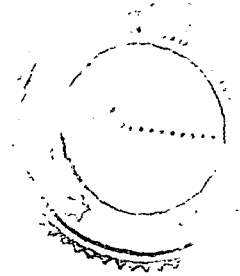


WANCHO THROUGH HISTORY

Miss. Pranjana Das
Department of Anthropology
NEHU, Shillong, 1988.



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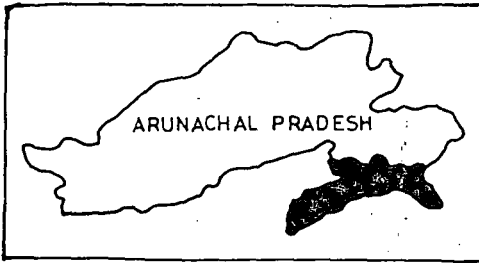
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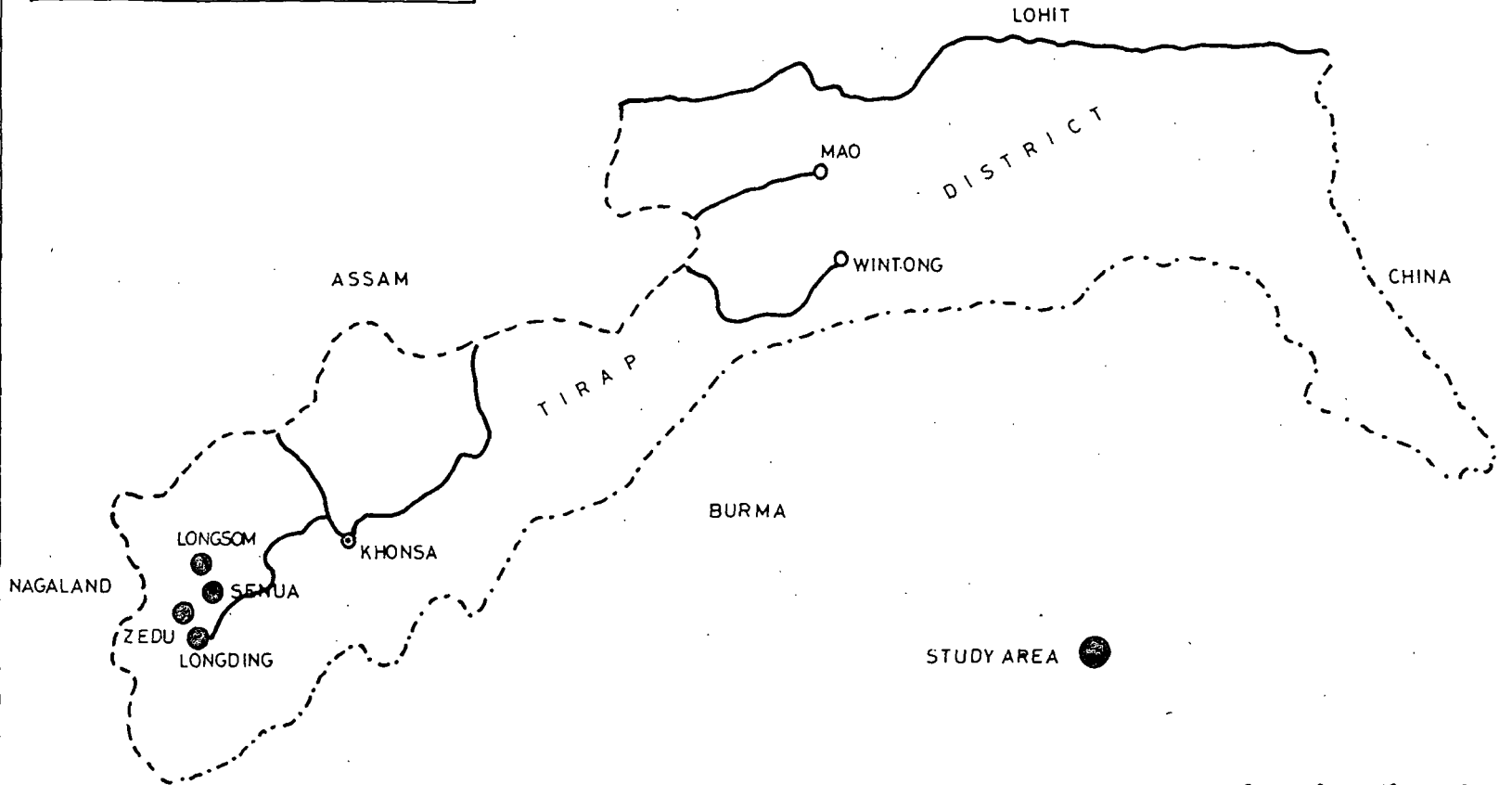
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STUDY AREA

TIRAP DISTRICT



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I express my heartfelt gratitude to my supervisor, Professor P.K. Mishra, Head, Department of Anthropology, NEHU, Shillong for his kind supervision of the study and painstaking in editing the manuscript.

I am also grateful to Professor B.N. Saraswati, Department of Anthropology, NEHU and my former teacher Dr. R.L. Hungloo, Department of History, NEHU for the keen interest and encouragement they had shown.

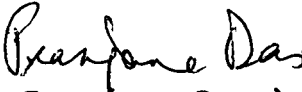
I will fail in my duty if I do not place in record my thanks to my superiors in the Directorate of Research, Itanagar, for providing me with necessary facilities in carrying out this work successfully.

I also remain grateful to the informants especially Bowang Wanghem and others whose materials I have used in preparing this dissertation.

Last but not the least I thank Mr. Gupta of Ziro and my friend Mr. John Mao, Research Scholar, Department of Anthropology, NEHU, for typing the manuscript.

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CHAPTER - I

Introduction and Literature Survey:

One of the questions which has remained in the minds of planners is how to develop the tribal populations retaining their identity and culture. Jawahar Lal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India laid down the policy of Panchsheel for tribal development which said that tribals were to be developed according to their genius. Dhebar underlined this by stating " the problem of problems is not to disturb this harmony of tribal life and simultaneously work for its advancement". These are beautiful statements but to translate them in reality is indeed a difficult task. In order to find out what is harmonic and genius of a group, one has to have authentic information about them. There are many such groups about

whom very little systematic information is available. One of the important tasks that needs to be done is to compile the information from all the sources and indicate what are the gaps in information.

I chose to study the Wancho tribe of Arunachal Pradesh to compile and to provide some information about them. Very little work has been done on them either by anthropologists or historians. The references about them are casual and are in the nature of track accounts of the British. Verrier Elwin has collected references about them in his book, India's North-East Frontier in the Nineteenth Century; J.N. Choudhury too makes a brief reference about them in his book, Arunachal through the Ages; L.R.N. Srivastav's tour diary - Among the Wanchos and the Tirap District Gazetteers edited by S. Dutta Choudhury contain some

details about the people and the area inhabited by them.

All these studies have not focussed on all the aspects of Wancho life. These studies do not give us much idea as to the process of change and tend to impose a static picture of Wancho life till the recent times. None of these works have tried to carefully examine the material constraints of this tribe. They have also failed to demonstrate the conditions in which the Wancho actually lived. The internal dynamics of their tribal social organisation has also remained undefined.

However in order to understand the nature of the life and condition of Wancho in the larger context of the Indian tribal society one has to carefully examine the (a) historical geography of the area they have inhabited for times past (b) their material condition, the process involved in their subsistence, the nature of

appropriation and the technology used in the production of their subsistence (c) the nature of their political organization and its role in administration of the tribe, (d) their social organization and the changes occurring in it, from time to time and (e) the various rituals and beliefs of the tribe.

In order to understand the Wancho tribe in its right perspective all the aforesaid concepts should be studied as the parts of a total design. In this regard, the eminent anthropologist Maurice Godelier¹ very rightly states - " To functionalist, with the exception of Evans-Pritchard and certain other brilliant field workers, a social system is a total whole, section of which are necessarily inter-linked, but according to them even a

1. see Man in India, March 1984, p.74.

history of a social system can tell us nothing of the necessary linking of parts, because history belongs to the order of consequential and accidental events and not to necessity. Laws of functioning exist but there are laws of their evolutions or necessary transformation".

However, in dealing with the Wancho of Arunachal Pradesh there are many practical difficulties faced both by the anthropologists and the historians in pursuing the past of the tribe is the lack of recorded history. It is purely as a result of this lack of recorded information that one finds a great difficulty in accurately periodizing the study of the tribe and thereby it fails to point out the various changes which have taken place in the life of Wancho from time to time.

True that "Anthropology has opened historians'

eyes to the significance of political habits, the mixture of the universal and relative which goes to make up the ways in which people accustom themselves to living in group".²

My research indicated that there was very little written material on Wancho, which can be reconstructed for having a meaningful idea about the life and condition of the Wancho therefore I had to collect the information myself. The time which I had at my disposal was too short to plan a full length study them. Therefore I decided to concentrate on such aspects which may throw light on their life-style as well as indicate some events in their history. In a situation like this, the oral traditions are the only source and therefore I decided to collect information on their legends, folk tales and

2: Ibid, p.75.

folk songs. I have also observed them singing and found out about their rituals and festivals as part of their oral tradition.

A proper understanding of the oral traditions is possible only in the context of the culture in which they exist. Since I have not done a full study of the culture of the Wanchos I have not made an attempt to analyse the information that I have collected on their oral traditions. This is one the major limitations of this work. The limitation of the time and the scope of this dissertation also did not permit me to make a comparative study of the tribe but I have only tried to take the first step towards the fuller understanding of the Wanchos tribe.

The first chapter is on the Introduction and Literature Survey where I have given the kind of information that is available on the Wanchos. The second chapter is on

Historical Geography. In this chapter, I have identified the physical feature of the area inhabited by the Wancho. It also discussed the land, soil, climate and its overall impact on the life of the Wancho. The third chapter concentrates on the study of their material life of the tribe. The nature of distribution and various custom connected with it has also been discussed. I have also paid attention to the nature of their agriculture and industrial technology and their impact on the economical life of the Wancho. The fourth chapter is the Nature of State. In this chapter, I have tried my best to provide historical data to give an idea of the evolution of the state. The role of various dynasties from time to time and the system of administration also have been discussed to some extent. In the fifth chapter, I have tried to present a very brief account of the Social Organization. In this

chapter, I have described their institution of marriage, various customs connected with birth, ritual and beliefs, and disposal of their dead. I have also concentrated on their religious practices and their impact on the social and cultural life of the Wancho. The sixth chapter is the Conclusion.

Migration:

The Wancho like many other tribes of Arunachal Pradesh have their own tradition about migration. According to one tradition, the original place from where they came is Nyannu Ofan³. Another tradition traces the courses of their migration to their present abode through Tangnu and Tsangnu, both in the Tuensang area of the present Nagaland. It is not known when they actually migrated. The Ahom Buranjis and the early British records, however suggest that

3. Srivastav, L.R.N., Among the Wanchos, p.1.

they came and settled in the south-western part of Tirap some hundred years ago⁴.

Origin: The Wancho narrate many tales in connection with their origin. The tales and legends differ from clan to clan. Some of these legends are interesting and through the years have perhaps become so coloured that now they seem full of romantic fiction and mystery. As regards folklore and its scope, P. Goswami⁵ put down that folklore was first coined by W.J. Thomas (1840) and it has established itself as a generic term under which are included traditional institutions, art and craftsmanship, customs and roles connected with marriage, inheritance, birth and death, festival, agriculture, fishing and hunting, cattle rearing, beliefs in spirits, fairies, witchcraft, spells, charms,

4. see Tirap District Gazetteer, p.32.

5. Goswami, P., Ballad and Tales of Assam, p.2.

omen etc. The Wancho do not have any literature but it is rich in folklore and other local tradition handed down from generation to generation. Of these some are written down and published in school magazines and some are simply preserved and handed down by word of mouth.

Legends:

The Chief is said to have originated from a pumpkin seed and some clans say from a gourd. But the queen was from Heaven. One day the Chief of Longthan had gone hunting. As he neared the river, he saw a few beautiful girls taking bath. He hid himself and watched. From their conversation, he came to know that these beautiful damsels were from Heaven and they had come to visit the earth. Seeing the river they could not resist taking a bath. The chief took a long stick and with it he managed to collect the clothes of these angels in a bundle. The poor angels could not come out of the water now.

The Chief went up to them introduced himself and told them not to be afraid. Later he married one of the angel and lived happily after.

An old and childless Wancho couple were extremely happy about an extra ordinary pumpkin that they had found growing near their house. The pumpkin was taken inside with a lot of care. At night, the couple heard strange noises. They woke up to find out if any one had entered their house. They looked up and down and to their surprise saw that their prized possession the pumpkin was rolling to and fro. Thinking that the pumpkin was haunted the man took his dao and hit the pumpkin. At his stroke the pumpkin broke open and inside they saw a baby crying for he was hurt on the head by the dao. The couple took him out and tended to his wound. They reared him and

called him Chang. He grew up to be the king - 'Chang' -
wound and wang chief. He married an angel from Heaven.
His wife was called Changwangsia or addressed as Asen
Ranghie.

The Wanchos believe in ghosts and spirits. They
believe that seeing a ghost is bad omen. Why is it taken as
a bad sign?

The Longsom Raja narrated a legend which goes thus:
Long long ago the earth was occupied by the humans, the
spirits and the animals. These three were constantly fighting
with each other to gain supremacy. The 'Bou' satan wanted
to wipe off the human beings intellect. One day 'Bou' saw
a man, the man was carrying a naked 'dao' or a sword.
It hung from his cane basket. The 'Bou' thought the dao
must be the man's tail and made a swift snatch at the
dao. The naked dao cut and injured the Bou. He had to

admit to the human's intelligence and agreed that the human being was superior to all spirits. This was an insult to the Bou and in his embarrassment he turned himself invisible. The Wanchos believe that Bou is on the lookout for revenge and if any man meets a Bou he is in for trouble -, sickness, poverty, death and even famine might befall on him.

Fight for Fire:

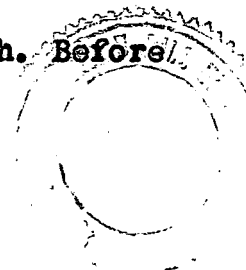
The three - human, spirits and animals that lived on this earth, long long ago were fascinated by fire. The fire that they saw in the sky - lightning. The fire that struck the land during a storm. They felt that this fire would be an useful weapon. All three contemplated on conquering fire and owning it. But to master and own fire was not easy, they needed to know how to make fire. So they

decided to hold a competition. The first turn was given to the spirits but they failed, then the animals too failed. Now was the turn of the human, while the spirits and animals watched the man took a piece of wood and a bit of string and began rubbing. Soon a spark appeared and there was flame. The human's skill in kindling fire was appreciated by the spirits and the animals. So man became the sole owners of fire which helped them to become superior over spirits and animals.

Origin of thunder and lightning:

The Wanchos believe that thunder and lightning is the sign of anger of those live in Heaven. Once upon a time the Queen of Heaven came down to visit the earth. She was given a pira (wooden stool) to sit on. The poor queen was very uncomfortable on this pira . She was angry at this and considered that she was given a very bad treatment by her hosts i.e. the people on earth. Before

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she left, she asked them - "Of what wood is this pira made off?" Her host replied, "of Zake". The Zak tree has splinters and do not make good seats. When she reached Heaven, the Queen told the king of this he laughed. His laugh is said to be the thunder. The queen was so angry and humiliated that she ordered the fire of heaven i.e. lightning to strike and burn down the zak trees. Even now zak trees are normally hit by lightning and thunder can be heard then.

The Gourd Prince:

The first Wancho king is said to have come out of a jati lau (water gourd). The Wancho usually leave gourds to dry and when it is dry they clean it well and use it as a vessel.

Long long ago one such gourd was left to dry and insects began to form inside it. When people went near the

gourd they heard a whispering sound and so they broke it open. To their surprise they found a human baby inside.

The people were thrilled they thought the baby was extraordinary - a super being called him Chongwang; chong mean insect, and wang to settle or thrive on. They considered this baby to be the son of God. They gave him presents and respects and made him their king. This how kingship got started.

Methodology:

In collecting the oral data care has been taken to select only those which are considered to be most authentic. Census Reports, Gazetteers, Newspaper reports, journals, British account, tour diary of Srivastav have been consulted and used profitably.

Tools used:

The tools of field data collection includes interviews with the Chiefs, Gaonburas and selected knowledgeable persons, participant observations.

As the study is based on the interpretation and analysis of the folklores and the oral informations, and the description of the factual data, the method being followed in preparing this is empirical in its study.

I have considered and incorporated the suggestions made by the experts who had attended my pre-submission seminar. I thank them for their guidance and showing keen interest in my work.

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CHAPTER - II

Historical Geography:

The principal elements which make up the geographical scene at any period of time are in addition to the physical environment, the people, the forms and distribution of their settlements, their agriculture, their crafts and industries and their trade¹. The reconstruction of the face of the Tirap district at the beginning of the historical period must therefore call, not only on sources which are historical in the narrow sense, but also on the researches of the geologist, botanist, meteorologist and archaeologist. This is a task of immense difficulty, and makes demand on too many disciplines ever to be satisfying or complete.

The history of the district emerged from obscurity and dubious traditions in the early part of the

1. Pounds, N.J.G., An Historical Geography of Europe 450 B.C.-
A.D. 1330, pp.1-2.

13th century A.D. when the Ahoms came from North Burma through the Pangsau Pass over the Patkai, and made steady advance along the course of the Noa-Dihing in Tirap.

Placed between the plains of Brahmaputra on the west and the valley of the Irrawaddy on the east, this area witnessed movement of people from across the Patkai ranges from time immemorial². The Ahoms who ruled in Assam and its eastern regions for six centuries from A.D. 1228-1826, left a series of invaluable historical chronicles known as Buranjis, which throw a flood of light on the late medieval history of Tirap. Scanty information as given in the Ahom and British records is the only source of early history of this area.

The history of the Tirap district as an administrative unit goes back to 1943 when it was called the

2. see Tirap District Gazetteer, p.26.

Tirap Frontier Tract, The tract was carved out of some areas of the Sadiya Frontier Tract and the Lakhimpur Frontier Tract³. The name of the unit underwent a sequence of changes from the frontier tract to frontier division, and finally in 1965 to the Tirap District. The district lies to the south of the Brahmaputra. It is bounded on the north by the Dibrugarh district of Assam and the Lohit district of Arunachal Pradesh; on the south by Burma, on the east by Burma and on the west by the Sibsagar and Dibrugarh district of Assam and the Mon district of Nagaland. The district lies between the latitude $26^{\circ}40'N$ and $27^{\circ}40'N$ and the longitude $95^{\circ}11'E$ and $97^{\circ}10'E$.

The Longding sub-division is located in the south-western corner of this district. This sub-division has been divided into four circles for administrative

3. Ibid, p.1.

purposes. They are - Niauxa, Kanubari, Wakka and Pangchau⁴.

Generally the area is rugged and mountainous as it lies in the sub-Patkoil region. The vegetation on the whole is tropical evergreen, rain forest type and semi-evergreen according to the variations in altitude and soil conditions. There are a few grasslands in comparative less humid areas⁵. In the lower Wancho belt forest vegetation is found to be rich and varied.

The soil on the hill top is generally deep and it varies from clay to heavy loam. On the slopes it is loamy more developed and of slightly open texture. In the foothills, it has mixed features. The hilltops are more suited for cultivation of fruit trees ranging from sub-tropical to temperate deciduous plants. Cereals and other root crops grow on the slopes; paddy can also be

4. Ibid, p.2-3.

5. Ibid, p.3.

cultivate⁶. In the higher altitude the forest is generally temperate. The thick wooded areas are not the virgin area because of the shifting cultivation which has been going on in these areas for a long time.

The climate in this district is largely influenced by the terrain marked by high hills, deep ravines and valleys through which the streams and rivers flow. The climate is cool and highly humid at the lower elevation and in the valley. The rain gauge station report on Longding rainfall in 1975 as 191.10 cms.

The cold season prevailing from the later part of November to February is followed by frequent thunderstorms in the pre-monsoon season from March to May. The monsoon continues from June to about the middle of October. On the whole the climate in the hill areas is moderate and pleasant and the constant breeze make it

6. Ibid, p.104.

salubrious.

The rivers Tesse, Tising and the Tewai constitute the principal drainage system. Besides these there are swamps, creeks and canals. Wancho area abounds in good land water resources suitable both for capture and culture of fisheries. Resources however remain unutilized for fish development of fisheries. Some of the common indigenous fish species are - Tarputitose, Labeo dero, Balilius danila etc.⁸

In recent times the GSI and the AOC have taken keen interest in that territory tertiary formation of the area for assessing oil and coal resources in the region. Oil shows near Tisse stream south of Kambari area have been reported⁹.

7. Ibid, p.21-23.

8. Ibid, p.17.

9. Ibid, p.8.

The Wanchos belong to the Indo-Mongoloid group. They lived under their Wangham (Chiefs) and had a highly stratified society. They have among them almost fifty villages which are divided into two groups - Tangjen and Sangjen¹⁰, or lower and upper Wancho area. Some of the villages in the Lower Wancho area are - Chobnu, Banferra, Wannu, Kanubari, Russa, Zedua, Senua, Niannu, Mintong, Pumao etc. Some of the villages in the Upper Wancho areas are - Longjen, Longkai, Nginu, Kamhua, Khanu, Wakka, Longphong, Bonia etc.

Fish form an important item in the Wancho diet.

It is also interesting to note that the Wancho ladies are kept on a strict diet of fish and rice after delivery.

Fish is needed for rituals as well.

10. Srivastav, L.R.N., Among the Wanchos, p.2.

Population:

In 1961 the population was 23,393 and increased to 28,650 in 1971. In 1981 of the Census record, the total population of the Wanchos was 33,072 (males -17027 and females - 16055)¹¹.

History of the Wancho

Wannu ss said to be the first Wancho village. It is situated in the Banferra circle below Longding. Five migrating Wancho clans first settled here. They were the Ralang, Arang, Pongla, Niyanute and Yanko. They are regarded as five original clans of the Wanchos. Among them the chief was selected from Ralang family. Wancho were known both to the Ahoms as well as to the British.

11. see 1981 Census Record.

Relation with the Plain People

It is reported that there were little intercourse between the Wancho living in the hills and people living in the plains of Assam. This is not true. During the Ahom rule, the plains people on one hand and the Wancho were quite friendly. The Ahom king Shiva Sanga married the Banferra Princess Ladoi (there is a fort named after her as Ladoigar). The Wanchos have a custom of their own in disposing their dead and all Wancho would prefer to die in their village so as (to be lucky and get a fitting funeral) to be treated to a Wancho death ritual. When Shiva Sanga married Ladoi, he promised to send the body of his wife back to her village on her death. Accordingly, on her death the Ahom sovereign sent the corpse of his dead queen to her village. On the way up the stench of

the dead body got a little too strong and so they i.e. the people carrying the dead body performed the last rites of the queen in a spot on which a fort was built later named after her the Queen ofas LADOIGARH.

The Wancho were referred to by the Assamese as 'Naga' - this word is derived from the Sanskrit word 'nagna' or naked. The other names by which the Wanchos were known to the plains people besides Naga were - Rangpang, or by their villages as Banferra, Barmithunia and Harmithunia. The Wanchos came down to the markets of Barhat and Sepakhati in the Dibrugarh district to trade. In the olden days, says Elwin "Mothers in plains of Assam used to subdue naughty children by telling them that if they did not behave, the Rangpangs would come and carry them off".(Srivastav,p.4).

These Wancho man appear to be impressive looking and attractive. One day when a Banferra Wancho Chief Khunbao went to the Ahom king Supimpha's palace to pay tribute. One of the royal wives happen to see this impressive looking man..She was impressed and narrated to her husband about Khunbao's physical attributes. Supimpha was angry at his wife's impudence and to teach her a lesson sent her off with Khunbao. This unfortunate queen at that time was expecting. While in exile she gave birth to a boy. The next Ahom King Suhura-muns came to know about this boy and granted him the post of Bar Patra Gohain. The boy was named as Kancheng Barpatra and friendly relationship grew between the Banferra Nagas and the Ahoms.

The Nature of Relationship with other Neighbouring tribes:

While their relation with the plain people was mostly commercial, the relationship with the neighbouring tribes was of social nature. The Patkoi, the geographical and political boundary between India and Burma does not prevent the people on both sides from visiting each other or entering into marriage relations. Trade forms another bond between the two.

British attitude towards the Wanchos:

The earlier Officers who visited the Wancho area found them less turbulent than the Noctes. Though they were referred to as "hideously wild", 'uncivilized', and 'dirty' by the British. In 1841-42 Captain Brodie visited many Wancho villages of Banferra, Juboke, Mulung, Jaktong, Tabong and Chongnu. People like the American Baptist missionaries Reverend Clark and his wife tried to

extinguish the Wancho urge for head-hunting. The cult of head-hunting was customary in the old days and it was connected with every aspect of their social activity.

It was not until the last quarter of the 19th century that people, specially the British Officers started visiting the Wancho area and this gave birth to unpleasantness and the government did not relish the idea of their interference. But their outrages - Chopnu Wancho's attack on Banferra, murder committed by Banferra Wanchos in Sibsagar Dodorali, Wancho kidnapping of tea garden labourers made the British apprehensive about this tribe. In February 1875, Lt. Halcombe, the Asst. Commissioner of Sibsagar (Jaipur) accompanied by Capt. W.F. Badgley the Security-in-charge of Assam Infantry and a mixed groups of Engineers, Sentries, survey group and load carriers entered the

Wanchos area. The British had actually gone to survey the area and link a road to Burma. They were escorted by a guide from the Rusa village and they made their way to Nissa village (Srivatav, p.99).

Murder of Lt. Halcombe and his men:

The Wanchos did not like outsiders and anyone who violated the sanctity of his land was not a friend had to be punished. It is said that the soldiers explored the village and on seeing a corpse on a platform they laugh at it and one of the chief of Nginnu who had just died. This raised the alarm that the aliens needed to be punished. A dead body was sacred - how dare they could defile it by touching. The punishment of this crime was not even innovated - for no one had ever broken this law. The confused and angry Wanchos attacked the British sleeping in

their camps with daos and spears. The British caught unawares at a loss. Lt. Halcombe and eighty men were butchered. The injured men escaped with Capt. Badgley to the Chanu village where they implored for help. The Chanu chief "Yatau" refused all help because he was an ally of the Nginnu Chief. Most of the wounded British and others in their party died. A graveyard of these unfortunates is said to be still seen in the outskirts of the Chanu village.

When the report of this tragic incident reached the British in Assam, punitive expedition was immediately sent to avenge the death of their fellowmen and teach the Wanchos a lesson.

British revenge on the Wanchos:

A punitive expedition under Brig. Nuthal was sent to the Wancho area in April 1875 and there they stayed on till May. This time the British has taken with

them Nocte interpreter from Bouduria. The Wanchos even today say that their misinterpretation caused more trouble and the Wanchos became bitter enemies of the British. The villages of Nginnu, Nissa, Longkai, Kamhua were burnt down. The Niannu village was partially burnt.

R.G. Woodthrope the Assistant Superintendent of the Royal Engineers who had come to survey the area says that the Wanchos could do nothing to stop the British. He found an old woman in a hollow of a tree and tried his best to quell her fear by giving her some money. The British gave the Chanu Chief a safari hat as present. It was to show their gratitude for letting the fleeing and injured British party rest in his village. But the proud Chief refused, pointing to his own crown. As the British left, the Chanu chief raised his hand, says Woodthrope,

as a gesture of friendship perhaps.

In 1876 a small force again escorted a survey party to the Wancho hills and again burnt the Nginnu village which refused to surrender some of those connected in the massacre of 1875.

The Nginnu villagers were said to have been so helpless against the British attack that they fled to Lhannu village. The chief of Lhannu did not want to get involved and bring the wrath of the British on himself and refused all help. The Nginnu villagers went to the Namsang villages (Noctes), he promised to help on payment the tributes only. The Namsang Chief demanded two goats as annual tribute, which the Nginnu gave in return for their help. Ecen now the Nginnu villagers send one goat annually to the Nocte village - Namsang. (Srivastav, p.105).

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CHAPTER - III

Material Culture:

The land of the Wancho is surrounded on all sides by high hills, the area is not fertile except for the foothills the rest of the land is not suitable for good cultivation. It is indeed a sad thing that the Wanchos hardly get paid anything inspite of their hard labour. Here jhum is practised. The Wanchos call jhum fields Haram. Ninetyfive percent of the people work in the fields. Although appreciable progress has been registered in the field of economy due to mainly to various development schemes initiated by the Administration it will still be prue to say that the economic activities of the people of Arunachal Pradesh continue to be largely of a subsistence nature based on agriculture. Agriculture

is mostly of a supplementary nature to other activities such as hunting, food gathering, trapping, fishing, rearing of animals and trade (T.G. p.101).

There existed inter village trade as well as trade with the neighbouring people of Assam and Nagaland. Inhabitants of Banferra, Rusa and other villages close to the plains use to come down to the markets of Sepekhati and Borhat for purchasing coloured clothes, beads, iron for making dao and salt. The Wanchos living near the Patkoi hills did not however, come down because those markets were distant to them¹. Traditional trade in indigenous products of however limited scope is no doubt still carried on, some local people own shops and do brisk business.

1. see Privastav's Among the Wanchos, p.3.

"In jhuming the people cut the trees and plants on the hill sides during the dry season and burn them along with the organic deposits accumulated through many years of leaf-fall, before the rains set in. They use a jhum clearing for two years and then abandon it after a period of years which varies according to the pressure of population and availability of land"². The Wanchos cultivate millet, paddy, maize, arum, topioca and pulses, gourd, brinjal, potato, garlic are grown by them. They have 11 varieties of paddy and rice and 4 varieties of arum . Poppy is grown on a very limited scale. Millet and paddy are cultivated in turns. Harvest by hand-picking is a common method among the tribes in the district. Wet cultivation is limited³.

2. Elwin, V., A Philosophy for NEFA, pp.80-81.

3. Tirap District Gazetteer, p.106.

Jhum cultivation has three stages: (i) cutting of all shrubs, weeds and trees at the fields chosen for Haram is left to dry (ii) after about 2-3 months these are burnt, and (iii) the ash is then spread out evenly and the seed sown. Implements used by the Wanchos are very few. Daos to cut the trees and shrubs, sticks used to dig holes, a wooden stick with metal tip called Rohun is used for clearing the land and at the time of harvesting. People go to the Priest and he predicts the future and profits of that particular Haram by cracking eggs and observing omens therein. Only if the egg show perfect yolk which fortell a good harvest the farmers will go to cultivate, if not another Haram will be chosen. Due to this, some spots are cultivated more often than other spots. The implements were good in the old days for limited agriculture



A Wancho Chief

but they are inadequate for large scale farming. Ploughs are used for wet cultivation. In the Wancho area we find individual ownership of land. The Wangham (chief) own much of the land. No hasty change from jhuming to permanent cultivation is possible in this mountainous terrain. But, by all means, attempts at introduction of permanent cultivation whereever possible side by side with improved jhum cultivation are being made. Although the Jhum Land Regulation of 1947 has given the people customary rights over the jhum land, they have been showing willingness to adopt the new methods and techniques of sedentary cultivation⁴. The agricultural shows, exhibition and demonstrations on the modern system of cultivation have stimulated in the people a curiosity and enthusiasm. The development

4. Ibid. p.110

of communications and the establishment of administrative centres in different parts of the district have opened new horizons for social and economic progress of the people, and this is apparent in the field of agriculture. A project sponsored by the Regional Research Laboratory⁵, Jorhat has been undertaken at Senna village near Longding for cultivation of medicinal and aromatic plants with involvement of the villagers. A plot of land adjacent to the Soil Conservation Training-cum-Demonstration Centre at Senna has been brought under cultivation of Solanum khasianum to provide planting material for commercial cultivation by the villagers. Side by side with cultivation, animals are domesticated by the people for food and sacrifice, trade and payment of bride price. They are also means of barter in the tribal economy. Compensations are realized in terms of animals. Pigs, long-haired goats, mithuns and hens are

5. Ibid, p.110

reared.

The geographical remoteness of the area combined with its lack of communication and transport facilities and the low standard of living of the people in the pre-Independence days are responsible for the economic and commercial under-development of the district even though it is rich in forest minerals and other resources. In the absence of money as a medium of exchange, the whole system of trade and commerce was based mainly on barter or exchange of commodities according to the needs of individuals, families or villagers.

Trade with Burma:

Trade relation between the people of this district and those of Upper Burma had been in existence for centuries. Bhano⁶ a great trading centre of the Irrawaddy river,

6. Ibid, p.133.

attracted a large number of traders from this district, who carried their merchandise for exchange or sale through the passes across the Patkoi ranges which they used as trade routes.. In exchange of handloom products, tea leaves, salt, beads etc the people of this area imported from Burma daos, iron implements, fishing nets, spears, Burmese garments. One of the principal items of trade was opium. With the extension of administration in Tirap with the result of the clandestine movement across the border for trade has been stopped.

Trade with the plains of Assam:

From time immemorial, the people of Tirap led regular trade relations with the people of the plains of Assam. But no detailed account of the early trade is available. Some of the Ahom Buranjis refer to the people

by the present Tirap district trading with the Assamese.

As a matter of fact, Tirap was one of the important sources of salt for the people of Assam the Brahmaputra valley before it was regularly supplied by the merchant of the Company through Bengal. Moreover there are some references in the Buranjis to the supply of raw coal and crude kerosene oil to the people of the plains by the Wanchos which they dug out from the pits in the hills⁷.

In the past, the articles disposal and exchange were brought to the market in the plains of Assam. Now the tribal people sell their articles instead of bartering them for other commodities and buy their necessities from the plains markets.

7. Ibid, p.133.

The chart⁸ gives an account of the merchandise exchanged between the people of Assam and the Wanchos in the old days.

Name of the tribe	Articles produced and sold in the plains Market		
	Cottage Industry	Agriculture	Miscellaneous
Wanchos	bamboo mat, case and bamboo, wooden images, daos etc.	ginger, arum, shallies, sweetpotatoes,	forest products such as timber, bamboo, cane

The articles that the Wanchos generally purchase from the plain markets are: mill-made clothes, beads, tea leaves, tobacco, bidi, household utensils etc.

Before independence, the area was initially isolated and there was no trade centre but a chain of markets have

8. Ibid, p.138.

sprung up along the border. The Wanchos go to Berhat, Namrup and Sonari.

Inter-tribal trade among the local communities:

A regular trade was current among the tribes themselves within the district and with those of the neighbouring district of Lohit. The articles of trade consisted of the daily necessities like salt, opium, cattle, hand-woven clothes and articles brought from the plains of Assam.

Banking:

There is no indigenous banking system in the district. There was a custom among some of the people to bury the money in the house for security reasons. In order to stop this practice and in the interest of the local people, the Government have been encouraging the people to

make saving. A number of local post offices with saving account facilities have been opened. The SBI at Longding gives out loans to the people.

Handicrafts:

The tribal arts and crafts are unique in many ways and for their development there are craft centres with training and production wings. The Wancho communities are engaged in weaving. In the Wancho society, weaving is done by women belonging to the Royal families. Their women woven bags have a combination of deep red, yellow, black and green colours against a white background. "These zigzag designs," observes Dr. Elwin "are popular on the sashes used by the Konyaks and Wancho to carry their baskets and are common on the Wancho bags".⁹

9. V. Elwin, The Art of the North-East Frontier of India, p.40.

He further mentioned of a having bone design and diamond pattern on the Wancho bags.

Weight and Measure:

In recent times method of measurements have brought a change in the Wancho traditional system of measurement. Till recently and though rare cases even now they had the bartar system. The conical cane basket Kiase (cylindrical basket) and phackjack measured from the finger tips of the other hand also stretched out (spreading of hands and arms) were used as units of measurement. Four baskets full would be 1 than, 5 phack of a normal structured man would be as long as a house.

Metric System:

In order to implement the metric system of weights and measures introduced throughout the country

under the Standard of Weights and Measures Act, 1956, a government organisation of weights and measures has been functioning in Arunachal Pradesh since 1964¹⁰. This has simplified the business transactions.

Household Implements:

People make their household articles like pot of clay and used even for rituals. Bamboo pots to carry and store water. Mats made of bamboo strips, vessel of wood, furniture both of wood and cane, they make their own. Thanup (grain grinder) out of a long log of hard wood.

Weaving:

The Wancho word for weaving is Ngintsong. In the olden days, this art was restricted only to the ladies of royal family. Weaving was done on loom looms - bags blankets, sashes and loincloth were made of cheap cotton, sometimes silks. Now the Wancho ladies of all classes have started

10. Ibid., p.137.

weaving. Loin looms are still being used in the houses.

Government weaving centres have introduced the fly-shuttle looms. In the lower Wancho areas sericulture has also been started. Wancho woven goods are in great demand. Their bags with bearing bone and diamond horizontal stripe in orange, red, yellow, and green are beautiful.

Cane and bamboo work:

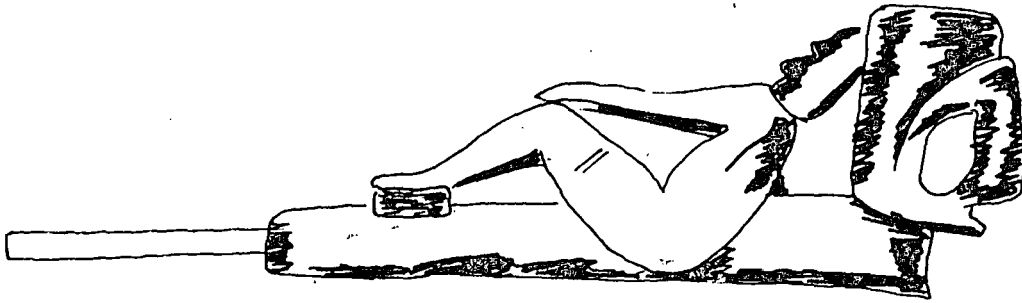
All the tribes adapted in cane and bamboo work. The Wanchos are likewise good craftsmen. Their bamboo mats are in great demand in the plains market. The necklaces made out of grass by the Wancho women depicts their finer craftsmanship. Their baskets made of lajai and radang bamboos are valuable.

Wood carving:

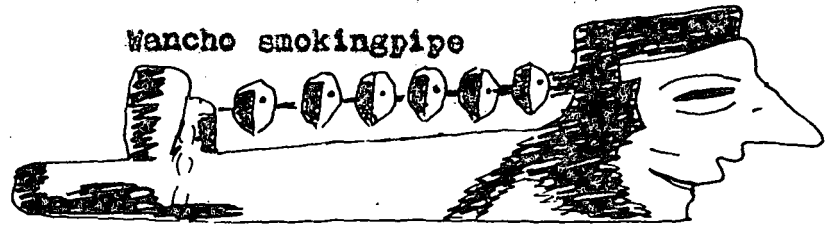
Some of the finest and best wood-carving in the entire area of Arunachal Pradesh are found among the

Wanchos of the Tirap district. The central motif in wood-carving is a human head. Dolls, plates, tobacco pipes, statuettes and forms such as frogs, tigers etc. Verier Elwin remarked that " Here the wood-carving in the past has been very largely associated with head-hunting and the human head dominates almost everything that is made. Thus there are tobacco pipes with the bowl carved in the shape of a head; drinking mugs with warriors carrying off heads in triumph; small wooden heads and little human figures, often done with astonishing realism and which again celebrate a successful raid."¹¹ The Wanchos are good at carving.

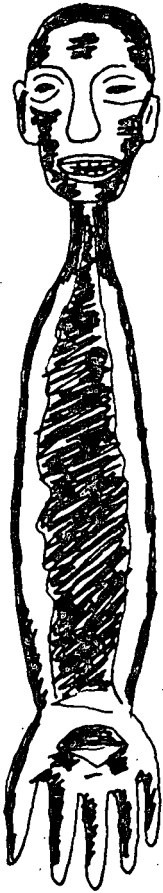
11. Verier Elwin, A Philosophy for NEFA, p.101.



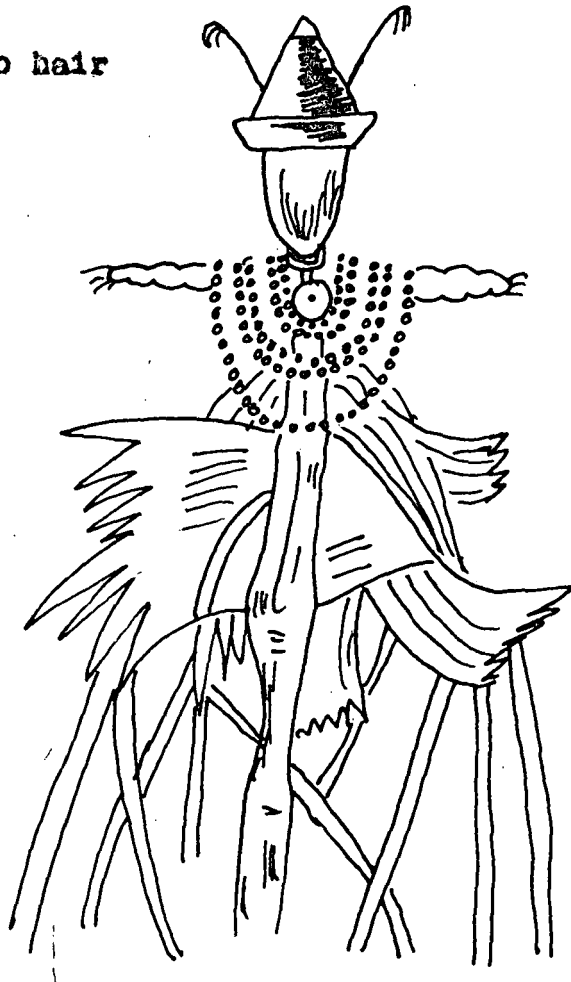
WANCHO SMOKING
Pipe



Wancho smokingpipe



Wancho hair
Ornament



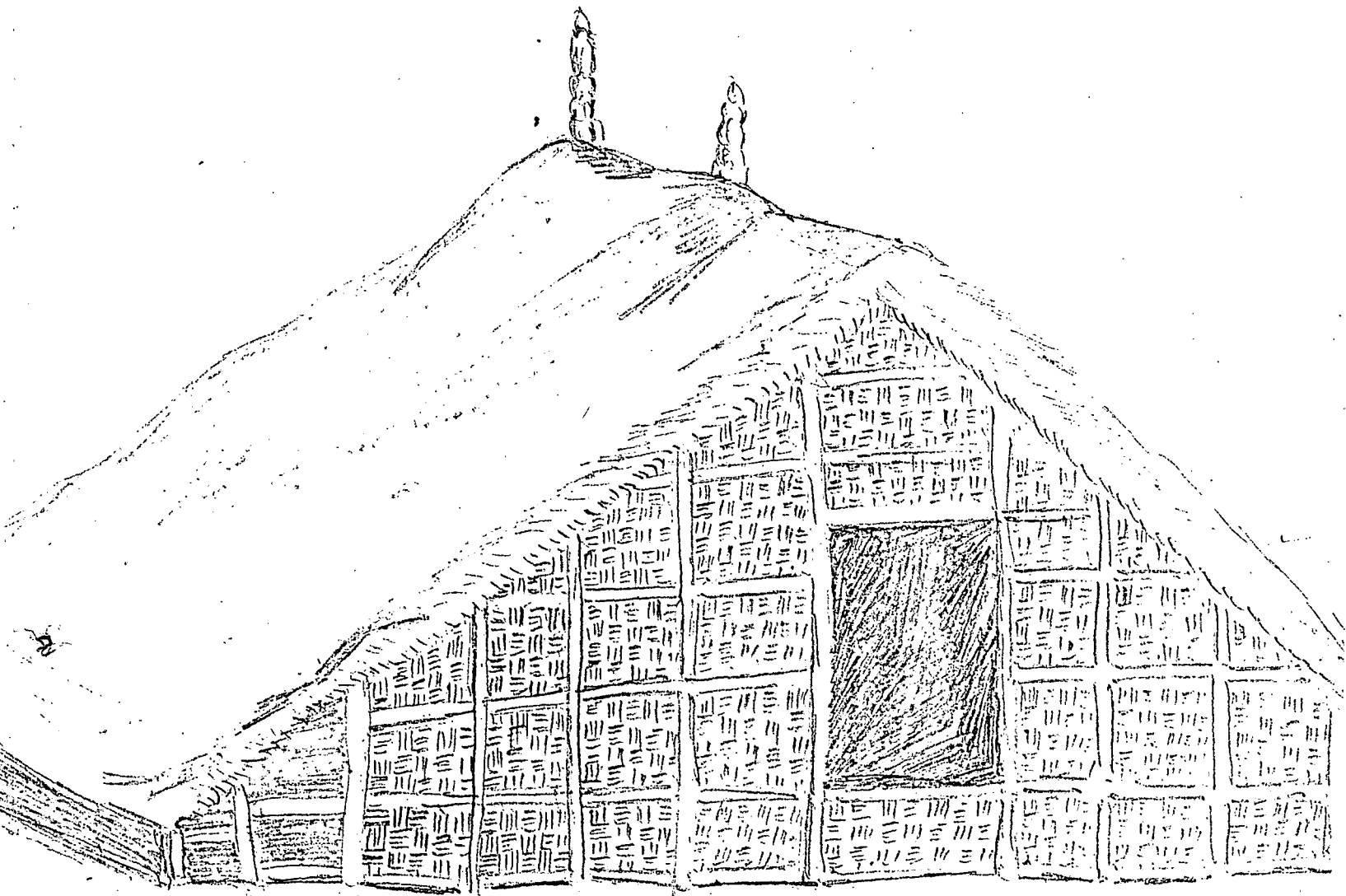
Grave effigy

Smithery:

The Wanchos earlier made their own barrel for muzzle loading guns to hunt and protect their field. Though the Government has ordered to stop of such gun manufacture clandestine cases can still be found.

Ornamentation:

The bulk of ornaments used is made up of beads brought from the plains. Their bead necklaces, silver, grass, cane and wood jewellery are worth admiring. To quote Verrier Elwin,¹² " the Wanchos are not fond of clothes, but make up for this by the use of splendid ornaments of ivory, bone, horn, shell and beads, while the more ephemeral grace of feathers and flowers distinguishes their ears and hair". " The designs and colour combination are superb. One Wancho fgirl received President's award for



A Wancho Hun (House)

master craftwoman this year for excellent bead works.

Besides bead works the Wanchos also make ornament from glass beads, wild seeds, cane, bamboo reed"¹³.

House site and houses:

The wancho villages are extremely well placed, occupying the highest points of the ridges on which they stand and commanding all the approaches to them. In the olden days bamboo and cane stockades were built. "The scenery was magnificent; a high darkly-wooded range behind Ninu descend abruptly for about 1,500 feet, when it suddenly changes its precipices for beautiful open undulation country, well watered by a succession of clear, babbling streams at the cool waters of which in the deep shade of clumps of trees, dotted along their banks, magnificent methna (mithun) quench their thirst; across

13. see Resarun, Vol. XI, 1985, p. 9.

the Dili, into which these streams all flow, rise other lofty hills wooded along the ridges, but cultivated below on the more gentle slopes, over which the cloud-shadows are lazily moving, and on which numerous village glitter brightly. To our left the high peaks of the Patkai range lose their outline in the hot and lazy atmosphere; it is a beautiful country and today basking in the still sunlight all is so calm and peaceful before us, it would seem almost impossible that treachery and murder could find a place here; but the black cloud already darkening the sky changing the blue of the air to a murky brown the roar of the flames and crashing of timbers behind us, and the thought of the scene of the massacre, which is still before us, remind us of the eternal truth that even the Earth's fairest spots the fiercest passions of man may make their home¹⁴.

14. Woodthrope, R.G., Tirap District Gazetteer, 1980.

The house site does not belong to the village commonland. Whenever a new village is established, plot of land are allotted to the individuals. The individual constructs his house on a suitable site within the limits of the land allotted to him by the community. The individual exercises full and heritable right of ownership over the land allotted to him. No ceremonies are observed either during the selection of site or at the time of construction of a house¹⁵.

The Wancho generally build their houses at the ground level, the eaves almost touching the ground on two sides. The rear portion of the house is however, raised on piles depending on the slant of hills. The framework is built of solid logs and beams. The front portion of the house is used as a common room. Behind

15. Ibid, p.76.

the common room there are compartment and cubicles on both sides or on one side of the house with a wide passage running all along the house. The number of such compartments depends on the number of the families. Each compartment has a hearth in the centre. In the rear there are rooms for the unmarried girls.

We can divided a house into three classes. They are:

(1) The Wangham (chief) house, (2) The Commoners house, and (3) Morungs and granaries. The Wangham's house is the longest and built on the most level site in the village. It is sometimes 200 feet long and 50 feet broad. Haimendorf has observed that the chief's possess better houses and rivher furnitures¹⁶. The chief's house

16. Acharyya, N.N., The History of Medieval Assam, p.241.

consists of two hugh halls at either end, both sides of the central corridoe are stone rooms or bedrooms. The bedroom of his wives have seperate hearths, their own door of exit and a verandah. Near the ehtrance stand the logdrum and some distant away stands the log grounder. The hall behind is used as reception, and conference centre. It is raised, has a dáamond design mat floor. There are bed rooms for the unmarried girls of the village in the chief's house. The pillars are carved and the grain grounder has only two holes.

The Wancho commoner's house is much smaller than the Chief's. The design is almost the same except for the floor. It has a cross design unlike the diamond design in the Chief's house.

The roof of the houses is thatched, the thong

(post) project through the roof. These protruding post are also covered with palm leaves so that no rain seeps into the house. This system of using extra long post is to enable the owner to use the same post in cases the bottom of the post gets rotten. The decayed portion can be cut off and the post lowered.

The Wancho house is generally having five thongs posts). This post are given different names:

1st pillar	-	HUMKHANG THONG
2nd pillar	-	THNOGNU
3rd pillar	-	WATAK THONG
4th pillar	-	REMRING THONG
5th pillar	-	REMRING KHUATHO THONG

The second pillar THONGNU is significant in every Wancho house. The Wancho bride on entering her husband's house for the first time has to circle around this pillar three times. The fourth pillar - REMRING THONG is

used for rituals and all rituals are performed near this pillar.

The Wancho hun (house have a chang (platform) along with some rooms on the ground level. The men stay on the chang portion and noi (female room) are on the ground floor level. The houses are pitch dark and its a wonder that the Wancho can see inside it. The hearth are a common feature. Salpira (stool) with short legs and tables are seen carved out of one piece of wood. Beds too are carved out of a single piece of wood. Changes are coming into the Wancho house. Modern furniture are to be seen.

Granaries:

These are large substantial buildings raised four feet from the ground and situated in the midst of

the village. Morungs are long structures with beds on either sides, it looks like a military barrack. The pillar of this building is usually carved. The raised verandah is sometimes at the rear of the house or from the side of the house. There is a hearth in the middle and contains a big log drum.

Generally houses are built by the local people on cooperative and reciprocal basis. The building materials are collected locally from the nearby forests by those who wants to construct a house and the labour is supplied freely by the villagers. The owner of the house feeds those who help. The unique feature of most Wancho house is the open bamboo platform, generally rectangular in shape, extends outwards from the main house on one side in the front. This serves the purpose of a courtyard as well as for drying of foodstuffs.¹⁷

17. Choudhury, S.D., Tirap district gazetteer, p.73.

Dress (Man):

Men shave the hair round the crown and temple and grow hair only the top of their heads. They then tie back this bunch of long hair at the back of the head with a comb called Khalet. They wear a cap called Khawcoup. Upper portion of their body is bare, and they wear a loin cloth Khialet,¹⁸ which is a piece of cloth of about 22 inches long and 6 inches deep. It overlaps the front and back and hangs down like a skirt down to the knees. They love to wear a lot of ornaments of ivory, bead and glass. Sometimes string of monkey skulls and metal pendants are also worn round their necks. The necklaces are called Jik. The men wear a cloured arm band. They have holes in their ears and often wear the strangest of earplugs, sometimes it is bamboo pieces, glass or plastic plug, broken bottle necks and safety pins. Only the Wangham

18. Ibid.p.78.

wear a strip of blue beads round his calf. Their dang or dao is inseparable, they carry it round everywhere. Most of these men have tattoo marks on their face, neck, arm chest and back. Their belt is called Zapak. Hats predict social structure status. A specially made fillet for their hair is used by the chiefs. Hairpins of cane and bone are also used. The warriors who has taken skulls wears are wooden hands carved out like hairpins. On the arms the Wancho men wears chaklit (armlet). The Wancho men carries a weapon. Besides, chang (dao), pah (spear) with small heads and decorated with goats hair is also popular.

Dress (Woman):

The girls run around bare till they are given a loin cloth. The woman wear a piece of cloth round her hips called the kihuthau which is about 28 inches long

and 6 inches wide. The upper portion of the body is left bare. The Chong Wangsa the chief Queen Wangchasia and Wangchasa wear countless numbers of necklaces while the Wanpah women do not wear much. The Royal ladies keep long hair which they tie with palm leaves (tockou) so that the hair is covered and remains stiff and straight.

The Wancho men and women are very fond of head-dresses and ornaments. Head-dresses of various designs made of cane strips decorated with beads and stones. An ordinary head-dress is called khupong and the costly one liklikhasan, which is decorated with beads, furs and tusks of wild boars.¹⁹

19. Ibid. p. 78.

CHAPTER - IV

Nature of State

Literary and ethnological sources indicate that the early wave of the Mongoloid migration entered India in the east before 1000 B.C. at about the same prehistoric time as the arrival of the Aryans in the west. As no material proof of these movements and ancient settlement of the people has been discovered, we can, at the present stage of our knowledge, do little more than faintly trace the courses of tribal migration that took place in comparatively latter times.¹

The Wancho are believed to have originated at two places Tangnu and Tsangnu both in Tuensang². When asked about how the village was formed the Wanchos come up with many theories. One such theory was narrated by a resident of Niauxa. It is not know how the villages

1. Choudhury, Datta S., Tirap district gazetteer, 1980, p.26.

2. Srivastav, L.R.N., Among the Wanchos, 1973, p.1.

actually formed. There was no chief or raja to rule the people who had assembled in the area after migrating from Nagaland. So from Tangnu a chief was called to rule over the people. The leader who was ruling these people before the Tangnu chief made an appearance was Kianupa. He was weak and could not control the people so he was overthrown and his place was taken by the outsider from Tangnu, who became the Wangham (chief).

One tradition is that the original place from where the Wancho started migrating is Nyannu Ofan, and they first came to a place called Tinao. From Tinao they went in two directions. One group went to Tangnu and the other to Tsangnu. From Tangnu and Tsangnu they came to their present habitat³. Before the Wancho came to their present habitat the land, they say, was occupied by a different people, who, the Wancho assert with pride,

3. Srivastava, L.R.N., Among the Wanchos, p.1.

were not as developed as they. The migrating Wancho drove most of the people living there. This however is doubted by doubted by some who believe that the area presently occupied by the Wancho was not inhabited by any people before them⁴. The two migrating branches of Tangjan from Tangnu and Tsangjan from Tsangnu continued to move towards the east and established themselves in the villages occupied by them at present, & at times occupying unclaimed lands, and at times onsting the original settlers. These two groups of Tangjan and Tsangjan further got themselves divided into several smaller Jans. Under Tangjan are Nijan, Kanjan, Kongjan, Choujan and Wakkajajan. Under Tsangjan are Niaujan, Ngojan, Zujan, Chopjan, Chejan and the independent village of Senua.

The geographical division of the Wanchos does not coincide with their social division. Some of the

4. Ibid, p.2.

jans under Tangjan and Tsangjan are both in Tuensang district of Nagaland and in Burma across the Patkoi. The Patkoi, the geographical and political boundary between India and Burma does not prevent the people on both sides from visiting each other and entering into marriage relations. Trade forms another bond between the two. The Wancho believe that the Konyaks from Mon in Nagaland are their counterpart who preferred to stay back in their original home in Tuensang. The word 'konyak' comes from the word 'kanya', meaning man. Clark an American missionary was the first to use this terminology. With the advent of the NEFA in 1957, the Tuensang Frontier Tract was amalgamated into Nagaland. Thus bringing a sharp distinction between them territorially.

The Wancho trace their lineage from the family of

four brothers first settled in Tangnu and Tsangnu of Nagaland. The four brothers were - Moipu, Hanglang, Tingpong and Takham and are believed to be the forefather of the Wancho. The eldest Moipu is said to have settled in Niannu his descendant are said to be the Lower Wancho - Niajen, Choujen. The descendants of the second brother Hanglong are the Jannu. Zajen and Chopjen are said to be the descendant of the third brother Tingpong. The fourth brother Takham is said to have gone back and remained in Nagaland. It is believed that the Wannu village was the centre of migration of all the different clans of the Wanchos..Among the five families Ralang, Arang, Pongla, Niyamik and Tanbo the chief was selected, from the Ralang family.

This Wangham (chief) was all in all. When a prince is born the villagers go out to hunt fish and celebrate

the occasion. The occasion when a person acquires the seat of a Chief is also celebrated. A feast is given to honour the new ruler. The chief's eldest son Taichongpa is given more importance, then the younger sons - Nawlisa and Naulipa who leave their father's house after they marry.

The Wangnauli (subordinate villages) pay tribute to the paramount villages. It is said that Borduria village⁶ pays slat tax to the Chanu village. The Wangham directs and also keep an eye over the welfare and wellbeing of the village community. Without the Wangham's sanction nothing can be done, be it cultivation of Haranis, construction of house, road, observing rituals, giving punishment to the guilty etc. The pansa or subject offer a share of meat or fish to the king if they had gone hunting or fishing. The new

6. It is a Nocte village.

queen usually select a few families in her husband's village as her own, a sap is then given to the families as a sign of honour and proof of the new relationship. After this, she can dine with the family and go to seek their help in times of troubles. The chief's lands are cultivated by his commener's wives - Wagnu. Some of the village youths stay with the king - they wait on him, bring him food, pur him zo (rice beer), light his opium pipe, these youth would even die for the king. These attendants are appointed by the cillage and mostly hereditary. The Wancho are proud of their warrior ancestry and in the olden days, their war-tactics had won them many victories. They were accustomed to guerill type of warfare. They were expert in ambush. They did not go in for open confrontation with the enemy. Nawmei (braces) helped the king to fight wars.

Most of the weapons were stored in the King's homes.

Village Organization:

Villages are divided into units. Most villages have different names for the village units which generally amounts to two or three units. The Upper Wancho call these units as CHINGKHAW and CHINGKHE. In the Lower Wancho the units are called TINGNU and TINGSA. While in the next and independent Senne village there are three divisions - TINGNU, ZONGFONGZONGHAM, and TINGSA.

The word thom is given to a group of villages. Each village has two or more smaller units Jhomg consisting of a number of houses each under a Junior Controlling leader - Wangsa. In the Wancho village 20-40 houses form an unit called Tingzong. Each of these units have a Pah (boy's dormitory). The Pah plays an important

plays an important role in the society. A village may have 2-6 or more pah depending upon the size and population of the village. A royal family or a person of high rank is usually the owner of a pah. The ownership is hereditary. The owner is responsible for building, maintaining and managing the affairs of the pah. In return the members of the pah known as pahsem help him in the fields or do other odd jobs. The pah is a dormitory for unmarried boys. Soon after attaining puberty the boys are taken into the pah. They continue to sleep in the pah till they marry. Every evening after dinner the boys groupe out of their houses, taking with them their daos, tobacco pouch, betel nut store and things they would need for the night in the pah. They return to their house the next morning.

The pah is like a club house where the teenagers cut, joke, sing, play, sometimes make cane furniture out of wood or bamboo, make bead ornaments and relax on the whole. The pah is a recreation centre. The youth have great fun, singing lailungs (folk song). This kind of singing involves two groups - each tries to outdo the other in singing. It is a sportive competition. A common sight in each pah is a long drum Khum. It is used as an alarm. The beating of the drum can be heard far over the hills. In the olden days pahs acted as guard houses and centres for discussion ~~on~~ strategy. It is believed that the word pah comes from the word apah (meaning to listen). Pahs are built near the gates of the village to act as guard room.

Councils:

In each Wancho village there exist a well organized body for the administration of justice. It is the council of elders, the Wangchu-Wangcha of which the Wangham (chief) is the head. As assisted by a number of members with different function, this self-regulating socio-political organization has been in existence since ancient times. It is not merely a traditional judicial body but it has a direct influence on the socio-cultural and socio-economic life of the community. The members and their designations vary from village to village. At Purnao, for example, the council consists of Wangham, ngopa(priest), wangcham and the senior members of the village representing each clan. The Wangcho and the Wangcha are also called Khonsai and act as ministers. The Chief before giving a decision on any ~~matter~~ matter, consults the two khonsais.

The wangcham acts as messenger to the Chief and the council. He informs the village about the meeting and calls the members to attend it. The village council of the Niaujan group, consisting of Niannu, Niausa, Mintong, Longphong and the Zedua villages are similar to that of the Pumao council, but here the executive body consists of only the wangcham (chairman), wanchapa, wangchampa and the Wangchupa. At Wakka, the council has a large number of members: the tang-ngam (chief), da-pa, gangsapa (junior chief).

In case of dispute within the village, the decision of the council is accepted and regarded by all, but in inter village disputes, when the decision is not accepted, a dispute led to serious and even head-hunting in the old days. The council generally meets at the chief's morung, where all the members are invited.

Function of the council:

In the old days, the main function of the council was to decide and plan about warfare, and to settle cases and disputes within the village. But nowadays, besides dealing with minor cases and disputes, the council takes up all kinds of development work, such as the construction of the road, cleaning the village paths etc. "A good of such council can be found in Chanu village, where it is more a development work and each member is responsible for the different activities. At the same time the council settles the disputes and rites cases".⁷

The Chief respect the decision of the Council members. If the chief is a young man the elders of the village address him as Wangpa meaning sone

7. Verier Elwin, Democracy in NEFA, p.170.

All the councils works within the frameworks of the Assam Frontier (Administration of Justice) Regulation of 1945 which recognises their importance and authority and confers on them considerably powers. This is in recognition of the fact that 'modern democratic government can have a solid foundation only in the village democracy'⁸.

Punishment:

The Wangham's word is law. Dispute within the visit generally arise out of theft, seduction of girls, adultery, etc.. But inter-village disputes arise mainly on account of encroachment of land by the members of one village over another's village. There are disputes over the rights on water. Hunting and fishing in another territory may also cause enmity. In the olden days Wanchos law were strictly enforced, corporal punishment was common.

8. Choudhury, Datta, S., Tirap district gazetteer, p.183.

Seduction of the Chief's wife is a serious offence earlier it led to death sentence to the culprit. Exile from the village is also considered to be a serious punishment. A theft of agricultural crop is compensated by payment of a fine of one pig to the village councillors.

In the old days, it is said that if a thief stole such articles from the house of a chief, he was sold to another village for one elephant tusk and a gang. Adultery with a betrothed girl is also compensated by payment of fines. Generally seizing of their ivory ornaments, harams(cultivable land), animals and banishment were common form of punishment.

The Panchayat Raj Regulation was introduced in what was then known as NEFA of which Wancho region was a part. It did not come in conflict with the traditional

village councils which has been in existence since time immemorial.

The NEFA Panchayat Raj Regulation 1967 (No,3)

provides a three tier structure of self-governing bodies -

1. Anchal Samiti 2. Zilla Parishad 3. The Agency council-

In the NEFA (Admin) Supplementary Regulation 1971 a

Pradesh council was constituted in the place of Agency

council. The 37th Amendment Act of the Constitution 1975

provides for a legislative assembly in the Union territory

of Arunachal Pradesh and at that time Pradesh council will

cease to exist. The 1971 Regulation defines a Gram Panchayat

as 'a body of persons elected according to the Tribal

customary methods by the residents of any village or agency

of villages. The Gaonbura and Katakis have made adminis-

tration of development plans easy for the officers. The

Gram Panchayat at the village level, Anchal Samiti at the block level and Zilla Parishad at the district level have been working effectively and were readily accepted by the people since an infra structure of such an institution had already existed in the villages.

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CHAPTER - V

Social Organization:

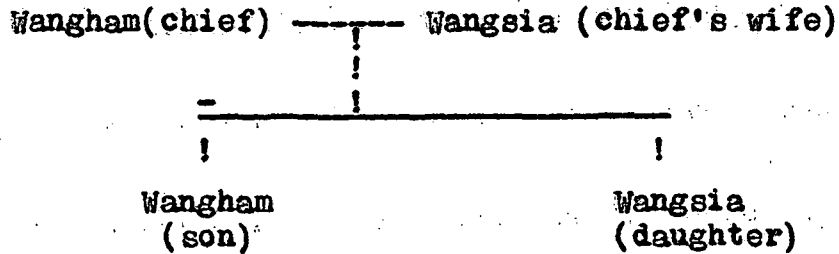
The Wancho society can be broadly divided into two main divisions: 1. Wangjen and 2. Pangjen. The Wangjen comprises of chiefs, the royalty and the Pangjen are the commoners. The word 'jen' means clan or family unit. The Wangjen and the Pangjen are believed to have come from different patriarchal lines, some prominent names of the Pangjen are - Azangham, Chema, Jamikhan, Panglaham, Tikham and Zuaham.

The Wancho society is characterized by the existence of class distinction, a system uncommon amongst the Noctes. The Wanchos have four classes, each class is formed on the basis of marriage relations and each one of them received social recognition according to their

gradation and status in the social hierarchy. The highest of these four classes are the Wanghama (chiefs) and the lowest are the Wangpens (commoners) . The Wangshas and Wangsus are two intermediary classes who have sprung from inter-class marriage. The Wangshas are the descendants of Wangham fathers and Wangpen mothers; whereas the Wangsus are said to have descended from marriages between Wangpen men and Wangham women. Determination of the class and status a person belongs to, follows from his birth¹. The Wanghams, the Wangshas and the Wangsus practically control the society and the Wangpen merely obey and abide by their decision. This fact has certain implication regulating social behaviour and social relations.

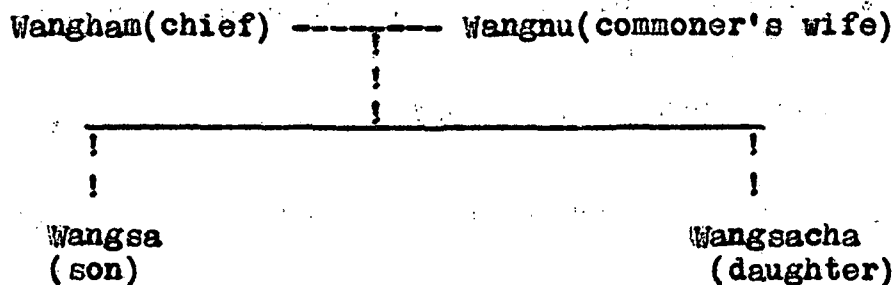
1. Choudhury, J.N., Arunachal Panorama, p.238.

The sequence of descending lineage of the people belonging to the chieftain class is as follows:



But a chief may have other children born of wives taken from the lower classes of Wangshe, Wangsu and Wangpan.

This commoner wife will be termed as Wangnu



The Wancho word Sa means children, son or daughter and Su meaning grandchild.

The Wangsha and the Wangsu, though lower in status than the Wangham, still have some royal blood in them, and

consequently are entitled to hold certain position in society.

They might be appointed to look after the Pahnu (chief's morung). "Social distinction in the ordinary course of life does not become obvious but it is recognizable during some social function where the whole community participate. For example, in social festivals, the Wangpens who are at the bottom of the society are not allowed to take meal sitting in the same row with the Wanghams. A Wangpan under no circumstance can aspire to marry a girl who is ~~above~~ above him in social status. We cannot say how far this division of classes resembles the caste system of the Hindus, but perhaps, we notice something like a nascent state of caste distinction"².

2. Ibid, p.239.

Marriage:

The Wancho (gamy) or marriage is arranged. Girls are betrothed to boys at the same time of birth or infancy.

However, these marriages are clan endogamous. People of villages either subordinate or paramount to each other do not marry from each other's villages. It would be considered incest for the people of the subordinate villages are the descendants or emigrants of the paramount villages.

All these villagers are said to be their own blood. Girls are married from rival villages. After the negotiation and the acceptance of the proposal, it is obvious that the two families become closer, this is termed as the chongning.

Many a time the children on growing up break the engagement.

Love marriages are popular too. The exchanging of Salipan between the couple is a sign of a marriage proposal. While



A Wancho bride

the Wangham marry several times maintain a harem the Wangpan (commoner) as a whole stick to one wife. The Wangham reserve girls from the Panjan clan who play the role of subordinate wices,- another extra hand in the field and house. This was the main reason for the Wancho practising polygamy marriage. The offspring of the Wangham father and the Wangpen mother is the Wangsa who has no right to inherit the royal property. Compulsory marriage with a childless brother's widow is carried out by either the elder or younger brother of the deceased under moral obligation. Often the widow children but that does not deter the marriage. Sometimes an elder brother dies leaving his fiancée in an advanced stage of pregnancy she becomes the responsibility of the younger brother. If a brother is already married and is not willing to be encumbered by some children and wife another

widower or any other eager suitor marries the widow or pregnant fiancée. A Wangham widow will have to marry a Wangham only. There is a taboo against Wangham widow marrying Wangpan men. In the case of sororate marriage, it is not always obligatory. Sometimes the younger sister marries her deceased elder sister's husband when there are younger neices and nephews. If the deceased elder sister was engaged to a man the younger sister is married off to her sister's fiancé to respect the negotiation and word of honour,. Though this kind of marriage is not compulsory.

Widows and widowers are allowed to remarry. On non-availability of a close relative, a widow may marry into another family. Her new husband settles with her if she has male issue who is an heir to his deceased father's property. No rituals are performed for this type of marriage.

Negotiation for this type of marriage are carried out after the purgatory rites of the dead mate have been performed. The Wancho believes that a woman cannot survive without her male counterpart so no matter how old and senile the widow or widower is remarriage is approved.

A Wancho selection of mate through divinity is done by a priest (Wangchupah) - who breaks three eggs and pour them seperately on three leaves. He observes these eggs and if he finds them good, negotiation is started if not it is cancelled.

Marriage are negotiated in the Wancho society. The opah predicts whether the match is suitable. The bethrotal ceremony is called toimonmonk or hawale. The bride is taken for the ceremonial visit to her future husband's house accompanied by the mother-in-aid and a few friends.

She carries with her two bundles of rice with her - Wangthaw (white rice) and Wangnaugh (black rice) in a basket - Khang.

She continues to live with her own parents. The marriage is final when she conceives. One of her thigh is tattooed. In the sixth month of pregnancy, the marriage is declared, and complete. A feast is arranged Pangtuk or Noktuk. She is again tattooed khahuta on the breast. Marriage rituals differ from clan to clan and between Lower and Upper Wanchos. The Opah predicts the unborn's future in the early months by tearing leave - Nongchak and burning dry bamboo leaves. During her pregnant stage, any religious rituals if performed will be in the groom's house. In some clans the bride delivers in her mother's house. She goes home to her parent before the baby arrives accompanied with her mother-in-law. This is called cahmp chat. The

The bag of rice are still carried to and fro. While in some clans the bride conceives in her mother's house and the labour pains will herald her preparation to leave for her husband's house. The bride's parent arrange meat, fish, rice and go to their son-in-law's house to feast.

Royal marriages are said to be different; The Wangham sends some village elders with a proposal to a ritual village asking for the hand of a Princess for his son. Before this is done the Opan on the basis of what he has read in the eggs predict - Oti. This egg will be shown to the Princess when she come to visit her in-laws house.

The bride and groom do not usually see each other. The Gaipah is the priest who performs the marriages. The groom's and bride's friends accompanied by their mother-in-law aide and village elders meet at a place - Pangkham or boundary. Here a platform is made, food, meat, fish, rice, zu, are collected in this platform from both parties. The

young couple still do not see each other, their friends sing, dance, make merry, and recites lores before finally feasting. After the feast the marriage party and bride is escorted back to her father's house. The bride's father sacrifices a dog on his doorstep and sing a song of his past bravery before the bride and groom enter the house over the dead dog. That night a bridal chamber is arranged for the new couple to see each other for the first time.

Next day a feast is again given, the friends of the bride and groom tour the village. At cross roads shots are fired may be to chase away the evil spirits. Sometimes feasting goes on for 3-4 days.

The Brides Dowry:

The Wangsu - Wangsa keep an account of the dowry which consist of mithun, rice, salpiras . The groom's friends are

given loin clothes and dao, the opah is given a spear - pah. The dao symbolises good friendship for with it the jungles can be cleared between the two villages so that they may visit each other. The bride's party is also given white Nithan and red 'nina' cloth, dao chang and loin clothes, and spear for the opah. A cooked meal is given to the groom's party when he takes home his bride so that they do not go hungry till they reach the boundary - Pongkham. After they cross this boundary, the groom's party takes the responsibility of meals. The bride is accompanied by her mother or mother-in-aid. She carries with her the two bundles of white and black rice as she makes her trip to and fro between her husband's and father's house. The period when she stays in her father's house is called khaithotuk. Pregnancy legalises the marriage. In her husband's village the new queen chooses some families

as her own so that they can help her in times of trouble.

Love marriages are not uncommon. The bride and groom choose

each other Nongche - Nongchen and marry after their parents

give the approval. Rituals like the one stated above are

not carried out in case of widow or widower remarrys.

Divorce:

Divorced is not easy, but it is granted on payment of fines. The Wangsu-Wangsa (the village council) take an account of the dowry that the woman had brought as bride price. All gifts that had been exchanged are returned and the divorce is complete.

Festivals:

The Wanchos have a number of agricultural, social and religious festivals. The names of the festivals vary from village to village and also among the different groups of

the Wancho. The number of festivals also vary. For example, sixteen different festivals are celebrated in a year at Wakka, whereas in Pumao area, only six festivals are observed. Similarly Ninnu village observes fourteen, Longkai twelve and Pongchau seven festivals. One of the most important festivals observed all over the Wancho area is Ojiyele. This festival continues with great enthusiasm for six to twelve days during March-April every year just after sowing of jhum paddy. Pigs, buffaloes and mithuns are sacrificed and feasts are arranged in each and every morungs (dormitories). Songs and dances by boys and girls in ceremonial costumes make it joyous and colorful. The people put on clothes specially on this occasion, as the festival also signifies donning of new garments. Farm houses are constructed for new harvest. Ojiyele takes a festive look at Pumao where dances are held around a long ceremonial pole called jangbam planted for this occasion.

Rituals performed in the Granary:

During the harvest an animal be it pig, hen or dog is killed, its blood is smeared on the granary post and doorway. The Chejampah (family priest) performs this rituals.

Festivals celebrated in the Longding area:

In all there are eight important besides other festival that the Wancho celebrate. In this eight, is included the harvest as well as the loin cloth ceremonies.

1. Kangai: Kangaim is celebrated in the month of August. It is the loin cloth ceremony for boys. The celebration lasts for four days.

2. Thawan: It is celebrated in March. This is the girl's loin cloth ceremony. They go to the fields and have a party that last for three days. Boys do not attend this party but on the girls return they exchange presents.

3. Hadujing: It is celebrated in the month of May on the occasion of millet harvest.

4. Tagpoi: This is celebrated in the field in the month of February. Sheds are built in the fields, the big shed is given to the Wangham and commoners stay in smaller sheds.

5. Bannui: This is celebrated for six days in the month of March. The people make a chang or platform and make a Zangbang (figures) of Wangham, his queen and his son. The queen dances with the Pausa youth. Pausa meaning subject. For three continuous days tales of the past and present are narrated, for two days dances are performed and the best day a big grand feast is held.

6. Ordernu: In February, the people go to the fields with the priest Napah or Opah to pray to the God of Earth Baurang and invoke blessings and divine powers for a better and

properous harvest.

7. Dungtham: This is celebrated in February by the children.

They go to the Sheta river. A platform is made to catch fish. They swim, play, laugh and tease. This ceremony is for the welfare of the children.

8. Laujen or Oriah: The Upper Wancho term for it is Laujan,

the lower call it as the Oriah festival. It is celebrated to welcome the new year and implore the Gods for a better and prosperous year. The Jangwan is an important part of the Oriah festival. The sky God Ganger Zoban Rang, Lainu Moon god, Gamgtan Sun God, lansa - stars and Baurang, the soil God is prayed to for blessing and prosperity.

The Oriah festival consists of the Rangwanthai and the Oriah Nilauk. The first consist of erecting a bamboo post and the second is hoisting of Oriah flag. After that follows the serving of endless glasses of rice beer - zo or Ju.

To drink Zu is known as Juling. After the drinks the feast - Naktoh starts. This festival lasts for three days, Ashoi neih, Bohnu neih and Bohsa neigh. On the last day the traditional bamboo post is carried away - Rangwan Paw. All Wancho are very attached to this festival and wait it to come again.

Besides the annual Oriah festival harvest festival called Lauden festival in August is celebrated. In the last week of March, Pungram is celebrated to announce the cultivation of millet. In some villages, festival is known as Chachiyanyak - shasi meaning rice and anyak meaning invitation is celebrated to benefit prosperity by invoking deities like Rang for fertility and Baurang to protect and not to destroy the crops.

After the new harvest, a festival called Pactakle is celebrated in which the skulls of the dead are taken out and offered with rice-beer Zu and food. In some villages

the annual, religious ceremony called the Sangaam,

Pagen and Gakgam are performed. The priest Gipa kills a big cock and sprinkles its blood over the accumulated weapons. The sacrificed cock is then taken to the field.

The priest utters prayers to the Supreme Power to shower blessings so that they may have good crops, good fishing and hunting expeditions, good health and peace.

This ceremony is also performed when a new chief is appointed. Besides games community fishing, hunting, swimming, the Wancho love singing and dancing. Their folk songs is known as Lailung and their dance as Shon.

Lailung means tying a bundle, lai means leaves, bung means rope made out of bamboo strips. For rituals leaves and this type of rope is used nothing can replace it.

Likewise to Lailung. Lailung are more common among the Sangjeh. Nowadays, lailung is taken as common folk songs.

In the olden days, Wangpahs did not sing lailungs along with their Wangham. Youngster did not sing them in front of their elders. These were sung in the morung, among fields and to one's sweetheart. Lailungs cannot be sung alone - two teams are needed. The lailung are usually about love, romance, tales about bravery, legend etc. Competition in lailung singing is often held. The exercise helps to extend and sharpen one's wit and intelligence and brings about a spirit of competition and sportmanship. One team usually loses but all in good spirit.

Maibon is also a form of folk song. It is mainly sung by the Tangjen. The differences between Maibon and lailung are in the tones and in the contents. Lailung has comparison and similies.

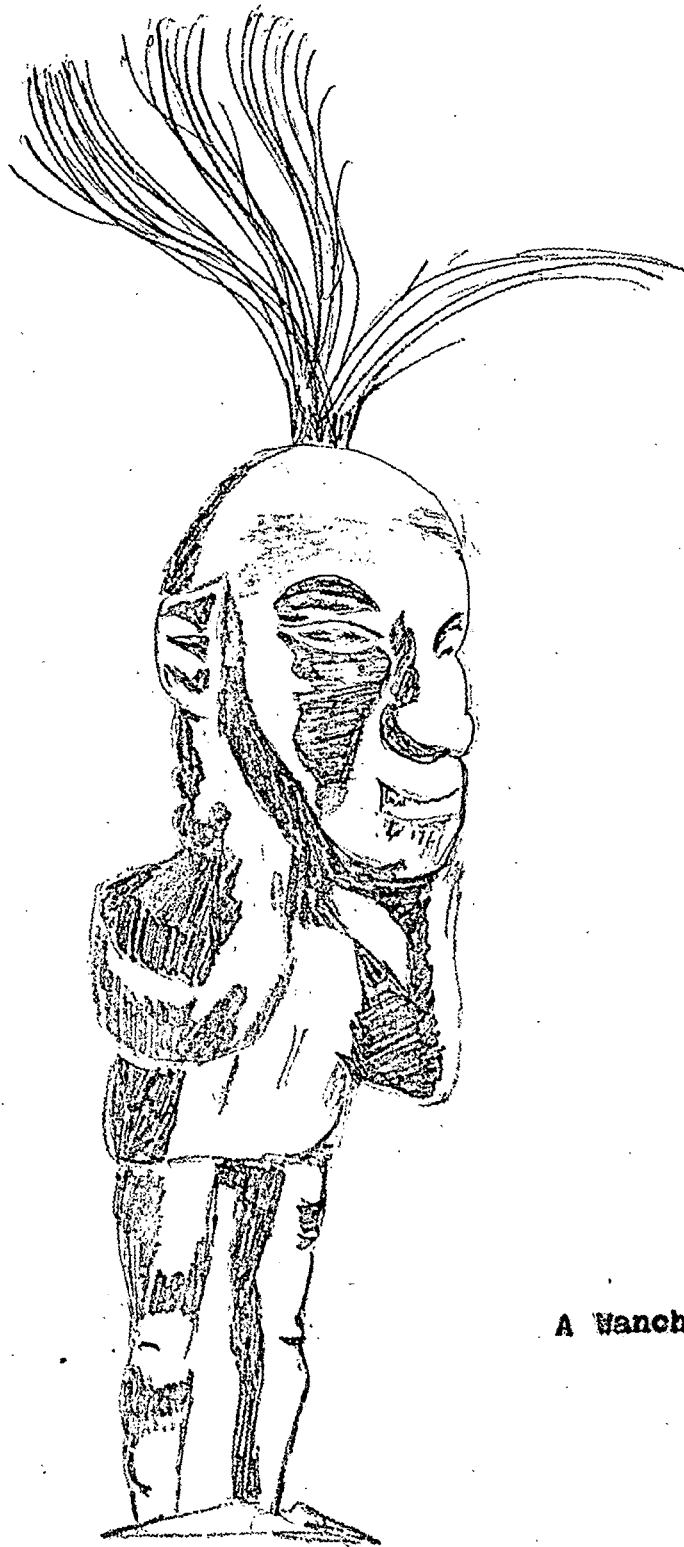
Songs:

Wancho songs can be heard echoing through the night sometimes even during the day. When one Wancho hears the strains of a song over the hills he sings too, to support and show his understanding for the feeling of the unseen singer. At a time many voices join the singing. This is form of communication and expression. Songs are sung everywhere during marriage, at home, in the jungle, fields and at any time of the day. They say when one sing he forgets his fatigue and boredom. They sing both when happy and sad. They believe in singing helps one to cultivate good thought. Meaning of a Wancho song that is sung in the jungle while chopping wood:

"We all gather to sing,
It will be fun if we sing together,
Do you think of me when you go to the field?
Do you think of me all the time on the roads
and while working?"

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A Wancho singing

Where will you be going today?
only by thinking of me can my
Jamsa (beloved) end her day.
In the daytime I think of my parents.
At night I think of you my Jamsa
When I am hungry I remember my Mother
At leisure and while drinkings zu
I think of you.
My day and night becomes an ordeal
When I do not think of you and see you,
My mind is restless".

plea to his ex-girl friend:

"I will go look for a new mate,
The old wife has gone ugly and ill tempered
My old girl has a new friend.
So I will go look for a new mate,
Please let me go look for a new mate.

Wancho songs are full of romance, the themes are of love
gained or lost, battles, heroes, legends etc. The lailung
are full of imaginary. They are simple but full of
comparative similes.

Songs sung in the field:

Words: Wake orgon chidku huling
Meanings: Jungle cut and the sun dries it.
W : Chape longsam hanew lung
M : A feeling of wellbeing like as if staying in
the palace of Sukafa the Ahom King.
W : Mai pung jibnu chi oybi opu chopon ma ha
dei manjonbi jha sa phontu tabi new indei.
M : Comparing of girls with flower. If he sees
a girl he wants to know her. If he sees
a flower he wants to put it in his ear.

Parables :

These stories reflect the Wancho view on animals and nature.

(a) Pig and the dog:

Long, long ago the pig and the dog were given equal importance and were good friends - aming meaning animal friendship. These two the pig and the dog were owned by a man. Their master sent the two of them to work in his heaven. Everyday early in the morning the two would leave the house at their master's orders and head for the Harem. The pig was a sincere and hard worker. The dog was lazy and slept there throughout the day. One day the pig felt he should tell his master the truth. The tired pig went up to his master one evening and complained that it is always he who

ending (to end) (to stop)

works. He said, "My owing (friend) slept the whole day while I was busy. Did you not ask both of us to share the work?". The master asked the dog in a stern voice, "Is what your aming the pig saying the truth?". The cunning dog immediately denied the facts and told his master that he always works very hard. The master believed the dog, the pig now to prove that he is in deed a hard worker started working harder. He never took any rest even at midday. While his friend the dog slept under the shed. Every evening, before the tired pig would reach home the dog was already by his Master s side. The man sternly asked the pig, "Whesse were you?". The dog replied, "He was sleeping". Before the pig could say anything and prove to his master that he had been working in his master's harem, the man took a stick and began beating

the poor pig. The dog became the favourite of his master, while the poor pig took shelter under the house, the dog stayed in the house with his master. From that day onwards the pig was denied inside and remained outside the house, he was not considered an equal to the dog. The door step was raised so that the pig could not enter. Hence the pig and the dog were never friends, even now the pig is said to have cursed the dog and now its the dog who has to work while the pig remain at home.

(b) Frog and the crab:

It is said that long ago the crab had long elegant legs and the frog could stand upright. The frog and the crab were close friends. They lived together and shared a harem. Alternately if one stayed at home to do the house work, the other went to work in the harem.

At midday, they would both have lunch in the field and talk. One afternoon the frog was waiting for the crab to bring him lunch of roasted kachu. The frog waited and waited the sun was about to set but still his friend the crab did not come. He began to get worried and left the field in a hurry. When he reached home he saw the crab rolling helplessly near the hearth, the poor crab while resting the kachu caught fire and his elegant legs got burnt. Seeing the condition of his friend he laughed so hard that his backbone broke. Since then crab crawls and the frog hopped.

(c) Crow and the monkey:

The crow and the monkey were neighbours and good friends. They helped each other in the fields. First they worked in the crow's field and then the monkey's field. The monkey was growing millet and other grains, crow was growing stick rice (baragrains). After the harvest the

crow invited the monkey to have a share of cooked sticky rice. The poor monkey not having tasted this kind of rice before took up his dish eagerly. But to his disappointment he could not relish the cooked rice. It stuck to his paws, the whiskers and all over his face. The crow was eating his share with great enjoyment. The next day the monkey invited the crow for food. The crow was happy to accept and whole day he kept contemplating about the food at the monkey's house. He reached his friend's house and monkey served him watery gruel made out of millet. The crow did not know how to eat. The monkey smiled, the crow put his head down for he realised the monkey was as smart as himself. It was a case of tit for tat.

(d) How the dog lost his horns:

The dog of long ago had horns. He was very

proud of his long and pointed pair of horns. One day the dog wanted to gaze out on the valley to see if any of his friends were near about. He did not want to bump his horns against the boughs of the trees. So he took them off his head. He placed the horn of the ground under the tree and climbed up. While he was on top of the tree a goat came up the hill saw the pair of horns, placed them on his own head and strolled away. The dog was surprised to see his horns gone. He looked everywhere and then he saw the goat wearing his horns. The dog chased after the goat. The goat fled and refused to return the horns. The poor dog lost his horns, even now when he sees a goat he barks and chases, but the goat will never give him his horns back. That is why goat and the dog are bitter enemies.

Religion:

The Wancho do not worship any idols. They believe that there is a supreme power or divinity which they refer to as Zang. Rang on personify as Zaunpa. Like the Hindus the Wancho people offer sacrifices of food articles, animals, objects to the Zaunpa. They do not however, have a specific place for worship.

Though there is no picture of their God -.

Zaunpa, the Wanchos described him as magnificent. His head is adorned with the sun and the moon, his khietet (loin cloth) is the rainbow. Zaunpa is linked with every aspect of Wancho life. The Wancho believe in countless religion rituals. For this they have a number of priests to pray as well as perform the rituals, be it birth, death, marriage, harvest festival. For nearly every

* based on the author's fieldwork.

occasion a specific priest is around.

The Wancho opah, zampeh, chajampah, gammu etc have a great influence of the people. Besides, these priests and rituals they have a concept of the same human being considered to be pure in body and soul have immense power. These beings are called Aje. He has powers to see the future, to heal sickness, to change bad for good and bless. Aje is said to have an abnormal behaviour. Some strange shining black pebbles are found with the Aje. The Aje do not know from where these pebbles come into their possessions. Sometimes one, two, and even three pebbles get her in one year. These pebbles are kept in water pots in a sacred place. If these pebbles get lost the Aje loses his power. The Aje has to live a strict and holy life - sins will make his pebbles disappear. It is said that if these pebbles disappear disaster will strike. Although

they live normal lives, marry, rear children and even work to earn their own living they have to pray regularly, eat prescribed and restricted diets.

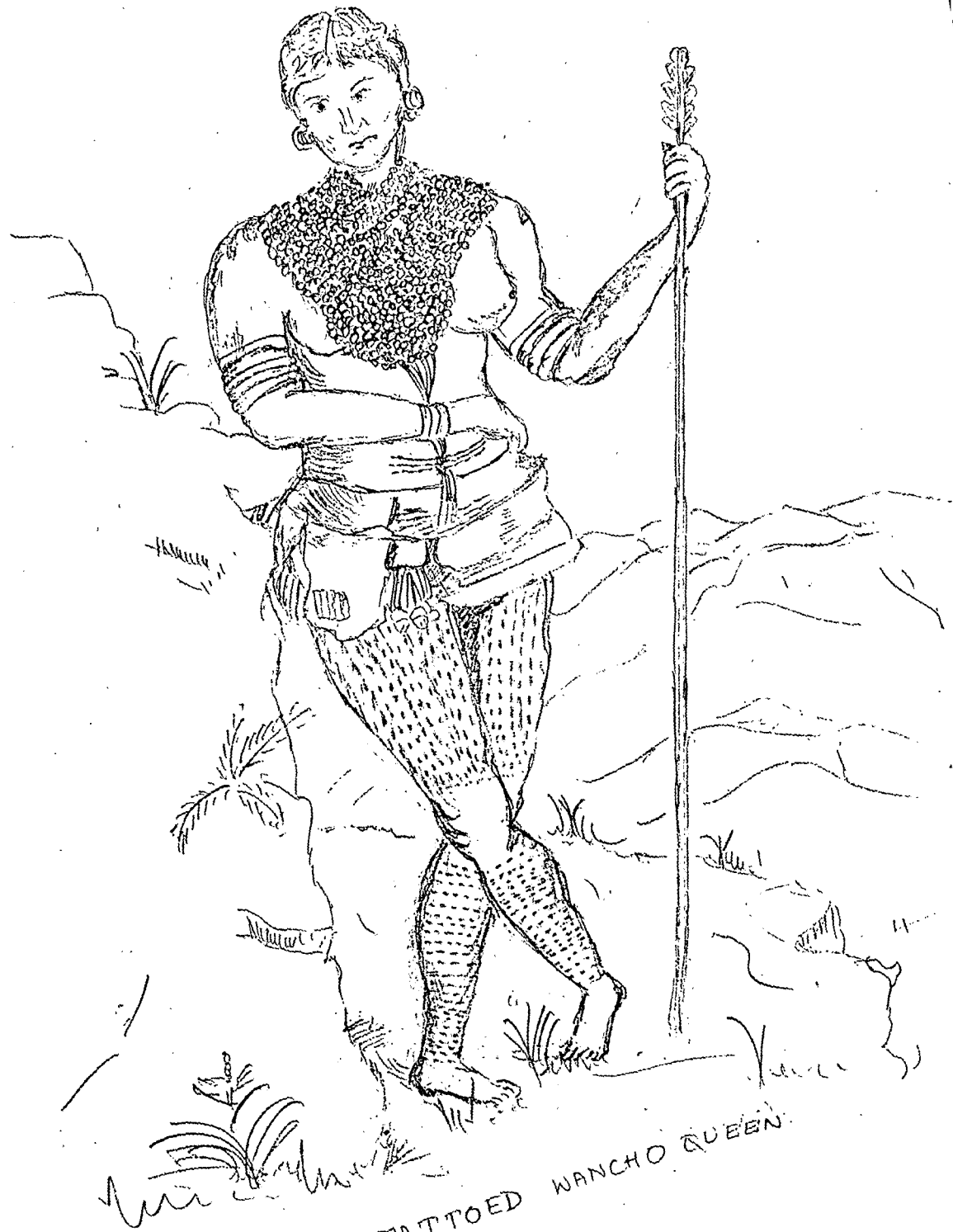
The life of Aje goes on, the old Aje's power are transferred to a new Aje. The old Aje can predict the future. Aje - from where and how the new Aje will emerge 'falling of a star'. It is believed that God drops a star and when it falls on a house, a member of that house is chosen and granted supreme power to become an Aje. Aje does not harm or practise black magic; he believes in non-violence. Their power is so great that on seeing a person's belongings the Aje can predict and talk of the person who is nowhere in sight and whom Aje has never seen.

It is found that strange creatures enter the house before an Aje emerges in that house - snakes, monkeys,

wild cats appear. Animals and snakes that enter the house are not chased away. They are taken as a sign, symbol or as messenger of God.

Practise and Significance of tattoo (HUTU)

Tattoo is an art and the Wanchos are skilled in it. Tattoo marks are made with a dao or any other kind of sharp pointed instruments and pointed bamboo tings. After perforations and lines are made the spot is rubbed with a paste of rice flour mixed with the blue or black juice of some jungle berries. The tattoo mark on the face is called ak or tunho, that on the neck as dinghu, on the chest as khannu and on the back as tackhnu. A man is allowed to tattoo his face after he takes a skull. Tattoos are a sign of heroes, fearless and courageous warriors. Tattoo was an award of bravery. It was a mark of high birth. No Wancham would marry a girl without any



A TATTOED WANCHO QUEEN.

tattoo marks so, no matter how painful the girls went through it, after puberty and after marriage. Many a times a bride would scream and screech while her friends had a gala time with the boys from the bridegroom's party and the marriage feast.

The tattoo on the man's face consist of four lines that travels from the forehead round the eyes, up the nose, cheeks mouth and chin. Spots outline these lines. Designs are drawn on the nose, wrist, shoulders, arms, neck, chest and back sometimes. In this respect clan differs, some tattoo the face some the other parts of the body.

Tattooing for women holds great importance as it marks different stages of life carries and much emphasized part of marriage rituals. Tattoo on the thigh is called as betam hu, that on calf as chichin-hu. At the age of six or seven years the girl is tattooed on the calf if she is engaged, or at around eleven to thirteen years of age (puberty).

In the seventh month of pregnancy a 'M' design is tattooed on her chest. The chief's daughter has more tattoo designs than other girls.

Clan wise tattoo designs differs even for women. The shoulders have a diamond design, cross garter design for the thighs, vertical lines for the legs right up to the shinbone, a cross on the navel and lines drawn on the breast to the stomach. The most common tattoo marks is the crosses on the navel which is skillfully with three fine lines and looks like a Maltese cross.

Beliefs and superstition:

The full moon and the crescent moon are held auspicious. Without the moon they do not perform any ritual - dark night or moonless sky is not held to be a good period. One is liable to fall sick or one will

lose fertility if any sacred ceremony is carried out on moonless nights.

The Wanchoo explains the phenomena of the solar eclipse in an endearingly simple way. They say that the sun is eaten up by a giant frog. During the eclipse the village is closed and general works are stopped for the time being. Jerking or throbbing of any muscle or joint of eyes, arm, thigh is considered unlucky.

During wars, the Wangpah or priest predicted the outcome of the war through the observing of egg shell and egg yolk. If during the journey or raid, the food that is carried gets rotten. It is taken as a bad omen.

Birth and puberty rituals and ceremonies:

Pregnancy is an important matter in a Wancho society for it finalises marriages between a couple. The opah predicts the unborn child's future in the

second or the third month. Sons are preferred to daughters.

The Gumnu (mid-wife) is appointed by the Wangham. After

the baby is born the Gumnu cooks red rice and fish for

the mother. The diet is continued for three days or more.

The Gumnu looks after the baby, washes and cleans it for

the first three days and she even names the boy. The

Gumnu is an important person in the society.

As soon as the child is born he is given a lick of the Zu; boys are made to touch a live fish. After a few months solid food is introduced. Popular, good looking and moral abiding people are given the privilege of feeding the baby its first solid food. The parent of the new born hold big feasts to welcome and celebrate the coming of a new member in the family. The ritual at the time of delivery and after is called Nauchan. The Gumnu

piercethe years of the baby with ginger juice and ties a string of beads and predicts the baby's future on the second day. On hearing of the baby's arrival marriage proposals will come. If it is a girl she will be reserved with gifts and a garland from her maternal uncle for his son. In the Zotham festival, the baby is given solid food.

According to the child's physical development a loin cloth is given. Boys are generally given a loin cloth when they are around 14-17 years old. On that day the boys father gives a feast. The boy is given a dao and also a membership oin the morung. A dog is sacrificed on the doorstep before he enters it.

The number of patches of land on Haram are locked under the Zhum cycle, Haram helps to calculate a person's age. If the cycle of certain haram started on one's birthday, repitition of this haram will be counted

as years for him. The tenth rotation will be his tenth birthday and so on. Girls are given their loin cloth when they are between 11 and 14 years old. As usual a feast follows.

Lightning :

They believe that God uses lightning to show his wealth. If lightning strikes a place that place or spot will be abandoned for ever.

Earthquake:

During an earthquake, pregnant women are put under restriction and thought to be unfortunate.

Animals:

Tiger is called the king of all animals - it is sacred. Tiger slayer are given knighthood - Nawmai.

The snake - python is considered to be and as an evil

symbol. Anyone who sees one should kill it or he will be cursed, but not when one's wife is pregnant, if he does the child will have the habit of flicking out its tongue like a snake.

Birds:

Cawing of the crow and cry of the owl are believed to be predictions of bad news and times. The cry of the eagle and the cuckoo predict love and news of lovers eloping.

Taboos:

Prenatal and post-natal periods - pregnant ladies and their husbands are put under restrictions. The husband is forbidden to kill snakes, strike nails and stakes into the ground. During the delivery period, the menfolk stay away for 2 days. Locks and knots are untied, unpowder

and weapons are stored elsewhere. Husbands and wives live separately till the child is nine months. Twins are considered to be a bad omen.

Brewery:

The men are not allowed into the room where rice-beer is made; he is not to touch the Tongkhah (yeast). If he does he will lose his virility and becomes equivalent to a woman. Guns, spears, daos, fishing rods and nets are not allowed near the breweries.

Disposal of the dead:

The Wanchos have a word to mean death - Zukting (zuk= grave, platform for dead; ting= land). The purgatory rites (Zafoat) differ from clan to clan and between upper and lower Wanchos. The Wangham and the Wangpan have different cemeteries. The cemetery for natural death and

accidental death is also different. The corpse is washed, wrapped in and cloth and adorned with his/her belonging and offered food. The Gamph (priest) who, looks after the dead body. The Wingham as they are blue blooded do not perform any death rites for the corpse. Oangjen woman married to a Pangjem is appointed as Tanthuroo. She performs the purgatory rites for the royal family. She washes the body and offered food and drink to the departed soul.

The corpse is carried on a stretcher with his belonging, to an already made chang (platform). Corn, drink, meat, fish, are offered to the departed soul. His money, pipe, watch, clothes, torche, umbrella, dao are all placed over or near the corpse. The Wancho believes in the existence of the other world. These possession are either torn or spoilt for the Wancho believes that if in this world

things are broken, in the next world they will be better,
In the dead man's house the hearth is not lit, food is
sent by sympathetic and helpful neighbours. If a nephew or
niece dies the maternal uncle provides the food for his
sister - Mamsa (mam=dead, sa=rice). For two weeks the corpse
is visited. When after a month or so the body decomposes,
the skull is separated. The Zampah cleans the skull, offers
food and drink and puts it in a pitcher - this occasion is
known as rapoly. It is said earlier the wanchos kept the
corpse of their relatives near the house. The Government's
constant urges to stop this practice has persuaded the
Wancho to shift their cemeteries towards the approach or
entrance of the village. After the people return from the
cemetery in a procession they touch a bamboo chunga filled
with water before entering the house as a purification rite.

Accidental deaths do not get so much of importance. The corpse is visited for five days only. It is tied in a mat and hung somewhere far ~~away~~ away from the villages cenetery. Effigy of wood, carved similar to the dead man is put on the platform, no effigy for ladies are made. If the dead man was tattooed his effigy would be tattooed too.

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CHAPTER - VI

Conclusion : The Changing Scene

I have discussed in the foregoing chapters about the Wanchos through history, history here meaning time. The formidable problem that we had to reckon with it is the extremely meagre extent of the conventional historical data.

This indeed posed a formidable problem. Moreover whatever earlier references we get about the Wanchos are by the people who were a part of the colonial rule. They had a vested interest in the area and they were prejudiced in their views. For them the people living in remote areas should not be anything but primitive. This is the ethnocentric Western view. Empirical data indicates that no human group

however primitive it may be in terms of technology, can survive having an integrate view of their own society and that of the whole cosmos. One of the important tasks of the scholars working on groups like Wancho is to bring this feature of their society so that we have a better understanding of their ways of life. Realising this there was no other way but to collect the data from the people. Since it was not possible to go in for a full scale ethnographic research. I collected their folklore, folksongs and such materials which are in circulation in their day to day life. How far the information contained in these materials is historically valid is indeed difficult to say, at this stage of research but they do indicate about their belief systems. The belief system is not isolated. It is

related to history, ecology, culture and experience of a population and therefore to that extent relevant in understanding the Wancho way of life. Any picture that we get is only partial.

The Wancho like other population in this region were in interaction with the people in the plains region. One can safely assume that this interaction was neither of one type nor stable but certainly persisted overtime.

At times they were friendly relations and other times hostility prevailed. Nonetheless both needed each other for

a variety of reasons. Roy Burman has indicated that such communities played the role of bridge and buffer between regions. Exchange of various products was another reason.

In the process however, mutual cultural borrowing took place.

The Wancho practised jhum cultivation using simple hoes. It was perhaps not simply a tribal mode of economy, but it was a way of life. They developed cottage industry, art and handicraft depending on the availability of raw materials and skill. The limited trade on barter system was conducted with the neighbouring communities. The influence of Christianity from Nagaland and the foothills of Assam have compelled many a Wancho to adopt the Christian faith. Although small in number the Wancho youth are generally attracted to modern way of life. Though the tribal life continues some educated citizens have thought that changes are necessary for the Wancho to modernize their way of life. The Wancho traditional society is in a state of transition with government backing and support of the educated Wancho youth the following are some of the changes that can be pinpointed.

1. The Wancho Youth Association: It was formed in 1972 by a group of inspired, educated and far seeing Wancho boys. The aim of the association is to bring about radical changes in the Wancho society. It is working for the society's reformation. The association is trying to stop polygamy, stop the practice of taboo, prevent the people from being superstitious and to dress decently. The association has been doing good work, and people are aware of the weaknesses of the society and are grateful for the associations guidance. It has imposed fines and successfully brought the practice of tattoe to a stop. Besides the Wancho society has been suffering problems arising out of opium consumption. Every man especially of the ~~max~~ older generation is addicted to opium. The association is trying to eradicate this practice. There

is a case of punishing an opium smoker by banishment. The Wancho boys and girls are becoming interested in education. Graduates are not many but most of them have completed their high schools. The first Wancho girl to have matriculated was in the year 1986.

2. Education:

Spread of modern education started in the area with the starting of schools set up by the Government. One Higher Secondary School at Longding. One High School each at Khannu, Pangchau, Senua, Chopnu and Wakka have been started. Primary schools have been started in most villages. Number of boys always exceeds more than girls. Girls are not sent to school for they have to act as sorrogate mothers look after the house and younger children while the mothers are out in the fields. Mr. H. Ponglam is the first graduate

from the Longding area. Other graduates now among the Wancho are Wangjen Wancho, Wangnam Wancho. In Longson village there are about eight matriculates. Lower Wanchos have had more education opportunities than the Upper. In 1986 the

3. Improved methods in agriculture:

Implementations of various Welfare schemes for socio-economic development of the people since Independence have brought about remarkable changes in the life of the people.

Some Wanchos still practise shifting cultivation. According to the Jhum Regulation 1947, the members of a village or a community have a customary right to cultivate jhum land by shifting method. Jhum cycles have reduced greatly and the cycle in this area varies now from four to six years. Previously it was eight years. Government is trying to improve the practice of agriculture. Efforts is

to provide improve seeds, fertilizers and agriculture tools.

Effort is also control the determination of the quality of land.

In some Wancho villages, farmers have started minor irrigation canals and have taken up to permanent cultivation namely, Khanubari, Ojaku chattang, Namphang and Zedue villages. In the ancient times land was held collectively by clans. But gradually now individual ownership has come into existence. During the periods when the land is kept the fence are removed for animal grazing. Wanchos grow eleven types of millet. Maize, yams, sweet potato, topioca, varieties of arum. rice, tobacco, betel leaf, varieties of lemon, acres are grown. Tobacco and betel leaf are sold in the plains. Earlier opium trade with China and Burma had brought the Wanchos a great deal of money. With Governement's

constant effort to stop illicit trade and addiction of the drug, cultivation of opium has gone down considerably and illicit trade has almost stopped. New crops and fruits have been introduced like pepper, mustard, ginger, tumeric, potato, sugar cane, garlic, pears etc.

4. Animal husbandry:

Wancho rears mithuns, pigs, and fowls. Farmer's training are conducted to educate people in agriculture, veterinary and animal husbandry by the concerned department of the Government. Under proper and scientific methods piggery, poultry, duckery and rearing of bees, goats and milch cows have started.

5. Scientific pisciculture:

Fish occupies an important place in the Wancho tradition in social and religious life. People are

predominantly non-vegetarian and had a particular aptitude to fish and relish its consumption. Fish is a must for Wangsu people on various occasions. The Wanchos go out to fish in big and small groups. Community fishing is usually done during the harvest festival, birth of a new chief and chief's marriage. Fish is needed or used at the birth of a baby, naming ceremony of the child and for performing death rituals also. Under IRDP small as well as medium fisheries development programmes have been undertaken. Production ponds have come up. Fisheries have taken momentum in the area. The fish species that have been introduced are the common grass and shur carp, rohu, mrigal and catla.

6. Banking:

There is a branch of the SBI functioning at Longding, the sub-divisional HQ of the Wanchos area.

7. Co-operative society:

The following are the co-operatives societies in Wancho sub-division:

- (i) Wancho Consumer General Societies Ltd, Longding.
- (ii) Wancho Dairy Co-operative Society Ltd. Longding.
- (iii) Upper Wancho CGS Ltd., Wakka.
- (iv) Kanubari CGS Ltd., Kanubari.
- (v) Malla Fishery Co-op. Society Ltd., Mopekhet.

There are 2 CD & IRDP Blocks. They are:

(i) Niauxa comprising of Kenubari, Longding and Purnao Circle.

(ii) Panchau and Wakka Administrative Circle.

8. Water Supply:

There is an acute shortage of good drinking water in the villages in spite of the numerous streams and creeks.

A number of water supply schemes have been taken up in these villages by the Government.

9. Health:

Earlier Wanchos treated their sickness through local herbs by incantation of priest. The Wancho word for medicine is Tongkhehoi, Injury - Loijabin; aches - Kamkhe. Besides herbs, pig, chicken, egg shells, dry fish etc were used by the priest to cure and perform the rituals of pacifying the angry God - Ban-rang who is said to be the cause of all disaster. General health of the Wancho is good. Ignorance of hygiene and unhealthy condition of living results in diseases like dysentery, diarrhoea, measles, scabies, and skin diseases. In the lower belt instances of malaria are high. There is one PHC in Longding. Sub-health centres at Pongcheu, Wakka, Kennubari, Benferra and Chopkin. Under ICDS programme

Angawadi centres are functioning in most of the villages to cater to the need of mother and child care. Goitre is a common ailment. Leprosy cases are considerably high in Upper Wancho area and also surrounding villages at Longding, viz., Senua and Zedua. There is a Leprosy Sanitorium which is functioning at Senua under the auspices of Sankar Mission, Assam. Rehabilitation centre is also there at Sanyoa for the patients who have been cured. Enough is yet to be done for the rehabilitation.

10. Social Welfare Organization:

Welfare extension project centre in Nianu is staffed by Gram Sevak who is in charge of the Balwadi-Pre basic school, adult education, craft, child care, nutrition and sanitation and recreational and cultural activities.

11. Road communication:

There is an all weather BRTF from Tissa to Pongchau in Longding and Tissa to Wakka. The other route connects Longding to Sepheketi via Bimlapur, thus linking Assam to the Wancho area. Inter-village tracks of the ancient times are made and have been improved. The road development has helped the Wancho area to prosper economically, trade with the traders of Assam and tourists from the plains have added to their prosperity and exposure to the Indian mainstream.

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APPENDIX

Since not much of the information is available in the written form, emphasis was laid down on a detailed field study. The interview method was used with the help of the following questions:

1. Recording of various folk tales

- (a) Did your grandparents tell you about the origin of the Wancho?
- (b) Do you know of any migration folk tales and songs?
- (c) How did the Wancho king get selected? Are there tales of bravery?
- (d) Do you believe in magic and spirituality?

2. Recording of various traditional songs.

- (a) Do the Wancho sing during the harvest, or while sowing seeds and at marriages?

3. (a) What are various Gods worshipped by the Wanchos?

- (b) What is the form of worship? Are there any sacrificial rituals involved in this worship or not. If so, what are those?
- (c) What are the various rituals regarding birth, death, marriage and other rituals at social gatherings? What are the marriage rules? Was child marriage common? If not, at what age did a Wancho marry?

- (d) What is the role of a monk/priest/religious head?
 - (e) Why did you not go for some other religion like Buddhism?
 - (f) Do you have any significant religious spot that is visited periodically?
4. (a) How is a chief of the tribe selected? What powers is he assigned with? How is he different from the other members?
- (b) Who were the various officials of the state? How were laws framed or passed?
 - (c) How do you categorize the various Wancho?
5. (a) Do you have full rights in land, can you mortgage land or sell it without the permission of priest or the village chief/headman?
- (b) Were any taxes paid? If yes, was it in kind or cash?
 - (c) What were the methods used for weights and measures?
 - (d) How do you cultivate the land? In a group? or individually? What kind of implements do you use?
 - (e) How did you earn your livelihood apart from agriculture?
 - (f) Was land and other property owned communally or individually?
 - (g) What types of local industry were there?
 - (h) How did the Wancho weave their loin clothes? How did they dress? What were the various ornaments used by both man and woman?
6. (a) What was the nature of the contact with the neighbouring population? Were the Wancho known by any other name?

- (b) How did your people defend their territory? What was the military build up in the olden days?
- (c) Where did the Wancho go for marketing? Did the people go down to the plains? Were these market held weekly/ fortnightly/monthly?
- (d) What implements were used for fishing, hunting and agriculture?
- (e) What kind of household implements did the wancho use?
- (f) How were houses constructed?
- (g) What are the various cultural festivals, their duration, change and nature of celebration?

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GLOSSARY

Father - apa, papa.
Mother - annu, nunu,
Eldest son - apong, taichongpa.
Younger sone - naulipa, naulisa.
Elder daughter - aphe
Younger daughter - abow
Elder brother - papong, apung.
Eldest sister - aphe, phephe.
Youngman - nausan
young girl - naucha
old man - mipah, ajupa
Father's brother (elder) - papanu
Father's brother (younger) - papasa
Father's sister (elder) - nichannu
Father's sister (younger) - nichasa
relative - nichong
maternal uncle - hosang
father-in-law - hosong
mother-in-law - nisong
girl - sacco
boy - lackka
priest - opah, npah, zanpah, ganpah
midwife - gamnu
medicine - tongkhehoi
injury - loijahing
cough - haikak
rheumatism - naipong
aches - kankha
sun - gangtan
moon - nainu

sky - gang
earth - kabangnu
stars - lansa
supreme power - rang, zang, zaunpah,
family priest - chajanpa
rainbow spirit - lamlongkang
malevolent spirit - jako, baula
malevolent water spirit - non, hungwang
malevolent earth spirit - bourang
dwelling house - hun
bachelor dormitories - pa, panu, pasa
~~_____~~
bed - salpira
roof - hunkhamji
bedroom - jeeapnoi
bedroom for girl - jeeapnoi
assembly hall - nauachienoi, humsong
dining room - shetnoi
kitchen - ponkah
grounding house - khun, jang.
white rice - wlangthaw
redrose - wangnang
corns - talla
seeds - naan
conical basket - noh
box - swak
verandah - chinghow, chingkhe, konthaw
sword/dao - dang/chang
spear - pah
beloved (girl) - jansa
edible bark of tree - sali
effigy - sappa
cemetery - goun

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