

ETHNO GRAPHIC NOTES ON THE AKHAS OF BURMA

This section in 2 volumes

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Volume III

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In the text the author refers to four authorities on the Akha. Their works are referenced below:

Hugo Bernatzik Akha und Meau: Problem der angewandten Volkerkunde in Hinterindien, 2 vols.
Innsbruck 1947

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COLLECTING

When Akhas are short of rice, they will sometimes dig a type of wild yam (a eu), and cook it with what rice they have. They eat it as gruel. They do not especially like it, but it keeps them from starving. There is also a type of red bulb (a zi) shaped something like an avocado that they dig when they are really hungry. This also grows in the jungle. Digging such food occurs in their legends, and indicates the extreme poverty of those who are forced to do it.

They also dig the roots from the following plants: g'aw kaw (they also eat the leaf), pa k'aw, lah byeh (which grows in the water, and is related to caladium) and law caw, which is a bush that grows in wet places.

The following plants are gathered for food in the jungle: law jm (they eat the leaves), jeh k'a (they eat the leaves), da leh (bracken shoots), g'aw loe, g'aw k'a (a bitter type of green), ma k'a da seh, and many others.

Some of the trees they eat the leaves from are: si pu dzi bu nyeh dazh (banyan), za meh, and many others.

They also eat the flowers of some trees, such as deu pyu and ah paw. Before they eat the flowers from the shm pa do nyo tree, they say they must first mix them with chilli pepper.

They eat the leaves from the following climbing plants: a beu leh coe tah bu, and others. There is also a climbing plant (a mi nui gaw), whose root they also eat raw. They use the leaves of lu pa for chewing betel.

They gather berries and fruit from the following bushes: a gah lu ceh (raspberry), a kui meh la leh o (yellow raspberry) leh o na leh o ne leh o shui si k'a za ya sa leh o and probably others.

They eat the tender leaves of the following bushes: a kui meh la gu ci gu ma, and others.

They gather and eat the following herbs: bui pa mah coe coe ma ji yaw, meh tsui meh shui, tsaw tsui (ginger root, also very important in their religious customs), boe teu (which they eat braw), bui pa mah coe and others.

They beat the shoots (a bye) of the following types of bamboo: a cu, a k'a, a ma, a pyeh, ma baw, ma pyeh, ma ya, za baw, za coe, za myo, za pui, za shaw, and probably others.

They also eat the tendrils (a coe) from these plants: a gah, meh law, meh ceh, and others.

Akhas collect the red flower (nga du) at the end of the banana stalk, and cut the banana tree to get the inner core (nga lo). For the most part they do not eat the fruit from the wild banana trees, since there are too many seeds in them.

Akhas eat many varieties of mushrooms, (a hm is the generic term), but for the most part they eat only those that grow on logs rocks and trees. They do not eat the 'ground mushrooms', since they are afraid of being poisoned by them. There are two exceptions to this however: hm bo lo yeh, and kui hm na sa.

Fruit and nuts are gathered from the following: a da (the variety that has soft fruit), a ka da k'a a g'm a k'a, a ka si poe (wild apple), a law baw pya (a type of chestnut), beh beh la nga bym ci coe ci teu ci ca dao (palm), dm byoe, deu gaw (wild toddy palm), gui g'o (wild mango), g'eh (wild cherry), jah ca, ka ca.kah ya. kah ya teh. ka ca ko yeh, k'o yeh, lm bo, la ceh, ma lu, ma mo, mi ci li, lmya law, peh lo, pa bu sa, pu k'a, saw la ju, si gu, si gu ma tsi, si k'a la ma, si ma, si nah, si poe la k'aw, sipu, si sho tsi naw, tsui ka (chestnut), tsui na (another of chestnut), tsui sheh, zeh, and no doubt many others.

There are other jungle trees that the Akhas value not because they eat the fruit themselves, but because they are a good place to set traps for birds, or hunt them, since the birds are attracted to the fruit. Some of these are: dze ah, ja saw (barking deer also eat the blossoms), mi ceh mi leh, si pah, etc.

There is a type of tree (k'a ba), which has a bitter fruit. They do not eat it, but they gather it and feed it to their pigs.

Akhas also look for bird's eggs in the jungle, and eat almost every kind they find except crow and buzzard eggs.

There is a type of large spider (a o lo ma), which lives in the jungle. Akhas eat this. They also collect various types of cicada, grasshoppers, and such. I have heard of some eating praying mantis, but this may not be customary. There is a type of grub (k'a boe), which they cut from bamboo sections and eat (k'a boe ceu dza-eu).

Akhas eat the young of several types of bees and wasps (bya bya shaw bya yaw, bya nyeu bya g'ah lah shui bya g'eh, ya bya, bya gaw, etc.) These varieties live in trees, so they get them by cutting down the tress (bya deu dza le-eu). There are many kinds of ground wasps (bya du). They dig these up (bya du du eu), to get the young (bya boe). One way they find the wasp's nest is to catch a wasp and tie a string to it. Then as it flies through the jungle, the Akha boy's race madly after it yelling to each other which way it is going. They find the nest this way, and then dig it up to get the young.

Akhas eat honey made by various types of bees such as: bya bya shaw, bya yaw, bya nyeu, ya bya). They usually smoke the hive before trying to get the honey. If a certain plant (m k'eu ba), is near the beehive, and in flower at the time they make the honey, Akhas will not usually eat the honey. They say it can make some people go insane.

When they go out collecting food, they go in parties, and then divide up the take evenly. they also remember the 'grandparents who guard the house', and give them some too.

FOWLING

Akhas love to hunt birds. Every spare minute young birds get they will go out into the jungle to shoot birds with their slingshots. they eat almost every kind of bird except the vulture, since it eats carrion, which it is not proper to eat (ma dza k'm-a). They also do not eat the house swift (jaw ji jaw g'a) since it lives in houses with them. The various types of nets and snares are:

1. Bird net

(baw g'a k'm-eu). This net is usually set for various types of doves, pigeons and related birds. They first of all look for a place where these birds often fly, as through a saddleback of a mountain, and then clear the immediate area of obstructions. they put a net up that may be anywhere from six feet square to nine feet square. it is fixed so that anything hitting against it will cause the net to collapse from its taut shape and generally fold itself over and around the bird. Sometimes a whole flock of birds can be caught if they fly into the net at the same time.

They often set these up early in the morning, or some times in the evening. These are the times when the birds cannot see very well, and also the favourite times for the birds to be flying. Sometimes the nets are left set all day.

2. Small bird spring trap

(seh to tah –eu) This is a trap like figure in Izikowitz's book on the Lamet. For the bait they usually use termites, or a white grub that lives in bamboo (k'a boe). they use termites especially in the months of April and May. the grubs they use especially in August and September.

They prepare the bait in the following way. they make a little cup-like affair of the outer layer of a banana stem to put the termite in. They press some dirt down into the bottom of it and put the termites on this. This keeps the termite cool and alive much longer. Also, it means that the termite will keep beating its wings, which makes just that much more attraction for the birds to come.

For the grub, they fix a section of bamboo to put it in. When the bird comes and peeks at the bait, a spring trap closes around his head and chokes it to death.

When they use the termite for bait, they can only do it in the morning, since the hot part of the day its wings get 'bad', and it can no longer whirr its wings to attract the birds.

3. Live decoy

(da-eu) They take a decoy animal (da ma) and tie it in a spot in the jungle where they think birds of that kind are. When a wild bird comes, they have different methods of taking it. If their decoy is a chicken and a jungle fowl comes, they will usually shoot it. If they use the parakeets as decoys, they will use birdlime to trap the parakeets that come.

For the green pigeon (k'a gu nyoe) and a certain type of dove (k'a gu da), they use a net when they come. These two they can also sometimes get to come to them by imitating the call.

When the Chinese francolin (tsa dah lah za), and a bird, which resembles it but is smaller (lah za) come to the decoy, they use a spring snare (lah ju) to catch them. For quails (hah za la ma) they have a special contraption to catch them, which I have never seen.

For the numia, or chickadee (k'a ja) birds, they have a basket with other munia birds in it. When the wild ones come, they find a special opening (lu seu), which leads into the basket. The wild birds go in through that opening into the basket (ja pah) to join the other birds feeding inside, and then they cannot get out again.

4. Birdlime

(I ni da eu) They first of all beat the bark of the birdlime tree in water to extract the birdlime. Then they have several different ways in which they can make the trap. One is to find a place in the dry season where you can dig a little and get some water. They then fix two sticks down by the water where the bird can perch while drinking. Birdlime is smeared on the part of the sticks where the birds will perch, and thus stick to the sticks.

Also, when they find a lot of birds coming to a certain tree to eat the fruit, they will take two or three sticks and fix them onto a long bamboo. Birdlime is smeared onto the sticks, and the bamboo is tied up into the tree among the fruit in a place where the birds are likely to land or perch. There are also certain dead trees where the Akhas notice that the birds frequent, so they will watch the areas they go to most often and put some branches with birdlime on in those areas.

5. Plank-fall trap

(ja the sheu-eu) This is mostly to get rid of birds that devour their paddy, rather than as a means of getting food. Often when they have a field far off from their village, they will pile up their paddy at an intermediate spot about halfway between their field and village. Then later on they will transport that paddy on to the village. While it is exposed in that way, the birds flock to the spot. So often they rig up a board or a series of boards nailed together, or a split bamboo section. They prop one side up with a stick (da to), which has a string attached to it.

As the birds congregate under the raised board to eat the paddy, a person standing off pulls out the peg, and then quickly runs over and jumps on the board or bamboo section, to make sure all of the birds that were caught under it are killed.

6. Spring-pole snare

This is a snare type of trap that catches large fowl that go on the ground, and sometimes even catches small barking deer and the like. The main fowls they try to catch are: pheasant (geu), jungle fowl (ya nyi), peacock-pheasant (ba go-o), great argus pheasant (g'a g'a), Chinese francolin (tsa dah lah za), quail (hah za la ma), emerald dove (k'a gu ci ui), wagtail (ja tsi), waterhen (ui za) pitta (caw k'eh) and a few others (nga ceh, lah za).

They will make the spring pole snare according to the size of the bird they hope to catch. They cut branches and put them in such a way as to lead the birds to graze where the trap is. The trap catches them around the head.

7. Pecking snare

(to pyeu k'm-eu) This is much like the snare described above. The important feature of this is that there must be something bright or attractive to the bird, so that it will peck at it, and thus set off the trap. They often use bright red seeds (the ne), the same kind women use as ornament on their clothing.

HUNTING

Akha men are extremely fond of hunting. Often when I give a choice of a subject for an informant to give a text on, he chooses something having to do with hunting.

Not only do they hunt for the meat they get, they also love the excitement and challenge of it, along with the companionship. Even when the men are not actually hunting, they talk about it constantly. This is one of the favourite themes of men and boys in an Akha village.

The favourite animal they hunt is the barking deer. They also like to get wild boar, bear, sambar deer and mountain goat, as well as almost all kinds of monkeys rodents and edible birds.

When they go after barking deer, they usually have young boys drive the deer to where the older men are waiting. In hunting other animals, they usually go out as a group, and then spit up and stalk what they can see. When it gets too dark to see, they return to their camp. They may go on for two or three days, or longer depending on whether they have been successful or not. When there is lots of work to do around the village, they may go on just a one-day trip.

When they are hunting and one of them misses a shot, often others scold him, 'How do you expect to get anything to eat if you go around missing easy shots like that?' He will respond, 'well, you certainly don't think I tried to miss do you?'

They all seem to think that their village has better hunters and fisher men than any of the surrounding villages.

When they plan to go on a hunting trip, they are always anxious that there will be enough men going. Many of them feel that anywhere from eight to twelve is about the right number. If it is too many they do not like that, but if there are not enough they will not go. If the group is large enough they will allow one man who has had twins (or other human rejects) to come along with them. They feel that the collective goodness of the other man will overcome the evil of that one man. They would never allow two men who had had 'human rejects' to go with them, for surely the spirits of the game would not allow such a group get anything to eat.

When someone shoots a large animal, there are certain things they must do. First of all, the one that actually shot the animal goes with the gun with which he shot it, and touches the end of the barrel to the head of the animal, then he touches the middle section of the gun (about where the trigger is) to the middle of the animal, and finally the stock he touches to the tail of the animal. He does this three times. If he should fail to do this, the gun would not shoot many more animals, or its aim would go bad.

If it is a large animal, the one who shot it must perform a ceremony (pu tso-eu). He takes three small branches in his left hand, and beats the animal with these three times. Then he throws two of the sticks away, and keeps only the third. Then he plucks some fur from the rear end of the animal, then the middle section, and then the head section, doing this a total of three times. Next he cuts a slit in the end of the branch he is holding, and fixes a leaf in a cup-shaped fashion into that slit.

Next he takes the nine tufts of fur that he has pulled from the body of the animal, and puts them into the cup shaped leaf. He then takes that stick and forces it into the ground right at the end of the snout of the animal. The stick must come right in the middle of the snout area. While doing this he must not touch the animal at all. Then with his left hand he pulls the animal back from the stick, and after that the animal can be taken back to the village.

They believe that if the hunter does not do this, the 'spirit owner' (yaww sah) of the animal will attack him. (gu la-eu).

If the animal killed is a barking deer, they do not dress it in the jungle, but must carry it back to the village. Others besides the man who shot it can help carry it back to the village, but when they get near to the village gate, the man who shot it must carry it. When he gets near the village gate he puts the barking deer down on the ground, and performs another ceremony (sha neh k'eh-eu). For this he breaks off three shoots with his fingers. He will be careful to choose a tree that is plentiful for this, since ever after when he performs this ceremony he must use shoots from the same tree. These shoots which are usually called a neh are called sha neh (sha referring to meat) in this particular ceremony.

The one who shot the barking deer, while still holding the three shoots from the tree picks up the deer and his gun and goes into the village. He goes directly into his own house, and lays the barking deer and his gun on the ancestor altar. He then takes three shoots (sha neh) with a container which has a little holy water (I cu shaw), and waves them over the deer three times. Then he takes the shoots and sticks them into the wall either below the ancestor altar, or above it in the thatch. He then drinks the holy water. After he has done all of this he skins the animal, and prepares the meat for eating. The one who shot the barking deer would not think of eating any meat from it if he had not done all of the above.

When Akhas kill any one of the big four (bear, wild boar, samber deer, wild goat), the ritual (k'ah pi ca-eu) is a little different. The man who shot the animal will be the first to skin it. When he does so, he will be careful to cut the skin from the stomach and chest region in a long strip, and then leaving one end attached to the rest of the skin, will tie the free end around the snout of the animal. In the area where he cuts this strip of skin he will also cut out nine small pieces of meat to take home for his family to eat.

If it is a female wild goat they have shot, they will use a machete to skin it, since if it should be with young they would have to throw the machete away. So they will cut a bamboo or stick in such a way that it has a very sharp side and use that. If when they cut up the wild goat they discover she is with young, they will abandon her, and all the tools they have used on her. Furthermore, the man who shot her must offer three pigs, one dog, and three chickens. Besides that he must perform the 'inside' and 'outside ceremonies'.

If the animal, one of the big four, is not with young they continue the skinning and cutting up into sections. However there is one special precaution they take when skinning the samber deer. They will use a sharpened bamboo or stick to cut out the skin right where the foreleg joins the body, because they say it often has ringworm. Some take that part of the skin off and bury it, others burn it. They are afraid that if they touch this area they will get ringworm too.

When the animal shot is one of the big four, the hunters boil the head and four ribs, and have a meal from this. Following this meal, they put all the parts of the animal together again as it was when alive (sha gah gah-eu).

When they have done this, they cut the animal up so that it will be easy to carry back to the village. Each man takes a chunk and then they start back. If they happen to see small game on their way back, they can shoot at them. But on that day they must not shoot any more of the big four, or barking deer- at least this is what they say. But I have known them to break this rule. When they get to the village gate they put the meat down, and the one who shot the animal will perform the ceremony as described above for the barking deer (sh neh k'ch-eu).

They then take the meat on into the village, and into the house of the man who shot it. When they put it under the ancestor altar they re-assemble it so that it has the general form of the animal when it was alive. Then the man who shot it waves the branch (sh neh) and puts holy water over it three times, and drinks the water. Following this he puts the branch into the wall below the ancestor altar, or into the thatch above, as in the case of the barking deer described above. The branches (boe soe pa law) put in near the ancestor altar are never taken out. They are left there to rot away.

When the animal shot is one of the big four, they also use an egg and a chicken in the ceremony by the ancestor altar. If the animal killed was a male, it must be a hen that is used. If the animal was a female, it must be a rooster used for the ceremony.

Some Akhas say that the hunter's wife must be the first one to eat meat from the kill. Others say that the hunter must feed some to his mother and father first, if they are still alive, before anyone else can eat it. If they are not alive, he must eat some first, and only then can others eat it. The exception to this is when they kill a certain type of animal that has a snout like a pig, but legs like a dog (kui si za si). This may even refer to two animals. But they say that when they kill this animal they must eat it at the spot where they killed it.

When they shoot any of the big four, the right foreleg must be given to the village priest (dzoe ma) which accounts for its name (dzoe la). The left foreleg (pu la) goes to all the villagers. The exception to this is when they shoot a braking deer. The left foreleg is given to those who took part in the chase.

The lower jaw (meh o) of any of the big four, as well as the barking deer is hung up (sha u ceu -eu) on the men's side of the house, but in close proximity to the ancestor shrine. Some also say the skull is hung up too, but I have not seen this. Some say they can hang up only one jaw from each hunting trip, but others do not agree with this.

When they shoot monkeys, they hang the whole skull up, but it is tied up under the highest part of the roof instead of on the wall on the other side of the ancestor altar, as the others are.

There are three major types of bamboo gophers (ho pi) that the Akhas are fond of digging: a gah ho pi ho pi tseu na ma sa ho pi. There are some Akhas who will not eat bamboo rat meat. Others will eat the meat from those whose legs are good and have no disease. Others will eat any kind. They cook them in almost any way they want. If they get a female that is carrying young from certain types (ho ca ba gah ho), they will not eat them.

There are certain people who are not supposed to hunt. A person whose child, or parents, or anyone living in his house under the protection of his ancestor altar should die, that man will not go hunting for twelve months, according to their customs. In actual practice they often do not wait this long. If they kill something they are afraid that it might be that relative that just died. A baw La bui (P-3) told of a relative of his mother's who went hunting before the 12 month period was up, and shot a barking deer. When he went back to the barking deer, he discovered on one of the forelegs the silver bracelet of his grandfather, who had died a few months back. People who cannot shoot because of a death in the family are allowed to chase game, however.

Men who are about to get married, or who are just recently married, do not go hunting, 'or do anything else that might be dangerous'. Some say that the boy should not hunt for twelve months after he is married, but others say that any time after he is married it is all right to go hunting.

If the husband goes hunting, the wife must not go fishing at the same time. Also, the husband must never take his wife hunting with him. Something terrible would be sure to happen. P-3 told of a time when his mother's younger brother went hunting with his wife. He met a tiger close up and was so frightened that he could not even shoot at it. The tiger clawed him to death.

There are certain animals which are taboo to shoot, at least under most conditions. One of these is the gaur (neh nyo). However K-10 told me how their village used to hunt gaur, since there was a man in the village who carried the owner spirit of the gaur (neh nyo yaw sah pi-eu). He could also go with people from other villages when they wanted to hunt gaur. Even if he were alone, however, there were certain very special ceremonies that they had to perform if they did shoot one.

He went on to tell that about seven years ago that man lost this special spirit which made it possible to hunt gaur. The reason they felt he lost it was that his son died in Kengtung Christian Hospital at that time, and this was a sign that the spirits had afflicted (gu la-eu) the father. So they did not hunt gaur anymore.

Two men (K-3, K-15) told me that there were some brave Akhas who will shoot a gaur even when there is no one with the spirit with them. However, those who might shoot a gaur must observe 'ceremonial abstinence' (lah-eu) for a month and a half, and observe many ceremonies, including a great deal of spirit incantation (neh to-eu). Also, they must not skin the animal on the day they shot it. After shooting it, all of the men in the party must go home, and only the next day can they skin it.

Akhas do not ordinarily hunt tigers and leopards. However if one is about to bite or claw them, they feel it is perfectly all right to kill it. They will also eat the meat of such a kill.

However if the tiger or leopard has ever bitten a person, they will never eat the meat. This is true of any wild animal they kill. If it has ever bitten anyone, they feel they must not eat the meat.

There are certain animals they must not kill, because of a taboo, such as elephants (ya ma), and hornbills (hah bya). Any big snake is called Lord and they will not kill them. When I asked some men why there were these animals that had a taboo on them, they did not know, nor did they seem to care. They just shrugged and said, 'The ancestors said we must not hunt those animals, so we don't'.

There are certain conditions under which they must not eat the meat of an animal they have killed, besides those mentioned above. If a bear when shot, dies with its paws facing up to the sun and the moon, then they must not eat the meat or even touch it. They just abandon it right there. The one who shot it must perform the inside and outside ceremonies (la k'oe la nyi m-eu) when he gets home. If a wild boar dies while crouching down with its snout to the ground, they do not eat that either.

If when they shoot a barking deer it calls out (hoe-eu) they are very frightened, and will not eat the meat. Some people feel that beside the barking deer, if either samber deer or wild goats call out or moan when they are shot, they must be abandoned. If they should eat the meat of such animals they believe they would be afflicted by the spirits (neh gu la-eu).

They also are greatly frightened when a large animal any of the big four, plus barking deer is shot but does not fall down. They say that even a worse sign than this is when the animal not only does not fall down, but also is looking back. I should add that I have yet to find an informant who has actually seen this happen, but they all 'know' someone who has seen it. Such a sign is considered a bad omen (daw), and greatly feared. One man (P-3) said they could take some thatch grass like spears and throw them at the animal a few times. If it fell over then it was alright to eat it. But another group (Na gui A ka) felt that was wrong, and that under no circumstances could it be eaten (ma dza k'm-a).

If when they kill a samber deer it has just pone horn, or if either of the horns is split or abnormal in any way, they will abandon it.

After getting any of the big four, while carrying the carcass back to their village, they beat on a bamboo section (k'aw di-eu). One group said they beat on it to let the people at home know they got one of the big four, and also to make sure they can get one of these animals later. When they get a barking deer, they blow on a buffalo horn (ya ja baw-eu). This both indicates to the villagers and the chasers that they got a deer.

There are some who blow a buffalo horn to frighten one of the big four out of its hiding place so they can shoot it. It does not matter who blows it. They also use leaves and bamboo whistles to lure animals. (meh ja ja-eu), so they can kill them. Some of them are very good at this. For the barking deer they use a kind of bamboo 'whistle' that makes the sound of a wounded barking deer (ci ha ci ja ja-eu). This will bring adult deer, both male and female as well as tigers and leopards sometimes.

As for the weapons they use, the guns made locally by either Shans or Tai Lois are the most popular. They also use crossbows (ka), and are very good shots with them. They sometimes put poison on their arrows, which will either make the animal so weak that the hunter can catch up with it and finish it off, or the animal will slowly die. Akhas have spears which they use ceremonially in killing buffaloes at the time an elder dies, but I have never heard of them using it for hunting.

If the men of a village have gone hunting lots of times and not got anything, or if they go to a completely new area to hunt, they will often perform a ceremony to the owner spirit of the game (sha sah law-eu). The one who performs the ceremony is not the village priest (dzoe ma), but any older man in the group who knows how to do it. They will take a red rooster that is ceremonially pure (yaw shaw), kill it, and offer it to the spirit owner of the game in that area. They believe that every animal has a spirit owner (yaw sah). They also believe that if they make a proper offering, and ask in the right way, they will be sure to get game. As they offer the sacrificed rooster the leader of the group will call upon the spirit owner and then will say something like this, 'Even if you do not give us something big, give us something small.'

If everything is propitious, the spirit will cause some animal to come near, so that they can kill it. One group told me how that after they had done this, they turned around and there was a barking deer practically right on top of them.

After this ceremony, if they get something, they offer a type of thanks to the spirit owner, 'Thanks for sending this. Send lots more in the future. Keep us from getting sick'.

One group (K-9) also told me that sometimes if they do not get any game over a long period of time, they have the village priest (dzoe ma) go along with them. Almost always the village priest remains in the village, partly to be on hand in an emergency (such as twins being born) and partly so that he will be protected from any harm. So when he goes with them, they are almost certain to get some game.

TRAPPING

The Akhas use the following methods for trapping animals.

1. Spear-trap for big game.

(dzeh beu tah-eu) For the most part they set this up for bear and samber deer, but often they will also set it up, with the spear at a lower level, for porcupine. When their maize is getting ripe bears are a terrible nuisance, so they may set several spear traps near the cornfield. Also they will set these traps along a path frequented by samber deer or porcupines. When deer are a nuisance in their fields in certain seasons, they will set these traps on the commonly used approaches of the deer.

The trap consists of three main items: the spring pole (dzeh beu ya pyeu), the bamboo spear (dzeh beu dzeh yeh) and the cord stretched across the path which triggers the spear (kah bah). The height of the spear is determined by which type of animal they want to get.

They also set up this type of trap with a gun in place of the bamboo spear. They call it the same thing. The main time they use a gun is for leopards and tigers, when they have killed some animal in or near the village. They will then set up the gun-trap near the kill on the path they believe the leopard or tiger will follow, and then they must notify all of the villagers that they have set up such a trap, so they will not accidentally walk into it.

When they set up a bamboo spear-trap, they must make a sign to put beside the path leading to it, with the representation of the spear pointing in the direction of the trap. If they do not do this and someone is injured in it, the injured party can bring a case against the person who set it. If there is a warning, however, no case can be brought. There are some cases of people setting them off accidentally, but I have never heard of anyone being killed by it. Usually it hits them low down so that they escape a fatal wound.

2. Dead-fall trap

(ya dam deu-eu) This is similar to the Lamet Book. They use it for both small and larger animals in the rodent family. To fix this trap, they first clear a spot so there will be nothing above or beside the trap to trigger it accidentally. Then they prepare the heavy wooden piece that will fall on the animal (ya dm dm mah). They make it fairly large if they want to catch larger animals, and smaller for smaller ones. They say if it is too small for the larger animals it will not kill them.

There is a framework under the dead-fall with a triggering device. As the animal walks onto that framework, the weight falls on it and kills it. The Akhas say they have to look frequently at their dead-falls, or the animal will start to decay.

3. Snap-trap in a tree

(pya the tah-eu) This is set up in trees along branches frequented by squirrels of various types, as well as different types of civet cats and monkeys. They also sometimes set it up near a place where a wildcat comes to steal chickens.

They make the trap by hanging up some bit of food that they feel will be tempting to the type of animal they want to catch. There is a simple triggering device, which causes the cord to snap around the animal that tries to eat the bait, which either strangles the animal, or holds it there until the one who set the trap can get there.

4. Spring-pole trap

(la peu tah-eu) It is generally set for the barking deer, although Akhas sometimes get a bear in it. When they make this trap they spend a long time getting just the right wood for the spring pole. They will not use wood that has been eaten by insects or is not sound, because they know that the animal that will be caught will make an all-out effort to get away. The spring-pole (la peu ya pyeu) has the cord (la peu a ca) tied to it. For the actual loop, which lies on the ground, they use runners (zaw kah), which come from a type of palm tree (zaw). For the upper part of the cord that attaches to the spring pole, they use a type of rattan (ni na, or, leh).

They dig a shallow pit below the spot where they have the loop, and cover it over with branches and leaves. They have a triggering device tied to the branches. When the animal steps into the hole, the triggering device causes the spring pole upwards. This tightens the loop around the foreleg of the animal, and holds it tight until the one who sets the trap comes.

For this they also make a warning sign, which is a loop fixed to resemble the loop in the trap, and hanging in a niche on the side of a pole located near the trap. The side of the pole that the loop is hung on shows in which direction the trap has been set.

5. Use of a blind

(lo bah) They put food in a place near their blind where squirrels and other rodents and monkeys come. Then when there are a lot of them they will shoot them. The things they use for bait (ho ca seu ka ka-eu) are: maize, pumpkin, and paddy.

6. Pitfall trap

(sha du du-eu) A pit about eight feet wide, ten feet or so long and eight feet deep is dug, and then covered over. These pits are no longer dug, but ones that were used just a generation or two ago still pit the mountains, and the Akhas remember their grandparents telling of digging them.

7. Box trap

(a mi za dm deu-eu, ho ca za dm deu-eu) They make a shallow box-like affair with holes at either end for mice and rats to enter. They then make a heavy lid that fits down into the box. There is a trigger like piece inside under the lid. They sprinkle bait inside the box. When a rat or mouse enters to get it, the lid comes down on it and kills it.

8. Net trap

(baw g'a k'm-eu) This is similar to the nets they make with which to catch birds, but these nets are not so large, and they are set in places where members of the rodent family commonly travel. They put the net trap in place at night, when the animals will not be able to see it. When they walk into the trap, they trigger a cord, which causes a spring-pole to pull one end of the net around and close over them.

MARINE HUNTING

The Akhas hunt the following turtles: boe bya (very large), boe ci boe yaw (about the size of one's hand), boe ku (the most common). Boe tsi (they do not eat this, but use it for medicine), and maybe some others. They hunt them by ramming metal poles into the mud of lakes (boe ku tsaw dza-i-eu)

FISHING

The Akhas divide the fish that they eat into two categories: river fish (which they prefer), and lake fish. They believe it is much easier to catch the lake fish, but they do not like their smell, and also do not like the taste as much as the river fish. Some fish they consider to be clean (yaw shaw) and some they consider 'unclean'. The ones they consider to be 'unclean' are the ones that eat dung and other types of refuse. Akhas do not eat the intestines of such fish. In the list of fish below, only those considered 'unclean' will be indicated by an asterisk after the name. If there is no asterisk, it indicates that the fish is considered clean.

The following types are the types of river fish they catch: lo tsu (about as big as one's thumb, and very good to eat), lu yeh (small), meh coe* (medium sized, it will sometimes bite their fingers when they reach into places where it is hiding), nga bo* (large with very large scales), nga bya (flatfish), nga bya (large, stays right next to large rocks), nga da (medium sized, comes up rivers at the beginning of rains to spawn, thus the name), nga de (a type of minnow), nga de de geu, (a small type of minnow), nga de na (dark coloured minnow, one of the largest of the minnows), nga de ne (reddish brown minnow), nga de ui ca (whitish minnow, one of the largest of the minnows), nga jui a ma* (a small fish about the size and length of a pencil), nga pi a ma* (medium sized), nga shaw (medium sized), pehshui gah ma* (a medium sized fish is yellow, with darker stripes up and down its sides).

There are two kinds of fish which live in both rivers and lakes which they catch: nga pa deh* (medium, sized if the projections from its head pierces a person's skin, it is very painful), pa si li* (the Shan name, with an unspirated p).

They also catch the following lake fish, all of which are considered to be unclean: nga bawnga law (medium sized), nga lah nga sha (fairly large, raised by Shans to sell in market), pa tai (a fish brought from Thailand and raised in certain sections, the p is unspirated following the Shan).

The Akhas also consider eels (nga ui law) to be fish

They also catch the following shellfish: crab (a ka) with various species (a ka ka na, a ka ka shui, a ka ka ne, etc), a ka da g'aw (crayfish), snail (a nyo) with various species (a nyo nyo ma, a nyo nyo sheh za nga nyo). Some Akhas also catch and eat a type of large insect (myeh la) which is shaped something like a large cockroach. When it first comes out of the water, it has to wait for its wings to dry before it can fly. Shans are very fond of it. Sometimes both Shans and Akhas use it for medicine.

The Akhas have the following methods of catching fish:

1. Casting a net

(za dzeh-eu) They usually buy the nets from either Shans or Lahus, although there are also Akhas who make them. They hold the top part of the net (za za dzah) with the cord attached to it in their left hand, and with their right hand cast it into fairly shallow water with a sweeping motion. If thrown properly, the net will cover a circle of water roughly six feet across.

They allow the lead sinkers (za si) to pull the edge of the net to the bottom of the lake or stream, and then gradually pull on the cord. As they slowly pull the net toward them, the sinkers tend to come toward each other, keeping whatever fish there are trapped inside. But they can only do this where there is a pretty even sandy bottom. When the bottom is rocky they feel around in the water until they feel that are trapped under the net, and then take them out.

2. Pole and net

(nga myah myah-eu) For this they have a pole usually six or seven feet long. They have a net which is not as large as the net used above. One corner of the net is tied to the end of the pole, with a cord from that corner going from there along the pole to where the fisherman grabs it, but not attached to the pole. There are lead sinkers on the bottom of the net. Akhas often make these nets, although they also like to buy nets made by the Shans with nylon cord. They hold the pole over the water, and then slowly let the net part sink into the water. The force of the river (they do not use it in the lakes) carries the fish into the net, where it gets caught. they then lift the net into reach, and take the fish out of the net with their hands.

3. Damming a stream

(g'a lah pi-eu) For this they find a spot in the river which is not too deep, and does not have any deep spots in it. Then they dam up the stream, forcing the water around that spot. They often do this where there is a branch of the river with an island or a sand bank in the middle, then they only dam up one side.

After the section they have dammed up has drained off and the water is very low, they begin going through catching all of the fish that they can with their hands. They need large groups of people to do this.

4. Fish trap

(nga tsah tsah-eu) This method takes quite a bit of time and labour to prepare, but it is fairly permanent. They dam up a river with one opening in the very centre, which goes into a bamboo trap (lu ceu). If the stream is fairly wide, or the flow of water is fairly large, they may have two or three traps set in it. The water flows through the traps constantly, but keeps the fish inside, since they cannot swim back out against the flow of water pouring into the trap. Sometimes they insert a special fixture in the trap which makes it even more difficult for the fish to swim out.

If the stream is too large to dam up effectively, they will often put in bamboo stakes along the dam, close enough together to keep the fish from going through, but open enough to allow the water to flow through. They will take the fish out of the trap at periodic intervals. I have heard of them taking out as much as 50 viss (roughly 180 pounds) of fish in a few days, when several traps were set in a large stream.

5. Rock fish trap

(lo dzi dzi-eu) This is very similar to the above, but it is made for catching smaller fish, and they do not believe they get as many. They do not use bamboo stakes for this, but only rocks with which to dam the river. They have the trap part fixed in among the rocks around the central part of the stream.

6. Trap for spawning fish

(da lo k'm-eu) They take large bamboo sections, and split the top part, but leave the bottom part intact. Then as fish swim upstream and jump at rapids, they fix several of these, as many as ten or more in a spot where there are a lot of fish, so that when the fish jump they will land on the upper, split section of the trap, and slide back into the bamboo cup section. After there are several fish in that section (ka te), they take them out by turning the trap upside down into another bamboo section. They say they must not reach into the trap with their hands, or the fish will get the odour and not jump in.

7. Hookless fishing

(da tsi tsi-eu) For this they take a stick, usually one which is forked so that they can have two baits on at once, and put an earthworm or bamboo grub (k'a boe), or some other form of bait, on the ends of the stick. They usually whittle the tips down well so that they get the whole body of the bait onto it.

Then they hold the bait down in the water. They must be very alert, for when an eel or certain types of fish come they must let them get a good bite on the bait, and then must pull them out of the water quickly enough so that they will not be able to let go and drop back into the water, but not so quickly that they tend to whip then off the end. This type of hookless fishing will only work for: eels, minnows, nga pa deh nga baw nga law and nga bya. The women especially like to fish this way.

8. Hook and line

(nga jui jui-eu) They try to figure out the type of bait the particular fish they want to catch likes. When they put the bait on the hook. The hooks are purchased in the market, and are made in the West. They are careful not to touch it with their hands, especially when they are fishing for larger fish. They say that if the fish gets the odour of the human hand it will not bite. They use two sticks, as if they were chopsticks, to bring the bait to the hook.

9. Whirlpool trap

(nga bah ci-eu) This trap has to be made in a fairly large stream. They arrange rocks at the point where they prepare the trap in such a way that the water will go down and through the hole they have left in a 'whirlpool effect'. They count on the force of the whirlpool to suck all of the fish that come along down into the trap. This tarp takes more time to make and perfect. "We must have enough suction so that it is hard for a man to pull his foot out, but they get a lot of fish".

10 Shallow trap

(nga ya di-eu) For this type of trap they put in bamboo stakes across most of the river, so that water can pass through. The stakes are also high enough so that no fish will be tempted to try to jump over them. Then to one side they fix a flat mud and sand bank over which the water can flow, without any bamboo stakes. The fish swimming down the stream then swim over the bank, and find themselves quickly carried down and to one side of the stream. A flat place has been prepared for them there. There is not enough water to swim back up over the mud and sand dam, so they just flop around on the wet ground. When the Akhas make this type of trap, they usually put some kind of mat or bamboo framework over the ground where the fish are, so that birds will not swoop down and make off with them.

11. Blinding fish

(nga nm nm-eu) They can only do this in the dry season, around March and April, when the streams are very low. They do not need any fishing gear for this. But there must be a very large number of people to make it really effective. They all rush into the water at once and stir up the sand and mud on the bottom. This temporarily blinds the fish, and then they catch them with their hands. But they must keep stirring up the bottom all the time, or the fish will get away.

12. Hand nets

(i yah yah-eu) The Akhas make small nets (i yah) which are similar in design to the nets used by fisherman in the West to land their catches. For the most part though they do not try to catch large fish with these, but minnows, crabs, frogs, tadpoles and an animal about the size of a cicada that lives in the water (ja di a zeu).

There are three types of net (i yah). One is made of yarn but it is not very strong. One is made of a vine (ci gu) and it is quite strong. And one is made of wood and bamboo (da kaw i yah). This last is really a type of basket. Some Akhas can make them, but most of them buy them from the Shans. These baskets are used where there is a sandy bottom. They scrape them along the bottom collecting both sand and the small fish in the sand, and then shake and wash the sand out, just leaving the fish in the basket.

13. Hit the fish

(nga deu deu-eu) Sometimes on very dark nights when there is no moonlight, they go to a stream with pitch pine and machetes. They hold the burning pitch pine in one hand, and when they see a fish they strike it with the machete. In one evening they can get as much as two or three viss of fish (over ten pounds). They do not try to strike the big fish, for fear that due to the current of the river the machete would either glance off and hit them, or even if it missed the fish, since they would have to swing it quite hard they could still hurt themselves. So they hold the machete down close to the water and do not even try to swing very far. Further when they slash down into the water, they try to force the fish right down to the bottom. They say that if they let up on the machete too soon, the fish will almost certainly get away.

14. Poison

(nga tsi deh-eu) The Akhas have many poisons which they can use when they fish. They usually take the bark, or roots, or sometimes branches of the poisonous plant they use, and beat them with a stick on a rock near the stream. Then they dip this into the water, swish it around a bit, and beat it some more and repeat the procedure. Before long dead fish begin to float to the top.

Often villages have their favourite spots for poisoning the stream. Upper Jaw seu village has a place where they go every year. The elders try to stop it, and there is sometimes trouble over it, since the elders and the young people do not agree on it.

P-1 told me how one time he got into an argument with the Pa teh men when one of them put poison in a stream where he wanted to fish. This was after the cycle officer from Pa teh (a baw la ja) had strictly forbidden the use of poison in fishing. When P-1 went to see some of the Pa teh people about it, they asked him not to say anything about it, since it was one of the members of the family of the cycle officer who had put the poison in. P-1 was very angry with them, but he dropped it.

The type of poisons they use are: a da, maybe from the anogeisus acumimta tree, they use the fruit from it. pa bui (a type of vine, ah paw k'a (a type of small tree, probably related to veronica arborea, they use branches, a taw ceh (a type of vine they use either the roots or bark) peh seu (a type of tree, perhaps phyllanthus emblica, they use the bark) and si sa (a type of tree, they use the bark). There are also other poisons they have, one of which is slaked lime.

When they beat the poison and swish it in the water, they often say: "Let the stomachs of the fish split, and the stomachs of minnows pop". (Nga sha u ma pa nga de u ma peh de).

They have a certain fear about poisoning streams. Some are afraid the spirits will afflict them. Also there is a lurking fear that somehow they might wrong the 'Lord Dragon' (bya yah sah pa). They also have a proverb which states that if they poison streams, they will not have enough to eat.

15. Hand grenades

(ma pu beu-eu) This method was introduced by soldiers during the war. Akhas did not get as many grenades as Shans and Lahus, but whenever they got them, they would go mostly to the same type of place they put the poison in, at least the brave ones did. Some of them did not know how to handle them properly, and got seriously injured. K-29 told of a man who lost his thumb and forefinger when throwing a hand grenade while fishing.

As a general statement I believe it is correct to say the Akhas fish much less than the Shans and Lahus. They are more afraid of the water, and thus have not learned to swim as much as the Shans, who live in the valley and usually near streams, and even Lahus who are hill dwellers like the Akhas, but much more willing to learn how to swim. perhaps one of the Akhas fears is of drowning, which is a terrible death (sha shi-eu). Also they believe they cannot over come (g'a le-eu) the spirits of certain large rivers and streams.

For the most part it is the men and boys who fish among the Akhas. Akhas women also fish some, especially by means of 7. and 1. above.

After a group has been fishing they take the fish back to the village, weigh it up, and then divide it equally to all who went.

ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

DOMESTICATED ANIMALS

The main animals that Akhas raise are: chickens, pigs, (both of which ha are very important in their offerings , rituals, etc.) water buffaloes, especially if the make the terraced fields, cows and horses. Some of them also raise bees for honey. Also some raise quails to eat They have dogs as pets, as well as a meat supply and being important in their customs. (as when they build a house, want to keep disease from the village, have to bury a person who has died a terrible death, etc. They have cats as protection against rodents. They also keep parakeets and other jungle birds. It is not surprising to see a monkey in an Akha village as well.

Many Akha villages raise goats, although they have a hard time, since the goats tend to get into gardens and cause a lot of trouble. In Pa teh and lower Jaw seu I have heard of complaints being raised because some insisted on raising goats.

One of the main reasons they raise goats is to have them for certain ceremonies. When a parent dies one of the maternal uncles (a g'oe in this case the jm g'oe) must give a male goat (jm g'oe ci bu). When they have a village protection ceremony (pu k'eu g'eh-eu) they also must have a male goat- or a dog. I believe the original offering was a goat, but now there are many villages where they no longer raise them, so they substitute dogs and other animals. When they have the outside ceremony, (la nyi k'eu g'eh-eu) they are supposed to use a goat. They also use a goat when they purify (m shaw-eu) epileptics and those who have gone insane.

They are also supposed to use ducks in a few offerings, but I have never seen Akhas raise ducks. They buy them from the Shans when they need them.

They have very strict regulations on animals that must not be raised in an Akhas village, which means they must not be killed. Any female animal that should have just one offspring at a time (as cow, buffalo and horse), will be killed along with the offspring, if more than one is born. The meat cannot be eaten by the family that own the animal, or by any close relatives, but only those at least four generations removed (boe mi si k'a). For the most part they go to a spot outside the village especially designated for this purpose (je zdeh dza du) to kill and feast on the animal.

If an animal should have only one or two offspring when it should have three or more (chicken, pig, dog, etc.) the female plus the on or two offspring are killed, and eaten in the same way as above. All such animals are given the name 'animal reject' (je kaw) when such abnormal births occur. The owners are very angry at them for this and call them by the worst name they can think of depending which animal it is (kui peh za peh ya peh) for a bitch sow and hen.

There are other reasons for getting rid of domesticated animals, related to what is written above. If a sow should have her litter under the house, or in the village, even if the number of pigs is correct, they must all be killed. When the litter is born in the jungle, the owner goes into the jungle to hunt the sow and her new litter (a za za leh-eu). If the baby pigs however do not have hooves, or if they have had hooves and they are broken off, these too are considered 'animal rejects' (za peh) and must be killed.

If a bitch should have her litter in the jungle rather than near the home of the owner, she and the litter would have to be killed. With a mother hen, if she sets on eggs and none hatch, she would have to be killed. Any chicks that hatch and their feathers are sticking to them are also considered 'animal rejects' (ya peh), and must be killed.

As to the sow and her litter, even if three or more pigs have been born, if she has rolled over on them and killed them all, then the sow must be killed. If however, there have been three or more born, even if all but one of the baby pigs are dead, they can raise that sow and the baby pig. But they must bring back to the village the baby pigs that were smothered, and bury them somewhere in the village area.

Akhas feel that if the owner of the animals is straight, meaning in his carrying out of the Akha religion and customs, his animals will be born properly.

For their dogs, Akhas believe it is not right to look for a dog if it disappears. They use their dogs in hunting, and also in making sacrifices. When smallpox comes near a village they will kill a dog, preferably a big black one, and skin it. But when skinning it they leave the skin attached to the head. Then they stretch it out (kui k' o taw-eu) by the secondary gate (ka yeh law kah) with the head pointing away from the village. They prop the mouth open with a stick. This is to keep the smallpox spirit from coming to their village. However in 1950 when I was in Pa teh village and saw this, they also asked me to send word to some vaccinators to come to their village.

When Akhas kill a dog to make a curry, they eat every part of the dog, except the hard bones. There are some Akhas however who do not eat dog meat.

As for cats, Akhas say they cannot have a village if there are no cats, since mice and rats multiply so rapidly. They believe that if they kill a cat they will have much sin. (i ba na-eu). They are afraid of the spirits of cats, P-2 said, but I have not confirmed this from others.

For their domesticated animals that have horns (cows and buffalos), they cannot raise those where the horns are damaged in a way that seems to indicate that it was the work of spirits. If, for example, either one or both of the horns split open and blood oozes out, and they do not know of accident or the like that caused it, they believe a spirit shot an arrow that hit the horn (coe mya beu-eu). They must kill that animal. They can kill it in the village, and eat the meat in the village-except the immediate family, who must not eat any of the meat.

They sometimes notice that the horn of a domestic animal keeps getting shorter and shorter (coe beh-eu), for no apparent cause. This kind must also be killed, and they can eat the meat in the village.

If a horn should be broken off (coe bo), they would have to take that animal outside of the village, and eat all of the meat outside of the village. The same is true of any female animal where the female organ is diseased and gradually comes out (daw ni do le-eu).

If the Akhas see a cow jump on the back of a buffalo as if trying to mate, even though just in play, or a buffalo on the back of a cow, they must kill the animal that jumped on the other one.

For the buffalos used in offerings, mainly for dead elders, they must not have a nicked ear, the horns must be exactly right, if it is a buffalo cow it must have exactly four teats, its tail must not be cut off, its hooves must be right, and it must not be a white buffalo.

They eat white buffalo meat; it is very good, although a woman who has just given birth to a baby will not eat it for five months (ten cycles). She will not eat beef during that time either. She can eat either of these while she is pregnant though, 'if it agrees with her'.

They often castrate boars (a za g'aw mi tsui-eu). They say they grow much faster and get fatter, which is of course true. Also the meat from the castrated animal (a za az pa) tastes much better. In some ceremonies they use castrated boars, and in others uncastrated.

For their pig troughs (za dza k'aw law), they usually use a hollowed out log. It will usually be placed somewhere not too far from the stairs that go up the women's side of the house, since the special fireplace for cooking pig food is there. They cook banana stalks mainly for the pigs along with some caladium and other things they plant or dig up in the jungle. They feed the dogs the left overs from their eating. More often the dogs come into the house and help themselves.

Chickens are given paddy or broken rice to eat. Buffalo and horses are given paddy to eat when they are not working, they just let them graze, or cut some grass for them. Sometimes they will give cows and buffaloes a little salt, to keep them tame.

They have trouble with hawks, wild cats and leopards. Of course they have certain magical devices, which are to protect them from these animals, especially the village gate (law kah). They have a special function (law baw lu-eu) for the person who trapped or shot any predatory animal. This literally means 'fry tea', but what they actually do is to fry just a little of the meat of the predatory animal and give it to the man who shot or trapped it. All of the elders gather for this. Usually the meat does not taste good, he will just pretend to eat it or ignore it. But they also have a bottle of liquor, and the one who shot or trapped the animal is served first.

The financial bounty he gets for the animals is as follows:

Hawk	20 or 25 pyas	(ti ceh)
Wild cat	30 pyas	(sm mo)
Leopard	one old coin	
Tiger	2.50 in old coin	

The last two animals they ask money from the villages around too, since they are always glad to get rid of such animals. They will usually give 20 or 25 pyas (ti ceh) from their village fund (pu je).

When a tiger or leopard has killed any type of domesticated animal whose meat Akhas eat, including cow, pig, buffalo and dog, then the owner of the animal must divide the meat (sha bu sha hah) into equal portions. One portion, which is considered as bad (yaw doe) he must divide up evenly among all the villagers. The villagers must pay for this meat, but only K 1.00 per viss, which is very cheap, and the money does not have to be paid until their New Year time. Then the owner takes the other 'good'(yaw mui) portion, and he can sell it to anyone he wants to at the full going price, or he can eat it all himself.

If an animal has been injured by a predator, or a fall in the lake or like, and does not die, but also does not get well, they must consider this meat as above (sha bu sha hah), but it is treated somewhat differently than above. This time the animal is killed and cut in half. The villagers must pay one half of whatever the going price is for that kind of meat, although they do not need to pay until the New Year time. The owner sells the other half any way he wants, as above.

Sometimes when an owner finds his animal dead in the jungle, he will stab it several times and say how he saw it badly wounded, so he went ahead and killed it, so he can get more money. This often leads to arguments.

APPLIED ANIMAL SCIENCE

When Akhas hear of domesticated animals in nearby villages getting sick and dying, they will often kill a dog and stretch its skin (kui k'o taw-eu) near the secondary village gate, as described concerning smallpox. Also I have heard of villages where they tie magic vine (meh) all the way around the village to keep the spirits of animal sickness from coming into the village and making their animals sick.

They also have various medicines for sick animals and ways of treating them. I heard about a certain cow sickness prevalent in one area, making some of the cows of Na daw village sick. They took something black which is sold in the market as medicine (ma pi naw) mixed it with two eggs, added little gall from a crow they had shot, and put it into some water in a bamboo section. They then forced this down the cow's throat. Then they pulled out the cows tongue. 'If you can't pull it out then it does not need this treatment'. They would then scrape off all of the blister like protrusions on it with a machete. After that they rubbed a mixture of ginger root and chilli pepper on the tongue where they had scraped it. They said the cows got well immediately after this treatment. They also said that the Shans in that area were after the Akhas to come to show them how to treat these cows.

PASTORAL ACTIVITIES

They have children herd their cows and buffaloes. In the central area of the state they use the term herd (bo-eu), but in the north they say guard (lo-eu). This evidently is for the reason that when some of the farmers in that area get real hard up, they will try to steal someone's cow or buffalo, so they must guard them.

I have yet to hear of a place where they all go together to herd their animals in one large group. It just does not seem to work very well. Therefore it means that every household, no matter how few animals it has, must have someone to herd them. Sometimes they even have to have two, if they have both cows and buffaloes, although they say that in the rainy season, when there is more good grazing, they can herd them together. As much as possible they try to keep the animals around in the general village area.

Akhas don't usually have so many cows they need to brand them, since they can recognise each animal easily. I have heard of people with larger herds cutting some of the nick into the ears of their animals.

It is usually the children of the villagers who herd the animals. For this reason Akhas parents often are unhappy to see schools started in their village, which will deprive them of herders. When children do go to school, others in the household, including the man of the house, will have to take turns herding. Often they will have servant slaves (za k'a) whom they support as children of very poor families or widows, and they will make them the herders.

They sometimes give names to some of their cows. For the most part they use Shan names, as for example 'White Cow' (Do ma). In the Na daw area at least, they use Shan for telling the cows to stop (sa sa sa), but Akha for starting (heu). When oxen are used for ploughing they use Lahu for telling them to go up a slope (ta), or down(ya). When they want it to go slowly they use Shan (kaweh). They say that there are just a few cows and oxen who come to recognise their names and directions.

DAIRYING

I have never found any Akhas who milked their cows or buffalos. I have heard them say 'We pity the calves'. Also I have heard them say, 'We don't know how'. But it is also true that they do not like the odour or taste of cow or buffalo milk. They do buy condensed milk in tins (imported), and seem to enjoy that. P-2 said that some drink goat milk, but I have never confirmed this.

POULTRY RAISING

They raise chickens for eggs and meat in that order. Chicken eggs are extremely important in almost all of their religious rituals. Chickens are also sacrificed in their ritual, but for the most part they eat the meat afterward. There are certain rituals in which they burn the chicken, usually a small chick, and do not eat it however.

The women prize the white chickens. They take the feathers and dye them red, and make fancy trimmings (ya sheh sheh-eu) for their outfits.

They raise a chicken for killing (ya she) for the naming ceremony. When a woman knows she is pregnant, she chooses one and keeps it for the ceremony.

Akhas usually keep their chickens in a large, loosely woven basket (ya ci k'a pah) underneath their house. They will usually have ten to fifteen hens which are laying. To them the number of hens is the important number in trying to figure the size of their flock. Along with a rooster or two of the chicks, they will usually have thirty to fifty. Some villages are so far from water (Na daw for example), that they do not raise as many as they would like. Also since they have become Christians now they do not need so many for sacrifices.

The adults hardly ever eat any chicken eggs, except in ceremonies. The reason for this is that while the adults are out in the fields, the grandparents are the ones who take care of the children. When the children get to crying and fussing, the grandparents give them eggs to eat. 'Only when eggs are left over do we adults get to eat them'.

Akhas believe that there are chicken vampires (ya ya seu) which are somewhat on the order of vampires (pi seu) except they attack chickens rather than people. They will often kill a hen and suck her eggs.

WOOL PRODUCTION

Most Akhas I have talked with have never seen sheep. Their ancestors must have seen them however, because one of their days is named 'sheep day', (yaw nah). They have value cloth that is made of although they do not have much of it.

ANIMAL BY PRODUCTS

They use cow hides to make straps, harnesses for ploughing and that sort of thing. Those who know how to make very strong 'rawhide rope' (yah ca) from buffalo hide for pulling wood, etc.

Akhas also sell buffalo hides to the Shans, who fry and eat them. Sometimes the Akhas try and buy back part of the skin which the Shans have fried.

Akhas take the bones of animals they eat, crack them up and boil them to get the marrow out, which they use in soups. Then they throw what is left to the dogs.

They eat the brains of all animals. They throw away the manure. But they eat the entrails and everything else that they can.

Blacksmiths use the tail section of a chicken in their bellows. They say it is the only way they can get good compression. It will last one or two years.

They also use animal by-products, especially bones, teeth and fur in the making of medicine. When they butcher a pig, they hang the lower jaw (meh o) on the wall of their house along with the lower jaw of the jungle animals they kill.

AGRICULTURE

TILLAGE

Rice is the important crop to the Akhas. they will usually make three or four of the hill fields (ya) for planting rice each year. Almost everything that has to do with the preparation of the fields, planting and care of the crop, through the harvesting and bringing back to the paddy house, has strong religious overtones to the Akhas. They have a very real reverence for the paddy, and begin early teaching children the customs and taboos related to it.

They grow the following kinds of rice on their hillside fields:

ja g'aw
na u
ceh na
ceh ba
ceh geu
ka pao
la shaw
kao meh naw-eh
kao meh ta
la shaw ma
la shaw za

In terraced fields they plant:

kao leu kao lo
kao eh
kao shu
haw nyaw

The names beginning with ka or kao are borrowed from Shan

PREPARATION OF THE FIELD

1. Choice of a likely spot.

First of all the head of their house will find a spot where he thinks the ground will be fertile and there will be a good growth of paddy. But it must be a spot where there is no grave that will be in the field. Also there must not be a hot springs too near, nor any under ground water courses in the field. Also they would not make it in a place the field could see the village graveyard or any grave.

2. Mark the field

(ya bya-eu) This is described in Volume 1 in detail

3. Clear the field

(ya mya i-eu) If the dream they had after marking the field was good, then they proceed by taking their machetes and clearing all of the underbrush in the field. They must start clearing the field on an auspicious day for their household. If they take cooked rice wrapped up in a banana leaf to eat in the field at this time, they must be verify careful not to leave the banana leaf open with rice on it in the field. If there is some rice left they throw it on the ground, and then tear the banana leaf to shreds. if they do not do this, later when it rains and some water collects in that leaf, the rainbow (a de le k'ah) will come to drink that water and the spirit (neh) of the rainbow will afflict (gu la-eu) someone there.

4. Cut down the trees

(ya tu-eu) After the area has been cleared with a machete, when an auspicious day comes around, some male from the family will go out and cut the first tree. On the night before he cuts the tree the man and woman of the house must not have intercourse. Also on the night after he has cut the tree they will not have intercourse.

A certain amount of care must be taken in cutting down the first tree. When it falls, it must not hit any other tree. Later when the trees are cut they can fall on it, it does not matter. But it must not hit any other tree when they cut it, or they cannot make a rice field there. With the first tree (tu daw-eu), or any of the others, if the tree does a somersault (ko no ko to to-eu), or if it turns upside down so that its branches stick into the ground (sah hu hu-eu), then the site must be abandoned.

When they cut down trees they try to be careful that no one is under them when they fall. They will call out: 'A tree is falling, run'. But even so there are some deaths, and some serious accidents (as Law pa's brother from Bu ceh village).

If a person has been struck by a tree and they feed him some rice before he dies, they do not consider it a terrible death. (sha shi-eu). For this reason they must always keep a little bit of the rice they brought with them to the field (haw ga). The one whose field they are preparing, since they usually work on a cooperative basis must see to it there is always a little rice. He will not say this is the reason for keeping it of course, since they will not talk about the possibility of someone being killed while cutting down the trees. But they always recognise the possibility and feel they must be prepared. If a boy were to ask why he had extra rice that man would say, 'Oh this is rice to take home because we did not finish all of the rice there. Besides this helps to insure we will have a good rice crop this year.'

5. Burn the fields

(mi dza keu-i-eu) After the underbrush and trees have been cut down, they are allowed to dry out for several months during the driest and hottest part of the year. When they are dry, the men of the village will meet together to try to set a date when they will burn their fields. The date they set will usually be on one of the three following days:

dog day so that the fire will jump like a dog

pig day so that the fire will root around everywhere like a pig

monkey day so that it will be as fast as a monkey

They do not burn on tiger day, for if they did it would mean there would be streaks in the field as there are stripes on a tiger.

When they have reached a decision concerning a day that would be good for them, they usually talk it over with the nearby villages. The headman of the village where he is sending a representative, he will not go himself, to tell them the date they have in mind. If that village begs them for some reason not to burn on that day, they will usually change out of deference to that village's wishes. However if it is getting too near the time when they need to dig their fields, even though the other village or villages ask them not to burn then, they will have to go ahead and burn. But they figure it is alright since they notified the other village. Also if something burns accidentally which belongs to the other village, they cannot later bring a court action, since they were warned in advance.

On the day they burn their fields, only the men and boys go out to do it. They are afraid that the girls might be burned to death, so they are told to stay at home.

Usually the boys are sent down below to set the fires around noon or a little earlier, while the men wait up above the fields with their guns, ready to shoot any animals that come out ahead of the fire. The common animals they shoot at this time are: barking deer, various rodents, pheasants, and jungle fowl.

Before the boys actually start the fire burning in the field they take a little beeswax (bya shah), and some lard (za tsi) and put them on the stump of a tree near where they are going to start the fire. Then they start a torch of pitch pine burning, and as they bring it to the dry leaves and twigs they say, 'Melt like beeswax. Burst into flame like lard. Go up. Burn fiercely until banana trees fall with the heat. May the hot flames make the barking deer jump'.

Then the boys blow buffalo horns (ya ja baw-eu) to bring the wind. They say it really brings the wind too. I have heard of grown men being burned to death during this time, as well as boys, and also one girl. 'The girls cannot get out of the way in time like the boys can, that is why they should not have gone'.

The first one to start the fire in the field must plant a caladium plant somewhere in the burned field while saying 'May the paddy be as good as this caladium'. In the northern area they have a custom that the village priest performs about the time they burn their fields. On the night before he goes out to burn his fields he calls out a proverb (daw da) to the spirits to 'run away I'm going to burn my field'. There does not need to be any ceremonial abstinence (lah-eu) for this. Also the villagers do not have to wait for him to do it. It is sufficient for that year for all the villagers; no matter what time they burn their fields. Pa teh village and others in the central region of Kengtung State have not heard of doing this.

6. Dig the field

(ya du-eu) When it is a very good stand of trees and the soil is of the right consistency, they do not have to do this step. After burning they plant (ya na m-eu) as in the Pang Hki Heh area, and other areas in the southern part of the state. But in the northern, central, western and eastern areas, they usually have to dig the field (mi li du-eu) before they can plant. They can start digging any day that they want to. They either work alone or in groups. It does not matter who takes the first swing with his mattock.

7. Break up the clods

(ya den-eu) They use the back of their mattocks to break up the clods so that it will be easier to plant. For planting corn they often do not bother to do this.

8. Rake the field

(ya ka-eu) They use a type of rake (jeh ka) that they make out of metal, if they have it, more often out of wood. After they have raked the fields they then have to burn the piles of rubbish that they have collected in piles.

9. Burn the raked up piles

(ya ji ji-eu) There is nothing special about this. They can do it any day they want to. If they timed the burning of their fields properly and a good wind, they will not have too much to rake up and burn at this time. They often plant cucumber and watermelon seeds in the places where ashes are from these piles of unburned rubbish. They later plant rice around these.

10. Ceremonial abstinence for the fire.

(mi dza mi ah-eu) When they think everyone has burned their fields the elders prepare for a day of ceremonial abstinence. But first they will send around to ask everyone if they have finished. If they have the evening before they have it the village priest or some other elder will call out for the villagers, 'Tomorrow don't go anywhere. We are going to have ceremonial abstinence for the fire.' They do this so that the fire will not burn any place it should not burn. It kind of puts the fire out for that year. They do it either on sheep day or tiger day.

I got from K-28 and K-29 the idea that when they were burning their fields they inadvertently burned some lairs of wild animals and also probably wrong some spirits, so this day of ceremonial abstinence is to ask forgiveness for this. If they do not have this day of ceremonial abstinence the leaves of the paddy plants as well as all other planted things will die.

11. Build the field hut

(ya cm tso-eu) There does not seem to be any special custom that is related with the erection of this hut. It is very simply constructed of bamboo and thatch, and usually made in a very short time. They generally construct it about the middle of one of their larger paddy fields.

After they finish building it they hang up a piece of partly burned firewood. This is to keep crows away, since they leave their cooked rice for their noon meal in the huts, wrapped up in banana leaves, crows are tempted to enter and eat it. But when the crow gets down near the fire blackened stick hanging there he thinks, 'Oh someone has cut off my head and hung it up there', and is frightened and flies away.

12. Hang charcoal baskets

(ya maw k'a daw ceu-eu) This can be done whether before the paddy is planted, or after it has been planted and the paddy plants have started to come up a bit. The purpose of this is to keep the paddy field from arguing with another paddy field, whether that field is mine or someone else's. They take some charcoals from the fireplace of their field hut (if that is the paddy field from which they can see another paddy field, put it into a little open container made of bamboo (k'a lo), and hang it up in that field, if that is their own field). Then they take some charcoals from a fire built in that field and put them in another basket and hang it up in the first field. K-28 said there must be three lumps of charcoal in each basket. If the other paddy field is someone else's I just need to hang the basket up in my own field.

Very closely related to this is another ceremony (pu maw k'a daw ceu-eu) this is where they hang up baskets in the field and in the village (pu) when their paddy field sees their village. For this they take three charcoals from their field hut and hang them up on the pole (ya she kaw du) on the uncovered porch (gui ga). Then they take three charcoals from their home, put them in a basket and hang that up in the field that faces their village. if they do not hang these up (ceu-eu) the paddy will not be good they say. Only the men or boys must hang the baskets up.

I have heard some say that if they can see a graveyard from their field they must also hang these baskets up, but only in the field, not in the graveyard. However others say they would not make a field for planting paddy where they could see a graveyard. In the Meung Yawng area they do, however perhaps because they cannot shift their fields as much as Akhas in some other sections of the State. Men from the north say that they don't bother to hang up such baskets anymore, but they have heard of their ancestors doing it.

Their preparation of the field is completed. it should be noted however that if they have seen a bad sign at any time during their work on the field, they still abandon it, no matter how good the fertility of the soil may seem to be (unless they can rationalise their way out of it of course). Some of the bad signs are: to see a slender loris in the field, to see a barking deer in the field, or to see any animals that has been killed by a tiger or leopard in the field.

In discussing this matter with Akhas, I realise that what one person considers bad another person may not, but the ones written above are all agreed upon. Also if when they are just ready to plant the field they should see a pangolin in the daytime, which is considered bad. It should be mentioned that most of the things they would see that would be bad signs they would see in the initial stages of preparing the field- that is while clearing and burning it. Most animals would frequent a field after it has been burned off.

Even though they may see a bad omen (daw) in the field they will continue making the field usually, but they will have to remedy the bad omen (daw jaw-eu) first.

PLANTING AND CARE OF THE PADDY

1. Planting the paddy

(ceh ka-eu) This is described in Vol. 1. On the night before they plant their paddy, and the night after they plant it, that is two nights in a row, the man and the woman of the house must refrain from sexual intercourse (kui la lah-eu).

When they kill the two chickens described earlier, the elders also examine the gizzards (beh ji) and the stomachs of the chickens (tsah k'a). They look especially for paddy seeds. If they find some, that is a good sign. It means they will have a good rice crop and not be hungry. If there are none, it is a bad sign. They take any seeds they find and mix with the other seeds they later plant.

Also when they plant paddy they have a type of singing. (a ho ho-eu). They do it, partly to praise the paddy. Also they do it to keep ants (a ho) from carrying the seeds away, as well as doves. They say that this singing is to tell God, so that he will keep the ants and doves from taking the seeds away.

2. Adding new field.

(peu sha peu na ji-i-eu) They do this wherever they add a new section (ya na lah-eu) to their paddy field, which is just about each year. The reason they do it is so that the old and new paddy fields will not argue and fight.

They take some earth from the old part (ya peu) and mix it with some earth from the new (ya na). Then they kill a chicken by hitting it over the head, after ceremonially sprinkling (kui la sheh-eu) it. They let the blood from the chicken drip down on the dirt that they have collected from the two fields, and then throw some of the dirt onto the old, and some onto the new sections. Only men and boys must do it. There is ceremonial abstinence for this.

3. Weeding the field

(ya mo mo-eu) After the rice comes up several inches, they will usually start weeding it. It is taboo to use a machete for weeding. They must use a small hand hoe (la ngeu). Some also say that it is taboo to use a mattock for weeding, but others say it is not a matter of being taboo, but simply that the tool is too large for the task. Still others say that mattocks are perfectly all right to use, and they use them for hoeing.

Some of them will weed their paddy crop three or four times in a season, others just once or twice. It depends on how thick the weeds are, and also on how lazy the owner of the field is. The amount of rainfall, since it is then the rainy season, also makes some difference.

4. Offering to the field spirit hut

(k'm pi law-eu) This is a very important offering they have to the field spirit hut in their main paddy field, which is more or less the shrine for their entire paddy crop.

They do not perform this as a village, or all on the same day, but each family does it when a propitious day for them arrives. The time of year is sometimes after catching an insect and before catching the grub.

The man of the house with at least one helper will take the following in his shoulder bag: banana leaf packages (pacu) of holy rice (with an egg in each one), a packet of fermented rice, a package of tea leaves, and some pitch pine, not in a leaf. He will also take a hen in a basket (k'a lo) and carry a rooster along in his hand. He and his helper then go to the field spirit hut.

First of all they build a little fire of pitch pine inside the field spirit hut. Then one of them will take the rooster and ceremonially sprinkle (kui la sheh-eu) it. Then he takes a new stick for killing chickens (ya ci di du) which he has prepared (pya-eu) on the way to the field, and kills the rooster. Then he will hold the rooster over the fire long enough to burn some of the feathers. While doing this he will say, 'Today burn a rooster. Get real good, paddy!' Then he puts the rooster to one side. Later he and his friend will take it home, cook it and eat it with the other members of the house.

Next they take the hen out of the basket, ceremonially sprinkle it, and kill it with the same stick they used for the rooster. They then hold the hen up in such a way that the blood that comes out will fall on the basket (k'a lo) in which they carried it. After that they dress the hen and cook it in the field hut. Then they put five pieces of cooked meat in a dish (liver, thigh, breast, head and one other piece from any place) and put the dish just above the field spirit hut.

In the meantime they stick a stake (k'm pi ya k'a) into the ground just above the field spirit hut. The dish of meat is put near the base of that stake. Then the basket (k'a lo) with the blood on it, is tied to the top of the stake with the open part of it to the east. The reason for pointing the opening (meh k'eh) to the east is because that is the good direction and will make the paddy grow well. The west is the direction with which they bury people, so it is a bad direction. They also put the stick for killing the chicken (ya ci di du) in the basket.

Then they take some of the long wing feathers (a dah dah k'a) and put three into the top part of the basket, three into the bottom part of the basket (kind of weaving g them into the bamboo) and three are stuck into the ground at the base of the stake. They put one on the south side, one on the west, one on the north, but leave the east side free for the egg. (In Jaw seu and also the jaw way of doing it, they stick all nine of them into the ground around the stake).

Next the man of the house puts the three banana leaf packages on the ground with the dish with the meat in it, and opens them. He then takes the boiled egg, strikes it against the post and peels it. He then mixes three bits of it with holy rice, and drops them onto the ground to the east of the post while saying: 'Oh today we have come to offer to the field spirit hut. Get real good, paddy'. Next he drops a little bit from each piece of meat in the dish dropping it on the same spot. He does this three times.

Then he throws three bits of fermented rice onto the ground at that spot, then some tealeaves, with a bit of ginger root. He does not need to repeat what he said above each time.

Next he rewraps the banana leaves with their remaining contents and along with the dish with the meat in it carries them back to the field hut, and leaves them there while he goes out to do the next custom.

He takes the other banana leaf package with the holy rice out to the termite hill to offer it (tsa pu ya u peh-i-eu). If they have no termite hill in their field, they must still offer this, but will do it somewhere in the vicinity of their field hut. He will open the package with the rice and egg in it, and crack the egg on anything handy.

Then he breaks off three pieces, mixes that with all of the rice, and drops it on the top of the termite hill while saying, 'I'm breaking the termite hill egg. Get real good, paddy'. He drops all of the rice. Most of the egg is left however.

The he re-wraps the egg in the same banana leaf, and take sit back to the field hut. He keeps this package in his shoulder bag, however, since he will take it to the village priest, who will eat it with the elders. It is very potent, and no children are allowed to eat it.

At this point, he and any friends with him return to the hill hut. There he opens the package with the rice and egg in it, which was left from the field spirit hut offering. He breaks off a little of the egg, mixes it with a bit of the cooked rice, and eats it as he would ancestor offering food. Then he breaks off a little, and feeds it to any others who came with him, and they eat it in the same way.

Following this, they eat a meal of rice and chicken curry, and then return to the village. They just leave the other two banana leaf packages, with the fermented rice and the tea leaves in the hut, to disappear, as they will.

When he gets back home, he takes the shoulder bag that has the rooster that was partly scorched, the re-wrapped package with the egg and rice, and the termite hill egg (tsa pu ya u) in it, and hangs it up on a wooden hook on the division wall of the house (law ka) on the woman's side of the house, and not too far from the fireplace. Then he goes and puts a fermented rice container (k'a beu ji si) into the dirt of the fireplace on the men's side of the house. Near that spot the woman of the house will next place a winnowing tray, and then bring in the shoulder bag that her husband, or son, hung up. She takes the things out of the bag, and puts them on the tray.

She then takes the two eggs out and temporarily puts them carefully up on the tray above the fireplace (haw ta) on the women's side. Next she calls to the young people to dress the rooster and cook it into the curry. When it is done, all of the elders of the village are called. When they are all gathered and ready to eat, the woman of the house gets the two eggs and feeds the one offered at the field spirit hut to the elders as ancestor offering food (a poe law dza). They first of all call a blessing (dam-eu) on that household's paddy crop, and then eat the egg using both hands. After that she gives the termite hill egg to the village priest.

Then they have a feast of rice and chicken curry. After eating, a male in the family must put in another fermented rice container. (ji si) into the dirt of the fireplace on the men's side. There is a bamboo straw put in each of these, and the village priest, and some paternal uncles. (a g'oe) then suck a little up and say 'Delicious. May you have a wonderful paddy crop'.

There is something else that some do. When they are burning the rooster in the fire, they take it out a moment and rub off some of the scorched feathers. They then wave these around among the paddy that is growing near the field spirit hut while saying, 'Small this, and get real good'. Then they rub some more off and do it in another area, while saying the same thing, and then they must do it a third time while waving their hand in another area of the paddy.

5. Care not to offend the spirit of the field.

They are very careful not to do anything to cause the soul of the paddy field to run away. For example, if they would cut down a tree from which to make a coffin in an area where the paddy field could see it, then they are afraid that the soul of the paddy field would run away. If the paddy field should see such a tree, or if someone has been digging for bamboo rats in the field, or even in a place where the field can see the red dirt, or if cloth has been burned in the paddy field, or if any domesticated animal has gotten into the field and eaten some of the paddy, then they must burn a chick (ya za pui nm-eu). For this they take a very small chicken to their field hut. After ceremonial sprinkling they kill it with a stick. Then they hold it over a fire for a moment while saying, 'Oh, I am burning the chick. Let the paddy get good'. Then they take the chick home in their shoulder bag. If they wish, they can eat the chick at home. When this ceremony is performed, the man and woman of the house will refrain from intercourse the night before and the night after they do it.

In spite of all the care they show for their paddy however, if they find it is not developing as it should, they start looking around to see what is wrong. It may be that they will see the burrow of a pangolin in the field. If so they must perform a ceremony (tah kui byoe ca-i-eu) to counter the bad effect it could have on the rice. Even if there is not a burrow in one's field, if there is a pangolin burrow in a field across from mine, and there is red dirt (mi tsa mi ne) showing, the man in that field must care for it right away (with the above ceremony) or the owner of the first field can fine him.

For the ceremony they do this. They take a live rooster to the spot in their field where the pangolin has made a burrow. Actually it can be the burrow or some other animal too, but they say that the pangolin is about the only animal that burrows in this way and such a place. When they get near the burrow, they ceremonially sprinkle a rooster and then kill it by hitting it over the head with a stick. They then pull some feathers out of the tail and drop them in the pangolin's hole. Next some feathers from the wing are pulled and dropped in, and finally some feathers from the head are pulled out and dropped into the hole. They do this three times.

They next cook the chicken, and then drop a pinch of meat from each member (ti she ti jeh) of the chicken into the hole. While dropping both the feathers and meat into the hole they say something like this, 'If this means a bad omen (daw) disappear and never let us see you again. If a blessing (lah) come back each year for three years'. The reason they say this is that sometimes they do not know right way whether or not it is something good or bad that this burrow indicates for the future. 'We can only know which it is when we harvest the crop'.

The ones who have performed the above ceremony then eat the cooked chicken. Then they stuff the basket (k'a lo) they brought the chicken in down into the pangolin's hole, and return home.

if this same pangolin burrows another place in the paddy field, then the man must go and offer another chicken just as above. If it digs a third burrow they do it again- but each time they do it they must eat all of the chicken meat in the field. They must not bring any of it home. if there should happen to be a fourth time, they leave it.

If, however after the pangolin (or some other animal) has burrowed a hole in someone's field and a chicken has been offered there, as above, and next it goes and burrows a hole in his garden, this is a sign of blessing returning (lah k'o-eu). they kill a pig at that spot, cook it and eat it. This time they can carry home any extra meat they have left over.

If a person carries something through a paddy field with a shoulder yoke (paw kui), or with a pole, as the Shans do, then they must offer a chicken at the field hut. They tell the spirit owner of the field (ya sah a ma), 'Someone has carried something through the field. But we offer this chicken to you. Please make the paddy good'. They can eat that chicken meat either in the field or at home.

There are other taboos they have. One very strong one is that no one must strike (deu) any of the paddy plants with a machete or an axe, anything metal I believe, while it is growing. if they do they believe the rice crop will be bad that year. I have never heard of an Akha doing this, but they have told me of non-Akhas who did not know any better who had done it. Whenever they find someone doing that, they quickly sacrifice a chicken in their paddy field. Of course when possible they try to get the offender to provide the chicken. But whether he gives it or not, the man who is working that field must make the sacrifice and carry out the ritual (mi ceh deu-eu ya za pui nm-eu).

They also must not let any paddy plants get burned, nor must they burn any of the straw left over after the harvest until after they have a special ceremony (bah yoe pyeh-eu). They also must not pull up any paddy plants while they are growing. Also they must not whistle or clap their hands in a paddy field. This goes back to their legend about getting paddy seed from the dragon. I asked what ceremonies would be carried out if there were such an offense, and K-28 and K-29 said they had never heard of anyone making those particular offenses.

They must never cook and eat a crab in a paddy field. This may be based on their legend about getting God's book. And anyone who has just handled a chicken nest (ya gui) must not work that day in the paddy fields. If they did, the leaves of the paddy plants would get all entwined and twisted around each other (ceh pa bah bah la-eu). This is because the chicken nests are made of the curly fine strips of bamboo left over from making bamboo strips (a ne). They are afraid that just as these shavings are all twisted tighter, this would pass onto the paddy field.

If there should happen to be a landslide (mi bya bya-eu) in the paddy field during the growing season, they must make propitiation (mi bya ca-i-eu). This is the common time for landslides, since they come towards the end of rains, just as the paddy is getting up to a fair height. If the landslide occurs after the paddy has been harvested, and before they plant paddy for the next year, they do not need to do this.

What they do for this ceremony differs from region to region. P-3 feels that it must be a pig, but K-8 and K-26 and others, say that a red rooster is sufficient. They kill the animal used, cook it, and drop a piece of meat from each member (ti she ti jeh) onto the place where the landslide was. While doing this they say, 'We are offering to the landslide. Don't let the soul of the paddy run away. May there be a lot of paddy. After this, don't ever let there be another landslide'.

Next they take some strips from a plant (a gah) which they use to make handles for their brooms, and stick them into the ground just above where the landslide broke away, in a criss cross fashion, as if it were a fence. This is to keep the dirt from sliding down any more. They also throw some metal droppings (shm ce) into the fissure caused by the landslide. These are crude bits of metal found around the blacksmith's workbench. They call the doing of these two things bya yah tsah-eu), since they feel it is connected with the great dragon (bya yah).

If when they are felling a tree it falls into a field (law u-eu) where paddy is growing, they must sacrifice a pig at the field spirit hut (k'm pi ca-eu). This is not true if a tree should fall into a cotton or cornfield, but only paddy, since this wrongs the spirit owner of the paddy. After cooking the meat, they drop onto the ground, near the field spirit hut, a bit of meat from each member and eat the rest. This is to keep the whole paddy from being ruined. Some just kill and burn (ya za pui nm-eu) a chicken for this, which they take home to eat. 'It depends on the customs of the area, and the seriousness of the offense'.

If an animal, any animal, should knock over the field spirit hut before rice harvest, the owner of the field must offer a pig (a small sow will do), at the field spirit hut. When offering it he says, 'We are offering this to the field spirit hut. Don't let the soul of the paddy run away'.

If the ears of the paddy plants are not good, but tend to be dried up (yaw ko ko-eu), then they take a very small chicken and burn it up in the field hut, while telling the paddy to become good (ya ci dzah-eu, or, je mi she-eu). People do not eat any of the chicken meat, but burn it all up.

If something too bad happens, the soul of the paddy will flee (ka la ba-i-eu). They believe this is much like the soul of the person fleeing, and in the same general way it must be called back (ka la ui-eu). The soul of the paddy fled, they do not call it back right away. They wait until about the end of December, when the crop has been harvested and threshed. It may even be that the owner will not be aware of one of the above mentioned tragedies having taken place, but when he harvest his crop, he finds it is much less than it should be, and so then he will know that the soul had fled. He too will perform the ceremony to call the soul back (ka la ui-eu).

This is what they do. The owner of the field will call a shaman. The shaman will come about nine in the morning. The owner of the paddy will have a pre-ceremonial feasts (shi ne ti-eu) for him. The owner provides the following animals for sacrifices: one duck, one pig, and two chickens (both sexes represented). While the shaman and his helper are taking the animals up to the village gate, the owner of the paddy field will go out with his carrying basket (k'a jo) and cut a few remaining stalks of paddy, which he purposely left for this time. He puts them inside the basket and returns to the village gate, where he stands outside. The shaman is in the gate, with the animals that he has killed lying on the ground in the middle of the path. He repeats spirit incantations that go like this: 'Soul of the paddy don't run away. Soul of domesticated animals and soul of planted things, don't run away'.

When the shaman is finished with the spirit incantations, usually around three or four in the afternoon, they go back to the home of the owner, with the sacrifices, and have another feast. But before they feasts on the sacrifices, all the animals are cut in half, and half is put aside as the shaman's meat (pi sha). He will not eat it all by himself, of course, but will divide it with his helper (a dzaw) and the elders of his village.

6. Guarding against pests

They have two general methods of getting rid of the pests in their paddy fields: the magical and the practical.

a. Magical:

There are three ceremonies each year that they perform as a village, plus the figure of a cat they can make individually.

1) Catching an insect

(k'o shi k'o na nyeh-eu). Exactly three cycles of days after they have planted their paddy they have this ceremony. The village priest keeps track of the time. The whole village does it on and same day, and they have ceremonial abstinence (lah-eu) on the next day. (Note: just three cycles of days after this, they must catch the white grubs. And just three cycles of days after that they have the 'yeh ku dza' ceremony.

For this ceremony, they go out and catch any kind of insect or bug (a maw) they find in their paddy field. They bring it back to the outside of the village gate. They cut a stake, and drive it into the ground. Each household has its own stake. They cut a slit in the side which faces their paddy fields, about half-way between the top and the bottom. Then they wrap upon the insect or bug which they got in their paddy field, in a banana leaf. They wrap it very tightly, killing it as they do. Then they tie the leaf firmly. Next they force that down into the slit while saying, 'We have caught the bug of death and sickness'. This means death and sickness to the paddy crop. By doing this they believe they keep the insects from eating the paddy, and they also keep the paddy from having any kind of disease.

2) Catching the grub

(boe g'o nyeh-eu) They perform this ceremony when their rice is about three or four inches high, which is the time when the white grubs (boe g'o) do so much damage. The evening before they go out to catch the grubs, the village priest will call out that the next day they must go out to catch the grubs. It must be 'monkey day' (myo nah) when they go to catch them.

The next morning each household goes to open of the paddy fields it has planted and digs up a grub. They bring these back to the village gate where each household cuts a stick, anywhere from three to five feet long, and drives into into the ground. This time the slit they make is near the top of the stake. Then they wrap the grub in a banana leaf, and force it down into the slit, killing it as they do. They say, 'You ate the roots as before, now try eating the head (top) for a while!' They believe that this cuts down the number of grubs in their fields. If they are still bothered by them later, they may repeat the ceremony. I have heard of one village that did it three times in one season. On the next day, the whole village must observe ceremonial abstinence.

3) Catching the grasshoppers

(nyeh bah nyeh-eu) This is done about the time the paddy crop is just getting ready to harvest, a time when grasshoppers can do a great deal of harm. Again the village priest will announce the day when the whole village must go out and catch a grasshopper. This will also be done on 'monkey day'. As written above, each family will go to their own paddy field and catch a grasshopper. They bring it back to the outside of the gate, where they cut a stick.

4) Making a cat

(a mi maw kaw dzeu-eu) This is not done as a village, but is done individually when a person is having a lot of trouble with rats and mice in his paddy field. he will take nine stalks of paddy and make a representation (maw kaw) of a cat with them. Then he ties this up in his field hut, or sometimes near the path that comes into the paddy field. Go back to China (if they are living in Burma they will say this, but if they are living in China they will say, 'Go back to Burma').

b. Practical

They set traps at the edge of the field, especially as the crop is coming on. They also make things to flutter in the wind to keep birds away, although they admit they are not good very long, because the birds get wise to them.. They usually make them from the brownish paper-like sections near the base of a bamboo stem (za lo).

They also make clappers out of split bamboo (ja paw deh-eu). They will cut a length of bamboo, (about eighteen to twenty two inches long) in half, and join it at the top. They hang these about in various sections of a large field attached to long strings which connect at the field hut. Someone stays in the hut and pulls (g'eu-eu) the strings to the clappers when birds or rodents start to come into the area. If it is a small field, they just hold the two pieces in their hands and clap them together. It makes a very loud noise.

When the paddy is coming on they have lots of trouble with monkeys, wild boars, samber deer and bears. So to keep them out they make a device (bah meh deu-eu) which scares them away. It is made of a fairly large log, with one end scooped out so that water can come into it. Then they balance it near a stream in such a way that as the water comes down into the trough, it gets so heavy that it swings down. As it swings down it loses the water, and thus swings up again. As it swings up the other end is fixed so that it hits on a log- or anything that will make a loud noise. If they have enough water, they may have two or three of these in a field, and the combination of sound and action keeps the animals out. Except for the monkeys. After two or three days of this they begin to get wise and start coming in again. So the best thing for them is to shoot them with crossbow or gun.

HARVESTING AND THRESHING

1. New rice offering

(g'o do caw-eu) Described in Volume 1.

2. First reaping

(yeh daw daw-eu) Described in Volume 1.

3. New rice meal

(ceh nm yu dza-eu) Described in Volume 1.

4. Reap the paddy

(ceh yeh-eu) When the above mentioned ceremonies are finished, they each go to their fields and cut (yeh-eu) the paddy, on any day. They use a small sickle (yeh k'o) for this. They grasp a handful of paddy stalks in their left hand, and then cut them with their right, about four to six inches from the ground. After they have cut three or four such handfuls of paddy their hand is full of stalks. So they take one stalk and tie it around these (g'o dzah dzah-eu), and lay this onto of the cut stalks. This is to keep the newly cut paddy from resting on the ground. Often when they harvest there are rains which beat the paddy into the ground if it is not fixed like this.

5. Put into stacks.

(ceh bym ba-eu) This is done after the fields have all been cut. They must not, however, do it on 'sheep day' (yaw nah). Apart from that, it can be done on any day. There is no ceremonial abstinence involved.

They choose the most level spot they can find to make the piles on. before they pile the harvested paddy on the ground, they put quite a bit of straw on the ground to protect it. There will be anywhere from five to fifteen stacks in a single field, depending on the size of the field and the fertility of the soil.

6. Prepare a threshing site

(ceh bym sa k'aw deh-eu) if the stack of paddy sheaves is on quite a level area, they do not need to do this. But usually it is on a steep hillside slope, so they need to dig out an area large enough to put down a mat (gaw pu) usually about five by seven feet in size. There are some places where it is too difficult to dig out such an area, so they put some poles in the side of the mountain, put a bamboo woven frame (ka te) on those, and then the mat on top of that (ceh bym sa k'aw sheu geu-eu).

After they have put the mat down at the stack which is nearest to the field spirit hut, they also put a fan (baw seu) that they will use in their winnowing, as well as in a basket (k'a pu) they will put the paddy into when they are finished. they are then ready for the next step.

7. Initial threshing, by foot

(ceh naw daw-eu) They must do this on an auspicious day for their household. The man and woman of the house must refrain from having intercourse the night before and the night after they do it. For the most part they say they must not do it on 'monkey day' or 'sheep day', although if either of these days is auspicious for that household, they can do it on that day.

The man of the house will go to the paddy field with a tightly woven carrying basket (k'a jo) on his back. But this time he will not use the wooden yoke (paw kui) band (k'a myeh) or a man's legging (kui taw) with which to carry it. in the basket he will carry the following banana leaf packages: holy rice (with an egg in it), tea leaves, and fermented rice. On the way to the field he will cut a pole (ceh bym u k'eu, ceh bym sa k'eu) to hold onto when he first threshes the paddy. This is made from a special tree (pu k'a) by some, or by bamboo by others- although the A jaw clan feels that bamboo is not proper for this.

When the man arrives at the stack of paddy nearest the field hut he takes the hat (ceh bym u k'o yu dzeh-eu) off. Then he opens the three banana leaf packages and puts them on top of the stack. He next breaks the egg he has in the package with the holy rice, using the stick he has brought to break it. The egg is boiled. he breaks of a little and drops some of the egg on the stack three times. The he lets some of the fermented rice fall on the stack, and then some tea leaves. They consider this giving this liquor and tea to the paddy to drink. last of all he gives a drink of water to the stack.

When he is finished with that, he takes a little of each of the things in the packages (still on top of the stack of paddy) puts them on one hand, although not mixed and then goes over to the mat they will use for the threshing and rubs the items onto the mat one at a time. Some of them make a trip back and forth with each item. They give a drink of water to the mat too.

They then repeat this procedure with the stick they hold onto (ceh bym u k'eu). Then they do it to the fan (baw seu), and last of all to the basket (k'a pu).

Next he takes three handfuls of the paddy stalks from that stack and throws them down onto the mat. Then, while holding onto the stick, he rubs the paddy kernels loose with this feet (naw daw-eu).

8. Opening the rice stacks

(ceh bym peh-eu) After they have done the above, usually the afternoon of the same day, the head of the household and one other man go around to the other stacks in the field, and get three stalks from each stack. They bring those to the first stack and again rub them with their feet to thresh them. While doing this they call out: 'Expand, increase!' (Jeu-eu, jeu-eu). Then they leave that paddy there.

Next one of them takes a leaf, which can be from any tree, and plants it on the ground under the stick they hold onto while threshing. Then he takes some of the paddy that has been threshed, which is still on the mat, and throws a little onto the leaf (tsi ka-eu) three times, while saying, 'I'll give this to the ground', (Mi gah shaw te). Next he will take the fan and scoop up some paddy with it and dump it into the carrying basket (k'a jo). he does this three times. Finally he re-wraps the banana leaf around the holy rice and what is left of the egg, and goes back home with them. he leaves the other two leaves there. When he gets home he puts the re-wrapped leaf up over the fireplace on the woman's side. Then that night the family gathers together and eats it as ancestor offering food.

9. Beat thresh the paddy

(ceh di-eu) When the above ceremonies are all finished, they get down to threshing the paddy in earnest. they use, for the most part, a doglegged stick (di ma), and beat the heads of a stack of paddy they have put on the mat. Often they have two lines of stalks on either side of the mat, with the heads pointing toward the central area of the mat, where the man walks up and down beating the paddy. Often there will be two men at either end of the same mat. Evidently there are some men who only use their feet to thresh paddy (K-29).

During this time there are certain taboos that they have. They must not step over the stick they placed in the ground, or they fan, or the basket in which to carry the paddy home, or the spot on the mat where they rubbed the special food. If they do any of those things, they must burn a little chick (ya za pui nm-eu).

10. Winnow the paddy

(ceh baw-eu) They can start on this any day. Actually they usually start doing it the moment they are finished threshing a stack.

CARRYING TO THE PADDY HOUSE

After the paddy has been threshed, they put it in their field hut. if their field hut is not large enough, they will put it in temporary shelters (ceh ji she ku) in their field or in the jungle close to the field. They generally do not leave paddy in them more than nine or ten days. Sometimes if their paddy field is a long way from their village, they will carry their threshed paddy about half way home, and then make a kind of dump of it (ceh pi ti ti-eu).

In some areas of the State, where they are not bothered with thieves and such, the whole village will often go together and build some secondary paddy houses in an area roughly mid-way between their fields and their village (ceh ji dzah dzah-eu). They try to get their paddy into these as soon as they can after threshing, especially to guard against fire and rain.

When they are ready to bring the threshed paddy back to the village, they sometimes find that spirits take part of it. K-28 told of a man from his village who had about 150 loads (300 baskets) of paddy threshed and ready to carry to this house. But one night spirits whisked a large proportion of it away. they were sure it was spirits since there were no footprints in the area. The man went right to a shaman who repeated spirit incantations for him. When he went back the next day, the paddy was all there.

When they carry their paddy back to the village, they have to be very careful still to protect it. No rice in any form must ever fall into a river or stream.. if it does, that person will not get enough to eat that year. When I asked P-1 about this once, as to why they did it, he said, 'I don't know why we do it, but one of the earliest recollections I have of my childhood is the elders warning us children never to spill paddy or rice in a river or stream'.

Also, others have to be careful when a man is harvesting and bringing in his paddy. If I see a man, for example, coming back from his paddy field with his carrying basket full of paddy, I must not touch that basket, nor must I run my fingers through his paddy to see if it is good or not. if I should do either of those things, my own paddy would want to go into person's paddy, and my crop would be greatly decreased. It is perfectly alright to ask him about his rice crop, and even to just glance at the paddy in the basket in passing. But I must not stare at it or bend over to get a better look at it. Also I must not climb up to have a look in his paddy house to see his paddy. However, after I have carried all of my paddy and put it into the paddy house, then I can finger his paddy, look at it etc.

The following ceremonies are followed in connection with bringing the paddy home to the paddy bin.

1. Covering the paddy house shrine

(si ma u g'm sheh ceh-eu). The paddy house has a shrine (si ma u g'm), which is to the paddy house much what the ancestor altar (a poe paw law) is to the house. There are some who erect a little structure right by the paddy house in which to put this shrine, while others put it directly in the paddy house. If the shrine is in the paddy house, it means that only males and women who have carried out the post-menopause ceremony (ya yeh a ma) can take paddy out of the paddy house to pound it. Since it is usually girls who pound it, this can be quite a bother, so usually they make the little structure outside.

Those who erect the structure for the shrine (ceh ji si ma u g'm tso-eu) put four posts into the ground. They are high enough so that cows and buffaloes cannot get to the food that will be placed there. The altar part itself is made one cubit square, and enclosed on the back and side (all with woven bamboo). There is sloping roof of thatch on it. They must erect it on an auspicious day, and the mother and father of the house must refrain from intercourse the night before and the night after erecting it.

Before any paddy from the fields can be poured into the paddy bin, however, they must cover the shrine with paddy (si ma u g'm sheh teh-eu). This is what they do. The man of the household takes three branches of a certain type of tree (si ma) with three leaves to each branch. He puts these one the bottom of the little altar platform, if that is where they are going to have their shrine. Or he puts it on the floor of the paddy house, if that is where they are going to have their shrine. On top of those leaves then he puts the following: banana leaf packages, holy rice (but without an egg this time) fermented rice, tea leaves, and one raw egg, but this is not in a leaf. The egg is the important part of the shrine. Over all of these a cut gourd (that is the top part has been cut off) is inserted. When they bring the first paddy that has been threshed from the field, they pour that over the gourd until it is covered (sheh teh-eu).

They can maintain this one shrine for as long as three years, if the gourd is in good shape and protects the things under it. But by the fourth year they must change the egg, 'since it is just a shell by that time'.

K-28 said that since he was the village priest, and always took the paddy out of the paddy house anyway, they had their shrine in the paddy house. Also, if there is a woman who has performed the post-menopause ceremony in the household, they have no option- they must have a shrine in the paddy house, rather than build a little structure.

2. Dumping the first paddy

(ceh ji k'a teh-eu) This is only done by those who make the little covered altar for the shrine near the paddy house. This too must be done on an auspicious day for the family, and the father and mother must refrain from sexual intercourse, both the night before and the night after doing it. The man of the house (or any of his sons) must do it.

This is what they do. When they have completed number one above, and are ready to carry paddy in from the fields he will take the first load into the paddy house and dump it in a corner on the upper side calling 'Jeu-eu, jeu-eu' as he does so. Then later girls, or anyone can put paddy in.

3. Completion of harvest

(bah yoe pyeh-i-eu). This ceremony must also be done on an auspicious day for the household, and the mother and father must refrain from intercourse the night before and the night after. It is something they must do after all of the paddy is in the paddy bin, and before new years time. If they have not done it and New Year comes around, they must do it on the first day of the New Year ceremony.

What they do is this. The man of the house will take nine of the banana packages (pa cu g'oe cu). Three have holy rice, three have fermented rice, and three have tea leaves. He also takes three small branches, with the leaves intact, of a type of tree (pu k'a) as well as three sections from a branch of the same kind of tree.

When he gets to the village gate, he puts down on the ground one of each of the packages. he takes the small branches with leaves on them and sticks one each in the packages pointing back toward their home. He then sticks one each of the larger sections in the direction of the field he is going to.

When he gets to the edge of the field he is going to, he clears his throat loudly (eh heh ka-eu). This is to scare away the spirits and to keep him from seeing any bad omen (daw). Also it 'makes God look'. he goes into the field, to the area above the field spirit hut where all the paddy has not been harvested yet. He then pulls of almost all of the remaining paddy, but he leaves three stalks near each other, with the paddy still on them.

When he is finished with this, he goes to the three stalks that are left, and puts down three branches of the type of tree mentioned above (si ma), with three leaves on each one. They are placed in a star shape around the base of the plants. He also puts three of the banana leaf packages that he has still in his carrying basket (one of each), at the base of the three plants, as well as a boiled egg.

Then he ties up the three stalks, using leaves from the nearby paddy plant. he ties two places: one quite low and one near the top. At the point where he ties the top one he also ties the remaining three banana leaf packages. Then he cuts the stalk between the two tied places with this sickle, and puts the top section still with the banana leaf packages still tied to it, into his carrying basket.

After doing the above, he then very carefully and slowly slides out the egg that he but in at the base of the stalks. He does it so that heaven will not see. He puts that egg (bah yoe pyeh-eu ya u) into his carrying basket, and takes it back to the village priest to eat, or to share with the elders. (Note: children must not eat this egg. If they did they would get short of breath 'sa li li-eu').

They take the top part of the three paddy plants that are tied together and put into the carrying basket. They take it back to the paddy house, where they tie it up inside, just below the roof. They just leave it there. Of course eventually it will fall down, but they say it is alright. They must not take it down.

From this time until the next ceremony, the paddy houses are closed. This means that for a month or two they will not be able to take any paddy out. So they will have to put a supply of paddy in their house to last during that period.

4. Opening of the paddy house

(ceh ji tsi-eu) This is done anywhere from four to seven weeks after the above ceremony. After it has been done they can start taking the paddy out.

They say the custom was taught to them by the lord dragon (bya yah sah pa). They must repeat the words the dragon originally taught them. Each household does it on a propitious day. For those who have constructed a little shelter for their paddy house shrine near the paddy house, this is what they do. The man or son of the house will carry a carrying basket (k'a jo) with the following banana leaf packages in it: holy rice (with an egg), fermented rice and tealeaves. They must cover the basket with a silk jacket (a baw Ja deh peh k'ah). When he gets to the little shelter for the shrine, he takes off his carrying basket, puts it on the ground, and then takes out the three packages. He puts them on the platform of the shrine, opening as he does so.

Next he breaks open the boiled egg that was with the holy rice, using anything he wants to break it, and mixes a little of the egg with some of the holy rice in its banana leaf. (Note: this is cooked sticky rice). Then he drops three pinches of this mixture onto the platform of the shrines shelter. He next re-wraps what is left of the egg and sticky rice, and puts it back into his carrying basket. He leaves the other two leaves where they are (with the fermented rice and the tea leaves).

Then he will put some of the paddy that is in this altar (which he poured in to cover the shrine) into his carrying basket, and take it back home. He takes that out at the house, and comes back for another load. He does the same with that, and returns for a third and final load. This time, however, after he had put the paddy he is going to carry home into this carrying basket, he must take some back out and throw it back onto the shrines altar, doing so three times. This is to feed the shrine. The paddy house is now considered open, and they can start taking paddy out of it.

Where there is a household with a woman who has carried out the post-menopausal ceremony, what they do here is much more elaborate- but they also feel that it is worth it, since it ensures more rice to eat. She will have a carrying basket with the following items in it: a small bamboo section with fermented rice, another section with tea, another section with water, a boiled egg, a banana leaf package with holy rice (including a boiled egg), and three rice cakes (haw tah). Here again a silk jacket will cover the basket opening as she carries it. The others in the family, besides the elders of the village, as well as elders from nearby villages will also go. They will carry a hen in a basket (k'a lo) and will carry a large boar with a basket (k'a lo) tied over its snout.

When she gets to the paddy house she first of all opens the little door and throws in a bit of hemp rope (dzi a ca). This is opening the paddy house door. (ji k'eh pah le-eu). She then takes out of the carrying basket the small bamboo section with the fermented rice in it, and sets it up on the porch (ceh ji pya k'ah) of the paddy house.

While the people in the crowd that came with her hold the hen and the boar, she will ceremonially sprinkle them, and then kill them. She will kill the hen first, by hitting it over the head. For the pig, these women just usually start the killing process, and leave the rest to the men, since they have never done it and are afraid. As long as she makes some kind of jab or stab at the boar, then it is all right for others to finish the job. The body of the hen and boar are then carried into the paddy house and laid on top of the paddy.

The woman will next retrieve the bamboo section with the fermented rice in it on the porch, and stick it into the paddy, along with the bamboo sections of tea and water. Also she will put three rice cakes, along with the boiled egg, on a banana leaf on the paddy.

Next she will put out some of the feathers of the hen, first from the tail, next on the wing, and last the head, and drop them each time on the paddy, in the general direction of the paddy house shrine (which of course is hidden under all the paddy). She does this three times. While doing it she says something like, 'Let us always be able to get enough rice out of the paddy bin. Let there always be enough food to eat'. She next pulls some bristles from the boar (rear end, foreleg, head) and drops them on the paddy, doing this three times. While doing this she is still calling down a blessing on the paddy house and paddy.

She next breaks open the egg, usually with a wooden stick made to stir up the rice when cooking it (haw ceh da la). She breaks off a little and drops it on the paddy while continuing the blessing. She drops three bits of egg on the paddy. Then she breaks off three pieces of the rice cakes in the same way. After that she gives the paddy the three things to drink, but pouring just a little on the paddy in the following order: liquor (liquid from the fermented rice), tea and water. (Note: all of these are offered in the same general spot as above, that is, over where the shrine is).

Next she will call some young men to tie the two baskets they used up on the rafters of the paddy house, about in the middle. They are then finished with the things to be done inside the paddy house. The woman (ya yeh a ma) then goes out onto the porch of the paddy house to the basket that has the paddy in it which is being saved as seed for next years crop. (Note: the basket is called k'a dah). She takes the banana leaf package that has holy rice and an egg in it out of the carrying basket. She opens the package, and takes the boiled egg out. She cracks it, breaks off three pieces, mixes them with a little of the sticky rice, and drops them onto the seed paddy. While doing this she says, 'Paddy seed, be pure'. Then she re-wraps the rest of the egg and rice and puts it back in the basket. She takes this home, where she serves it to the members of the home, elders and friends as ancestor offering food (a poe law dza).

Finally she takes a small basket like affair woven of bamboo (haw gah) and scoops some paddy into the basket (k'a jo) used for carrying paddy. After she has put this in, she puts the two banana leaf packages on top, which she takes out first when she gets back to the house, and puts up on the frame over the fireplace on the woman's side. The elders come with them, as well as the young men carrying the boar and the hen. Before the boar can be cut open though she first of all must stick a new bamboo tube of fermented rice into the dirt in the fireplace on the man's side of the house. The elders will suck some of the liquid present in the bottom of this and say, 'Oh it is surely delicious'. The elders then take the liver out of the boar and examine it (za pi haw-eu), although on this occasion they will let the woman (ya yeh a ma) look first. Everyone will say, when they see it, 'Oh it's good', whether it really is good or not. Then the liquor is given to the elders who have looked at the liver. The meat from the boar and hen are also cooked for a feast.

The woman goes again to the paddy house and gets another load of paddy. The amount she will actually put into the carrying basket will depend on how many people there are in the house as well as how much strength she has. She takes that to the house, and then comes a third time to the paddy house. This time after she has put paddy into her carrying basket, she takes out three pinches (tsi) and drops this into the basket like affair woven of bamboo (haw gah) she has been using to take the paddy out. She then throws that paddy back into the paddy house. They consider this giving some paddy back to the paddy house altar. She then carries the load of paddy back. No one else in the household must carry paddy that day. The next day they may. When she gets back they have a feast, with the woman (ya yeh a ma) taking the first bite.

TERRACED FIELDS

For those Akhas who make terraced fields, there appears to be only one religious custom they have connected with it, and that is clearly borrowed from the Shans. The Akhas call it offering to the ditch (ui k'eh law-eu). The Akhas differ in the way they do it, depending on how they have seen the Shans and Mon-Khmer do it in their area, partly. But the general procedure is this.

They go to the place where the ditch that takes water to their terraced fields runs out of the stream. They take a rooster and hen with them. They first of all ceremonially sprinkle the rooster. Then they pull feathers out of the rooster (leg, wing, head) and drop them on the ground at the juncture of ditch and stream. They do this three times. Then they kill the rooster and let his blood flow into the ground there. Then they put the poster to one side. Next they take the hen and do exactly as they did to the rooster. Then they build a little crude altar (ja gui) at that juncture. It is only about six or eight inches above the ground, with four posts, and the actual platform part made of woven strips of bamboo.

While some are building the little altar, others have been cooking the rooster and hen, in one pot. When the altar is finished they take out the banana leaf packages and open them on the altar. Then they put a piece from each member into a dish. The leader of the group will take these bits of meat and drop them on the altar as he says, 'Oh, lords of the earth and water (mi sah cu sah), we offer you this. After this let the ditch be real good. Don't let the ditch break down. Make the paddy good.'

Then they eat the chicken curry they have made, along with rice of course. They must not take any of it home. However there are some Akhas, especially those who have taken on the Shan religion, who will take some of the meat home. But for the most part, they join with the Shans and use a pig for this ceremony.

It should be noted that even when Akhas make only the terraced fields (as K-29's father), they must always have a small plot of paddy up on the hillside where they can have a spirit hut. They do all of the old Akha customs at that, but actually get all of their rice seeds, and often more, from the terraced fields. For those who are planning to make the terraced field, they first of all have to dig the terraced (deh ya) they make the bund of earth (deh bah) so that they will hold enough water in that particular terrace (deh law), but not so much that the weight of the water will eventually break down the bund. They have to have overflow spots.

They first of all have to plant in seed beds (ga she-eu), which is something they do not do with the hillside field (ya). Then when it is large enough they take the seedlings (ga) and transplant them in the terraces (ga tso-eu).

OTHER CROPS

As for the other crops that they raise, they do not have all of the complicated ceremonies that they have with rice. They do mark the fields (ya bya –eu), clear them, cut them and burn them in the same way, however. They only time they do anything that might be called a ceremony is when the leaves of the crop dry up and get yellow (a du du mi mi-eu for corn, sa la pa ku pa lu lu la-eu for cotton). To keep this from happening they are very careful not to burn any fields after they have planted their crops. If this should happen they kill a chicken and perform a ceremony (ji mi she-eu) similar to a ceremony they have for paddy when this happens (ceh mi mi-eu).

Along with the three or four fields they plant in paddy, they also plant a very small field of cotton, or they will plant one larger field, half in cotton and half in something else. The same goes with corn and soy beans. They also grow peanuts in fairly large quantities, and enough chilli pepper for their own use. I have not heard of them selling it like the Lahus do.

They plant the following crops in between other things: squash, cucumber, cantelope, pumpkin, tomatoes, ginger, barley (in the north), gourds, and sunflowers. Some of these sunflowers reach an enormous size. They do not plant many potatoes, but partly this is because of the red ants (a ho ne) that eat them. Akhas also plant banana trees, either in their fields, or in their gardens when they have them. Many of them also plant sugar cane, although not nearly as much as the Shans plant. Some Akhas who had lived in China under the Communists (K-16, K-17) told how they had been forced to grow wheat two years in a row. Since it was a failure both times the Communists did not force them to grow it again. But one of the men said he had seen wonderful wheat growing in the Loi Hpalin area when he travelled up there. He felt their soil or climate was not quite right.

Not many Akhas have gardens. Sometimes it is a matter of finding an area in which to make it. Sometimes it is from a lack of understanding of the value of a garden. Those who do not have gardens raise such things as greens, beans, onions, and cucumbers. Cow manure is used by some (Na daw) when needed. Corn is one of the main crops they cultivate for animal feed. They also grow caladium for their pigs. There are four kinds that are the most popular: bym ma dza b ym, bym ma nyeh dzah, bym ma a yaw, bym ma dao. The first two kinds are also eaten by the Akhas. They do not try to store it for long periods, but dig it up as they need it. For the corn they will leave it drying in the house, somewhere not too far from the fire if possible, and up fairly high.

OPIUM

They try to plant opium on a hillside that is high enough to get dew, but not too high, since they do not get such a good crop. They plant in late October or early November. Then they harvest it in three months. When they harvest it, they make dual slits on three sides of the pod on one day, and then on the next day they collect what has oozed out with a broad bladed knife.

TOBACCO

There is a small leaved kind they plant in June, and can harvest in about two months. They must weed it at least twice. There are two kinds that they plant after the rive harvest. They can pluck these leaves in about one month. After they pluck the leaves, they shred them. They do this by rolling up several leaves together as tightly as they can, and then slicing off thin strips with a machete. The shredded leaves are then sunned until dry. They say it is not good to smoke unless some dew has fallen on it. They do not sell it much, but if they happen to have a surplus crop, they may sell some at a fairly cheap price to either Akhas or Lahus in the area.

INDIGO

There are some who plant a little indigo (Na daw) who plant a little indigo, but the growing conditions have to be just right. For the most part they buy it from the Shans (as in the Meung Yang area). In areas (as Meung Yang) where the villages are lower, they plant enough for their own needs, and do not buy it from others.

FOOD PROCESSING AND CONSUMPTION

PRESERVATION AND STORAGE OF FOOD

Akhas often dry meat (sha ko ko-eu) from their hunting. They cut the meat they are going to dry into thin strips after rubbing salt into it. During the dry season they hang the strips of meat in the sun to dry. If it is the rainy season, they hang them on the framework over their open fires. Even during dry season, after it has been thoroughly dried in the sun the meat is hung over the fire. This tends to smoke the meat, and also keeps it from spoiling. They do not dry dog meat, since it is not tasty that way they say.

They also follow this drying and smoking process with certain types of fish. There are some areas where they sell dried fish, but not as an important cash crop. The price they get for dried fish is better than pickled fish.

There are several types of fish that they pickle, including hides of buffalo and wild boars. They never pickle dog meat or chicken.

To pickle fish, they mix salt, chilli pepper, and a little cooked rice (haw) with the fish, after having cleaned it thoroughly, and then put the fish into a jar (ci cu) with a special lid, made by the Chinese. The top of the jar has a lip-like arrangement in which water can be kept. The lid fits down into that water, so that there is no way for air to get into it. As long as they keep water in the lip of the jar, and do not open it too often, they can keep pickled fish in it almost indefinitely.

Sometimes they stuff the fish down in a section of bamboo. They then put leaves over the end, and tie them down tightly. Or they make a kind of lid from another bamboo section just a little bit bigger than the one they put the fish in, and ram it down hard to keep it as air tight as possible. They usually use the bamboo sections only in cold season, since any other time the fish tend to rot before they are pickled. Also they do not use fish that have been killed by a hand grenade or by poison for pickling, since those kinds spoil much faster than those caught in a trap, a net, or by hand. I have not heard of any Akhas getting sick from eating pickled fish (nga sha ceh).

The way they pickle other types of meat is much the same as pickling fish. Many of them are afraid to eat pickled pork, for fear they will get sick from it, and often those who do eat it get sick.

FOOD PREPARATION

To Akhas the all important food is rice. To prepare it for eating, they first must take some paddy out of the paddy house. This should be done by a man, or a woman who has performed the post-menopausal ceremony (ya yeh a ma), if the rice is to be used for a ceremony. Anyone can take it for daily meals. Who ever takes it out always throws back three little handfuls after having taken what is needed. This is for the paddy altar (si ma u g'm).

They often dry the paddy in the sun (ceh law-eu); especially right after the harvest, and any time it might be damp or need to be dried. This is so it will pound well without getting broken up.

After sunning it they pound it. But there are only certain times of the day they can pound it. In the morning until they eat their morning meal (roughly 8 a.m.) they can pound it. And in the evening from 3 or 4 p.m. until dark. They have this regulation from their ancestors, they say, and feel it is binding on them. Part of the reason for this ban is that to pound paddy in the day would seem to be pounding paddy for someone who had died. (shi ceh tah-eu).

Also there are certain days when they cannot pound paddy. If anyone in the village should die, unless it was a new birth and not named yet, no one must pound paddy that day. Also, on the day of the funeral no one must pound paddy. When they do start pounding paddy after these breaks, it does not matter who starts pounding it.

I asked some Akhas what would happen if soldiers or the like should come through their village and force them to pound paddy on a day when they should not, or at a time of day when they should not pound it. They said that they would go ahead and pound it for them, but the sin (i ba) would be upon the person who forced them to pound it. They personally would escape any harm.

One part of pounding the paddy is winnowing it. The girls do this, whereas both girls and boys help operate the foot operated pounder. There are two parts to the winnowing: the first stage (k'a pui je-eu) is done with a winnowing tray with small holes in it (pui je). This is to separate the outside husk of the paddy, and leave the rice grains, and inside softer husk. The second step (za shaw-eu) is done with a winnowing tray without holes in it (za ma), and separates the rice grains from everything else.

The pounded rice (ceh pyu) is kept in a woven container (ceh pyu sa bah) until it is cooked. In preparing the rice for cooking they wash it (nyeh tsi-eu), but I am not sure whether this is before they soak it or after, or both.

Then they soak the rice they will cook the next day overnight (ceh dui dui-eu). The next day they put the soaked rice into the rice steamers (haw sa bah) and begin to cook it. When it is fairly well done, they take it off the fire and whiten it (haw ceh pyu-eu). They use a wooden plank (haw tah) for this. They sprinkle water on the partly cooked rice to get it to soften and become well done.

When that is finished, they put the rice back into the steamer (haw sa bah) and steam it until it is ready to eat.

Often old men in general, and opium smokers in particular are very exacting about how they want their rice fixed. So often they fix their own rice to please themselves. The father of P-2 was a perfect example.

When camping in the jungle, Akhas will usually use bamboo section (haw, dzaw, baw, law) in which to cook their rice. they cannot fix it just exactly like they want it, but this is much easier than carrying a lot of utensils around.

They prepare the curries they eat in various ways, according to what they put in their curries, and according to how they like their curries fixed. The most common way of fixing curries is to: fry (lu-eu); boil (ca-eu); broil on a stick (sha teh); near the fire (g'o ba-eu, pui dza-eu); or wrap in a leaf and prepare it. There are two ways of doing the latter: one is to wrap the meat, greens, or whatever it is they are preparing to eat with the rice, in a leaf, and put it at the edge of the fire in some hot coals (m dza-eu). The other is to wrap it in a leaf and boil it (toe pu pu-eu). They generally use the leaf from a certain tree (bui pa) for this.

For foods that have been pickled, they usually fry them before eating, or wrap in a leaf and roast in the coals (m dza-eu).

There are also certain foods they have for snacks between meals. For this they sometimes prepare popped rice (a bo bo-eu) or sorghum (sha lah). In Northern Kengtung State I have heard of some Akhas growing some barley. They pound it, put it into little leaf packages and steam it. They say it is quite good. For those who grow sugar cane, they cut this up in sections and eat between meals. Peanuts are also popular to have for when people come to visit.

Some Akhas eat rotten soybeans that have been prepared into cakes (a ci). They usually only eat it when there is no meat.

The women will take glutinous rice that is not mature (ceh nyaw) and pound it. They then fry it and serve it as a treat. They may do this as many as three or four times in a growing season.

If they have rice left over (haw ga) they often feed it to the animals. If there is some rice they have taken to the field and it is left over (haw cu ga), they bring it back home. The next morning when they cook their morning meal, they will put that rice on top of the new rice that is being steamed, and give it to the dogs to eat. Some Akhas say that people eat this kind too sometimes.

Akhas clean and eat the tripe of game they get (baw u u dza-eu). The one main exception to this is the peafowl. They are afraid that if they eat the gall bladder of the peafowl they will die, so if the gall bladder has been injured in any way they will not eat the peafowl at all. If the gallbladder is completely intact, they will take that out and eat the meat and the rest of the tripe.

There are certain meats that Akhas eat raw. Perhaps the favourite is pork, and it is eaten this way most often at weddings and other special ceremonies. They cut out chunks of red meat without any bone (sha ji sha ne), and chop it up real fine (sha byeh byeh byeh-eu), while mixing various types of herbs in it for taste. Then they mix blood from the animal killed with this and form it into little balls. When they eat this they usually drink as well.

Besides pork they also prepare raw meat in the above manner from: buffalo, goat, cow, barking deer, and samber deer.

Akhas prepare bamboo shoots for eating by: soaking them, or pickling them, or boiling them. Since one type is bitter (a k'a), when they eat it they eat it along with fruit from a certain type of bush (si k'a la ma), and then they say it is not bitter at all.

They have a way of preparing the leaves of the caladium plant for eating. They tear the leaf up, separating all of the stringy portion out and throwing it away. Then they boil it until it gets soft, and add something that is sour (such as g'aw pa g'aw ceh), and eat it. They say that if they do not prepare it this way, they will get hives from eating it.

There is a type of herblike small tree (ji yaw), which is generally used as pig food. If people eat it they get bad sores around their mouths, and break out with hives. There are some, however, who have learned to cut it up in very small strips and boil it along with some ashes until it is thoroughly done. Then they wash it with their hands (nyeh tsi-eu) carefully and eat it, apparently with no ill effects.

There are large black seeds (a beu), generally used as playthings by children, which can be eaten if they are boiled many times, and then thoroughly washed. This is not done, they are believed to be poisonous.

DIET

Akhas have the following taboos: They do not cook fish from the river and mushrooms together. They will not cook and eat mushrooms that come from logs and mushrooms that come from the ground together. It makes them violently ill they say. Also when they eat watermelon, they do not eat any kind of egg. If they do it they will be poisonous.

They believe that if they fry a cantaloupe-like melon (beh za) and eggs together and eat them, they will die immediately. K29 told of three Shans who had died when they ate this combination.

They like eggs, but sometimes complain that they hardly ever get a chance to eat them.. they sometimes eat them raw, but not too often. Usually they boil or fry them. If they fry them, much like our scrambled eggs, they put in plenty of onions, and sometimes they put an egg in a leaf and roast it in the hot coals. Before roasting it, however, they mark it all around the egg with charcoal so that it will not split open in the fire.

Akhas are known by other tribes as 'the dog eaters'. Actually there are a fair number of Akhas who do not like dog meat, especially among the women. K-16 once had a little that had been carefully cooked with chicken meat, but he has never eaten any since. Some Akhas object to the smell of the meat, although those who eat it say that if it is fried properly there is no odour.

Akha women, usually when pregnant, sometimes eat a type of clay (mi tsa a nah). They are very choosy about which clay they eat. If there is any sand in it they will not eat it. Some Akhas feel it is not right for any one but pregnant women to eat clay, since it becomes an addiction.

EATING

When Akhas go to eat, they do not say, 'I'm going to eat' (Ha dza-i ma), but, 'I'm going to rest' (G'a na ma), since the first is said only after someone has died. Also, when selling meat to neighbors, they do not say, 'Cut off some meat' (Sha ji taw la-aw), since that is said when someone has died. But they say, 'If you want some meat, have some' (Sha ji dza maw na sha ji sha dza la-aw).

Ordinarily they must eat in the house, unless a person has died. then they can eat outside if they want. If they are in the jungle, of course, or performing a ceremony at the gate, they can also eat outside. if they have to kill a domestic animal in the jungle for getting its tail tangled, or if a cow gets its neck stuck in the fork of a branch, or that sort of thing, they bring the meat back to the village, but they must not bring it into the house. They must cook and eat it outside the village, in a special place designated for this.

But there are restrictions on who can eat such 'animal rejects' (je caw). Any woman who is still capable of bearing children must not eat any of such meat. Also, no person can eat the meat from his own animal reject, or from the animal rejects belonging to others in his clan.

DRINKING

Most public drinking of alcoholic beverages is done during the new years feast. Even the women drink at that time. Akhas feel that when women get drunk, they cry. The men often run into things while drunk, and as a result they have swollen foreheads during this period. There is also a fair amount of drinking done during wedding feasts, but this is usually only for one day.

There are often one or two men in a village who are known as heavy drinkers. if they come around to someone's home hoping for a drink, the head of that house will try to hide his liquor (ji ba) so that he will not drink any.

Drinking is connected with many of the religious ceremonies, but usually reserved for the elders at such times. There are also certain fines that are paid by 'setting up drinks' for the elders.

TOBACCO

Tobacco smoking is very common among Akhas of both sexes and all ages. the only thing that seems to cut down the amount of their smoking is when their supply runs out. The man's pipe (gaw lu) is quite different from the woman's (gaw tsui), with a longer stem (gaw teu), and a different type of bowl. Often the elder men will have silver tobacco pipes.

They say they need fertile ground for growing tobacco. There are two qualities of tobacco. By custom the women use the inferior quality.

They sometimes chew tobacco by twisting some of it on the end of a bamboo stick. They believe that chewing tobacco when one has a toothache helps. They also sometimes chew the residue they have in their pipes. They say that this is very satisfying. This residue is also used to kill leeches and certain bugs.

BETEL CHEWING

Betel chewing (lu pa g'o-eu, a g'o g'o g'o-eu) is almost non-existent in some Akha villages, whereas in others it seems that almost all the adults chew. The Loimwe area and north seems to be the area in which the greatest majority of Akhas in Kengtung State tend to chew betel. Some of them mention the help they get from betel when they have a toothache.

For the most part they seem to buy the ingredients for betel chewing from the Shans. In a year they would spend roughly 4 or 5 old coins as a minimum. Some would buy at least twice that much.

OPIUM SMOKING

Many of the Akha men, especially the older men with at least one grown up son, have become addicted to opium. Often it begins because they do not have the proper medicine to control some disease. To the Akhas opium appears to be very effective when smoked during a time when the person was suffering from dysentery or tuberculosis.

Young men usually do not smoke opium before they are married. No girl wants to marry an opium smoker. There are not many women who smoke opium, but when they do it is usually because of chronic illness (as K-2's wife). There are usually not more than one or two older women in a village who smoke opium.

When both the husband and wife smoke opium, it makes for a great deal of hardship for the members of that household. The children especially have to suffer, since they not only do not have enough food to eat, but they have to work hard to get the opium needed for their parents. When it is just the man of the household that smokes it is a little better, but it still means that the wife and children have to scrounge around to find money with which to buy opium.

DWELLINGS

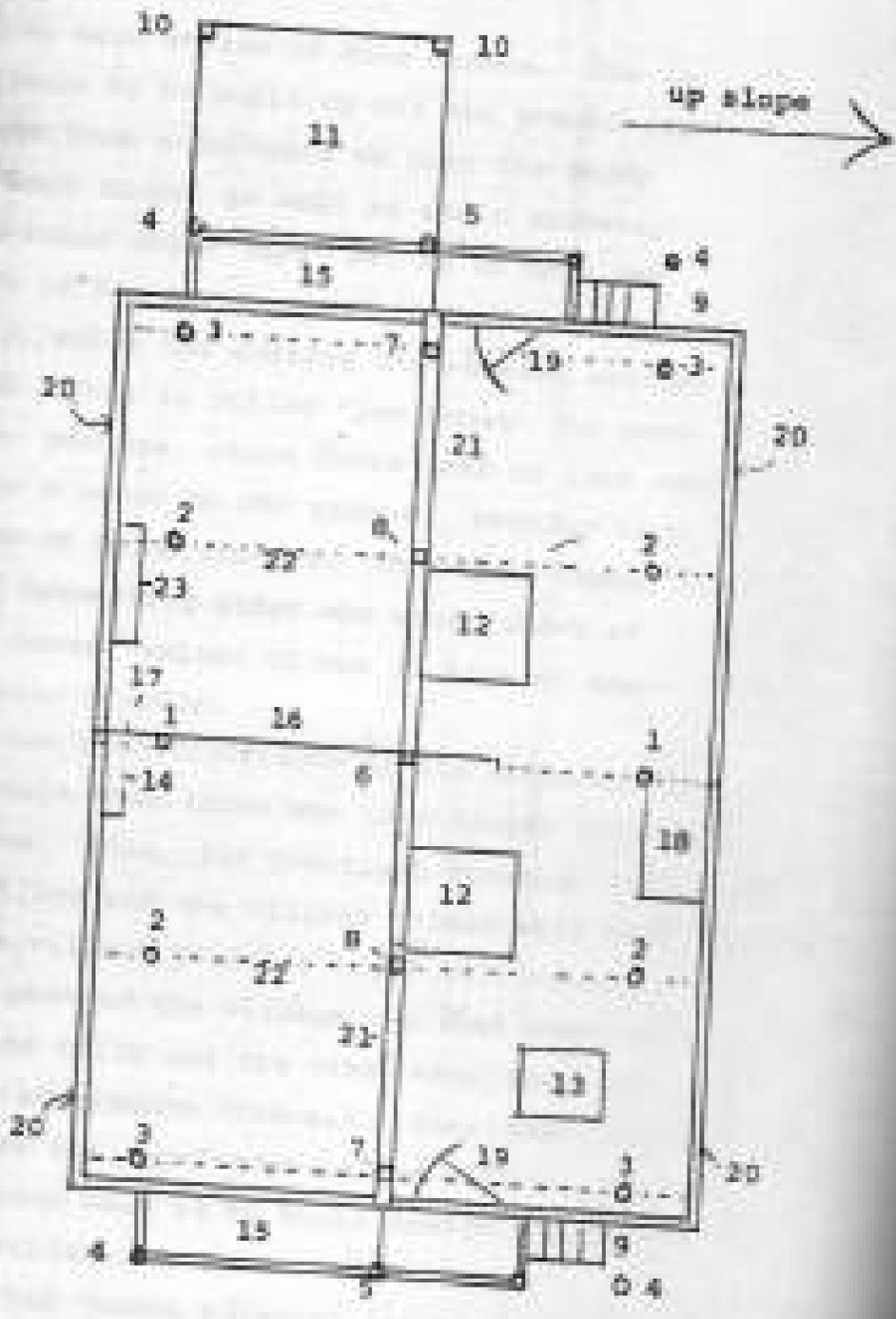
HOUSES

There are two main styles of Akha houses. One is for the whole house to be built up off the ground (nym go), with enough room underneath so that the paddy pounder can be kept there, as well as their animals, tools etc. The other style (nym aw) is to have the sleeping section of the house up off the ground (usually one or two feet), while the cooking and walking section is on the ground. This called 'low house' for more reasons than one, perhaps, since Akhas tend to look down on anyone who has a house on the ground. Usually they are either widows or opium smokers. Certainly there would be no self respecting elder who would think of living in such a house, unless it was in time of emergency, and then only briefly.

There is not too much difference in the structure of the dwellings, except that those who have larger families build larger houses. Also for practical reasons, the headman of the village and the village priest will have large houses. The village priest's house will usually be in the central part of the village, so that everyone can hear him when he calls out the times when they must observe ceremonial abstinence (lah-eu). Sometimes his house will be toward the upper edge of the village, but under no circumstances must it be built toward the lower section of the village.

Those who have had 'human rejects' (tsaw caw), however, must build their houses at the very bottom of the village, after they have come back from their time spent in the jungle. This is considered a disgrace, since they get everyone else's refuse washing down on them. But they must not live 'above' anyone, since they are no longer 'good'.

Alpha House plan



EXPLANATION OF THE AKHA HOUSE PLAN:

1. Main housepost (jm zeu)
2. 'Between' houseposts (ka lo zeu)
3. Corner houseposts (la coe zeu)
4. Porch posts (pya k'ah k'aw zeu)
5. Central porch posts (pya k'ah zeu to)
6. Central post (byoe to mah)
7. End house posts (below the floor zeu to, the floor byoe to to mah)
8. Short under posts (byoe to tseh)
9. Stairs (daw dzm)
10. Posts for uncovered porch (gui ga k'aw zeu)
11. Uncovered porch (gui ga) at a lower level.
12. Fireplaces (tsaw g'o)
13. Fireplace to cook pig's food (tsaw ha) only in the larger houses.
14. Ancestor shrine (a poe paw law)
15. Covered porch (gui ga ceu)
16. Dividing wall (law ka) with the men's side (baw law) on the side of the uncovered porch, and woman's side (nym ma) opposite it.
17. Partition between main post and side wall (jm ka)
18. Shelves for food and utensils above (gui la) water containers below (i geu)
19. Doors (la g'o)
20. Beams that go around the house (tsm tui)
21. Main floor beam (k'aw daw)
22. Floor crossbeams (yeu da)
23. Shelves for goods (gui la)

The houses that Akhas build are not too durable, but they do not intend that they should be, since they know that they will have to be moving on to new houses when: 1) the fertility of the nearby fields wears out from the slash and burn cultivation, or 2) when 'human rejects' are born in the village. Usually the roof of the house made of thatch, is the main part of the structure that needs to be repaired. They figure roughly that a good thatch roof will last two rains without any repair to speak of, but after that it will need repairs each year. They often completely renew the thatch about every seven or eight years, if they are still in the same site that long.

As to the place where they build their homes, each household has a fair amount of say as to where it is, within the lines the village priest (dzoe ma) and headman (bu she) point out to them. They must not build their house outside the village gate (law kah) or in a spot where the shadow of their house would strike, at any time, the village swing (la ceu).

Each one must collect the wood and bamboo he will need for his house. When it comes to bringing the posts in he will share his labor. That is, he will get some men to work for him, and then he will repay them later the same amount of time when they need help.

The women of the household are responsible for the thatch. They go out and cut the thatch, and then carry it to the site of the new house in large bundles on their backs. Then they will call some of their lady friends, and they will make the thatch into shingles (u ji teh-eu).

When all of the materials are ready, and a propitious day (nah mui) comes around for the family that is building the house, the head of the household will call the villagers together and they will build the house. It usually takes two or three days, although I have also heard of smaller houses (as for widows) taking just one day. During the time they are building the house, the household must kill at least one dog to feast them. They have a proverb (daw da) that tells about this, and they feel it is most important that it be carried out.

The householder digs the first hole, or at least starts digging it. It is for the main post (jm zeu). As long as the house is there, this post must never be moved, although if needs be the house could be shifted around and all of the other posts could be set in different places if so desired. The ancestor shrine will be hung on the wall in the woman's side of the house very close to this post. They do not hang other effects on this post, nor do they allow any animals to be tied to it.

When digging the holes, they must never allow a human shadow to fall into the holes. That would bring bad luck. After the householder has dug the hole for the main post (jm zeu). to about the depth of his arm, he sprinkles water into it three times, puts three pinches of rice in it (tsi ka-eu), three pinches of salt, three bits of ginger root and three bits of egg. All of this (ceh law tsi-eu) is to insure good luck. Actually, the bits of egg is just a pantomime. The egg is not broken, since it will also figure in the 'climbing new house ceremony' (nym da da-eu). They put their hand to it and act as if they are breaking off some of the egg and throwing it into the hole.

Before they actually 'plant' the main post (jm zeu) they tie a stem of thatch grass through the hole that has been made for a joist. They never undo this thatch grass, but just leave it there to rot. They do not seem to have any idea why they do this. They consider it a custom handed down by their ancestors that they must not break.

After the main post has been put in, either the house holder or his friends can dig other holes. They next dig holes on either side of the main post for the 'between posts' (ka lo zeu), and then the two holes are dug at the ends for the 'corner posts' (la coe zeu). When finished with these five holes on the down slope side of the house, they then dig five holes for the posts on the opposite side. Smaller poles, and not quite so deep, are dug at either end for the porch posts.

When all the posts are in, they fit the rafters (pya dm) that go the width of the house up on the posts. There are holes in the rafters which fit over projections (byoe du) made on top of the posts. Next, they fit the rafters on that go the length of the building (beh). After that they put the three central posts in (byoe to).

The ones marked number 8 in the drawing are short (byoe to tseh), only coming up to the floor level. The one in the very center, number 6 (byoe to mah), goes all the way up to where the roof will be. The end central posts are also put in, but in two sections. The section from the ground to the floor level (zeu to) supports the post (byoe to to mah) that goes from the floor to the roof.

The ridge pole (byoe cah) is then put on. Then poles (nym nyoe) are laid from that down to the side rafters (beh), to which the thatch shingles will be tied with strips of bamboo (a ne). When these are in place they can begin thatching. The owner of the house will have to tell the men who do the thatching which end of the house will be the men's, since the thatch on the men's side will have to overlap that on the woman's. Later, too, when they put in bamboos and wood, the smaller (u du) end must always point towards the woman's side, while the base (daw peh) points towards the men's side.

For the floor, they put in the floor crossbeams (yeu da), shown by broken lines in the drawing (number 22). Then on top of these poles are laid (yeu keu) and on top of those the split bamboo (za jaw) is laid. On top of everything the very important main floor beam (k'aw daw) is [placed. This divides the house up into two main sections: the sleeping section (k'aw meh paw), and the section where they walk, cook, eat and work (k'aw bi paw). It should be pointed out that there are some Akhas houses, especially when they live in an area with lots of trees, where they either split wood with a machete, or saw wood into planks for their floors. Such homes are the exception however.

Holes are made in the beams that go around the house at the floor level (tsm tui), into which poles are placed. Then the wall is put on that (ka pyaw taw-eu). These walls are also made of split bamboo, but it is usually woven with a very 'large' type of weave. There are no windows in the house, since the thatch comes down almost to the floor anyway.

At either end of the house there is a covered porch (gui ga ceu). A staircase leading up to this (daw dzm) is built up the slope side. It usually has none steps or notches in it or at least an odd number.

On the men's side, beyond the covered porch, is the uncovered porch (gui ga). This is at a lower level than the rest of the house, and is usually made of rough logs placed side by side. They sun things here. The two posts at the corners away from the house (gui ga k'aw zeu) often have a line strung up between them on which they put clothes to dry.

The majority of homes in this area are built up off the ground, although the poorer families sometimes just have the sleeping section built off the ground. It is put on the down slope side of the mountain, and is slightly higher than the cooking and corridor section of the house. But even in this style of house the general construction is the same, except for the fact that there is no flooring on the upper side of the house.

The only inner wall in the house (law ka) is connected with the main post (jm zeu), so that it divides the house evenly. The Akhas have a proverb, 'Before something embarrassing, put a wall. Before a mouth that is laughing, put a hand'. They feel that men and women must have their own rooms. They have said, 'We would be too embarrassed to even talk about it if we did not do this'.

In the house built up off the ground, fireplaces (tsaw g'o) are built in both the men's and women's side. When the house is on the ground, of course, they just make the fire right on the ground. The main function of the fireplace in the woman's side is for cooking the rice and pig's food. In the men's side they cook the curry and make tea. Also, both sides use the fireplaces for warmth, and as centers for social gatherings. The most natural place for a guest to go when he enters someone's home is to the fireplace.

There are several shelves fixed against the wall. The higher ones are for food, cooking utensils, and that sort of thing. Below (i geu) they put their gourds (i pu), and bamboo water containers (i bah).

There is a drying rack over both fireplaces (k'aw ta). They keep tobacco there, along with various things they either want to smoke or dry. They sometimes hang corn there, although for the most part they hang it from the roof poles, but usually in the general vicinity above the fireplace.

The covered porches at either end of the house (gui ga ceu) are very convenient. For one thing they are much brighter and get more breeze than inside the house. The women do much of the actual preparation of cotton for spinning and preparation of food for cooking on the porch. The men also repair their tools and do various things on their porches. When it is raining they do all of this under the protected part, or under the house. But when the sun is not too hot, they will do it on the uncovered porch (gui ga).

In the larger houses they have another fireplace (tsaw ha), which is mainly for cooking food to feed the pigs. It is on the woman's side. Also on the woman's side is the ancestor altar (a poe paw law), which is described below.

On the opposite side of that on the men's side the men hang the skulls of the larger animals they get when they go hunting. They hang them up just as close to the ancestor altar as they can. But they must never hang up more than one skull on the same day. When the animal killed is one of the big four, and they perform the 'sha neh k'eh-eu, they put the branches right into the mouth of the skull. For the skulls of monkeys they shoot, they do not hang them here. They hang them up just under the ridge pole on the men's side. Also on the men's side they usually have shelves (gui la) on which to put their goods.

It is impossible to get accurate figures concerning the typical number of occupants in an Akhas house. The range, however, goes anywhere from one (as widow) to twenty or so.

When the house is completed, they have a 'climbing new house' ceremony (nym da da-eu). The ceremony actually starts in the old house. They boil an egg (nym da ya u) , and then carry it to the new house.. Anyone may carry it.

The man of the house takes some ashes from the old fireplace and wraps them up in a wild banana leaf. He then puts these ashes, along with the ancestor altar, into the ancestor altar basket (a poe paw law pu tu). On top of the basket he ties the three legged metal stand on which they cook (shm kui), and the broom from the old house. Also, the small table on which they make their offerings (a poe law jeh) is tied to the top. Either a man, or a woman who has performed the post menopause ceremony (ya yeh a ma) must carry this basket. They all carry their goods, with friends and neighbors helping them, and set out for the new house.

When they get there the one carrying the ancestor altar basket goes into the house first. He or she unties the three legged metal stand (shm kui) and broom, and puts them where they will be kept in the new house. Then he stands the ancestor shrine basket in the place where it will be kept, on the floor right below the site where the ancestor shrine itself will be hung. He then fixes the ancestor shrine in place, and leaves the house.

Next, the woman of the house, either the grandmother or mother, takes the specially cooked egg (nym da ya u), and goes into the house. After that, the other members of the household follow her in, as well as the village elders and friends. The housewife goes to the men's side (baw law), and squats down by the fireplace. She then takes a wooden paddle they use to stir rice when it is cooking, and cracks the egg. Then she takes off the shell and drops it into the fireplace. She pinches off a little of the egg and drops that into the fireplace too. After that, the family and friends bring all their belongings into the house.

Then three elders will put long, thin bamboo 'straws' down into the bamboo section that contains the fermented rice (ji ba ji si), and pretend to suck up liquor. They do not actually suck any up, since there is no liquid in it. But they keep murmuring, 'Very delicious.' These three elders must consist of: the village priest, a maternal uncle (a g'oe), and an elder who is from a different clan (tsaw tsm).

The householder then takes a pig and ceremonially sprinkles it. He kills it and cooks it to feast all who have come. The maternal uncle (a g'oe) will help with the cooking, and be an honoured guest at this occasion. When the pig is killed the elders present will gather around to look at the liver to see how things will be while they are in this new house. If the liver is healthy and there are no sores on it, it will be a good sign. Also, if there is a lot of fat near the liver that means they will have plenty to eat. But whether it is good or not they will say, 'Very good'.

After the feast, one or two more of the elders will repeat a poetic chant (sha zi zi-eu). It calls a blessing on the new house, asking for health, plenty to eat, etc. Though just one or two do it, they represent the whole group.

One feature that some houses have, although not all, is a kind of 'attic' (gui ma). They keep various tools, baskets etc. up in this area. There is a little ladder (gui ma daw dzm) which they climb to get up to it.

They often build a little shed like structure on one side of the house (caw dah). It is simply covered with thatch (caw dah joe-eu), and has no walls. It gives them a larger sheltered area to work in under the house.

There are certain aspects of the house, which have to do with their Akhas religion. For example, there are bamboo crossbeams on to and at either side of the house. The husbands sometimes knock these off when their wives are in labor and cannot give birth.

The wall along the length of the house on the upper slope is called paywa za. The wall on the men's end of the house sometimes needs to be kicked out for certain funerals (see Vol. 2).

Besides the main house (nym ma) there must be little sleeping houses (nym za) for any sons who are married. They must not sleep in the main house after they are married. When the father dies, the oldest son will move into the main house, but otherwise all sons who get married must sleep in the small houses, although they eat together in the main house, and all of them take part in the ancestor offerings, which are held there.

ANCESTOR ALTAR

The ancestor altar (a poe paw law) is located on the woman's side of the house, right near the dividing wall (jm zeu) between the men's and women's sides.

There is a little shelf (jm gui) woven of bamboo with shallow sides on it. Nothing is kept on it as a regular thing, but during the ancestor offerings the things that are offered to the ancestors are put up on it. It is under this offering tray where some Akhas tie the final three heads of paddy they harvest. I have heard from some that there must be a woman in the household who has performed the 'post-menopause ceremony' (ya yeh a ma), if they have this type of altar for their ancestor altar.

The more common thing is for them to have a section of bamboo (jm bah) hung up high on the wall, in which they put the three heads of paddy, which are harvested last. The heads of paddy are tied with rattan before being put in. The bamboo section is usually between nine and twelve inches long, and has an opening of from two to five inches. When the bamboo gets full, some say they take the old out, and put it up in the thatch in that general section of the house. Others have said, 'We never take the old out'. Those who do this must have fairly large bamboo sections.

Below the shelf, or bamboo section, there is a wooden hook from which four things hang: a small version of their rice table (a poe law jeh), a small stool, a bronze gong, and a shoulder bag.

The small rice table is put down on the floor during the ancestor offerings. Some of the offerings are put on it. The stool is also put down on the floor near the table, evidently for ancestors to sit on.

The bronze gong is fed as a part of the ancestor offering, and also struck. The shoulder bag which must have been woven by someone in that family, has the following items in it: a piece of wood used for killing the chicken used in ancestor offerings (ya ci di du), two small woven containers with lids (haw gah), and three cups. During the actual ancestor offering, one of the small woven containers has some holy rice (haw shaw) put in it, and the other has some rice cake (haw tah) put in it. The cups are used for the following offerings: one has tea, one has liquor, and one has some chicken meat.

There is an ancestor altar basket (a poe paw law pu tu) which is kept on the floor right under the things hanging on the wall. Some Akhas consider this to be the heart of the ancestor altar. The basket itself is woven of rattan, and is usually bought from either Lahus or Shans, although I have heard of a few Akhas who have made their own. It stands about three feet tall, has a lid, also woven of rattan, that fits down over the top, and has four legs on the bottom to keep it off the floor.

Inside this basket they keep three stems of a plant (ya pyaw do) which they use in making their brooms. These are usually around twelve inches in length, although it is up to the householder how long he wants to cut them.

There is also one length of cloth. It can be any color, woven by anyone, and almost any length, although a minimum would be eight or nine inches. But it must never have been worn as clothing.

There are also three leaves (paw law) from the wild banana tree (nga ne). It is probably from these that the ancestor altar (a poe paw law) got its name, although I cannot get any confirmation from the Akhas concerning this.

Members of the household will often keep other things in their ancestor altar basket, especially things of value. They keep money in it, since no one is willing to be afflicted by the spirits (neh gu la-eu) by opening it. But they must never keep anything in it that someone has worn.

If a child should open it, or if it should fall over or anything happen to it, they would have to make a new offering of one pig and one chicken. These would have to be of opposite sex. They must never allow chickens or pigs or children to climb up on it. The only time they put anything on it is during their ancestor offering, and then they put some offerings there temporarily.

The ancestor altar is very sacred to Akhas. It is only some overwhelming event which causes them to get rid of it. If a no-son person (shm byeh) dies, then it must be left in the jungle when they bury him. They say something like this to the ancestor altar, 'There is no one to offer to you any more. All have died. You also leave (le caw-aw). It is your own fault that you have suffered this'. The last statement refers to the fact that they believe their ancestor altar gives them a certain power to maintain food, health, and the family line, since it is the direct link with the ancestors. So if the ancestors fail to help their 'line', they have only themselves to blame for this calamity.

There are also some Akhas who have had to give up their ancestor altar and move into Shan villages due to insurgents and other unsettled conditions. K-28 told of leaving all of his ancestor paraphernalia in the jungle, not far from a Lahu Christian village. When he put the ancestor altar under a big tree he said, 'I'm going to have a rest from you for a while. I have not been able to overcome the rulers (actually referring to the insurgents here). Later I will come and get you again'. After saying this, he moved into a Shan village and became a Buddhist. If he had not said this, he would have been afflicted by the spirits (neh gu la-eu) of the ancestor altar, especially the mother and father, and paternal grandmother and grandfather.

SETTLEMENTS

VILLAGE SITE

When Akhas choose a new village site, they try to make sure it will have good water. Also, it needs to be close to fertile land where they can make fields. They are also anxious that the air be good. When the elders find a spot that looks good to them, they check with the spirits to make sure it is alright to live there. They do this by having the village priest (dzoe ma) drop an egg from his right ear. If it breaks when it hits the ground that is a sign that the site will be good for them. I have heard of some villages (K-29) where when they dropped the egg it did not break. So they dropped it again and again, and each time it got larger. This told them that the spirits did not want them to live there.

There is still another check they have before actually starting to build the village. For this they bury rice. To do this they first of all pound the ground down hard in a shallow hole about one foot in diameter. This hole must be dug in the general area where they are considering building their village. Then they place three grains of husked rice (ceu pyu) in a star design, with the ends touching in the center (g'o dzoe-eu). Next they put a dish or bowl over the rice, and twist it down into the ground. They weigh it down with sticks etc., to make sure that no insects or animals can get in to disturb the grains during the night.

The next day they examine these three kernels of rice, and if they are undisturbed, they believe the spirits approve the site. so they choose a site, and begin clearing it. They also begin the long process of gathering wood, bamboo and thatch for the building.

The very first house built will be that of the village priest. It is not really a village until that house is built and occupied. This house is usually located in the central or upper part of the village. It cannot be located in the lower section.

PATHS

In almost all Akhas villages, they leave a kind of wide avenue (leh kaw ta-eu) down the center of the village. This is a convenient set-up for those who have animals, which they drive in and out of the village to pasture. Also when Shans and others come to the village for trading purposes, this is a convenient place in which to take packs off. The children enjoy it as a playing area as well. Although I have never heard nay mention of this, I have often wondered if it did not form somewhat of a firebreak for the village. Even if they have this in mind, they would probably hesitate to mention it, since the spirits might hear it, and actually cause their village to burn!

There must always be a bypass around an Akhas village. If some real sick person is being carried to the hospital for example, or back to his village from being bitten by a bear, or any type of tragedy, they must carry this person around the village on the bypass. If that person were carried into the village even to rest, the villagers would fine them heavily.

Also when special village religious ceremonies are being held, this bypass must be used by everyone. The villagers that are holding the ceremony will put up bamboo stars (da leh) to indicate that no one must enter the village, but must go around it.

Their bypass is also used by those who are travelling and do not want to spend time in a village. If they go through the village, then they must stop and have tea in someone's house. Otherwise it is a serious breach of etiquette. So if a person is in a hurry, he will take the bypass around the village.

SIZE

There are no reliable statistics for village size in Burma. K-28 used to live in Pa nga A ka (on the west side of the Loimi mountain), where there were over 100 houses at one time, and over 1,000 people. He said there were 15 people in some houses. A close relative of his had 20 people in his house, and had to cook rice and curry in several places. In his own extended family there were 30 people at one time, including the married sons and their children.

There are also several villages with as few as five houses, although they are usually in a transitional stage when they are so small. This seems to be about as small as an Akha village will become. If there are fewer than this, they cannot carry on as Akhas, but feel they must move in with some other group (as the Shans) and carry another religion.

PUBLIC STRUCTURES

Perhaps the main structure is the village gate (law kah). This is always on the upper side of the village, on the main path into the village. It is the dividing line between humans and spirits. It is the guard of the village, which diverts all bad things and makes them, go around. That is why Akhas feel that people must walk through this gate when entering a village. In poetic form they say that it chases away the hawk and the wildcat, the leopard and the tiger, illness and sickness, leprosy and epilepsy, vampire (pi seu) and werewolf (la pya), and keeps all bad and wicked things from the village.

They make the gate once a year, when they add a new set of posts and cross bars (Vol. 1). The posts usually stand about 7 or 8 feet above the ground. It is usually about 4 or 5 feet between the posts. The wood in the posts would average between 6 and 9 inches in diameter.

In front, that is on the upper slope, away from the village, they have two wooden figures, one male and one female. These figures (law kah maw kaw) are slightly less than life-size. The male figure (law bah za yu bah jui) is always located on the upper slope, and the female figure (law kah za mi kah deu) on the lower slope. They believe that if they make the female figure quite fat there will be lots of babies born in the village, so we make it quite small. These figures are the spirit owners (yaw sah) of the gate.

In Thailand they tend to put these figures together as if in the act of copulation, but I have never seen this in Burma. In questioning several elders about this they felt strongly that any right thinking Akha would never dream of doing such a thing. They considered it would be a very grave offense, and said that it would call for the sacrifice of at least one pig. Only children or ignoramuses (a dzaw) would do such a thing, they say.

I have also heard (P-3) that sometimes they take the black fur from a dog skin and wrap it around the man figures private parts to make it look more realistic. I have not seen this, but I have seen a small ball of bamboo strips hung in the area of the scrotum on a male figure in Thailand.

No one, whether villagers or outsiders, must touch either figures or the gate. If they do, that will offend the spirit owner (yaw sah), and the village will start having sickness, and their livestock will be taken away by animals. If someone who is not an Akha touches or does anything to either the figures or the gate, the village (in the person of the village priest) will fine them heavily. If it is too serious, they will have to offer up to three pigs. While that offering is being made, everyone in the village would have to remain perfectly quietly in their homes. They could not go anywhere.

At night, when no one is around, sometimes a young man will do this. If there is a girl he wants to sleep with, or perhaps marry, but she refuses him, he will go up to the female figures and while repeating that girl's name will rub his hand on the section where the private organ would be, rubbing up. He would do this in the hopes that the girl would get pregnant, and then have to marry some good-for-nothing. It is a type of revenge. Of course, if the elders knew that he had done that, they would make him give a pig.

K-2 told me of a Chinese man (A va eu) who married an Akha. One day their son shot off one of the wooden birds on top of the Naw leh village gate with his slingshot. The moment the father heard about it, he went running up to the village elders with two chickens and asked them to forgive his son. As a result of doing this, he was let off with just the two chickens. If he had not done that, or if he had given them a hard time, they could have fined him up to K100. I later confirmed all of this from a villager who was there at the time.

If during the year after they have put in a new post, the cross bar (law kah pya dm) falls down, they must have anew day of ceremonial abstinence (lah eu), and sacrifice a pig on the day they repair it. They do not do this when old cross bars fall down.

Also if the wood of the posts springs to life (baw mn mn la-eu) and starts growing, they believe this is a terrible sign. They must offer a new pig. However they cannot take the posts out of the holes. What they do is twist them around, trying to break all the roots that have sprung up.

There is a simply constructed secondary village gate (ka law kah) out beyond the main gate. Its main purpose seems to be a repository of the wooden spears, guns, cross bows etc. that the men use to drive out the spirits from the village (Vol. 1).

When Akhas approach a village, they can walk through the secondary gate if they wish, but they do not have to. However all must enter through the main gate (law kah).

Also on the upper side of the village, and usually in the same general area as the two gates, is the village playground (deh k'ah). At night the young girls of the village go up there to dance (deh k'ah geu-eu) and the boys take their musical pipes and go there to do their dance- and to court the girls.

In this same general area is the village swing (la ceu). They only swing on it during the 'yeh ku' ceremony. (see Vol. 1).

PROPERTY

PROPERTY SYSTEM

Since Akhas provide all of the wood, thatch and bamboo for their houses, when they move to another village they can sell their house, but they must give some money to the village. (ci ni ca hah lu je). They must give four old coins if it is a house up on stilts, two old coins if it is a house built on the ground. They can also sell their paddy house, but they do not give any money to the village for this, since it is more or less a private venture.

When someone sells a house and the village gets money for it, they divide the money in half: the elders divide their half evenly among themselves, and the other half is put into the village fund (pu je).

Akhas can also sell their hill fields, their terraced fields, and gardens. They do not put anything into the village fund for these.

They must not sell their broom- but it is not a property matter so much as they are afraid it will make them poor. 'It has swept up the fallen rice we have eaten'. Also they do not sell banana leaves. since if they did they would have shorter lives. Banana leaves are very important in may ceremonies. This is why they must not sell them.

When Akhas become very poor, they sometimes sell their children. K-28 told of how he gave two lumps of silver for a 13 year old girl. When she was about 17 a Chinese man living with the Akhas wanted to marry her. K-28 kept asking her, but the first two times she refused. The third time she said yes. So he sold her for 60 old coins. She left the Chinese fellow after about a year, and came back to K-28. Then she married someone else, and then she died of smallpox. This was about 1958. K-28 said that he felt he got his original investment back on her when he sold her.

Akhas often buy large animals, such as buffaloes, as a joint venture. If one of the joint owners dies, his share in the animal is transmitted to his heirs. Sometimes they buy an animal jointly for the purpose of butchering, and split up whatever profits they get.

When they are selling something, they are supposed to inform the members of their sub-clan (pa) first. If someone in the 'pa' wants to buy it, and will pay as much as someone who is non-related, then the owner is obliged to sell it to the man in his own 'pa'. if the non-related man will pay more for it however, then he is no longer under the obligation to sell to someone in his 'pa'.

If when a person is fined he has no money to pay the fine, the elders will force him to sell a field, or animals, or the like, often at a reduced price, so that he can pay the fine.

If a person in the village wants to borrow something that is mine I must lend it to him. But I am not obligated to lend things to people from other villages. If the person who breaks it or damages it, he must replace it or make it good. Of course in actual practice this does not work out too well, since the ones who borrow things are often very poor, and when they break them the owner does not feel like making them repay for them. K-29 told of several cases where he had lost machetes, etc., this way.

PROPERTY IN MOVABLES

There are certain things Akhas must not sell or buy, such as cats, fermented rice containers (ji si), nor anything to do with the ancestor altar. Also, they must not sell banana leaves. They also must not sell three-legged cooking stands (shm kui), rice steamer (haw sah bah), the clay pots on which they place their rice steamer (oe ne), the cooking pan they use for steaming the large rice steamers (maw za), and anything else that is connected with what they do in their ancestor offerings. If they have an item that is new and never been used, they can sell that.

Also, they must not sell their main sow (a za za ma). The hen which is used in the special yeast making (de saw ya ma) can also not be sold. When they make yeast (deh tse) they take out three feathers from a hen. They remember which hen it is, and do not sell it. Nor do they kill it to eat later. When it dies a natural death they put some rice and silver in its mouth and bury it.

There are certain things that the whole village buys jointly: a boar for mating, a brass dish (gui byeh) for distilling liquor, a basket for measuring paddy and various things (k'a pu), scales (pa yaw), used especially when they butcher and sell meat, and also when they have cotton to sell, the wooden container used in distilling liquor (ji ba sa bah), and other things as well.

They keep these items (listed above) in the headman's house when they are not in use. If anyone spoils anything of the village property, he must make it good. One common problem is that the dogs biting through the blood soaked cords used in the scales when they weigh meat.

During the year when there is to be a post-menopausal ceremony in one's family (ya yeh m-eu), the members of the family must not sell or give any seeds to others for planting. If they do, then the luck blessing (gui lah), will go along with the seeds and will be lost to the family. If it is corn for eating, say, or whatever it is for eating rather than planting, then they can sell or give it away. This also applies to the year when the woman who has performed the post-menopause ceremony has to purify the last born child (za shaw-eu). And they follow this practice of not selling things or giving seeds away during the year they have the cleansing of the ditch so that children will be born (ui k'eu ui ga la sa-eu).

To identify their goods, they sometimes mark them by first heating some metal in the fire, and then while holding the hot metal with tongs, they make one, two, or three holes in the goods. Each family has a distinctive design. Later they can identify their goods by that. Also, they sometimes brand (tsa tso-eu) their animals, usually by making a nick in the ear or doping something to the right or left ear of each animal. Only when they have quite a number of animals do they do this.

REAL PROPERTY

They can sell land that they have made improvements on, as fields and gardens. Usually if they have merely marked a site (ya bya-eu) as a good place for a field and someone begs them for half of it say, they will freely give it. Sometimes if the one who marked it does not want to give it, he will finally sell it, but not for too much. Perhaps he will charge three or four old coin.

When Akhas grow a crop on someone else's field, and they use their own buffalo, plow, etc., as well as eat their own food, then they give back 15% of the proceeds to the owner. If, however, the owner furnishes the buffalo, the plow, and feeds the man doing it, the divide half and half (m pa pa-eu).

If a man has a field, then no one else can work that field until he dies, unless he gives them permission. But now (1966), with the government edict that they only have to wait three years before someone else can start working idle land, they are having trouble (as in Ya ka).

When there are two people with fields right next to each other, the two of them work together and make a kind of ditch between the two fields. If there is some problem over it, as there often is, then they must call the headman (bu she) to arbitrate. He will come and together they will bury a stone to show the demarcations.

ACQUISITION AND RELINQUISHMENT OF PROPERTY

They must not sell cats, and they say that it is not right to steal them, but for the most part you grab (nyeh) them and take them.

When goods are truly lost, although there are often arguments over whether they were stolen or lost, the owner can claim that article any time, any place. However, if it was something difficult for the person to find it and bring it back, the owner will usually give him one old coin.

BORROWING AND LENDING

If they borrow money (pyu pa-eu) they usually follow the Shan custom, which is 10% per month, or 50% for a year. They claim that their true Akhas custom is for relatives to help each other.

If you borrow 10 loads of paddy now, after the harvest of the next crop you must repay (dzi dzo tsoe k'o-eu) 25 loads. If it goes over to another year, then the one who borrowed must repay 50 loads.

If the person does not repay, then the lender takes some of his property, but usually with the headman's consent.

If a person dies with a debt (dzi dzo da-eu) his children inherit it. If the children are just girls, they may be sold to become slave servants (za k'a). If they are old enough for marriage, they can be sold for about 60 old coins.

There are times when a person feels sorry for the one who can not repay him and cancels the debt (dzi dzo shu-eu).

When they borrow something (yu nga-eu, or ci nga-eu), they do not charge rent for it. But if the person borrowing it breaks it, he must make it as good as when he received it, or replace it with a new item of equal value.

INHERITANCE

Inheritance usually goes to the sons. Sometimes the father will be angry at one son, and give him nothing. However when the father has died, the elders will decide how much the son should get, since the father said it in anger, and it would not be fair to the son to be cut out of the will. They will explain it to the others something like this, 'How would you like it if you had been cut off without anything?'

The older son will usually get more. For example, if the father leaves 100 old coins, the older will get 60 and the younger 40. Of course, if for some reason the younger son has cared for his father till death (cu she-eu), then he may get a larger share than this. But usually he will not get more money than the older. However, for other things, such as fields, etc., the father will give the one who cared for him until death the larger field. This usually seems fair to all concerned. Of course the parents, before they die, may give money or goods to any favourites in any way they want, but after death the money has to be divided up fairly equally- even when the child is a scoundrel.

Daughters do not get anything. If there are no sons, the money and goods go to the widow. But if she gets married again, she cannot claim anything except the clothes wears, plus anything she can prove she had when she got married.

ADMINISTRATION

This does not seem to raise a problem to Akhas. the paternal uncles (a zaw) who take care of the remaining family members, also handle whatever money or goods have been left for the children.

OFFENSES AND SANCTIONS

SANCTIONS

Akhas do not have capital punishment. For the most part they do not believe in corporal punishment either, although I have had some Akhas tell me that they had to beat a certain person. But on further questioning it usually turned out that the beating was not so much a sanction against the person as a means of either getting him to confess something that everyone is convinced he is guilty of, or making him keep quiet when they are trying to discuss his case. For the most part, I believe they do not beat a person as a punishment.

For the simpler offenses they will fine the culprit, or make him pay back what he stole or damaged, or both. For certain offenses they combine this with public humiliation, so that the culprit has to kill a pig and feast the elders of the village. The theory seems to be that when a person is wronged he must be repaid, and the sanction must be such that it will both embarrass the culprit, and make others afraid to do it.

It is very seldom that they will actually tie a person up. They only do this when he has done something rather serious and cannot pay the fine, or when it is something so serious that they cannot handle it in their own village. They dislike very much having to tie anyone up, and usually do it just as a last resort.

When fines are exacted, the one who tried the case always gets something. Also the village fund (pu je) will get something. Often it is divided into thirds, especially when there is an injured party and he will be the third one to get something. Often for the simpler cases, they are just fined a bottle of liquor. This is drunk by the elders of the village, with the offender pouring (k'a-eu) the drinks for them.

OFFENSES AGAINST LIFE

Akhas do not believe in killing. As a matter of fact, they are deathly afraid of killing anyone. This is one reason they hate to see Akhas boys become police and soldiers, for fear they will kill someone. If an Akhas kills someone, whether accidentally or intentionally, he is barred from partaking in the ancestor offerings. He must not even be in the house when they have them.

They believe that if a person has killed someone else, he will die a terrible death. He will call out in excruciating pain, his eyes will roll, and his tongue will stick way out. I have heard several say this about the tongue, but only K-28 says he has actually seen it. The way the Akhas put it is, 'Because they have sin on them (ba na-eu), they cannot die easily'.

K-8 told me of a man in Na sm A ka, by the name of Shaw k'ah. He was a political leader in that area. A man by the name of Dzui do came from another village. Shaw k'ah was a very wealthy man. The two of them and the other villagers were gambling and drinking, and Dzui do was losing pretty badly. The more he drank the more he threatened to lead a gang of dacoits to rob Shaw k'ah and get his money back. Word of this got out to the villagers and they came and heard his threats. They had the ring of truth about them they said. So they tied Dzui do up, and led him about 3 furlongs from the village (K-8 has been to the actual site). Then Shaw k'ah stabbed him to death, and they buried him there. Shaw k'ah would not stay that night in his own house, and during the time of the ancestor offerings he would not stay in any house with an ancestor altar. This happened about 1945.

I asked if nothing was done about it. They said that at that time, just after the war, things were so topsy-turvy that there was not much likelihood that officials in Loimwe even heard about it. The villagers themselves were afraid to tell anyone about it, but Akhas in the area quickly caught on because of the way Shaw k'ah would leave a house any time they started to have an ancestor offering, and gradually the story became known to the Akhas.

I have had Akhas tell me that a person who killed someone else must not sleep more than one or two nights in his own home after he has killed someone. 'He and his ancestor altar would not get along together'. But in actual practice I believe they do stay in their own homes, later when things calm down a bit, although they always leave when the ancestor offering is made.

K-8 also told me about a man named Meu sui (his mother's relative) who was killed by Dzui lm. This was in Ta naw village. Partly it was because Dzui lm wanted Meu sui's opium fields that he did it. Later Dzui lm had a stroke, or something that left him paralyzed. He had to 'crawl like a snake'. This is considered divine retribution. He is now dead, but his wife and children are still living in Ta naw, and still working some of the opium fields that her husband got from Meu sui.

K-28 told of a man in a village near him (Law ba was the man's name) who was always gambling, and to cover his gambling losses he got to stealing buffaloes, cows, etc. He got to taking anything he could put his hands on as a matter of fact. He was always being fined by the villagers, but since he had nothing to pay, the father had to pay it. K-28 knows definitely of one time the father had to give over 200 loads of paddy for his son. Also gradually he lost almost all his livestock because of the son.

Finally the father called all the relatives together, and they decided to get rid of Law ba. So they got him to come to the father's house, and then gave him a lot of liquor to drink. When he was quite drunk and they tied him up. 'They did not dare tie him up before he was drunk'. Then they tied a long rope to his neck, threw it over a rafter in the house, and then tied it to a huge rock. They managed to get the rock up to another rafter, and then when they got everything set they dropped the rock, which strangled him. The reason they did all of this was so they would not actually murder the man- it was the rock falling that really killed him. K-28 said that the father was a leading spirit priest (boe maw) for the area, and he could not think of being a murderer and not eating the ancestor offering. They told everyone that Law ba died of a stomachache, but again the nearby villagers knew what happened.

K-28 also told of a boy (She naw) from another village near where he used to live. His mother died, and his father took another wife, and told the second wife where he had buried his money. Then the father died. The boy demanded that his step-mother share the money with him, but she refused. He took the matter to Kentung, and got the verdict, from a Shan, that the mother and step-son were to use the money together, and not quarrel about it anymore.

The boy went back, but he was so mad that he paid two Akhas men 30 old coins each to kill his step-mother. What they did was to put some poison in some liquor and then gave it to her to drink. When she got drunk, and was also in agonies from the poison, the two men beat her to death.

Now according to Akhas custom, the two who beat her to death could no longer eat the ancestor offering, but the step-son who paid them to do it (and there were many witnesses when he gave the money) could go on eating. However K-28 and K-29 felt that the step-son paid for it in that before long he died too, and one of the men who actually killed her died. The third one is still alive (1966), so I asked about him. Both felt that probably he did not help beat the lady, so his lifespan was not cut so short.

When a person kills another accidentally, there are evidently different sanctions. If it is a matter of a hunter shooting one of a hunting party (sha mu eu), this is not really considered killing a person, since the spirits caused that man or boy to turn into the form of a barking deer, or some other kind of animal.

I heard of one case of a man who set a gun trap, and another man walked into it. The one who set the trap had to pay 300 old coins, but I do not know how the money was divided. This was a case where he had warned people that he was setting the trap, and yet a man who had heard him say it still walked into it.

There is no penalty that I have found for abortion, probably because they feel it is so terribly wrong they do not have the problem. As for infanticide, they kill all 'human rejects', (tsaw caw), but that is not an offense to them. I have never heard of infanticide apart from that.

OFFENSES AGAINST THE PERSON

Akhas have a common saying, 'Say something wrong, a fine of five 'ga'. Do something wrong, a fine of ten 'ga'. (Daw bah nga ga, la bah tse ga.) One 'ga' equals about 2.50 old coins. Akhas evidently feel that saying something wrong is only half as bad as 'doing' something wrong to someone else. Actually it works out that they do not always fine the full amount, especially if it is a first offense. But it is a working principle that they have.

The type of thing they have in mind when they say something wrong (daw bah) is to slander a person by saying he is a vampire (pi seu), or a werewolf (la pya) or a thief, 'unless he really is a thief, and then it is not considered libel.

K-28 told of Li hui (a young man who lives in Ya ka with him now) being called a werewolf in his village by a man named Li tu. Recently when Li tu was in Kentung buying things, he stayed overnight with K-28, so K-28 asked him about his calling Li hui a werewolf. Li tu denied it at first, but then K-28 presented several people who heard him say it, and then Li tu was 'zah le-eu' (literally amazed, but used here in the sense that he could not contradict the witnesses, and just had to keep quiet). So K-28 had him give K25 (paper) to Li hui.

It should be noted that since their customs are based on old coin, it makes to a bit different when they move into town and start using paper money. According to their proverb the money that Li tu had to give was twice as much as he should have given for a verbal offense. But since the exchange rate of old coin is almost ten to one, it is only about one fifth of what he could have asked for.

When Li tu gave the 25 kyats to K-28, K-28 in turn handed it over to Li hui. What Li hui should have done was given five kyats to K-28 for handling the case for him, given five kyats to the village fund, used two kyats to buy liquor to set up drinks for the elders, and taken (eaten) the remainder. But what he did was to buy about one kyats worth of liquor to set up drinks (k'a-eu), and gave nothing to K-28.

When they set up drinks for the elders if they do it properly they will say something like this, 'This is bought with the money I got from so-and-so for calling me such-and-such'. I asked what would happen if Li hui had turned out to be a vampire. They said that if people in the area who were being bitten by a werewolf would give his name as the one who was biting them, then it would be certain that he was a werewolf (la pya). Under such circumstance no one would be fined for libel. I asked if they would do nothing to the werewolf, and they said all they could do would be to drive him out of the village and then set fire to his house. No one must take any of the wood or goods from that house before burning it down. Also K-29 said, when they would burn down the werewolf's house they would not need to worry about other houses catching fire too, since only that house would burn. He said he had seen it done.

One of the most common offenses among Akhas is a husband beating his wife too hard. Of course they rather expect that the husband will have to beat her some, but within reason. Sometimes if the husband beats his wife too hard she will run to her male relatives (a mah a da), and they will bring her back to the headman of the village, and ask that something be done to the husband. Usually if it is not too serious, and if it is a first offense, they just teach (saw neh) the husband. If it is serious, or if the husband has been warned before but still does it, they may fine him (up to a maximum of 10 'ga'. since it is a la bah offense), or make him give a pig for the village elders to eat (a za she pu-eu). This is more than just giving a pig actually. He must also provide rice, liquor and tea. Then he and his family must cook up the pork curry and cook the rice, and feast the elders. This is a favourite punishment. 'It makes the man very ashamed', they say. Of course it also gives the elders a good number of rice and curry feasts.

K-28 told of a man (A ba) in his village who hit his wife (A mi) on the forehead with a piece of wood. She bled a lot from it. She came running to K-28, who was both the headman and the village priest at the time, and he fined the husband. I asked why she did not go to her male relatives, and he said they lived too far away. But it is always possible for the wife to go to the headman to get him to protect her. Of course in such cases if the headman can see no actual evidence of pretty severe treatment, he will usually not fine.

SEX AND MARITAL OFFENSES

The Akha's idea of the worst possible sex and marital offense is for a married woman to sleep with someone other than her husband. This means that if a married man, for example, were to sleep with a single girl, he would probably not run too much risk of having trouble- unless the girl got pregnant through him, and then he would have to marry her. That is she would become his 'little' (second) wife. I have heard some say that if the father of the girl pressed the matter, or if the male relatives (a mah a da) of the man's wife pressed the matter, the erring husband could be fined, but I have never heard of an actual example where this was done.

In the case of adultery, K-28 told of an unmarried young man named A tu, from his village. He took a married woman, Mi teh into the jungle, and while sleeping with her Mi teh's husband, Law beh, found them and called the villagers. K-28 was then headman and village priest, so he handled the case. After thorough discussion with the elders of the village he fined A tu, the standard fine for this case, 90 old coins (ko ya nyi tse ga – where one 'ya' equals 7.50 old coins). Of this, 45 old coins went to the aggrieved husband, and the remaining 45 was divided equally three ways: 15 coins for the village fund (pu je), 15 coins to the headman (k'a je), and 15 coins to the village priest. In this case it meant that K-28 got a total of 30 old coins for the case.

But that was only part of it. The two who committed adultery then he had to kill two pigs. One pig had to have a girth of 'five fists' (nga tu za). That is, they take a string and put it around the pig. Then they double the string and put it around the pig. Then they double the string, and measure how many fists they can get on it. This would mean, roughly, that the pig would be approximately 40 inches in girth. This pig (pu bah) is given to the whole village, since it is felt that when they committed adultery they wronged the whole village. There was another pig that had to be killed, but it was only a four fist (oe tu za) pig. When they killed this they had to stab it in a very special way through a leaf. When they kill this pig (je ti shi ne zah do-eu), it is the indication that from now on the two men (that is A tu, the one who seduced the wife, and Law beh, the husband) are in a taboo relationship (zah do). After A tu and Mi teh had killed the two pigs, they cooked rice, made curry, and had to feast the whole village.

After this they had to get married. I discovered as the men were talking that it was automatically assumed that the marriage of Mi teh and Law beh was dissolved the moment adultery was committed. If A tu and Mi teh had not gotten married, they would not have been permitted to stay in the village. Of course, neither of them could go to Law beh's house, and he could not go to their house. They could not even speak to each other. Nor could they make adjoining fields. There also had to be at least one house between them, etc. because they were in the taboo relation. (zah do).

Later on A tu and Mi teh broke up. Also, not much after the split up, Law beh also married another wife. As far as K-28 knows, they are still living together.

I believe that perhaps in the Loimwe and Meung Yawng area they do not fine quite so much for this- or maybe it just depends on the headman. But I have heard of them fining just a total of ten 'ga', plus two pigs, for this type of offense. they also divide the money differently. the offended man gets half of the money, the village priest gets one-tenth of the total, his two helpers each get one-tenth, and the village fund gets one fifth.

Sometimes Akhas boys go and try to steal love (mi k'oe-eu). they go They go to A girl who is either asleep in the jungle or in her home, and try to have intercourse with her before she wakes up. This is usually when the girl has refused to sleep with him. if the girl wakes up and recognises the boy, and if the boy is past puberty (za k'a heu-eu), the father of the girl can bring a case against the boy. The standard fine for such is five kyats, one 'geu' for each corner of the house (one 'geu' equals 1.25). Also, the boy must kill a pig and feast the elders (a za she pu-eu).

if the boy has not reached puberty, and cannot have intercourse, they just warn him and let him off. However they usually tell him, 'If you come back bothering like this again, we'll hit you.'

If the girl wakes up before the boy has actually had intercourse with her, the boy usually tries to get away before anyone can tell who it actually is. If he does get away, the matter is dropped. But if they do see who it is the boy must set up drinks (ji ba k'a-eu) to the elders. This is designed especially to make him ashamed.

There does not seem to be too much rape (a loe ceh loe-eu) among Akhas perhaps because both parties are usually willing. I did hear from K-2 of an Akha girl who was 12 or 13 sleeping in the jungle when two Akha boys came along and forced themselves on her. The one who had reached puberty was fined, but the other was let go with a warning. 'You cannot fine that kind of person for sleeping with a girl'.

Of course there are variations to this, depending on the headman and the elders. But this is the basis on which they fine for property offenses. It shows that they consider the paddy house to be more important than the house. If some couple were to have intercourse in the paddy house for example, or on the porch of the paddy house, they would be fined 7.50 old coins.

When livestock is involved, they usually do this. If a person stole someone's cow, he must return that cow, plus another cow as a fine. If he has killed and 'eaten' (that is, sold the meat) that cow, then he must give the owner two other cows. However if the man is a habitual thief, they will often make him give a total of three cows to the owner. Then on top of this, they may make him give a pork feast to the elders of the village (a za she pu-eu). There is a sanction they have as a last resort: that is to fine the person his main sow (za ma dzoe dzah). They believe that there is a spirit on the left shoulder of each person tempting them to steal, etc. If a person who has been listening to this spirit and stealing things has to offer this sow (za ga ga-eu) however, it usually cures him. They said that in the case of Law ba (see above), it cured him of his stealing when they did this- although it did not cure him of his gambling.

K-29 told of a man who was out in his fields cutting down trees to make a field there. Others were also cutting down trees in their fields, all around him. One noon when he was resting, he decided to broil some fish, so he built a fire. When he left to go back to cutting down trees he did not put his fire out well enough, and that afternoon the wind whipped it up, and it burned quite an area both in his field and in a neighbor's field. But of course it did not burn properly, since the trees were not thoroughly dried yet, so it meant that the person whose field was burned had to start cutting down a new field. So they made the man who was careless with his fire cut down as big an area as his fire had made useless.

The way Akha houses are built up off the ground, often other people's animals cause trouble under their houses- perhaps getting into food they are keeping there. This often makes the householders mad, and so they scoop up some red-hot coals from one of the fireplaces and pour them down the splits in the bamboo floor (leh tsa da-eu) onto the offending pig, cow or buffalo or what have you. If the pig does not die from this, the person who poured hot coals on it must pay damages (or as they put it, 'pay the cost of the medicine used in curing the pig'), and will be lectured by the elders. Sometimes he will be fined, especially if he has a history of doing such things. If the pig, or other animal should die, however, then the person who poured down the hot coals on it must pay the owner as much money as the pig is worth. The owner of the pig must give half of the meat to the man who caused the death of the animal. That man can sell that meat, and if the villagers are sorry for him, they will buy (dza pya-eu) some of the meat from him. This helps him to defray his expenses. The owner of the pig also sells his half, and gets to keep all of the money he gets.

If it is an accident whereby the man pours hot coals on another's animal, he still must pay the damages (that is, the cost of the medicine for curing the animal). If the animal should die, he must stand half the cost, but again he gets half of the meat and can sell it, so often he does not come out too badly.

If the villagers know of any person in their village who is acting as an armed bandit (called dacoit in Burma), they first of all teach-warn (saw neh) him. If he continues to be a bandit, however, they will drive him out of the village, since they are afraid of the consequences it will have on the whole village if he stays.

If it is a very poor person who cannot pay his fine, they often make his relatives either pay it, or go bond for him, stating that if he does not pay it within a certain length of time, they will pay it for him. Sometimes if such a person persists in crime, they will tie him up and deliver him to the cycle officer (sa ma ti). This is often done with the full consent of the relatives, who are fed up with paying his bad debts.

In a way the penalty they fear the most for stealing is that they will die with their tongue sticking out, or their stomach will burst, or the like. The reason for this is that when a person finds that someone has stolen something that belongs to him, and he does not know who has done it, he pronounces a curse on that person. Often the curse is that they will die in agony with their tongue lolling out, or that their abdomen burst open or that their eyes burst open, etc. K-29 told about a woman he knew whose stomach (abdomen) did burst open, and he feels sure it is because her husband cheated some Shans out of 3,000 kyats one time by lying to them and eating the money himself. The story the wife is that since she was a widow she was hard up and was breaking rocks for the government. One day a man rolling big boulders down from above was careless, and one rolled down on her killing her. They carried her body back to her home, and had the wakes each night and were getting things ready for the funeral. One night, while the young men of the village were gambling, they heard the awful noise of her abdomen bursting open. They had to get other cloths and bind her back up. 'This was because of the curses of the ones who lost their money to her lying husband'.

NONFULFILLMENT OF OBLIGATIONS

If a person in a village says that he will move along with others to a new site, but when the time comes he changes his mind, they will often fine him 5 'ga'. It is considered saying something wrong (daw bah). Of course, if there were a valid reason for his having to break his word, such as his relatives putting terrific pressure on him to stay, then they would not fine him.

If a person says he is going to buy a large animal (such as cow, buffalo, horse, large pig), but then backs down later, especially after the owner had turned down other buyers, the owner can fine him, through the headman, up to 5 'ga'. What they seem to prefer doing in such cases, however, is to take a down payment (di she ta-eu) of, say 5 kyats. If later the one wanting to buy the animal changes his mind, he does not ask for the down-payment back, but the owner of the animal cannot ask for a fine, since he has already gotten the down-payment.

If a person buys an animal, such as mentioned above, but finds that he cannot lead it back to his village, he will take it back to the owner who will refund him his money. However, the owner will keep one kyat back for himself from the purchase price if it was a cow or buffalo, and three kyats if it was a horse.

When a boy wants to marry a certain girl, he will send some of these relatives to extract a promise from her father that she will marry him, they take liquor along and go ask the father (yeh maw zo-i-eu). The father of the girl will send word to the girl (he will not ask her directly), to ask if she wants to marry this man. If she sends word back that she is willing to marry him, then he will tell the relatives. They will say, 'Let's exchange goods so that we can be sure of this girl'. It may be noted that they generally do this if she is a popular girl. The father of the girl will usually say, 'Oh, we don't need to do that'. But the boy's side will insist on it, to make sure the boy gets that girl.

Then the father will ask them how much they want to weigh out (myaw ta sa-eu). They may say half a viss, or one viss (3.6 pounds), or anywhere up to four viss (which K-29 had heard of). So they bring out scales, and they weigh up one viss of silver coins from the suitor's relatives, and then the girl's father must match it. While they do this, they call in the headman of the village to be a witness.

If the boy does not marry the girl, the father gets to take all of the money. If for some reason the girl changes her mind and does not marry the boy, then the boy gets all of the money. If they later get married, according as they have promised, then both parties in the agreement take back their share of the money.

K-28 told about his grandfather who had such an agreement (myaw ta tseh ta-eu) for his daughter. But then he went ahead and had her marry someone else. He would not, however, give the money to the young man who should have gotten it, however, so finally the case was taken to Kentung, where the grandfather was fined thirty kyats, as well as having to give all of that money to the boy who had been promised to the girl.

If a person borrows money from another and does not pay it back within a specified time, that person will go to the headman. The headman will try to get the person to pay it back. But if the person still does not pay it back, then the one who is trying to get his money back will take something by force (hu dza-eu) from the man who owes him the debt. He will try to take something he thinks is of the same value. If he takes something that is worth more than the debt, the elders can fine him. If he takes something that is less than the value of the debt, then that is just his own loss, since the debt is now considered as paid, even if what he took is worth only a small fraction of the debt.

For what we would call criminal negligence, it depends a little on the amount of injury just what is done. If a person is careless about keeping the steps up to his house in good repair and someone is hurt while climbing them, the house owner cannot be fined. However, if it was an elder who was hurt, he will want to beg (sha-eu) that elder. To do this, he will kill a pig and have a feast in his home (a za she pu-eu), with the injured party as the honoured guest. After the meal he will tie a string around the person's wrist while calling a blessing upon him. Of course, if the house owner does not want to do this, he does not have to.

When they set traps that are dangerous to people and don't tell others about them and someone's dies, they are fined 300 old coins. If a person is injured, whether others have been told about it or not, the one who set the trap must still pay the cost of the medicine. If the one who set the trap failed to tell the people about it, the headman would probably decide on some fine or public reprimand to punish him (as serving liquor to the elders).

OFFENSES AGAINST THE STATE

If the whole village has agreed to do something, such as not make fields in a certain area, or gather firewood from a certain area, etc., and a person in the village breaks that, they will fine him 30 kyats. Besides, he must kill a pig and feast the village, since this is an offense against the state (in a limited way of course). Of this fine, 29 kyats goes into the village fund, and the headman of the village gets one kyat.

RELIGIOUS OFFENSES

If a person wrongs any of the following, the village priest will make him give a pig and rice for feasting the elders: the village gate (law kah), the secondary gate (ka yeh law kah), the village swing (la ceu), the water source (law k'aw), the burial site (lm bym), or the offering site to the lords and rulers of land and water (mi sah law gui). If it is such an offense that a new ceremony must be performed, then the guilty must furnish all of the things that will be needed. Of course, this can sometimes come on the village priest himself. If he makes a mistake in an offering, for example, he will have to make it over, killing his own animals for sacrifices. If the village priest feel that the wrong to any of the above is not too great, he may just fine the person a bottle of liquor.

There does not seem to be any penalty for impiety- but if it carries on into action (as if the person would no longer make the ancestor offerings), the village priest would discuss the matter with the headman, and other elders. For a first offense they would fine him 10 'ga'. The village priest would get one third, the headman would get one third, and the village fund would get one third. If he persists in not making the offerings, however, they will drive him out of the village.

The village priest is in charge of collecting money for the various offenses that have to do with the religious life of the Akhas. Also when they break certain taboos he is the one who will collect the fine, or tell what the fine should be.

The Akhas feel that when a person breaks taboos and commits ritual offenses and the like, they not only have the fines of the village priest to worry about, but they will have to bear the consequences of their sin. This is usually shown by either sickness or a shortened life- or both. They say that sin perches on a person (i ba na-eu) who has committed such an offense. Even though something terrible does not happen right away, it will happen eventually. Then when it happens, it is proof that person has made some religious offenses- although sometimes it indicates other offenses too, such as for stealing, adultery, incest, etc.

SOCIAL OFFENSES

For those in an Akha village who are constantly drunken and disorderly, they will first of all warn them to cut down their drinking and to quit causing trouble. If that fails, the elders will tell everyone in the village to quit giving that person liquor to drink. If that fails too (that is, he makes his own liquor and still gets drunk), they will do something to make him feel real ashamed. K-29 told of this kind of man where the elders tried everything and it would not work. Finally they made him set up drinks of liquor for them, and he was so ashamed that he was much better for a long time.

If there is a quarrelsome woman with a sharp tongue, the husband will sometimes ask the elders to teach her. He has tried it and it is not done any good. When the elders teach her, they warn her that they will fine her if she continues. If she does continue, the headman of the village may fine her either one bottle of liquor or 1.25 kyats, 'just to make her ashamed'.

If a person is real lazy, the elders will tell him to get to work. If he does not work, then the elder tell the village not to help him.

When there is an uncooperative person in the village, they will teach him. One of the big persuaders they have is, 'When you are hard up, what are you going to do? If you do not go along with us we will not cooperate with you later'. This usually brings them around- or makes them move to another village.

One social offense that Akhas are very sensitive to is that of a person who walks through their village without resting in some house. By that they mean having some tea- or at least a cup of water. Such a person can be fined with liquor. Closely related to this is the offense of a person who goes into an Akha home the wrong way. Men and boys must always enter through the men's side (baw law). Women usually enter through the women's door- but they can enter through the men's door too. Men and boys, when going to a new house, can always tell which is the woman's side, since the paddy pounder is under the woman's side. I have also heard that if a person goes into a house, as a guest, and then right out again without stopping to talk a bit, or having something to drink, they can fine him.

If a person gets a village into trouble by stealing or always having court cases, that village will kick him out.

JUSTICE

LITIGATION

It is difficult to get any statistics from Akha villages as to the incidence of civil actions and cases. Probably the greatest cause for litigation is stealing, so it depends on the number of men in the village who are thieves. If it develops that a certain man has several cases brought against him, they will make him move out of the village.

K-28 told of Da gaw from his village. He used to steal things, and also try to organise men in his village to go steal things from other villages. Since K-28 was acting as headman of the village, as well as village priest, he warned him several times, and fined him. Finally after a thorough discussion with the village elders, who all agreed, K-28 told Da gaw that he would have to leave the village. Da gaw did not want to leave, so he begged them all to let him stay. He also gave a solemn promise that he would never, never steal again. Before too long, however, he went to a distant Akha village and stole and killed a cow.

The people from that village caught him, tied him up, and brought him back to his own village, telling K-28 and the other elders what he had done. The other village, where he had stolen a cow, fined him 150 old coins. After he had paid that to the other village, K-28 and the villagers in his home village made him give a pig for a feast (a za seh pu-eu) for the village, since he had lied the last time. Then they made him leave the village.

When he left the village, he told the headman of a village to the southwest of them that he could not stand the talk of the headman of the last village where he had lived, so he wanted to leave. The villagers of the old village did not contradict this, evidently, since they wanted to be rid of him. K-28 heard that the headman of that village was quite critical of him, feeling that it was mainly K-28's fault that Da gaw wanted to leave the village. But in a short time Da gaw was both stealing things himself, and organising groups to steal things from others. When he caused too much trouble, they too had to make him leave their village. He is now (1966) living in Ho la Akha in the Meung Hkawn area, not far from Ho he.

K-29 told of how the village he lived in had to kick out three men at once. It was for a combination of stealing and lying. They caused an awful lot of trouble in their village by spreading wild tales, and also brought court cases against the village. So finally the elders met together and decided to make them all leave at once. This was after several warnings, which only seemed to make them worse. Actually, at first they lived just outside of the village, but since it was outside the village gate, it was considered another village. They had to elect their own headman. They were forced out about paddy planting time, and only stayed in the location outside of their village until they had harvested their paddy when they moved off, and he is not sure where they are now.

K-28 told of his village kicking out a man (Zo shui) who was a werewolf (la pya). Any person who is a werewolf or a vampire (pi seu) is driven out of a village – but usually not until there has been a great deal of litigation, both in the village, and often going to the local Shan official. I have followed the trouble in Jaw seu upper village over the woman they were sure was a vampire, until finally there was a village split over it, and now there is a new village (Na seh).

K-28 also told of a man who lived in a nearby village to his. He had a son who was real lazy, and thus no girl wanted to marry him. He went around at night trying to steal love (mi k'oe k'oe-eu) from girls, therefore, and the father was constantly having to pay the fines for him, which got stiffer each time. Finally, the villagers made the father move out of the village.

I have also heard from several that if there is someone who does not follow the Akha customs (religion) they are kicked out of the village. They seem to feel that especially the customs related to planting, caring for and harvesting the paddy are important, and everyone in the village must follow them completely. I have heard of four or five cases of people being forced to leave the village for this reason.

JUDICIAL AUTHORITY

Akhas do not have any separation of judicial and executive authority. The judicial authority really lies with the elders of the village. Of course, they have their headman, whom they have chosen (and they keep this fact always before him), but the final authority is still in their hands. The court in each case is composed of the village elders, with the headman sitting as the chairman.

The Akhas have the following proverb,
I mah ti ya ga poe-eu
Jaw mah ti tah ga poe-eu

The literal translation is: the horse that travels is worth hundreds. The horse that stays at home is worth millions. That is, the headman who travels about on business for the village (the horse that travels) is valuable certainly, but not nearly as valuable as the elders who stay home and take care of the sick, see that the customs are carried out, drive out the werewolves from those possessed, etc.

Of course the aggrieved party can always take the case to the Shan cycle officer in his area, or even to Kengtung. But this is always a very expensive venture, both in time and money. So for the most part they do not do it. If they do do it, it often is the start of a rupture in the village that ends up in a village split.

LEGAL AND JUDICIAL PERSONNEL

The Akhas have no specialized law enforcement personnel. The closest thing to it would be if a person from village 'A' were tied up by people in village 'B' for stealing something, or any other serious crime. Before the elders of village 'B' would try the culprit, they would send for an elder from village 'A' to come. That man (it could be the headman or any responsible elder) would see things done properly. He would not necessarily speak up for the accused, unless he felt that he was getting a raw deal. He would be anxious to find the truth in the case, partially for the sake of the name of his own village, and also for the sake of the man involved- and in that order. If he felt that his fellow-villager had done something quite bad, when he got back to his own village he would tell the headman and elders there, so that the culprit would be fined again by his own village-especially if it was not a first offense

The elder who has to travel to another village is supposed to be give one old coin a day for his trouble. Usually, however, if he finds his fellow-villager innocent he will not take any money at all. If the man is guilty, but he feels sorry for him, he will take only half the money coming to him, or maybe will not take any at all. It depends upon him.

INITIATION OF JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS

When a person wants to bring a case against someone else in his village, he takes a bottle of liquor and goes to the headman's house. He tells the headman what the matter is. If it is very minor, the headman will often try to fix it up by telling him to forget it. An example was given me of someone who was angry with a neighbour for stealing some of his firewood, and so went to the headman's house with a bottle of liquor, but the headman talked him out of making a case, and he went back home.

If the matter is serious enough, or if the headman cannot reconcile the parties by himself, he will first of all call the village priest, since he is in charge of the spiritual health and well being of the village. The two of them will then send word to the elders of the village to come to discuss this matter. They may meet at either the headman's house, or the home of the village priest.

When the elders are all there, the headman will have the man wanting to present the case tell just what happened. As he is doing so, the elders are drinking the liquor that he brought. After the evidence has been presented, the accused gets to have his say, and the accuser is supposed to keep quiet. I say supposed to since often he will start a running argument during the defence presentation. But if he does, the headman and other elders will try to quiet him down. There are occasions when the accused will readily admit his guilt and even beg the elders to make it a small fine. When this happens they usually do make it a small fine. But usually the only time they confess like this is when there have been witnesses who saw them do it. If there were no witnesses, usually they claim innocence.

After both sides have presented their testimony, they call for witnesses. They do not make witnesses swear any kind of an oath, but they have been known to fine witnesses who told a lie to the elders and thus brought about injustice.

During the proceedings it is not unusual for the one who has been accused to make a lot of fuss, scream at the witnesses, etc. If that happens, they scold him at first, and if that does not work, they will hit him. This hitting is not done in the process of ascertaining the fact of the case. Such a thought horrifies them. Nor is it punishment for his wrong. It is merely trying to keep him quiet so that the 'trial' can go on. I have heard of case where the accused got so angry and noisy that they had to tie him up and lead him out of the house where the discussion was taking place. I do not believe that this happens very much however.

TRIAL PROCEDURE

Bernatzik says that there must be two witnesses, but I have never heard this. They believe that anyone who saw the crime should testify, but they do not say any number of witnesses must testify before they can give a decision. Often there are no witnesses. Sometimes the witnesses are known scoundrels, and do more harm for the case of the accused than good.

They do not make a person take an oath before testimony, but if it becomes a matter of one person's word against another, he will often put himself under type of oath, 'If I didn't do it, let a lightning-bolt (tso) strike me. If I'm lying, I'm willing to undergo a lightning bolt'. There are many variations to this, 'Let a tiger carry me away if I am lying'. 'If I did like he says, let me die- let me die right now!' Etc.

Sometimes the elders will ask one of the persons in the case if they are willing to take an oath. There are sometimes, I understand, when a person giving testimony will back down at this pint. He is afraid to take an oath either if he is lying, or if he is not positive of the innocence (or guilt, depending on which side he is testifying) of the accused. Also the next question after they ask, 'Are you willing to take an oath?' might be, 'Will you undergo an ordeal?'

There are many ways of having a person undergo an ordeal (m myaw sheu-eu) in the Akhas culture. Of course sometimes if the person says he is willing to undergo an ordeal they feel he must be telling the truth, and so they drop it. If the elders are not sure, however they may still do it, although they do not do it now nearly as often as they used to. It is so expensive that K-28 and K-29 say these days people tend to take unresolved cases to Shans, since even though they have to pay money and all, it is still much less expensive than having an ordeal. But there are times when a case has blown up into such a big issue that they feel they must have the ordeal.

K-29 has seen ordeals three times. One was between two Akhas in the same village, one was between Akhas and Shans, and one was between Akhas and Lahus. I believe that some forms of ordeal have been borrowed from the Shan, perhaps, but what the Akhas do now is so Akhaized that it is hard to draw any lines.

One of the most popular forms of ordeal is the uncooked rice chewing ordeal (ceh pyu g'o-eu m myaw sheu-eu). If they are going to do this, they must set a day when they will have it. They must also invite all of the village priests in the area. It is ideal to have six, but they can do it as long as there is at least one. Local Shan rulers as well as village elders from nearby villages are also called. They arrive in the village on the evening before the actual ordeal. Each side in the case must kill a pig that evening, to feast the elders of the village, as well as those who have been invited from other villages. When the ordeal is over, the one who lost must pay for the pig that the other side had to butcher.

The next morning they again feast on the pork that was killed the day before, and then go up to a spot outside of the village gate. They have quite a bit of preparation for this. For one thing, they must make a crude type of altar (ja gui) in the center of where they are going to have the ordeal. It is built up off the ground about two or three feet. There must be a divider going right down the middle of this altar, however. It is made, as the whole altar is, of split bamboo. The divider rises about six or seven inches above the altar. The man who is bringing the accusation will then put money on his side of the altar. It may be one viss (3.6 pounds) of silver coins, or 100 old coins, or whatever he wants to put there. The man being accused must then put exactly the same amount there. If he does not have it personally, he must borrow it, or get some of his relatives or friends to put it there for him. The one who wins the ordeal will get all the money.

There are two shelters (she g'aw) constructed for each side. The accused must stay on his side, with the witnesses he has, as well as his relatives and those who are on his side, so to speak.

I have gotten conflicting statement concerning incest. Some say that they are fined. Others say that they are not fined. Others say that they are not fined, but that they must perform the 'tearing of the sub-clan ceremony' (pa tseu tseu-eu), and that is enough. From the only examples I have gotten, the latter seems to be what they really do. After they have had the above-mentioned ceremony, then they are not considered to be in their former clan or extended family – so it is no longer incest. Of course they cannot eat the ancestor offering with their former relatives- they must have their own ancestor altar and eat there. But they can visit their former relatives- although they must never use the kin names with them as they did before. At one time I heard that they must not enter their relative's houses, but I think now this is not correct.

If a husband deserts his wife, she gets the house and all of the goods left there. At least this is what some Akhas have told me, although I have never heard of this actually happening.

PROPERTY OFFENSES

The Akhas have a saying, 'For an offense a home, one 'daw'. For an offense against the paddy house, one 'ya'. (Nym si ti daw, ji si ti ya). One 'daw' equals four old coins. This means that if someone steals something from my house, he must give me back the object he stole, plus a fine of four coins. If someone stole some paddy from my paddy house, he must give me back the paddy, plus a fine of 7.50 coins. Of stay on his side. There is a line they make with a machete, which keeps them apart.

Besides the altar, they must also arrange nine stools near the altar. These are for the nine great 'dzoe' that they call when they have the three special ancestor offerings to the 'spirit of the village priest' (Vol. 1). On each stool they place cloth (the kind Akha women weave). The length of the cloth must be at least one hand spread (to), which would come to about eight inches. The winner of the ordeal gets the cloth, although the stools are returned to the owners.

They make two gates (law kah) out of the magic vine (meh) at the entrance to each of the shelters. When the men chew the uncooked rice and then spit it out onto a leaf, it will be while sitting in these gates.

The day on which they have an ordeal is a day of ceremonial abstinence for the whole village. On the evening before the village priest must call this out, so that there will be no intercourse (between married couples that is) or anyone breaking any of the other taboos related to ceremonial abstinence. Just before the ordeal, the two contestants each return to their own home, and after repeating their genealogy (tsui gui-eu) and calling out to all of these ancestors, plus the sun and moon, plus everyone else they can think of, and finally ending up with 'god' (a poe mi yeh), they then make an ancestor offering. The main thing they call is, 'Come and look. Don't let anything happen to me. I'm innocent. Let the worst possible things happen to the other man- he is a liar.' The ancestor offering is only carried out by the two contestants.

When the two men get back to the site for the ordeal, a spirit priest (boe maw) then calls to the nine great 'dzoe' to come down and sit on the stools. Then the spirit priest has some elders weigh out exactly equal amounts of uncooked rice (ceh pyu). The spirit priest then repeats spirit incantations to the rice to bring a spirit into it to reveal to them which man is lying. Then the spirit priest will call down a wasp (bya du), who, theoretically at least, will come down and fly around and look at each person who is present, and then will fly back up out of sight again. This is a spirit which comes to look around. In questioning K-29 about this, he said the wasp was called the times he witnessed this type of ordeal, but no actual visible wasp came. I do not know whether they consider this wasp indivisible or what. But they insist that each time the spirit priest must call the wasp.

Then just before the rice is put into the mouths of the two men, they both repeat their genealogies, and at the end ask their ancestors to come down onto their right shoulders to 'look'.

The elders then make an offering on the altar of pork, both raw and cooked, along with 'holy rice', liquor, and tea. This is for the spirit which has come down into the rice.

The helpers then dump the uncooked rice, which has been on a leaf, into the mouth of each contestant. The contestants themselves do not touch it. They go squat quietly in their gate and chew the rice. They are allowed all the time to chew they want, 'since the guilty one will not be able to chew his up anyway'. When they both say they are ready, they spit the uncooked rice they have been chewing back out onto leaves. Then the elders on both sides gather around and look at the rice. One of the two men will have chewed his rice well. There will be saliva mixed with it, and the grains will be chewed up. The other, who will be the guilty one, will not have saliva in his. The grains will not be broken and chews up. Also, the rice grains will be red, from blood which will come from his biting his tongue. They say that the guilty person cannot chew his rice- he can only chew his tongue.

When those present see which has won (g'a le-eu) the ones who were on his 'side' let out a whoop, fire off guns into the air, beat drums, rush up to the altar to take off all the money, and deride the other group with vigor and abandon.

The losing side has to kill another pig, but it can be small this time. It is the pig that sends the spirit back (shi pi meh k'o-eu). This is the spirit that the spirit priest called down into the rice to reveal the guilty party.

K-28 told of hearing about an Akha man who was guilty, but kept lying until they had this rice chewing ordeal. He could not spit the rice back out, and got to choking. His relatives had to pull him out of the gate quickly, 'or he surely would have died'.

There are other types of ordeals too, but the above seems to be the most popular and widely used. One type is to melt lead in a crucible, and then have the two accused place straws in it. The one whose straw burns right up is guilty. Of course, they also have to call the spirit to come down; the men have to repeat their genealogy, etc, as in the above.

Another ordeal by molten lead is to have a piece of money lying on the bottom of the crucible, and each man must reach in and take out. Before they do it, however, the spirit priest will give protection to the innocent one so that he will not be burned. They say that only a very good spirit priest can do this. If he gives this protection, and then both men come up with burned hands, he can be fined 300 old coin for lying to them about the protection he said he could give.

Another ordeal is to drink hot lard. K-28 saw a man whose face (around his mouth and chin) was scarred badly from this ordeal. He was the guilty party, of course, so he felt it was alright. I wonder if this ordeal is borrowed from the Mon-Khmer (A boe), since Akhas feel that a spirit priest from that group must be called to repeat spirit incantations so that the innocent party will not be burned.

There is another type of ordeal they have which they often use between two villages, or sometimes for every household in a village. If there is trouble between two villages, as where K-28 told me that a Shan village kept accusing one Akhas village near him of stealing their animals, they will sometimes resort to the 'boiling the rice packets ordeal', (toe pu pu-eu m myaw sheu-eu). The preparations for this are much the same as that described above for the chewing the rice ordeal. This time they weigh out equal amounts of uncooked rice, wrap them in leaves, and each contestant puts them in a pot with boiling water. They are also given equal amounts of firewood, although the Akhas insist that no matter how much firewood they have, the guilty party's rice will not cook. There must be go-betweens that handle the rice, leaves, firewood and the boiling of the packets. After both sides are satisfied with the time that has elapsed, they take the packets out of the water, and open them in front of all the witnesses and elders. The packet belonging to the innocent party will be cooked, but the one which belongs to the innocent party will be cooked, but the one which belongs to the guilty party will still be raw.

In the case K-28 told me about, the Akhas lost, so they had to pay all the expenses for the ordeal, and pay fines for stealing the animals they had been accused of stealing. This was agreed upon ahead of time, however, so there was no problem there.

There is also a way they do this ordeal in a village when someone has stolen something, and the villagers have no idea who it is. They bring a representative from each household to the site outside of the village where affairs are held. Since they call down a spirit to help point out the guilty party, they do not want to do this in a village. Then a packet of uncooked rice is prepared in leaves (as above) for each household. They then make some kind of mark on the package, so they can identify it when it is taken out. The all of the packets are placed in the same pot and cooked. When it is felt they should be done, they are taken out and opened. The one that is not cooked belongs to the guilty party.

A man who came with K-23 told how they did this ordeal of rice packets between two men in his village. One man was his paternal uncle. Another man had accused this uncle's wife of being a vampire (pi seu). The uncle strongly denied it. Finally, it came to having an ordeal, and the other man's rice packet did not cook, so he had to pay the expenses as well as a fine, and it all came to almost 300 old coin. After that, those two men never spoke to each other again, although they continued to live in the same village.

I have had cases told me where the man could not pay up, after an ordeal, so the elders made him leave the village.

I have also heard of where they did not have an ordeal, but put a curse on the thief. I never got the wording of the curse, but the idea was that they called the spirits to see that the thief died in a very short time. P-2 told me of a man (in 1952) who quickly confessed to his guilt when they started to call this curse down on the thief.

I mentioned above about striking the accused to keep him quiet. I should add that if during the proceedings it turns out that the man was innocent, the one who struck him can be fined. Also, whenever someone accuses a person of a crime, and then it turns out that that person was innocent, the person who brought the case to the elders must 'wash the face' (mya pyaw tsi-eu) of the man he unjustly accused. They do not literally wash the face, but they must give four old coin. Also, if they have struck the accused when the accused was innocent, they will usually be fined seven or eight old coin.

When the elders and headman have pronounced judgement (ya k'a da-eu), the case is considered as closed –in that village, at least. If they want to make any kind of appeal, they must go to the Shans.

EXECUTION OF JUSTICE

The Akhas try to finish a case in one night, and if it is not complicated they often do. But sometimes it lasts over many days, especially if they have to wait for witnesses to come back from trips or the like. Often this leads to bribery (la nm nm-eu) of the headman. Even though he alone does not have the final say in the matter, he can often swing the discussion so that the person who bribes him gets off free, or with very little fine. For some of the bigger cases, they may try to bribe up to about 40 old coins (I have heard of one such instance). But for the more minor cases it is usually just four or five old coin.

K-28 told how that when he was headman in the village, there were three man who tried to bribe him. According to him, he did not accept the bribes. They were small bribes – only between three and five old coins.

If Akhas find that their headman took a bribe, they are almost certain to choose a new headman. They look down on any headman who would do this.

When it comes to Akhas trying to bribe Shans to get favors, however, they all feel pretty much that they must do it, since 'we have no face before Shans, the only way they will listen to us is when they see our money'. K-28 and K-29 told of a case where an Akha boy was with some Chemise KMT troops when they murdered a villager in the Loimi area. The Chinese all got away, but the Akha boy, about 17 or 18 at that time, was caught, and tried for murder. The boy's father kept giving bribes to various Shan men who said they could help him- but they just 'ate' the money, and no good came of it. The boy was killed.

Akhas say there are three main types of cases: 'gui si', for stealing little things outside a person's home (as firewood), or killing someone's chick when it comes into another's garden, and that sort of thing. For this the headman usually tries to get the case dropped, or if it is not, the guilty party usually has to set up the drinks (ji ba k'a-eu) for the elders. The next is 'g'ah si', which is going into someone's home (nym si) or paddy house (ji si) to steal something. For this they must give a pig, return the goods taken, and often pay a fine as well, depending on the elders. Also, if they opened the basket in which the ancestor altar goods are kept (a poe paw law pu tu) to take something out, they must also provide all of the expenses for an 'inside ceremony' (la k'oe m-eu). They must call a spirit priest for this, and make various sacrifices etc. K-28 saw this twice in his village, but he has heard of it happening many times.

Their third and most serious category is 'nya si'. This is basically 'wronging another's wife', although some other crimes would be included with this, such as 'stealing love' (mi k'oe k'oe-eu) etc. I asked about murder, and they said, "Oh yes, that would be this kind too". Perhaps there are not enough murders in Akhas society that they categorize it along with the more 'common' crimes. Long ago the person who committed a 'nya si' offense had to give at least one buffalo. Now they are heavily fined and must kill two pigs, etc. (described above). As to which type of offense it is, and what the particular punishment will be, the headman, village priest, and elders will decide and announce it together.

K-28 told of a boy coming from another village to his village and talking frequently with a married woman while her husband was away. The young people (za gu) told K-28 this was going on, so he called the boy. He questioned him as to what he was doing—"Just visiting". So he asked why he did it for hour after hour alone with the woman in her house when he knew this was against Akha custom. The boy could not answer.

So they tied the boy, and called his father to come. When they 'tie' someone for this type of thing, they do not tie them firmly, they usually just tie a rope on one arm. The reason the father was called was that he controls the money for the family, so he is the one who must pay the fine.

When the father came K-28 fined him sixty old coin, which was just half of what it would have been if it were a proven case of adultery. K-28 gave half of that to the Shan cycle officer (sa ma ti) in his area, kept two coins himself, and out the balance into the village fund.

If a person has done something wrong, usually he does not try to run away, since he fears the beating he will get if he tries to. If a person from a distant village, however, is not recognized and thinks he can get away, he will try to run. If he gets away, the offended village will just drop the case, since they feel that he will not be back to cause more trouble.

When it is a very poor person they fine, if that person cannot pay the fine, the elders will either make his close relatives pay it, or at least go bond for him, stating that they will pay it within a certain length of time. Of course, in some instances such people, especially if they are repeaters, will be kicked out of the village. There are also some places where the fined person who cannot pay up will be tied and handed over to the Shans. But this means usually that the relatives will hand over the money rather than see him tied up.

There was an interesting case in Ho he Akha in April 1965. Two brothers got into a terrible argument, and one was not willing to end it in the village, so he took it right to Kentung. Police were sent to arrest the brother and bring him in, which they did. But later the one who had him put in jail came himself, along with four or five of the elders, to ask the authorities to release him. They did not want to have case against him after all. I asked the one who originally accused his brother what made him change his mind. He said it was paddy planting time, and they needed his brother to come back. Actually, I learned from his friends that he had cooled off, and felt rather badly that he sent his brother to jail.

PRISONS AND JAILS

Akhas do not build any kind of 'jail' for criminals, although they do make them (ku) for insane people. Actually, Akhas are very much afraid when they are handed over to Shans and the Shans put them in jail.

They believe that if a rope or chain used to bind them was previously used to bind a convict who was executed, even if they are released, their lifespan will be shortened. Also, if the rope or chain was used to tie up a crazy person, they too will become crazy. Furthermore, if they die in jail, it is a type of terrible death (sha shi-eu), and they cannot be taken back to their village to be buried. Moreover, their village must perform the 'village protection ceremony' (pu k'eh g'eh-eu), and the family of the person who died in jail must have a ceremony to keep the terrible death from plaguing their household (sha yah law-eu).

There always seem to be a fair number of Akhas in the large Kentung jail, although I have never gotten figures on this. But I have talked with several of them. The most common crime is robbery or dacoity. The latter is usually when they have been in a group with Chinese or Shan leading them.