonel Garston to punish Romkang for its attack on the Beheea village in the preceding year, that is, 1861. When the force reached Lallikopali, a large body of the Adi met the force and offered their surrender and wanted a peaceful settlement provided all their past offences were ignored. This overture on their part was readily accepted. Negotiations were carried on. The important village chiefs were to enter into agreement to maintain peace. In November 1862 the Deputy Commissioner, Lakhimpur met a body of Minyong chiefs and after a long discussion characteristic of their *kebang*, an agreement was signed between the Government and the principal village chiefs from eight important villages. It was agreed to make some payments of gifts to them in kind so that it could be conveniently distributed among the villagers.

Besides the Minyong of Kebang, Ledum and other foot-hill villages, the Pasi of the villages near Pasighat and the Padam of Padu, Mebo, Silluk and Bomjur also signed this treaty.

For some time it appeared that the Minyong and the other tribes who had entered into the treaty would remain peaceful. While treasuring such hopes Mackenzie also struck a note of caution in dealing with them and said, 'Since these forms of agreement

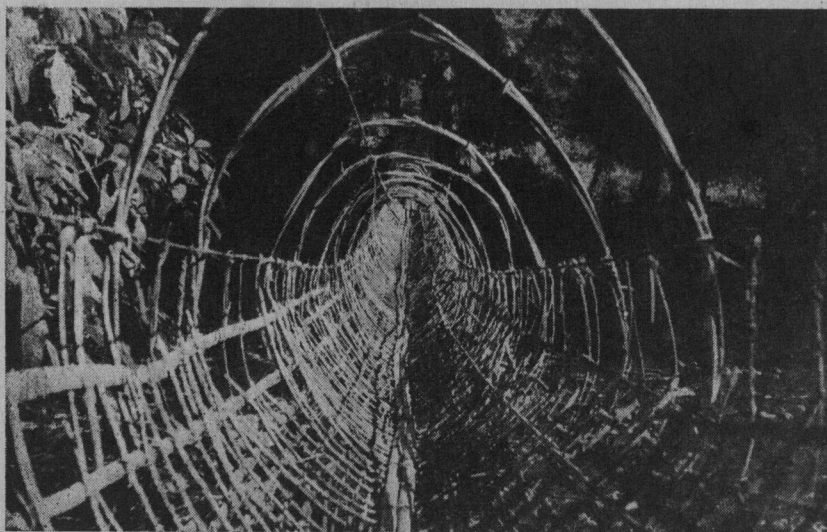
were instituted, the Abors have given but little trouble. They are a sulky, intractable race and it is possible that some day they may break through the restraint which self-interest at present puts upon them. But it is reasonable to hope that every year of quiet, every visit paid by them to the markets of Sadiya, renders this more improbable. New wants are being created and new ideas imbibed, which cannot fail to have effect. At the same time the local officers feel that they must be ever on their guard lest opportunity lead to outrage, and the fruit of years be lost in a moment of unbridled savagery. Much tact is required in dealing with them. They are in manner insolent and rude beyond all other tribes of this frontier.' (1884:44-45)

Unfortunately, this treaty was not to be honoured for a long period. In 1863 the Padam of Mebo walked out of the meeting in anger. In 1865 the Minyong did not attend it. They gave a pretext that there was an epidemic of cholera and small-pox in the plain areas and they did not want to contaminate themselves. But this was only an excuse for their not attending the meeting which was evident from their later behaviour. In the same year they tore up the said treaty. They were also indignant because the price of salt which was one of the most important commodities of import for them, had gone high.

In 1866, the Minyong again absented themselves from the meeting though there was no excuse for them this year. They, however, demanded that the military post at Pobamukh should be abolished by the Government. This evidently was not agreed to and the outpost was strengthened.

From the beginning of the third quarter of the last century the relation between the Government and the Minyong deteriorated and was far from friendly.

It was proposed to send a Trigonometrical Survey Party to reconnoitre the hills in the year 1876-77 but the attitude of the tribe was hostile towards any such party and ultimately it was decided to abandon the despatch of this party. It was also suggested by the local officers to organize a military parade along the villages



5. Interior view of a suspension bridge



6. The ornaments elegantly denote the wearer's status in his family and society

of the tribes in order to intimidate them, but this move was also considered useless and hence abandoned.

In the year 1896 some Miri were engaged in cutting rubber near the Jonai river. A party of Minyong from Komsing surprised them and killed four of them and decamped. No steps were taken to trace the murderers nor any fine was imposed on them or their villages. This further gave a fillip to their outrages and they gradually became bolder and bolder and started showing hostile overtures to the Government.

The last four or five years of the last century were, however, peaceful and there was no report of any hostility from any of the tribes on the northern side of the Brahmaputra including the Minyong, who, it appeared, were just breathing for time and waiting for opportunities.

From 1901 to 1947

The new century began with new hopes and ideas. For a few years there was all quiet. In 1902 attention of the Chief Commissioner was drawn towards the regular blackmail exacted by the 'Pasi Minyong' from the saw mills, threatening to stop the supply of timber by intimidating the suppliers. In 1906 the authorities of the Meckla Nadi Saw Mills lodged a complaint that the 'Pasi Minyong' exacted a regular blackmail from them on the threat that they would prevent contractors from supplying timber to the saw mill. The Sissi Saw Mills also lodged a similar complaint. Such complaints were the source of constant irritation to the Government. The Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam suggested in 1907 that the Government of India must take steps to stop the blackmail extorted by the Adi from the saw mills and others concerned with this business ; that the policy of aloofness should be done away with ; that agricultural and other taxes be imposed ; and that the villagers may be required to receive the officers of the Government visiting their villages.

The Government of India, however, did not agree with these suggestions on the ground that as the temper of the tribes was not yet known fully nothing should be done which might require using force against the tribes. And so they suggested that in the first instance first-hand information might be collected about the tribes, and the forest and the areas may be surveyed as far as possible. To achieve

these objects they suggested that Williamson, the then Assistant Political Officer, might undertake a tour of the areas.

In pursuance of these instructions Williamson undertook in 1908 a tour of the Minyong areas starting from Pasighat. Besides touring Minyong villages like Ledum and others, he also visited a few Pasi and Gallong villages. He toured unescorted and his tour was very successful. He carried out all the instructions given him and especially he made the people realize that the Government can stand no blackmail to be extorted by the tribes.

The success of this tour enthused Williamson and he again undertook another tour in 1909. This time his main purpose was to establish friendly relations with the Minyong in the Siang valley and to establish the identity of the Tsangpo with the Siang. He was accompanied by Colonel Lumsden and Reverend Jackson, an American missionary. This tour was a failure. The party could reach only up to Kebang, the old problem village. Unfortunately, at that time the Minyong were engaged in an inter-tribal feud with the Panggi and so they prevented the party from proceeding further.

1911 was a fatal year for this area. Williamson, the Assistant Political Officer, and Gregorson, a medical practitioner in the tea gardens, were murdered at Komsing, one of the most important Minyong villages. The event is described exhaustively by Bentinck, the then Deputy Commissioner of Lakhimpur.

“.....The party consisted of Mr. Noel Williamson, Assistant Political Officer at Sadiya, Dr. J. D. Gregorson, a doctor with a large practice on the tea gardens round Tinsukia in Lakhimpur district and a man much interested in the frontier tribes, their three servants, two orderlies, ten Miris, and 34 Gurkhali coolies from Shillong ; assembling at Pasighat starting thence on March 8th and reached Rotung on the 20th. At Rotung some rations and a case of liquor were found to have been stolen by the Abor carriers who supplements the Gurkhalis, and Mr. Williamson told the villagers that he would require satisfaction on his return journey ; this seems to have caused some anxiety in Rotung, and the advisability of murdering Mr. Williamson was discussed at a council that night ; the matter was reported to Mr.

Williamson, but he, knowing the Abors to be stronger in council than in action, considered that nothing serious was intended and on the next day continued his journey. Carefully avoiding the territory and villages of Kabang, which was not only of doubtful friendliness, but infected with small-pox, the party crossed the river and marched up the left bank to a place below Pangee village where a camp was made and the return of the coolies was sent back to bring the remaining stores awaited. On the 28th, one of the Miris, by name Manpur, was sent back with three sick coolies and some letters. In Rotung Manpur boasted that the letters contained orders to send up sepoys and guns to punish Rotung and Kebang; this of course was untrue, but coming on top of the previous alarm, which had otherwise died down, so excited the Rotung men that on the following day they followed the four men, and when they halted for their mid-day meal, fell upon them and killed them all. The murderers at once returned strengthened in numbers, hurried on to Kebang, picking up on the way men from the small village of Babuk, and in number about 100 crossed the Dihang, and finding in the Pangee camp only Dr. Gregorson, the Miri Kotoki (or interpreter) Moria, and three or four sick coolies, killed them all on the spot. Dr. Gregorson was resting in his camp and was instantly cut down; this was at about 1 p.m. on March 30th. That same morning Mr. Williamson had marched on with the rest of the party and had camped on the large stream, the Ribung, which runs at the foot of the hills on which Komsing stands. There were still a few Abor coolies in his camp and news reached these from below of what had happened that afternoon; the fact however, were deliberately kept from Mr. Williamson. The following morning the party moved up to Komsing and encamped in the village. At about 10 a.m. while the coolies were cooking their food Mr. Williamson started to go to the house of the Gam, Lomben, who had come with him the previous day. Three men—Lunung Gam of Pangee, Manmur of Yagrung, and Tamu of Bosing—went with him on the pretence of showing him the house; taking him down a side path out of sight of the rest of his party, they suddenly set on him and cut him down. The rest of the Abors who had crossed from Rotung and Kebang attacked the coolies at the same time; only five or six were killed in the village, the remainder mostly reaching the river bank in small parties; thereafter exhausting the little ammunition that the few men with gun had with them, they were all

killed except five coolies, who managed after great hardship to make their way back to the plains; a servant of Mr. Williamson, who reached the Panggi village of Pongging and was there kindly received; and the principal Miri Kotoki Mullina, who swam the river, was taken by Babuk men up to their village and killed there. Three of the survivors reached an Abor village near the mouth of the Dihang, and from there the news of the disaster was sent in to Sadiya and thence to Dibrugarh, where it arrived at about 9 a.m. on April 5th. Being the Deputy Commissioner and Political Officer, I at once communicated with the Military Police and arranged to have their station duties taken over by the 14th Maharattas, and the same afternoon left by train with a detachment of Military Police under Captain Dunbar, fully equipped and rationed for three weeks. Captain Hutchins, Assistant Commandant, Lakhimpur Police, met us at Saikhowa with all the boats and boatmen that could be secured and within 100 hours of the receipt of the news in Dibrugarh a defensive post was being constructed at Pasighat. The journey up the river, as most of the boats were far too large, was most arduous, and the advance party under Captain Hutchins, which had the largest boats, rested hardly day or night, it bore, however, excellent testimony to the organisation and training introduced by Captain Dunbar that the movement was performed in as many days as not many years ago it would have required weeks. On the way up Mr. Harrison of the Laimekuri Saw Mills overtook us in his steam launch on which he had picked up the three survivors already mentioned; he also did us great service in securing extra boatmen. At Pasighat Captain Hutchins received from the Passi Gams the remaining two survivors whom they had found, fed and cared for; one of these two, Dal Bahadur Rai remained with Captain Hutchins until the expedition started and was of the greatest service during the three months that followed on account of his accurate knowledge of the country he had been through; the other was later on enlisted in the Military Police." (Reid 1942 : 218-19)

This incident created 'a great stir and it was realized that the time had come to take strong action against the offenders. A punitive expedition was ordered but as monsoon had already begun it was decided to wait till the arrival of the winter. In the meantime preparations were being made for the expedition.

Early in October, the expedition was ready to proceed. It was a colossal force consisting of about 8,500 men out of which 3,000 were porters engaged for the transport purposes as except foot tracks the area under operation did not have any other means of communication. Major-General Bower was in the command and the Chief Political Officer and was assisted by Bentinck and Dundas as Assistant Political Officers.

After the expedition was successfully completed political and survey operations were started. Bentinck moved on along the course of Dihang for establishing its identity. But the area proved to be so difficult and the supplies so inadequate that the overtired porters expressed inability to move further. The party had therefore to return back from Singging, a Simong village.

Another column had left to survey the Panggi country. It reached Geku, the northernmost village of the Panggi, and was able to survey the whole Panggi area. Another party again proceeded to survey the Padam country and could reach Damro, the parent Padam village and the country was surveyed.

The Minyong and the other cognate tribes in Siang were quite peaceful during 1912. A trade post was established at Pasighat and the other was suggested to be opened at or near Rotung. A military outpost was also established at Pasighat besides one each at Balek and Kobo.

In 1913 an order was issued to erect a memorial for Williamson and Gregorson. It was also reported that the Adi were behaving peacefully and coming down to Pasighat to get their disputes settled by the Assistant Political Officer there.

In 1914 a trading post was established at Rotung.

In 1915 Yemsing was again visited and no opposition was encountered from the villagers. A Military Police force was also sent to Rotung to guard the trading post. For the first time in the history of agriculture in this area wet-rice cultivation was introduced at Rotung but the

villagers did not show any enthusiasm for this new type of cultivation in which they could not repose their faith.

In 1916 the Political Officer made extensive tour of the area and levied taxes on all lands under cultivation in the plains and no opposition was raised against this. An intertribal feud was going on between two Minyong villages at this time but the Government did not desire to interfere with this. Dosing and Riga, both Minyong villages were considered to be the most powerful villages in that area and were causing constant disturbances.

The consumption of opium was becoming excessive and in order to check the excess a new method of registration was introduced. According to this all the addicts were registered and only they could get the supply. For this purpose a shop was opened at Pasighat in the heart of the Minyong country in the year 1918.

During 1921-22 two memorials were erected at Komsing and near Pangee village for Williamson and Gregorson who were murdered there in 1911. The two villages gave all the possible help in the construction and promised to look after them.

1922 was comparatively a year of quiet. The outposts at Rotung was still maintained. The cultivation of poppy was legally banned for the first time in this area.

In 1925 the Government took a liberal view of the compulsory and free labour imposed upon the villages of Komsing and Pangee where the two British officers were murdered to maintain the track between Pasighat and Yembung, a distance of about 33 miles. They were relieved of this burden this year.

During 1927 intertribal feud raged between the Minyong and the Panggi. This took a severe turn and there was a great loss of life on both sides. Taking the advantage of their position the Padam also attacked the Panggi, their old enemies, and the Minyong derived benefits out of the double attack on them. The result of this feud was that a great part of the district was in turmoil and peace was once again disturbed. Once the Minyong and the Padam joined hands and were

ready to launch a severe attack on the Panggi but the information leaked out to the Panggi and they, who otherwise would have sustained a severe loss in the surprise attack, repulsed their enemies with a heavy loss. The Minyong consoled themselves by accepting the superiority of the Panggi in their fire-arms which they alleged the Panggi obtained from the Simong and the Memba. This, however, put an end to the hostility.

The Minyong of Dosing and Yeksi were trying for a long time to grab the land of Pangin and once or twice they had attempted to do so after crossing the Siyom river. The Government did not desire that the two villages should create any trouble and so they advised Pangin to use all methods to expel from their territory the invading Dosing and Yeksi.

In 1928 the hostility between the Minyong and the Panggi again broke out but it did not take any serious turn and they did not come out for an open fight.

The Political Officer, Sadiya and the Assistant Political Officer, Pasihat jointly undertook a tour and reached the Siyom river. They wanted to peacefully settle the disputes between Dosing and Yeksi on the one side and Pangin on the other, and for this purpose they asked all the three villages to be present there for discussion. Dosing and Yeksi, in spite of the orders, neither participated nor sent their representatives for the discussion and so no action could be taken in this regard. The post at Yembung was, however, shifted to Pangin on the confluence of the Siyom and the Siang rivers.

1929 was comparatively a quiet year. The hostility between the Panggi and the Minyong, and Panggi and Padam continued with occasional outbursts of open feuds but no large scale fighting took place.

The trade block instituted by the two Minyong villages of Riga and Parong still continued. Earlier Dosing and Yeksi villages of the Minyong had also instituted trade blocks but with passage of time they could not continue to keep a strong watch on the trading people coming down through their villages.

The administrative report for the year 1933 mentions a very important ethnological point. The Pasi, after their migration from their parent village of Adipasi were living with the Minyong and were gradually identifying themselves with them. The report says that 'the Pasi tribe was gradually being absorbed into the Minyongs'.

1934 was a good year for the Minyong as they had a bumper crop. This gave a fillip to their hostility with the Panggi.

In 1936 the Minyong villages beyond Komsing and Pangin were visited by the Political Officer, Sadiya for the first time after the survey expedition of 1913. Powerful villages of Riu and Dosing were visited and friendly relations established with the Minyong of the Siang, Siyom and Simang valleys. Many disputes about land, property and *mithums* were settled and he was even requested to extend his tour to further north.

This year another tour in the upper Minyong area was undertaken by the Political Officer. Even such villages as Dosing which resented the earlier visit of the Political Officer came forward to receive him this time. All other villages showed a great amount of friendliness towards him. Like the previous year a number of cases were settled and cordial relations established.

In 1940, the Political Officer undertook a tour up the Siyom valley. The Minyong and the Gallong were engaged in some land dispute and were not to be reconciled by any mediation and were prepared to launch an attack on each other. The Political Officer took up the case and settled it amicably and peace was restored between them.

One of the most important events of 1941 was the visit of the Governor of Assam to these areas. He could visit only up to Pangin, the central Minyong village and invited Minyong from Riga, Pangin, Dosing, Rotung, Kebang, and Komsing; Padam from Damro as also the Karko, and Gallong to meet him there. Representatives from 75 villages numbering 370 came to meet him. He impressed upon them the evils of slavery, raids, and trade blocks to which they appeared amenable.

This almost proved to be a turning point in the history of relations between the Government and the Minyong, who, it appears, decided

then to put an end to their hostility, and started cooperating with the Government. Little by little Government also tried to help the Minyong. Roads, though to a very limited extent, were built and the villages were assured of the protection of the Government while coming down for trade purposes. The market at Sadiya attracted a large crowd of the Minyong, besides many other tribes, every year. Salt, the most prized commodity, was made available in plenty to them. Sadiya market was flooded with beads of different quality and lustre. With coming in touch with other tribes at Sadiya, the Minyong gradually shook off their hostility towards the tribes and began concentrating on their own development.

The 'Quit India' movement of 1942 remained more or less unheard in these isolated hills. The Minyong, like the other tribes, were not so much politically conscious as to take part in the freedom movement of India. By now the British Government was passing through thick war and all attentions were diverted towards the achievement of victory. The tribes on this frontier were almost neglected and left to their own. But now they had felt the danger of their insecure life and wanted to do away with inter-tribal feuds. And now not much effort was needed in maintaining law and order in this area. 1947 brought independence to India and a new chapter in the history of relations between the tribes and the Government began.

From 1948 onwards

After Independence the Minyong started to be treated on a different footing and with a different outlook. Now they were considered friends rather than enemies of the Government. They needed and were given the same attention as was given to peoples of other parts of India. Sincere efforts were made to bring the Minyong at par with the other peoples of India. This involved a lot of planning and expenditure of large amount of money.

The major problems confronting the Government were those of food production and communication. In the pre-1947 period practically nothing was done for increasing food production. Neither the Minyong nor any other tribes were self-sufficient in food production. The constant fear of being kidnapped or killed told heavily on their mind and this affected their economic life. For a major part of the

year they had to live on jungle roots and tubers. One solution to increase the yield of crops was thought to be the introduction of wet-rice cultivation. Agriculture Inspectors and Village Level Workers were posted in important areas to see the opening of such cultivations. As the land of the Minyong, as a whole, is hilly, there was not much scope for a large scale conversion of the jhum fields into wet rice cultivation fields, but the lower Minyong area afforded such facilities and a huge acreage was brought under permanent wet rice cultivation there.

In those areas where wet rice cultivation could not be introduced efforts were made to introduce terrace cultivation and in some difficult areas the improved jhuming was introduced. No avenue was left unexplored which afforded any possibility of increased food production.

Apart from introducing these improved methods of agriculture, better seeds, and tools and implements were given to the people. Introduction of cash crops and fertilizers was also attended to. The result of all these was that during a short period people started taking real interest in these activities and were convinced that the Government really were interested to help them out and when they saw the helping hand of the Government proffered to them they could not refuse to take advantage of it.

The communication between the headquarters and villages and between one village and another was hopelessly bad. The Minyong did not have time nor the need for making better roads—rather they preferred that the approach to their village should be difficult so as to prevent the enemies entering it. This also prevented the social intercourse between one village and the other. Right after 1948 roads started to be cut. The headquarters at Pasighat was connected with each of the outposts and the latter connected with villages by porter tracks, bridle paths or jeepable roads whichever was possible according to the nature of the terrain. Opening of roads brought new ideas and new hopes to the people and they started visiting markets in the plains and other villages to meet their social and economic needs.

Medical facilities have been provided even to the remotest Minyong villages. Hospitals and dispensaries have been opened at different

places in the Minyong area and physicians have been posted to look after the health of the people.

Along with the development of economic, physical and sanitary conditions of the Minyong, their educational development was also taken into consideration. Many important villages were provided with schools. The Minyong have had the privilege of having the first high school and college in their area which catered to the need of all the districts of Arunachal Pradesh.

In 1952 the first Community Development Project in Arunachal was opened at Pasighat. This included many of the lower Minyong and a few Padam villages. The Project took up intensively the problems of agriculture, communication, education, and public health and sanitation. Remarkable headway was made in the different spheres of work in the areas where Community Project operated.

In 1953 the headquarters of the Siang Frontier Division was shifted from Pasighat, which is in the heart of the Minyong area, to Along in the Gallong area. During that year the name of the Division was changed from Abor Hills to Siang Frontier Division.

In 1959 another National Extension Service Block was opened at Pangin in the Minyong area which covered the upper Minyong. Thus almost all the Minyong villages came under the Block Programme and were benefited by it.

During these years tremendous development of the Minyong area has been brought about. The whole face of the area has changed. The economic condition of the Minyong has improved and with the strengthening of economic position more happiness has been brought to their doors.

Having given a general introduction of the Minyong, their area and their relations with their neighbouring tribes and the outsiders and the condition prevailing in their villages during the last 150 years or so, we may now turn to a discussion of their family life.