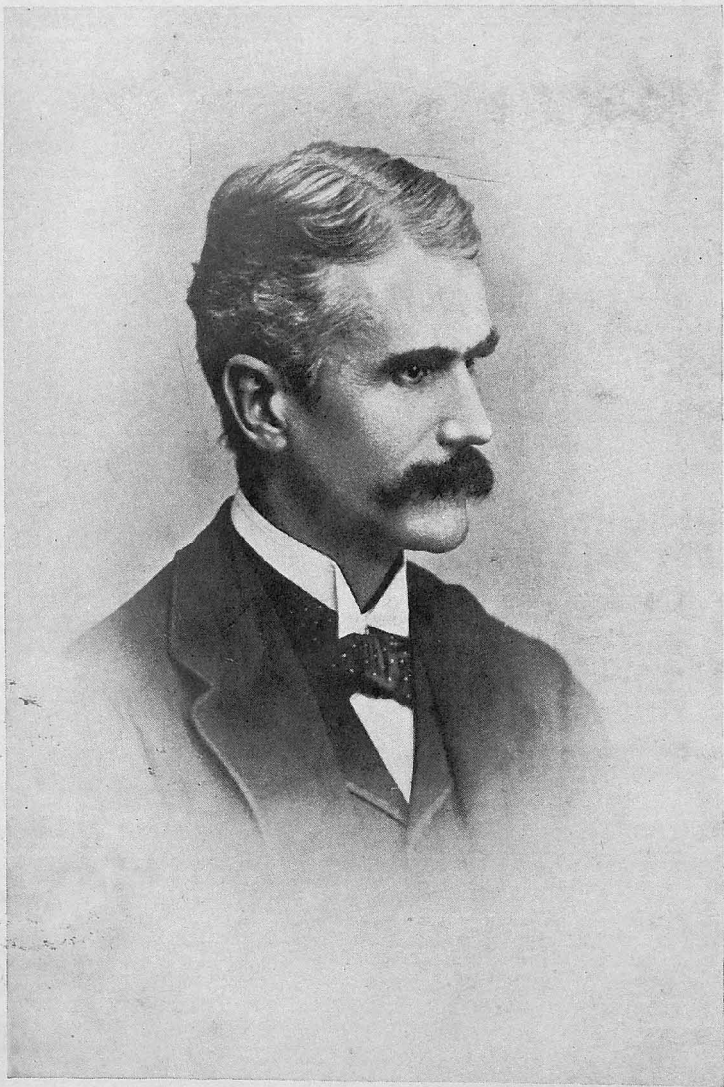


THE
NICOBAR ISLANDS

E. H. MAN

**THE NICOBAR ISLANDS AND THEIR
PEOPLE**

PLATE I.



E. H. MAN, WHEN FIRST APPOINTED IN 1869.

THE NICOBAR ISLANDS AND THEIR PEOPLE

BY

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1932); and of A DICTIONARY OF THE CENTRAL NICOBARESE LANGUAGE,
in two parts, i.e. English-Nicobarese, Nicobarese-English, and
first published under the patronage of the Secretary of State
for India; also of A DICTIONARY OF THE SOUTH ANDAMAN
LANGUAGE, printed by the British India Press,
Bombay, in 1923*

*Compiled posthumously from papers in the R.A.I. JOURNAL and the
INDIAN ANTIQUARY, and from notes prepared for
publication before his death; with a*

MEMOIR

CONTRIBUTED BY

SIR DAVID PRIN, C.I.E.

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

To have lived for many years among a people comparatively unknown to the rest of the world, in a climate that few of the white race can endure for long together; to have learnt their language from phonetic sounds alone and reduced this to printable form, thus opening up a means of communication for them with the world outside, is surely a great achievement. Mr. E. H. Man did not rest satisfied until he had produced a Vocabulary and Dictionary comprising many thousand words, arranged for English students studying Nicobarese and for natives learning English, the two parts complete in one volume; while doing this he collected a large quantity of other valuable material in the form of notes and photographs, some of which he contributed in the form of articles and lectures to scientific journals and societies, together with maps, all of which are of permanent worth. His unceasing labours on behalf of a people whom he loved and understood as they had never been understood before represented a stream of quiet, unostentatious work, that went on from its beginning in 1869 until the day of his death in 1929. In this work he was for many years helped by his sister, who has here brought together the material in a new form, with some assistance in the matter of arrangement and revision; while the life-story of Mr. Man has been written by Sir David Prain, himself an eminent judge of the worth of the work done by his friend.

Mr. Man had the good fortune to be gifted with a singularly acute ear for inflection and intonation, and while this gift made him critical of his own work it also kept him from taking for granted efforts made by missionaries and travellers to make lists of words, unless

these were based upon some recognised form of transliteration. The system he himself adopted was one recommended by Dr. A. J. Ellis, the President of the Philological Society, while he had as collaborator at one time (over the language of the South Andaman Island in particular) the late Sir Richard Carnac Temple, Bart. Apart from this help, Mr. Man's work is singularly his own.

Permission for the reproduction of such papers as have been published at intervals by the Royal Anthropological Institute and other societies has readily been given; to these have been added the notes made by Mr. Man during years of quiet study and reflection, the whole thrown into a form that will make it of interest to the general reader as well as to the student of anthropology, for the study of race now makes a wide appeal. It is of the more value since some of these earlier types are rapidly becoming extinct, and this fact, deplorable though it is, lends additional interest to the material here brought together.

In the attempt to bring into proper relation and put into concise form the scattered notes left by so eminent a student it is inevitable there should be shortcomings; but these will be forgiven if it is remembered that this is a selection from the whole of the material left behind by one who was discoverer as well as interpreter for a people whom none have ever known quite so intimately as he. If that be kept in mind, this book may stand as a memorial to labour unstinted, to devotion to duty unsurpassed, and to painstaking effort that few have ever equalled.

L. H. YATES.

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MEMOIR

BY SIR DAVID PRAIN, C.I.E., M.A., LL.D., F.R.S., ETC.

EDWARD HORACE MAN, C.I.E.

1846-1929.

EDWARD HORACE MAN was the second son of Lieutenant Henry Man and Emma Martha Thompson, and was born at Singapore on 13th September, 1846. He was baptised in St. Andrew's Church there on 7th October, his godfather being his father's friend, Mr. John Harvey, the Straits representative of a Mincing Lane firm of merchants trading with Borneo. This had some bearing on his future career, so is worth mentioning here. His baptismal name of Edward was that of his maternal grandfather, Edward Thompson of Dover, a descendant of the cadet branch of an old Kentish family of Kenfield, betwixt Ashford and Canterbury. His grandfather on the paternal side was Mr. Henry Man, a merchant, who had come to London from Inverness, himself the son of a James Man who had married Isobel Robertson in 1755. Henry had been born at Cawdor in Nairn at a time when his father, James Man, was factor to the estate of Castle Cawdor. Henry Man had remained in Inverness some little time after his marriage, but later moved to London, and at the time when he died there in 1820 his grandson Henry was a boy of five.

It is of interest to note that there were two sons of that James Man who had married Isobel Robertson in 1755, the elder one being William (who died in 1793) who had also a son and a grandson both named William. The absence of any record of the birth, marriage or death of this elder son (William) led his descendant, Lieutenant-Colonel John Alexander Man, on leaving the army, to take up residence in Scotland, that he might

investigate the early history of the Man family, since both the elder and younger branches had achieved distinction. This investigation suggested that their common great-grandfather had first been known as *John Stuart*, and had been one of those who had made themselves responsible for the safety of the Chevalier de St. George during the brief visit of that exiled Prince to Scotland in 1715, had attracted his personal favour and attention, and had received from him the additional name of "Man" as proof of gallantry, and that for some time the family was known as Man-Stuart. In 1898, Colonel John Alexander Man received authority to assume, under Royal Warrant, the surname that he believed his grandfather's grandfather to have borne, and was known as Colonel Man-Stuart up to the time of his own death in 1908. His example was not, however, followed by the branch descended from the younger brother Henry, and Edward Horace Man and his relatives decided to remain content with the simple surname borne by their father and his fathers before him, regarding the double name as something of a tradition.

Family traditions, all the same, have a tendency to be accurate, and there is no reason to suppose that the one on which Colonel Man-Stuart relied presented an unjustifiable claim. What the tradition appears to indicate is that the change from Man-Stuart to simple Man, later, was a case of reversion to a still older surname, for this surname of Man was well known in the counties of Inverness and Nairn before ever the father of that James Man who married Isobel Robertson in 1755 took an active part in the Jacobite cause. It was also well known in England at an even earlier date. An English family of the same name was flourishing during the time that James Man was serving the Cawdor estate, a descendant of which, another Henry Man, was the friend of Charles Lamb; a branch of the English family was, a generation or two later, living in Kent; and by a curious coincidence, when Edward Horace and his elder brother Henry were being taken to a school at Dover, their mother and they met in

the same coach another Mrs. Henry Man whose sons were at the same school, but her husband bore no relationship to the then Captain Henry Man of the 49th Madras Infantry.

* * * * *

A brief sketch of the career of Captain Henry Man must be inserted here. Born on the 5th December, 1815, he went to Charterhouse School, where he was a contemporary of W. M. Thackeray; later he was transferred to Eton, where he remained until sixteen years of age, when he was, according to India Office Records, "nominated by C. Mills, Esq.," to an Indian cadetship and ordered to proceed to Addiscombe. When he graduated at Addiscombe at eighteen he was posted to the Madras Presidency, and on reaching India was gazetted an Ensign of Infantry as from March 10, 1834, receiving the requisite two commissions to that effect. Before being appointed to any corps, Ensign Man was ordered on active service during the first Goomsur campaign, which lasted from September, 1835, to May, 1836, and again during the second Goomsur campaign, from January to March, 1837. In July, 1837, he was posted to the 49th Madras Infantry, and on 5th March, 1838, he was promoted Second Lieutenant in that regiment, on whose list of officers his name remained throughout the whole of his Indian service. Before the second Goomsur campaign ended Ensign Man's health had become impaired, and before his promotion took place he was on his way to England on sick leave. Restored to health by the voyage, he applied for permission to attend a course of surveying at Chatham, "in order to make himself more efficient in the performance of his professional duties," and the India Office saw no objection to the proposal. The authorities in Madras so well approved this course that on his return to duty there he was seconded from his regiment and given command of a company of sappers and miners which surveyed and assisted in constructing the military road into the Nilghiri hills. It is understood that when this task was com-

pleted Lieutenant Man and his company were lent for a time by the Government of Madras to the Government of Bengal and employed on similar work in Northern India.

An acquaintance, which ripened into a lifelong friendship, between Lieutenant Man and Sir Henry Yule, may have been formed at Chatham, for Yule, who had passed out of Addiscombe at the head of the list of graduates in 1839, was also given permission to proceed to Chatham, and on completing the course there was given a commission in the Bengal Engineers. It was while in England that Lieutenant Man became engaged to Miss Emma Martha Thompson, youngest daughter of Mr. Edward Thompson of Dover and his wife Anna Hannam, whose eldest son, later, married Lieutenant Man's sister Elizabeth, youngest daughter of Henry Man of Fulham. Soon after Lieutenant Man returned to India, Miss Thompson followed him to Madras, where they were married in the Cathedral Church on the 14th July, 1842. After his marriage Lieutenant Man reverted to regimental duty with the 49th Madras Infantry, then in garrison in the Straits Settlement, with its headquarters at Singapore; he was at headquarters when his second son was born in 1846, but appears to have been with companies at Penang when he was promoted Captain on the 18th April, 1848, and before the second Burmese War began in 1852 Captain Man had been ordered to proceed with his regiment to Burma and had sent his little family to England. He served throughout the war, which lasted from July, 1852, to July, 1853, and received the Burma Medal at the close. During the Mutiny of 1857 the 49th Madras Infantry were on duty in Burma. Captain Man was serving with the wing stationed at Moulmein when he received orders to proceed with a detachment to the Andaman Islands and occupy the harbour of Port Blair on behalf of the East India Company. This duty he carried out on the 22nd January, 1858, and sixteen days later the Company established there a penal settlement, regarded as necessary at the close of the Mutiny.

During the first decade of its existence the annual death rate among the convicts stood, in spite of able medical administration, at the disquieting figure of 18·56 per cent. The new Acting Superintendent at once applied to the Settlement the engineering knowledge he had acquired at Chatham some years earlier; roads and drains were added to dispensaries and hospitals. As a result the average death rate among the settlers fell during his first year of office to 3·9 per cent.; during his second year to 2 per cent., and during his third year to 1·9 per cent. And meanwhile the responsibility of the Superintendent was increased.

In 1869, Her Majesty's Government, as the result of amicable negotiations with Denmark, undertook to relieve that country of the obligation to repress Nicobarese piracy and took possession of the Nicobars. These islands were transferred to the Government of India, which at once established there a penal settlement subordinate to the one at Port Blair. When, on June 9th, 1869, Lieut.-Colonel Man was confirmed in his appointment as Superintendent of Port Blair he was at the same time appointed by the Supreme Government Superintendent of the Nicobars, and was gazetted, by the Government of Madras, a Lieut.-Colonel in his own regiment.

Prior to the 5th December, 1870, when he would attain the age of fifty-five years, Lieut.-Colonel Man applied for permission to proceed to Europe on leave for private affairs. The application was granted and on the 10th January, 1871, he left Port Blair when relieved of his duties, from which date the title and status of the post he had filled with such distinction was changed by the Government to that of "Chief Commissioner of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Superintendent of Port Blair." On reaching England Lieut.-Colonel Man settled for a time at Godalming, and later removed to Surbiton, where he was promoted to Major-General in Her Majesty's land forces, and where he died in 1898 at the age of eighty-three.

The preparatory school to which the three sons of Captain and Mrs. Henry Man were sent at Dover was conducted by a personal friend of Mrs. Man's father, a Mr. Hammond. From this school the three boys were transferred in due course to the Sevenoaks Grammar School, where they remained until Henry, the eldest, who wished to follow his father's profession, was old enough to make it necessary he should be prepared by an Army Tutor for Sandhurst. In the meantime Mr. Hammond had retired and his successor at Dover had added an Army tutorial department to the school, so Henry was sent back to be under this Mr. Chigwell. As the health of the youngest of the three boys was also giving rise to anxiety it was thought advisable to send him to Dover as well. The health of Horace, the middle brother, was good, but it was thought well to transfer him at the same time to Dover. His godfather, Mr. John Harvey, interested in Horace's progress, had arranged that he should be given a place in the London office in due time, where he might master business methods and perhaps, in the future, be transferred to Borneo. Horace had, however, long made up his mind to be a sailor and his ambition revived when he returned to school at Dover, but this wish was not known to his parents and when on furlough to England in 1863 Lieut.-Colonel Man put to his son the offer that Mr. Harvey had made. Whether the suggestion of Borneo balanced the attraction of the sea, or whether he was too diffident to disclose his own real ambition, Horace accepted a junior position in the Mincing Lane office of Harvey and Guthrie, without knowing it following in the steps of a namesake of his grandfather's a century earlier, one of whose claims to remembrance was the kindness he showed to a junior colleague, Charles Lamb. If the business careers chosen for Henry Man in 1762 and for Horace Man in 1863 proved uncongenial to both alike, the reputations they won later in life owed not a little to enforced business discipline. If E. Horace Man found office routine uninspiring, it only made him the more careful to exercise attention to detail and to add to that

a passion for accuracy that became characteristic of him in later life and helped to bring him distinction. Even the outside interests that he cultivated as an offset to his rigid office routine proved ancillary to his success; he carried off trophies as a keen member of an amateur athletic club and developed powers of endurance that later on, in tropical service, served him in good stead. An enthusiastic breeder of canaries, he developed powers of close observation and the faculty of winning confidence that helped him to overcome suspicion and win the affection of shy races of men—all contributing towards his future had he but known it.

After spending some five or six years in the City office, with the prospect of a transfer to Borneo still remote, the negotiations that added the charge of the Nicobar Islands to that of the Andamans, then under his father's care, were in progress. This addition involved some increase in the staff of the Andamans Commission and Lieut.-Colonel Man, now aware that life in a City office was uncongenial to his son, asked the Viceroy of India, with whom the duty of appointment lay, whether an Assistant-Superintendentship could be conferred. The Viceroy (Lord Mayo) signified his willingness, and in recognition of the value of Lieut.-Colonel Man's own services, he allowed him to nominate his son provided he should be able to pass the prescribed qualifying examination. The advantage of having been taught for a time by an Army Tutor at Dover here showed itself, and the tests were passed with distinction. Securing a passage for Penang round by the Cape, Edward Horace Man left for India. From Penang he crossed to the Nicobars and thence to Port Blair and joined his parents in 1869. He took up official work there in November of that year, serving as Third Assistant until November, 1884; as Second Assistant until 1888; as First Assistant until April, 1891, and later as Deputy Superintendent until he retired in September, 1901. During his service he had, on some twenty-five occasions, to act for shorter or longer periods in grades above his own, as Deputy Superintendent, and

as Chief Commissioner, in addition to his own duties. The magisterial posts he held concurrently with his executive ones; after his promotion to administrative rank he served as District Magistrate, and was appointed Additional Sessions judge as from the 6th September, 1894. Throughout his service, E. H. Man shared with his colleagues the obligation to undertake in rotation tours of duty as officer in charge in the Nicobars; his first tour being undertaken in 1871 soon after his father had left for England. The Nicobars were so unhealthy that at first these tours only lasted for some six weeks; eventually they were extended to three months. Some officers, however, stayed for two or three years, and actually E. H. Man was in residence, at intervals, for some six and a half years.

Another obligation, shared in rotation with his colleagues, was that of escorting to India parties of time-expired convicts, and of taking charge on the return voyage to the Andamans of prisoners sentenced to transportation.

During the first decade of his service E. H. Man did not avail himself of the right to apply for leave of absence; he first applied for, and was granted furlough in 1880, and was absent from Port Blair from August, 1880, to September, 1882. He was absent a second time from June, 1895, to April, 1897. In the interval between these two periods, and once before the first furlough and after the second, he is understood to have availed himself of the right to take "accumulated privilege leave" for three months after each thirty-three months of completed service.

* * * * *

The transfer of the Nicobars to India in 1869, which provided E. H. Man with congenial office duties, did something more—it supplied him with absorbing personal interests aroused during the brief interval between his arrival at Port Blair and his installation as a Third Assistant to the Penal Settlement of which his father was

Superintendent. The occupation of Port Blair by the East India Company in 1789, and its reoccupation in 1858 by the same corporation, had been followed by Andamanese reprisals on intruders who had taken possession of their fine harbour and had ousted them from many of their favourite haunts. These reprisals, attributed in the eighteenth century to "Andamanese hostility," were regarded in the nineteenth century as due to cupidity and a desire to possess themselves of the tools and appliances of the settlers. Steps were taken, therefore, to teach the natives their aggressors' ideas of the laws of property, and when they had learned to appreciate the laws of other nations, further efforts were made to establish Homes near the harbour for such survivors of the outlawed tribes as might be in need of food and lodging. The officers in charge of these Homes appeared, by 1869, to have convinced the aborigines that the invaders were really friendly in their intentions. This good result had been largely the work of Mr. J. N. Homfray, the officer in charge of the Homes, who had acquired a fair colloquial acquaintance with the South Andaman vernacular, and so had managed to persuade the aborigines to regard the settlement with favour.

The humanity of Lieut.-Colonel Henry Man, as Superintendent, was not limited to his successful work in reducing the death-rate in the convict settlement; his sympathy with the aboriginal natives of the islands led him to supplement Homfray's endeavours wherever he could. Finding that Homfray had at the Homes a number of children, some of them left behind by their parents, others orphans, he founded on the island of Ross, near the Residency, an orphanage and school, where by 1870 there were over forty boys and girls. In the welfare of these children Mrs. Man took an active interest, as well as in the Homes where Homfray had settled the adults. It was here that her son first made acquaintance with the aborigines who were afterwards to become his life-study. His first tasks, however, were to master the regulations necessary in a penal settlement; to become a proficient in Hin-

dustani, and, as far as possible, to acquire a colloquial knowledge of the vernacular of the convict settlers. His father had endeavoured to make a systematic collection of Andamanese objects of sociological and ethnological interest; E. H. Man, from the outset of his career, seems to have formed a resolution to render the Andamanese the same service that his father's friend, Sir Henry Yule, had tried, as a young officer of engineers, to render the inhabitants of the Khasi Hills in Assam, but an opportunity to do this did not offer itself until after his parents had left Port Blair.

Three months after his parents had left Man was made a magistrate, and in 1871 was sent to make his first tour of the Nicobars. There he found conditions were different; the primitive inhabitants had rights that could not be brushed aside as those of the Andamanese had been. In the Nicobars Man set to work at once to study their speech and began the systematic collection of Nicobarese objects in order to supplement his father's collection of Andaman material, and he also went further in that he proceeded to evolve a scheme for investigating customs and beliefs. A visit to Calcutta on convict-escort duty had enabled him to become a member of the Asiatic Society of Bengal; a list of Nicobarese words prepared by him for his Annual Report in 1871 was published in that Society's Journal in 1872. During subsequent tours of duty in the Nicobars between '72 and '75 Man further increased his collection of objects of interest, extended his ethnological studies, and enlarged his vocabulary of words and phrases.

During these years difficulties were being experienced at Port Blair in regard to the Orphanage and the Homes. In the Orphanage School the children were eager to learn and became apt pupils; most of them mastered Hindustani with ease and some learned English, while all of them readily mastered some useful craft. But no regular employment could be found for them when this education was completed. The boys were left to find what they could for themselves—and they usually solved the puzzle

by swimming to the mainland and reverting to jungle life ! Or they became demoralised by getting into contact with convicts in the settlement.

When E. H. Man returned from the Nicobars in June, 1875, the Chief Commissioner, aware of his successful labours there, put him in charge of these Andamanese Homes. He had won the respect of the Nicobarese by the simplicity and sincerity of his dealings with them, and they had appreciated his ability to understand their outlook on life. His acquaintance with their language had no doubt been of great help to him, but most of all it was his sportsmanlike spirit, for he had accepted their challenge in their games and had astonished them by out-running their favourite sprinters. Such qualities as had endeared him to the Nicobarese were likely also to make him equally successful with the Andamanese.

When the Chief Commissioner paid his first visit to the Homes some time later he expressed his astonishment at what had been accomplished under the new regime set up by E. H. Man. Yet the changes made were singularly simple. From the outset he had found the Andamanese anxious to do all they could to please him; he had persuaded them to eschew jungle practices and given the inmates work to do that suited their various tastes. At the same time he had begun the preparation of an Andamanese Vocabulary, some part of which was incorporated in his Report for 1876. It was in May, 1876, that he wrote telling his father he had completed some two thousand words of this Vocabulary, adding, "I have taken great pains over it; six or eight hours a day have been devoted to it during the past month, and before that a daily average of two hours for many weeks." He had also prepared two maps: one of the whole group of the islands, the other of South Andaman Island.

The despatch of the letter containing this news coincided with an event that had, later, a marked effect on these studies. In May, 1876, there arrived at Port Blair Lieutenant Richard Carnac Temple of the 21st Regiment, then on foreign service in Burma, who had been detailed

for duty in the Andamans. Temple, who was four years Man's junior, had joined his regiment as an Ensign in 1871 and had developed similar interests in local affairs and the study of tongues. In Burma he had been studying the speech of Pegu and had devised a method of transliterating Burmese into the Roman characters. Having heard of Man's efforts, Temple sought his acquaintance and suggested to him a mode of spelling Andamanese that Man was glad to adopt. The firstfruits of the warm friendship that sprang up between the two young men was the translation by Man of the Lord's Prayer into the vernacular of South Andaman Island and his collaboration with Temple in the preparation of an Andamanese Grammar.

When Temple arrived at Port Blair in 1876 he had already passed the Higher Standard Examination in Hindustani; being entitled to "language leave," he decided to spend this on the Andamans as Man's guest, in the bungalow assigned to officers in charge of the aborigines, on the island of Viper in Port Blair Harbour, to which bungalow the Andamanese were freely admitted. When his leave expired Temple was transferred to the Bengal Staff Corps.

The Chief Commissioner, who took a keen interest in these studies, gave E. H. Man every possible opportunity of visiting the different tribes with suitable presents. In this way he was able, by degrees, to establish friendly relations with all but one of the various Andamanese tribes, and to have similar experience, later, in the Nicobars.

His close association with Temple led to an expansion of E. H. Man's interest in linguistic study. The primary aim of Temple in mastering a language was to ascertain its nature and understand the structure of its forms; it was an end in itself. The object of Man, on the other hand, was to acquire an acquaintance with different forms of speech in the hope that his records of the customs and beliefs of those whose tongue they were studying should be more faithful and be better understood; to him

linguistic study was a means to an end. The habit of attention to detail and insistence on accuracy that his early business training had inculcated had enabled him to imbibe Temple's enthusiasm without losing any of his own original persistence.

While engaged in these linguistic studies Man met with an experience that left a lasting mark on his sensitive nature. Temple, who was his guest at the time, has left an account that may best be told in his own words: "A terrible epidemic of measles had broken out and was raging among the natives; it carried off 25 per cent. of the tribe at that place. The whole lower floor and back verandah were given up to sick natives and they were helped as far as possible, but it was not possible to prevent them from plunging into the sea to try to cool themselves, with the result that they died in spite of the care bestowed on them. In spite of sickness, however, all our spare time was spent in trying to learn what proved a very difficult tongue." It is easy to understand the anxiety of the two friends, confronted with such risks, to perfect their study of speech while they had such an opportunity, and it was gratifying at this psychological moment to receive from home a little volume of "Notes and Queries on Anthropology," which Man then declared to be "worth its weight in gold." Until he received this he had been working on a system evolved by himself, and while he regarded the system advocated in the "little volume" as superior to his own, his work in conjunction with Temple left him satisfied that "in getting answers to questions" suggested in the Notes and Queries, "an intimate acquaintance with the language is necessary."

In the letter that accompanied the little volume referred to, Lieut.-Colonel Man remarked that his son had not, so far, asked for leave; in his reply, dated July, 1876, Man wrote: "I find I have taken such a fancy for the people and am so interested in them in every way, that I would forego 'leave' and all such indulgences rather than lose my present connection with them. Before I am transferred to other duties I hope to have secured a valuable

fund of information, so as to render my account of them as exhaustive as possible. What do you say to my volunteering for the Nicobars in 1877, and working that field on the same plan as has been advocated in the little book you sent? This would, of course, be dependent on my having completed my researches among the aborigines of these (the Andaman) islands."

Three weeks after the despatch of that letter Man's collaboration with Temple was interrupted; in a brief note written to his parents in August, 1876, he informed them that he was leaving on duty at daybreak next day in search of a vessel reported from India as "missing." While he was absent on that cruise his friend Temple laid aside work on the Grammar and, by way of relaxation from the task of trying to prepare for his Hindustani examination, wrote an Introduction to and a Commentary on Man's translation into Andamanese of the Lord's Prayer. He had completed this by the time Man returned to Port Blair in August, 1876. Man sent his father a copy of this translation, with Temple's commentary, with the letter announcing his return from the cruise. In September that year Temple arranged with Trübner and Co. that the translation and commentary should be published both in Calcutta and London.

Early in 1877 Temple and Man completed the Andamanese Grammar, and when the former was transferred to a Punjab regiment he took the manuscript of this with him, meaning to make it ready for publication. Temple's military duties as a regimental officer, and later as a Cantonment Magistrate, prevented him from finishing this task, and the Andamanese Grammar was never published in full. A fragment only was published in India, for private circulation, in 1878.

Man realised when Temple left him in 1877 that the stage reached in the work he had been doing would not justify him in volunteering for the Nicobars in the following year. Although he had greatly extended his collection of objects and it was now fairly representative, in the linguistic field there was still much to be done. He wrote: "I am

fast learning to chatter to the Andamanese; they are, I think, much surprised at my progress; while preparing the Vocabulary I could not find time to commit to memory many words, and now I am busy collecting words from the tribe on the other side of the Middle Strait."

The Chief Commissioner, who appreciated the situation, continued Man in his appointment as officer in charge of the aborigines not only until June, 1878, but until June, 1879. By that time Man had found there were nine distinct tribes in the Andamans, speaking languages that, while mutually unintelligible, showed a common type of construction, yet marked by differences which placed them in three distinct groups. His Vocabulary that in May, 1876, had contained some two thousand words, now included nearly six thousand; he had established friendly relations with eight of the nine tribes; his account of their customs and beliefs, though not complete, showed much material secured. It was in June, 1879, that he felt justified in doing what he had hoped to do two years earlier.

The tour of duty for which he volunteered in 1879 enabled him to renew his study of Nicobarese speech on the lines adopted by Temple and himself when studying Andamanese. By the time the tour ended his list of Nicobarese words had extended to two thousand, and this tour had enabled him to check his earlier ethnological observations and to extend their scope, with the help of the British Association Manual. The only field in which he had little or nothing new to add was that of objects of ethnological interest. Perhaps the most important result obtained from this tour of duty in the Nicobars in 1879 was that whilst there he was able to render a fortuitous service to the inhabitants of the Andamans. When it had become known there that he was no longer to be the officer in charge of the Homes the distress of the inmates was great, more particularly on the part of the men who had given him most active assistance in securing information. One native who had been the most helpful of all became seriously ill; he died soon after Man left. The

other five had their grief turned to joy when the Chief Commissioner allowed them to accompany Man to the Nicobars. Before he left, Man made his successor at the Homes promise to send by every mail an account of happenings among the Andamanese at Port Blair. These letters he construed in their own tongue to his five companions, and wrote, in their own words, return messages to their friends in the Home. This self-imposed task, simple as it sounds, was in reality far from easy. Like children at school, the Andamanese were delighted to hear home news, but found it boring to have to reply—but the remarks he was asked to transmit often gave him new words and phrases. His patience and trouble he felt to be well repaid, for the letters, when read out by his successor, delighted the Andamanese at Port Blair, and made a strong link of affection between them.

At the close of this Nicobar tour Man took Privilege Leave to Europe for the first time in the course of his service, but he derived little benefit from the change; he contracted a serious illness on the steamer that took him home, and had to spend his brief holiday in England as an invalid. It may, however, have been in connection with this leave that he was proposed by his friend Temple for election to the Royal Geographical Society, an election that took place on March 8th, 1880. He was absent from the Andamans from the 24th August, 1880, to September, 1882, and practically the whole of this period was devoted to the completion of the monograph on the Andamanese. Early in 1881 he was elected a member of the Royal Anthropological Institute as well as of the Royal Asiatic Society, and was invited to lecture to the members of both societies, and complied with these requests. The Anthropological Institute Diploma handed to him is dated 26th January, 1881.

Early in 1882 Man sought the acquaintance of Mr. A. J. Ellis, the President of the Philological Society, and enlisted his aid in settling the Andamanese alphabet. His problems interested Ellis intensely. Before making Man's acquaintance, that eminent scholar had only learned of

the existence of such a language from the translation of the Lord's Prayer into South Andamanese, with Temple's commentary thereon, and the privately printed fragment of an Andamanese Grammar prepared by Temple and Man together. The manuscript of the Grammar which Temple had taken away in 1877 had returned to Man's possession in 1881, and with this material at his command and Man's personal assistance, Ellis was able to prepare an alphabet for writing not only the language of the Andamans but also the language of the Nicobars. Man was also able to complete his monograph on the "Aboriginal Inhabitants of the Andaman Islands" and to read this in instalments at meetings of the Royal Anthropological Institute between March and June, 1882. Before the discussion of the third instalment took place Ellis had already shown his appreciation of Man's labours by devoting the bulk of his Presidential Address to the Philological Society on the 19th May, 1882, to a report on the researches made into the South Andaman language by his friends Man and Temple: what had started as a labour of love with Man turned out to be a most important contribution to philological knowledge.

Man was already preparing to return to the Andamans in August, 1882, when the first instalment of his "monograph" appeared in the *Anthropological Institute Journal*; the second instalment appeared in the same journal in November, 1882, and the final instalment in February, 1883. In the *Athenæum* of the 24th February, 1883, appeared a notice stating that it was intended to reissue all three instalments "in the form of a separate Monograph which, in that shape, may serve as a model for ethnologists." That this intention had been discussed with Man before he left on his return to Port Blair, in August, 1882, is suggested by the fact that during the period between September, 1882, and November, 1883, he wrote the preface to the "separate Monograph," and that during his leisure he prepared a paper read at a meeting of the Anthropological Institute in May, 1884: this afterwards became the "Introduction" to

the monograph, which also, in its final form, included Mr. A. J. Ellis's Report made to the Philological Society in May, 1882.

The evidence of the President of the Philological Society that Man was as conversant with the Nicobarese as with the Andamanese language, secured for him the grant of a subvention from the Government of India for the printing of the Nicobarese Vocabulary that he had compiled. The assassination of his friend and colleague, de Rœpstorff, in the Nicobars in 1883, led him to volunteer again for duty there, and he asked leave to defer the publication of the Vocabulary until he had had a further opportunity of verifying his earlier work and of enlarging its scope. In 1884 Government decided to plant a free colony in the Nicobars in addition to the convict settlement that had been established there in 1869. Man does not appear to have been consulted in regard to this scheme—it may be that its promoters suspected that his experience would have led him to consider the best interests of the Nicobarese were not served by European speculators. If he was not consulted as to administrative acts, he was not hindered in his plans to study the language and customs of the islanders, and as he had by June, 1885, accumulated Privilege Leave for three months, he availed himself of this opportunity to complete his account of the Nicobarese tribes, with reference more especially to that shy and elusive tribe, the Shom Pen in Great Nicobar, with whom he had taken particular pains to establish a friendly personal contact. Whilst in England he handed his first account of this tribe to the Anthropological Institute, and for that had been elected a corresponding member of the Berlin Anthropological Society. The paper was published in the *Anthropological Journal* in 1886.

How many times during following years Man did tours of duty in the Nicobars is not clear. He was there early in 1888, when the Government of India, whose effort to found a free alien colony had failed, resolved to withdraw also the penal settlement established in 1869; he had the

task of writing the final report on that settlement and of reviewing its history. His report and review appeared to have impressed the Government, for his views with regard to colonisation were recognised as the soundest that had till then been received at headquarters.

By this time Man had accumulated a considerable amount of material for an account of the Nicobarese, on the scale and after the style of his work on the Andamanese, and when his tour of duty was ended he must have regarded his linguistic studies as nearly finished, for he had assembled more than twice the number of words he originally wrote and had arranged his findings in the form of "Notes on the Central Nicobarese Language" and a Dictionary that contained nearly seven thousand words, with illustrative phrases, derivative, and compound words. This Dictionary was published as two parts in one—viz., a Nicobarese-English and an English-Nicobarese. As he was entitled to claim three months Privilege Leave as from June, 1888, and did so, Man was able to secure the approval of the India Office for its publication at home. It was published in London in 1889, under the patronage of the Secretary of State for India.

The publication of his papers at different times in the *Journal of the Anthropological Institute* and the accounts given of objects of ethnological interest, brought Man numerous appeals for assistance, and compliance with these requests brought him various tokens of recognition and made the beginning of more than one personal friendship. Among these were invitations to visit certain Continental Museums, to which he seems to have responded both on his homecoming and return journeys to India. On his forty-second birthday he received the Imperial and Royal Austrian Gold Medal; in November, 1888, the Galileo Medal; in February, 1889, an invitation to become Corresponding Member of the Leipsic Museum; the relative Diploma, dated Leipsic, 6th May, 1889, was transmitted through diplomatic channels to the Viceroy of India in 1892, and was handed to Man by the Chief Commissioner on the 30th March, 1892.

Early in 1890 Man was gazetted for the third time to act as Deputy Superintendent at Port Blair. This transfer from an executive to an administrative post proved permanent; on the 15th April, 1891, he was confirmed as Deputy Superintendent and appointed District Magistrate. His administrative capacity proved equal to his executive ability, and Government showed appreciation by recommending him for the order of C.I.E. on the 3rd of January, 1893, also by appointing him to officiate as Superintendent of Port Blair as from July, 1894, until the arrival from Rangoon on the 3rd of August that year of his friend Temple, who had been selected by the Viceroy to be the next Chief Commissioner. Man was made Additional Sessions Judge as from 6th September, 1894. Judicial duties at Port Blair deprived him of opportunities of further local investigation in the Nicobars, while administrative responsibilities left him little leisure to arrange the facts already accumulated, so the continuation of his account of the Nicobar Islanders, the first instalment of which had been supplied in 1888, had to be laid aside until he should take furlough.

Man left Port Blair on the 26th June, 1895, on leave to Europe on private affairs, and did not return to the Andamans until April, 1897. During this period he gave his time to the study of his Nicobar Notes. The points on which he found the need for further local research proved so numerous that they prevented his completing the monograph, though when he returned he contributed to the *Indian Antiquary* a series of "Notes on the Nicobarese," the interest and value of which intensify the regret of ethnologists that his official duties during the last decade of his public service prevented him from completing a work of which these were manifestly fragments.

In 1898 Man's scanty leisure for investigation was further curtailed by his appointment to officiate, for a second time, in the position his father had occupied thirty years before. The only opportunity afforded, after he became an administrative and judicial officer, of adding

first-hand knowledge of things Nicobarese, came when he was entrusted with the task of organising and supervising the Nicobar Census of 1901. This, as it happened, was his last outstanding public duty; on the 13th of September, 1901, he reached the age of fifty-five, and his public service came to an end.

During his official life of thirty years, E. H. Man's dealings with the convict population in the Settlements at Port Blair and Nancowry Harbour were marked by a consideration and a justice that brought him the confidence of successive Chief Commissioners. His various tours of duty in the Nicobars between 1871 and 1875 involved, in addition, responsibility for the regulation of the conduct of a primitive population, some of whose customs were sources of anxiety to the Government of India. This duty led Man to realise, long before those responsible at home for the training of officers to serve in the outlying colonies and dependencies of Britain became aware of the need, that it is desirable to be well acquainted with the beliefs that underlie the customs of a people whose conduct is to be controlled, and that to acquire a knowledge of the beliefs of a race an intimate acquaintance with their language is necessary. Because of his personal studies of their speech and customs, Man's services in the Nicobars between '71 and '75 made him so effective that the Chief Commissioner placed him in charge of the Andamans from '75 to '79. His dealings with both groups of islanders were marked by the same justice that he showed towards the convict settlers; his consideration for both indigenous peoples made him a humane and sympathetic governor. He drew a fine but fitting distinction between the two races; he treated the Nicobarese as backward but well-meaning younger brethren; the Andamanese as wayward but attractive children. Both races gave him their entire confidence and affection. In his study of the two races prior to 1876 his work was that of a gifted and observant amateur whose enthusiasm was restrained by an innate passion for accuracy; after 1876, in association with his friend Temple, he began to develop

the skill of a disciplined philologist and the methods of a systematic ethnologist. Unfortunately, as regards both the races that he studied, it has been the misfortune of both ethnologists and philologists to have been deprived of some of the results that might have been obtained, as the exigencies of Temple's military duties prevented the publication of the Andamanese Grammar and the exigencies of Man's civil career prevented the completion of his account of the customs and beliefs of the Nicobar Islanders. While he was welcomed by experts as one of their company, he remained throughout his career a cultured amateur; the closer his approach to the position of a professional, the more obvious became his disposition to account for and excuse the statements and conclusions of others and the less marked any tendency to blame or criticise statements and views that did not accord with his personal observations. Though when studying Andamanese and Nicobarese speech he manifested all the thoroughness and zeal of his friend Temple, linguistic research remained for Man a matter incidental to ethnological investigation. In so far as natural facts of any kind had a bearing on ethnological enquiry he took an interest in all the sciences to which these facts belonged, but he regarded the connection as accidental rather than as incidental; he even considered Natural History in all its branches as outside the scope of his proper studies. His feeling that he should be able to obtain from students of other branches of knowledge all the expert advice he required was by no means unnatural, more particularly in the case of botany, since he had at his service the official report by Mr. S. Kurz, on the vegetation of the Andaman Islands, with an appendix dealing with the Forests, and a map supplied by the Survey of India. Thanks to the assistance of Dr. (afterwards Sir George) King, Superintendent of the Calcutta Botanic Gardens from 1871 to 1898, Man was in a position to supply botanical identifications of plants enumerated in his own lists, and if the report prepared by Man is imperfect from the botanist's point of view, that only shows he did not send King specimens of every plant

which had an Andamanese name, and that some of the specimens he did send were insufficient to admit of definite identification. If King asked for more complete information Man was not always able to comply with the request, for, when paying brief visits to the aborigines in their haunts, he had often to be content with such scraps as could be secured at the moment. The Chief Commissioner had asked Man, as Deputy Superintendent, to take part in a conference with King; as a result of this Man suggested that trained Indian plant collectors should be sent to Port Blair from Calcutta, Man himself, as Deputy Superintendent, undertaking to ensure their safety and facilitate their movements. When the collectors arrived he did much more than provide escort and transport; his personal regard for King and his interest in the work itself led him to supervise it, and much of their success was due to the voluntary service Man gave to the work. Prior to 1883 botany had been a branch of natural history that had interested him least; after 1891 it became the branch that he assisted most. This was probably accidental rather than intentional; he was as ready to assist the Geological Survey of India, and the Indian Museum owes as much to his generous assistance as did the Calcutta Botanical Garden and its herbarium. Indian students of bats and birds, insects and molluscs, minerals and rocks, were hardly less his debtors than students of plants.

After his return to duty at Port Blair in 1882 Man had to resume an activity that he appears to have thought had ended. How extensive were the demands he complied with may be estimated from an incidental reference to twelve, among others, of the scientific establishments in which those interested could examine any particular object of scientific value in which they were interested; nor was his generosity restricted to India or to the British Empire. Ethnologists in every land were indebted to him, and next to them all students of anthropology.

He appears to have visited Calcutta more than once in connection with the organisation of an exhibition in that

city in 1883-84; for his work on behalf of this exhibition he was given the silver medal struck by the Government in commemoration of the event.

Another favourite pursuit of Man's, followed as keenly after his retirement from office as during his official career, was photography. In nothing was his "infinite capacity for taking pains" more evident, and the artistic merit of his pictures excited the admiration not only of colleagues in the Andamans and Nicobars, but of friends and even experts in this country. Sets of prints from his Eastern plates were prepared for distribution to various museums and societies, and many personal friends had to thank him for unstinted generosity on behalf of charities.

During the last decade of his service under the Indian Government, when he had no opportunity for continuing his study of Nicobarese, Man gave close attention to minor points in the Andaman Monograph, and this care, with what was added after his retirement, completed the work that, in Temple's words, "must always remain a classic."* After he had retired he did much to reduce to order his Nicobarese studies and observations; this task was undertaken less with any thought of continuing the account that had been published in part in 1888, than with the object of assessing the extent to which further investigation would be required, an investigation which he still hoped it might be possible to make if his life were spared. His home at Preston Park, shared with a favourite sister, became the centre of attraction to many friends who loved and appreciated him; of him it could truly be said that he never made an enemy or lost a friend.

After a brief illness he died there, on the 29th September, 1929, having completed his eighty-third year. Some days later a little company of those who had loved him saw all that was mortal of Edward Horace Man laid to rest in Patcham churchyard, and knew their own lives were the poorer for the loss of a wise counsellor and a tried and trusted friend.

* Unfortunately, many of the alterations made have had to be omitted from the 1932 edition owing to the method used for its reprinting.

CHAPTER I

THE NICOBAR ISLANDS

THE Nicobar Archipelago, which comprises twelve inhabited and some seven uninhabited islands of varying size, lies midway between the last of the Andaman Group and Acheen, and forms, with the Coco and Preparis Islands, part of a submerged volcanic chain that appears to connect the Province of Burma with Sumatra. The aggregate area of the group is 635 square miles; the whole population somewhat under 10,000 persons, two-thirds of which number live on the northernmost island, Car Nicobar, where they are as many as 120 to the square mile, whereas in the southern island of Great Nicobar they are as few as 300 all told.

The latest available Census for India Report, that of 1921, says that with the exception of the tribe of the Shom Pen, who live in Great Nicobar, the Nicobarese appear to form one uniform race of Mongolian origin, divided by certain characteristics and variations of language and custom into six groups occupying different islands. Lines of division by language do not, however, always correspond with lines of division by custom, and this Report adopts the system of grouping by language.

The number of inhabited houses found throughout the various islands is given in this Census Report as 1,576, of which some eleven hundred were found in the one smaller island of Car Nicobar; the next largest number being in Teressa, also in the Northern Group. In every island the male population exceeded the female; on the whole the population was found to be slightly increasing, but in a few places it was found stationary, in others definitely declining.

In the extremely careful studies made by the late Mr. E. Horace Man it is stated that among coastal communities he found strong general resemblance, although in spite of that it was possible for a close observer to detect points of dissimilarity sufficiently pronounced to enable him to identify members belonging to Northern, Central or Southern islands, and he adds that "of their affinity with the great Indo-Chinese family there exists no room for doubt . . . it is needless to dwell on all the confirmatory proofs that have been obtained . . . or on the physical resemblance of the people of all the groups to the Malays and Burmese."

The origin of the name "Nicobar" Mr. Man found himself obliged to leave in some doubt, although he had made the most careful effort to find it. After long study of the dialects it was only in one, that in use in the Central Group, that he found a word bearing resemblance to it—viz., *dā-nāhka-bā*—the name of one of the moons in the dry season. "Whether the use of this word was understood by travellers to refer to the name of the island instead of to the name of the month," he says, "is open to question, but I mention it in passing." The first actual use of the word as a name he found in an old book of letters, dated 1711, published in Toulouse in 1820, wherein the author of the letters, Père Faure, writes:

"La principale de ces îles s'appelle 'Nicobar' et elle donne son nom a toutes les autres îles, quoiqu'elles aient outre cela un nom particulier."

Sir Richard C. Temple, Bt., C.B., C.I.E., F.S.A., writing in recent times in "The Customs of the World," Part IX., says:

"In the Nicobars we have a nation of islanders who, many centuries ago, migrated from the adjacent mainland and brought with them many of the characteristics of the continental peoples to which they belonged. But their *habitat*, which made them comparatively isolated, has

caused them to preserve the earlier semi-civilisation of their race intact, while their congeners in South-Eastern Asia . . . have greatly advanced and become affected by outside influences of many kinds."

Many attempts to convert and to train these islanders were made by missionaries who visited them between the years 1711 and 1846; their names and their heroic work were known to and were valued by Mr. Man in his own work. Frequent reference is found in his notes to the records left by Pères Faure and Tallandier; to the work of the Novara Expedition in 1858, the writings of W. L. Distant in 1868, and others, including those of F. de Röepstorff, his own contemporary in the first years of his appointment; and the notes and observations made by them were closely studied and compared with those he made himself.

British interest in the islands is of comparatively recent date; from the year 1758 to 1869 (the year in which they were ceded to the British Government for the purpose of establishing a settlement with a view to protecting trading and other shipping), these islands were, except for a brief break, counted a possession of Denmark. In some "Papers Relating to the Nicobar Islands," found among the Records of the Government of India, it is stated that the claims of the Danes were abandoned, and the British flag was hoisted, by the natives themselves, who had conveyed their wishes to be transferred to the British Crown through merchants at Moulmein. The real truth is that the Danish Government found the islands of little importance, while the British-Indian Government found them to be of considerable strategic value, both for the establishment of a Penal Settlement (in the Andamans) and for the suppression of piracy in these waters. It is interesting to note, however, that the same Government Papers go on to say: "The Nicobar Islands offer sufficient points of attraction to a maritime and commercial Power to make it worth while to attempt their occupation . . . although in any such attempt neither men nor money would need to

be spared . . . the great fertility of the soil would, under cultivation and industry, speedily develop numerous sources of profit, with possibilities for factories for the manufacture of products of the coco-palm, such as oil, soap, cables, cordage . . . boileries on sugar-cane plantations, cultivation of rice, tobacco, etc. . . .”

And it is also interesting to compare these prognostications with observations made in quite recent times, as where H. S. Montgomerie, writing in 1922, records that “the yoke of British sovereignty, formally imposed in 1869, has been of the lightest. . . . It has stopped piracy (which was foreign to the Nicobars, a people really peaceable and friendly, and extremely interesting to students of zoology, botany, and ethnology); one of their most attractive points is the way they have adapted themselves to their present circumstances under British rule; as long as all goes well they are hardly conscious of being ruled . . . taxes and prohibitions weigh more heavily on traders and outsiders than on the natives themselves, the latter being enabled to live their own lives to an extent seldom possible to natives of other states . . . and they have adapted themselves to their circumstances in a quite wonderful way.”

It is satisfactory to know that by wiping out piracy, by checking the trade in liquor, by protecting the natives from being fleeced by the unscrupulous, trading has been made possible and safe for all parties, and that during the seventy or more years that the islands have been under British rule and protection a growing commerce has been attracted to them. The staple commodity is still the coconut, as it has been from time immemorial; a very considerable trade having always existed between these islands and Burma, the Malay Peninsula, and Ceylon. The British-Indian Government has generally opposed the acquisition of land by foreigners, and the Nicobarese do comparatively little to extend the area of their coconut plantations, thus exports have been increased mainly by curtailing the waste that has gone on among them. Further, the presence of a mission and schools, and the

PLATE III.



BATTI MALV : THE UNINHABITED ISLET BETWEEN CAR NICOBAR AND CHOWRA.
It is here that the beautiful hackled pigeons breed.

influence of a Government Agent in residence at Car Nicobar (the island containing fully 75 per cent. of the total population) has had a very marked effect on all the islands. It has led to a decrease in crime and a considerable rise in the standard of living. In a lesser degree that has applied to all the remaining islands, to which nowadays an Indian is posted as Government Agent; as since the withdrawal of the Penal Settlement the islands are seldom visited by European officials. In the outlying islands and in Great and Little Nicobar, advancement has been slower and contact less effective, because population is scattered and access to the islands is more difficult.

No one who knows the islanders will dispute the fact that the Nicobarese people are capable of acquiring and of surviving a much higher degree of civilisation than they have yet attained; nevertheless the process should be a gradual one and should come as much from their own side as possible. To bring them too rapidly into contact with other standards might easily prove disastrous. Nature has been almost too beneficent to them; they have never had to struggle for their existence; all the essentials of life are available with the minimum of exertion. It is true that today they look upon many commodities brought to them by traders as necessities instead of luxuries; that they will prefer rice, for example, to pandanus-paste largely because it is less trouble to prepare; and that many foreign products such as tobacco, knives, cutlery, silver, and pots (other than those manufactured at Chowra), are bought by them. Today, too, many of the islanders are comparatively wealthy, yet they spend their wealth chiefly on things for personal adornment, on electroplate, gramophones, and the like, rather than on better housing and furniture, largely because knowledge of any better way of life is still a closed book to them.

Thanks to the bounty of Nature and to their communistic-cum-feudal social system, no one, however idle, can really suffer want, and it is probably this absence of any struggle for existence that has developed a dislike to making special effort to attain to a higher civilisation.

Sir Richard Temple, who knew them intimately, has said that circumstances are rather to be blamed for the slow development of the Nicobarese character. With no occasion to develop courage, no necessity for working continuously, he is bound to take life easily. Even his virtues of truthfulness and honesty are the less remarkable when he has no temptation to steal and no occasion to be afraid of telling the truth; and it has to be allowed that even the Nicobarese regard the foreigner as "fair game," one whose goods can be taken without giving anything in return, and one who may be lied to without a twinge of conscience.

Even the most casual visitor to the two groups of Islands (Andaman and Nicobar) is struck by the wide distinctions and differences that distinguish them; these are found not only in language and physical characteristics, but in customs and what may be called their civilisations. But when comparing the two it should be remembered that the Andamanese only came into contact with the outer world some century and a half ago, while the Nicobarese have been in contact for several centuries. Trading as they have done with so many different races it is only natural that they have in this long course of time acquired the gift of tongues to a limited extent. It is a point in their favour, too, that they are capable of acquiring, and of surviving, a higher degree of civilization without being prejudicially affected by it.

The attempt to employ native Nicobarese by traders has developed to some degree, as was only natural; today traders engage young men in Car Nicobar to go with them to the other islands, and as members of a crew they visit India and Burma, sometimes staying for a considerable time, acquiring education and making money. While the rupee is also gradually coming into circulation and a refusal to sell goods for cash has been made a punishable offence (as when settling the debt question in 1918 Colonel Douglas laid it down that the rupee was "lawful tender"), barter still remains the principal method of trade. About that time it was decided to tax the Nico-

barese by making traders pay an *ad valorem* export duty on all goods exported from the Islands, and it became necessary to fix the exchange value of the rupee—at that time its equivalent was 200 nuts, thus giving the coconut itself a definite value as well as official recognition as a form of currency.

When wireless telegraphy began to be developed it was hoped that the Nicobar Islands, from their position in the Bay of Bengal, might have become of great use to the Empire as a meteorological station. There had been insuperable obstacles in the way of laying cables, but as none would be needed it was hoped that telegraphic communications might be established along the line of trade routes to warn shipping of the formation and direction of cyclonic disturbances that too often proved disastrous. The project did not, however, mature, and now that every sea-going vessel is fitted with wireless the need for such a station is less, rather than more, necessary.

CHAPTER II

SOME ISLAND CHARACTERISTICS

THE Census Report of 1921 placed the Islands in three groups—*i.e.*, the Northern, comprising Car Nicobar, Chowra, Teressa, and Bompoka; the central, comprising Nancowry, Camorta, Trinkat, and Katchall; the Southern, consisting of Great and Little Nicobar with Pulu Milo and Kondul. The Shom Pen tribe, which we must consider a race apart, inhabit the interior of Great Nicobar, the Report saying very little about them.

In the view held by Mr. Man, this grouping of the islands could not be taken in any sense as a natural division by language nor as correct from a geological standpoint, although it was convenient in other respects. Philologically, he maintained there were no fewer than six divisions (judged by dialects), and geologically only two.

That Census Report showed an increase in the population, the movement of which was by no means evenly distributed; in some of the islands there was decrease, but increase in one more than made up for decrease in another. Conditions affecting the question varied very much. Of the total population more than two-thirds is concentrated in Car Nicobar, the northernmost island. The soil there is fertile, the climate reasonably healthy, the land fairly flat and other factors favourable. There is even a danger of over-population here that may have to be faced some day, although provision for the future is a point far from the Nicobar mind!

The next most closely populated island is Chowra, although there the population has definitely decreased, but this island occupies a peculiar position in relation to

the others. By some means, no one quite knows how, the people of Chowra have acquired an ascendancy over the people of the other islands, who credit them with supernatural powers. And Chowra people mistrust everyone else, since their huts have doors with padlocks, and they allow no one to touch their monopoly of the pottery trade.

The people of Chowra were the first to discover the art of making clay pottery and they have made rich capital out of their skill. On every other island the attempt to make pottery is strictly "tabu," while the spirits have decreed that pork cooked in any other than a Chowra pot will bring evil upon the eater thereof! Thus from Car Nicobar in the North to Great Nicobar in the South, all must make voyages to Chowra to purchase supplies of pots. In exchange they bring foods and implements which Chowra people have neither the time nor the means to make or cultivate. This is all very well, but the curious fact about the pottery trade in Chowra is that long ago the clay-pits that supplied them with material were exhausted and they are compelled to go to Teressa and elsewhere to get it, yet they compel the people of Teressa to buy their pots and forbid any attempt to manufacture any out of their own clay! Chowra people have also the monopoly in the making of special large canoes—racing ones. These they sell mainly to the Car Nicobarese, who have no suitable timber for making their own. This timber, again, can be obtained from other islands, but if so it must be got through Chowra acting as middleman and pocketing the usual handsome middleman's fee!

It is difficult to understand how the people of Chowra gained this complete ascendancy over the other islanders, unless that was, as some believe, the island first colonised, hence is to some degree the parent of the rest. To their claim to be the cradle of the race they have, however, later added the claim of magic.

Chowra is the head of inter-island trade, just as Car Nicobar is the head of foreign trade. Inter-island trade is curious, as each group is more or less dependent on

another group for certain things; threads of trade, vital to the system, run in all directions. Chowra people have good heads for business and a facility for figures only rivalled by their near neighbours, the Car Nicobarese.

A good deal of intercommunication passes by canoe between the different islands, while connection with the outer world is mainly dependent upon foreign ships. Foreign trade is largely in the hands of Asiatics—Indians, Burmese, Malays, and Chinese. It is mainly carried on by means of barter and exchange, the unit of calculation being the coconut. Several million coconuts are exported every year, quite half of which come from Car Nicobar, as going south the supply dwindles. At Car Nicobar, indeed, the trade has warranted the setting up of small shops and factories, a development that may be watched with interest. The progressive Car Nicobarese has, indeed, reached the stage where as an owner of palms he will employ labour for cutting down nuts and transporting them to the stores, and also will build huts to accommodate traders.

The chief exports are, besides nuts, the products of the same, such as oil, fibre, and copra; lesser exports are birds' nests, split cane, areca nuts, sea slugs, ambergris, tortoiseshell, parrots, and monkeys.

Imports are, for the most part, articles of luxury such as ornaments, beads, silverware, glass, salt, matches, tobacco and coloured cloth. There can be no doubt that the liking of the people for cheap European goods leads to their putting themselves in the power of unscrupulous traders, and it is a difficult matter to protect them where account-keeping is carried on chiefly in the head.

Proper cultivation of crops would call for considerable supervision if the resources of the islands were ever to be developed. The natives' own idea of it stops short at clearing the jungle. Mr. Man noted that when he visited clearings where the site was at all hilly no attempt at ridging had been made; nor did he find fences to keep out wild pigs, and very little to indicate on a first approach that cultivation was in progress. Vegetable and fruit-

PLATE V.



HUTS ON EAST COAST, CAMORTA ISLANDS.

growing, however, was general, although weeding and watering was seldom done. As soon as the soil ceased to yield a satisfactory return resort was had to a fresh clearing of jungle. Those who had no gardens of their own bartered for vegetables with surplus pots, paddles, etc. He considered that the jungle-clad portions and the grassy uplands provided soil of most excellent quality.

CHAPTER III

PERSONALITIES AND PROPRIETIES

TAKEN as a race the Nicobarese are decidedly an intelligent people; they pick up languages wonderfully quickly; they delight to copy manners, speech, and dress, and do it with a childlike naïveté that is quite refreshing. At first acquaintance they strike a stranger as being an amusing, simple folk, easy to get on with and well disposed. In any hand-work they are skilful and neat; never, in their simplest operations, are they guilty of slipshod work.

By comparison with many other native peoples they are well housed, and their houses are grouped together in villages, generally well situated. Built on piles, the dwellings are set well away from high-water mark when by the shore, and are, for the most part, kept scrupulously clean and free from odours. While exertion does not come easy to them, they can, when building a new hut, planting a garden or making a canoe, work both hard and well. At other times the most vigorously pursued of all their avocations seem to be the religious exercises imposed upon them by their chief men who arrange the numerous feasts and festivals. Indeed, it might be said that life among the Nicobarese would be very tolerable—but for religion !

Food; for example, is easily come by, for the coco-palm supplies their major requirements and next to that is the pandanus-leram that is equally easily cultivated; the soil yields abundant fruits and vegetables in return for slight labour, while pigs and poultry and fish supply them with “savoury meat.” Providence has indeed been kind to them, for in addition to productive soil they have

naturally beautiful surroundings and a climate that suits their nature and type, although it does not agree for long with people of a white race.

Among the many directly personal and critical observations made by Mr. Man, some that refer to their attitude towards strangers find their place here. He says that "all the islanders except, perhaps, the inhabitants of Chowra and Bompoka, bear a good reputation for hospitality, and this is especially true of the most crowded of all the islands, Car Nicobar. Nevertheless it is usual for visitors to carry with them their own stores when they visit other settlements in case they should not meet with the treatment they expect." He adds that: "In former times, soon after the establishment of the British Settlement, apprehension of our intentions led to a general display of obsequiousness on the part of those who came into contact with us. On our landing at a strange village young coconuts would at once be cut and brought to us to assuage a thirst they assumed to be ever-present, and others would be placed in our boats for us to take away. Or if they came to visit the Settlement, the people would be laden with fowls, limes, fruits, and vegetables, and with other objects that they considered valuable. The fact was they considered us too formidable to be approached without a peace-offering. It was very evident, too, that they were overawed by the magnitude and the manifestly permanent character of our establishment, so were very desirous of assuring our goodwill. However, since they have been satisfied that we have neither desire nor intention of interfering with their rights, and have found that our presence, at first dreaded, has been a benefit to them and has increased their trade as well as given them a chance of providing themselves with many articles for their own use, consumption, and adornment, they have adopted a sort of semi-independence that at times becomes even ludicrous."

It has been the common experience of Settlement officers, when anxious to get some knowledge of the language and customs, to find the natives would plead

any excuse for avoiding an interview or, more generally, show great insistence upon receiving some present in return for any help they might give, in addition to a good meal as well as the tobacco and rum they so much relish. Nor are they particular in keeping to their promises.

This seems to be the right place to tell a story Mr. Man was fond of repeating, as showing the eagerness of a native to make sure of getting payment before he parted with anything of his own. When he was studying the language for the purpose of compiling a vocabulary he found a native who could help him very efficiently if he would, but, rather unfortunately, this man had set his heart on obtaining a silver cup that was one of Mr. Man's own cherished possessions. However, as the man would be content with nothing else, a bargain was struck; he was to buy the right to take away the cup by giving so much time to teaching his own tongue. They tire very quickly, however, as children do, and it was not long before the man got up and demanded to be given the cup that he thought he had quite well earned. Mr. Man, however, placed his finger on a spot on the edge of the cup, giving him to understand he had earned just so far round and no more, and that he must come again and again until he had got the whole way round the rim. By this means he assured the man's regular attendance and finally had to pass over his treasure. Several years after Mr. Man met his treasured cup again, battered out of all shape and recognition, on the grave, presumably, of the man who had "earned" it, as according to their custom it had become "tabu" for anyone else to own it after his death.

When all has been said for the Nicobarese as a race, they are probably as harmless and as attractive a people as can be found anywhere, and the base, treacherous acts of which they are said to have been guilty in former times were probably instigated by lawless Malay and Burmese traders who had used the same methods themselves. It may quite certainly be added that in few other parts of the world would shipwrecked persons meet with greater

kindness and consideration, and there are few people who repay fair dealing and consideration from others with readier response.

In ordinary life the natives do not buy or sell or barter very much among themselves, their transactions being then in the nature of gifts for which they expect a *quid pro quo*, sooner or later. If, for instance, one has been out fishing and has caught more than he and his own people can eat, he would then make presents to his friends. If his garden yields more of certain crops or his fruit is abundant he will give some to his friends, and when he kills a pig he will give away portions of pork. But at the same time he makes a mental note of those to whom he has made gifts, and at no distant date he will expect to receive some equivalent himself.

On the other hand, to offer goods in exchange, say tobacco for fruit, a chicken for an equivalent in rice, would seem to a Nicobarese to be a very unfriendly act, and a proposition not to be entertained for a moment between himself and one of his own race—it might assume a different complexion if he were dealing with a foreigner. The foreigner, for his part, would prefer not to be placed under obligation, and would find life much more comfortable if he might barter for his fruit and his vegetables in the usual way—i.e., that is by equivalent exchange, where he could not purchase outright in coin or coconuts.

Among their rules of etiquette it is never unseemly to ask a favour, and it is always bad manners to refuse any request that it is at all possible to grant. While extremely hospitable, their hospitality is always given more or less with regard to receiving a similar return. Every man has a particular friend or comrade in another village who will give him hospitality when he goes to that village, and to whom he will offer the same in return, especially on the occasion of the feasts. This hospitality may include all the members of the friend's family as well as himself. Although those who are friends of friends may be expected to bring their own food if they come, no one ever dreams of such a thing as expecting a return for

accommodation. A "paying guest" would be a quite incomprehensible arrangement.

While no appreciable influence seems to have been made upon their physical condition by such contacts as have taken place between the Nicobarese and peoples of other countries, it is certain that mental and moral influences have been considerable. The Nicobarese have not been slow to perceive the intellectual superiority of the "kaling," or foreigner, whether European, Malay, Burman, or native of India, as well as the advantage of deriving as much benefit as possible from contact with him by acquiring and adapting such knowledge as they can without doing violence to their own time-honoured customs; it is almost equally certain that they have found that in honesty, truthfulness, hospitality, and certain other virtues, they have little to learn from the alien. If there is one characteristic more than another wherein they are likely to deteriorate from association with foreigners, it is in their independence of spirit. It is noticeable that although possessed of ample means of securing all their simple wants, many of them, including even the headman, experience no sense of shame in asking for some such trifling present as a few annas' worth of rice, sugar, tobacco—things they can so easily purchase from local stores. . . . On the other hand, they can never be accused of repudiating a just claim, or of forgetting a debt even although many months, even years, elapse between the time of its being incurred and the date of its being repaid.

The usual method of account-keeping has been by means of the tally stick, whereon, according to the number of notches made, so would be owing tens, hundreds, or thousands of pairs of coconuts; when a payment was made or more were bought, so the tally-stick was corrected by the tradesman. Only when a debt was fully paid would a tally-stick be thrown away. Nothing but an innate sense of honesty could prevent a Nicobarese from throwing away his stick at any time and so repudiating his debt. On the other hand, the stick often gets

PLATE VII.



HUTS IN NANCOWRY ISLAND, CENTRAL GROUP.

lost, and then the native goes on paying, probably long after the real amount of his debt has been liquidated.

A people who are capable of making calculations that deal with tens of thousands can hardly be thought of as savages, and the Nicobarese have an undoubted natural aptitude for mathematics, and thoroughly understand the points of the compass.

All visitors to the islands have remarked upon their aptitude for acquiring languages or for making at least a colloquial acquaintance with any language spoken by those with whom they come into contact. This is, of course, most noticeable at Car Nicobar, where there is much activity in trade and more foreign visitors. The natives there have excellent memories and quickly reach a standard of education approximate to that attained by the average European of about twelve years of age. It is probable that in studies involving more application and use of the reasoning faculties they would find it difficult to stand the strain, but as long as they are learning what they think will be useful to them their ardour is unabated, and when scholars return to their friends they take every opportunity of showing off their superior attainments.

Their Eden is strictly protected by the British-Indian Government; the native right to sell their produce in a free market is upheld here as elsewhere in India; and as long as trading is carried on under the native plan there is little friction. To put any of the islands within the grip of a trading company would be a step greatly to be deplored, for monopolies of any kind would upset the delicately-balanced but quite effective system of internal trade. To give grants of land, too, would be unfair to natives who hold all property as heritable and as an individual possession. In two islands such grants would be impossible, and in the others any action of the kind would work grave injustice.

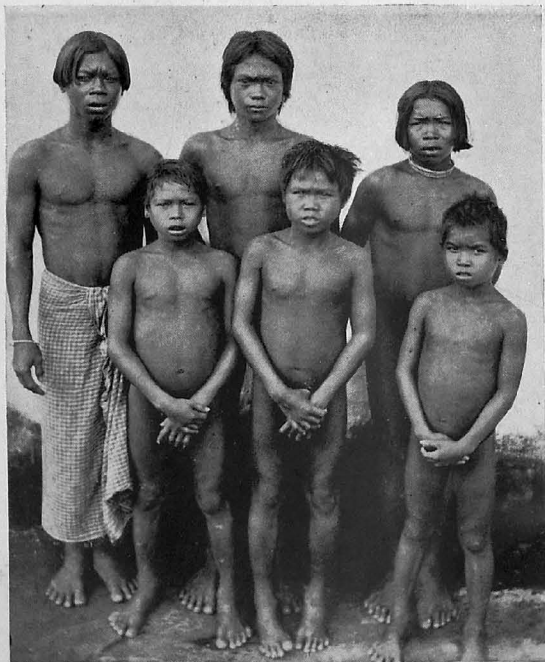
After years of close observation, which included taking measurements and making careful studies of each island group of peoples, Mr. Man noted many factors in physical development and general characteristics that other travellers

would hardly take into account, or would pass by with but slight comment. For one thing, he noticed how well-developed their lower limbs were by comparison with the average Indian's physical build, and decided that this was clearly attributable to their constant practice in climbing the straight coconut tree, a practice that begins very early in life, small boys being required to run up the trees and gather nuts almost as soon as they could balance themselves. The feet and hands were both inclined to be abnormally large, broad, and flat, and this, again, was due to the same practice of laying hold with the flat of the foot and outstretched palm. They walk up the straight stem with the toes turned outwards and the body bent double, precisely like the monkey.

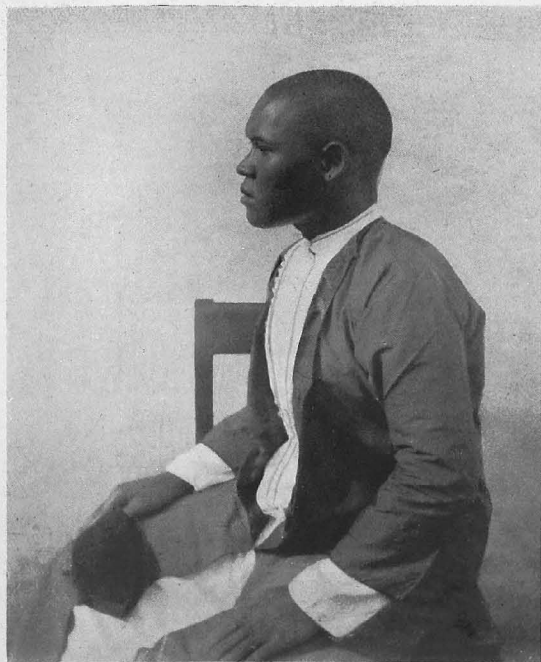
Measurements taken over many years showed that it was the exception to find a man who attained 6 feet in height; the majority were found to be between 5 feet 3 inches, and 5 feet 5 inches in height, while the women averaged round about 5 feet. The average girth round the chest of men was $34\frac{1}{2}$ inches; the play of the chest in no instance exceeded $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches. The average weight among men was 136 lbs., and among women 118 lbs. The average waist measure among men was 31 inches, and of the calf of the leg 16 inches. Unlike the Burmese, they do not admire corpulency and are rarely overburdened with flesh. The Nicobarese seldom carry weights on the head, but always with the help of a pole slung over the shoulders, the weight distributed at either end; nor do they carry any load more than a hundred or so yards, tiring rather easily.

They are unpractised in running and their walking powers, too, are difficult to determine; only under very exceptional circumstances would a Nicobarese attempt a walk of twenty miles, and then he would require frequent rests. When competing in races at sports functions at the Government Settlement they have generally fallen below the average scores reached by Malays or Sepoys, and very few can run far at racing speed. In jumping, too, their achievements are poor. They excel, however,

PLATE VIII.



GROUP OF CAR NICOBAR YOUTHS.



A NATIVE OF CAR NICOBAR (AGED ABOUT
19 YEARS).

Who could read and write Hindustani like a munshi, having lived at
Ceylon since 7 years old.

in tug-of-war, where their muscular development stands them in good stead, and in wrestling.

In regard to both sight and hearing they are a little inferior to the Andamanese, but far superior to most Europeans in both respects. Cases of blindness and of short sight are rare, and their sense of smell is keen. Nevertheless it surprised Mr. Man to find that they had very little sense of *taste* and he attributed this to their constant habit of betel-chewing; in spite of that they were always able to distinguish particular flavours in food and drink—and to detect at once when rum had been diluted !

Because of this practice of betel-chewing the mucous membrane of the mouth becomes so stained that its natural colour is quite obliterated. It spoils the teeth, which become enlarged and encrusted, while the whole shape of the mouth is altered. Fortunately, this practice does not begin until they are nearly grown up, thus the children and boys and girls are often quite nice looking. Nor is toddy-drinking resorted to until near maturity, so in lads and children the lips remain of a good shape even where the mouth is fairly large.

The forehead is well formed, the eyes more or less obliquely set, the nose rather wide; the complexion of the majority is yellowish or reddish-brown; the cheek-bones are prominent, and the features, though flat, are less markedly so than is usual among Malay races. The lobes of the ears are still disfigured by the custom that prevails among the Burmese of piercing them with wooden or cane discs, measuring sometimes as much as an inch in diameter.

The skin is very smooth to the touch, doubtless due to the practice of frequent oiling, but they are also fond of bathing, and use hot water whenever possible. After exercise they perspire freely.

From the fact that the Nicobarese usually rise late and indulge a good deal in sleep during the day it would seem they can ill bear privation in respect of sleep, yet these views have to be modified by remembering that they quite frequently spend the night in spearing fish or in singing

and dancing at some feast, when it may happen that they keep awake for forty-eight hours at a time.

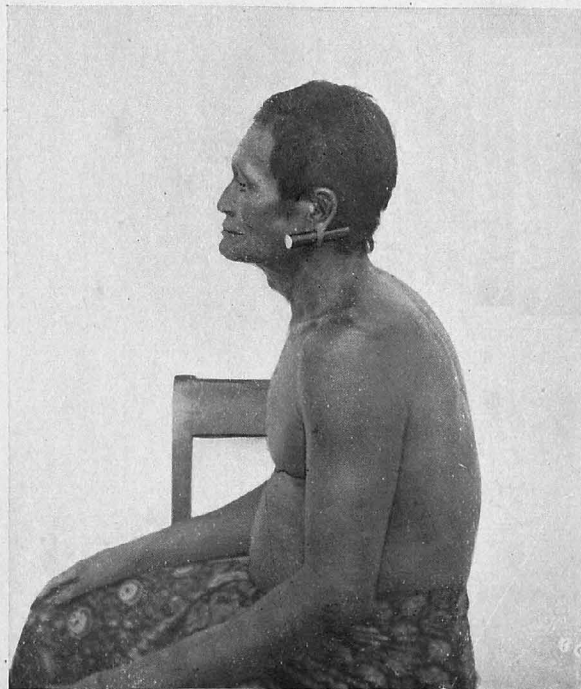
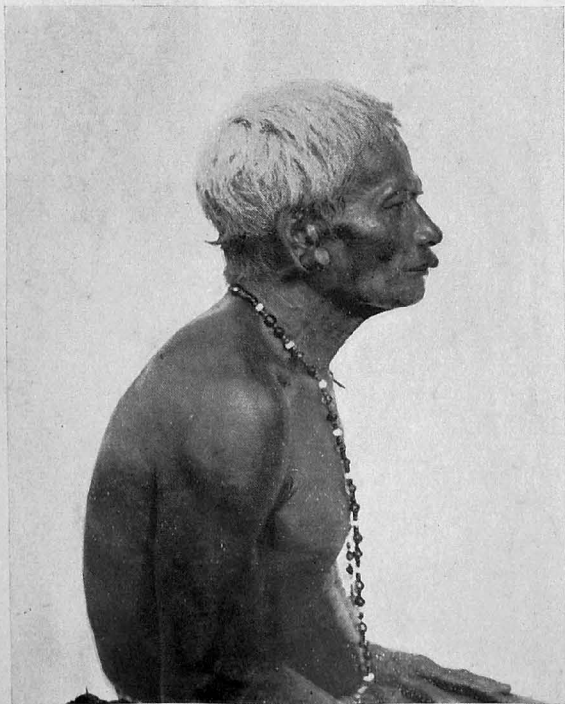
Thanks to the equability of the climate their ability to stand cold can hardly be judged—but they are always careful to avoid direct exposure to the rays of the sun. Mr. Man said that when photographing a group standing in the sun he was always begged to do it as quickly as possible lest they should suffer, and he found their appreciation of a pith hat was not altogether due to their liking to obtain an article of European clothing.

A sluggish gait and slouched bearing is very often remarked among both young and old and throughout all the islands. Even the Car Nicobars are not exempt from this, although active enough in most ways. There is an entire absence of spring and of elasticity; and too often they are stiff and ungainly in their walk. The practice of tree-climbing may account for this to some extent, yet not wholly, but because of this stiffness it is impossible to teach them any gymnastic feats, nor do they possess any tricks of sleight of hand.

In regard to length of life, judged by observations made over many years, the average length of life among the Nicobarese seems to be rather higher than among other native peoples. This may be partly due to their comparative immunity from epidemics such as cholera, typhoid, smallpox, and measles, also to their living in a land of plenty where lack of food is practically unknown. The extreme limit of life noted was a little over seventy years. Old persons are always allowed to reach the natural term of life and are invariably treated with kindness and respect. A few instances have been known of four generations existing in the same family, and in one, where the great-grandmother was well over seventy, she was still able to paddle herself across the harbour and do all the usual domestic duties in the house.

Crossed unions with other races seem to be of comparatively rare occurrence. Unions take place between coastal and inland tribes, but cases of unions between these and the Chinese have been very infrequent, while

PLATE IX.



TYPES FOUND IN THE CENTRAL GROUP (MAINLY OF CAMORTA ISLAND).

with Burmese and Malays they are few by comparison with the amount of inter-coastal trading done between these countries. The most marked results in crossed unions are seen in alteration of the facial shape, the colour of the eyes, and the hair. Puberty is attained by both sexes at about fourteen and thirteen years of age respectively, and the extremes of child-bearing age seem to be from fifteen to forty years of age. Children are very often suckled until they are two years old, owing to the lack of suitable soft food for young children.

Peculiarities of odour which distinguish the various islanders do not seem to be dependent upon age or sex. The natives themselves declare they can distinguish any member of another tribe by his odour, the strongest and most objectionable being the people of Chowra ! Among those who take some pride in their personal appearance this odour is not objectionable at all.

In a description of the Nicobarese, written in 1869, a medical officer, who had served for some years in the Straits of Malacca, said: "These natives have clean, healthy skins of different degrees of darkness, some as dark as the Malay, some of an olive colour." Mr. Man examined a large number and found that the distribution was general and the differences in shade to be met with in nearly all the islands, and that the darkest hued were the Shom Pen, who, as has been said before, have to be considered as a "race apart."

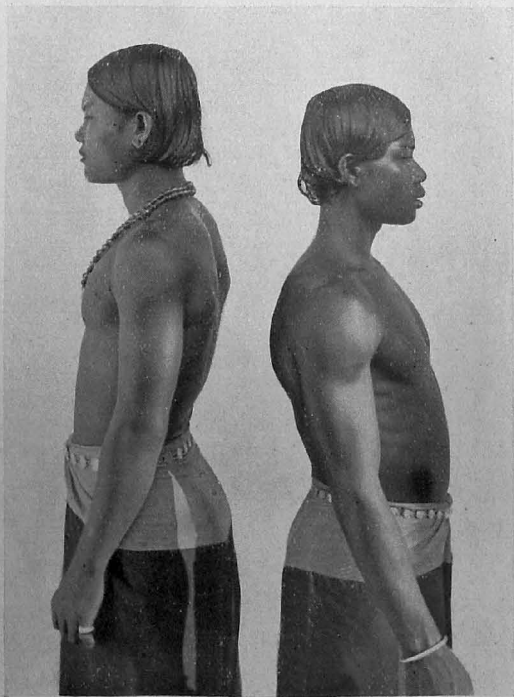
Speaking generally, too, the Nicobarese have straight hair, though in many cases, again, it is wavy, and some even have ringlets. It is fairly abundant, too. Hair on the face is seldom seen.

Hair retains its colour to a quite advanced age; people over fifty years of age show no sign of becoming grey, and the few old people who show white hair are considered very venerable indeed. In its usual oiled state hair looks jet black, but it is really a rather rusty brown. The brush-like appearance of the cropped hair of the natives of Teressa and Bompoka is due to the fashion in those islands of wearing the hair cut close and short.

Even in men and women quite advanced in life the teeth are remarkable for their regularity and freedom from caries, but the habit of betel-chewing thickens the teeth and wears them down, giving an unpleasant appearance to the mouth.

A great repugnance is shown to making unions with real Hindus; this repugnance they share with the various races of Indo-China and Malaya. If asked for an explanation of this the Nicobarese invariably refer to the Hindu as being " 'nother kind of man." Other affinities are the aversion to milk as an article of diet, which is common to all the various races of Indo-China and the Archipelago; the artificial deformation of the head by flattening the occiput in infancy, which is a custom in Borneo and the Malayan Peninsula, but has no place among the institutions of Hindustan; and the practice of sniffing the cheeks—what is known as the Malay kiss—instead of kissing the lips. Burmese courting customs also correspond with those of the Nicobarese, likewise their love of canoe-racing, and their skill in dancing and singing. Still another similarity is their observation of days of quarter and full moon as holidays whereon no work may be done. Last, but not least, is the similar belief in spirits who cause sickness and death, who must be propitiated or scared away, and the custom of making offerings to departed friends at funeral and memorial feasts, in order to gratify the dead person's spirit and secure his peace.

PLATE X.



WOMEN OF CAR NICOBAR.

CHAPTER IV

SOCIAL LAWS, HABITS, AND CUSTOMS

APART from light external rule the Nicobarese have only such laws as are required of them by their own customs, which they follow with that sort of unreasoning faithfulness due to superstition. Mr. Man watched these very closely and he reached the conclusion that:

“The social forces do their work independently of placing men in authority, and make society possible even when there is no visible authority at all . . . the machinery of government,” he said, “is often much less powerful than the public opinion that controls men’s conduct in ways so little conspicuous that they are seldom investigated with the care they deserve.”

After comparing observations made by other travellers with his own, Mr. Man concluded that among the Nicobarese there was nothing that corresponded to the patriarchal system, nor were there any councils that might be said to transact business, but in every village there was one man looked up to by the rest, who took the position of *Headman* or leader. He was given this position on account of his superior intelligence, often because he could speak other languages beside his own, but his position was by no means hereditary nor did it give him any rights outside his own village. Reference was made to him whenever anyone had a complaint against another, and his decision was always accepted. In special circumstances and in cases of sickness the Headman would generally act in conference with the *Menluana*, the Medicine Man or Wise Man, who is sought at once when sickness occurs.

The *Menluana* is credited with possessing more powers

and of having more than ordinary intelligence, with, in fact, powers of divination, so that in cases of wrongdoing he will have ability to ascertain whether or no the accused is guilty merely by looking at his hand. Indeed, his powers of discernment will often compel the guilty to confess, because were he to persist in declaring his innocence he would fall down dead directly the *Menluana* looked at his hand !

In cases of sickness the methods employed are those generally used by all witch-doctors. Exorcism is the first thing resorted to, and the *Menluana* is doctor-priest, his powers being employed in both capacities. When summoned to attend a patient he commences by feeling the limbs, after which he proceeds to announce the measures to be adopted to propitiate the evil spirits and enlist the services of those who are good. The Headman will help him in this, and he is further supported by some of his *ma-a-fai* or students. The *ma-a-fai*, who are novices or aspirants to the priesthood, are a rather uncommon and interesting variety. Anyone who feels inspired may become a *ma-a-fai*, and if, later on, he tires of it, he may conclude " he has no vocation " and retire ; but while he is a student he leads an idle and somewhat luxurious life, with attendants to do everything for him and carry him about in a sort of sedan chair.

When called upon to attend a patient the *Menluana* takes a number of students with him, if he has them, but only he will prescribe. He will communicate with the unseen spirits by means of a monotonous cry kept up for a long time, after that he will inform the relatives of the course the sickness will take ; if it is serious he may emphatically declare that he has learnt that all further interference will be useless, for the patient's spirit has already passed into the keeping of the evil ones ; in more hopeful cases he may announce that, thanks to his influence and his skill, the machinations of the evil spirits and their power have been defeated and the sufferer will be cured. This is only another form of looking beyond the phenomenon to the cause behind it. In the case of a Nicobarese



TWO MAÏ-A-FÂI, OR ASPIRANTS TO THE PRIESTHOOD, BEING CONVEYED IN COVERED CHAIRS FROM ONE VILLAGE TO ANOTHER.

this real cause is one of the spirits of land, sea, or air, beyond the reach or influence of any but the witch-doctor. What happens in the case of death is described elsewhere.

In matters requiring judgment between right and wrong it is the custom for angry men to inflict loss upon themselves rather than upon the real offender. Setting fire to his own hut, hacking the posts, or destroying some of his own property, even mutilating himself by hacking off a finger, are quite usual methods of taking revenge for wrong done, likewise of showing shame or disgust at the misconduct of others. They are also very sensitive of ridicule and of slander, and such offences will rankle in the mind for weeks until some sort of satisfaction has been rendered.

Recognized proprietary rights as to land do not appear to exist, but a man has the usufruct of any land on which he or his blood relations have planted coconut trees, pandanus, or cycas; or land that he has cleaned and made into a garden for as long as it remains cultivated; or to land that has once been held then given up by its original owner provided permission has been asked and given. The only property that goes by inheritance are coconut trees, huts, and canoes. Whosoever plants a tree is the owner of it and his heir after him; the land is not claimed, only the tree. On the death of a man his coconut trees are generally divided up among his heirs. The Nicobar-ese regard as a rich man one who has a good hut, two canoes (one being a large one), a good vegetable and fruit garden, several coconut trees, some pandanus and cycas, a good quantity of spoons and electro-ware, twenty or more pigs, fifty fowls, a few dogs and cats, and ample supply of *dhas*, spears, knives, plates and glasses, Chowra pots, pieces of cloth, some European clothes, a few tools useful in carpentry, and files.

A man may bequeath a share in his property to other relatives besides his children and these would respect his wishes. It sometimes happens that a man inherits a plantation at such a distance from his home that he is un-

able to benefit by it, in which case he may dispose of it to others. Marriage gives a man no claim to the property of his wife. She can dispose of the produce of her trees just as she chooses. Happily-married couples generally share-and-share alike. If a man has married more than once and his wives have owned trees in different places, at his death his children and heirs arrange among themselves regarding the division of his substance, each taking a share.

Strips of jungle are allowed to remain between villages to mark the boundaries. The area of each village is quite clearly outlined in the minds of the villagers themselves, and it is not often that any dispute arises as to lands that lie contiguous to such villages, but small hamlets gather round bigger villages and some of the hinterland belongs to them. The far interior of an island may not even be explored, or it may be considered too swampy and hence malarious and dangerous to live upon.

An assembly of wise men or elders usually meets to adjudicate upon all sorts of social matters such as the holding of festivals or the punishment of crimes. In the case of crimes a fine is the usual punishment, but if it is theft that has to be punished a flogging is administered. Thieves are tied up and flogged across the breech. Many will pay the fine in advance rather than bring the matter before the elders. Cases of adultery are also settled by a fine, sometimes a very heavy one, as infidelity is a disgrace to the honour of married people, although divorce is freely permitted and often arranged by the parties themselves, especially in cases where no children have been born.

Under their own rule the people are remarkably honest—and indeed it would be difficult to know what they could steal where money is seldom wanted or used, where rent and interest on loans is unknown, and where a man would rather destroy his own property, damage his own person, even take his life, than damage or destroy anything belonging to his neighbour, although it is the

neighbour who is in the wrong. Nevertheless, under contact with modern conditions of trade with foreigners and with traders' ships, there is temptation to cheat and defraud and to run into debt, to purchase things they cannot pay for and do not need, and to depart from the truth. The "unchanging East" changes rapidly under conditions that appeal to the lower self, to greed, and acquisitiveness.

But many good customs remain that still protect and maintain their character as a peace-loving, kindly-disposed people. There is, for instance, the custom of adopting children, those of friends, or even of strangers. In Car Nicobar, Chowra, and Teressa, where the population is denser and children are numerous, facilities are given to couples from the other islands to go and adopt young children, even to buy them outright. Trips are made for the purpose, and boys and girls are brought away to be "adopted" for a certain number of years and then returned, or, as in the case of those who are bought, to be set free at about fourteen years of age. In the Central and Southern Islands children are petted and made much of, and adoption often leads to permanent settlement and later on to marriage, and the inheritance of the possessions of their foster-parents. Mr. Man noted that where adoption was the rule the children became as their very own, and were most carefully tended and treated. Parents who part with their children receive substantial presents in return, for those who seek a child with the intention of adopting it are generally among the more well-to-do members of the community. Parents do not abandon all interest in the children they have parted with and periodical visits will be arranged, while at any time a child may demand restoration to its natural parents if discontented.

In regard to relationships, these are usually traced through the male line, but the type of relationship is the same whether male or female. It is usual to speak of the one as "males of one's home," and of the other as "females of one's home." No distinction is made between

maternal or paternal grandparents save to describe them as "the brother or sister of my grandfather or grandmother," as the case may be.

A list, believed to be fairly complete, giving the various terms denoting recognised relationships, has been compiled, a study of which reveals the following peculiarities:

1. That distinct terms are used to denote an elder or younger brother or sister in relation to another of the same sex.

2. That the terms used to denote a brother, sister, uncle, aunt, grand-uncle, grand-aunt, and great grand-aunt, differ in respect to males or females, that is to say, the words *chau* and *tau* when used by a male would refer to an elder or younger brother respectively; when referring to an elder or younger sister the word used would be *ankana-ni*, literally meaning "female of one's home." Sisters, on the other hand, use the word *enkoina* when speaking of brothers, meaning literally, "male of one's home."

3. Although the relationship of a first cousin is distinguished from that of a brother or sister, there is no distinction between a cousin and a nephew or niece.

Property descends equally to children of both sexes; failing children, to the nearest of kin without distinction of sex.

An ordinary friend would sometimes be addressed by his name, but usually some term of endearment is preferred, and even a mere acquaintance would, out of compliment, be called MEWIIH, instead of by his name. In addressing each other, friends and relations are careful to use a term appropriate to the occasion, the choice being determined by the relative ages and standing of the parties. For example:

KAIYU-WA (cousin) is applied to an equal in age or position.

KA-CHAU (elder brother or sister) to one senior to himself.

KA-TAU (younger brother or sister) to one junior to himself.

KA-CHOM is used by children to all old persons.

HEWIH by all old persons to young children, also

KOAN-YOL by old persons to younger ones.

KA-CHIA is used to contemporaries of one's father.

KA-KOAN to one young enough to be a son.

Any particulars about a family are difficult to procure where more than one or two generations have elapsed, as no means are taken to record genealogies.

CHAPTER V

UNWRITTEN RULES AND CONVENTIONS

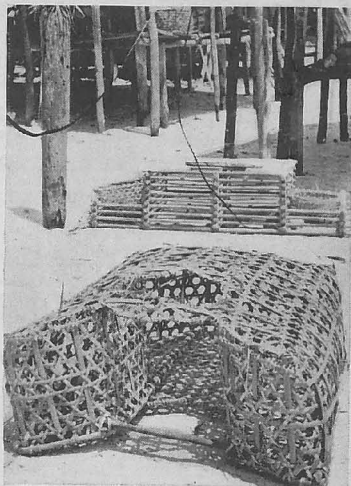
VARIOUS rules and conventions prevail among the island groups, one of which forbids curiosity being expressed regarding the manners and customs of other islanders when exchanging visits. While this shows an unexpected sense of refinement and respect, it also makes it difficult for a stranger to obtain the information he might otherwise gain. For example, when questioning a native of Car Nicobar, the most advanced and "cultured" of the islands, about any place to which he might have travelled in, say, a Government steamer, it would be difficult to get out of him anything more than a few unimportant details on such matters as the wearing of the *neng*, the style of cutting the hair, the type of *kanaiya* or hut used, the method of keeping it clean, and other really quite trifling matters; this is because every visitor is expected strictly to confine himself to the object of his visit, and when that is accomplished, to return whence he came.

One custom, common to all the islanders, is that of betel-nut chewing. To outside observers it is objectionable mainly because it spoils the appearance, but the native, on the contrary, thinks it improves that, and it is a habit they share in common with other races such as the Javanese and Peguans. It is held to allay the pangs of hunger when canoeing or fishing or on long hunts, and to mitigate or even prevent attacks of fever. The custom is not commenced until about the twelfth year; if children take to it earlier they are generally discouraged. In spite of the fact that it spoils the mouth and teeth, causing a black encrustation to form and a distortion of the lips, a man with clean white teeth would have little chance of

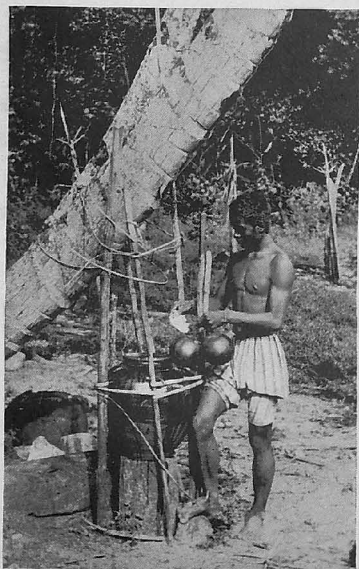
PLATE XII.



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1. THE CYLINDRICAL BUNDLE OF WOOD READY TO PLACE ON A NEW GRAVE : PEN FOR KEEPING A SMALL PIG OR FOWLS. 2. A CHICKEN COOP : CAGE FOR CATCHING CRABS. 3. HANGING WATER-POTS ON THE TREE TO CATCH RAIN-WATER. 4. A COOKING-POT. (COOKING IS GENERALLY DONE OUTSIDE THE HUT OR IN A HUT SPECIALLY GIVEN UP TO THIS PURPOSE.)

obtaining a wife among his own people—he would be considered to have “pig’s teeth” and be only half a man. Mr. Man, in fact, came across an instance of two brothers in the island of Teressa, sons of the Headman, who had abstained from betel-nut chewing right up to their twentieth year, but ultimately found themselves obliged to conform to the custom in order to find favour with their sweethearts. They were both naturally good-looking, fine upstanding specimens of their race, but their white teeth effectually barred all their prospects of connubial bliss !

The quid is usually taken the first thing in the morning and repeated at intervals during the day; “betel-quid-taking” is a period of time by which they reckon, as, roughly speaking, a quid takes about fifteen minutes to chew. A boat journey, for example, might occupy five or ten “betel-quid-taking” periods.

Smoking is a habit that is allowed from quite an early age. Several kinds of tobacco have been introduced by traders from different countries, but the variety most largely used is the Chinese that is made up in paper packets. The generic name for all varieties is *tabaka*. Until recent times tobacco was cultivated only in Teressa, of seed obtained from Burma, and was generally smoked in the form of cigarettes. Even the Shom Pen smoke tobacco and have learned to manufacture cigarettes by combining tobacco with dried leaves and rolling them into strips some 3 or 4 inches long.

While tobacco is cultivated or imported, the betel-nut is found in plenty in all the islands, and as the natural crop is in excess of local requirements a fair quantity of nuts are exported to other countries by traders who come to the Nicobars with goods from Malaya and Burma and other states.

The use of coconut oil as lubricant is general among the younger men and women, who apply it to their bodies and hair freely and then wash off the greater part with water. Some disapprove of oiling their skins and use a paste made of coconut refuse in the form of a soap which

they rub on and then wash off with water. Many are content to use water only. At Car Nicobar oiling of the hair and body is confined to the younger men and women.

The practice of flattening the occiput and forehead is considered to be of the highest importance among the communities of the Central and Southern Islands, but among the Northern group (in Car Nicobar especially) it is not observed and indeed meets with but little sympathy. Mr. Man watched the process and described it in detail, and he says:

“Seated cross-legged on the floor of the hut, near the fire, the mother lays the infant (boy or girl) on its back across her knee and with a small pillow or calico-pad under its head; warming her hands from time to time at the fire, or over the flame of the rude lamp if night has set in, she gently presses the brow with the palm and outstretched fingers of both hands, for an hour at a time, taking care the while never to exert such force as to cause the little one even a momentary discomfort. Indeed, the operation has a soothing effect, for the child usually falls placidly asleep during the process. The desired result is, of course, produced only by very slow degrees, and the custom is seldom abandoned until the child is old enough to run about and to resent the enforced inaction and confinement to one position; the skull is also, by that time, hardly soft enough to be affected by gentle measures. The sole object of the custom is declared to be the improvement of the appearance in after years; no other benefit seems to be gained by it, and no evil consequences seem to ensue from it. From the care taken to keep the infant as much as possible on its back, whether on its mother's lap or on the floor, the risk of unilateral deformities being produced is minimised . . . the Northern Islanders, however, prefer the head should retain its natural shape, and, as far as can be ascertained, there are no superstitions to be found to account for the observance, or non-observance, of the custom on other grounds.” It certainly tends to induce the hair to grow close to the

head, whereas in the Northern Islands the women encourage it to grow erect on the scalp by raising it and combing it, and as they also keep it close-clipped the people of those islands have bristly wigs.

Another custom, common throughout the adjacent peninsula of Malay and from the borders of Assam to the coasts of Borneo, is that of deforming the ears by inserting large wooden discs or cylinders in the lobes. This deformation is regarded as an improvement on nature, and a decoration, and is adopted throughout the whole group. If it were not so regarded the discomfort it entails would long ago have led to its discontinuance, although it is commenced in early infancy. "This practice," said Mr. Man, "is one of the many which, in my opinion, establishes an affinity between the Nicobarese and the great Indo-Chinese family." Other forms of self-mutilation, and the practice of producing scars on any portion of the head or body by way of ornament, the adoption of distinctive tribal marks, circumcision, even the almost world-wide custom of tattooing the person, are non-existent in the islands.

Their remarkable conservatism and superstitious regard for traditional custom and local practices, handed down from remote times and still faithfully observed, have made attempts to teach them difficult, in spite of their receptivity. In teaching them anything the attention has continually to be brought back to what is being taught, and the learner has to be stimulated and encouraged to apply himself to the matter in hand. Yet his mental capacity is of no mean kind and his retentive memory is remarkable. The native Nicobarese is far quicker to acquire English words and terms and to use them intelligently than the Englishman is to learn the native language! The quickness with which they "tot-up" figures is truly amazing, and there will be little need to doubt their accuracy. The Southern islanders are all, however, behind both the Central and Northern natives in mental capacity, the Car Nicobarese being by far the most advanced, equal, indeed, to any average Burmese

or Malayan in constructive skill, mental quickness, and in general ability. They quite easily acquire a sufficient number of words and phrases in any of the languages which they hear from traders and foreign visitors.

Among tribal peculiarities those of *attire* are certainly prominent. The *neng*, the sash or loin cloth that with men is wrapped about the middle of the body, is made of a strip of coloured cloth or calico about 2 yards long. It is folded to a width of between 3 and 4 inches except at the ends; it is passed round the waist and between the legs, and secured at the back, leaving the ends hanging loose. At Car Nicobar and Chowra the *neng* has the ends and all neatly folded and stitched down; in other islands it is more loosely worn. Even the Shom Pen have adopted the *neng*, but as they wear it badly they are never considered to be "properly dressed." It often happens that the native of one island may be distinguished from one of another isle simply by his manner of wearing the *neng*, and by the colour of the cloth used for it.

As may be supposed, in more recent times, the more well-to-do and the more intelligent natives who have frequent intercourse with traders and Europeans, do not rest content with this slight amount of clothing, especially when they go to visit strangers. On such occasions these advanced thinkers are usually to be seen wearing a curious assortment of foreign habiliments, such as the Burmese *lungi*, the Malay *sarong*, loose Chinese drawers, and various jackets. Especially do they affect articles of European dress, boots, hosiery, and gloves excepted. The appearance of a party of headmen visiting a Government vessel or station official may be better imagined than described, since one may wear a discarded silk hat, a naval commander's coat and a pair of trousers inches too long; another will consider himself beautifully dressed in riding breeches, a pith hat, and a red coat. The possessions most coveted are silk hats, cloth coats, and trousers; and such articles are not parted with by their original owners until long past wear, and they will grace every important occasion in the meantime.

No garments are ever removed when visiting; both men and women have a sense of decency that forbids them to remove or change any garment in public, and these are, in fact, seldom taken off except for bathing. The *neng* is rarely abandoned even when European garments are worn as well, and it is taken off about once a month only, or according to the ideas of cleanliness that its wearer may have.

The ordinary costume of girls and women from the time they are able to run about is a species of skirt, generally made of cotton material, which reaches from the waist to just below the knee. Occasionally a piece of material of greater width is worn that enables a woman to fasten it from below the shoulders to cover the upper part of the person as well. Sometimes a large coloured handkerchief is loosely thrown over the shoulders; sometimes a cotton jacket, or even a cotton gown is seen, and is counted one of a woman's great possessions. These things are obtained either from traders or are copied from a pattern belonging to a neighbour.

On festal occasions the Nicobarese male wears a much ornamented *neng* and the female a much ornamented petticoat, or one consisting of strips of coloured cloths arranged in neat design and sewn together, but these are worn over, not instead of, the customary garment.

A headband, called a *shanoang*, is sometimes worn by way of special ornament by young persons of both sexes, and always by bachelors. A head covering is never worn because of the sun, but a plaited sort of "sou-wester" is worn during wet weather, and in the Central Islands two spathes of the wild areca are stitched together to use as protection from the rain, much as we should use an umbrella.

* * * *

A few characteristic expressions that can be put on and put off according to the humour of the moment, and that can be used "as a cloak" either to hide or express the feelings, may here be mentioned.

Astonishment is expressed by the eyes being widely opened and the eyebrows raised.

Anger is shown by frowning and glaring at the object that has excited wrath.

Shame is denoted by averting the head, and it would seem that indications of blushing are found among the young and sensitive, among whom it shows itself in face and neck.

Amusement, aroused at seeing something comical, or at the result of a practical joke, is expressed by waving the right hand vertically in front of the face, while the individual staggers about, convulsed with laughter.

Delight and *pleasure* are expressed by clapping the hands as well as by the usual signs of sparkling eyes and smiling lips.

Cheerfulness.—When in good spirits the eyes sparkle and the corners of the mouth are drawn back; in pronounced joy laughter and tears are often seen together.

Perplexity.—When puzzled or at a loss to understand why things should be so, the skin about the eyes and forehead is slightly wrinkled.

Fright.—This is evinced by a blanched face, the eyes widely opened, and the limbs trembling.

Disgust.—This is shown by the corners of the mouth being drawn down, the head averted from the object towards which the eyes are at the same time directed.

Contempt.—This is expressed by a sudden jerk of the head accompanied by a slight protrusion of the lips and raising of the nostrils with expiration. When anyone wishes to express that he is not responsible for what has been done, he folds his arms and shrugs his shoulders.

Obstinacy is expressed by closing the mouth firmly and clenching the teeth.

Defiance, by raising the head and muttering words indicative of contempt. When wishing to threaten, a man raises his fist as though claspings a spear, and clenches his teeth.

When *guilty* sly and jealous expressions are to be detected in the eye.

In *beckoning* the head is shaken vertically, and an arm is held out with the knuckles on the hand uppermost, and the fingers are waved towards himself.

In *affirmation* the head is nodded vertically and is turned aside or shaken when desirous of expressing negation.

CHAPTER VI

HUT, HEARTH, AND HOME

THE picturesque appearance of Nicobarese villages is most attractive, for they seem to nestle among palm and pandanus trees, while the practice of striking tall poles, some 40 or 50 feet in length, in front of the huts, ornamented with fringes of bamboo or sugar-cane leaves placed at regular intervals, adds much to their picturesqueness. No more healthy or desirable sites for villages could be found than along the beaches and among the dune forests that consist, for the most part, of palm trees. In the Northern group of islands precautions are taken to keep the villages clear of undergrowth, to remove all refuse and rubbish far away, and to keep each dwelling very clean, its surroundings well swept and sanded. In the Central and Southern groups such precautions are less observed and care is not taken to bury the dead at a sufficient distance away nor to keep down the undergrowth, hence these natives suffer from fevers and other ailments from which the Northerners are generally immune.

Like all peoples who inhabit coastal and malarious districts, the Nicobarese erect all their dwellings, even temporary ones, on piles, by which the floors are raised from 5 to 8 feet above ground level. Among the Northern peoples two trees are preferred for providing poles, both yielding stems so stout that they can be split into two and even four pieces, which are cut, rounded, and shaped, to make posts about 10 feet long, of which four are first driven into the ground. The floor beams are secured on to these posts, auger holes being made in them through which wooden bolts are driven to secure this outline

PLATE XIII.



THE NEW CANOE: A MATTER OF FAMILY IMPORTANCE.

framework. But before continuing to make the floor they construct the framework of the roof, which has to be done on the ground. The long stems of the *Areca augusta* are used for this, and they are placed perpendicularly, about 18 inches apart, and lashed with split cane, these lashings being repeated at intervals of 18 inches or so in parallel lines until close to the top of the structure. This framework is further strengthened by lashings outside of split bamboo placed in rows close together, and on the inside with corresponding rows of rattan cane lashed to the frame. When this framework is completed men are summoned to assist in raising it to its position, and it requires quite a large number to do this. They are rewarded for their help by a feast of pork. After the framework is in position a grass thatch is put on, then the flooring of the hut is taken in hand. In huts in Car Nicobar one finds raised beams crossing the floor which make a common "pillow" for the inmates when they sleep at night. Still another thing noticeable here is that the central portion of the floor is planked while the remainder consists of split bamboo tied together with cane. This gives the inmates of the hut a choice of places to sleep on—a cool one when the night is close and a warmer one for windy nights. A grating is placed inside the hut near the apex of the roof, on which spare pots and other things are kept, and smoke passes out through the top.

On the floor farthest from the entrance a fireplace about 5 by 4 feet is made; it is sunk into the floor, and although made of wood is rendered quite safe from catching fire by being lined with sand. On this stones are placed to form a stand for pots, and firewood is put in between the stones. In the Nicobarese house there is, therefore, only one room, but it is large and lofty. Its greatest inconvenience is that all light, also ventilation, has to come through the door and the floor spaces where the bamboos come round the edge. Most cooking is done outside or in a separate hut, yet as a fire is often burning within everything above gets blackened with smoke in course of time;

much spare food, such as rolls of bread-paste, is kept on a shelf just above the fire as well as spare coconut drinking-essels, etc.

Another feature is that a board is placed some short distance below the floor of the house and attached to each post. This is the sort of barrier used, and a quite effective one, to prevent rats and mice from getting into the house and into the thatch. Besides the superior hut, it is usual to build one or two inferior ones, one of which will be used for cooking, another for a workshop, perhaps one for a hen-roost with accommodation for pigs. Underneath the superior hut are placed platforms, or settles, where the family and friends sit, work, talk, even sleep, at any time of the day or night. The women do much of their work here, such as mixing the pandanus paste and cleaning vegetables, etc.

Ornaments inside the hut are mainly tusks, Burmese teak-wood boxes holding clothing, lacquered boxes, while electro-ware, where such is possessed, is displayed on the walls. Dried coconut shells hold water, but also they are used to hold coconut oil to feed rude lamps, although in more modern times kerosene has been purchasable from traders and modern lamps are in use. A village is sometimes quite well lighted by means of series of half-shells of coconut placed in a crescent shape, the end of one shell overlapping another, so that when one is burnt out the other catches alight and so the "torch" is passed on; these give a good light for a space of three or four hours at a time. It is astonishing how much work, and play, takes place at night, and how much sleeping is done by day, but the warm, rather moist climate, accounts for this.

Some authorities say that the average number of huts to a village is from 10 to 12, although as few as 3 may be found. On the other hand, in Chowra, where population is dense, as many as 43 have made up what was considered a model village, the huts being symmetrical and substantial, and very orderly. In Car Nicobar a village might average from 60 to 100 huts, but these would be set

in groups of 3, 6, or 10, each group separated from the other by a belt of trees or gardens. In regard to the shape adopted for the roof there are four patterns that find favour: (1) the round beehive shape, such as prevails without exception at Chowra; (2) a modification of this beehive style; (3) a curved outline resembling the tilt of a wagon; and (4) this brought to an angle at the top with a wooden ridge-pole, similar to the form met with in "civilized" life. Finials are added to all round huts in all the islands. The Car Nicobarese consider the huts found in the Central group of islands are very inferior to their own; the ordinary visitor, however, will think the latter are the most picturesque both as regards build and setting. The former are more substantially built and are kept cleaner, but the latter, being clustered on a sandy beach, canopied by lofty coconut trees and backed by dense jungle, with *kanaiyas* placed in a row along the foreshore, make a very pleasing picture.

In the smaller islands of Bompoka and Teressa the villagers fill baskets with their refuse and throw it on the foreshore, leaving the sea to take it away by degrees. A festival is also made the occasion for cleaning-up the village by burning great bonfires. In villages in the Southern Islands litter of all sorts, especially of broken coconut shells, is left to lie on the ground even close up to the huts. If reminded how much cleaner their Northern neighbours are in this respect, the Southerners will reply that the people there are so numerous they can afford labour for keeping their villages clean!

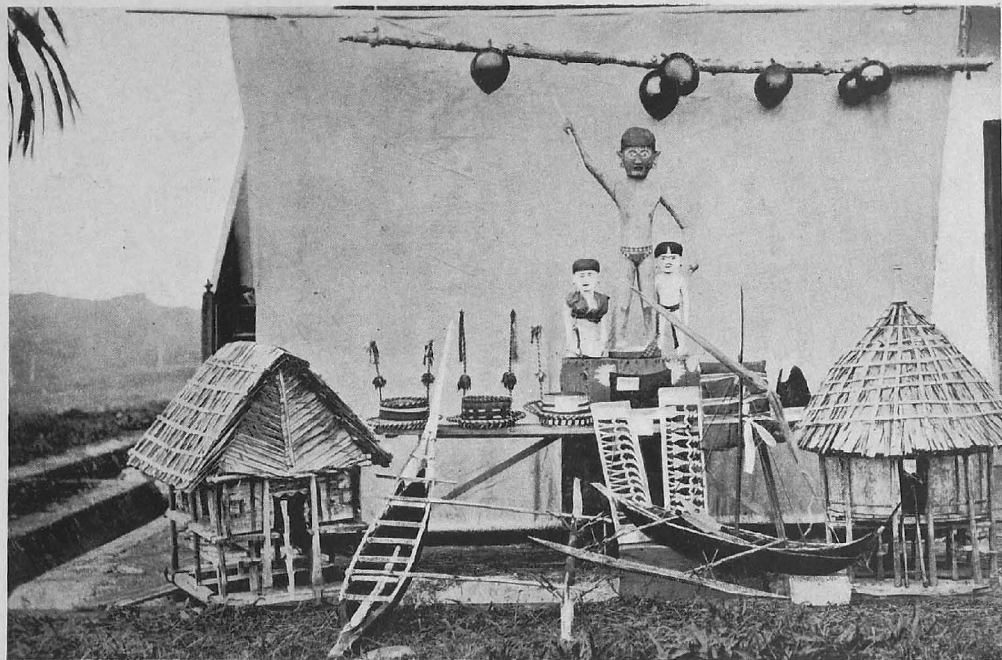
A point of interest about all huts is that there is no fixed rule as to the position of the entrance to them; in the case of those nearest the sea the entrance is generally facing the sea; in many instances entrances are parallel with the sea-front; inland the entrances are made nearest to the road or to some open space. The door into the hut is reached by a ladder, quite well made, as a rule. The Nicobarese do not object to strangers coming into their houses while the ladder is in position, but if it is removed it is a signal that the family is not to be disturbed.

Every detail of home and village life is ruled by superstition. After a new hut has been built (a thing that takes some time) the day and the manner of taking possession, the number of people who shall live in it, and the way they shall occupy it at night, are all matters that the spirits decide for them. A special post on the east side and nearest to the doorpost is occupied by spirits, the good taking that portion of this post that comes above the floor, the malignant or evil spirits that portion beneath the floor. No doors should come on this eastern side, nor should the family sleep facing the east, but should have their heads that way and their faces towards the west.

Generally speaking, all the houses in one group belong, more or less, to one man in a representative capacity, his relatives, dependents, labourers, and friends being housed by him and fed as a matter of course. The leading man and his own family may live a little apart from the rest, but both sexes ordinarily sleep in the one large room of the house. A separate hut may be built nearer the sea for any member who is sick, and a wealthy Nicobarese may own a kind of holiday home or "seaside bungalow" as well as his other huts. On the beach, some distance away from the village, will be the birth house or houses, where a prospective mother goes, taking her husband with her to wait upon her until such time as the infant is born and has attained a certain age—it may be three or even six months. If a birth were to take place in one of the "good" houses that would become ceremonially unclean and have to be pulled down and rebuilt. Some of the richer Nicobarese own their own birth house.

A mortuary or death house is often built side by side with a birth house, but more usually this is at the entrance to the burying ground or cemetery.

PLATE XIV.



ARTS AND CRAFTS.

The huts and canoes are models made by the Nicobarese for museums. Slung on the bamboo rod at top are the coconut water vessels in common use. The figures in centre of picture are *kareau* or fetiches in the form of carved human figures, kept in the huts to scare away evil spirits. On the table are models of the peculiar hats placed on disinterred skulls at memorial feast.

CHAPTER VII

ARTS AND CRAFTS

POTTERY.—Indian pots and jars find their way into the islands, but everyone professes to *prefer* Chowra pottery, largely, it would seem, for fear of incurring the resentment of the local manufacturer by patronising a foreign article! Even so, as the supply of suitable clay is in danger of being exhausted, it is not unlikely that local manufacture may have to be altogether abandoned, although it is the shape and form of the local pot that makes it preferred, rather than the fact that it is a native production. Indian pots have narrower necks and from their shape are unsuited to boiling the pandanus, therefore they have to be kept for boiling meat, rice, etc., whereas the Chowra pots can be equally well used for all purposes.

Chowra pots are made in six sizes, the largest measuring 27 or 28 inches across, the smallest from 9 to 10 inches across. There are also five different sizes in *tafâl*, that is small pots used for boiling water and eggs. The largest pots are only used on feast days, for boiling pork; the next largest are used at all times for pork, pandanus, and cycas paste, while the smaller ones serve for cooking fowls, rice, vegetables, etc. None are ever used for cooking fish.

With the exception of the small *tafâl*, all the pots are made with edges curving slightly inwards; they may be roughly described as of an oblate-spheroidal form, and their want of uniformity is easily explained by their crude method of manufacture. Not many people have an opportunity of seeing this, not even natives of other islands, so that Mr. Man's personal observations have a

special interest as he witnessed the process and made his own notes.

Chowra people will never consent to satisfy idle curiosity and soon give strangers to understand that their room is preferred to their company, and they will deliberately mislead when they cannot get rid of enquirers, which makes enquiry doubly difficult. Mr. Man counted himself fortunate that on one of his official visits to the island he was able to photograph the different stages of manufacture, as he found some busily engaged in shaping while others were firing pots. He watched how, after clearing a quantity of clay from stones and other extraneous matter, it was mixed with fine sand until of the proper "consistency." Then an operator seated herself on the ground—it was generally the women who did this work—and set before her a board on which she laid a ring or hoop made of coconut leaves tightly bound together; at the bottom was placed a piece of plantain-leaf to keep the clay from sticking to the board. Taking one or more handfuls of clay, the base of the pot was shaped in this "bowl," after which rolls of clay were built up round after round, until the required dimensions had been attained, the operator all the time turning the pot round and round, moulding it with her hand and shaping it by her eye. Long practice made her quick to detect any error in shape or form through excess or deficiency in the rolls. When the required shape had been obtained the vessels were set aside on a raised platform to dry for two or three days, the time required depending upon the size of the pot and the state of the weather; only the small *tafâl* are ever moulded, fired, and trimmed in one day.

When a pot is dried sufficiently to allow of trimming, superfluous clay from the inside is scraped away with a hard shell, after which it is turned over and any external excrescences are removed by using a fine strip of bamboo that is freely moistened with water, the hands of the potter being kept moist as well. Finally the bamboo is used over the inner surface also, and the rim is trimmed to as uniform thickness as possible with the same piece

of bamboo. Once more the pot is placed on a wooden platform and is left to harden for another eight or ten days before it is considered ready for firing. A sort of primitive kiln is then prepared in an open space near at hand, and bits of broken pottery are stuck in the ground, a few inches apart, in such a way as to form a stand for each pot placed bottom upwards with the rim resting on these potsherds. . . . In a space under each pot is put a layer of fine wood ash and some scraps of coconut shell and bits of firewood, and on the upturned base an object resembling a wheel is put, against which more brushwood is placed, but so that no pieces touch the pot. Fire is then lighted underneath and outside, but it never comes in actual contact with the pot. The flames are fanned by one or two people who use leaves and sticks both to encourage the burning and keep the flames from touching the pot until it is held to be sufficiently baked. It is afterwards carefully lifted by means of sticks and left to cool off on a bed of fine sand where, before it is cooled, it is given the black stripes without which no Chowra pot would be considered finished. This painting is a very simple process, being accomplished by laying strips of green coconut husk on the hot surface; a few seconds are sufficient to print the requisite number of stripes down the sides and along the inner and outer edges of the rim.* While employed in this printing the "artist" carefully avoids touching the pot, but by way of giving a final finish to the work a handful of moistened strips of bark are passed over both inner and outer surfaces, and this imparts a sort of light copper colour to the parts not already stained.

In order to identify pots it is usual to mark them before they are fired with some device peculiar to each maker, care being taken not to infringe upon the marks of others. Some sharp-edged tool or spear-head is used for this purpose.

* The device of black-stained stripes on the outer rim and sides of their pots is also traceable to the original use of wicker work frames or moulds in the manufacture of these cooking vessels.

It would be difficult to ascertain the number of pots made in any one year, for having regard to the number of people employed it must be considerable. The largest demand seems to be for the second and third sizes, while the smallest sizes of *tafâl* are sold in neat little bundles of five together, called "kamintap" or "set of five."

Experience has taught the natives that to ensure the serviceability of any pot for a length of time it is desirable to store them for a year or two in the heat and smoke of the hut; new-made pots are, therefore, placed bottom upwards on the lattice-work platform with which most huts are furnished in the space under the roof, where the combined action of heat and smoke renders the pot harder and makes it durable. When so hardened they are reckoned to be good for a year's hard wear, whereas freshly-made pots are apt to "fly" and become useless at the first trial.

No special vessels are made for use at funerals, but it is usual to place two large and four small pots on the grave of a deceased person, and to leave them there for some six months, after which they are thrown away into the jungle with other belongings of his. The Nicobarese have never been known to make clay figures of men and animals. The great event of the year in Nicobarese life is the annual visit to Chowra for the purchase of household pots. Boys are not considered grown-up until they have made this journey in a canoe originally purchased from Chowra, all other canoes being forbidden to land there. They are, of course, careful to choose a time of calm, fine weather, and the amount of preparation and of ceremony required is quite considerable. This can best be described in the words of a comparatively recent visitor, Rev. G. Whitehead, who, writing in 1924,* says:

"When the time for starting comes near they singe the canoes with torches of palm-leaf in order to harden the wood. The village canoe is sure to be taken on this trip, and there may be other canoes as well. They put new cross-bars on the canoe and fasten them in position with

* "In the Nicobar Islands." Seeley, Service and Co., Ltd.

bands made from the leaves of the thorny palm, which have been split and shaped for the purpose. After this they bring *chamam* (the broad spathe of the giant palm, also used for bedding and for making crude boxes, etc.), and sew it on the canoes to cover up the interstices between the canoe proper and the stick that runs along the top of the cross-bars. By thus making the gunwale a few inches higher they prevent the waves from splashing so easily into the canoe. The outrigger is taken down to the beach, with new bamboos to connect it with the canoe, and all are tied carefully into position, the masts also.

“The people who are going get themselves ready. Some of the sons are going for the first time to Chowra; such youths bear the distinctive name of *ra-mal*. They also get ready their goods for barter—cloth, tobacco, and *dāhs* or choppers, which they have bought from other traders for this purpose; also yams of various kinds of their own growing; and they prepare the food they will require on this trip.

“They then sacrifice, by cutting their throats, some cocks which must have big combs, and let their blood drip on the heads of boys who are going to Chowra for the first time. After this all feast together, in a “good” or ceremonially clean house—normally the village hall—and eat the flesh of the fowls that have been sacrificed. Then they sing songs in praise of the canoe while waiting for the tide to ebb.

“They tie to the masts baskets made from *chamam* which contain the tobacco and cloth which they take for bartering, and also smaller baskets made from the spathe of the areca palm—these latter contain their food. On the canoe rigging of their craft they tie bamboos (perhaps 2 feet in length and $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches in diameter); these contain coconut oil wherewith to rub their bodies if it is very hot, or if it rains, on the journey.

“Then they launch the canoe and paddle out to beyond where the surf breaks, and anchor there. After this the people swim out to the canoe with their yams and with

the coconuts they are taking out with them for food and drink during the trip; or, if the canoe is a long way out, they will take these things in small canoes, making several journeys. Each man has marked his own yams which he is taking for barter, but the coconuts they take for use are not marked.

"All who are going on the trip wear garlands made of ripped young banana leaves, which are plaited; they also wear round their necks a cord from which hangs a small packet of an odoriferous root something like ginger. This root is wrapped in cloth.

"They will have with them in the canoe some sour fruits strung together, such as limes, wild oranges, wild brinjals. They say they take these as a protection if there should be a great many fish; for they will throw these at the sharks and porpoises that may come around them, and which might easily upset the canoe, or at least break the outrigger, when the canoe would at once become unmanageable. They believe the big fish in their gluttony will swallow whatever is thrown at them, and if they find the food is mighty unpleasant will move off. But they take with them, also, a few big spears, as a further protection in case the big fish should prove obstinate and not move away.

"The distance is 40 miles, and there is often a strong current running. A favourable crossing takes from fifteen to twenty-four hours, but sometimes they are as long as three days on the journey. . . . When they reach Chowra the people come down to the shore to meet them, and some will come off in small canoes to greet old friends and anticipated customers. . . . Chowra people generally know a little of the Car Nicobar dialect, and the others know something of the Chowra dialect, so they get on tolerably well. . . .

"A house on the beach is set at the disposal of the visitors who immediately set about carrying up their things. Each man sorts out his own things and chooses with whom he will transact business—generally with an 'old friend.' The young lads are duly introduced by

their fathers to those with whom they trade, and the blood of fowls is again rubbed on their bodies, and fowls' eggs are broken on their heads.

"If the weather continues good the visitors remain in Chowra for only two or three nights; but if there is a change and it becomes rough they are compelled to stay on indefinitely, for the risks of facing indifferent weather on the ocean in a catamaran (canoe with outrigger) would be very considerable. Despite great protestations of friendship, the Car Nicobarese have more dread of the power than respect and love for the character of the people of Chowra, the home of magic.

"When able to start back the visitors get their things together—the pots they have purchased, and the necessary food, and a delicacy called *kui-loi*, as a treat for their friends at home. This last is a concoction prepared from grated ripe coconut and bananas, with possibly some yam in it. It has been cooked by steam, having been placed on sticks put into a round Chowra pot with some water below.

"When expected back home the people keep a sharp look-out in canoes, sometimes getting out some miles from the land . . . they can see the sails of returning canoes when they are yet a long way off, but will wait for them to come alongside. If these should prove to be not from their own village they will enquire if their own friends have been seen out in the open sea. . . . When such voyagers at last get back to their own village all the people go down on the beach to meet them. They also heat water for an *al fresco* bath, and take down food for them.

"For two or three days those who have been on a trip will remain down on the beach and go through ceremonies of purification; these were no doubt intended to free them from unholy influences of the spirits and perhaps break the spell of the magicians of Chowra. The sons who have now accomplished their first trip and been initiated into the company of true men, are decked out, have silver wire wrapped round their arms and legs, like

the *mai-a-fai* (novices for the priesthood). Canoe races are held and these youths take a special part in them, and in the evening, after the races are over, the canoes are 'fed' with the blood of pigs and fowls, and with pieces of pork and the legs and wings of chickens. A number of pieces of pork are formed into a sort of garland and tied round the body under the armpits of the youths who have made their first visit and are kept on until the end of the ceremony that night. Finally, just before the company breaks up and the people go to their own homes in the village, these lads again have eggs broken on their heads. . . . Then the great excitement, if not the great pleasure, of the year is over. . . ."

BARK-CLOTH.—The following extract from the *Indian Antiquary* gives Man's notes on this subject:

No attempt has yet been made by the Nicobarese to weave cloth. This may be explained by the fact that, in consequence of the equable nature of their climate, their absolute requirements in this respect are, to say the least, limited; and their needs have for generations past been supplied by traders from the neighbouring continents, who here barter calico and coloured handkerchiefs, as well as other articles, for cargoes of coconuts.

Moreover, while in the southern portion of the Nicobar Islands it has been customary from remote times, both among the coast and inland communities, to manufacture bark-cloth for purposes of clothing,* it has been the practice among the women of Chowra, Teressa, and Bompoka—where foreign trade has heretofore been slack—to wear thick fringe-like skirts of split coconut leaves, called *hinong*.

The use of bark-cloth for clothing is nowadays almost entirely confined to women—and to those only of the

* Fontana's remark that in his day (1778) the women wore "a bit of cloth made with the threads of the bark of the coconut tree" possibly refers to this material, as it somewhat resembles the *ochrea* or fibrous sheath which envelops the upper portion of coconut tree stems. It may be, however, that the *hinong* is the garment to which he alludes. (*Asiatic Researches*, vol. iii., Article VII.)

Southern group—when in mourning; this being the result of the greater facility now afforded the inhabitants of Great Nicobar and the adjacent islands for procuring calico direct from trading-vessels, a larger number of which now visit the islands in consequence both of the extension of the coconut plantations and of the immunity from the risks experienced in former years from disputes or misunderstandings with the natives.

This bark-cloth, which goes by the name of *ok-ho*, is of a somewhat similar character to that manufactured by the inland tribes of the Malayan peninsula and Sumatra, but, being of a darker shade, more nearly resembles coarse, newly-tanned leather. It is sufficiently flexible and durable to be used for purposes of clothing, sleeping-mats, pillow covers, and the like for a considerable time.

It is only occasionally that the men engage in the work of preparing this material, in the manufacture of which women, therefore, usually excel. The tree which provides the necessary substance is believed to be the *Ficus brevicauspis*. The size of the pieces of bark taken from the tree depends, of course, on the requirements of the manufacturers.

A large strip, say 7 to 8 feet long by about 3 to 4 feet wide, is apparently generally preferred. This is carefully removed by means of a *dáh* and, while still fresh, green and pliant, the outer skin is with little difficulty stripped off with the edge of the same implement without injury to the inner bark, which is then ready for the next process. This consists in beating the inner bark on a large flat stone with the edge of a small paddle-shaped mallet, first diagonally in one direction, and then transversely, the work being subsequently repeated on the other side of the bark, the object, of course, being to thoroughly disintegrate the pulpy substance adhering to the fibres, and thereby to render the material flexible and suitable for the purposes above-mentioned. When a large piece of bark is being prepared, this part of the process proves tedious and fatiguing, as may be judged from the fact

that a small piece about 18 inches square, which I saw dealt with, was still insufficiently beaten after some twenty minutes of hard work.

When the bark is sufficiently dressed, the now pliant material is conveyed to a pool of fresh water, where it is left to soak for about half an hour, after which time it is removed and again spread upon a large smooth stone by the operator, who proceeds to express all moisture by means of a suitable cylindrical stone. When this is accomplished to her (or his) satisfaction the material is hung up to dry in the sun, and is ready for use in a few hours.

No attempt is made to ornament the substance thus produced. Specimens are sometimes sought as curiosities or as barter by the natives of the Central Group, who also occasionally use this material for sleeping mats, pillows, and fighting-hats; but they do not—and, from all accounts, never did—as has been incorrectly asserted, apply it for purposes of clothing.*

The Nicobarese have no knowledge of the art of knitting, and no plaited fringes or other articles of personal clothing or ornament are manufactured by them of cord or fibre of any description. On the other hand, they show considerable artistic skill and accuracy in drawing, judging by the elaborate *henta-koi* or shields that are made to act as a charm against evil spirits in cases of sickness, generally by order of the attending *Menluana*. Professor de Rœpstorff, in his description of Nancowry customs, published in 1884, describes this *henta-koi* in detail, noting that the face in the centre represents the sun, the crocodiles represent thunder, the black arms wind, while red figures on the extreme left stand for fire. The central mythological figure is meant to represent the "Giver of All," and to the right are the various weapons

* Specimens of bark-cloth have been supplied to the following museums among others: British Museum, South Kensington Museum, Kew Herbarium, University Museums at Oxford and Cambridge, Maidstone Museum, the Ethnological Museums at Florence, Paris, Leipzig, and Leyden, the Imperial and Royal Museum of the Court at Vienna, and the Indian Museum at Calcutta.

used by hunters. The wooden figures for scaring away evil spirits in case of sickness may be as large or as small as inclination dictates, but they are surely alarming enough in either case. If, in spite of having these placed beside him, a patient dies, the figure is thrown into the jungle as useless; if the patient recovers, however, it is kept for future service.

Extraordinary accuracy marks the shaping of weapons such as bows and fire-sticks made of wood. The latter are beautifully made, with the hollowed cup of one stick and the rounded end of the other. Rapid twirling of one inside the other produces sufficient heat to ignite the little heap of dried leaf that, once alight, starts the fire. This friction of two pieces of wood in skilful hands is quite as effective as our old flint and tinder method.

CANOE SHAPING.—One of the chief social duties of Nicobarese men is to take a share in the preparation of canoes, whether for the use of one family or for a community. Every capable male should be able to lend a hand or take a particular part in the work. This applies to all the islands, but the design will vary as also will the workmanship in different islands, thus enabling a connoisseur to distinguish by its appearance to which island a particular canoe belongs. In Katchal, for instance, workmanship is distinctly superior, whereas in the Southern Islands they work much less artistically. Both in canoe-building and in navigation the Nicobarese show distinct superiority to the Andamanese. The suitability of their craft for the use to which it is put and their trust in its seaworthiness is proved by the readiness with which any owner will, sometimes single-handed, undertake to transport loads of Chowra pots to other islands, or take a load of cane from Little Nicobar to Nancowry—a distance of as much as 30 miles. Such voyages are frequently performed at night with only the light and position of the stars to help them to guide their course.

During the S.W. monsoon they cut down trees and

give them their first rough shaping in the jungle; then in dry weather these logs are dragged down to the shore and finished there. Like the Burmese boats, they have no keel, but the absence of keel makes it easy for them to sail with the wind. A large canoe lasts for some two years, or if made very strong may last four. The biggest range from 30 to 50 feet in length. The masts are made of bamboo or some pliable wood and are kept in position by means of cane or stout cord stays. The first operation on a log is to flatten one side then begin to scoop out the interior; after this the shaping of the sides is taken in hand and the two ends are roughly trimmed. More scooping goes on until a rough sort of shell has been attained. When this is trimmed and planed, it is ready for firing, and then friends are invited to assist in collecting a quantity of coconut leaf, the canoe is turned upside down, rested on logs, and the firing begins. When sufficiently burnt-out inside the canoe is turned on its bottom, and coconut torches are held against it outside, and the sides pressed into shape after they are sufficiently heated. This is repeated two or three times until the sides have been made to bulge and assume the right shape. All that then remains to be done is to supply the fittings. Leaf sails are now seldom seen as cloth sails have become general. The next addition is that of washboards or gunwale pieces; sometimes these are made of areca spathes stitched together, sometimes a thin, narrow plank is used for the purpose. In the prow a flag made of feathery palm may sometimes be fastened; the islanders of the central group use a coconut leaf which they trim at the sides and top; one for small canoes, two or more for larger ones. The use of a thin plank attached to the gunwale to raise it is becoming more frequent as more intercourse in all weathers takes place. In new canoes, when travelling in the hot sun, a thick layer of coconut leaf is placed at the bottom of the canoe to keep the wood from shrinking and cracking. Where painting and tarring is not thought of the canoes naturally wear out much more quickly. A paddle is usually made as long as a man's

span and the proportion of the handle to blade is the length of his arm. As a rule the natives can pull long distances, and they avoid fatigue by turning the paddle in a particular way so that the handle rests partly on the thigh and partly on the gunwale of the boat.

Racing in canoes is popular. When racing, tall, thin sticks or poles are attached to the stern on which are tied bunches of cock's or pigeon's feathers in graceful and effective ornament, and streamers of red and white calico are attached to the outrigger. If a small canoe capsizes or fills with water, while clinging to the sides its occupants jerk it in such a way that most of the water is thrown out, then they bale out the rest. When making long voyages in large canoes they place in the centre, at short distances apart, partitions, which enable them to bale out water after shipping any; without this device it would be difficult to keep it free in a rough sea. Leaks are repaired by means of beeswax if small; if large, by means of wire and resin melted with heat.

Canoes are much employed when a trading steamer or Government boat visits an island. As these last are obliged to stay outside any landing-stage to avoid the surf, both passengers and goods will have to land by the help of native boats. Coral reefs also make landing difficult in many places, but the Nicobarese are adepts at taking advantage of the waves to land themselves on the shore, and can calculate fairly closely how far they will be carried by them.

Many of the better-off islanders have large canoes which they use for fishing and transporting goods, and most big villages keep one canoe for racing purposes that may not be used for cargoes. This is kept turned upside down, on a trestle in the village hall. Richer members of the community may also possess a private racing canoe, for the sporting instinct is strong among them, and they are always ready to show off their skill. There is no betting, however, and no desire to benefit by a competitor's loss. There are races arranged whenever anyone comes into

possession of a new canoe, and such races are part of the general entertainment at a feast, also at the last of the series of funeral feasts, when those who have been mourning put on new garments and rejoin the general life of the community. Races also take place at every festival and thanksgiving.

CHAPTER VIII

SPORTS AND PASTIMES

ONE of the unwritten laws among Nicobarese sportsmen is that the wild pig is never to be hunted in the "dry" season. This is because the pigs then tend to run thin. But in the rainy season groups of men will set out together, having as many as eight or ten dogs with them, and form a hunting expedition. All the wild animals are free for all to hunt, and there are no rights reserved. The chief weapon used is the spear, although firearms are not now unknown. The dogs are not allowed to attack until an animal has been brought down by the spear. This means that skill in the use of the spear has to be gained by every man and boy, for not only is the spear used in hunting, but it is needed for fishing as well. It is quite understandable that the spear is useful and suitable for attacking sharks and porpoises and crocodiles, but it is rather surprising to find it used for ray-fish and *bêche-de-mer*. Some spears are two-pronged, some three, some even four or five-pronged.

Another weapon is the cross-bow, used mainly by natives in the Northern group of islands and chiefly during the N.E. monsoon, when, with its help, they often succeed in bringing down pigeons from a considerable height.

A type of iron spear, called a *homyah-ta*, is not used as a weapon, but as an ornament. Only Chowra people are allowed to use this or wear it because of a superstition, yet it is used and worn surreptitiously by natives of other islands. It is a badge of authority, and a somewhat costly one, so can only be worn by the wealthier members of a community. Inferior imitations of it have

been brought by Malay traders from the Straits Settlements, but these are not as valuable as the Chowra make.

Of any other kind of hunting the natives nowhere appear to have any idea, and most pleasure is derived from their fishing expeditions. In fish-spearing they become very proficient, often being able to spear fish at considerable distance away. Spearing by torchlight is only done at flood-tide, when parties go out together and one of the number directs the course of the canoe, others hold lighted torches, and the remainder use the spear. The fish, being attracted by the lights, come up into quite dangerous proximity so that the sport becomes really exciting, having a considerable element of danger in it. It is rare to see a man miss a shot with the harpoon, yet as he has to make allowance for refraction it requires no little skill to throw the harpoon so that it strikes exactly the right spot.

Various types of octopus, ranging in size from a few inches to as much as 4 feet in length, are found in the waters. The sting of an octopus pains but for a short time, and is apparently never fatal. It is caught at night by the help of palm-leaf torches, and sometimes as many as 100 octopus are caught in one expedition. These are used as bait, and with such bait men and boys go fishing in the open sea with lines many feet in length; they use English hooks and lines in these days, and would rather lose their game than lose their hook!

Several different species of turtle are met with and among them the kind that furnishes true tortoiseshell. No traps are employed, but the common method is to turn the turtles over on their backs with the aid of a spear and to leave them thus until, weak and helpless, they can be carried home. Advantage is taken of the season when the turtle approaches the sand to deposit eggs, and as a turtle will lay as many as 100 eggs at a time, and these are considered very fine eating, both the turtle and eggs make a very fine prize. No stakes may be put in shallow waters, but it is permissible to make a type of fence of palm leaves kept in place by heavy stones. The

waving of the palm fronds keeps the fish within the pools. Tales of men and boys plunging into deep water and seizing fish with their hands are acts such as those who know the Nicobarese will be sure it would never enter into their heads to do.

In regard to swimming, as compared with the Andamanese the Nicobarese are by no means distinguished for skill, nor yet in diving. They are, therefore, far from meriting the extravagant praise bestowed upon them by a writer who visited the various islands some fifty odd years ago. The passage occurs in "Stray Feathers" and makes mention of a well-known character, the headman of one of the principal villages in Nancowry Harbour, whom the writer describes as seen by him "stark naked, looking the veriest savage imaginable, darting head foremost from his canoe and catching the fish in his hands as only these islanders can." According to the same writer only the Nicobarese could plunge into water and come up with *two* fish, one in each hand! Mr. Man was very sure it had never entered into the imagination of a Nicobarese even to meditate, much less to perform, such a feat as this. He said, rather, that:

"In the absence of any necessity or other incentive to attain excellence in the art of swimming, there exists in this easy-going, indolent race little spirit of emulation such as might prompt them at least to strive to obtain a reputation for skill. No races, and no games in which swimming enters, are ever practised among them. They are deterred by their dread of sharks, which have, on rare occasions, attacked some unfortunates of their acquaintance. Swimming on the breast, on the side, and on the back are methods known and practised by some, but the most common form of swimming is by the hand-over-hand stroke. Even among the coastmen, those who have acquired the art of swimming in their youth rarely, if ever, practise it in their later years. When a Nicobarese has occasion to dive to a depth of 10 feet or so—to recover a *dáh*, or other valued object—he jumps into the water feet foremost, save when he has to go to as great a depth

as three or four fathoms, when he would take a header. On no occasion would he take a weight in order to assist him to descend more easily."

A very favourite sport is canoe racing. They love to compete in this and to show off their skill, but still not with the idea of beating a competitor, for if in a race one side finds it is getting ahead of the other the first will slacken speed in order to let the other get even again. There is no starting-post, no goal, no prize, the sport being pursued solely for the pleasure it gives. There is therefore no betting on a race, and the better sort of Nicobarese would only feel contempt for a player who could find satisfaction in gaining an advantage over his fellows. Of late years a species of gambling and betting has set in, and many have become corrupted, but still it holds true that the old-fashioned type of Nicobarese would no more approve of gambling or of playing for the sake of gaining a prize than an English sportsman would approve of any member of a team who did not show the team spirit.

Race meetings are frequent; when held on a large scale visitors come from other villages and a big feast is made and spread in the communal hut built on the beach, where it serves as a sort of village hall. The visitors will challenge their hosts to a race on their own grounds, when a similar feast will be offered as a return for hospitality enjoyed.

Singing and dancing are other favourite Nicobarese pastimes. Their singing is by no means unmusical, even if crude and unintelligible. Of later years, what with the importation of gramophones, concertinas, and mouth organs, it is no worse, if no better than that of other untutored folk. They have ancient folk-songs as well as folk-lore, many of these showing considerable imaginative power. New songs and new tunes are introduced from time to time, and they have a considerable facility for picking-up and making use of tunes, verses, phrases of English and Hindu in their own compositions. Their voices are harsh, perhaps, and untuneful, yet their ear is by no means defective, nor their sense of time and rhythm. In dancing they show skill as well as remark-



CANOES READY FOR A RACE.

able staying power. The younger men and women can dance all night and seem never to tire. In fine weather, especially on moonlight nights, dancing will go on night after night, and sometimes all the inhabitants of a village will troop down to the open space that corresponds to the village green and join in the sport.

The *mai-a-fai*, or aspirant to the witch doctorate, is compelled to dance every night of the year of his initiation, and this necessity compels him to go the round of several villages in order to find witnesses and companions, because in most of the dances a circle must be formed, each dancer having his right hand on the next dancer's shoulder, his movements consisting of swaying and kicking, and jumping in unison, singing all the time.

Certain other games the Nicobarese have which are not unlike those known more or less over the world, such as ball games, quoits, wrestling, and a sort of fencing with sticks. Young Nicobarese play football of a type that consists mainly in kicking the ball about with very little regard for any rules or for the winning of a goal. Perhaps their most popular sport is wrestling, in which they show skill and endurance and sometimes considerable courage.

An even greater favourite is story-telling, and certain folk-tales are passed on from generation to generation. Travellers have made collections of these, some of which are now well known.

CHAPTER IX

METHODS OF RECKONING

1. DIVISIONS OF THE YEAR

THE greater divisions of time are reckoned by monsoons (*shom-en-yūh*, or *shom-en-yūh*). As each monsoon lasts six months, more or less, two successive *shom-en-yūhs* represent approximately one solar year. Roughly speaking, the South-West monsoon (*sho-hōng*) continues from May to October inclusive, and the North-East monsoon (*fūl*) from November to April. In order, therefore, to denote a period equivalent to our solar year the Nicobarese describe it either as *ān* (two) *shom-en-yūh* or as *hēang* (one) *fūl heang sho-hōng*.

The monsoons are subdivided into lunar months (*kāhē*), and, as the change of monsoon may take place during the course of the "moon" in April-May and of that in October-November, fourteen terms are in use for the purpose of indicating the possible number of lunations, or fractions thereof, which can occur in the two monsoons. The terms are as follow, the first five in each monsoon invariably occurring in the order given:

S.-W. Monsoon (Sho-hōng).

Shēh	..	..	..	..	..	about Apr.-May
Hammua	..	..	..	..	..	„ May-June
Channī	..	..	..	..	..	„ June-July
Daneh-poah	..	..	..	..	..	„ July-Aug.
Manà(k)-nga-poah	..	..	..	..	..	„ Aug.-Sept.
Laneñh and/or Lāh-meluh	..	..	..	..	..	„ Sept.-Oct.

N.-E. Monsoon (Fül).

Kàkà-tòk	..	..	..	..	about	Oct.-Nov.
Tō-it	..	..	..	..	„	Nov.-Dec.
Hâmak	..	..	..	..	„	Dec.-Jan.
Mitosh	..	..	..	..	„	Jan.-Feb.
Mokhēak	..	..	..	..	„	Feb.-Mar.
Danāh-kapâ and/or Kabâ-chui(j)	..				„	Mar.-Apr.

If, at the termination of the Manâ(k)-nga-poah moon, the weather prove stormy the new moon is called Lanēh, but if the weather be mild and indicative of an early change of monsoon it is called Lāh-meluh. Similarly, at the corresponding period in the N.-E. monsoon, the sixth moon is called Danāh-kapâ, if there appears to be no likelihood of an early change in the direction of the wind, and Kabâ-chui(j) in the contrary case.

When the change of monsoon occurs, the name of the “moon” then running is changed to that of the first “moon” of the new monsoon; hence it generally happens that Sheh and Kàkà-tòk continue only for a fraction of a “moon”—viz., for the unexpired period of the “moon,” during which the change in the direction of the wind occurred. By this means the error which arises from adopting the lunar year of thirteen complete lunar months is avoided. The chief point for the stranger to bear in mind is that the reckoning is by half-years, and not years, so that in referring to a period of 7 *shom-en-yūhs* $3\frac{1}{2}$ solar years (approximately) would be meant.

In like manner at Car Nicobar they have the following fourteen terms to denote the possible number of lunations or fractions thereof in the course of the two monsoons:

S.-W. Monsoon (Mes-sūnga).

Ilūe	..	..	..	..	about	Apr.-May
Penyai-nōng-makek	..	..	..	..	„	May-June
Ra-nānga	..	..	..	..	„	June-July
Tenlôn-lông-kunâta	..	..	..	..	„	July-Aug.
Kenrūi (d)-ngaran-kamòp	..	..	..	..	„	Aug.-Sept.
Cha-nāh-ñe and/or Ka-nai(t)-el-ta-ôka	..				„	Sept.-Oct.

N.-E. Monsoon (*Komfūata*).

Tâ-sēla		about Oct.-Nov.
Teng-tâk-ken-chūta		„ Nov.-Dec.
Kâ-rēn-ngarit		„ Dec.-Jan.
Inôka-tâ-wūe		„ Jan.-Feb.
Kenchūt-tang-kòng		„ Feb.-Mar.
Kenchūt-mirūnga and/or	Lâ-nēn-	
nga-el-kūi-tâ-īawa		„ Mar.-Apr.

The principal, if not the only, seasons which are recognized as such are: (1) *yonga-rai*, or *dai*, the time when deciduous trees shed their foliage (March-April); (2) *dai-tata-yâl*, the time when young leaves (*dai* or *rai*) are formed on the same trees (May-June); (3) *shama-hawn*, which occurs in the first few weeks of the rainy season, when planting and cultivation are mostly attended to in the gardens; (4) *komoruāk*, the season during which memorial feasts (*koruāk*) are held—viz., November-April; (5) *kōi-kapā*; and (6) *kōi-ilūe*, the calm seasons in April and October respectively when trafficking is chiefly carried on between the various islands. There is no method of indicating divisions or periods of time by crops.

Not only do the Nicobarese possess terms to denote the chief phases of each lunation, such as the “first-quarter,” “full-moon,” and “last-quarter,” but, as will be seen from the following Table, they are able to indicate any particular day in a lunation as clearly as we could ourselves.

TERMS EMPLOYED FOR EACH DAY AND PHASE OF A LUNATION.

1st day, hēang-she-kāhē.	1st Quarter, hēang-lā.
2nd „ ān-she-kāhē.	Full moon { ong-yūang-kāhē, also hokngāka (-kāhē), or fwiañ-oal-kāhē.
3rd „ lōe-she-kāhē.	
4th „ fōan-she-kāhē.	
5th „ tanai-she-kāhē.	Last Quarter, kaneäl.
6th „ tafūal-she-kāhē.	Waxing moon, hen-nēni-oal-kāhē.
7th „ issât-she-kāhē.	Waning moon, tennyuoa-na-oal-
8th „ enfōan-she-kāhē.	kāhē.
9th „ hēānghata-she-kāhē.	
10th „ shòm-she-kāhē.	
11th „ hēang-yām-kāhē.	

12th day,	ân-yâm-kâhē.
13th „	lōe-yâm-kâhē.
14th „	fōan-yâm-kâhē.
15th „	tanai-yâm-kâhē.
16th „	tafūal-yâm-kâhē.
17th „	issât-yâm-kâhē.
18th „	enfōan-yâm-kâhē.
19th „	heānghata-yâm-kâhē, also shòm - heānghata - tōm- yâm.
20th „	hēang - momchīama - yâm- kâhē.
21st „	enfōan-tat-lānga.
22nd „	issât-tat-lānga.
23rd „	tafūal-tat-lānga.
24th „	tanai-tat-lānga.
25th „	fōan-tat-lānga.
26th „	ongāwa.
27th „	hinai.
28th „	hinlain.
29th „	manūt.
30th „	kanat.
31st „	kanat.

The corresponding terms employed at Car Nicobar are as follows:

(a) *Yānihi-chingeät* (waxing moon).

1st day,	kahōk-chingeät.
2nd „	aneät-chingeät, 2-days-old moon, kânel- hâun (<i>lit.</i> , pig's tusk).
3rd „	lūe-chingeät.
4th „	fân-chingeät.
5th „	tanī-chingeät.
6th „	tafūal-chingeät.
7th „	sât-chingeät.
8th „	hēohare-chingeät 1st Quarter, tut-la-äl.
9th „	maichūatare chingeät.
10th „	chamanga-chingeät.

(b) *Rōka-chingeät* (whole or greater portion of moon).

11th day,	kahōk-sīan-chingeät.
12th „	aneät-sīan-chingeät.
13th „	lūe-sīan-chingeät or sōho-chingeät (day before full moon).

- 14th „ fän-sian-chingeät or chawī (or komtôpla)-
chingeät (full moon).
 15th „ tanī-sian-chingeät or
 anòì(ch)-chingeät
 16th „ tafūal-sian-chingeät or
 chukyea-chingeät } (days immediately
 following full
 moon).

(c) *Drônga-chingeät (waning moon).*

- 17th day, kahōk-drônga-chingeät.
 18th „ aneät-drônga-chingeät.
 19th „ lūe-drônga-chingeät.
 20th „ fän-drônga-chingeät.
 21st „ tanī-drônga-chingeät.
 22nd „ tafūal-drônga-chingeät; Last Quarter, drô-
 ngte-chingeät.
 23rd „ sât-drônga-chingeät.
 24th „ hēohare-drônga-chingeät.
 25th „ maichūatare-drônga-chingeät.
 26th „ sam-drônga-chingeät.

(d) *Sâlnōwa-chingeät (disappearing moon).*

- 27th „ kahōk-sâlnōwa-chingeät.
 28th „ aneät-sâlnōwa-chingeät.
 29th „ lūe-sâlnōwa-chingeät.
 30th „ fän-sâlnōwa-chingeät.

The period between the last appearance of the old moon and the first appearance of the new moon is called *aiya-ap-chingeät*. It, therefore, corresponds to the term *kanat* in the dialect of the Central Group.

2. DIVISION OF THE DAY AND NIGHT.

The varying position of the sun at the same hour at different seasons is accounted for in a somewhat singular and ingenious manner. It is thought that the rising of the sun north of the east during the heavy squally weather of May, June, July, and August is attributable to

the violence of the S.-W. gales driving it towards that position (!); while the fact of its appearing south of the east during the rest of the year is, on the same principle, ascribed to the force of the N.-E. winds then prevailing, which prevent the dawn from breaking uniformly in the same point of the horizon.

The property of the sundial is unknown to the Nicobarese. From the following list of terms used by them to indicate the various hours of the day and night it will be seen that their day is divided with regard to the position of the sun at different hours until sunset, while the period between sunset and sunrise is in like manner divided in reference to increasing darkness, supper-time, approach of midnight, midnight, deep sleep, approach of dawn, and dawn:

(a) *Forenoon—la-hâla-heng.*

Sun-rise, danâkla-heng; hen-nêla-heng	} oal-haki (morning).
About 7 a.m., ênhla-kôî-hindôaha	
„ 8 „ kôî-hindôaha-ka	
„ 9 „ kôî-hindôaha-chông.	
„ 10 or 11 a.m., ênhla-kâmheng.	

(b) *Afternoon—lâ-hanga-heng.*

About noon, kâm-heng.

„ 1 p.m., shariâla-heng (or shadiâha-heng).

„ 2 „ chin-faicha-chông.

„ 3 „ chin-faicha-ka.

„ 3.30 „ chin-faicha-ênhshe.

„ 4 „ heng-imat-mitûa.

„ 5 „ heng-imat-ênhshe; also heng-kamôt
(tari-tapping time).

About 5.30 p.m., ênhshe-shup-heng.

(c) *Evening—ladiâya.*

Sunset, shup-heng.

„ shortly after, ladiâya.

Twilight, eñhshe-puyūe.

Dusk, puyūe.

(d) *Night—hatòm.*

About 7 p.m., puyūe-tuchuūl; puyūe-pòt; also fane-
ämla-kamòish (roosting time).

About 7.30 p.m., heñ-mokngôk (supper-time).

„ 8 „ heñ-mokngôk-ka.

„ 9 „ heñ-mokngôk-chiyàu.

„ 10 and 11 p.m., eñhshe-yūang-hatòm.

Midnight, yūang-hatòm.

About 1 a.m., hen-chatnga.

„ 2 „ ha-hōaka-chiyàu.

„ 3 „ ha-hōaka-ka.

„ 4 „ ha-hōaka.

Dawn, shortly before, eñhla-püyü.

Dawn, püyü.

Sunrise, shortly before, chang-i-oal.

In order to particularise a certain hour of the day to an alien unacquainted with their terms, a native will, by protruding his lips or by stretching out his hand, point to the position of the sun at the hour in question, and say, *dāhtare heng*, “thither sun.”

At Car Nicobar the terms used are as follows:

Sunrise, mânat-la-tâ-wūe;* pühü.

Morning, ko-tâ-nen'-pühü.

Forenoon, tâ ran'-pühü.

Noon, sâ-kâm'.

About 3 p.m., tâ-ran'-hârap.

„ 5 „ ko-tâ-nen'-hârap.

Sunset, mânat-ta-tâ-wūe.*

Evening, hârap.

Dusk, parūe-yâmat.

About 9 p.m., arū-hârap.

„ 11 „ kûa-meng' a-häre.

* The substitution of *t* for *l* is all that distinguishes the word for “sunset” from that for “sunrise.”

About midnight, chyūal-hâtām.

„ 3 a.m., chinriü-ta-pü.

„ 4 „ rô-haiyam (*lit.*, “ cock-crow ”).

„ 4.30 „ āl-kūa-pü.

Dawn, mūaka.

Sunrise, shortly before, ta-pü.

There is an alternative method for indicating periods of time on moonlight nights—viz., by applying the terms used for daylight-hours with the substitution of *kâhē* (moon) for *heng* (sun), and by adding *kâhē* to those terms which are complete without the prefix or suffix of *heng*—e.g., *danākla-kâhē*, moon-rise; *kām-kâhē*, the meridian altitude of the moon; *chin-faicha-chòng-kâhē*, two hours later (i.e., than *kām-kâhē*), etc. It will thus be apparent that the entire list of terms from *danākla-kâhē* to *shup-kâhē* can be employed only at full-moon; and, as the equivalent clock-time of such of the terms as can be used on other nights during the lunation—both before and after full moon—necessarily differs to the extent of some fifty minutes from that of the next preceding or succeeding night, it is necessary to note the exact phase of the lunation in order to determine whether the term employed refers to some hour before or after midnight.

The practice of reckoning length of time by nights (*rām* or *dām*) instead of by days is usual but not universal. *Example*: *Enfōan hanga rām na kapâh*, he died eight days (*lit.*, nights) ago; again, *shòm-lōe hala rām shwā-ngare chông-heōe*, the steamer will return (southwards) thirteen days (*lit.*, nights) hence. In these examples *shinkâm* (day) might be employed in place of *rām*.

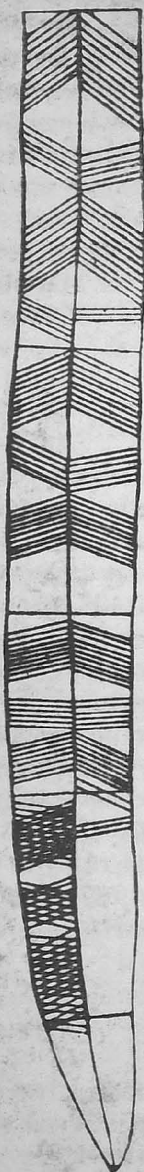
3. TIME AND DISTANCE.

In order to express any short period of time or to indicate the distance of some village or spot on the same island, the Nicobarese would say that it was one (or more, as the case might be) “ betel-quid-taking-time,” so that a halt or visit occupying some fifteen minutes, or a walk

of about a mile, would be described as "one betel-quid-taking-period." *Example*: *ân kohòt hē maiyâ leät tang*, we all reached it—some place about two miles distant—in two betel-quids' time. Similarly, a walk of about four miles would be considered and described as equivalent to "four betel-quids," and so on. But in order to convey an approximate idea of some distance by sea in a canoe (say, from two to twenty miles between one island and another) they say that it is one (or more) "young coconut drinks" distant. Thus a canoe trip of less than two miles would be spoken of as less than "one young coconut drink," while a trip from Nancowry Harbour to Chowra would perhaps be regarded by the majority as one of six "young coconut drinks," and so on, relatively, between any two other places according to distance. Experience, however, shows that just as the capacity for absorbing fluids and chewing betel-quids varies considerably in different individuals, so also do terms of this nature, when used by them, differ not a little in significance; as, however, there is no great call for exactitude, either in regard to time or space, in connection with their movements, these rough methods of determining distance are ordinarily sufficient for all their requirements.

The explanation of the use of these terms is, as may be supposed, to be found in the fact that the Nicobarese invariably carry young coconuts in their canoes when making a trip of some duration, in order to assuage their thirst; while betel-chewing is a practice universally observed among them. The following may here be added as further examples of the same nature:

<i>hēang kola-hòinsha</i>	..	a few moments, <i>lit.</i> , one holding-of-the-breath.
<i>hēang hat - dôh - na - yô</i>	..	about one hour (of the day
<i>lŋga-heng</i>		only), <i>lit.</i> , less-than-one-stage-in-the-sun's-passage-across-the-sky.
<i>hēang mishōya-heng</i>	..	about three hours (of the day only).



NICOBARESE METHODS OF
RECKONING TIME: THE "KEN-
RATA" OR CALENDAR.

It will be observed the notches
are meant to go 10-6, 10-4, -30.
When the notches fill one side
of the *Kenrata* they commence
on the other, and thus keep
tally for quite a while.

<i>hēang molkânla-heng</i>	..	about six hours (of the day only), <i>lit.</i> , one-half of a day.
<i>hēang muyòia-ònh</i>	..	about three hours (of the night only), <i>lit.</i> , one-half of a day.
<i>hēang muyòia-ònh</i>	..	about three hours (of the night only), <i>lit.</i> , the time taken in burning one small bundle of firewood.
<i>hēang hat-pomâk-ònh</i>	..	about six hours (of the night only), <i>lit.</i> , the time taken in burning one large bundle of firewood.

4. POINTS OF THE COMPASS.

The Nicobarese possess terms descriptive of the points of the compass—*viz.*, *ta-ngâle*, North; *ta-ngange*, South; *ta-ngâhae*, East; *ta-ngaiçhe*, West; and are in the habit of making more use of their knowledge in this respect in the daily affairs of life than is deemed at all necessary among civilised communities. For instance, there is in all their dialects a very extensive list of words expressing “motion” or “direction,” which require severally the special suffix appropriate to its class, implying whether the direction or motion be northward, southward, eastward, westward or . . . towards the landing-place (*ta-ngaiçie*). The result of this seemingly pedantic mode of expression is that most careful observance of the rules on the subject is at all times necessary, not only to convey a correct meaning, but in order to avoid conveying the directly opposite impression to that intended; while by inadvertently employing a suffix appertaining to another class the certain risk is incurred of being to a greater or less degree unintelligible.

The words indicating the four cardinal points are not derived from prevalent winds, nor is it possible at the present day to decide definitely as to their origin. No trace can be discovered of the derivation of the terms denoting “south” (*ngange*) or “east” (*ngâhae*), but the

word for "north" (*ngále*) signifies also "above," and that for "west" (*ngaiche*) means also "below"; the latter would thus appear to be associated in the minds of these Islanders with some idea of the position of the setting sun.

TABLE OF CERTAIN COMMON VERBS AND ADVERBS HAVING SUFFIXES
INDICATING DIRECTION OR MOTION

	<i>North</i> (also <i>Above</i>) ta-ngále.	<i>South</i> ta-ngange.	<i>East</i> ta-ngáhae.	<i>West</i> (also <i>Below</i>) ta- ngaiche.	<i>Landing- place</i> ta- ngaiñe.	
<i>Like that</i> {	(of some object in a northerly direction) shiri ngále.	(of some object in a southerly direction) shiri ngange.	(of some object in an easterly direction) shiri ngáhae.	(of some object in a westerly direction) shiri ngaiche.	(of some object in direction of land- ing-place) shiri ngaiñe.	(of some object without reference to its direction) shiri ane.
	North- wards.	South- wards.	East- wards.	Westwards.	Towards the Land- ing-Place.	In any Direction.
Go	af-al	af-ang	af-ahat	af-aich	af-aiñ	af-at
Ascend a hill ..	af-al	—	—	af-aich (de- scend a hill)	—	—
Ascend a hill ..	ō-le	—	—	ō-she (descend a hill)	—	—
Go	ō-le	ō-nge	ō-he	ō-she	ō-ñe	ō-te
Arrive	tang-la	tang-nga	tang-hat	tang-she	tang-ñe	tang-ta
Climb a tree ..	chiat-la	—	—	chiat-she (de- scend a tree)	—	—
Bring	kai-hala	kai- hanga	kai- hahat	kai-hashe	kai-haiñe	kai-hata
Ascend a ladder	chuak- lare	—	—	chuak-shire (descend a ladder)	—	—
Come	kai-lare	kai-ngare	kai-hare	kai-shire	kai-ñire	kai-tare
Hither	òid-lare	òid-ngare	òid-hare	òid-shire	òid-ñire	òid-tare
Thither	dāh-lare	dāh- ngare	dāh-hare	dāh-shire	dāh-ñire	dāh-tare

5. STEERING COURSES BY SUN AND STARS.

The acquaintance of the Nicobarese with the heavenly bodies is very limited, and such little knowledge as they possess is confined to the more intelligent of the elder members of the various communities* who are able to

* It should be mentioned that none but the elderly members of the community venture to betray any knowledge of this subject, it being among their superstitions that acquaintance or familiarity with such matters tends to shorten their lives, or at the least to age them in some mysterious manner. It is consequently only from certain of the more intelligent of the old people that any trustworthy information on these points can be gathered.

identify a few of the more striking of the constellations, planets, and stars, to wit, the Pleiades, Orion's Belt, the Southern Cross, Ursa Major, and Venus.

When travelling by night—which usually is only done in the calm weather breaks (*kōi-kapā* and *kōi-ilūe*), occurring respectively in April and October—they take advantage of such knowledge as they possess of the position of certain stars in reference to the situation of the neighbouring islands, to steer their course thereby. The islands they are in the habit of visiting most frequently are in no case more than forty-eight miles distant—in other cases ranging from eight to thirty-five miles—and as care is taken to arrange such trips, whenever possible, only while calm weather is assured and during neap tides—in order to escape strong currents and dangerous tide-rips—their dependence on the stars for guidance is limited to the first half of the longest voyages, after which intervening islets or lofty hills, which then loom in view, are naturally preferred as surer indications of the correctness of the course. In these night voyages the polar-star is chosen as a guide by the natives of the Central and Southern Groups when visiting Chowra and Nancowry respectively, and by the natives of Chowra when steering for Car Nicobar; while the Southern Cross directs the Car Nicobarese voyagers in their expeditions to Chowra, and also the natives of the Central Group in their trips to Little Nicobar. Sometimes they steer their course by keeping one or other of these stars directly stern of the canoe. Save to this limited extent no attempt is made to utilise their observations of the movements of the planetary bodies.

6. THE WINDS AND CLOUDS.

I give here a diagram of the various terms used in order to denote the different winds. It should be mentioned that the term (*mahai-chiam*) applied in the diagram to the N.-N.-W. and S.-S.-E. winds implies “straight,” by reason of their proceeding *direct* from these two points where lie adjacent inhabited islands—i.e., Chowra,

Teressa, and Bompoka on the one hand, and the Southern Group on the other; so that, making their voyages thitherwards during the prevalence of either of these winds, they know that on one course or the other they can make sure of being driven *straight* to their destination.

With regard to the clouds, the Nicobarese have but one word to express the different formations of cirrus, cumulus, and stratus—viz., *mifainya*, while to denote nimbus they merely say *mifainya-ta-āl*, lit., a black cloud.

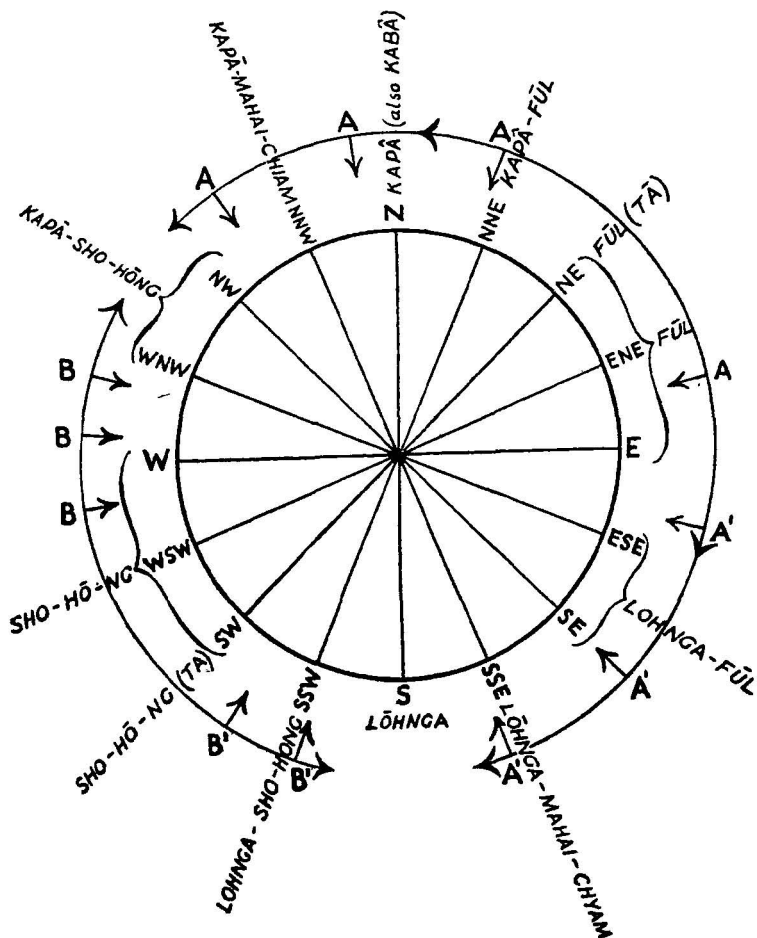


DIAGRAM SHOWING THE TERMS USED TO DENOTE THE DIRECTION OF THE VARIOUS WINDS.

EXPLANATION.

A denotes the direction of the wind at the close of the N.-E. monsoon, and

B denotes the direction of the wind at the close of the S.-W. monsoon, and when these veer to the opposite direction by way of the north. They are both included in the term *hânsh-wīalakapâ* (lit., wind turning north).

C denotes the direction of the wind at the close of the N.-E. monsoon, and

D denotes the direction of the wind at the close of the S.-W. monsoon, and when these veer to the opposite direction by way of the south. They are both included in the term *hânsh-wīalalòhgna* (lit., wind turning south).

The *hânsh-fūl*, when blowing almost continuously from the N.-E. (say, from February to April), is described as *hânsh-fūl-tā*.

Similarly, the *hânsh-shohōng*, when blowing continuously from the S.-W. (say, from June to September), is styled *hânsh-shohōng-tā*.

In naming any of the winds mentioned in the accompanying diagram the word "*hânsh*" (wind) is prefixed.

NUMERIC SYSTEM AND ARITHMETIC.

In consequence, no doubt, of the long-established trade in coconuts and their acquaintance with foreign traders, the Nicobarese possess an adequate system of numeration, more than sufficient for their own requirements. Especially is this the case with the Car Nicobarese, who, having a word (viz., *lâk*) denoting 20,000 (really 10,000 pairs), are able to express any multiple of that number.

Travellers tell us in reference to the art of counting, "which is the foundation of science," that it is common to find the primitive method of counting by fingers and toes still in practical use, while in many languages some of the very terms employed in numeration are traceable to this peculiarity. That the Nicobarese system of numeration originated in the practice of counting by means of the

fingers is evidenced by the fact that, while *tai* and *kane-tai* denote the hand (or finger); *oal-tai* the palm; *ok-tai* the back of the hand; we have *tanai* indicating 5; *inai* a score; and *dòktai* 200 (also, in certain circumstances, 10). When, however, a modern Nicobarese counts he never makes use of pebbles, cowries, grains, or other objects, and only occasionally, or for emphasis, of his fingers. Usually he names the numeral which he desires to express without any such aid. But, when a Nicobarese, possessing more than three or four children, brothers, sisters, etc., is asked their number, he will, before committing himself to a reply, almost invariably enumerate them on his fingers by turning down the fingers of one hand with the forefinger of the other, commencing with the little finger.

In his transactions with ship-traders the Nicobarese keeps a tally of the quantity of coconuts promised or delivered, by means of strips of cane or bamboo, called *lenkòk-ngoát*. At intervals of about $\frac{1}{3}$ inch along these strips nicks are made by bending the fibre over the thumb-nail, each nick thus formed representing a score (really 10 pairs) of nuts either due or delivered. As this is the only system of keeping tally which they possess, they have no method of recording any lower numeral than a score of nuts. I have, too, known a Nicobarese in enumerating from memory the huts in a village employ a similar strip of cane, making a nick for each hut he called to mind, and, on noting the last, count all the nicks he had made. It is hardly necessary to add that no figures or cyphers are in use. The Car Nicobarese also on certain occasions maintain a calendar of wood (styled *kenrāta*), resembling in most cases a sword-blade, on which incisions are made, each of which signifies a day.

The Nicobarese system of numeration is that known as the vigesimal, the peculiarities and irregularities of which are soon mastered. A striking peculiarity is that, in counting coconuts, money, and edible birds'-nests, the natives of the Central and Southern Groups (both coast and inland communities) reckon by pairs, scores, and

four-hundreds, the corresponding terms employed bearing to some extent a family resemblance; while other objects (with a few exceptions shortly to be mentioned) are reckoned by scores. In the remaining three dialects the systems somewhat differ: Car Nicobar reckons by pairs, scores, two-hundreds, four-hundreds, two-thousands, and twenty-thousands; Chowra by pairs, scores, two-hundreds, two-thousands, and four-thousands; Teressa and Bom-poka, by pairs, scores, two-hundreds, and two-thousands.

Another point to note is that (in the Central Group) the term *dòktai* when referring to coconuts, money, and edible birds'-nests signifies 200, but it can be employed only with *momchāma*, signifying 400: it cannot, therefore, be used in reference to the above objects for any less number than 600 (*Example*: *hēang momchāma-dòktai* = $1 \times 400 + 200$). Employed, however, with other objects—e.g., men, huts, paddles, etc.—*dòktai* denotes 10 only; but as in the former case it can be used only with *momchāma*, which then signifies 20, and therefore the lowest number for which it can be employed is 30. *Example*: *hēang momchāma-dòktai-yūang-paiyuh* = $1 \times 20 + 10$ —(*lit.*, fruit) men.

Two only of the six dialects, and these the most widely apart—viz., the Car Nicobar and the Shom Pen (*i.e.*, the inland tribe of the Great Nicobar), adopt the Malay system of counting from 11 to 19 inclusive—viz., 1 (and) 10, 2 (and) 10, 3 (and) 10, etc., whereas the four other dialects have the Burmese system—viz., 10 (and) 1, 10 (and) 2, 10 (and) 3, etc.

None of the numerical terms employed in the dialect of the Central Group express a second meaning except *tafūal* (6), which also signifies "pair, couple"; but when employed in the latter sense no confusion is possible, as it is invariably preceded by one or other of the numerals from *hēang* (1) to *hēang-hata* (9) inclusive. *Example*: *tafūal-tafūal-hēang* = 13 (*lit.*, 6 pairs + 1).

With the exception of the term *lāk*, the only numeral which appears to be of foreign derivation is that denoting 7 (*issât* in the Central Group and *sât* at Car Nicobar), which resembles the corresponding equivalent in the Indian

languages proper (*sát*), but this, doubtless, in the absence of any more satisfactory evidence, is a mere coincidence.

When it is intended to convey the meaning that a round number is referred to, the term *yūh-ngare* (indicating "whole," or "no more and no less") is added. *Example*: *ân-momchīama-dòktai tâk rupīa yūh-ngare* (Exactly 1,000 rupees). When the number referred to falls short by a little of some round number it is sometimes expressed by employing the word *tangla* (to reach), as follows: *lōe tare tangla ân-momchīama hen ñĩ, 37* (lit., 3 more reach two-score) huts.

From the foregoing examples it will be seen that no conjunctions are employed in expressing numbers involving the use of several numeral terms.

By prefixing, infixing, or suffixing, the particles *m'*, *ma*, *em*, *am*, or *om* to a numeral the sense of "only" such a number is conveyed. *Example*: *hemēang*, only one; *ânma*, only two; *lamūe*, only three; *fomōan*, only four; *tamanai*, only five; *tamafūal*, only six; *missât*, only seven; *menfōan*, only eight; *hemeāng-hata*, only nine; *shamòm*, only ten.

The processes of addition and subtraction of simple quantities are accomplished on the fingers or by means of the *lenkòk-ngoât*. Supposing, for example, that A owed B 200 coconuts and incurred a further debt of 350 coconuts, he would express the fact by turning down, in the presence of B, one finger after another of each hand—commencing in each case with the little finger—and, on reaching the thumb of the second hand, he would close both fists and bringing the knuckles together, open both hands simultaneously, as though throwing something from each on to the ground, at the same time exclaiming—"shòm" (10)—the word "*inai*," indicating "score," being understood—thereby signifying 200, and adding the words "*hēang-momchīama*" (400)—i.e., by taking the previous debt of 200 into account. He would then recommence, and after counting the fingers of one hand and the little and third fingers of the second hand, he would say "*iessât*" (7), and, crossing the next (i.e., middle) finger with one of the other hand, he would say "*tanai*"
8

(5)—the word “*tafūal*,” indicating “pair,” being understood—following this up by again closing both hands, bringing the knuckles together and opening them simultaneously in a downward direction and exclaiming “*hēang-momchīama-issât-inai-tanai(-tafūal)*,” which denotes 550.

Multiplication and division are never attempted. They do not seem to experience the need for any such calculations, sufficiently at least to stimulate whatever faculty they possess for devising some practicable methods.

The necessity for expressing fractional numbers or quantities is experienced to so slight an extent that but few seem to agree as to the exact meaning of the few terms that are on rare occasions employed for the purpose. These terms are:

hēang-molkānla = one-half.

hēang-mishēya = one-third (? also one-fifth, one-sixth, etc.).

hēang-shēi-tō = one-fourth.

ān-mishēya = two-thirds (? also two-fifths).

lōe-shēi-tō = three-fourths.

hēang-hēang-molkānla = one and one-half.

ān-hēang-mishēya = two and one-third (or thereabout).

The terms denoting ordinals are very limited, and from the absence of uniformity in their use it is evident that they rarely have occasion to employ them. In order to express the sequence in a row of objects or in a race they cannot reckon beyond the seventh, the term denoting which also signifies “the last.” The two sets of terms in use are here given:

(1st) *orēh*; *ongēh*; or *morēh*

(2nd) *tanōe-ok*

(3rd) *mong-yūang-ñe*

(4th) *monyāh*

(5th) *tanōe-ok-mēnyāh*

(6th) *menyāh-ka*

(7th) *manā(k)-nga-shīan*

(1st) *morēh*

(2nd) *tanōe-ok-morēh*

(3rd) *mong-yūang-ñe*

(4th) *tanōe - ok - mong
yūang-ñe*

(5th) *menyāh*

(6th) and last, *menyāh-ka*,
also *manā(k)-nga-shīan*

The only explanation—such as it is—given for this paucity of terms by those who have been questioned on the subject is that there are never more than seven “moons” in a Nicobarese “year” (i.e., monsoon), and that, although they have specific names for each “moon,” they associate each in their mind as either the first, second, third, etc., of the “year.” In their canoe races, moreover, there would rarely be so many as seven competitors.

In order to express a certain date since any event, such as the 9th, 15th, 23rd since new moon or since someone's arrival, departure, death, etc., the suffix “*she*” added to the cardinal, denoting the number of days, is all that is needed. *Example*: *linheñ hēang-momchīama-lōe-she dām na leāt kaiyīnga*, “this is the twenty-third night since his departure.”

COLLECTIVE NUMBERS.—In order to indicate pairs or sets of four or more of certain objects the following terms are employed:

tafūal, in reference to a pair of coconuts, rupees, or edible birds'-nests.

tāk, in reference to a pair of bamboo utensils containing shell-lime.

amok, in reference to two pairs of (i.e., 4) bamboo utensils containing shell-lime.

amok, in reference to a pair of cooking-pots.

kamintap, in reference to a set of four or five of the smallest size of cooking-pots.

nōang, in reference to a set of ten pieces of tortoiseshell. *Example*.: *lōe nōang ok-kāp* three sets (i.e., 30) pieces of tortoiseshell.

Such phrases as “by pairs,” “by scores,” “by four-hundreds” are rarely used, but would be expressed as follows:

by pairs, *hēang-tafūal-hēang-tafūal*.

by scores, *hēang-inai-hēang-inai*.

by four-hundreds, *hēang-momchīama-hēang-momchīama*.

RECURRENT TIME.—*Shuā* is the term most commonly employed as the equivalent for the English “times.” *Example*: *tanai shuā*, five times; but several other terms

are in use, each of which, however, in a restricted sense.

Examples :

lōe kota-tai, three times (in reference to hammering or other handwork).

ân ko-chat, twice (in reference to jumping).

fōan ko-nga-lâh, four times (in reference to going).

tanai ko-ñe-ngē, five times (in reference to talking, singing, etc.).

fōan ko-shī-chakâ, four times (in reference to eating, etc.).

issât ko-shī-ânha, seven times (in reference to washing, etc.).

NUMERAL COEFFICIENTS.—One of the many proofs of the affinity existing between the Nicobarese and the Indo-Chinese races is the presence in full force in all their dialects, including even that of the isolated and degraded inland tribe of Great Nicobar, of the system which necessitates, in the enumeration of objects, the employment of a term—known to grammarians as numeral coefficients—descriptive of the particular object referred to.

Contrary to the practice generally (if not always) adopted in both Burmese and Malay, these coefficients are invariably inserted between the numeral and the object designated and not after the latter.

(1) *yūang* (fruit); *kōi* (head); *tat*; *tat-yūang*; *tat-kōi* are used in referring to human beings—e.g., *fōan yūang Pigu* (four Burmese); *ân kōi kōan* (two children); *hēang tat ilū* (one bachelor); *tanai tat-yūang Malāyu* (five Malays).

(2) *nōang* (cylinder) is applied to animals, birds, fishes, insects, eggs, spears, boxes, baskets, ropes, legs, fingers, lips, nose, eyes, teeth, *dhās*, fish-hooks, rings, seeds, etc.
Example : lōe nōang kâa (three fishes).

(3) (*nōang*)-*yūang* is applied to fruits only—e.g., *ân inai (nōang)-yūang oyau* (forty coconuts).

(4) *tâk* (wide); in connection with flat objects, such as planks, paddles, coins, tortoiseshells, edible birds'-nests, finger-nails, leaves, feathers, cloth, clothes, thatch; also, however, cooking-pots and fishing-nets—e.g., *fōan tâk pōwah* (four paddles).

(5) *hen*, when referring to dwellings and other buildings; *tanai hen ñi* (five huts).

(6) *chanang*, to trees, posts, hairs, etc.; *issât chanang oñihan* (seven trees).

(7) *dandoi*, to ships, boats, and canoes; *lõe dandoi chông* (three ships).

(8) *hinle*, to bamboo utensils containing shell-lime.

(9) *tôm* (bunch), to bunches of plantains, betel-nuts, *Pandanus*, etc., or to single pineapples and papayas.

(10) *manoal* (also *mokônha*), to bundles of prepared *Pandanus* or *Cycas* paste.

(11) *pomâk* (bundle), to large bundles of split cane, also to the large trimmed bundles of imitation firewood offered by mourners at the grave.

(12) *mekûya*, to small bundles of cane, ten of which equal one *pomâk*.

(13) *minôl* (bundle), to small bundles of firewood.

(14) *lamem*, to bundles of Chinese tobacco.

(15) *amoka*, to books only.

(16) *chaminkâa*, to ladders only.

(17) *shamanap*, to pieces—of, say, 40 yards—of calico, etc.

(18) *kamilâng*, to cords and fishing-lines.

To the above may be added the following expressions for distance:

het-nōang (used with *ñi-nâu*, green coconut) in order to express distance by sea—e.g., *lõe het-nōang ñi-nâu hē tang* (we could arrive [there] in three green coconuts' time).

kohôt (used with *maiya*, take a betel-quid) in order to convey an idea of distance by land or time spent on a visit—e.g., *fōan kohôt inâ maiya tang* (you two could reach [that place] in four betel-quids' time).

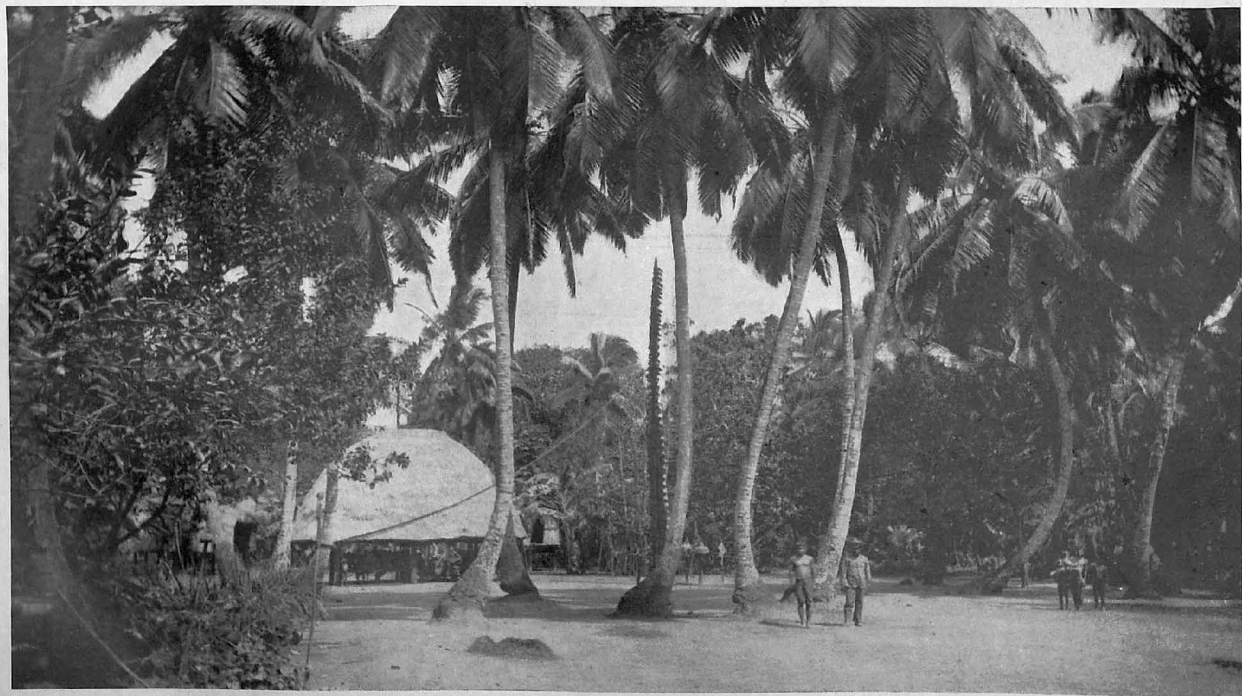
CHAPTER X

THE COCONUT PALM AND THE TRADE IN NUTS

“ A GROVE of palms, perpetually ruffling green fans,” to borrow Stevenson’s phrase, is the best description of islands that are, without doubt, a natural home of the coconut tree. In some far back period it may have been introduced from elsewhere, as it has, of more recent years, been introduced with some success in the neighbouring Andamans. In the Nicobars the coconut palm (*Cocos nucifera*) grows in many varieties; it is cultivated with some care; and is the very mainstay of life and of prosperity. Each palm gives, as a rule, two crops of nuts per year, a crop averaging fifty nuts. All the year round some will be ripe while others are growing. In Car Nicobar, where some intelligence is shown in planting and in using the crops, the method adopted for obtaining a new plantation is to place a sprouting nut on its side half covered with soil, and not to plant another within at least 18 feet of it. In this planting care is taken to place the sprouting shoots facing outwards, so that the shape and extent of a plantation shall be well defined and the trees given the best chance to develop. The chief enemy of the young palm tree is the wild pig, and ordinarily some attempt is made to fence-in a young plantation.

Under favourable conditions a young tree will produce fruit some four years after the seed-nut dropped from the parent tree and was planted in the ground. From this time it seems able to go on growing and producing fruit for an almost unknown length of time, throwing out new fruit spikes, these bearing anything from seven to fourteen nuts, which take, on an average, from eight months to a year to ripen. If the fruit of certain trees is required to

PLATE XVIII.



THE COCO PALM: CULTIVATED GROWTH.

be left undisturbed on account of some special purpose, the owner sticks a rough fence of branches around it, and this will be respected and counted a sign to announce to all and sundry that this tree is not to be touched, it is *tabu*. Trees not so protected are liable to be pilfered. Most owners of trees have devices of their own for indicating which trees belong to them and must therefore not be climbed by anyone else. As to attention, the young palms receive little beyond a clearing away of brushwood and grasses that might choke their early growth; in dry weather they are seldom watered. Nevertheless the owner of a grove or plantation has difficulties to contend with, for besides hurricanes that may work devastation among young trees, he has to dread the flying-fox and coconut beetle, both of which are very destructive to young trees as the beetles work their way into the stems and destroy alike foliage and fruit. An even greater enemy is the "robber-crab," the *Birgus latro*, which is common along all the coasts of tropical islands and lives almost entirely on coconut diet: it is nocturnal in its habits and hides itself by burrowing in the ground like the rabbit, and lines its tunnels with coconut fibre. The way the robber-crab gets at its food is ingenious. It first uses its great claws to strip the husk away in order to find the eye, and having found this it has the easiest road into the interior. There are three eye-spots on every coconut, but only one permits of easy entrance. Having pierced the easy eye with one of its spindle legs, it rotates the nut until it has made an opening large enough for one of its great claws to be inserted, which it uses to break up the shell and remove its contents by particles which it carries into its mouth by means of the other smaller feet. From its nutritious diet it accumulates under the tail a store of fat which dissolves by heat into a rich yellow oil. The natives have an ingenious way of catching the robber-crab. They tie a band of grass round the stem of the tree at a fair distance from the ground; as the robber invariably descends backward he imagines himself to have reached *terra-firma* when he touches the grass and lets

go his hold. Monkeys sometimes damage the nuts to such an extent as to make them unfit for sale, yet the natives will not kill monkeys: they abandon the plantation and go to establish a new one elsewhere, doing their best to avoid the marauders. The islands now possessing the greatest number of productive palms are Car Nicobar, Camorta, and Trinkut; Katchall and Great Nicobar have an abundance of trees likewise, but many of these are damaged by monkeys. Very few traders go to Great Nicobar, and none go to Chowra to purchase nuts, as the supply on the last-named island is only sufficient for the requirements of its dense population. As a rule traders go to Car Nicobar first, then to Camorta, Trinkut, Bompoka, Teressa, and Katchall in the order named. It has been said that the ratio of population in the islands, which is largest in the North and decreases as one goes South, may be attributed to the fact that the growing of coconuts and the extent of land adapted for the purpose bears the same proportion. The Northern islands have the fertile, calcareous soil on which the palm flourishes luxuriantly, whereas the hills of the southern group are covered with dense jungle and the soil is much of it clay.

A Nicobarese can tell when standing at the foot of a tree whether the nuts have arrived at the stage when they are ripe for drinking purposes without having to gather and test them. It is young, unripe nuts that are carried about for refreshment, taken on journeys, etc., but older trees are tapped for "toddy"—a spirituous liquid that older people drink freely, but which otherwise is only offered to visiting friends. Toddy is not considered a proper drink for young people and children, and it is certainly intoxicating. Trees are tapped for it after they commence to bear fruit, those bearing brown nuts being the best for the purpose, and the tapping, or stepping, is a kind of monkey-laddering. The toddy is drawn off morning and evening, some trees yielding from three to six bottlesful in the twenty-four hours.

The coconut is the chief article of export, the chief food and drink, and in former times was the chief source of

light and fire. Nowadays visiting steamers bring supplies of kerosene oil for lighting purposes, and castor oil is preferred to coconut oil for rubbing on their bodies. From the fibre is made rough rope and twine and matting, and instead of removing the whole nuts traders now take the bulk of the freight as *copra*, to obtain which the nuts are, when ripe, cut in two with a blow from a hatchet, the flesh removed with a sharp knife, and spread in the sun to draw out the oil. In fine weather a few days' exposure is sufficient to make *copra*, but in bad weather it is very easily spoilt. If taken unripe the *copra* is inferior both in amount and quality. The shell, with the husk, is used for firing. Those who keep pigs feed them on coconuts, the allowance to each pig being four per day.

Mr. Man was of the opinion that were the Nicobar Islands to be colonised by an agricultural race such as the Chinese, a vast change would take place in their producing power, for as he viewed it, the coconut trade, though by no means of negligible value, would sink into insignificance beside the wealth that might be realised from the rich forest and jungle-land and the proper cultivation of fertile and practically virgin soil. In a brief but emphatic statement made in 1884, he said: "To colonise the Nicobars employ Chinese, send them to Great Nicobar, employ agriculturists who are not opium-smokers, maintain quick and frequent communication with the Straits Settlements, assist colonists in transporting their families, and provide them with ready means of procuring food, clothing, medicines, tools, and implements." Later, he added, "It seems merely a question of time for the promising character of these rich lands to be recognised and for advantage to be taken of the opportunity they offer to the energetic colonist."

The uses to which the coconut tree and its various parts are put have been tabulated as follows:

From the leaves are made the temporary thatch for huts; torches, *hinōng*, sails; while dry leaves are used to screen canoes when these are drawn up on the shore.

From the spathe toy canoes and sails are made.

From the flower comes *tāri* or spirit; from the ochrea a strainer for *tāri* and oil; from the shell are formed the water- and *tāri*-pots.

The fruit of the coconut tree provides food, drink, and oil.

In a letter which Mr. Man preserved as having some bearing on this subject, the writer says:

“DEAR SIR,

“It happens that I have had occasion to visit Car Nicobar and Nancowry two days after the receipt of yours, and though pretty confident on the subject of hut-building, I put the following question to the natives in both places: ‘What use is made of any part of the coconut tree in the construction of your huts?’ and the reply was to the effect that, ‘In the roof, none whatever; in making the floor laths obtained from the trunks of coconut trees are occasionally used between the joists and the upper layer of split bamboo, but only in the absence of the material usually employed and preferred. As regards the posts supporting the hut, these are usually made from the trunks of certain trees the wood of which is very hard, but at Arong village, owing to the scarcity of such trees, the posts are provided from coconut trees.’”

A Nicobar folk-tale accounts for the origin of the coconut tree after this wise:

“There was once a man who worked magic and made water to flow out of his elbow. Such a man is dangerous as he must be possessed of a devil, so the people chopped off his head and threw it into the jungle. After a time a tree grew out of the skull, and at last fruits as big as a man’s head grew on it, and these fruits were full of water. Now water is very scarce on the islands, but nobody would drink the water of the coconut tree until one day a sick man, almost at the point of death, was so parched with thirst that he was given some of this water to drink. From that moment he began to recover. Soon all sick people were given coconut water to drink, and in time everybody wanted to drink of it.”



CLIMBING THE TREE FOR COLLECTING "TODDY."

CHAPTER XI

FOOD AND DRINK

WHILE the Nicobarese depend upon the coconut to a greater extent than upon anything else for their supply of both food and drink, the fruit of the *Pandanus Leram* is to them nearly as indispensable, and the tree itself is equally characteristic of the islands. This tree needs a damp soil; its trunk runs up to 30 or 35 feet in height; its fruit resembles a pineapple in shape, comes out at the base of the leaves, and is of the size of a large *jak*. When nearly ripe it changes from green to a yellowish colour, and when gathered may weigh anything between 30 to 40 lbs. This is the breadfruit of the Nicobarese, yet it must not be confounded with the breadfruit of the South Pacific Islands, although the latter, like the *jak*, is also an *Artocarpus*. As there are practically no cereals grown on the Nicobar Islands, and the natives find it necessary to supplement their diet of fish, fowl, pork, and fruit with something farinaceous, they have utilised this product with which Nature has lavishly supplied them. It is true that of late years traders have brought in a considerable quantity of rice which is sold through local "shops," and is, in fact, one of the staple commodities taken in exchange for coconuts; yet it has never displaced the pandanus in favour. Cycas, which ripen only during the N.E. monsoon (from November to April), also plantains and yams, are made into a paste and eaten in the form of cakes, or are fried as a vegetable, and sometimes are simply baked in their skins.

Pigs and fowls form the principal meat, but are seldom consumed save at feast-times; it is rare to find them offered to visitors on any other occasion. Nevertheless, as the feasts occur with some frequency, a great feast will

practically clear a village of its stock of boars (sows are never killed), and it will also very considerably reduce its supply of poultry. Fish are only eaten raw when boats have been out a long time and it has not been possible to get sufficient other food; at all other times fish is cooked, but always by broiling or baking in hot ashes; it is never cooked in a pot by boiling or stewing. Both meat and fish may, however, be dried by fire-heat. Fresh pork (or wild pig), like fish, is cut into strips, salted, and dried in the sun for several days, after which it is kept in a jar covered with salt. Nothing is ever buried in the ground to preserve it for use later on, as is done by the Andamanese. When boiling a piece of pork in a pot strips of cane are fastened to it to facilitate lifting it out when done. Fowls and birds are cooked by broiling over the fire or in a pot. In the islands of Teressa and Bompoka crabs are caught, fattened in cages, and let out when one is wanted for boiling. Most foods are cooked, and it is rare to find any Nicobarese eating uncooked food unless driven to it by hunger.

The ordinary diet of the people consists of *larom*, the bread-paste about the preparation of which more is said below, and this is varied with coconut cake, baked yams, and sweet potatoes, with abundance of fresh vegetables and fruits, and at feast-times with meat, mainly pork, and poultry. Coconut milk and toddy are the usual beverages, for where water is drunk it is only that caught in pitchers when it rains; much of the water in wells is brackish. If a pitcher is placed under a coconut tree when rain is falling, and a stem of a branch is made to form a conducting spout, it readily fills with fresh water. For bathing purposes the wells and pools provide sufficient, for rain is frequent, and washing of clothes is done when water has accumulated in any convenient place. Meal-times are the early part of the morning after rising, and just after sundown; during the day everyone partakes of odd refreshment more or less continually in the form of betel-nut quids and drinks of coconut milk. Fruit is also freely eaten.

There are several varieties of both red and white pandanus, the "topes" of which are as much an inheritance as are coconut trees. The ripening of the fruit is carefully watched and when at the right stage it is plucked and kept in store on the wooden platform under each hut. A bough, when it is brought in, may weigh anything up to 50 lbs. When ripe the fruit is taken and boiled in a pot kept for this purpose alone, and this first boiling continues for about six hours. The whole fruit at this stage is like a large pod and is full of seeds; the pod being broken open, the seeds can be got out, when they are pressed under stones to exude the farinaceous substance they contain. Even so, this substance being full of fibres has to be strained and cleared. This is a laborious process where sieves are unknown, and it is done by passing threads through the substance time after time until it is free from all foreign matter. Then the paste has to be boiled once more, pressed into shape, and wrapped up in leaves. Neat bundles of the boiled paste are tied together and hung above the fireplace in the hut, where the heat and smoke together "ripen" them, and from these bundles one or more portions are detached as required. It takes a woman practically a whole day to make a large bundle of *larom*, the flavour of which is not unlike boiled chestnuts. It is usually eaten fresh, but is still eatable after three months' preservation. Père Tallandier, who visited the Nicobar Islands in 1711, says: "*Ils font une espèce de pâte de racines qui leur tient lieu de pain*," and he is certainly alluding to *larom* paste; its preparation was doubtless the same then as now.

The pandanus is cultivated from slippings taken from the trees bearing fruit; it is seldom or never grown from seed. A new tree bears fruit after three years, this being not unlike a huge pineapple with prickly knobs growing on the crown which have to be removed by slicing them off. This is done before carrying it to the hut.

When rice is available it takes the place of *larom*, but in the ordinary way a portion of *larom* and some coconut kernel, with the milk of the nut for drink, makes a good

meal. For old people and young children who cannot masticate the nut it is ground down by crushing or grating it. At meal-times a housewife will take down a bundle of *larom* paste from above the fireplace and will cut off a portion that she considers sufficient for the family's requirements, doing this with a piece of bark-fibre if she does not possess a steel knife, as nowadays most islanders do. A piece of *larom* on a platter, with some ripe husked coconut served round it, is each person's share. Should rice form the staple of the meal, it, too, is boiled down to a paste and served with chunks of coconut in the same way. Any fish, vegetables, fruit, and occasionally a piece of pork or fowl, are additional to, not instead of, the portion of *larom* paste. In very dry seasons the pandanus tree gives a poor yield of fruit, then rice has to supply its place in the dietary.

The fat of pork when that is cooked is preserved for eating cold and is added to the *larom* as if it were butter. Fat from the back of the pig is much prized and when melted down it is kept for a month or more, but it is never used for cooking other things, as in frying. Vegetables are cooked before eating them, including *papayas*, both ripe and unripe; they are generally boiled, and some of the water in which they are cooked is drunk when heating them. The wild yam is eaten when the cultivated kind is not available, but is not relished in the same way. Like the Burmese people, the Nicobarese drink little during a meal, but after it they rinse out the mouth and take a copious draught of young coconut milk, or of toddy, and then chew a piece of betel-nut and smoke cigarettes. At Car Nicobar water is freely drunk when anyone is feeling out of sorts, and hot water is freely drunk by women for a month after childbirth. Water is always used for cooking purposes in all the islands, but rather less at Car Nicobar where there is oil in plenty, and it is liked as a cooking medium.

Bachelors are allowed to drink toddy, but many of the unmarried of both sexes do not drink it at all, for it is considered to be the drink of old persons, save on festive

occasions. It is not bought and sold, but if a guest going to a feast takes with him a contribution of toddy, his host will give him in return an extra portion of pork. Enamelled soup plates and electro spoons and forks are now in common use, instead of the spathe of the areca palm that used to serve as plate or dish, and a meal is quite orderly in its serving, although table manners and customs, like the table itself, may be somewhat rude. At feast-times the people will eat to repletion, after having waited for hours for the meal to be got ready; they will then sleep and eat again, then dance for hours on end. After a feast they may go without pork for weeks until someone feels obliged to kill a pig in order to get a change of diet. The native shops now give opportunity for making variety, as many foreign products find their way to them from traders, such as canned meats. Magistrates and Government Agents have occasionally found natives much the worse for drink, but this has been because the liquor, usually rum, was obtained through smugglers, for its sale is carefully watched and restricted.

CHAPTER XII

BIRTH CUSTOMS AND INFANCY

THE marriage tie, as we shall find, is a very loose knot, and little ceremony attaches to the union of a young couple, but the rites and observances attending both birth and death appear to be legion. It would seem that entrance into the world and departure from it are the two supreme events in life.

What is curious, and is almost unique, is that regulations regarding a birth apply as much to the father as to the mother, and most travellers have noted that *couvade*, or "lying-in," is considered necessary for the father, or practised by him, in some islands, although regarded as a mere superstition in others. But restrictions regarding diet and rest, or avoidance of work, are observed by the father quite as much as by the mother. It is considered selfish of a man to carry on his usual occupations when a birth is imminent and for some time after it has taken place. He is endangering the life of the child if he works hard and gets into a state of perspiration although it is not yet born.

When the time arrives for the child to be born the wife goes to one of the birth-huts set apart from the rest, and, quite frequently, close to the mortuary hut, so that, as has been said, a Nicobarese enters and leaves the world at much the same spot. The birth-hut may, however, be down on the beach, away from the village, and richer families own their own birth-hut, which assures a measure of privacy, and is really a wise precaution.

The husband remains with his wife to look after her and attend to her wants until some weeks have elapsed and

she is able or at liberty to return to their home; for some time she is ceremonially unclean and he must attend to all her wants, perhaps with the help of other women, and before they leave he will give a feast to those who attended her—no other payment would be allowed.

When birth-pains come on other women come to help the sufferer, and although child-birth is fairly easy with them, there are more deaths at this time than is usual in other parts of the world. If there is delay in delivery it is presumed that the baby is trapped by something or other and a diligent search is made for tight fastenings or traps, while the doors of huts and lids of boxes are set wide open—even the racing canoe in the village-hall is lifted up from its resting-place to “ease” it, and any logs lying about are turned over.

Saffron and turmeric are used to rub over mother and child, and any clothing they use is dyed with this. Plenty of hot water is used for both mother and child, although she is ceremonially unclean for at least a month. A young baby is bathed every day with warm water and the wood used for heating this must be of a special kind, while the vessel containing the water must also be a special one. After its first bath the baby is rubbed all over with coconut oil. Mothers will often get up in the middle of the night to bathe their babies, and probably this frequent bathing is a great comfort to the little one, especially in the birth-hut, for cleaning of the hut itself is not allowed, the whole process of birth being regarded as unclean; thus no pots or clothing or mats used there may be taken away, and are, in fact, often destroyed before the birth-hut is left.

There are always a number of husbands and wives inhabiting birth-huts at the same time, as they do not leave this enforced exile until a child is three months old, and may stay much longer. Meantime it may have been given a name, often by the woman who first receives it in her hands, or naming may be left until it is old enough to give itself some kind of name or nickname. The scruple they have against using the name of a dead rela-

tive until a long time after his or her death makes it difficult to find new names. Foreign words are often given as names or nicknames, thus one finds the drollest combinations of words used, such as "Kiss-me-Quick," "You-stay-Here," "Story-Teller," and so on.

Kissing and fondling of their babies is common as it is everywhere else, but it takes the form of sniffing at the cheeks, never touching the lips. The practice of betel-chewing makes sniffing a much better form of showing affection as the mouth and lips are often distorted and disfigured.

The first food given to a young child after its mother's milk is the milk of coconut mixed with pandanus paste. A young child may not touch fish until at least five years old, nor will a nursing mother eat fish lest her milk be tainted. Mothers may suckle their children for a long period, say two years.

The greatest number of children ever known to have been born to the same parents is twelve, and then very few of the number attained to full growth. Out of families numbering as many as eight or nine children, some two or three will generally fail of reaching manhood or womanhood. Cases of twins are rare, and of triplets almost unknown. Indeed, the birth of twins is regarded as a misfortune and as reflecting on the chastity of the mother; her character will be under a cloud for some time after such an event has occurred. There is also a belief that it is impossible for twins to grow up together for many years, and that by killing the younger at birth the prospects of survival for the elder are improved. This belief is supported by legends of twins that grew together, quarrelled, when one killed the other, hence the impossibility of twins ever agreeing.

At Car Nicobar Mr. Man observed how very youthful some of the married couples seemed. Boys of eighteen and girls of sixteen had already become parents. He noted, too, that as a general thing all children seemed to be born before the mother reached the age of thirty. In this island families of six and seven children were common

and few couples remained childless. Cases of stillborn children are also rare. He did not find that any artificial restraints on population were used, nor any unnatural means to increase or limit reproduction. Were such things known, they might certainly be resorted to, for it is a fact that application is quite often made to the Government station for "medicine" to stimulate reproduction.

While population in the islands of the Northern Group has been increasing, there has been steady diminution in that of the other groups. Extinct villages in the Central and Southern Groups can quite easily be traced, with evidence that epidemics of smallpox and other diseases have certainly carried off many families. Going southwards, too, many childless couples are found, hence the practice of adoption that has already been alluded to. Then, although the decrease in the Central and Southern Groups is less striking in modern times than it was years ago, it is certain that unless the population is steadily recruited from the Northern Group, a few more decades will see the already sparse numbers wiped out. But from the fact that in several villages in the Central islands residents are found who have migrated there from other islands, it looks as if recruiting and resettlement was being done.

After taking considerable pains to find out whether this recruitment did or did not take place, Mr. Man found that in Teressa and Bompoka, and in some of the other islands, thirty-five men, three women, eight boys, and five girls had all been born in other islands, chiefly Chowra, and had gone later to live there. These represented about 5 per cent. of the total population at that time. Further south the proportion was much smaller. In the north, especially at Car Nicobar, on the contrary, not a single case of immigration was to be discovered.

As the Census Returns show and as has frequently been remarked by all travellers the proportion of men considerably exceeds that of the women, yet this may not be

as much the case as at first sight appears, because as soon as strangers appear the women disappear into their huts and will not come out either to be numbered or photographed, and they are often away working in the gardens when any visit is taking place. Thus it is difficult ever to get the real number of women and girls that any village may contain.

PLATE XXI.



GROUP TAKEN AT MUS, CAR NICOBAR.

CHAPTER XIII

MARRIAGE CUSTOMS

WHEN a girl reaches womanhood the fact that she is marriageable is announced by giving a feast to which friends and possible husbands are invited. It is *de rigueur* for all relations to bring gifts to the girl and to present them either on the evening of their arrival or the following morning. For other than relations to offer gifts would, however, be a breach of decorum. Among the gifts there must be at least one new skirt bestowed upon the young woman. Before the arrival of the guests the tuft of hair that young girls retain until this time is shaved off by her mother or some female friend, and this is wrapped up in a cloth and placed in a box, to be kept by the mother for as long as relations between herself and her daughter continue amicable. The guests commence to arrive in the evening, but they are not offered anything to eat until the following morning, so either they come already fed or bring something with them to pacify their hunger. They are, however, expected to commence culinary operations, supervised by their host, who provides the cooking-pots. The actual work of cooking is done by the women of the party while the men play about with the coconut oil which the father offers to each guest in turn in a shell, this oil having been an offering from the prospective bride to her mother. Many cooking-pots are brought into use, some for pork, some for poultry, some for yams and other vegetables. If anything has been forgotten, it is borrowed from neighbours.

An entire day will be spent in eating and drinking with sleeping intervals and some singing and dancing. The girl herself is not seen as she remains indoors entirely

enveloped in a piece of calico which covers all but her face. The feast goes on through the following night and on the second day the guests go away, taking with them any remains of the spread. During all this time and for a week afterwards the parents' hut is kept decorated with branches and leaves, while young plantain leaves are worn by the *menlūana* and his satellites, who have a standing invitation to all such gatherings. Other men, too, will wear plantain leaves if they can get them. During the whole of this time the girl will never have left the hut unless accompanied by her mother or some elderly matron.

This feast is called the *wingaich*, and it marks the great epoch in a girl's life. From now on she may allow her hair to grow long, but when doing cooking she must wrap her head in a handkerchief, as do all other women when so engaged, in order to prevent stray hairs falling into the food. A few days after the *wingaich* has been held any young men who have noticed the charms of the maiden may make advances and are generally given some task by which they must prove the sincerity of their affection—it may be canoe-making or the repairing of a hut. Marriages between first cousins or closer relations are not permitted, but there are no restrictions between unrelated individuals bearing the same name; probably, however, no case of this has ever occurred. First-cousin marriage is, however, permitted among the Shom Pen, and a case of a man marrying a widow and her daughter was observed.

It is the parents' duty to satisfy themselves that the qualifications and capabilities of a prospective son-in-law are such as will allow him to keep a wife; they enquire into his skill in hunting, fishing, his success in cultivating land, his ability in building a canoe, and his possessions. Nothing in the nature of a dowry is bestowed on the bride by her parents; on the contrary, it is required that the bridegroom shall supply all gifts, calico, and jewellery, as evidence that he is in a position to support a wife in comfort. In the event of a young man being able to

satisfy them on all points, the relatives raise no further objection to the union, and the girl bedecks herself in her ornaments as a sign of betrothal, and indeed is regarded as virtually married, for no one else would dream of paying his addresses to her—for the time being, at any rate. The lover is then at liberty to take up his residence with his bride's family, or she will go to his, although this arrangement is not necessary, and may be altered to suit convenience. There is no actual marriage ceremony and no special marriage feast, but the newly-united pair live together for about a month, at the end of which time they themselves invite friends to a feast in honour of their nuptials. At this meal the bashful bride sits somewhat apart from the rest, but the feast itself in no way differs from any other one, save that this time no decorations are added to the hut, and neither song nor dance nor wedding gifts enhance the occasion.

If children are born, a couple may maintain conjugal fidelity without a break throughout their joint lives; on the other hand, if no children arrive after a reasonable period, a separation seems natural and inevitable—in fact, the woman generally chooses for herself another mate from among the widowers, or the other bachelors, of her acquaintance, and the deserted husband consoles himself in like manner. In this way it happens that many Nicobarese, especially those in the Central islands, will, before they reach their thirtieth year, have had two or more partners. Some have been known to transfer their affections even more times. But, on the other hand, at Car Nicobar, where marriages are generally fruitful, divorce or separation is a rare occurrence and couples once united live together for the rest of their lives. All the personal effects of a married couple, including plantations and trees, are their joint property; justice requires a division of the settlements when they desire a change.

A brief experience of life in the islands is sufficient to confirm the impression that a Nicobarese wife is regarded in all respects as the helpmeet of her husband and his equal, but if she happens to possess special merits or if

she can claim superiority on account of personal attractions, wealth, skill in household arts, or proficiency in any respect, she may exert her powers without exciting the least resentment or opposition in her partner. He is far too sensible of his good fortune in having won so estimable a wife to think of risking his comfort and happiness by offering objections to her opinions or desires at any time.

Widows are invariably well cared for, and there seems to be no reason to suppose that the treatment they received in past times was any less considerate than that accorded to them today. It is optional with them to marry again, but it would be considered indecorous to do so until several memorial feasts have been observed, which means that an interval of something like two or three years will have elapsed. After that they do not pass to their late husband's brother or other relative, but are as much at liberty to choose whom they will marry as during their spinsterhood. The Car Nicobarese seldom intermarry with the other islanders, and alliances between different island peoples are not common unless they all speak the same dialect. Connections occasionally take place between Nicobarese women and Malay or Burmese traders, but as has been mentioned before, there is strong racial antipathy among all the Nicobarese to the natives of India, and the very occasional unions that do occur are the exceptions that go to prove the rule.

Where a Nicobarese woman considers herself aggrieved by the conduct of her husband in absenting himself from home on what she may regard as insufficient grounds, as, for instance, when having gone to a distant island for purposes of trade he remains there for his own pleasure, in spite of the fact that plenty of opportunities of returning have presented themselves, she will take her revenge, especially if their relations in the past have been at all strained, by laying herself out to form a new alliance. The signal of her doing this is that she discards the old garments she adopted when he went away—a faithful wife is supposed to wear something akin to "widow's weeds"

when her lord is absent—and she will array herself in her bravest attire and put on all her ornaments, and this is an intimation to all whom it may concern that she is a “grass” widow and will be willing to change her state if another suitor presents himself. If a separation is made and agreed upon no special steps are taken to inform the headman or the community in general. In most cases where a woman returns to her former home the rupture in relations soon becomes known to her former acquaintances and she is not blamed for taking matters into her own hands.

Except for individuals who have some serious physical defect—a very rare occurrence—it is unusual to find a man or woman who is unmarried at middle age. Some will, of course, be widows or widowers, but very few people remain single by choice after they are grown up. There may be circumstances which prevent a young man marrying as early as usual—his qualifications may be considered insufficient by the girl or her parents, or he may find another has been preferred before him—but ere long he will find a partner and assume the usual rights and responsibilities of a married man. The duties and occupations of family life are fairly divided between men and women, but those of a wife, if lighter and more diversified than those of a husband, still make large demands on her time and energies, for in addition to caring for the children, she has to prepare the pandanus paste that is their staff of life, to procure firewood and draw or catch and store water, cook all the food and tend the livestock, look for shell-fish and prawns along the shore, and do a share in hoeing and in planting the garden. She also shapes the coconut water-holders, makes baskets, flags, and gala dresses, makes the bark-cloth used for skirts, mats, and rugs, pillows, etc., and at Chowra she has, in addition, the work of making pots at certain times of the year. A husband may give assistance in all these matters, but for the most part he considers himself too much occupied with work that he regards as being more masculine, such as canoe-building, hut-building and re-

pairing, making weapons, etc.; also he has daily to tap coconut trees for toddy, as well as to hunt and fish. He will do the heaviest work in the gardens and plantations, and always it is he who does the bartering with traders and has to make journeys.

Home-life to the Nicobarese is by no means the dark, unimaginative life that many would think; it is full of interest and is diversified with hunting, playing, feasting, dancing, and with memorial obligations; affection is felt and shown between husbands and wives, parents and children, tribesmen and kindred; the play of the children affording constant joy and amusement. Morals may not be as elevated as among Europeans, yet neither are they as low as with some so-called civilised peoples. Both sexes meet on an equality of social importance; such a thing as wife-capture or wife-purchase being quite unknown, nor are daughters regarded as disposable property.

Mr. Man considered that it must always be difficult for Europeans, even after years of residence among this people, to form a just estimate of their mind or morals or to convey the kind of influence that tradition exercises on their customs and their behaviour. He desired that his own observations should be taken as facts that had appeared to him worthy of special note, not as judgments he had pronounced upon them; this especially in regard to marriage customs, to the relationship of the sexes, and to family and communal life.

PLATE XXII.



A GRAVEYARD AT CAR NICOBAR: MORTUARY HUT.

Sometimes, in order to avoid a death taking place in a hut, those who are not expected to recover are removed to the mortuary hut, which is erected beside the graveyard at a convenient distance from the village. These mortuary huts are also used for rites pertaining to the exhumation and ossuary feasts.

CHAPTER XIV

DEATH AND BURIAL (INCLUDING FUNERAL RITES AND SUBSEQUENT OBSERVANCES)

Extract from "The Indian Antiquary," October, 1899.

"Notes on the Nicobarese," E. H. Man.

INERT and phlegmatic as are the Nicobarese in most circumstances of life, yet some of their demonstrations of grief at the death of a relative or friend amount to what might be described as frenzied extravagance. This, although attributable in part to real sorrow, especially on occasions of family bereavements, is no doubt, as regards many of the *quasi* mourners, mainly induced by their superstitious fears and the dire necessity—for such do they regard it—of conciliating and propitiating the disembodied spirit, which, for the first few days after its release—when it is called *hōiha-īwī* or *hōiha-kamapāh*—is believed to be peculiarly active and malevolent.

The funeral customs in the Central and Southern islands of the Archipelago differ in so many points from those observed by the communities inhabiting the Northern islands that it will be necessary to treat of each separately. I will, therefore, endeavour to describe first the practices which prevail throughout the Central Group and also, for the most part, among the Southern islanders, and then sketch briefly the chief peculiarities of those adopted by the inhabitants of Car Nicobar, Teresa, Bompoka, and Chowra.

In every case of illness or serious accident the *men-lūana* (i.e., the "medicine-man," exorcist or shaman) is at once summoned, and by his arts and incantations and the erection of fetich-charms (*hentā-kōi* and *hentā*),

seeks to deliver his patient from the power of the evil spirits, to whose agency the disease, suffering or injury is attributed. When, notwithstanding all his efforts, death supervenes, it is not considered necessary to remove the body from the hut until the preparations for the interment are complete, but notice of the melancholy event is at once sent to all neighbours and friends in adjacent villages, for no one is supposed to willingly or wittingly fail to bid farewell to the remains of the departed or to make the customary offerings, consisting of a few or many fathoms—according to the wealth or spirit of generosity of the donor—of white or coloured calico or other cloths, or silver bangles, necklets, spoons, forks or other valuables. Any friend who is unable from some valid cause—such as absence from home, sickness or other trouble—to pay this mark of respect is expected to make his excuses and explain his conduct at the earliest opportunity to the chief-mourner, who, if satisfied, condones the other's absence; otherwise, it would be regarded as a slight to be remembered and rendered in kind as soon as an occasion offered for the purpose.

Should a relative from any unavoidable cause be absent when the obsequies are performed, he is restricted from visiting the village where the deceased died and was buried until the first memorial-feast (*entoin*), the reason being that he was not present at the ceremony—shortly to be described—when the mourners are required to take upon themselves vows of abstinence in token of their respect to the memory of the departed, or—as it would no doubt be more accurate to say in many cases—of their dread of offending his spirit.

During the interval that the news of the mournful occurrence is being conveyed to all concerned, at home the female relatives of the deceased are engaged in the last offices. One near of kin gently closes the eyes of the corpse in order to give the appearance of sleep, for not only is the glazed fixed look of death held in fear, but the further benefit is gained of darkening the vision

of the departed spirit—believed to be still hovering near—and thereby preventing it from acting malevolently towards the living. Next, the body is laid with the feet about a yard from the fire-place and the head towards the entrance of the hut, and carefully washed with hot water. For some reason, said to be no longer known to the present generation, this duty is performed once, thrice or five times at intervals during the hours that must elapse before the interment, and invariably by a female, preferably a relative. While all this is taking place one or other of the mourners seated round the corpse gives utterance from time to time to some ejaculation, such as “How generous!” “How unselfish!” to which remarks assent is forthwith given in a chorus of sobs and exclamations of *öi-öi-öi* from the men, and *ahö-ahö-ahö* from the women in attendance, repeated assurances being every now and again addressed to the corpse of the sorrow caused by his (or her) death.

While the body is being laid out various necessary duties have to be performed by one or other of the mourners and their friends:

(a) If the stores of food belonging to the deceased or other occupants of his hut were not removed prior to the death they are at once carried away to another hut for issue after the burial. The water is, however, retained for the use, during the day or night, or both, as the necessities of the case may require, of the mourners, who keep a sufficient quantity boiling both for washing the corpse and for their own consumption, as they are prohibited from taking any food until the prescribed cleansing of the dwelling and individual purification of themselves on the day following the funeral shall have been accomplished, the pangs of exhausted nature being meantime sustained by means of quids of tobacco and sips of hot water.

(b) Some of the coconut-shell water-vessels (*hishōya*) are, however, taken with their contents to the entrance of the hut, where an uneven number (generally 3, 5 or 7 pairs) are violently dashed against a post so as to

crack the shells. In like manner all of the bulk of the portable property of the deceased, such as (in the case of a man) his spears, pots, baskets, paddles, plates and a great variety of other articles, are broken or otherwise rendered unserviceable; and then the whole are conveyed to the cemetery in order to be deposited at the proper time on the grave or at the head-post, this being one of the essential sacrifices prescribed by time-honoured custom.

(c) A small quantity of cooked meat, rice, *pandanus* and yam, together with some fruit, is brought from another hut and placed near the head of the deceased for the refreshment of the spirit, which is believed to be hovering near the corpse, and it is kept there till just before the removal of the body, when it is thrown below the hut, where it is consumed by the pigs, fowls and dogs.

(d) A stretcher for the corpse, called *da-yung*, is constructed by breaking up a canoe, made of common wood, belonging to the deceased or one of the mourners. The board thus obtained must be of about the same length as the corpse, and from six to ten inches wide. Curious pegs, called *shinpân* or *shanipân*, to the number of 5, 7, or 9—again no even number is permissible—are made by lashing together in an inverted V shape (X) the ends of two sticks, about 2 feet in length, of the *Garcinia speciosa*, and pointing the other ends.

(e) To every village (*mattai*)—and be it here mentioned that this term is applied to a collection of huts however few in number, excepting those of comparatively recent origin or which are not occupied throughout the year—a graveyard (*chuk-pentila*) is attached; and thither other mourners or their friends repair with wooden hoes and old paddles in order to dig the grave, which must be about 5 feet deep. Certain others are at the same time engaged in making the three posts which are needed for the grave, viz., the head-post (*kanōi-kōi*), which is the largest and about 8 feet long, and is made of hard-grained wood called *komching*; the extra head-

post (*pentīla*), which is about 6 feet long; and the foot-post (*kanōi-lāh*), which is of about the same length.

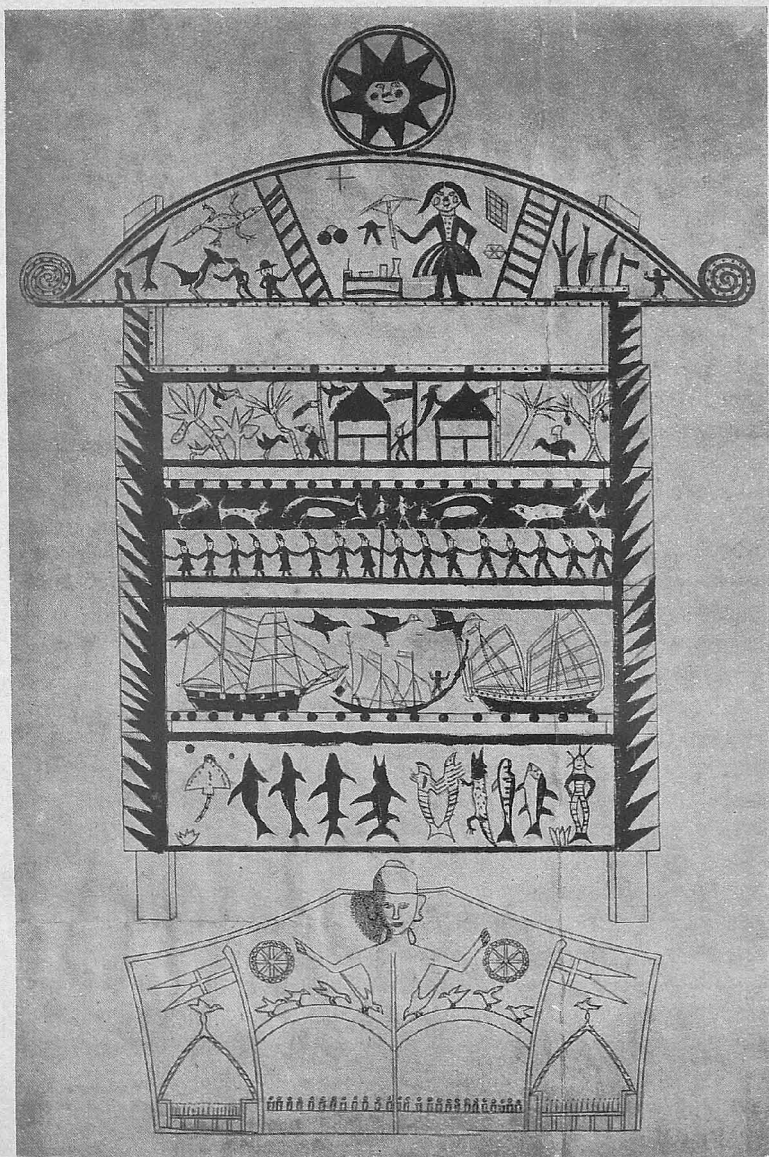
(f) The chips and shavings, produced while making the *da-yung*, the *shanipān* and the three grave-posts, are then collected and placed in a heap on the ground near the foot of the ladder of the hut where the corpse is lying. A quantity of coconut husks—sufficient to maintain a fire until the hour fixed for the interment—is added to the pile, which is then ignited by a flame kindled with fire-sticks, or obtained from a fire known to have been recently so kindled. In wet weather this restriction necessarily entails no little inconvenience. The object of the fire is said to be two-fold—viz., to keep the disembodied spirit at a distance, and to apprise friends approaching or passing the shore in a canoe of the sad occurrence: on no other occasion is a fire so lighted.

(g) As soon as the two head-posts have been made and the grave dug, the *kanōi-kōi* is firmly planted into the head of the grave, while to the upper portion projecting above the surface of the cemetery is lashed the *pentīla*, round the top of which are fastened some *Orania* spathes (*homyūam*), and—in the case of a female above the age of thirteen or fourteen—a large basket (*hentain*), then and there rendered unfit for further use by being slit with a knife or *dāo*. Into this basket are crammed some of the sacrificed articles which had shortly before been conveyed to the cemetery. In the case of a man, a similar quantity of his portable property is deposited about the head-posts.

(h) The trophy of pigs'-tusks, which has been suspended over the entrance of the hut of the deceased from the time of the last memorial-feasts celebrated by the owner, is, together with one or two *kareau* and *hentā-kōi*, carried out and thrown unceremoniously into the adjacent jungle. In doing this care is taken for obvious reasons to remove the M. O. P. shell "eyes" from the *kareau* and throw them apart! In addition to this the *chuk-fūm* fetich (consisting of necklaces of split plantain-leaflets), which is invariably kept on the left

side of the hut, as viewed from the entrance, is wrapped up in an *Areca* spathe and stowed away until the first memorial-feast (*entoin*) is held, when it is restored to its prescribed place.

To return now to the group of mourners engaged in preparing the corpse for burial. When the body has been washed for the last time, turmeric-unguent (consisting of turmeric-root paste mixed with coconut-oil) is smeared all over it by a relative of the same sex, if available; the ear-sticks (*ichē*) are left as worn in life, and the *neng* and *opchīap* are removed, and replaced by the *neng-ta-chīha* or the *lōe-ta-wīa*, according to the sex of the deceased, who is then dressed in any articles of European attire which he (or she) may have possessed; for no garment which has belonged to a dead person may be appropriated by another, but must be buried with the corpse. Except in the case of infants, a lighted cigarette is next placed for a few moments between the lips, and then laid aside for the purpose of being deposited on the grave together with the utensils and cloths used in washing the corpse. The mourners now proceed to decorate the body, according to the resources of the family and the description of offerings presented by their friends, with such silver ornaments as bracelets, anklets, necklets, waistlets and headbands; even offerings of new spoons and forks are often added. After this, a cap (called *shanōang-kamapāh*) is made of one white and two red handkerchiefs, or of 3, 5, 7 or 9 white, red and blue pieces of calico, and placed on the head of the corpse. Another handkerchief is wrapped round the throat, which is called the *tanūal-kulāla-kamapāh*, signifying "neck-tie of the corpse." Moreover, a chin-stay is prepared with a strip of calico and applied so as to keep the jaw closed, and the hands are bound together at the wrists with bands of white calico and laid over the abdomen, the ankles also being in like manner secured. An uneven number of silver coins are then placed between the chin-stay and the cheek, and sometimes even in the mouth, in order that the soul and spirit, being thus



A HENTA-KOI, OR CHARM, SUCH AS IS ORDERED BY THE MENLUANA
WHEN CALLED TO VISIT THE SICK.

This is kept in the hut until it has to be replaced by a new one. Every part of the design and figures has a meaning, from the sun at the top to birds and fishes signifying plenty. Considerable skill and accuracy is shown in the drawing and repetition of the design.

enabled to pay their way, may meet with a kindly welcome in journeying to their new home.

While these preparations are in progress the funeral-guests continue to assemble, each bearing offerings, termed *olyála*, consisting of silver personal ornaments or of calico, the latter of which vary in extent, according to the circumstances or liberality of the donor, from a few fathoms to one or more entire pieces of 24-40 yards. These gifts of cloth must be of material that has never been used, and may be of red, blue, white, spotted or checked, but never of black, calico. Immediately on their presentation they are torn by the family into lengths of about four yards, and laid ready for use on the floor.

First, 3, 5, 7 or more uneven number of two-fathom pieces of red or white calico belonging to the family of the deceased are produced, and, after a slit of about one foot lengthwise is made in a certain part of each, the corpse is laid thereupon and enveloped with these shrouds in such a manner as to leave exposed through these slits only a narrow portion of the face from the forehead to the chin. Neatly trimmed *Orania* spathes called *danáp-oal-hilīa*—3, 5, or 7 in number—are then wrapped round all but the head, and are tied tightly with split cane. The corpse is next placed on the *da-yung* (i.e., the stretcher), and lashed to it with more split cane, thereby ensuring perfect rigidity and facilitating the process of removing the body to the grave. One or three gaudy patchwork skirts, such as are worn by women at memorial-feasts, called *lōe-ta-wia*, are then wrapped round the waist of the corpse, whether it be that of a man or woman. When so worn it is termed *kentul*. Next, the calico offerings of friends, already referred to as having been brought and torn into lengths of about 4 yards each, are taken in hand. An uneven number of these—from 3 to 29 in the case of an ordinary individual, and a larger uneven number in the case of a headman or *menlūana*—are selected, and, after a slit has been made in each in the same manner as in the first

shrouds, they are wound round the corpse so as to leave only a narrow space down the centre of the face exposed. Last of all, 7, 9 or 11 *neng-ta-chiha* are tied round the whole. In the case of one who had occupied a leading position in their midst, the enshrouded corpse when thus ready for burial presents, as may be imagined, a considerable bulk.

Save in cases where, for sanitary reasons, it is important to expedite the burial, the hour usually fixed for the funeral is either sun-down, before midnight, or at early dawn. Under no circumstances can an interment take place between the hours of 11 a.m. and 1 p.m., as the shadows of those lowering the body into the grave, as well as those of the mourners taking their last look at the shrouded figure before the earth is made to conceal it from sight, would then fall *into* the grave and not safely *outside* or *across* it, and the consequences of this mischance are too serious to be rashly encountered; the belief being that sickness, if not certain death, would speedily overtake any who are guilty of such indiscretion. The danger does not extend to the act of digging the grave, though precautions against the possibility of harm arising to those who have been so engaged is averted before the arrival of the corpse by the *menlūana* in attendance, who carefully sweeps the grave in order to expel any intruder lurking therein. This is done with a leafy bough plucked from a small jungle tree, called *kōang*. This act is termed *kohō-hala*, which denotes "brandishing."

On the completion of the elaborate process of preparing the corpse for burial the enshrouded figure is gently moved to a position at right-angles to that which it had up to this time occupied, and is laid immediately under the centre of the roof of the hut. The mourners then assemble round the body, the nearest relatives resting their heads or elbows thereon, and the remainder ranging themselves behind, while the last farewells are uttered in heart-broken accents and with bitter wailings, termed *shidiang-kamapáh*. This lasts but for a short

time, and then, at a given signal, some young men who are in readiness at the entrance approach and, hastily raising the body, carry it *head* foremost down the ladder, and convey it away swiftly to the cemetery. One or more of the mourners not unfrequently cling to the corpse and have to be forcibly parted from it. Such persons will sometimes even allow themselves to be dragged half-way to the grave, where also they usually make a feint of throwing themselves upon the body after it has been lowered; but a slight show of resistance on the part of the bystanders generally suffices to frustrate any such attempts.

The *menlūana* then commands the disembodied spirit to go quietly to the grave with the corpse and remain there until the first memorial-feast (*entoīn*), when it will be required to proceed to Hades. It is further exhorted not to wander about in the meantime and frighten the living with its ghostly presence.

When the body has been laid in the grave the peculiar X-shaped pegs, called *shinpán* or *shanipán*, to which allusion has already been made, are brought into use: 5, 7 or 9 of these are driven into the ground across the body at regular intervals from the head downwards in order that the evil spirits, known as *mong-wānga*, may be unable to abstract the remains, a work which is supposed to be the special function and delight of this class of demons.

After the corpse has been laid in the grave *dai-ta-kōang* (i.e., leaves of the *kōang*) are again waved over it in order to disperse any spirits which may still chance to be hovering near; for it is held that, through sympathy with the deceased, the spirits of the bystanders, and even a stray demon, might by overhaste be interred with the corpse. To make assurance doubly sure, therefore, a dry coconut-leaf torch, such as is used in these islands when fishing at night, is lighted and waved a few times inside the grave, whereupon, at a given signal, the earth or sand is rapidly shovelled in with the blades of old paddles by a party of young

men who are standing in readiness to perform this duty.

Outside the grave and on the *kanōi-kōi* are then placed a variety of spears, paddles and other things belonging to the deceased, all of which are broken or damaged before being so deposited, in order that all may see how sincere the mourners are in their intention of denying themselves the use or benefit of any of the property, notwithstanding its undoubted value in their eyes. Another reason given for this wholesale destruction of property is that strangers who have no respect for the sacredness of tabued or sacrificed articles might appropriate uninjured and serviceable objects regardless of the displeasure of the disembodied spirit, who would unquestionably resent any such token of indifference and disrespect by wreaking vengeance probably on those through whose remissness such misconduct had been rendered possible.

After the grave has been filled in, the small post called *kanōi-lâh*, already referred to, is erected a little beyond the foot in order to mark the position and length of the grave. A cord is then fastened between the head and foot posts, and on this are suspended three pairs of *hishōya*. The middle pair over the centre of the grave is alone filled with water, the two other pairs over the head and foot respectively being empty.

On the graves of children a touching tribute is paid to their memory by placing on their graves models of the implements, etc., which they would have had occasion to use in after-years had their lives been prolonged. Toys also belonging to the little ones are broken and laid over them. In all cases, except that of very young infants, memorial-feasts are celebrated. The tabu, however, is less stringent in regard to the coconut plantations and trading operations when death takes place before the tenth year or thereabout, after which age the rites and ceremonies for the interment of a child are identical with those for an adult.

Besides the objects already enumerated as placed on

the grave it is customary among the communities of the Central Group to offer an uneven number of cooking-pots belonging to the dead person, in each of which one or more small holes are carefully bored in order to render it unfit for use. These pots are left there for about six months, and are then thrown into the jungle with the bulk of the offerings spared for a while after the first memorial-feast, which is invariably celebrated within that period, by which time they are no longer fit to remain *en evidence*.

The blades and prongs of the spears retained by the mourners are, like those sacrificed at the grave, bent or rendered otherwise—at least temporarily—unserviceable. They are, however, sometimes after the *la-neät-la*, or final memorial-feast, which brings the mourning period to a close, repaired and again brought into use. In the meantime, as will be found mentioned in a subsequent chapter dealing with memorial-feasts, they form part of the display of property which is made by the chief mourner on each of the *koruák* (or memorial-feast) days, which occur at stated times after an interval of two or more years.

Domestic pets (if any), such as paroquets, minahs and monkeys, owned by the deceased, are given away to friends. Dogs were formerly killed at the death of their master and buried in the jungle, but nowadays they are spared and appropriated by some other member of the family.

Any money possessed by a dead person, over and above that buried with him, is kept till nearly the close of the mourning period, when it is expended in the purchase of rice and other articles which have to be provided for the final feast; or—and this, of course, refers only to silver coins—is converted into personal ornaments, which are worn for the first time on that occasion.

At the termination of the ceremonies at the grave the mourning party return to their hut, where one or two women cover their heads with cloths and, leaving the face exposed, turn to the wall which is between them

and the direction of the grave and weep silently. This is said to be in token that the general body of mourners, whose representatives they are, although compelled to be otherwise engaged, are equally grief-stricken and would fain indulge their sorrow by refraining from every kind of employment.

While this scene is taking place within, *outside* the hut the demonstrations of woe assume a more serious form, and the grief and despair at the bereavement felt by the community in general and the family in particular are shown by hacking almost in half one of the supporting posts at the entrance of the hut. Although the injury is not so great as to endanger the stability of the dwelling, it is sufficient to necessitate the substitution of a new pile; but this renewal is deferred till the celebration of the last of the memorial-feasts, called *la-neät-la* (from *leät*, signifying "finished, enough").

Under every dwelling-hut there is a light wooden platform, called *itāha*, on which are kept various articles, *e.g.*, one or more *pomāk-ònh*, also bundles of firewood, freshly-gathered bunches of *pandanus* fruit, vegetables, etc. After the partial destruction of the hut-post, as just described, the *itāha* is broken up, and the materials of which it is constructed are thrown into the jungle. This act necessitates the removal of the *pomāk-ònh*, which is then rolled away and stored under another hut until the time arrives for celebrating the *entoin* feast.

The ceremony takes place before dusk; and after sundown on that and the two following days a fire is kindled near the head of the grave by means of fire-sticks, and kept burning throughout those three nights by one or more of the mourners who undertake this duty. The usual occupants of the hut sleep therein after the funeral and may in fact sleep in no other.

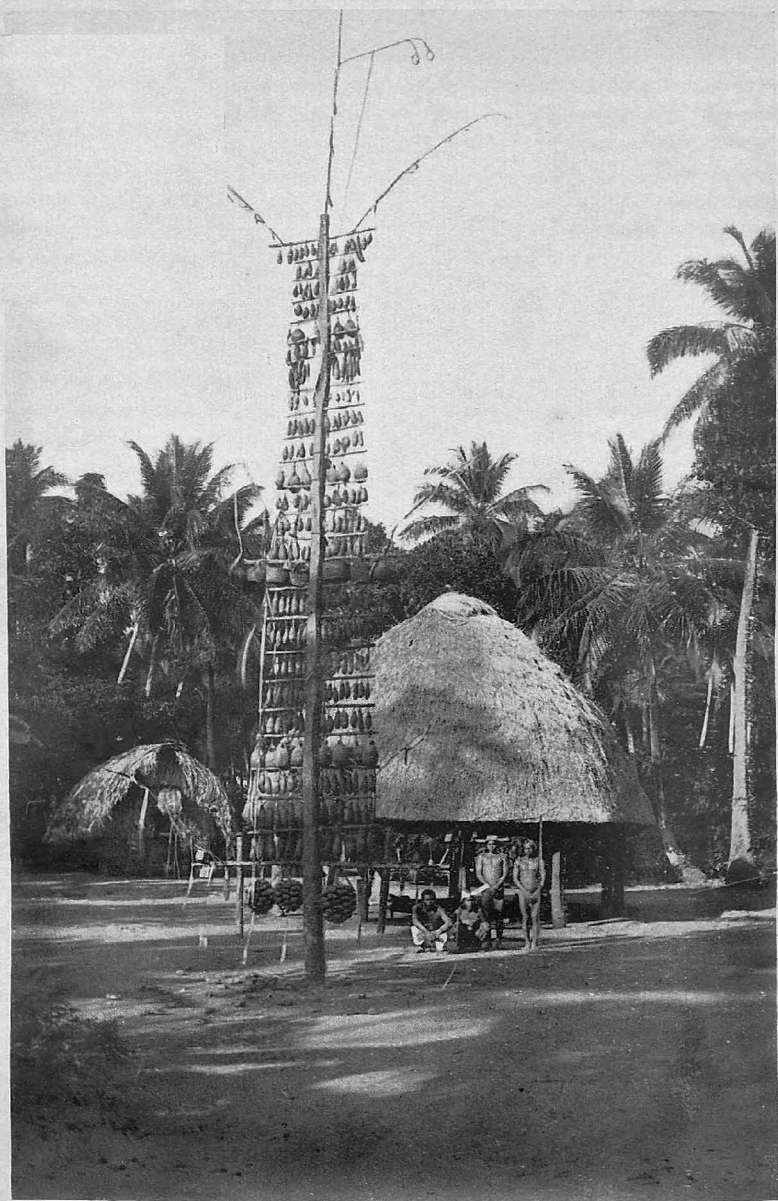
As has been already mentioned, mourners are not allowed to taste anything except hot water until about twenty-four hours have elapsed since the demise. It is not thought necessary to draw water specially for

their consumption, but any that may happen to be in the hut at the time is used. No idea of its defilement through the presence of death seems to have crossed the Nicobarese mind. Evidently some sentiment of the kind, however, attaches to the state of the hut and the persons of the mourners, as it is obligatory early on the morning after the interment that a thorough house-cleaning be undertaken. After everything has been removed from the walls and floor of the hut, the former are swept with a broom (*yihī-hanga*), and the latter washed with hot water (*et-shēch-oal-ñī*). The mourners then wash themselves by pouring water over each other. This is known as the *kolaich-i-ānh-hare*, implying purification by ablution. After they have dried themselves, they have, in order to be completely purified from their recent contact with the dead, to be anointed with an unguent, termed *danun-ānhā*, by the *menlūana* who, moistening his fingers therewith, performs the act of lustration (*enlūana*) by anointing each mourner in turn on the head and shoulder, uttering meantime repeatedly the mystic term "*epsh*" or "*ēush*," which to the people of the present day conveys no precise meaning, but is regarded as an injunction to the evil spirits to keep away, or as conferring some sort of charm or protection against their machinations. Meantime a man takes a short lighted torch, made of dry coconut leaves, which he waves in all directions inside the hut with the object of driving away any evil spirits that may be lurking therein. This act is termed *kohō-ñī-oal*.

With the further object of disguising themselves so that the departed spirits may fail to recognise them, and may do them no mischief, all the mourners shave their heads (*ikōah-kōi*), in addition to which the women shave their eye-brows (*ikōah-puyōl-okmât*), and the men eradicate with tweezers any hair they may have on their upper lips and chins (*itōsh-enhōin*). It is also common for a mourner, for the same reason, to assume some new name for him or herself, which, in a great

measure, accounts for the fact that some individuals have borne several different names in the course of their lives. This dread of the disembodied spirits of their departed relatives and friends is induced by the conviction that they so keenly desire to return to the scenes and associates of their earthly existence that they are utterly unscrupulous as to the means and methods they adopt for the purpose of attaining their object.

When the physical purification and fortification against the unseen powers are accomplished, the mourners and their friends assemble at the hut to partake of a meal (styled *ongtangkirâha*), which is prepared and eaten in silence. It consists of a pig and fowl freshly killed, and also of as great a variety of articles of food as can be procured. The object of this lavish provision is that each favourite viand may be represented, and thus enable the bereaved as well as their friends to decide at once from which they will abstain during one or other of the two mourning periods—viz., that styled *henhwáva-kanòishe* (or *oyânga-yannâta*), which terminates at the first memorial-feast (*entoin*), and that called *henhwáva-dîde*, which extends until the celebration of the final feast (*la-neät-la*) two or three years later. The various dainties are spread on trays, and each person is afforded the opportunity of declining or partaking of any number of them. By this means it soon becomes known which of those present intend to deny themselves, and to what extent their abstinence will be carried. At the conclusion of this repast a tray, containing a portion of each kind of food that has been served, is carried by one or two of the company and deposited on the grave as an offering to the departed spirit, but no effort is made to protect it from birds or animals, so that it usually happens that the whole amount is speedily consumed by pigs, fowls, dogs, and crabs.



ÑA-KOPAH : SACRIFICIAL OFFERING ERECTED AT CAR NICOBAR.

It consists of vegetables and fruits suspended from a ladder-like construction, contributed by those who have lost some relative within the past year or so, the object being to propitiate the spirits of the departed. After some weeks it is cut down and pigs are allowed to consume the remains.

CHAPTER XV

MEMORIAL-FEASTS AND FESTIVALS

To give any detailed account of customs in vogue in all the different Groups would take up too much space and only leave a confused effect; for all practical purposes the customs followed by the natives in the Central Group are mainly typical of others, with the exception of Car Nicobar.

As a rule there are not less than ten feasts of a memorial character held in honour of a deceased person, but only the first one, the *entōin* is mournful in character. At this first feast no dancing or singing is allowed, and all the invited guests are expected to wear their shabbiest clothes and discard all kinds of personal ornament, while the hut is never decorated as it is for all subsequent feasts. This *entōin* feast is held between three and five months after an interment has taken place, and always during the first quarter of a new moon because a dark night is essential. Such relations and friends of the deceased as were unable to attend the funeral, and who will have been required to keep away from the village during the interval, are sent for when the *entōin* is held, and are expected to bring with them then the offering of new calico for sacrifice at the head-post, and if they are related, must contribute a pig towards the feast. These friends, on their arrival, will give vent to loud lamentations, as if it were the funeral itself taking place, as this will have been their first opportunity of doing so. If their absence at the time of the funeral was really accidental or unpreventable, they will now undertake the vows of abstinence that they would have observed had they been present.

The first preparation for the *entōin* will have been the construction of one or more large pens for the pigs, with partitions so that each pig is separated from the others. The number of pigs may be as many as twenty or as few as two, according to the wealth of the mourners, and they are penned-up and fed, being also decorated with ribbons of coloured calico. They must all be fine specimens of their kind, fattened for the occasion. As all the pigs belonging to the deceased must be eaten at memorial-feasts and none kept for any purpose, the mourners usually appropriate the best for the first feast and leave the remainder to be fattened up. When the pigs are slaughtered some of the guests smear themselves with the blood, but usually wash it off later when the women present them with necklaces of plantain leaves. In addition to an abundance of pig-meat, a large number of young coconuts will be wanted to provide drinks for the guests, so a quantity will have been collected and tied together in pairs, and the pairs heaped-up in lots of about twenty-five pairs to each round pole stuck in the sand in front of the hut; this shows that an abundant supply of refreshment is ready for the fatiguing vigils that are about to commence.

During the first night the hosts are not expected to serve the guests with any solid food, only light drinks such as coconut-milk, toddy, and betel-nut to chew. During this first night the mourners weep and wail while their guests remain quiet or converse together in low tones. The mourners usually abstain from taking anything, but the guests refresh themselves from time to time. The guests may also sleep if they wish, but the mourners keep awake by abstinence and lamentation. In the morning the pigs are taken out of the pens one by one and slaughtered, but as pigs also have spirits that must be propitiated, offerings of strips of calico tied to sticks stuck into the ground are placed about the village, a coconut being put on the top of each stick. Each pig, after being killed, is suspended by the legs a few inches above the ground and the outer skin is

thoroughly burned-off by men holding torches of dry coconut leaves fanned by spathes held in the other hand. The amount of meat wanted for the evening feast will be handed over to the cooks, who will be the women friends of the party, near relatives being excused from this work. As more pigs are slaughtered than can be eaten at one feast, the remainder of the meat is apportioned to the number of guests and distributed to them before they leave, and as this is likely to be more than they can consume quickly, the portions are sprinkled with a mixture of turmeric powder and water, this being an excellent antiseptic. All meat thus preserved is, however, washed and cooked again before it is eaten. The meat consumed at the feast is boiled in Chowra pots, these being arranged in a row on the beach in front of the mourner's hut.

In the meantime the guests will have been anointed with lustrum, the ointment used by the *menlūana* after the washing of the mourners, previously described. This lustrum is kept for a few hours in case any late arrivals should have to be anointed, but when no longer required it is poured away and the vessel containing it is cleansed. The *menlūana* must anoint each person at the feast just as he did each one attending the funeral, and the women who have been making *fum* necklaces will then place these round the necks of those who are proceeding to the cemetery. The procession starts when darkness has fallen, by each person lighting a torch at the hearth, these being carried to the grave, together with a quantity of food and new calico torn into strips at the graveside, while some of the party are engaged in dismantling the head-posts of the things placed there at the time of the interment. The old offerings are tossed unceremoniously into the jungle and left to their fate. If the grave is that of a man, the bundle of spears left there to mark the foot is taken up, and each is reduced in length by hacking-off one or more feet from the bamboo shaft; the bundle is then replaced on the grave, but this time at the head of it. While this

is being done by the men of the party, the women squat at the head of the grave and raise the same disconsolate wail, during which they inform the departed they are there and reproach him for having left them comfortless. Before the grave is left the head-post is redecorated with the new shreds of torn cloth, and some votive offering is placed thereon that has cost the principal mourner much labour. Outwardly it represents a neatly-made roll of firewood, and is placed on the grave and left there to decay, in company with some coconuts, vegetables, and fruit, which are again offered on this occasion. These offerings are made in the belief that the departed soul will possess himself of them and use them for his comfort. (Although the practice of making offerings is general, there is reason to believe that the more enlightened and intelligent among the people are actuated by other motives than their regard for the comfort of the deceased. It is likely, for instance, that they are governed by their desire to exhibit their wonderful liberality of spirit, and a wish to show others how independent the family is of such property and means as they may have acquired by the death of one of its members !)

The ten memorial-feasts may extend over a period of two to three years, and it is only after the last one has been held that the spirit of the departed one is believed to betake itself to *Henakla*, where not even the *menlūana* can do anything for it.

Henakla, or Hades, is supposed to be an island situated somewhere to the East, and is regarded as a material region peopled by the spirits of the dead, which there assume the form and appearance they bore in their prime of earthly existence; children, however, keep the form they had at their death. Before the spirit takes its departure for *Henakla* it is said to resemble a ghostly skeleton which, unlike the spirit after it has entered *Henakla*, has the power and the habit of revisiting the earth; hence the practice of attributing diseases and other troubles, accidents, etc., to the influence and actions of departed friends and relatives.

At the conclusion of the first memorial-feast or *entōin* (the name implying the use of torches), the host distributes among the male guests, and the hostess among the female guests, such quantities of cloth or calico as will make a *neng* for each man and a skirt for each woman. To do this they remove what is required from the overhanging rows of cloth, the rest being left suspended in the hut. After the company has been anointed by the *menlūana* with lustrum, together with all the *fētich* or objects of veneration in the hut, all is ready for the singing of the *Kanōische-onghein*, or chant, which may continue until daybreak. The singing of this sounds like a slow and solemn chant, and only men join in it. It may be changed to the *Kanōische-teyāh* at later memorial-feasts, which is not sung in the same lugubrious manner, and in which women participate.

The first or *entōin* feast is the only really mournful one, although the number of feasts given in honour of a deceased person usually number ten. The second one commences the series of *kornak* feasts, which have little to signify that they are connected with death or with mourning save certain duties to be observed in connection with the grave.

Mr. Man numbered these feasts in the following order:

(1) *Entōin* (in allusion to the use of torches at this feast).

(2) *Ka-ḡnat-ñe-tai* (implying inauguration festival).

(2a) *Inâ-she-tôe* ("take away cloth").

(3) *Henwal-ñe-mat-chūa* ("bring back silverware").

(3a) *Inâ-she-loê* (also "take away cloth").

(4) *Hen-em-she* (in allusion to the wooden pig-pens then made).

(4a) *Inâ-she-loê* ("take away cloth").

(5) *La-neät-la* ("the last" in allusion to the termination of fast).

(6) *Da-nòk-ḡni-ḡnak* ("cut down young coconut leaves of hut").

(7) *Ka-lòng-ta-ñi* ("repeat the lustrum in hut and village").

At all the *kornak* feasts gongs are sounded to drive away evil spirits, but also to summon guests and announce that a feast is taking place.

Some few words of description of the meaning of the afore-mentioned names of the feasts is interesting:

“Taking down cloth” means the removal and packing away of the cloths that have remained suspended in the mourners’ hut since the preceding feast.

“Bringing back the silverware” is again an allusion to the love of making a display of wealth in silver—or electroware—which has been exhibited on the grave.

No *nengs* or skirts are distributed at the second *Iná-she-loê*, but lengths of red cloth are presented to those who take part in the festivities.

The feast of *Hen-em-she* refers to the construction of the wooden pig-pens for holding the large number of pigs that are to be slaughtered on this occasion. These pigs are provided by the mourners, including all relatives, and of course the number depends upon the wealth of the particular family that is holding the *kornak*. At this feast they also make a dummy pig of coconut leaves and wood, and put it into one of the wooden compartments by itself. This dummy pig is retained in this compartment for about three weeks, or until the next last festival, when it is taken out and thrown into the jungle, and the woodwork used for the pig-pens is taken for making a new platform under the hut, to replace that removed on the day of the death of the one whose memory is being commemorated. At the two last feasts to be celebrated jewellery may be worn and ornamented dresses appear again. At the latter feasts, too, decorations inside and outside the huts announce to everyone that happiness and prosperity are returning to the family that has been bereaved. They also erect a sort of “altar” in the shape of a raised platform consisting of two or three wooden chests placed lengthwise beside each other, with a tall framework made with six or eight “fighting-sticks” covered with red cloth, making a sort of alcove. Both on the platform itself and

suspended from the framework are displayed a strange assortment of silverware and jewellery, including forks and spoons, watches and chains, decanters and glasses. When the feast-time arrives four bottles containing the four kinds of drink consumed at the feast—viz., rum, toddy, coconut-milk and water—are placed on the *het-mat-mat*, where they remain during the night, to be poured out next morning as a libation to the departed in whose honour the *kornak* has been celebrated, and also as a propitiation to the *iwi-ka*, or good spirits.

The best canoes are decorated with flags on the occasion of this feast, as for other *kornak* feasts.

A striking feature in these two-day feasts is the length of time the guests are able to keep awake, in spite of their fatiguing exertions of singing, dancing, and feasting, and to keep up their excitement. Many keep awake from forty-eight to sixty hours, without rest or sleep.

The name "*la-neät-la*," literally "finished," marks the end of the mourning period. Others in the village who may happen to have celebrated memorial-feasts during the previous three or four years take the opportunity of an approaching *la-neät-la* to contribute each a pig towards the feast, in order that they may pay further respect to the memory of such of their relatives as have died within the preceding six or seven years, beyond which period the skull will have become so decomposed that it cannot be disinterred and dressed in the manner prescribed for the more recently buried. Such additional hosts play only a secondary part, the entertainment being confined to the hut of the principal mourner concerned, who is also the one who distributes among his guests at their departure the pork and the coconuts. (One of the duties before the holding of this feast has been to gather and husk a large number of ripe nuts, for which the plantation belonging to the deceased may be freely drawn upon. This is the work of the young men, who also collect supplies of young nuts for drink, of vegetables and fruit, and of leaves

for decorating the hut.) The hut is ornamented with a large variety of vegetables, leaves and fruit, both inside and out, often in a most tasteful manner. A stranger might think it was a harvest festival that was being celebrated, but the idea at the back of making this display is to represent plenty, and to gladden the spirit of the departed.

One of the striking features of the ossuary-feast, which takes place towards the end of a mourning period and is not restricted to one family alone, is the parade through the village of a number of young men armed with "fighting sticks," having their heads protected with padded hats. It is one of the duties of young men among a party of mourners to have sham fights with the other guests, and although these fights are mere play, each young man tries to show himself the better man, and nothing short of a broken stick, an ugly blow, or genuine fatigue brings one of these fights to an end; the pain of broken nails or scraped fingers is borne with equanimity in the belief that the departed spirit will be all the better pleased with the willingness shown to suffer in his (or her) honour.

During the first day of the ossuary-feast, the mourners, who have been restricted to wearing old clothes and from any personal indulgence, now bathe preparatory to smearing their bodies with turmeric and attiring themselves in new clothes and ornaments. The female mourners will have their hair and eyebrows shaved off, this being the first time they have been able to do so since the burial. The male mourners are also at liberty to have their heads shaved, but as it is customary for men to wear their hair long enough to reach below the ear, while the women are usually close-cropped, shaving is usually restricted to them.

When personal matters have been attended to, the next business is to erect a fence of sticks and cloth around the grave, which is about to be opened for the first time, while one or more additional *fétich*-objects are suspended at the head-post. Similar arrangements

are made by others, who have arranged to re-open graves of relatives whose feasts have been observed within the past few years. (In the case of young children no disinterment of the skull takes place as it is supposed it will have decomposed before the *la-neät-la* could be held.)

A number of dishes and new, clean, red and white cloths are collected at the head of the grave before the work of digging is commenced, which is done with old paddles, coconut shells and the hands and fingers.

When the time approaches for disinterring the skull, which it is arranged shall be about four o'clock in the afternoon, the mourners proceed in procession from their hut, followed by all relatives and friends. They are smeared with fowls' blood, oil and turmeric, in spite of their now wearing new clothes and ornaments. The air is rent with piteous wails and sobs. On reaching the grave the women squat down and wail continuously, drawing to them the dishes and cloths and the coconuts, all of which they are about to use for cleansing the skull when it is given them.

(Regarding the picture presented by such a procession, Mr. Man noted that it was unintentionally comic in aspect, and it was hard to resist smiling when he beheld two or three men with arms locked, blubbering hard on their way to the grave, while one of them held a decanter of rum and was pouring it into a glass, helping himself and his friends every now and then. The patches of vermilion paint on their cheeks, and the patches of blood and turmeric on their bodies, seemed to give the finishing touch to an unedifying spectacle !)

On reaching the spot where the skull is likely to be found, great care is taken to remove the soil, and on discovering the head the young men gently raise it, and amid a chorus of wails hand it to the female mourners; they with sobs proceed to wash it with coconut-milk, using the dishes for the purpose. If there is not enough milk for completing the work sea water may be fetched, but fresh water is never used

for this purpose. As this revolting duty renders the women "unclean" for periods which may vary from a few days to a few weeks, these women are looked after and fed by their friends, in order that they may not use their own hands. Stick-fighting between the young men of the company gathered around the grave is renewed with vigour at this stage, the idea being that as the skull is now exhumed the departed spirit is able to look on and see how eager they are to do battle in his (or her) behalf!

Similar groups and similar proceedings will be taking place around other graves even where they are being opened for the second or third time, the cleansing in their case being more easily accomplished.

When each skull and jawbones has been well cleansed and wiped, coconut-oil is applied to the whole surface, then the new clean cloths are used to wrap up the entire head, leaving exposed only the nose and chin. The women then bear these from the graves to the huts, placing a covering on each head, and seat themselves in front of the *het-mat-mat* or altar erection, holding their ghastly burden facing outwards on their laps, every now and then raising a heartrending cry of anguish. While they are doing this others will have placed a plank over the opened grave, depositing a bunch of young coconuts therein, with sticks and spears arranged over the top, to which are suspended spoons and forks and other objects.

During the time occupied in bringing in all the skulls from the different graves—as it may happen that owing to several deaths having occurred in the same village several families will be holding the feast at the same season—until about midnight, everyone wears a dejected mournful appearance and only speaks in whispers. The only refreshment indulged in during this time is tobacco, toddy and betel-nut. After midnight they commence singing a mournful song, which is kept up until daybreak. At dawn the women descend from their platform and the host is asked how many pigs are to be killed. He

mentions the number, but slaughter will not commence until after the skulls and jawbones have been re-interred in their several graves, which is done amidst much weeping and wailing. Before returning the sand and earth the broken spears and implements sacrificed at the first burial, and now rusty, are taken and deposited to one side; stick-fighting is resumed, while fruits and vegetables are brought in armfuls and deposited on the filled-up grave, together with broken pots, water-vessels, plates, etc.

The pigs are then killed, roasted and cooked, as at other feasts, and mourners and visitors alike eat together, only the women who are "unclean" being fed by their friends.

FESTIVALS.—In addition to the ten memorial-feasts, there are some thirteen other recognised festivals, of which six are of a quasi-religious character:

Oteo.—This is the ordinary annual feast celebrated when new *kanaiya* or poles are erected along the coast in front of each hut. These demon-poles are specially decorated for this feast and have a flag placed at the summit. At this feast only one or two pigs are killed, but a special feast may be celebrated in lieu of the *Oteo* if the village happens to have a large stock of pigs.

Ha-Ngók-Mattai.—This is a feast at which the spirits are propitiated with offerings of food, in consequence of there being some sick person in the village.

Hata-Kōi.—A feast which takes place when a new *henta-koi* is set up for the cure of a patient.

Mai-Faiya.—A festival on the occasion of the introduction by the village *menlūana* of a new candidate for the office.

Hai-Chuâl.—This is celebrated for two different purposes: (a) A few days after the completion of a new hut or the repair of an old one, when steps must be taken to banish all evil spirits lurking about the village; and (b) when there has been unusual sickness in the village and some sacrifice is deemed desirable. This first feast is

followed at an interval of five, seven, or any uneven number of days by another small feast, styled *kalòng-ta-ñe*.

Other seven occasions on which special feasts are held are:

When the birth of an infant is celebrated by the parents.

When the infant is named.

When the marriage of a young couple is celebrated.

In honour of the return of a long absent friend.

A house-warming on the completion of a new hut.

After dragging a new canoe to the coast for completion.

After the successful firing of a new canoe-shell.

Also the *wingáich*, which takes place when a girl attains womanhood and her parents wish to announce that she is marriageable.

To the foregoing brief descriptions of these several feasts it is necessary to add a few more particulars. As in the case of the *kornaks*, there is much sameness in their proceedings on all occasions, but the feasts in connection with the erection of new *kanaiya* and those in connection with the introduction of a new *menliana*, may only take place in the S.W. monsoon, while the remainder may take place in either monsoon. (The special feast in lieu of the usual *Oteo* may only be celebrated at intervals of two or three years as it depends on whether the village can afford to provide any large number of pigs. It is because of this that the smaller *Oteo*, when only one or two pigs are required, is usual.) As *kanaiya* are renewed every year, these feasts come at regular intervals. With regard to these, a day is chosen when the tide will be low in the evening, some two or three days after full moon, as the lofty masts have to be erected along the foreshore. The preparation of these poles occupies the men some days before they are set up, and in the setting-up some considerable ingenuity is displayed. A flag and some scraps of food are attached to the top of each pole before it is raised, thus heightening the effect. The feast itself is held in the principal hut

of the village, that belonging to the headman, and as it is necessary to decorate this, each owner of a hut contributes new bright-coloured cloth, handkerchiefs and silverware, while it is dressed with leaves and branches. The number of pigs required for the feast are likewise contributed by several villagers. This is usually a two-day feast.

With regard to the feast that takes place when an old hut is destroyed and replaced by a new one, all the *hentas* and *henta-koi* that were in the old ones are thrown away, and only the framework retained if that is still in good condition. Usually a *henta-koi* is only thrown away when it is no longer serviceable, therefore if any person falls sick it will be attributed to the want of this or of some other fetich that formerly restored him to health. The *menlūana* will then prescribe a new *henta-koi*, and this will be made, at his direction, by some friend of the patient, after which a ceremony of inauguration will take place.

The *Mai-Faiya*, or festival that takes place when the village *menlūana* wishes to introduce one who may eventually aspire to fill the office of *shaman*, is an outstanding one in that the *menlūana* may fix any time he chooses for this, and he will generally elect to have it during the S.W. monsoon, the reason for this choice being that festivities at that season are better appreciated, as most of the other gatherings take place in the dry season.

The novice will have previously undergone instruction at his hands, and when all the company have assembled, he will appear with a red cloth over his head, exposing his face as he proceeds to march to and fro over the floor of the hut, crying "Han-chu-chakà-īwī," adding sometimes "Salàm-īwī," intended as a greeting to the good spirit, the *īwī-kà* whom he looks to for help and guidance to make him a successful *menlūana*, and also to ask the favour of making more *menlūanas* for the benefit of the community.

After this the head *menlūana* will apply lustration to all the assembled company and to all the fetiches in the

hut. They then have the feast of pork and other good things provided by the host, followed by the elders among them singing the *Kandische-onghein*, after which the entire party sing the *Teyàh* and dance the *Katoka-teyàh*. The party then breaks up.

The name of the festival that takes place after the birth of an infant implies making coconut oil, as on this occasion a bottle or two of oil is made by boiling rasped coconut and turmeric root together to make the unguent that the mother applies to the infant and herself for some months to follow. Some feasting and dancing takes place and singing of the *Teyàh*, unless the mother and infant are in too delicate a state to stand the racket.

A similar festival and the same feasting and dancing takes place when the parents inform their guests of the name bestowed on the infant.

The feast and accompanying festival that is known as *wingáich*, which announces that a girl has become marriageable, is one of the outstanding occasions for merriment and rejoicing if the parents are well-to-do. The feast is ordinarily eaten at night, but throughout the day it is incumbent on all to show signs of pleasure and rejoicing, and they excite each other to laughter, although no coarse joking takes place; the idea being that if the gods are pleased the girl may some day be the happy mother of several children. If the girl's father is rich and liberally-disposed, he may present a length of cloth to each lady-guest and a strip sufficient for a *neng* to each man. The wearing of *fum* necklaces, the painting of the face with vermilion, and other customs, are all observed on this occasion.

The Folk-story of the Man who Came Back to keep his own Memorial-Feast, as told by Mr. E. Hart, late of Car Nicobar, is in place here.

THE MAN WHO CAME BACK.

"There was once a man who went with other men, each in his own canoe, to barter with men on board a

ship for bread and tobacco in exchange for coconuts and fruit. He did not notice that the ship was moving, and so got carried away to a foreign land, where he married and had two children. He used to go out in a boat and catch fish, and so became very well-to-do.

“ One day he saw a boat very near the shore, and he got some food and water and went off in it, leaving his wife and children behind.

“ He rowed, then set sail, and after many days he got back to his own land.

“ He found the people there were keeping a feast to his memory, for he had been given up for dead; everyone was dancing and singing, for it was dark.

“ He went to the pens where the pigs were kept and felt their ears. ‘ Why, these are my very own pigs !’ he said. Then he climbed a tree to get a coconut to drink, and someone who heard a noise called out: ‘ Hi ! That tree is tabu for the dead man.’ ‘ What dead man ?’ he asked. And when they gave him the name, he said: ‘ Why, that’s me; I’m not dead !’ and when he came down and they saw he was not dead he went into the house and told his story amid great rejoicings.”

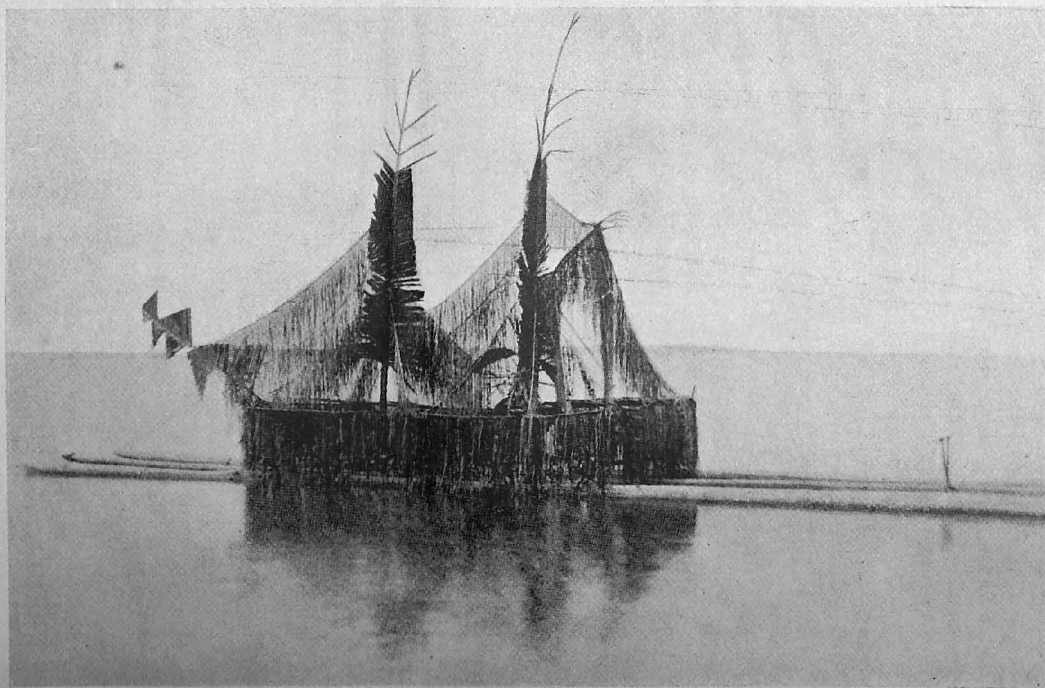
CHAPTER XVI

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND DEMONOLOGY

THE Nicobarese believe that the world is full of spirits, although these are quite invisible. Some of them are good—the *iwī*; others are more or less evil and malignant; nearly all diseases and deaths being due to demons who strike with invisible weapons.

Deaths of aged persons are not attributed to demons, but to the will of *Deūse* the All-Powerful, who strikes them down when they are too old to live any longer. It is the belief in evil spirits that makes it necessary in every case of illness to engage the services of a *menlūana*, to intercede with the spirits first, to use his knowledge as Medicine-man afterwards. The *menlūanas* support one another and further strengthen their hold by means of their pupils, the *Mā-a-fāi*.

They believe, too, in something in the nature of a human soul as distinct from the spirit. This is called the *hoin* and is associated with the breath. This *hoin* or soul departs with the breath and never returns, although some think it is buried in the grave with the corpse and does not finally depart until the *entoin* or first memorial-feast has been held. In support of this view, yet hardly coinciding with the idea of its burial, is the tradition that five days after the burial of a certain old woman her *hoin* appeared at the entrance of a hut and asked food of a child seated at the top of the ladder. The child, believing the visitor to be a neighbour, gave some food, but the mother, recognising it as a *hoin*, drove it from the hut and it returned to its grave weeping. On the return of the father he was angry when told



A SPIRIT-SHIP, NICOBAR ISLANDS.

When an evil spirit has been caught by the doctor-priest of the village it is caged and put into a small ornamental scape-boat built for the purpose and towed out to sea. Should the boat land at another village and transfer the spirit there, an attack with quarter-staves under recognized rule is made on the makers of the boat.

what had been done, fearing evil consequences would result. This dread of what a *hoin* may do is increased because it is believed that the evil spirit that caused the death is ever on the look-out for another victim to attack.

Mr. Man found a vague belief among the Nicobarese that certainly corresponded to the idea of Divine government of the universe, and of retribution to be experienced hereafter; but this only had reference to transgressions against customs and traditions. He could not find any proof of expectation of a future life or of Divine rule affecting conduct except where traditional customs and practices were set at nought, and then omissions would undoubtedly be severely punished. He said:

"I can recall nothing in the course of my researches which I could attribute to the teaching of those missionaries who fell victims to the climate . . . so long as the natives abstain from outrage and wrong to each other, and continue to maintain in full the customs of their ancestors, especially in regard to memorial-feasts, rites, and ceremonies, they believe that all will be well with them."

Worship, as other peoples understand it, he found to be unknown; there were no temples, and the *menlūanas*, with all their other pretensions, made no claim to exercise any priestly function.

There appears to be no place corresponding to Purgatory in the beliefs of the Nicobarese, although they believe in a sort of Hell. It seems doubtful, too, how far any conception of the future condition influences their conduct in the present; but they have a vague belief that all will be well with them as long as they observe all rites, ceremonies, customs, and practices. They believe that *Henakla*, which corresponds to Hades, but not Purgatory, is a material region that resembles very much the present world. Apparently there is no particular road on which the spirit sets out to go there, but the journey is always in an easterly direction and to an island, because the sea has to be crossed. The

voyage is said to be performed in a canoe, yet some aver it is necessary to swim all the way. On arrival in *Henakla* the spirit is questioned as to its conduct. If it can give a satisfactory account of itself it is allowed to associate with the elect; but those who have to admit that they have led wicked lives, have met with a violent death, or must own to having been mad, are promptly consigned to some adjacent place that corresponds to Hell. Such as have only been guilty of venial offences are warned to be careful of their future behaviour if they would remain in the favoured portion of the spirit-world.

Although it is definitely asserted that deaths do not occur in Hades, and it is supposed that life there continues indefinitely and is not very unlike life here below, there is never any desire expressed to quit the known for the unknown, and death inspires the Nicobarese with as deep a dread as it does every other race of men.

The virtues which assure anyone "a good place" in *Henakla* are: hospitality, chastity, fidelity, kindness, temperance, and sobriety.

* * * * *

Writing on the subject of "Religious Beliefs" at a later date, Mr. Man said:

"I feel I have made a somewhat important discovery in connection with their views concerning spirits. Hitherto the idea held by outsiders and authorities (including de Rœpstorff) has been that the Nicobars used all their arts to appease, propitiate, and sometimes to frighten away evil spirits, whom they also confounded with the spirits of the dead—i.e., of relatives and ancestors—and that not enough has been said of the existence of *good* spirits, in which they also believe. To put it plainly, and in a few words, I would set it out like this:

(1) *Īwī-ka* (the last syllable pronounced like cur) are the good spirits of good ancestors. These are not only

always friendly and come to visit the huts of their descendants, but they are definitely hostile to bad spirits, or demons.

(2) *Īwī-pot*, and others of various names, are evil spirits of wicked ancestors, and of people murdered, or murderers and evildoers (while in the flesh). These have caused death and disaster to others, and but for them life might be perfect, as *Deūse* the great Creator would only allow death to come to people broken down with old age. Steps *must* be taken to frighten away or entrap these evil spirits.

(3) *Īwī-mekuya* are the newly-departed spirits of relatives, who may be gratified and helped by having libations and offerings made to them, in addition to the sacrifice of all their own portable property that formerly belonged to them; hence all that is possible must be done to please them—partly because each living relative hopes and expects to have the same consideration paid to him or her after death !”

Briefly, it may be said that all the ceremonies connected with religious beliefs are intended to warn off evil spirits and propitiate good ones. Offerings of fruits and vegetables, often extravagant in number and tastefully arranged, will be put together at great sacrifice of time and labour by the relatives of one who has recently died. Contributions to this “peace-offering” may be made by outside friends and neighbours as well.

Many Nicobarese show strong dislike to talking about their beliefs in the unseen, and if questioned they will seize on any trifling incident, such as the breaking of a pencil-point, as proof that the *Īwī* are angry at their divulging such secrets to outsiders. It is considered wrong to disclose anything or to discuss anything merely for the sake of satisfying idle curiosity. An example of this occurred when a Survey party were employed carrying out operations. Extraordinary weather prevailed at the time, and this was taken to be evidence of the exceeding displeasure of the *Īwī* at the

doings of these strangers. Many superstitions, however, have died down since intercourse with foreigners and traders has become frequent and general.

The *ossuary-feast* is the greatest event in a Nicobarese year—although the feast is not an annual one by any means. It can only be celebrated when a community is able to provide the materials necessary for its proper carrying out and when surrounding villages are able to join in keeping it; in course of time, however, most large villages will have held an ossuary-feast. An excellent description of how these feasts are held will be found in the Census Report for 1921.

The ossuary-feast ends the mourning period, and after this life returns to the normal once more—until the next death occurs!

A brief résumé of recurring seasonal religious ceremonies, obtained from an educated native in the Car Nicobar Mission School, is the following:

JANUARY (The Burning).—Burning of leaves hung up in houses or used as medicine and for keeping off evil spirits.

FEBRUARY.—Fish from sweet-water ponds are placed on sticks over the entrance to dwelling-houses in honour of spirits.

MARCH.—Putting up of young coconuts in houses in honour of spirits. (This is the calmest month of the year and trips to Chowra are made.)

APRIL.—This is the month of the fire-festival; dancing goes on the whole night, followed by wrestling in the morning.

MAY.—In this month the making of pudding is done. Afterwards each family has to kill a pig, and all the best produce from the gardens is used for decoration of the houses.

JUNE.—No festival is held this month.

JULY.—This month bad spirits are driven out and

sent away on a raft. The spirits of the dead are honoured.

AUGUST.—The first festival of fishing with line and hook after rough weather; the usual offerings are put in the houses.

SEPTEMBER.—The second festival of fishing with line and hook; this time on the west coast.

OCTOBER.—Placing banyan leaves at *el-pānām*; to change the direction of the wind from South-West to North-East.

NOVEMBER.—Driving away of bad spirits, as in July, but not sent on rafts; they are simply killed and thrown into the sea.

DECEMBER.—Putting rattan leaves on the beach to keep off spirits which bring sickness at this time of the year.

Several things are tabu whenever a new canoe is brought from Chowra. Bats, for instance, should never be eaten lest their wings blind the eyes and prevent people from seeing their way home. Splitting of wood is forbidden as it may cause the canoe to split of itself. Octopus are not to be eaten lest they should attack travelling canoes.

DEMONOLOGY.—“Devil-murders” have from time to time been committed, always on the plea of protecting the living from the power of those supposed to be possessed and likely to do injury to others. Whenever these cases have been reported they have been enquired into with care, and punishment has been imposed with a view to stamping out the practice. The Census Report for 1901 records that the “devil-murders” on Car Nicobar were serious, and that cases had occurred on Chowra and Teressa and in the Central Group as well. These were found to be true ceremonial murders of men, women, and sometimes of children, undertaken for the public benefit by a body of villagers after more or less open consultation, for the purpose of getting rid of persons considered ob-

noxious and dangerous to the community. The various offences with which they were charged and for which they were put to death were:

Possession by evil spirits.

Witchcraft exercised to the public harm.

Homicidal proclivities.

Threats and attempts to murder.

Failure to cure (on the part of *menlūanas*).

Theft.

The same Census Report records only one case where "devil-murder" would have resulted but for official action. Of this instance, the Superintendent, Mr. R. F. Lewis, writes:

"A case of threatening to murder was reported from Dring. It appears that Narain Singh, a servant of the firm of L. Rati Lal (Mewa Lal's late father), who is established at Dring, went to the house of a Nicobarese named Tanwal to ask for settlement of a debt, but Tanwal refused to come down and speak to him; as the dogs kept him from going up he again asked the man to come down, but Tanwal said in his own language 'Shuha kachara' ('I will kill him') and stood at the head of the steps in a threatening attitude. Narain Singh went away and wrote a letter to Mewa Lal reporting the case. The latter sent for the parties and examined them. Tanwal admitted the whole thing and pleaded that he had been told by a witch-doctor, named Tulang, of Bompoka, that he would have to kill one trader, and that while he was arguing with Narain Singh he thought he had a good opportunity to do it. He added that, as he had failed, there was another Nicobarese left behind at Dring who would do the trick for him, and refused to give the name of the man. . . . I am bringing Tanwal up to Port Blair" (adds Mr. Lewis) "in the hope of ridding him of the devil!"

The Report likewise gives a full account of the depositions made in court regarding cases of alleged

PLATE XXVI.



DEVIL-MURDERERS.

“devil-murder,” while the judicial investigation and trial given to such cases seems to have been, of late years, a sufficient deterrent to their repetition.

It has to be remembered, however, that in former times these “devil-murders” had an honest purpose behind them and were a form of judicial execution. The offences for which the penalty was inflicted were (1) persistent theft, (2) sorcery or black magic whereby the lives of others were taken or imperilled, (3) murder, or violent assault, and (4) being a danger to the life or property of the community. People who put others in fear of their lives by threatenings would also be included in the last category. It was not possible to imagine that any of these offences could be committed by people not devil-controlled, therefore it was necessary to exterminate them. Included among the number would be, occasionally, such witch-doctors as failed to cure the sick or who put people in danger of losing their lives by wrong use of their arts.

A meeting of elders would be held to discuss a bad man's conduct. After mature consideration, for the matter would be brought up for discussion more than once, if the elders decided that the offender was past redemption, they would give the word that such a man was to be done away with.

The proceeding then would be for a number of young men to take their victim when he was off his guard, to beat him till he was insensible and throw him down on the ground, then break his arms and legs, tie him up tight, and after taking him out to sea some distance throw his body into deep water. This done, they would know he could not trouble anyone again.

Two men arrested on the charge of murder were one day brought before Mr. Man when he was Deputy-Superintendent of the Islands, and his Report says that the charge was it had been decided in the village council at Lapati (under the presidency of the Headman) that this man, Lowi, was a thief who did not live in a regular way. In fact, he was a bad man and had a

“devil,” therefore he was a danger to the community. When a man has a devil there is only one thing to be done with him: he must be killed in the orthodox manner and his body put into a boat and then cast into the sea. The “orthodox” manner is to break his limbs first, then the neck. On this occasion the prisoners had been the executioners and their behaviour at their trial was characteristic. A witness was describing how the execution had taken place when one of the prisoners called out: “Not same like that! I take his head so . . . Make go back and neck break!” The other man, wearied with the length of the judge’s proceedings, called out: “Say, Man, this very long! Give us cheroot!”

The narrator said it was quite impossible to drive anything but the dimmest notion of having done wrong into the heads of the prisoners, or of any of the Nicobarese witnesses. They were detained in Port Blair until thoroughly homesick and cowed in spirit, and until even the relatives of the murdered man begged for their return, so they were finally taken back, in full convict uniform (of which they were very proud), and returned to be made much of and to swagger as the best-dressed men on their island! It is odd to watch the air of unconcern and self-possession with which a released prisoner will march off home on landing on his native shore.

More than anything they dread dying away from home; detention at the Andamans had, therefore, real terrors for them. By dint of arresting and detaining for a time every perpetrator of a customary murder, this peculiar sort of lynch law was, and is, gradually being put down. The Headmen have, indeed, told the Government that if “bad” men were removed from their islands and never allowed to return they would give up “devil-murder” altogether as there would no longer be any need for it!

CHAPTER XVII

NICOBAR NAMES AND EXPRESSIONS

IN some Prefatory Notes to the Dictionary of the Central Nicobarese Language, compiled by Mr. Man, mention is made of the effect produced by the working of a superstition that prevents the names of deceased relatives or friends being used again for some considerable period after death. It is there said:

“The practice referred to is based on a firm belief in an after existence, which requires that the names of deceased relatives and friends shall be tabu for a certain period—generally about one generation—for fear of summoning or offending the ghost of the person so named.”

And again: “This practice of constantly inventing new names and words explains why so many women and other untravelling members of the community are incapable of understanding the dialects spoken in adjacent islands, and, therefore, regard their neighbours as distinct tribes; at the same time the frequent occurrence of synonyms for common objects is accounted for by the custom that requires a man to assume the tabued names of his grandfather immediately after the death of his own parent, and a woman in like circumstances takes the name of her deceased grandmother after her mother’s death.”

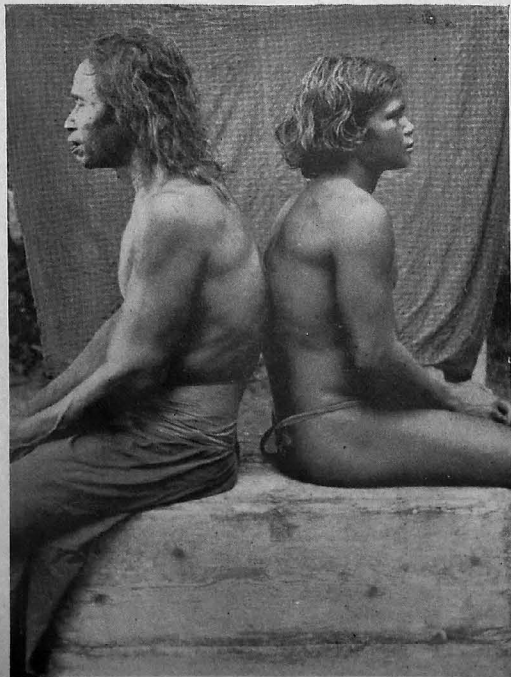
In a footnote it is explained that striking differences in dialects spoken in islands and localities separated from one another are only found where the separation is very wide, yet all the same, “When the small number of speakers of each unwritten dialect is taken into account,

it is somewhat remarkable that the stability of the language is as great as it is."

Among other effects produced by the custom of substituting names and words for those which become tabu is that these substitutions become rooted and remain in use. No objection is raised to anyone taking any word in common use for a name, but that word must again be dropped if *he* dies, and a whole generation must pass before it can come into use again. It happens, too, that a name used in childhood may remain all through life; on the other hand, a child may not receive any proper name, not even a "succession" name, until he or she has shown some special characteristic that suggests a name. There are no names peculiar to either sex; any names derived from their own or another language may be selected. In many instances the native name, especially in Car Nicobar, is given up in favour of an English one, and this must be remembered when referring to or addressing them. If a man were to be addressed by his original name after one of these freak changes he would not, happily, regard it as an intentional insult. It would be taken in good part and put down to ignorance or "chaff." Freak names lead to many peculiar and laughable situations. For example, the custom of adopting English names without knowing their meaning caused considerable amusement on one occasion where a barque laden with coal caught fire, and had to be beached on the coast near the western entrance to Nancowry Harbour. The crew, while in a boat making for land, observed a canoe approaching them, evidently attracted by the unusual sight of a burning ship. Not knowing what sort of "savages" these might be, the crew warned the canoe off, and were not a little astonished to hear a voice call out: "You not angry me! I friend! My name is 'Lady-Killer.'"

It is told, too, of a Car Nicobarese belle who had heard the music of the "Mikado" given on a gramophone, that she immediately adopted the name of "Yum-yum" and elected to be known by that name thenceforward.

• PLATE XXVII.



COAST TRIBES OF GREAT NICOBAR.

Popular names, mainly adopted from English sources, are "Duke of Cornwall," "Lord Byron," "John Gilpin," "Dick Turpin," "John Peel," "Jack Robinson," "Chatterbox," "Scarecrow," with any others they can pick up or learn.

In the Prefatory Notes before referred to, Mr. Man says: "At Car Nicobar the men mostly possess a good colloquial knowledge of Burmese, and many can converse in both Hindustani and English. Only a few know anything of Malay, or of the dialects spoken at Chowra and other islands of the Group. At Chowra the men know little or nothing of Burmese, Hindustani, Malay or English, but have sufficient acquaintance with the Car Nicobar and other Central dialects to make themselves understood by their neighbours. At Teressa and Bom-poka the men can converse fairly well in Malay, Burmese, and Hindustani, as well as in the Chowra and Central Group dialects. In other islands of the Central Group the men are mostly able to converse in Hindustani and Malay, and some in Burmese and English as well as in the dialect spoken in the Southern Group and Teressa. In the Southern Group, men can converse in Malay and a few in Hindustani and in the dialect of the Central Group. At none of the islands can the women speak any but their own dialect, although a few have picked up a slight knowledge of Hindustani. It occasionally happens that natives of different islands are compelled to converse together in Hindustani, Burmese, Malay, or even in English, because they cannot understand each other's dialects.

Mr. Man further emphasised the peculiarity that, unlike the Chinese and Burmese, the meaning of words was not affected by a change of *tone*; although, in common with other languages, sentences could be made affirmative or interrogative by inflection and stress. The dialects are rich in terms denoting various actions, such as fishing, going, ascending, coming, eating, carrying, visiting, and the like. They have a word that expresses eating meat, and another that expresses eating vegetables, rice, etc;

to denote fishing they have words indicating the various methods of catching fish; to express carrying there are various words to the several modes of carrying, such as on the shoulder, back, in the arms, etc; perhaps the most remarkable is the punctilious use of suffixes to certain verbs and adverbs in order to denote direction to one or other of the points of the compass *and to the landing-place*. They possess no generic term denoting animal; each description of animal, bird, fish, insect, etc., bears its own specific name, and they have no means of denoting the brute creation under one term. Also, while possessing a variety of terms to indicate specific stages of the tide, they have no general term denoting "tide," so have recourse to the word meaning "sea." The names of many birds and animals are derived from or are imitations of their cries.

The Nicobarese language is lacking in means whereby to express, simply and suitably, words and phrases in common use among other peoples. There is no simple or regular equivalent for "to have" or "to be," "to become" or "to do," whether used as auxiliary or actional verbs. It is perhaps not to be wondered at that the number of adjectives or nouns which denote the colour or quality of things or the moral qualities of persons, is exceedingly small, but it follows that many words and phrases in common use among more advanced peoples, especially such as deal with social life and relations, are without any equivalent in their dialects. Nor has their primitive mode of life ever necessitated finding names for such things as "rent," "rates," "taxes," "king," "government," "occupation," "liberty," "punishment," etc. Neither have they any equivalent for "sonship." *Ta-rik* does duty for man in the generic sense, although it also means native of Car Nicobar. Natives of other islands are *Ta-oo*, and foreigners are *Ta-oiny*.

But they have at least seven words to express the different stages of coconut-ripening—yet no word for the coconut-palm as a tree. Nearly every concrete

thing has its own particular name, but there are no collective names for trees, flowers, weeds, grass, rubbish, and so on. They have three distinct ways of expressing whether a thing is present before the eyes, not visible, or was visible some time ago but is not so now.

The majority of Nicobarese are extremely punctilious in observing their usual customs at meeting or parting—even those who are constantly in each other's company are so. N. Fontana remarks: "Whenever they visit one another no salutation takes place at first, but when the visitor takes leave they are profuse in good wishes that occupy several minutes, expressed in different tones of the voice, the words being: 'Callá, callá, condì, condì, quiagé,' which might be rendered as: 'Very well, very well; go, go, and return soon.' In greeting each other at any hour for the first time they take each other's hand, and each gives the other the equivalent of a kiss on the cheek."

Within their limited range of ideas and of means of expressing those ideas there is much that is surprising about Nicobarese customs, manners, and methods. Mr. Man realised this very vividly, and it was this realisation, coupled with the fact that he himself possessed to an unusual degree a keenness of perception regarding inflection and accent, that enabled him to attempt the reproduction of phonetic sounds in written form. He succeeded in doing fully and completely what others before and since have done to a very limited extent—*i.e.*, to put this language into written form so that it might be learnt as every other language is learnt, and he compiled a Dictionary which, in its final revision, contained between 6,000 and 7,000 words. To this he added a Grammar and a Vocabulary, giving the accents and pronunciation, this last being arranged for easy reference by both English and Nicobarese, and thus for the first time made it possible for learning to be put within reach of a people who had till then been cut off from the wealth of knowledge lying round about them.

An old Eastern proverb tells us: "Thou hadst not

seen the jewel if I had not lifted the stone," and Mr. Man's great achievement has been that he has lifted the heavy stone that hindered communication, and has made it possible for these people to catch a glimpse of the many-faceted jewel of knowledge, art, and literature. Generations may yet have to pass before the heavy stone is completely removed, but it is much that the first loosening and lifting is done. In his own modest way of expressing himself he has told us in his Preface to the Vocabulary:

"During periods of official residence in these Islands . . . while making ethnological researches among the aborigines, I made a Vocabulary containing some 3,000 words, with numerous illustrative phrases. Government granted me a subvention for printing this work . . . but I thought it advisable to delay publication . . . until I had availed myself of the opportunity to verify my notation of the various complex sounds in the Nicobarese language, and to enlarge the scope of the work. This I have been able to accomplish, and to the present revised Dictionary I have also added numerous Notes on the Grammar and several Appendices, which will, I trust, be found useful and interesting to philologists."

PLATE XXVIII.



SHŌM PĒN HUT.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE SHŌM PĒN

THIS inland tribe, only a remnant of which now remains, is more or less confined to the interior region of the one island of Great Nicobar (the largest isle of the Southern Group). Mr. Man considered this tribe, and he thought with good reason, to be the aboriginal stock of the Nicobarese. Their singular purity of breed, even at the present time, seems to point to this, for other sections and coast tribes even in Great Nicobar show traces of admixture with Malay and other stocks. He said:

“The inference I have ventured to draw from all the information and facts that have come to my knowledge is that the presence in modern times of the Shōm Pēn in one island only of the Group, is due to the determination of those who showed themselves hostile to them in other islands, so they became fugitives, finding refuge where they could be sure to live without fear of molestation.” Later he added: “Information obtained in the course of at least two years of research among the Shōm Pēn, while confirming what was first thought and said, has added little matter of fresh interest . . . In February, 1884, I had my first opportunity of visiting Great Nicobar and proceeded to a bay on the North-East coast of the island, where is a village known as Lafūl, the inhabitants of which are now on friendly terms with the Shōm Pēn tribe. This good understanding has been to their mutual benefit, and a species of mutual trading may be said to have sprung up. . . . Having explained the object of my visit to the Headman of this village, he agreed to go with me the following morning to act as guide and interpreter. The first half-mile

or so of our trip was made in a canoe up a creek, which brought us to a point at the foot of a hill which we had to ascend. After a rough walk of about two hours through light jungle and over the rocky beds of mountain streams—which at that season of the year were nearly dry—we reached the summit, where we came upon a small cleared plateau, at least 1,100 feet above sea-level, where there were two huts, about 8 feet apart, capable of accommodating one or two families. One of these appeared to be used principally for cooking purposes and was connected with the other by a light bridge. The flooring of these huts seemed to be about 8 or 9 feet from the ground, and access to them was by means of ladders. A few pandanus and coconut trees were growing near the huts, and there were pigs, poultry, and a couple of snarling pariah dogs attached to the establishment.

“The nine members who formed the little community here had retired to the jungle on hearing—or scenting—our approach. They were, with some difficulty, induced to venture out. A few among them seemed to have belonged to a party seen some years before by Colonel Cadell and M. de Röepstorff. After distributing presents among them, and food, they seemed to become reconciled, and I was able to expose a few photographic plates—unhappily these afterwards proved to have been spoilt by the climate. Confidence in the friendly nature of our visit being established, I proposed a return visit should be paid by some of their number to Government House, some fifty-five miles distant, and was agreeably surprised to find I could prevail upon two youths in the party to go with me, always providing I guaranteed to bring them back safely at the end of seven days. These boys rejoiced in the names of Atèo and Atòng, and were then about fourteen and eighteen years old respectively. Their father’s name was Alèo, and an elder brother, seen on a subsequent occasion, was called Ayaw.

“Returning to the coast village with these two lads,

I could not help noticing how easily and rapidly they picked their way down the rugged and steep hillside. It was a matter of difficulty for me to keep pace with them, and led to a few rather unpleasant falls which caused them much merriment; they remarked that these were the consequence of my being a *kaling-ta-shapata*, or booted foreigner!

“These lads were quite fair specimens of their race, their chests and limbs well developed, and while timid they were tractable, and submitted with a good grace to the ablutions that we considered very necessary. The younger of the two had a severe cut on one foot, for which it was found necessary to place him under medical treatment, and his brother remained with him for companionship. On this account they had, during the five days of their visit, less opportunity of seeing much of us, or we of them, than might otherwise have been the case.

“Although this is the first recorded instance of Shōm Pēn natives having ventured far from their island home, these lads exhibited no signs of astonishment at all the strange things shown to them, or at the surroundings of the Government Settlement. Nothing surprised them, if we might judge by their faces or manners. (I must mention that before parting with them their relatives had carefully noted on a strip of cane the number of days that would elapse before their return; this they did by bending back the strip to form a number of cracks on the surface. I was, therefore, all the more anxious to fulfil my promise to the letter, and we found that when, on the appointed day, the steamer arrived back with them at the coast village, their friends were already awaiting them.)

“The lads did not return empty-handed. They were well provided with a number of the things that most delight these people, such as beads, cloth, knives, matches, tobacco, etc. No doubt they entertained their friends with many stories of their strange experiences while with us.

“The custom of bending cane in the manner mentioned for reckoning the number of days I found to be general among all the coast people. And further, I found, when trying to compile a list of Shōm Pēn words, that their numerals differed but slightly from their equivalents in the coast dialect. What was surprising was to find that, while it was difficult to imagine any occasion when they would require the use of high numerals in their dealings, yet the Shōm Pēn would find no difficulty in using suitable means for the purpose. While employing terms of their own, they seemed perfectly able to adopt the somewhat complicated system of calculation current among the coast peoples.

“In regard to this system, its elaborateness is not surprising, seeing that the Nicobarese have to deal, in their trading operations, with quantities of coconuts sometimes running into hundreds of thousands. (Their annual produce may be some fifteen to twenty million nuts, of which several million are exported unhusked.) With the Shōm Pēn, however, the ability to use the elaborate system is the more surprising in that they have no dealings in coconuts or similar produce! All they can offer for trading purposes is bundles of cane, which they exchange with the coast people for such articles as they themselves can use.”

* * * * *

Of late years it has been recorded that the Shōm Pēn have become clever in making rafts and canoes, which they barter with the coast people, to their mutual advantage.

Their shyness and dislike to strangers continues, for within very recent years visitors to Great Nicobar, who go to explore its resources in rich timber and who note the luxuriance of its vegetation and fine rivers, and hunt that curious bird, the megapod which lays its eggs in alluvial soil, have all alike been unable to obtain much information about the tribe that inhabits the interior. No one has, as yet, been able to obtain the number of



A SHŌM PĒN RETREAT.

photographs, or the amount of first-hand information about them, that Mr. Man did in the years he was going in and out among the people of all the islands, or to win their confidence to anything like the same extent. In this instance, certainly, if in no other, his knowledge was, and remains, unique.

* * * *

One of the repeated visits that Mr. Man paid to the Shōm Pēn tribe was made in the company of Colonel T. Cadell, several months after his first one, and he said of this:

“ We again landed at Lafūl, and assisted by our former guides ascended to the encampment, where, this time, we met fourteen members of the tribe, including the three brothers Atèo, Atòng, and Ayaw. Presents and food were distributed, and photographs of the group and of their huts were freely taken; after this they entertained us to an impromptu dance. As we wished to proceed to Galatea Bay at the southern end of the island, we induced Atèo to accompany us on this expedition, but to the surprise of us all, as soon as he discovered that our object was to meet some of another tribe, which had been reported as being there, he showed such terror that it took four persons to hold him down in the boat! He tried to throw himself overboard and swim away. It was not until the boat was retracing its way from the Bay that he recovered from his fright and regained confidence. As we had no further need of his services we landed him, and our boat proceeded on its way back to Nancowry.

“ My next trip to Lafūl and Shōm Pēn territory was made later in the same year, and I again found everything in the same condition as on former visits. I again took several photographs, and on this occasion persuaded Atèo to accompany me to Ganges Harbour, to assist me in making acquaintance with some of his fellow-tribesmen there, and to see if I could persuade some of them to make a visit to the Government Settlement. He would

not agree to this unless some of his coast friends would escort him there and back. We had no difficulty about arranging this, and we weighed anchor and steamed round the north-east point of Great Nicobar, anchoring again in Ganges Harbour. On landing in one of the small shallow bays on the eastern side of this harbour, I sent Atèo and his friends on to prepare the Pēn community for my visit. I followed a few hours later and found some scattered clearings, sufficient for the erection of a few huts which are occupied from time to time when they visit the shore, and where they collect such products as are not procurable in the interior.

“Only a few members of the community put in an appearance, but these we convinced of our friendly intentions by distributing food and presents. I then obtained, with the assistance of the coast people, a list of words, including some numerals. Six of the party agreed to be photographed, and two lads were persuaded to go with Atèo on a trip to Nancowry. We promised we would return with them in six days’ time, and started on our journey. This proved a very rough and stormy time, but in spite of the discomfort they endured the lads behaved very well, making no complaint.

“After spending a few hours at my house they were invited by the Headman of the village near us, a man named Johnson, who had accompanied us on our recent voyages and was no stranger to them, to pass a few days with him. The lads were willing to go and I saw no reason to prevent their doing so, as they were also to be accompanied by their friends of the coast tribe.

“On the second morning of their absence, however, I received the startling news that they had disappeared during the night. As nothing had occurred during the thirty-six hours of their stay in the village which could have excited any apprehension in their minds, considerable surprise and uneasiness was caused by this conduct. Every effort was at once made to discover their hiding-place, but the fugitives had taken the precaution of treading on stones, logs, and spreading roots of trees, so

that only a few footprints were visible, leading into the jungle, and there all trace of them was lost.

“As they had not made their reappearance on the day fixed for my promised return, I was obliged to start without them, but in order to let them know I was doing so (it having been ascertained that they were still in the neighbourhood because fruit and food had been missed) I tried to warn them of my movements by using the steam-whistle, with the sound of which they were familiar by this time, but all in vain.

On my arrival at Laful the position was explained to Alèò and Ayaw, the father and elder brother of Atèò, who consented to return with us and help in the search for him. On our return to Nancowry we were greeted with the news that the very night of our departure a small canoe and three paddles had been stolen from a village near Johnson's, from which circumstance, and from footprints in the sand, the natives concluded that the runaways, taking note of the departure of the steamer, had made a foolhardy attempt to reach Great Nicobar in a canoe by themselves. Although the weather was fine, their ignorance in handling a canoe precluded any possibility of their reaching any of the Southern islands in safety, and notwithstanding trips made by the steamer in every possible direction that the canoe might have taken, nothing more was ever heard of the unfortunate lads.

“Alèò and Ayaw, after a further brief stay at Nancowry, during which time they were photographed, were conveyed back to their homes, when, it is hoped, they made it clear to their friends that the disappearance of the boys was due to no fault or foul play on our part. Nevertheless, relations between the coast people and the inland tribes were after this not a little strained for some while. I was assured that communications had been re-established when I visited the island for the last time the following year.

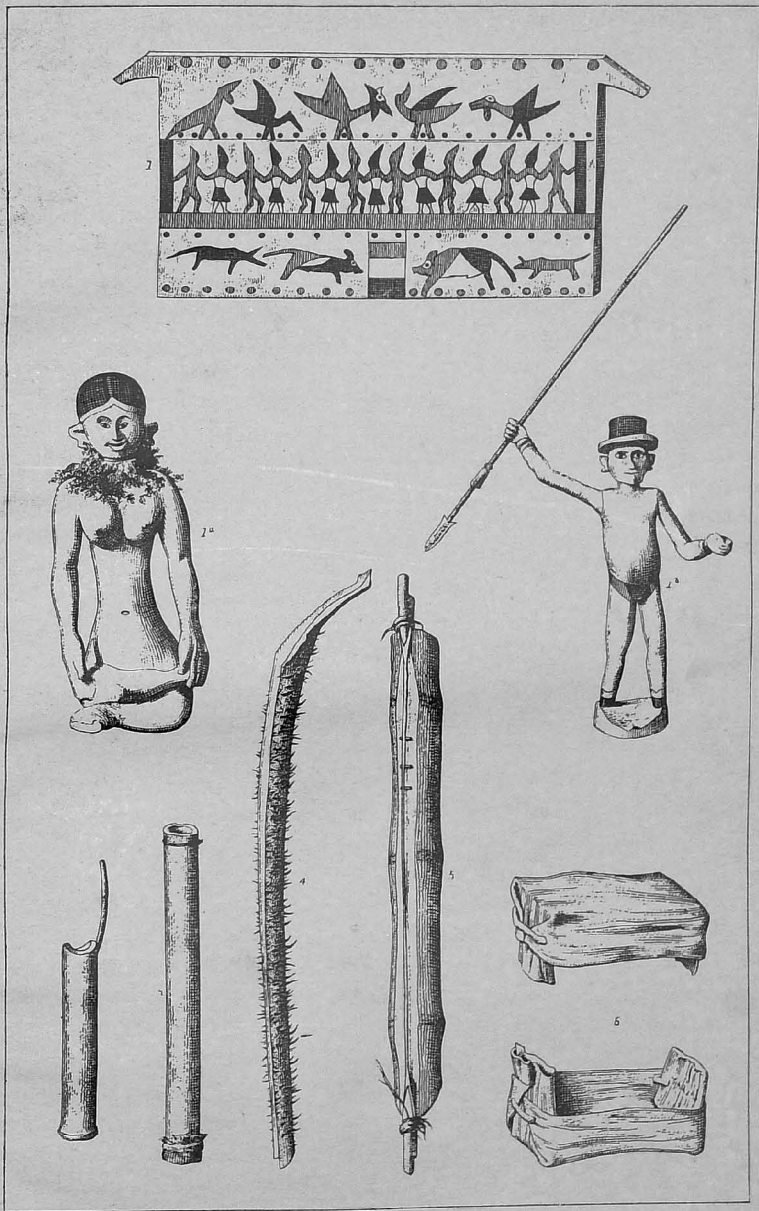
“On the occasion of my next visit, in company with Colonel T. Cadell, we visited encampments near Galatea

Bay and Pulo-Babi. Here we were fortunate, and under the guidance of the coast people were led about two miles inland to a secluded spot near a creek. One or two of our guides went on in advance to warn the Shōm Pēn of our approach; we, therefore, found them prepared to receive us and as composed as if a visit from Europeans was a matter of everyday occurrence, whereas there was every reason to believe that none of the party had ever seen a white face before! From their demeanour, however, and from the silence they observed during the half-hour we spent in their company, it was evident they were somewhat apprehensive of our intentions, and a little awed by our strange appearance. The clearing they occupied was only about 20 yards square, but the litter they had accumulated around it left still less space for locomotion!

"We considered that the people of this little community were of the same race as the others between Ganges Harbour and Lafūl; in fact, there was little to distinguish them and their surroundings from the others. . . . They wore the same scanty dress, the same bead necklaces, ear-sticks and head-bands, and their huts were of the light, frail description that showed they were not intended for permanent occupation."

* * * * *

Of late years there has been considerably more intercourse of a friendly nature between the coast people of Great Nicobar and the Shōm Pēn, and the latter have been acquiring the customs and habits of the former, especially that of chewing betel-nut, and so have disfigured their mouths and teeth; but as this fashion is regarded with such favour throughout all the islands, it may, perhaps, be assumed that the Shōm Pēn have "come into line" in other respects as well. Certain it is that in the matter of attire the Shōm Pēn males have adopted the Nicobarese fashion of wearing a *neng* or loin-cloth. This is usually a strip of Turkey-red cloth about 6 feet long and 4 inches wide, and is so adjusted as



NICOBARESE OBJECTS
obtained by M^r F. H. Man.

to allow some few inches to hang down behind, which gives the appearance of a tail. From the clumsy fashion in which the Shōm Pēn wear this "garment" one is led to infer that its wearing is usually reserved for special occasions, such as when visitors appear. Their women are content with a short skirt of bark-cloth, or a piece of blue calico when they can get it. Both sexes affect small bead necklaces, and usually bind a strip of spathe or piece of cloth round the head.

The task of obtaining information about the habits and customs of the Shōm Pēn is not and never has been an easy one; apart from their own fear of foreigners and the constant feuds they have waged with the coast people—sometimes, too, with different sections of their own tribe—the difficulty of reaching them and of staying long enough with them, and their own frequent changes and removals, have all combined to make them hard to approach, and rendered systematic study of their ways impossible. Thus any observations made years ago may be valuable even at the present date. Such observations show that:

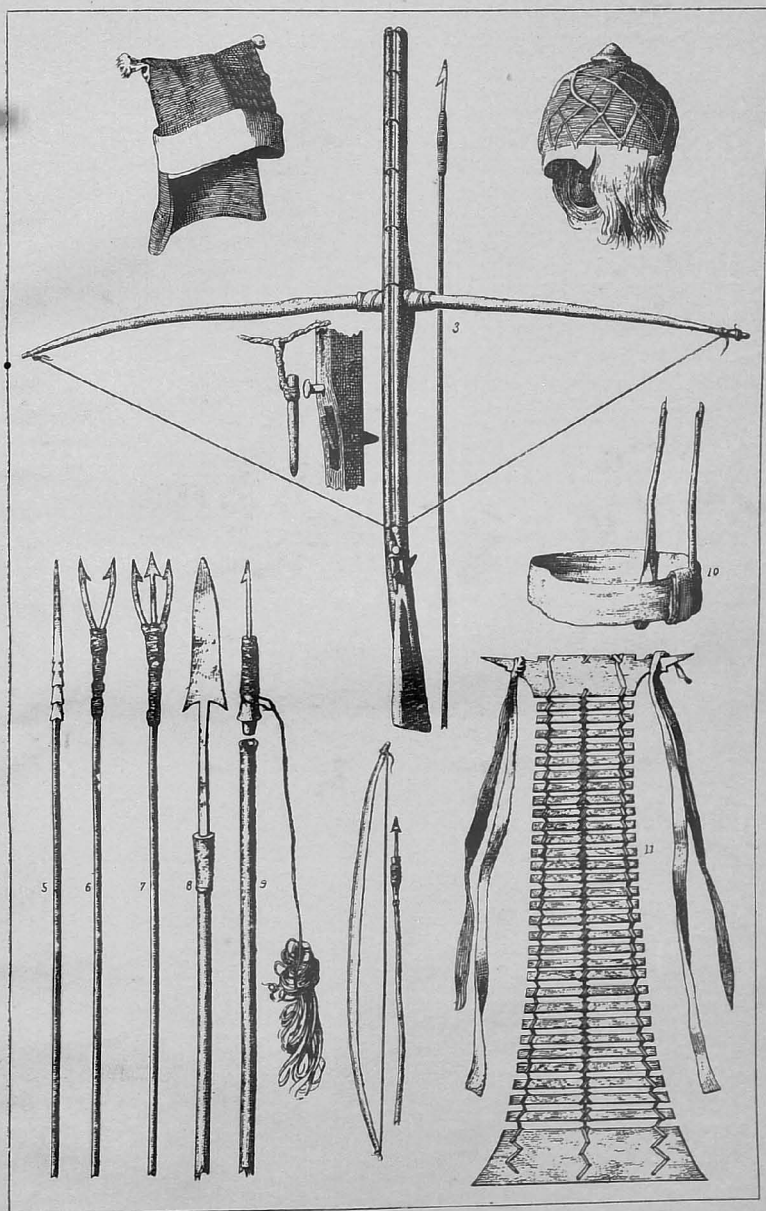
Their huts are smaller and ruder in construction than those found in any Nicobarese village along the coast or in other islands; such of them as are intended to be permanent structures generally partake of the beehive form (the form favoured by the coast tribes of Great Nicobar), and like these are raised on piles some 6 or 8 feet above the ground, and are entered by a primitive ladder made of rough pieces of wood lashed together with strips of cane. The space underneath these huts is so fenced in as to form a sort of cage; in this they confine any pig they may be fattening. The roofing of their huts is rather ingenious, as it consists of large sheets of bark resembling the spathe of the *Areca augusta*. If not entirely waterproof, it certainly affords a very fair protection against even tropical rainstorms. Another noticeable feature about their huts is that those nearer the coast are invariably of a light and frail description, not meant for long use, while those placed higher up

and further inland are strong, bear evidence of care in construction, and are set in small clearings—usually on the summit of a hill. This spot is chosen, evidently, because it commands a view of all ways of approach. It seems as though this people considered themselves in constant danger from attack, although none but their coast neighbours would be likely to invade their fastnesses.

In the rough clearings round their hill dwellings they grow yams and edible roots and such fruit-trees as young coconuts, which require little care in cultivation. From time to time they abandon land that has become weed-grown and set up a new clearing. Unless their practices have altered of late years, the pots that other islanders obtain from Chowra and use for cooking purposes are almost unknown to the Shōm Pēn; instead they use what is really a remarkable type of cooking-vessel. It is made of stout bark similar to that used for roofing huts, a large sheet of which is folded like a sack and secured by means of posts stuck in the ground. It is open at the top, and may be from 2 to 3 feet in depth. The bottom is raised about a foot from the ground to allow fire to be put underneath. These cooking-vessels are used for boiling meat, pandanus, yams, etc., and are found in all their encampments. It is said that those who live near the coast are glad to get hold of a Chowra pot when they can, but the inland people continue to use the same type of utensil as they have used from time immemorial.

To his study of the Shōm Pēn Mr. Man added a few notes that should be of use to all students of types. He says:

“The unmixed origin of the Shōm Pēn appears to be indicated by the singular uniformity of type observable even among sections of the tribe so widely separated as to be ignorant of each other's existence.” He quotes Dr. Garson, too, as saying: “Such close resemblances, occurring in a sufficiently large series, would indicate purity of race or, at least, isolation from other races for a



NICOBARESE OBJECTS
obtained by M^r E. H. Man.

long period of years. . . . There is evidence, indeed, that they have been for a long time isolated from surrounding inhabitants and that by absence of the fusion of fresh blood they have come to resemble one another so closely that they now possess certain definite characteristics of a more or less stable nature."

Mr. Man found that the only Shōm Pēn he had seen who seemed at all superior to the general and prevailing type were some who were living at Dakankat, on the west coast. This difference and improvement might be explained by their being on more familiar terms with other coast people and so adopting some of their habits. These Dakankat folk showed well-developed biceps and back muscles, due to their using canoes along the Dakanaing River, and to being quite expert in the use of paddles over distances of something like 9 or 10 miles, which was enough to try them severely.

* * * * *

Although Mr. Man's notes and records were made over fifty years ago, their accuracy is maintained and further enhanced by later information supplied by visitors and officials who have gone there in the interval for the purpose of making Census Reports. The verdict of Mr. G. F. Prevost, in 1897, was that "Little Nicobar is the most promising of all the islands inspected, as it contains about 40 square miles of forest of a marketable species of timber, but owing to the topography of the island its extraction would be costly and difficult." He added: "Unfortunately we were unable to visit Great Nicobar, with its much bigger area of 334 square miles (more than half the area of the whole groups of islands); from all reports, however, it would appear that it is densely wooded and has little area under grass. The hills are lofty, Mount Thuiller, the highest, being 2,105 feet above the sea. Little is known of this island save that the interior is inhabited by a small tribe of savages called the Shōm Pēn. It is, however, certain that large quantities of the *Callophyllum spectabile* must exist, as

it is from this island that the inhabitants of the other islands obtain the logs for their biggest canoes. . . .”

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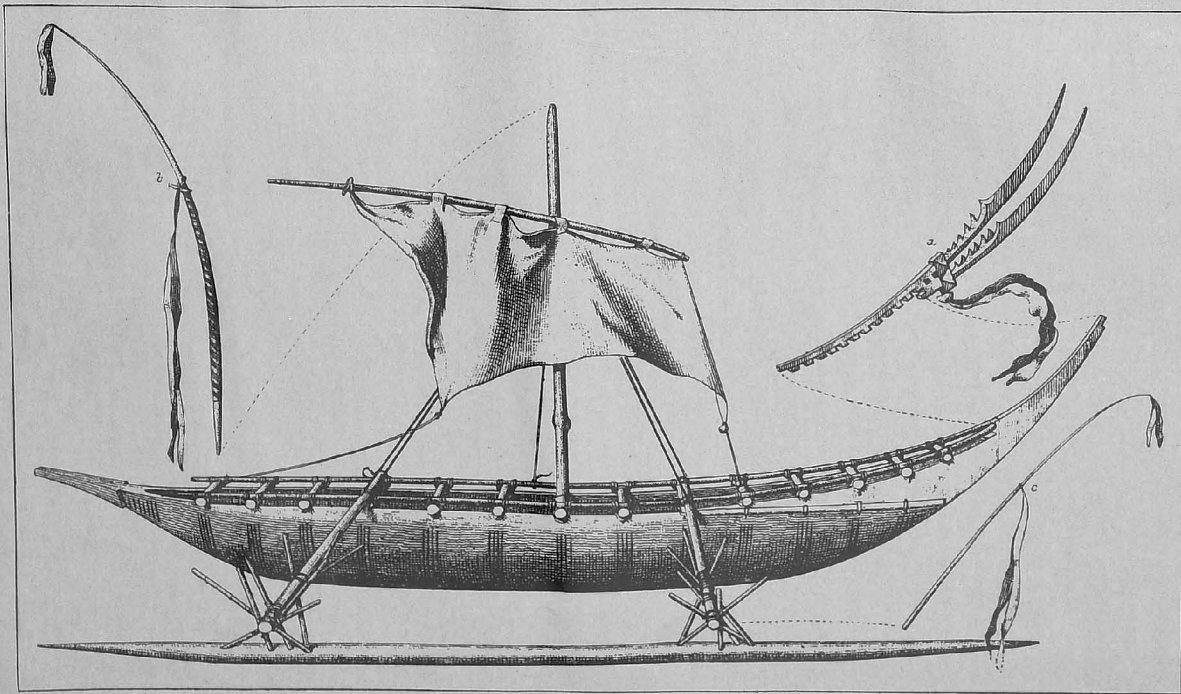
Repeated attempts have been made to colonise both the Great and Little Nicobar with Chinese immigrants—the only people who can withstand the malarial fever that attacks most Europeans when they attempt settlement. The Chinese are excellent colonists, and there could be no doubt that if a sufficient inducement were offered they would establish themselves on these thinly populated but undoubtedly fertile lands, and would soon change their character by reclaiming the swamps, clearing the jungle, and cultivating crops suitable to the rich soil. As far as can be seen, this seems the only way of overcoming the hostility of the Shōm Pēn and of bringing them under the influence of civilisation.

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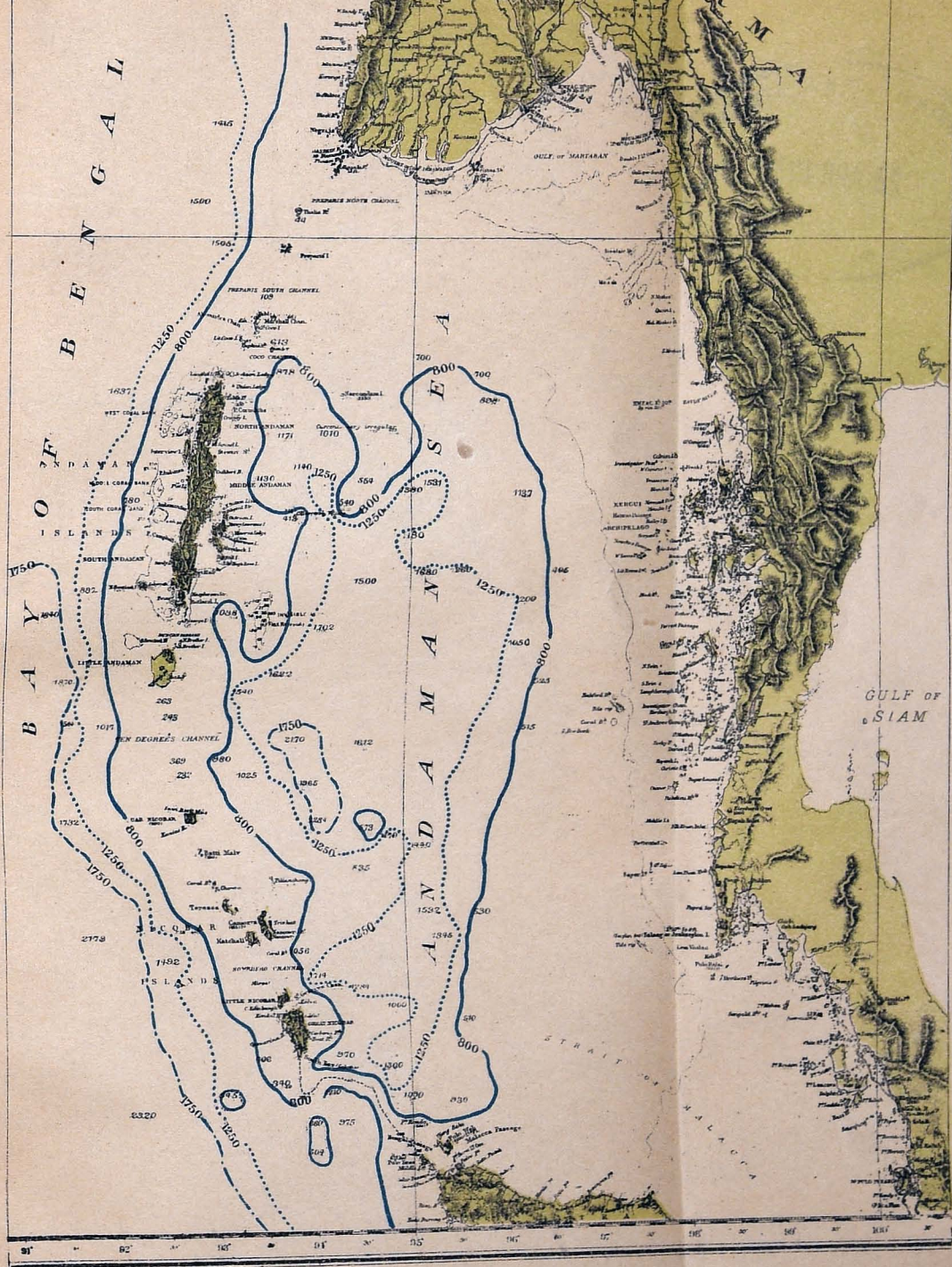
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92° 30' 93° 30' 94 30 95 30 96° 30' 97° 30'

SKETCH MAP
OF THE
ANDAMAN SEA
Soundings in Fathoms



93°

94°

Map of

THE NICOBAR ISLANDS

illustrating by Colour the Distribution
of Dialects

1887.



Car Nicobar

Batti Malv

Geog. Miles. 0 10 20 30 40
English Miles. 0 10 20 30 40

Chowra

Tillangchong

Teressa

Bompoka

Camorta

Trinkut

Katchal

Nancowry

S O M B R E R O C H A N N E L

Meroe

Trak

Treis

Pulo-Milo

Menchal

Little Nicobar

Cabra

Condul

Great Nicobar

The green colour refers to the inland tribe called Shom Pen (*Fr. Pain*).

LIST OF VILLAGES.

CAR NICOBAR.	TERESSA.	CAMORTA.	KATCHAL.	NANCOWRY.	GREAT NICOBAR.
1 Mús	1 Haoín	1 Hoe-mattal	1 Kíre-henpoan	1 Gal-ta-heak	1 Láful
2 Lápaté	2 Pahíála	2 Ináka	2 Hoin-ipoh	2 Lanoanga	2 Tenlá
3 Malacca	3 Keráwa	3 Hentoin	3 Oyau-tapáh	3 Mattai-ta-hoe	3 Bananga
4 Kákana	4 Laksi.	4 Domyau	4 Olenchi	4 Anowa	4 Matalta-ánla
5 Kemios	5 Hinám	5 Chang-hoa	5 Shaké	5 Hendáha	5 Enlowa
6 Arong	6 Chanúmla	6 Hoau	6 Oal-kolo-kwák	6 Itoe	6 Lokafum
7 Sáwi		7 Panoha	7 Shanoya	7 Oal-ta-meak	7 Henhóaha.
		8 Talárom	8 Komlánga	LITTLE NICOBAR.	8 Pulo-kota
		9 Keaiya		1 Ileya	9 Henpoin
		TRINKUT.		2 Enderiya	10 Pulo-bábi
		1 Tapiyáng		3 Pahonk	11 Kopenheat
		2 Hoe-tamin	CONDUL.	4 Temain.	12 Pulo-kunyi
		3 Ok-chuáka	1 Oal-nga-nát	5 Tiden,	13 Pulo-pet
			2 Oal-dowa	6 Enfok.	
				7 Makachían	

