

F237
930

THE MYTHS
OF
THE SHIMONGS OF THE
UPPER SIANG

by
TARUN BHATTACHARYA
Assistant Political Officer
North-East Frontier Agency

With a Foreword
by
VERRIER ELWIN

NORTH-EAST FRONTIER AGENCY
SHILLONG

1965

Published by Shri P. C. Dutta,
Cultural Research Officer for the Research Deptt.,
North-East Frontier Agency, Shillong.

THE SHIMONGS OF THE
UPPER SIANG

Cover design and layout by Shri R. N. Bagchi,
Art Expert, NEFA.



✓
398.2095H
BHA

Price : Rs.

NORTH-EAST FRONTIER AGENCY

PRINTED BY THE ASSISTANT MANAGER
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA PRESS GANGTOK (SIKKIM).

PAGE

22
22

CONTENTS

PAGE

FOREWORD	...	...	...	VII
PREFACE	...	...	...	IX
INTRODUCTION—	...	...	...
THE LAND	...	...	...	XIII
THE PEOPLE—				
Origin and Migration	...	...	...	XVIII
Domestic life	...	...	...	XXIII
Cultivation	...	...	...	XXVII
Festivals	...	...	...	XXX
Religion	...	...	...	XXXI
Dreams and their significance	...	...	...	XXXIII
Recreations	...	...	...	XXXV
Conclusion	...	...	...	XXXVI
THE STORIES—				
Asi and Eme	...	...	...	3
How Tani got the Mithun	...	...	...	6
Kebung and Petang	...	...	...	8
The First Winds and the First Cloud	...	...	...	10
Donyi and Polo	...	...	...	10
Pongku Pili and Biyirg Birtang	...	...	...	12
The Squirrel, the Monkey and the Bear	...	...	...	14
Nuyi and Gamro	...	...	...	17
Goyeng Goyeng Goriyo	...	...	...	19
The Fish	...	...	...	21
Tikdong	...	...	...	23
Jimu Tayang	...	...	...	35
How Tani had the Festival	...	...	...	38

The Dog	...	...	...	...	52
The Fowl	...	...	...	...	55
Sedi-Selo and how cultivation appeared	...	...	...	...	56
Roja	...	...	...	...	57
The Bee	...	...	...	...	58
Takom and Taruk	...	...	...	...	59

Origin and W. Gibson	...	...	...	...	60
Domestic life	...	...	...	...	61
Cultivation and agriculture	...	...	...	...	62
Festivals	...	...	...	...	63
Religion	...	...	...	...	64
Dreams and their significance	...	...	...	...	65
Restoration	...	...	...	...	66
Conclusion	...	...	...	...	67
The Stories—	...	...	...	...	68
Asi and Ema	...	...	...	...	69
How Tani got the Mirian	...	...	...	...	70
Kebung and Peling	...	...	...	...	71
The First Winds and the First Cloud	...	...	...	...	72
Donyi and Polo	...	...	...	...	73
Pongka Pili and Biyig Birtang	...	...	...	...	74
The Squirrel, the Monkey and the Bear	...	...	...	...	75
Nuyi and Gamu	...	...	...	...	76
Goyeng Goyeng Goyeng	...	...	...	...	77
The Fish	...	...	...	...	78
Tildong	...	...	...	...	79
Jimu Tavang	...	...	...	...	80
How Tani had the Festival	...	...	...	...	81

FOREWORD

I am particularly happy to have the opportunity of writing a brief foreword to this very interesting little book by Shri Tarun Bhattacharya. In the first place, he is the first of our administrative officers to write a book of this kind. For a long time past we have been hoping that research would not be confined to our research staff, for in the past, especially in India, much of our knowledge of the tribal people, and indeed of many other aspects of Indian life, depended on the work of Government officials. In this part of the world we may remember the important books of Dr J. H. Hutton, Mr J. P. Mills and others. These gentlemen were not professional anthropologists: they were busy administrators.

Shri Bhattacharya was for some years in an outpost, Yingkiong, in the north of the Siang Division in the North-East Frontier Agency. His work, like that of all such officers, was a combination of administration and development. He learnt to speak the Adi language fluently. He lived in an outpost remote from all but tribal company and was thus driven to relax as well as to work with his people. He helped them in their plans for developing their villages; he helped them to settle their disputes. As a result he, like many other officers of the NEFA Administration, came to know and love the Adis well. I hope that this book will be an inspiration to his colleagues

and that we may have other works from other officers.

The second reason that I am very happy about this book is that I myself like and admire the Shimong Adis. I have paid two visits to their area. The first was in January 1955 when I walked from Pangin to Shimong, the capital village of the tribe. This was a rather tragic visit, for the village was shadowed by a disastrous epidemic, and even when we were there a young child died and I will always remember watching the mother carrying the little body on her back to his grave.

My second visit was exactly three years later, in January 1958. I had marched down from Tuting to Bomdo on the right bank of the Siang and at Bomdo crossed the river in a raft and then worked my way north through the majority of the Shimong villages as far as Jido, whence I turned my feet into the Yang Sang Chu Valley. I found this tour an arduous one—the climbs were long, hard and exhausting, and at that time I was a good deal older than Shri Bhattacharya. We also had atrocious weather during the entire trip. But nothing can make me forget the impression I had of the people's courage, strength and vitality that overcame all their difficulties. Mr Bhattacharya knows much more about the Shimongs than I do and his introduction contains a great deal of invaluable information. So far as my own experience goes, it is accurate.

I commend this little book not only to those working in NEFA and the Siang Division but also

to anthropologists and others elsewhere. Some people affect to regard myths and folk-tales as something for children. To my mind, they are of great importance, for they reveal the narrators' power of imagination and throw a clear and natural light on many of their institutions and customs.

SHILLONG; VERRIER ELWIN
 October 31, 1963.

The stories were collected in my ordinary routine tours to the villages and I tried to write down whatever was told in my notebooks. A collection from memory of a list of names would not be necessary. The work was assisted by a young man of Pagan, Shri N. C. and a man of Shillong village Shri A. S. and Shri Ojonghanga and Shri T. S. and the rest by Shri Y. S. of Gopin and Shri Ojonghanga of Gopin village. I also saw many of the best Ronung Mar'oi (Hindi) villages near Laitumkroh and a Village-Head Worker of B and S. S. S. K. S. Tayeng. Shri T. S. D. Agricultural Inspector, now in the IFAS, corrected some wrong words which cropped in here and there.

During the collection, I observed a peculiarity that these sayings or folk-tales varied slightly with different narrators. Though variation was not so

PREFACE

Coming in contact with the Shimongs during my stay at Yingking, the administrative centre in Shimong country, I took an interest in their folk-tales which are very absorbing. But this was not a very difficult task. A good command of the language and a certain knowledge of their history are necessary so that stories when told can easily be grasped. Fortunately I had studied the language and could therefore dispense with the help of interpreters who despite all earnestness are likely to forget one or two points in the retelling.

The stories were collected in 1962 during my routine tours to the villages and I used to write down whatever was told immediately so that recollection from memory at a later date would not be necessary. The stories were mostly told by a grand young man of Puding village Shri Onisibo; the headman of Shimong village, Shri Angkeng Tekseng; Shri Ojonglibang and Shri Takirkombo and the rest by Shri Yayumsibo of Gobuk village and Shri Ojinteng of Gete village. I also owe much to the best Ponung Miri of Bomdo village Shri Lulutmedo and a Village-Level Worker of Bomdo, Shri Kusung Tayeng. Shri Toyi Dai, Agricultural Inspector, now in the IFAS, corrected some wrong words which cropped in here and there.

During the collection, I observed a peculiarity that these doyings or folk-tales varied slightly with different narrators. Though variation was not so

wide yet in certain cases some words—names of places especially—were completely omitted. I found also that even in the same village variation did take place. But one thing is certain, the main substance remained the same and no Ponung Miri would ever try to distort the facts. Doyings are told in songs. The songs are continuous and doyings which are long last for hours together. These are sung in style and people who listen to them no doubt find great interest in them.

One other thing must be mentioned. The ordinary day to day language and that used in doyings are not always the same. Words have changed much since the time of the Shimongs' forefathers. The names of places in doyings are quite different from those used ordinarily. The younger generation, unfortunately, seem to take less interest in their folk-lore and are beginning to forget the original words and unless the stories are preserved in the written script they ultimately may be forgotten.

In this book, I have devoted a chapter to a short summary on the Shimongs and the area where they live. Since Shimongs belong to the same culture pattern as the Padam Minyongs on whom a book has already been published, I have avoided writing in detail on each subject and only given a brief narration instead.

I am most grateful to Dr Verrier Elwin who has shown interest in this collection and honoured it with a Foreword, as well as to Shri I. M. Simon, who has edited my manuscript and improved it in many ways.

TARUN BHATTACHARYA

INTRODUCTION

THE LAND

Shimong is the name of a sub-tribe inhabiting the northern fringe of Siang Frontier Division along the left bank of the Siang river. They belong to the great Adi community and have common linguistic and cultural affinities with Padams and Min-yongs—the two major groups of Adis.

Spread over ten villages i.e. Ngaming, Jido, Anging, Singiang, Palin, Likor, Puding, Gete, Shimong and Gobuk, they number only 2,000 but the area over which they maintain absolute rights extends over more than 600 sq miles and is bounded on the north by the Kangong river, on the west by the Siang river, on the east by Abroka range and on the south by Takbo hills. Much of the area is covered by a high range of hills which rise steeply, one above another, and the altitude also varies widely, from 1000 ft to 14000 ft. The hills are broken, and abrupt precipices and deep gorges make it impossible to locate a convenient place for a village and so Shimongs settled themselves in the valley along the course of the Siang river.

Eko Dumbing, the highest peak in Shimong country, rises from the Abroka and attains a height of 14000 ft. People say that from Eko Dumbing all the hills are descended. They believe that the sacred domain of the snow god, Jimu Tayang, is there on the crest of Eko Dumbing. Round this range of high mountains is the source of aconite which is extracted from the roots of some species of the herb and people go there every alternate year in the month of October to collect the roots soon after the plants wither. The procurement of roots is not always easy as treacherous snow covers the ground showing little or no trace of the plants and only an expert eye can locate the right place. With the help of a sharp pointed wooden stick the collector removes the snow from a wide area and the roots are taken out. The journey to the snow mountain is always arduous and risky and physically weak persons cannot stand the hardship in these

high altitudes. It is said that Jimu Tayang the spirit god who reigns supreme over the area always frowns upon intruders and whenever he gets the chance he inflicts terrible punishment from which the victim seldom recovers. He raises violent storms which shake the ground and breaks the sky to deluge the land with torrential rain all of a sudden or he clouds the vision with a thick fog screen and covers up the paths under a deep layer of snow which treacherously hides holes and crevices and a man already blinded by the fog screen falls into these and may never get out again. Jimu Tayang commands his lieutenant the all-powerful Poli Adi who resorts to savage cruelty and pulls out eyes from their sockets, draws blood from the nose and ears, twists the genital organs or throws the body down a precipice or he may lure the victim with objects of beauty in nature—beautiful landscape, the white snows, the still water of a lake, animals and birds—and then drag him into the water from which he can never escape again.

Some years ago a party of sixty which scaled the high range suddenly vanished and their bodies were found far far away down a ravine, completely disfigured. People who go to Eko Dumbing must not displease Jimu Tayang; they must not raise their voice above a whisper and should come back as quickly as possible.

Eko Dumbing is also the sacred abode of Darjong—a god of the Khampas of Mankhota. Khampas make an annual pilgrimage to the crest where a narrow cave is situated. The cave is so narrow that it is only by wriggling on their stomachs that the Khampas can crawl into the cave and make their offerings to Darjong who rewards them by curing all ailments.

Aconite, the deadly poison extracted from the roots, is smeared over the tip of a triangular iron blade attached to the arrow head. When shot at an animal the poison immediately starts acting and even the biggest of all land animals—the elephants—succumb within hours. The roots, it is commonly believed, do not develop toxicity immediately after being uprooted. Soon after leaving the high mountain three continuous shouts—"gog-badnam"—must be given and it is only then that the roots become

poisonous. After reaching the village these are kept carefully and on a fixed day the roots are crushed between stones and smeared with saliva and the sticky juice is then applied to the iron tips of the arrows. Sometimes accidents happen when poison comes in contact with open wounds or cuts. If not treated immediately the person will develop nausea and vomiting and ultimately collapse. The treatment is crude—a deep incision is made with a sharp knife in the infected cut and blood is allowed to flow freely. If the poison is swallowed then the victim is placed in a conical bamboo basket upside down, and suspended from the roof and swiftly swung round. Vomiting is thus induced and the poison which may have accumulated in the stomach comes out with the vomit and the patient recovers. The animals shot with poisoned arrows should not be eaten raw. The portion where the arrow has entered should be thrown away and the meat cooked properly. The cases of food poisoning heard so frequently may be due to the slow toxic effect of aconite.

The high mountains remain covered with snow for six months. From early May the snow gradually melts and vegetation appears. Only during this part of the year is a cross-journey possible but again with the rains the paths become slippery and journeys must then be made with extreme caution.

The Siang is the major river in Shimong country. It flows from the north to the south. The valley of the Siang is wide enough to permit permanent wet rice cultivation which has become very popular with the Shimongs who dwell in this valley. The Siang flows majestically through spacious valleys but there are a number of rapids throughout its course where the current is very strong. The river twists in a loop near Likor and Palin villages but maintains a more or less steady course downstream. Above the village of Likor the valley on both sides gradually narrows and there are steep high hills which abruptly rise from the river itself so that not even a track can be constructed along the river-side.

Almost all Shimong country is covered by dense forests mainly of the tropical and sub-tropical types. Varieties of

bamboo, cane, grass, reed, are found everywhere. In lower altitudes the common trees of economic interest are the holok (*Terminalia Myriocarp*), borpat (*Ailanthus grandis*, Prain), walnut (*Juglans Regia*, Linn) nahor (*Mesua Ferrea*), hulong (*Dipterocarpaceae macrocarpus*), gondhsoroi (*Cinnamomum Cecicodaphne*). In higher altitudes oak (*Quercus*) and chestnut (*Castanopsis*) grow abundantly while conifers are totally absent even across Eko Dumbing.

The vegetation is so prolific that in abandoned jhum fields the soil is quickly covered and within a few years the fields revert to almost impenetrable forest. Various types of creepers inter-twine and reach the lofty tops of trees. Thick foliage overgrow one another and sunlight barely penetrates to the ground below.

In higher altitudes, over 10000 ft, the vegetation thins out and tall trees give way to strong dwarf shrubs. The roots of these plants cling to the soil so firmly that it is very difficult to uproot them. In between these shrubby growths, velvety moss covers the ground and, walking over this, one has the feeling of stepping on a thick carpet. Ferns are not seen above 9000 ft. A medicinal plant, Coptis Teeta, is however found between 9000 and 10000 ft. Coptis Teeta is used by the people for various stomach ailments. A species of bamboo locally known as tanang which is about the thickness of the little finger grows abundantly. Tanang bushes are very hard and at high altitudes they form the only source of fire-wood. Rhododendron also grows, though not plentifully.

Animal life is abundant in Shimong country—to name but a few, the tiger, leopard, wild boar, monkey, langur, civet, Himalayan black bear, bat, squirrels, porcupine, barking deer, wild goat and, at higher altitudes, musk deer and takin—and the Shimongs can keep themselves busy in hunting game all the year round.

There are innumerable species of birds, butterflies and reptiles and the country as a whole is a rich hunting ground for a naturalist.

Amongst the birds are the green magpie, treepie, greytit and sultantit, parrot-bill, various species of laughing thrush, babbler, sipia, siva, rosefinch, green and imperial pheasant, bulbul, cuckoo, shrike, minivet, fork-tail, redstart, fly-catcher, warbler, munia, finches, martin, swallow, wagtail, pippit, flower pecker, sunbird, pitta, broad-bill, wood-pecker, barbet, bee-eater, hornbill, parakeet, trogon, owl, hawk, eagle, dove, pigeon, jungle fowl, partridge, snipe, sand-piper and duck.

Reptiles include various species of lizards and snakes. Snakes vary from harmless species to deadly vipers. Amongst the poisonous varieties are the cobra, both the common and the king cobra, pit-viper and krait. The deadly viper, ngarba, which lives above an altitude of 9000 ft is a danger to all who go to the high hills. The ngarba coils itself on low branches or near the tanang bush or it may lie on the ground basking in the sun. It strikes with a swift movement and the victim succumbs rapidly to its bite unless timely aid is given. Some years ago a party climbing the high hill came upon a ngarba's nest which lay hidden inside a tanang bush. One of them, an old man, went near and saw brightly coloured eggs lying in the bush and extended his hand to pick them up. With a hiss, the hidden ngarba bit his middle finger. The old man shrieked aloud and his companions at once rushed to his side. One of them took out a dao and cut off the middle finger at the base. Though there was profuse bleeding, the old man recovered and continued to live long after that. The local people consider the ngarba an enemy that cannot be spared. With a long forked stick or some such trap they run after the snake and capture it alive or dead and then roast it over a fire and eat its flesh.

Monpas and Khampas are believed to have a knowledge of extracting poison from the ngarba's deadly fangs with which they may poison someone whom they dislike by mixing it in food or drink. Shimongs say that they tie a ngarba upside down on a tree and put a receptacle just under its mouth. Everytime the ngarba strikes at the tree the poison flows into the cup! How far the story is true is not known but Shimongs are in fact greatly afraid of Mankhota Khampas and do not take food or drink

from any one of them unless they are sure that the host is to be trusted.

The Siang and its tributaries are full of fish which include mahseer, catfish of various kinds, eel and others. Fishing is a common pastime for Shimongs who catch the fish with the help of nets or conical traps or by poisoning the streams.

The entire region receives the full force of the monsoons and rainfall is heavy. The annual average comes to 120 inches and except during a few months in winter, rain falls throughout the year. In the months of May, June, July and August the rainfall is very heavy and rivers and streams overflow their banks and dislocate communications temporarily.

In the valleys the temperature is very high during June and July and strong winds blow on clear days. The nights are however cool despite a hot day.

In winter the temperature falls low owing to the proximity of the snow ranges.

Luxuriant vegetation with the varied topography, the snow mountains, the magnificent waterfalls on the mighty Siang, the blooming orchids, the rich fauna, all contribute towards making the country of the Shimongs a veritable paradise which keeps the visitor spellbound. Climbing the range of Abroka along the Sarkam above the village of Shimong one just catches a glimpse of a vast panorama of enchanting beauty and truly feels that "if there is any paradise on the face of the earth oh! it is here, oh! it is here, oh! it is here!"

THE PEOPLE

Origin and Migration

Shimongs are divided into different clans and marriage between certain clans is strictly restricted. All the clans originated in Pedong Name and with surprising accuracy the people can trace their origin through several generations. There are nine clans who are actual Shimongs and their origin is given on the next page.

The Shimongs after migrating from Pedong Name the mythical place of origin, stayed in Luku Tirang in far away Tibet and then came to Nyulum Siang and thence progressively to Namgang Siang, Dajing Ego, Sila Ego, Perog Dumbo, Rashing, Boger Koying, Jemi, Sili Binkut, Osong Mekpop, Toreng Baying, Yoying, Kumne Epong, Genkang Etpang, Lombuk, Lomku, Shimong Patang, Komji Dabukitar, Jiyu, Boming, Mikong, Pekok, Gamgur, Tirang, Siki, Yammeng, Boksam, Peying, Rusing, Siso, Mong and Sirum, where they fought with Boking Angong a people who originally lived there but were subsequently reduced in number and are now extinct. The Shimongs were defeated and they fled in different directions and finally came back to the present site of Shimong village.

At Sirum they held a kebang and Abu Supuk (Tekseng) directed all to go to separate locations to avoid total annihilation and so Tekseng went to Riga, one section of Boli to Janbo and another section to Riu, Libang to Karko, Litin to Karko and Riga, Sitek to Olon, Sibon also to Olon, Kombo to Kamkar, Nopi to Gete, Lipir to Karko.

At Sirum when the Boking Angong attacked their settlement, all the male members were away hunting and only the women and children were present. The Boking Angong ruthlessly massacred many. A Boli old man Litum Tummuk was there but saved himself by hiding in a nearby bush. When the Boking were leaving the place two of them, Yadong and his brother Yanga, lagged behind and as they slowly moved up the track, Litum Tummuk sprang upon them and killed them both.

The Boli went to Janbo village where they settled temporarily. One day a man of Janbo left for the Nimat country and took Litum Tummuk along with him. There was a pool in between and the Janbo asked him to swim the pool the name of which was Sidom Siyeng. He did this in order to get him at a disadvantage with a view to killing him. He also asked him to leave his sword behind. Litum Tummuk did not fall for the ruse but carried the sword between his teeth and swam across the pool. The Janbo was afraid to kill him since he was carrying the sword, so he approached the Nimat Deba (official)

to kill him. The deba sent a very big dog to attack him but he took out the sword and cut it down. When the deba heard of this incident he sent for him and presented him with an axe—Gine Lakkang. When the Janbo saw that deba was showing favour to him, he also wanted to have an axe but the deba, in order to test his courage, sent another dog. The dog fell upon him and tore him to pieces.

Litum Tummuk returned and the Janbos never disturbed him again. He then came down to Tappin Korong where he met other people and all of them moved to the present day Shimong village where they did not encounter any serious threat to stability and their number also multiplied rapidly. With the growing pressure on land they decided to search for new locations and slowly moved northwards up to the banks of the Kangong River, better known as the Yang Sang Chu.

The Shimongs, after settling in their new-found home, were involved in the famous Ruing War with the Padams. Two Padams, Nyote and Nyobung, came to fish in the Yamne river with a net. Malling Kido of Shimong tore the net to pieces as they had wrongfully intruded into the Shimong fishing area along the northern course of the river agreed upon with the Padams formerly. The northern boundary of the river was Ruing. A fight ensued which lasted for many years and the Padams were defeated. The Ruing area became a part of Shimong land. In that bitter fight both sides suffered many casualties. Dalbuin, a neutral village near the disputed territory, secretly helped the Shimongs and led them through a secret path and many Padams were killed. When peace was established the Shimongs went to the Padam village of Damro and planted a simul tree there.

There was another fight in which the Shimongs were drawn up against the Padams and that fight too lasted many years.

Kepsi Simat of Sitang went to Padam (Damro) on a visit and he enquired who the richest man among the Padams was. He was told that Bapir was the richest man in the village and he approached him. Bapir ridiculed him by remarking that he was an insignificant little man. Kepsi Simat felt insulted but did not

express his displeasure outwardly. He, however, asked Bapir to meet him near the Komkar boundary over Tumrung hill two days later where he would hand over to him a brass vessel—ranku—in exchange for a mithun. So saying he left and on the appointed day Bapir, carrying a bottle of apong, went ahead to meet him at a place called Ampen Otti followed by some people who were leading a mithun. At Ampen Otti he found Kepsi Simat waiting for him with a cup of apong which he offered him. As Bapir started to drink the apong, Kepsi Simat took his sword out and beheaded him and in a flash vanished behind the screen of forest. When Bapir's men arrived they were horrified to see his lifeless body lying in a pool of blood and at once left the place and informed all Padams about the great tragedy. Padams came in hundreds armed with deadly weapons and arrived at Komkar village. The Komkars refused to cooperate with them as they had marriage relations with Sitang and Riga an allied village. Padams then requested the Panggis to help them and with the Panggis they set out for Sitang and Riga. In a series of encounters these villages were worsted and the Padams returned home. In recognition of the good services rendered, the Padams gave permission to the Panggis to establish a settlement along the course of the Yamne river. In course of time the Panggis moved further out and established a village near the junction of the Yamne and the Siang rivers and thus found a route to Pasighat where they could purchase salt. The Padams did not like this and asked the Panggis to remove the village from that location immediately, but the Panggis refused. The Padams could not stand this and immediately started a fight to subdue them. The fight continued for a long time and the route to Pasighat was cut off. The Panggis then came to the Shimongs for help and the latter most readily agreed. The bloody war continued for seven years and in Adi history this was the major war in which the maximum number of people rallied between two groups.

The Padams were far from the Shimongs but Komkar which sided with the Padams was near. The Shimongs fell on the Komkars and day and night they raided their poor village and

made the life of the Komkars extremely miserable. The Komkars finally sued for peace and this was agreed to. They then went to the Padams and made a peace treaty and the war thus ended.

Adi wars had their peculiarities. Parties were ambushed often and sudden raids on villages made with superior strength. The enemy movement was carefully watched by patrols known as magro who placed loops of loosely-strung string across a path and anyone crossing the path would dislodge the string and his movement would thus be known. The footprints were also followed and various kinds of signals—imitations of the whistling of birds—were exchanged between patrols over long distances. When an enemy was killed, in a surprise attack or ambush, his hands were chopped off and brought to the village and there stuck to a madar tree with the palm outwards. This was done as if to call on all the enemy to come and surrender.

Whenever a war was decided upon, a fast runner was at once despatched with three things—the feather of a bird, a stone and chilly. The feather symbolized speed and meant that one must go to the scene of fighting as quickly as a bird. The stone symbolized a stout heart and the chilly a fighting spirit. The fast runner handed over these tokens to the next village and it was obligatory on the part of the people of that village to send without delay another fast runner to the next village. With this relay system the news of anything that happened anywhere in Adi country could reach the farthest corner within a very short time.

When one of the warring groups wanted peace they placed broken pieces of an arrow and a sword at a place which the opposite party was likely to frequent. This was respected and the party immediately responded and a peace treaty was settled with sacrifices of mithuns and pigs and the drinking of apong.

Domestic life

Shimong villages are located along wide spurs between 2000 ft and 4000 ft. With the exception of the villages of Gobuk and Ngaming all are situated near the Siang river. The cultivations

of each village lie within a radius of five miles. In establishing a village the main consideration is necessarily given to availability of water. The village is not planned otherwise and the construction of houses is never haphazard. A little away lie the granaries where grains are stored along with other valuables, sometimes even money. Because of the close proximity fire accidents happen frequently and a considerable number of houses are gutted. The sanitation within the village is negligible and pigs and dogs serve the purpose of scavengers. The area within a village is generally filthy but after a torrential rain the dirt is washed off and the village looks clean once more.

Generally a house consists of a family the members of which seldom exceed six. Monogamy is the rule though there are some exceptions. A person having more than two wives is not seen. Inheritance is through the male line and sons share the property. The status of woman in the family is restricted. She does not hold any property though she is never considered a burden and so long as she is unmarried she stays with the family and helps in all domestic work.

The moshup is the main social centre of the village. There all important meetings are held and in great community festivals people gather there to participate in Miri dancing. The moshup is divided into different meroms and in each merom there are members who do not necessarily belong to the same clan. It is the duty of the members to follow the merom in community hunting and members take great pride in the achievement of their own meroms. Unmarried young boys sleep in the moshup and their duty is to keep watch over the village and alert the people against any possible danger.

Besides the moshup there is the rasheng, the girls' dormitory, which serves as a meeting place for young boys and girls at night. The rasheng is a great institution where a girl chooses her future husband and *vice versa*. It is here that young boys and girls meet together and know each other intimately so that when married they lose little time in establishing a settled life.

The Shimong houses are constructed in a rectangular shape. The width of the house is 15 ft to 20 ft and length 20 ft to 25 ft.

Supported on strong poles a platform of split bamboo is raised. This is the floor. The walls are made with wooden planks roughly split from trees. The roof is made with the fronds of the tara, a species of cane. Inside the house generally there is only one fireplace but two may be seen if there are more than one family. Over the hearth there are four to five racks, one above the other. On one side of the hearth, close to the wall, cooking utensils and water vessels are kept.

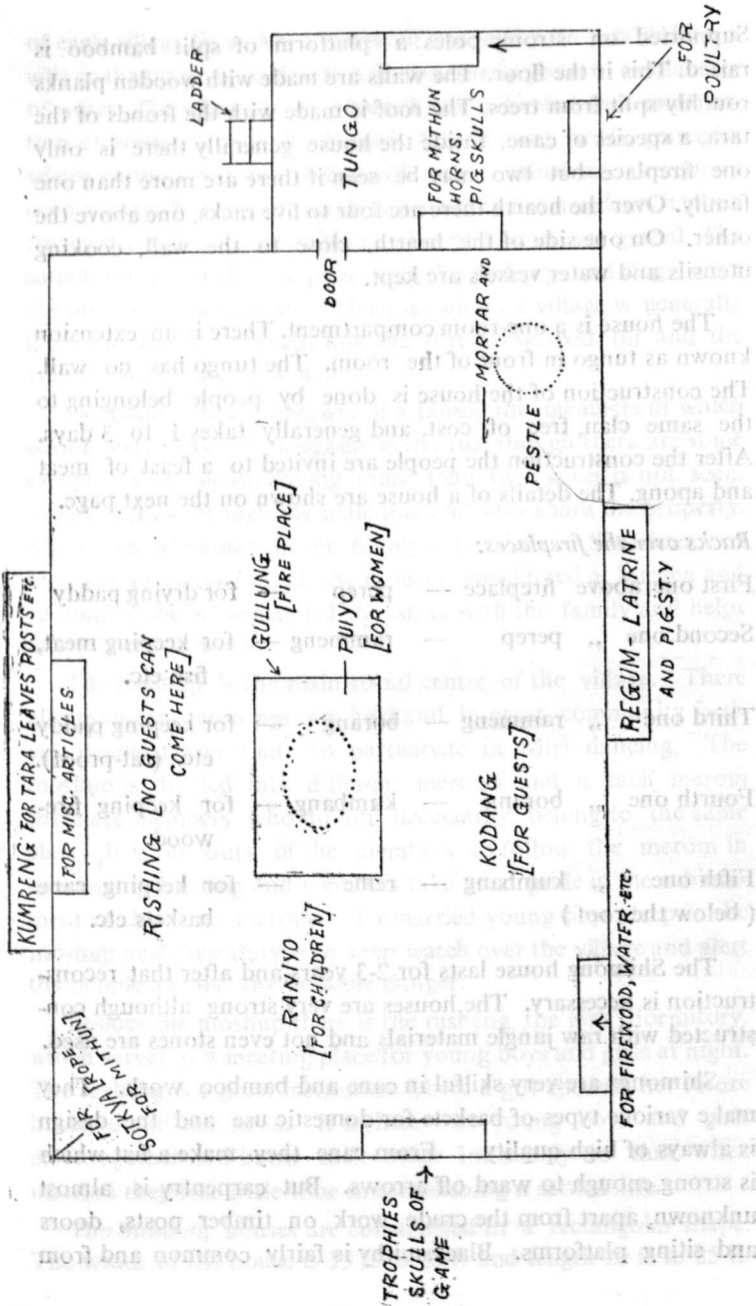
The house is a one-room compartment. There is an extension known as tungo in front of the room. The tungo has no wall. The construction of the house is done by people belonging to the same clan, free of cost, and generally takes 1 to 3 days. After the construction the people are invited to a feast of meat and apong. The details of a house are shown on the next page.

Racks over the fireplaces:

First one above fireplace	—	perep	—	for drying paddy
Second one „	„	perep	—	rammeng — for keeping meat, fish etc.
Third one „	„	rammeng	—	borang — for keeping paddy etc. (rat-proof).
Fourth one „	„	borang	—	kumbang — for keeping fire-wood.
Fifth one „	„	kumbang	—	reme — for keeping cane baskets etc.
(below the roof)				

The Shimong house lasts for 2-3 years and after that reconstruction is necessary. The houses are very strong although constructed with raw jungle materials and not even stones are used.

Shimongs are very skilful in cane and bamboo work. They make various types of baskets for domestic use and the design is always of high quality. From cane they make a hat which is strong enough to ward off arrows. But carpentry is almost unknown, apart from the crude work on timber posts, doors and sitting platforms. Blacksmithy is fairly common and from



scrap iron they make good daos and iron tips for spears and arrowheads. Women are specially skilled in weaving though designs are not especially remarkable. Women's skirts are of white cloth lined with red borders at both ends. Men use a loin cloth and a sleeveless shirt called galuk. Yarn is dyed with red and black colour extracted from plants, the red dye from the taman creeper and the black dye from engot, a small shrub.

Amongst the domestic animals, pigs, fowls and mithuns are reared. The mithun (*Bos Frontalis*) lives in a semi-wild state but each one is marked with notches on the ears to indicate ownership. These animals are very valuable and the price varies from Rs 600 to Rs 800 for a full grown animal. Cows are not so valuable. With the introduction of wet rice cultivation in recent times, bullocks are in high demand. Milking is unknown and cows are slaughtered often for meat.

Shimongs follow the shifting method of cultivation commonly known as jhum. Each clearing is known as 'patat' which the entire village cultivates for a year. The clearance of jungle growth is done before the advent of the monsoon and the trash is burnt. In the first year angngiat, Job's tear, is grown and in the second year only paddy. Varieties of crops are grown together and the outturn from a jhum field is always good because of the different crops. After the harvest of paddy a patat is allowed to revert to jungle and only cultivated again after an interval of 10—15 years.

Cultivation

The cultivation fields are divided into fertile and sub-fertile classes. Mopu is the poor soil where finger millet, job's tear and maize can be grown. Moying is the good soil where paddy grows well.

Generally two varieties of paddy are cultivated—coarse and medium coarse and the yield of paddy in good soil in wet rice fields averages 13 to 15 quintals per acre.

The Shimong agricultural year has two seasons, Lobo and Digin, and is divided into twelve months.

The detailed activities during the period are shown in the following calendar:

<i>Seasons</i>	<i>Months</i>	<i>Corresponding English months</i>	<i>Agricultural operations</i>
Digin	Jinmur	January	Collection of fire-wood for the house, laying traps in the jungle for rats and squirrels and fishing. Harvesting of Job's tear completed.
Digin	Kombong	February	Collection of fire-wood, fishing and hunting.
Digin	Galling	March	Clearance of forest for cultivation and preparation of land. Sowing of early paddy, maize, finger millet, linseed, arum and foxtail millet.
Lobo	Luking	April	Clearance for patat continues; construction of fencing in cultivation fields.
Lobo	Lobo	May	Sowing of winter and autumn highland paddy, maize, Job's tear and finger millet.
Lobo	Lokam	June	Weeding in cultivation fields.
Lobo	Tanyo	July	Weeding completed. Harvesting of early crops starts.
Lobo	Iyo	August	Harvesting of foxtail millet starts. Harvesting of early crops completed.
Lobo	Ite	September	Harvesting of foxtail millet, arum and maize completed.
Digin	Dishang	October	Harvesting of autumn highland paddy starts.

Digin	Terem	November	Harvesting of autumn crops completed.
Digin	Bishing	December	Harvesting of winter highland paddy and Job's tear starts. Construction of house completed.

There are very few varieties of cultivated vegetables and Shimongs mostly depend on the supply from the forest where no less than twenty to twentyfive species of leafy vegetables are available. Because of the abundant supply of roots and leaves as well as meat from the forest, starvation is quite unknown and in the past known history of the Shimongs no famine has ever occurred. Also as there is no selfish motive everyone helps one another in case of real need.

For fishing in the small rivers on a large scale generally two methods are followed—diversion of the channel and drying of the bed, and poisoning of the stream. According to the former method the water is diverted into a different channel and the main channel is thus dried up and fish are caught with bare hands. According to the latter method a river or a stream is poisoned with the juice extracted from roots, leaves and barks of certain plants. Fish die in hundreds, and are collected with hands or with baskets. The method is known as tamo and the poison used is collected from the following trees and creepers:

1. From the root of the ripik creeper.
2. From the fruits and leaves of the onger tree.
3. From the bark of tanir tree.
4. From the bark of the muding creeper.
5. From the fruit of the muyum tree.

Of all these, the poison collected from the ripik creeper is the most effective.

The advent of certain agricultural seasons is known by the songs of particular birds and the flowering of particular trees, such as :

The whistle of the todi kukkur bird in Kombong.

The whistle of the supir bird and the blooming of the tagat tree in Galling.

The whistle of the pakkom, yadidivi and jaja pokpok birds in Luking.

The blooming of the siri, takuk and tan trees and the ngardak (dwarf banana plant) in Tanyo.

The flowering of the taje, a species of cardamom, in Iyo.

Festivals

The Shimongs have a number of festivals in a year. These are great occasions when people relax from their day to day activity and make offerings to uyus, the spirit gods, so that they will show them favour and make their life peaceful. During the festivals all become carefree, and feasting, drinking and ponung dances go on day and night. Shimongs, like other Adis, drink apong and the average daily consumption is more than a gallon. There are very few people who do not drink at all but although drinking is unrestricted, it is rare for people to lose their balance and drink to excess.

The principal festivals are :

1. Aran, the harvest festival observed during January-February with the sacrifice of mithuns and pigs.
2. Oro observed during April with rice and apong.
3. Etor observed during April with the sacrifice of pigs and mithuns.
4. Solung observed during June with the sacrifice of pigs.
5. Rigo Pumeng,
6. Ringe Pumeng, and
7. Pesi Pumeng, all three of which are observed during August with offerings of fish and birds.
8. Yaggan Pumeng observed during September with the sacrifice of fowls in granaries.
9. Ammo Nite observed during September with the sacrifice of pigs and fowls.

10. Ampa Pumeng and
11. Jajum Pumeng observed during October with offerings of fish, rats and birds.
12. Amgan Pumeng observed during December with similar offerings of fish, rats and birds.

Most of the festivals are followed by the strictest taboo and people then abstain from work for 2-3 days. Community hunting is held before and after the festivals.

Religion

The Shimongs are in constant struggle with nature and they believe that the uyus, the spirits, are the real masters of their fate. Any calamity that befalls them they attribute to the uyus. Most of the uyus are far from good and benevolent. They haunt the village and its surroundings and seize every chance to hurt the people. They may bring violent death or chronic suffering, damage the crops and property or cause the death of animals. It is the yu who causes the sky to thunder; it is he who brings hail and storms, floods the river and streams, and shakes the earth. To appease the uyus, Shimongs spare no efforts and sacrifice mithuns, pigs, fowls and even dogs. There are a great number of uyus, big and small; some are comparatively mild but some surpass the limit of savagery and malice. The names of common uyus are given below :

Epom, Nipong, Nite, Siyor, Jemu Jenang, Teyong, Ecchung, Ladalayo, Rumking, Bishi Ada Biniyat, Sikkom, Yayebar, Adme, Ammang, Banji, Nishik, Nipak, Nireng, Nimar, Kolung, and Eshing.

Amongst all these the uyus, Epom and Siyor constantly haunt men. Epom brings chronic illness and Siyor violent death. Any accident in the rivers or in cliffs and by falling from trees is the work of Siyor. Nipong is responsible for still-birth or the death of women. Nipong yu is always on the lookout for women and once they fall into her hands it is very difficult for them to escape.

Donyi Polo the Sun-Moon god reigns supreme over everything and Shimongs pray to him for blessings. But for Donyi Polo the life of the people would be extremely miserable. It is Donyi Polo who gives them property, brings them a bumper crop from the field or gives them a good family and children. It is surprising that Shimongs have no special offerings for Donyi Polo who is so kind to them while they make constant offerings, sometimes beyond their capacity, to uyu who can hardly be said to be kind to them.

When a person is ill, his illness is taken as the evil influence of a uyu. To determine the type of illness and the particular uyu responsible, some rice grains wrapped in a leaf are taken near the patient and the uyu is invoked to come inside the grains. Then the grains are taken to a miri who is supposed to know all the uyu. The miri examines the grains carefully and determines the identity of the uyu and prescribes particular offerings necessary to please him. A pig or a mithun may be so sacrificed and the miri pleads with the uyu to be satisfied with the animal offered, and to leave the body of the man. So long as illness continues the miri remains in constant attendance.

Not every person can be a miri who has to have extraordinary qualifications and generally be above the ordinary. A great deal of perseverance and concentration is necessary as it is he who can freely communicate with uyu and see them when desired. A miri in a trance can even forget his surroundings and attain a state suggestive of hysteria during which he enters into hot arguments with an obstinate uyu who probably refuses to leave the body of the afflicted person. With his sword violently shaken, his appearance keeps all in intense suspense and sometimes when he tries to run or jump, up he is restrained by attendants.

When a person dies he is buried. If the death occurs during the night, for the whole night the body is kept in the house and with daylight it is taken to the burial place which generally lies close to the village. A pit is dug out, approximately 3 ft wide, 4 ft long and 2 ft deep and the sides are lined with flat wooden

boards and bamboos. A cloth is placed at the bottom and the body is covered with cloth and laid to rest. A space nearly 1 ft being left, the top is then covered with split bamboos and finally earth is spread over. People are generally apprehensive of any form of unnatural calamity, and in any case of unnatural death the entire village abstains from all work for 2-3 days. Sometimes the deceased's worldly possessions, like brass metal vessels which are costly, are disposed of with the dead and hung near the grave. Skulls of mithuns are also hung on wooden posts and it is believed that the dead man will enjoy these possessions in the other world.

Dreams and their significance

Shimongs attach great importance to dreams. A good or bad dream affects his daily life. The effect of a dream is psychological and the belief of the people in them is so deeply rooted that they take it for granted that they will be fulfilled. Various dreams and their significance are mentioned below :

If one dreams of eating jackfruit one will succeed in killing a deer.

If one dreams of eating banana one will succeed in killing an animal.

If one dreams of constructing a bridge one will succeed in killing a big animal.

If one dreams of fighting another man one will succeed in killing an animal.

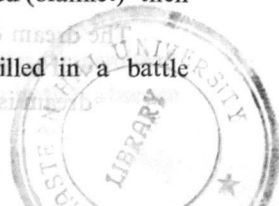
If one dreams of being stung by a bee one will suffer illness.

If one dreams of being bitten by a dog or a snake one will suffer illness.

If one dreams of a house being dismantled some one in the family will die.

If one dreams of being wrapped in white gadu (blanket) then one will suffer death by drowning.

If the dream is of a man being chased and killed in a battle that person will be killed in landslip.



If the dream is of a man carrying a big load then that person will have to pay a heavy fine.

If one dreams of a snake coming near but not biting, one will suffer illness.

The dream of abundant crop is an indication that cultivation will fail.

If the sun and moon are seen together someone will die.

The dream of a graveyard indicates that the dreamer will be rich.

Snowfall indicates that the house will be burnt. On the other hand, the dream of a burning house indicates that the sky will be clear and the sun will shine.

The dream of fish being caught in traps indicates that there will be plenty of food.

A bamboo water-pipe being laid on presages a good year for crops and sufficient food.

If one dreams of heavy rain and everything being covered with water then one will not see the dead body of a dying relation (i.e. he will die in one's absence).

If one dreams of an animal being killed and of shouting then one will find someone in the village badly injured with a deep cut.

If one dreams of a ponung, then either the dreamer or his wife will die.

A river in spate and a bridge washed away indicates that a kebang will be unsuccessful but if the dream is of a bridge which remains intact despite heavy rains, it indicates that the kebang will be successful.

If one dreams of falling down a landslide then one will die in a war or a fall from a tree.

The dream of a wild cat catching a fowl indicates that a thief will be found out. The same thing is indicated if the dream is of a vulture being shot.

If one dreams of tadoks (beads) being lost one will recover from illness.

If one dreams of hair being pulled out, one's tadoks will be lost and the dreamer will also fall ill and lose other property.

The dream of stones being thrown away from the roadside indicates that pigs and mithuns will die.

If one dreams of weeding with a tabo uyik (a bamboo weeder) then one will possess many fowls.

If one dreams of a fencing being made with bamboo then one will possess mithuns.

If one dreams of a tooth being extracted, one's mithuns and pigs will die.

If one dreams of a toe or finger being cut off one will lose his daughter or son.

Recreations

Although life is constantly a struggle for existence people find time to relax off and on and there are many occasions especially during festivals when they participate in ponung dancing. A ponung is very highly developed and both men and women take part in the dance. Ponung among the Shimongs is not exactly like that among Padams and Minyongs. The latter follow different rhythms while the Shimongs move step by step gradually in a semicircle around a miri, the leader, and swing their hands to and fro while holding each other's finger tight. A ponung miri may be either a man or a woman who has mastered the art of singing and memorizing stories which he or she narrates with great accuracy. Here, too, like a shaman, a ponung miri should have enough patience and natural inclination for the art of singing and naturally all cannot be expected to be good ponung miris. Interest drives the ponung miri to such a pitch that hour after hour, without a pause, he goes on singing and keeps the performers along with him.

Most of the songs are connected with folk tales transmitted by word of mouth from generation to generation in the absence

of the art of writing. It is therefore possible that through the years, stories have undergone some change from village to village. Indeed, even in the same village story-tellers differ though despite these differences, the substance remains the same.

Shimongs have a vast unwritten treasury of folk-tales. Most of these tales are based on imaginary objects which is natural as the origin of all creation in this earth or in this universe is a mystery to the people. One cannot fail to be impressed at the extent to which their forefathers exercised their imagination to compose the stories which, going back to the beginning of time, describe in detail the various natural phenomena and the ultimate creation of Tani—the man who later introduced cultivation and acquired a property with which he settled down to a comfortable life.

The ponung miri does the job with confidence. He or she is always free from tension and has a charming poise. Perhaps this is the trait of an artist. Despite the heavy strain there is no complaint as if physical discomforts are nothing to care for. But there is a rich reward. A large audience is always there to listen to a miri who can hold their attention by telling interesting stories one after another. Girls weave for him or her and people make other gifts or render free labour once or twice in cultivation fields and the offer of apong and meat is frequent.

Conclusion

Shimongs are an active and intelligent people. Their life is comparatively free from anxiety since their country is rich in fertility and they have enough to eat. People are sincere and honest and their being allowed to develop along the line of their own genius will definitely bring forth a viable community and administrative efforts are naturally made in that direction. With active encouragement from the Administration they have taken up permanent cultivation and in recent years, along with wet rice cultivation, have taken to fruit and vegetable gardening and the cultivation of sugarcane, potato and other cash crops. They have built many miles of roads in the difficult terrain and are sending large numbers of their children to Lower and Middle

Schools at Yingkiong and Tuting. Where no medical aid ever reached them before, two well-equipped hospitals with indoor treatment facilities are functioning and all villages are regularly covered in routine tours of medical personnel. With the vigorous efforts of anti-malarial teams the incidence of malaria has been reduced to almost negligible proportions, and the downward trend of other wasting diseases has also been observed. With better health and economy Shimongs are going ahead and there is no doubt that in course of a few years they will play a very important part in this corner of the Division and occupy a distinctive position in the great family of Adis.

THE STORES
