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IN THE TEXT THE AUTHOR REFERES TO FOUR AUTHORITIES ON THE AKHA. THEIR WORKS ARE REFERENCED BELOW.


Gordon Young. The Hilltribes of Northern Thailand, Bangkok, The Siam Society, 1962
NAMES AND NAMING

PERSONAL NAMES

Every Akha has a name of two parts. Usually the first part of the child’s name is the second part of the father’s name, this is true for both boys and girls. These names are the official names (tsaw myah myah ma) - the official name is not used very much in everyday life, except when the person becomes an elder.

For about a year after a baby has been born they usually just say ‘boy’ or ‘girl’, and don’t use any name. However, they also get nicknames (tsaw myah myah paw) during this period. Often the nickname is related to their official name. For example, if the official name is ‘Ym seh’, they may call the boy ‘A seh’ or they may call him something completely different, as with P-l, whose official name is ‘Saw ja’ but everyone calls him Za po.

There may be circumstances having to do with the birth that determines the everyday name of a child. For example, if the child was born with the cord wrapped around its neck, and was a boy, they will often call him ‘Lah tui’ or ‘Lah jui’ (both male names). The term ‘lah’ means ‘twisted around’. If a girl was born with the cord wrapped around her chest of over one shoulder, they will call her ‘Lah sha’ (the term ‘sha’ being the way they refer to someone carrying their shoulder bag in that fashion.

If one child dies, when the next child is born they often give it the first name ‘Sa’, from ‘bi sa eu’ to make easy. They also sometimes do this after the birth of twins. It is kind of request that things will be ‘easier’ with this child and they will be able to rear it. This can either be a part of the official name, or it may be in the everyday name.

They sometimes hope to change the sex of the next child in their giving of a name. For example if a couple has three girls, and then the fourth child is also a girl, they will give that girl a boy’s name. ‘We are sure to get a son the next time’.

Some of the everyday names are somewhat derogatory, and they do not use them in front of the person. A boe and a friend of his told me the name of a man I asked about as ‘Mya shu’. Then the friend went on to say that no one would say that name to his face but would say A shu. Because he has a peculiar squint (mya eye) they call him Mya shu behind his back.

K-2 told of a man whose name is ‘Mui kah’, but is now called A pyeu (pyeu la eu = to become) by the Akhas. The reason for this is that he first became a catholic, then reverted to the Akha religion, then became a Catholic again, then ‘became’ an Akha again. It is not a complimentary name. He would never use it himself. When a man (Sah tse) was angry at him he did use it however, but he also added the word for ‘bad omen’ (A pyeu pyeu daw) which made it an extremely bad name to call him.

The common initial syllables for the everyday names for boys are A, a (no special meaning), Law (from Chinese), Li (a li = boy), and Za (za = child). For girls the commonest are A, Bu (a bu = girl), and Mi (za mi = woman, girl).
Boys are sometimes given names that start with ‘Pu’, as ‘Pu jeu’, Pu lah’, and ‘Pu zi’. These are names which are usually given to a child which has been born just after the parents have moved into that village (pu), or to an infant that is being adopted and bought into another village. The idea is that this is an ‘addition’ (jeu) to the village, or a ‘blessing’ (lah) for the village, or that this child will help the village become more ‘firm’ (zi).

One strange thing to me is that there are a very few names that can be used by both girls and boys, such as ‘A sheu’. All that I have found like this start with ‘A’.

Often a person has more than one everyday name. As ‘A gu’, for example. He is often called ‘Gu za’.

There is one girl whose mother I once helped. I heard the girl referred to by three different names in the same afternoon: ‘A ti’, Bu ti, Puah ti’. The last one was her official name. The mother gave her own name as ‘Bu ne’, but since I heard others calling her ‘Mi ne’ I called her that too. I think this might be a matter of her being older, so her friends call her ‘woman’ (mi) rather than just girl (bu).

Often Akha men also take on a Shan name, especially for the benefit of Shans who cannot say the Akha name, or in case the way the Shans say their Akha name makes it a bad meaning in Akha. If the man is a first son he will be called Ai Lo, the third son Ai Sam, the last son Ai La, etc. This was true of Sah tse, for example, who id known as Ai Lo to the Shans. One time in Loimwe I said something about Sah tse and the shopkeeper had no idea who I was talking about, but some Akhas near by gave the Shan name, and they knew right away who it was. However, when Akhas talk about him, they never use the Shan name.

Akhas do not like to tell their own name. It is much more polite to ask someone with them. The women especially giggle and hide their mouths when they have to give their name. Unlike the Lahus, Akhas do not call a person ‘father of so and so’, or ‘mother of so and so’. If there is a kin relationship, they usually use that when speaking to each other, rather than the name. Or as A so did on the occasion of telling some other Akhas about Za po, who is his father’s sister’s husbands (a shah), he called him Shah po, a combination of the two.

NAMING

When a woman realizes she is pregnant, she sets aside a rooster (ya seh) to be killed for the naming ceremony. By the time of the ceremony, this rooster will have to be big enough to crow. Every Akha stresses this point when talking about this.

When they have the naming ceremony, the father of the baby is the one who must kill the rooster. When he kills it he must be extremely careful not to hit the eyes or ears. They seem to believe that this will cause some kind of injury or sickness to the baby if he does.

After the rooster is dead, the father will put out three long tail feathers (ya ci daw mi g’aw leh-eu). He puts these in his turban, and leaves them there until the ‘naming meal’ is over. When he takes them out of his turban and sticks them into the wall on the woman’s side of the dividing wall (law ka), not too far from the ancestor altar. The feathers are carefully kept there for the one cycle of days, but after that they just allow them to disappear.
Then the father takes the rooster, dresses it and makes curry. The woman of the house will cook rice for the naming feast. When everyone is ready, the husband will put down the ‘rice table’ (haw jeh), and put the following ‘dishes’ on it: chicken meat (this includes the thigh, which is very important, a little piece of liver, and three small pieces of meat from any other section of the chicken), ‘holy rice’, liquor, and tea. The mother then sits at the ‘rice table’ holding the baby.

Then the old lady who is in charge (usually mother in law) will take a string and dip it in each of the dishes on the table, and then tie it around the mother’s wrist. Then she will take another cord, and after dipping that in each dish she will tie it around the infant’s wrist. There are some areas, I understand, where they just wave the string around the dishes three times, without actually taking pains to dip it in each dish. While the ‘old lady’ (a pi) is tying the string around the infant’s wrist she will say something like this, “‘Te hui’ is what I name you, ‘Te hui’.” The name that is actually chosen is one that the parents choose. The one used above is merely an example, although it is a possible name for a boy. The name given the child is the ‘official’ one, which connects the child to his paternal ancestors. It must not be the name of some dead person. They feel that the person who died is now a soul with the same name it had while alive, so that name must not be given to another.

After the woman has tied the string and given the name, she will say, “don’t cry now. Get real big.” Some Akhas do this. The woman takes off her jacket and holds it up to the child a moment and says, “Hurry and get as big as this.” But others say that this is not done until a later ceremony (see below). Then the old lady dips her finger into each dish on the ‘rice table’ and touches that to the lip of the infant, as if feeding it. After she has done that, the actual ceremony is over. The family and elders then gather around the ‘rice table’ and have a feast of rice and chicken curry. However, they do not eat the chicken thigh that was in one of the dishes described above. The reason for this is that if during the first cycle of the child’s life it cries a great deal, they feel that they have not given it the right name. So they have to re-name the child. In order to save having to kill another rooster, they keep the thigh, since that would be enough for a re-naming ceremony. If after 13 days (a cycle) the child does not cry abnormally and seems happy with the name that it has been given it, they can throw the chicken thigh into the fireplace to burn up. They must not feed it to a dog, or just throw it out carelessly. I noted that k-25 still had the thighbone she had used when naming her son, although he was nine month old when she told me. She would not have to use it since her son was happy with his name, she said. I think she might have kept it for good luck, although she did not say that.

When they re-name a child, often they consult a shaman (nyi pa). She will go into a trance, and the next morning she will often say something like this, “I found last night that your child is not happy with his (her) name. Why don’t you give him a name related to a spirit priest (pi ma-ah ta eu).” When the parents give this new name, they will make the first syllable ‘Pi’ (after ‘pi ma’). This means that the name will be different from the regular overlapping pattern. In many genealogies I have gotten, there has been at least one name starting with ‘Pi’ for this reason. Sometimes they consult a ‘maternal uncle’ (a g’oe) about changing the name. If he changes it, the name will often start ‘G’oe’ (for a g’oe).
MESSIANIC MOVEMENT

About 1942-43 there was a messianic movement (a poe seu-ue) among the Akhas, that originated in China, but affected the Akhas in various areas of Kengtung State.

I was able to interview a man (Gui-tu) who had taken part in this. He was 19 years old in 1943, and lived in Seu bo Akha village in the central eastern part of Kengtung State (roughly between Meung Kai and Meung Yawng). At that time, the Akhas in that area heard a great deal about messianic ’spirit’ that had possessed some Akhas in China. They heard that this ’spirit’ could possess them too, so two men each from over 50 villages started out to the village where the leader of this movement lived. They did not know the name of the village, or the way to it, but they just kept asking people on the way where the Akha village was that had received this ’spirit’ (a poe seu-eu), and followed their directions. They traveled for 15 days before they got to the village.

The Akha village they came to is called Na-deh Akha and was said by Gui tu to be larger than Kengtung town, “although there were no cars in it, just lots of horses and mules”. As far as I can gather from his description it may have been in the mountains of the Ssu-mao area of Yunnan. Beside the regular villagers there, there were also hundreds of Akhas from other sections of China. Gui tu’s group was the first to have come from Burma, although more followed later. His group stayed there for three days.

During their stay, the leader taught them. His name was Kwa tsui, which is a Chinese name, although he was fully Akha. He told them how he and another man has gotten the ’spirit’ first (the other man lived about 15 days journey north of that village-they did not go up to see him). He taught them certain things they must not do: they must not steal, argue, commit adultery, attack others, or covet other people’s goods. In regard to the last one he told them they would not need to covet anyone’s goods, since in the end they would ’get more goods than they could possible use’.

He also told them that they would never have to work again in order to eat. They would overcome the Chinese and Shans, and they could live in the valley in the Shans’ more permanent village and eat the Shans’ food, while the Shans would have to live up on the mountainsides where the Akha people formerly lived. He also told them, that he had conquered all of the Chinese and Shans in his area of China, and that he was the ruler (sah pa) of the Akhas. Note: there were no Lahus in that area.

He went on to tell them, however, that they must never attack anyone first. They were only to fight when they were attacked by others. He then gave a slip of paper with magic writing on it for each village, so that the ones who got the ’spirit’ could never be harmed by gun, crossbow of machete. He said that if there was really a reason for full-scale war, they were to call him, as their ruler, and he would come with his soldiers and take care of it for them.

The ruler, Kwa tsui then killed a pig for them to feast on. He did not repeat spirit incantations (to-eu) or anything of that sort, but he did seem to stab the pig in a special way. All of the men from Burma were gathered around the stabbed pig and watched it squirm and twist and turn in its death agonies. Suddenly it died right in front of a man by the name of Jadze, from Burma. This was a sign, evidently, for later, after they returned home, Ja dze was the first to receive the ’spirit’.

They then set out to return home. On the way, Jadze’s brother, Ja shui, saw some wealthy Shans, four of them on the path. He started brandishing his machete at the one who had the bulk of the money, and was able to get the money away from him. But the Shan man’s three friends came up to Ja shui with their machetes and cut him in the chest. It was not too serious, however. Gui to felt that he got the cut because he has ignored the command from their ruler not to attack first.
When they got back to their village, Ja-dze was suddenly possessed by the ‘spirit’. He began to tremble violently and speak ecstatically, as he had seen the ruler and other doing in China. What he spoke was the Akha they speak everyday, but spoken in a very excited manner, and in a high pitched voice. He began to teach the things he had learned in China, and presently other Akha’s who had gone to China got the ‘spirit’ one by one, including Gui-tu, my informant. Even some who had not gone to China got the ‘spirit’ as well. When the movement was gathering speed, the Ja-shui who had stolen money on the way back from China, got angry at a Shan man and killed him. The Shan’s were then angry at Ja-shui, and set out to kill him. He went into hiding and sent word to all who had received the spirit, “come quickly with your arms- the Shans are attacking us”. He did not tell them that he had attacked first-they only learned of that later, which made them feel they had been tricked. When Ja-shui later went insane, Gui tu felt that it was because he had not obeyed the ruler’s commands.

All of those in the area where Ja-shui was hiding who had gotten the ‘spirit’ (40 of them, including my informant), gathered with their guns and machetes. They then attacked the Shan town of Wan Keng Hkam (Meung Wa), and drove out all the Shans. They were elated with this easy victory and began looking around the town. They went into the Buddhist temple, and took all of the offering money, and everything of value they found. They then began to knock the idols around and do whatever they wanted to them.

It was about that time when they were getting hungry, and they saw some plump white chickens. Now the ruler in China had told them that if they ate the meat from white chickens, or white buffalo, or white pigs, they would immediately lose the ‘spirit’, but with their elation and hunger they ignored that, and quickly cooked and ate a hearty meal. In the meantime the Shans had stealthily come back into the outskirts of the village, and were watching the Akhas. After the Akhas had eaten the white chickens, the Shans felt emboldened to attack them. Since the Akhas were both taken by surprise, and since they had lost their magic by eating the meat of the white chickens, they did not put up a fight. They ran away as fast as they could. One Akha man was wounded by a bullet that went right through his leg behind and a little above his ankle. They did not think any Shans were killed, and they were sure no Akhas were killed in the skirmish.

Then the Shans called the Thai soldiers, who had just recently come into the country, and with them they went to three of the Akha villages and burnt them down. They probably would have burnt down more, but all of the Akhas in that area had fled.

The Akhas had lost their ‘spirit’, so the movement petered out rather rapidly. I asked if the ruler in China had lost his ‘spirit’ too. They did not know, and did not seem especially interested. They never heard of him or the movement again. Gui-tu later had trouble from KMT Chinese soldiers (his wife and one son were killed by them), so he moved into a Catholic village in Kengung, and his is now a Catholic.

I checked on the movement with other Akhas, and got virtually the same story. K-2 added, “If the Thai soldiers had not come at the time they did, they Akhas would have conquered the Shans for sure”. He gave an exaggerated account of the actual fighting (“many Akhas and many Shans died”), and he also said that the Akhas controlled all of Meung Wa and Ce Hkm-which is almost certainly not true. Of course, he admitted that he was just telling me what he had heard others say.
P-2, who lived in Meung Yamng at the time, but was never involved in the movement, told of two men he knew Sheh dzah and Sheh pyu, who had gone to China and gotten the ‘spirit’. They went around recruiting people to their cause, and told them that if people did not obey what the two of them said, those people would go crazy. Later those two men were killed by the Shans, and it died out in the area.

K-28 and K-29 also told me of the repercussions in their area. There were three men from their area who went to China and ‘got the spirit’: Gaw dzoe, Gaw sui and Gui shah. Each was given a little length of bamboo with some paper with writing on it. Every third day they had to offer a chicken to the bamboo section with this magical paper in it. They got the ‘spirit’ and sang (ca-eu~) in Chinese. They would also shake all over.

There were a good many from the Loimi area and north who got swept up into the movement, but as far as I know, they did not actually fight the Shans. The movement quickly died out when a man named A Naw-i, who had gone and ‘worshipped’ (u du tah le-eu) Gui shah, became crazy and killed his own son. He then lived in Ba naw village. The men feel his is still alive, but do not know where he lives now (1966). After killing his son he called his wife and said, “Bring some hot water, I’ve killed a pig”. She thought that he really had killed a pig, and bought some hot water in. When she came in she saw him cutting up the legs of her son in preparation for cooking, and instantly she screamed, and the villagers came in and tied him up. They built a cage and put him. When he began to speak rationally they called a spirit priest (boe maw) to repeat spirit incantations (to-eu) for him. Later he was able to get out of the cage, and seemed to be all right. His ‘spirit owner’ (yaw sah) took him out, the Akhas felt. But when people in the area heard of this, they dropped the movement immediately.

The movement is finished, but many Akhas still remember, a bit wistfully I think, “The time we almost defeated the Shans”.
IDEAS ABOUT NATURE AND MAN

ETHNOMETEOROLOGY

In their proverbs, and when they repeat spirit incantations (to eu), Akhas call the sun ‘younger sister’ (A gm), and the moon ‘older brother’ (La k’eu). Whenever Akha’s have difficulties, they beg the sun and moon to “look down”. Also, when they harvest their first rice, they “shew the sun and moon” the first rice that they get.

The sun and the moon are married. At first the sun carried letters every day between the lord of the east and the priestess of the west, but she did it at night. She told God, “I’m afraid to go at night”. God said, “All right, go in the day then”. She said, “Oh no, I’m ashamed since I am married to my brother, and I don’t want people on earth to see me”. God said, “If anyone looks at you, he will get a needle in the eye”. And that is why we cannot look at the sun now.

Akhas believe that day and night came about when the ‘great tree’ was cut down. Before, it was always like night. But then the sky, which is considered something solid, with stars ‘stuck’ into it, was too low and close to the ground, and also it had too many suns and moons in it, so they had to shoot out all but one of each, and each time one was shot out, it raised up higher from the earth, so that no it is just right. Shooting stars which are see high up in the sky are called “stars that are going to get married” (a gui sm mi i-eu). If a shooting star swings down and seems to enter the horizon, this is called “lump of silver” (pyu a ma), for they believe there is a lump of silver or money where the shooting star entered the “mountain”.

Akhas believe that when the sun is eclipsed (nah ma nah keu dza eu, or nah ma sha eu), it is the sun and the moon having intercourse. This is also true of an eclipse of the moon (ba la keu dza-eu), which, custom wise is handled in much the same way as an eclipse of the sun. Where there is an eclipse of either the sun or the moon, Akha men will fire their guns, but I have heard two explanations for it. One is that they shoot their guns towards the vicinity if the sun or moon to bring it back out, and the other is that they shoot their guns during this time so that the guns will not explode the next time they shoot at one of the big four animals.

When there is an eclipse, Akhas are deadly afraid that blood from the son (who is female) will drip down on them. If that blood (ca shi, or nah ma ba la-eu shi) drips on a person, they can see it. Later, that person will have blood come out of his mouth, and he will die. Women especially are afraid of this. When I observed this in K-28’s village, I noted that his wife went running back into the house when the sun was going into an eclipse, “because I was afraid like anything”.

Women who are pregnant must not look at an eclipse of either the sun or the moon. During an eclipse when they go out of their house, they must have three leaves (or sticks or the sort) on their head, and keep them on as long as the eclipse is going on. I believe they may consider this to be the same as being in the house, and therefore the blood cannot drip on them. During eclipses of the moon they believe that dead people rise up and start walking around. K-28 and K-29 told several stories of Shans (one was of the royal family) who have had this happen, “since the Shans do not know how to handle this like we Akhas do”. It seems that the Shans are not willing to leave a body unburied if there is an eclipse of the moon.
Akhas also fear hail (u yeh a si), especially if it hails during the time they are growing paddy. If it should hail during that time, the village must observe ceremonial abstinence (lah-eu) for one day. The elders will beg the hail not to return. Note: the term hail (u yeh a si) is pretty much of a taboo word in polite conversation.

When there are strong winds that blow, Akhas seem to have different reactions. Some say they fear them, others say that “if we know what to do, we don’t need to fear them”. Often when a person dies a ‘terrible death’ (sha shi-eu) there will be a very strong wind, which is his spirit. To stop it they will blow three notes on a buffalo horn, or on their gourd pipes (la je). They will also take some ‘cold rice’ (haw ga), and throw some first in the direction the wind is coming from, and then some in the opposite direction, repeating spirit incantations while doing it. They do this in their own homes. The theme of the spirit incantations is, “Don’t come this way. Go to some other country. Go to a far distant place”. They will not observe ceremonial abstinence for this. However, if the wind blows down a tree or a big branch from a tree within the environs of their village, the whole village will (lah-eu) for one day. They also believe that there is a relationship between some winds and a ‘no-son person’s’ death (shm byeh). They do not consider this to be such a strong wind, however.

Akhas have a great fear of lightning and the lightning-bolt (tso) that is thrown down when there is lightning. They believe this ‘tso’ is thrown from the sky with permission from God. It will rip right through a tree and plunge into the ground. If the ‘tso’ is not damaged, it will later go back into the sky. If however, there is a bit of metal at the end which is broken off, then the ‘tso’ is dead, and will not return to the sky.

If the ‘tso’ strikes a person, he will be killed, and it will be because he has committed a great sin. His bones, however, will be considered excellent for medicine. Also, if it strikes a buffalo and kills it, the bones of that buffalo are good for medicine. The ‘tso’ is used by Akhas as medicine, and also as protection. That is, if one has a ‘tso’, a bullet cannot enter one’s body etc. These ‘lightning bolts’ are very old axe heads they find in their fields. They say there are also stone ones, which I have not seen, but I imagine they would be from tools used during the Stone Age.

As to earthquakes, there are several theories concerning it, all based on various legends and proverbs. But the most consistently believed one seems to be that it is ‘Ja bi oe lah’, the creator of the world, who is checking to see if people are still on earth or not, and to this day they say, “We are here”. See the following section for more detailed discussion of this.

ETHNOGEOGRAPHY

K-2 told me of a special type of spring water in the Na bo area, which is near the top of a mountain. The water does not run out, but bubbles around in this hole. If people stand there and talk a bit, some very small fish will come, and you can see them swimming around. If the people keep talking, those fish disappear and bigger fish come, and so on until there are 12 kinds of fish, each of them larger than the last group. The 12th kind is a single fish, and a whopper. When they can see it they are frightened and run. They consider that these fish are the servants and soldiers, of the ‘lord dragon’ (bya yah sah pa). Akha considers them to be very powerful spirits (neh yaw k’a). If you do anything disrespectful to them, such as spitting into the water, or urinating near by, then the spirits of those will be sure to afflict (gu la-eu) you.
To Akhas upstream and downstream are important directions, as well as ‘up and down’ (that is, for all their terms of going, coming, returning, etc., the have a choice of two words, one of which indicates from a lower to a higher point, and one from a higher to lower point.) This carries over into their feeling about cardinal points. They consider that ‘east’ (‘sun comes out direction’) is the upper side and the ‘west’ (‘sun fall down direction’) is the lower side, so that as the day wears on the sun is going down hill, so to speak. We found that when Akhas look at a map, they want the upper part to be east rather than north. It is very difficult to indicate north and south in Akha, except to say “China direction” for north and “Thailand direction” for south.

As far as I can tell, Akhas do not have any concept of the ‘beauty of nature’. They appreciate pretty flowers but not as part of the beauty of nature. It is a means of personal decoration, as well as to hiding body odor. When they look at what a westerner would call a ‘beautiful scene’, they do not see it as beautiful but as a good place to hunt barking deer, or a good area for making fields, etc. I do not mean to disparage the Akha sense of beauty, for they have it in their decoration etc., but they do not seem to have much interest in the broader, less personal type of beauty.

On September 22nd, 1965, I was sitting with four Akhas in the Christian Hospital waiting room, when there was an earthquake. When the two Akha men and two Akha women realized it was an earthquake, the men began saying, “za nyi boe a a nm jaw 1” (“All we people are still living on earth”). They did not say it very loudly but certainly in earnest. Then one of them, a spirit priest, asked the other, “Have you said it yet?” He said, “yes”, and then they both repeated it, as the tremors continued. The two said nothing, but sat perfectly still. The nurses and hospital workers were running out of the brick hospital, but the four Akhas stayed right where they were. K-30 felt this was because they were afraid of falling down in an epileptic fit if they tried to run during an earthquake. When the quake was over and the Akha men were discussing it, right away they started talking about the possible implications of the quake to the rice crop.

They said that if it happens too often, it is not good for the rice. They said that one was the “second one this year”. The spirit priest also explained something about the world being up on pillars, and the other man started asking him about the great dung beetle, but their turn to be examined came, and afterward I did not have a chance to speak further with them.

I have gotten the following four reasons for earthquakes:
1. The ‘lord dragon’ (bya yah sah pa) pulls at the roots of the earth and that is what makes it shake. This probably comes from the legend of the woman, when asked by the dragon to tell him were any people on earth, told him not to believe anyone, but to shake the earth each time to check for himself.
2. The earth is situated on a giant frog, and when the frog moves, the earth shakes. This is also based on a legend, and on the premise that the earth is kind of floating on four pillars over an expanse of water.
3. There is a giant dung beetle who made the earth, and it wants to check and see if there are animals and people still on the earth. This dung beetle may be the same as ‘Ja bi oe lah’.
4. When a person with very great power and influence dies, as a king or the like, the earthquakes, somewhat in sympathy.
ETHNOBOTANY

Akhas believe that there are one hundred and ten, plus two more, kinds of things that live. Also there is one hundred and ten, plus three more, kinds of rice. This comes from their proverbs, and perhaps shows their feeling that rice is more important than animals.

ETHNOZOOLOGY

If some wild animal comes into the village, without being chased by either humans or other animals, it is a ‘bad omen’ (daw), and the villagers must perform a village protection ceremony (pu k’eh g’eh-eu). If they do not, some houses in the village will catch on fire. K-28 and K-29 told me of a case they both knew about where a barking deer came into the village and they did not perform this ceremony. Before long, three villages burned down. The two men seemed dumbfounded that Akhas would think they could “get by without performing the ‘village protection ceremony’ at that time”.

The kinds most likely to come in are: pheasant, jungle owl and barking deer. K-29 has seen animals come into the village that were being chased by wolves, and were seeking sanctuary. This does not seem to be a bad. They can kill and eat these animals if they want to.

When a tiger takes a dog off, they must not chase the tiger. They can shout and beat things, but “it is not right to chase it”. Later, they can look for the dog. If it is dead, then they must just discard it. If it is still barely alive, though, they say, “Oh, look at the dog, about to die of hunger”, and quickly stuff some cold rice (haw ga) into the dogs mouth. If they do this, then they can eat the meat when it dies, since it was not ‘killed by a tiger’ (k’a la seh-eu), but ‘killed by hunger’ (meh seh-eu). If a tiger or leopard takes other animals off, they follow in hot pursuit. but they say that dogs are different, since they live with them. Therefore it is not ‘proper’ (teh k’m) to chase dogs.

When a dog howls (a kui tseh ngoe ngoe-eu), Akhas believe it is a very bad sign, although Shans take it to be a good sign. They call a spirit priest and have him repeat incantations (to-eu) so that the dog’s owner will not get sick. They say that the dogs see the legs of ‘Maw hui’ and ‘Maw nyi’ (brothers in an important legend). That is why he has hid head up when he howls-he is looking up where ‘Maw nyi’ disappeared into the sky. The spirit priest will perform an ‘inside ceremony’ (la k’oe m-eu), and a ceremony to keep the person from getting sick of dying (sa dah k’eh g’eh-eu).

There is a type of very small civet cat (bya hi la kaw), which the Akhas fear very much. They consider them the “dogs of the spirits”. If these civet cats get mad at a person, they may try to attack him. If the animal can run through the person’s legs, they believe, that person is sure to die-unless he can repeat the correct spirit incantations right away. So if they are attacked, they sit down quickly and fold their legs under them in such a way that the animal cannot run through their legs. K-28 told about shooting at one, and it got scared and ran off. He was scared too, he said. They do shoot them sometimes when hunting. If they are dead, they do not fear them. They also eat the meat.

If a tiger or leopard has killed some animal and another animal comes and jumps over (tsaw dzeu-eu) that kill, the tiger or leopard will not eat it.
Akhas believe that they must not strike a cat while their wife is pregnant, or the child, when it is born, will be like a cat. Actually, Akhas try to do all they can to please and pamper cats, since “if we didn’t have cats we could not have a village, rats and mice would eat all the food up”.

Akhas believe that snakes will have one of three possible names: Ai Lo, Ai Yi, and Ai Sam- all Shan names. When they call to a large snake, they will call all three names, since they figure that one of them will be right. (Note: they do not pay attention to small ones) Akhas believe that snakes can understand Shan and Chinese. If they tell a snake in Shan or Chinese to stay where it is for a bit, it will stay there up to a day or two. Or, if you tell it to spit out medicine for you it will. I imagine that these are from Shan or Chinese beliefs. Akhas have quite a few legends and myths that have to do with snakes and magical things they can do, but in at least one I am sure it comes from Shans.

They have many ideas about certain birds, most of which are written up in other sections.

ETHNOANATOMY

If when a child is born, any of the ‘parts’ (a seh) is missing (a seh dah-eu), the child must be killed. It is considered a ‘human reject’ (tsaw caw). If all of the ‘parts’ are present (a seh lo-eu), the parents and the villagers are very happy. Akhas like a person who has a well developed body, whether male of female. There is not much concern about the parts of the body, other than that they are all present. But, they feel that a person who has not grown up properly is one who has not had sexual intercourse with the opposite sex, and is therefore something of a queer.

They say that a thief or a dacoit will have an extra bone in his body. They do not seem to know just where it will be, although I noticed K-2 pointed to his ribs when he told me. There will also be something different too if the person is very smart, or extremely well gifted in some field. Akhas believe that they are bound to be different in their bodies as well.

Akhas do not kill albinos, actually they consider then to have ‘luck blessing’ (gui lah). Often they will become spirit priests of shamans, as the A jaw woman who was a ‘powerful shaman’ (nyi pa sha ma) the one whose husband committed suicide. Albinos are called white people (tsaw pyu). There do not seem to be many among Akhas. The only one I have definitely heard of is the A Jaw woman mentioned above, wife of Lo zeh, and grandmother of La bah from Ya ka.

Akhas say that those people who have their eyebrows go across the bridge of their nose (mya sheh sheh dzoe) will have lots of money (pyu gui lah yaw hui). If they have two forks of receding hairline (u ca ca eu), this means that is they are well off they will be very well off, but if they are poor they will be very poor. “However, you do not see many poor people like this.” For those who have sideburns (ba sheh sheh lah te-eu), they say that they will have lots of ‘luck blessing’, and lots of buffalos.

I am not sure what they do to those born with a clubfoot. But there is a man in Pa teh with clubfeet, and he was allowed to live. Perhaps the parents kept it hidden at first, and when he was larger and it was found out the villagers did not have the heart to kill him, but I don’t know. For harelimps and others considered ‘human rejects’ (tsaw caw) they kill them, as I have described elsewhere.
ETHNOPHYSIOLOGY

If a person has a twitchy right eye, it means that that person, or someone in his family, will get very sick. If it is in the left eye, it means the person will see an argument or death among his own relatives. If they get a bad twitch in their left shoulder or left hip, then it means that they will meet some very bad people (as robbers, dacoits, or the likes) that very day. If the twitch is on the right side, “it has no meaning”.

If a bug or insect (a maw) enters one’s mouth, it means that one is going to have meat to eat. “This is true, too, since the other day when I was urinating a bug flew into my mouth, and that evening your wife gave the two of us some pork to take home to eat.” (K-29)

They say that when a person has the hiccups (i tui tui-eu, or ui tui tui-eu), it means he has stolen and eaten an egg. I have a feeling this is just said in joking rather than being an actual belief. They believe that clearing your throat three times is a potent way of scaring the spirits away. Spirit priests will do this before starting to repeat spirit incantations. Before they camp in the jungle, they will clear their throat three times, “and if there are any spirits around they will be afraid and run”.

Evidently they do not attribute and special meaning to sneezing, except as a test to see if a person is still being attacked by a ‘werewolf’ (la pya).

ETHNOSOCIOLOGY

In their legends you gather a bit of their general philosophy about their relationships with other races and groups. I would summarize it by saying that they take it for granted that their race is God’s favorite race, and that they are the really important group in the world—even though numerically they are smaller than many others.

ACTIVITIES OF THE AGED

The aged among the Akhas stay around the house and do what they can. Often, they take care of the grandchildren while the children’s parents go to the fields to work. They help feed the animals. Some of them are still fairly skilled at weaving things out of bamboo and rattan.

The ‘post-menopause ceremony’ (ya yeh m-eu) is performed for older Akha women, and is to be considered very important. The reason it is held is so that when a woman dies, she will not go back to her ‘male relatives’ (a meh a da), but will always stay with her husband. She must have a living son in order to do it. It does not matter whether her husband is alive or not. However, it takes a lot of sacrifices etc., plus food to feed the people who come, since they invite all the nearby villages. So only those who are pretty well off can do it. They will save up for years in advance. K-28 was in the process for saving up to do this ceremony for his wife when he had to flee because of the insurgence in his area. I heard from one (P-2) that if the woman’s husband is dead, and a son or sons is also dead, she must also do many extra customs, but others believe she must have a living son if her husband is dead in order to do this ceremony. They all seem quite agreed that she must not do it if there is anyone in the household who is pregnant at that time.
The women who do this ceremony are supposed to have reached menopause (za baw tsi eu), although I have heard of some who have had children after performing this. They say that to have children after doing this is all right—provided they are not ‘human rejects’. That would be ‘extremely bad’. I asked if it would be possible for a woman who had had a ‘human reject’ before menopause to perform the ceremony, and they said yes, since it would ‘make her good’ (m mui m ja).

Akhas seem to feel that after a woman has done this ceremony, her household will be much better off. Even though it takes many animals, they will get all those animals back as well as have many, many more because of performing ceremony.

When this woman who performs this ceremony goes through the various rituals, and later on for certain ceremonies, she must wear a white skirt. The other ceremonies are: paddy planting, getting the new rice, opening the paddy house (ceh ji tsi-eu). No other women must wear white skirts at these times, but women who have done the ceremony (ya yeh a ma), must wear white skirts for them.

This is what they do for the ceremony. First, they have to call a spirit priest. If a woman’s husband is a spirit priest, he cannot do it for his own wife. They must get another spirit priest (boe maw).

After they have had a pre-ceremonial feast (shi ne ti-eu) for the spirit priest, he will perform an ‘inside ceremony’ (la k’oe m-eu) for the spirits, killing one pig and one chicken. They must be of the opposite sex. He will repeat spirit incantations in front of the ancestor altar. In this the important point is what he asks the last ‘old woman’ (a pi) who died. Usually this woman’s mother, to please move up a ‘notch’ (?? ti) to make way for this woman to take over that position. They next morning the woman again wears her white skirt, and makes a lot of ‘fermented rice containers’ (ji ma ma-eu). She will make around forty.

When she is finished with that, members of her family will bring back 15 chickens, of both sexes, and put them in a big basket (k’a pah). Before they put them in, they wash their legs carefully, and also examine them to make sure they are all right for the sacrifice.

The next day, when they are ready for the actual ceremony, the spirit priest and some elders will take out the 15 chickens and examine them carefully again, especially the combs and the legs. If there is one that is not good, they will exchange it. But if there are as many as three that are not good, they consider this to be a sign, since they were all good when they were put in the day before. So, they will not hold the ‘post menopause ceremony’ that year, but wait at least one year.

They have a ‘pre ceremonial feast’ (shi ne ti-eu) for the spirit priest that morning, and then his helpers take the 15 chickens out of the basket again and the spirit priest kills them. The helpers also prepare the following dishes on a winnowing basket: ‘rice balls’ (ja leh) in one dish, broken rice with an egg in it in another dish, ‘holy rice’ in another, liquor, tea, water (with some salt in it), onion (gu ci), and uncooked rice (ceh pyu) in the remaining dishes. The bodies of the 15 chickens are laid beside the tray.

This is also a large castrated boar killed, which is primarily for food for the people who come from that and other villages for the ceremony. When everything is ready, the spirit priest goes into the woman’s side or the house and site in front of the ancestor altar.
The woman who is becoming a ‘ya yeh a ma’ sits right behind him. They start this about 8 in the morning, and this first spirit incantation will go on to about 11 in the morning. During this time and during the time they are doing the things which immediately follow it, neither the shaman or the woman must relieve themselves.

I did hear from one (K-29) that if a woman needed to ‘go to the jungle’, all she needed to do was to go down under the house, rub the ‘main post’ (jm zeu), and tell it, ‘I am going to the jungle’, and it would be alright. If she had to do that, however, her ‘luck blessing’ would not be as great. They have a magical help, however, so that the woman would not need to go relieve herself. She will bring a hen to the spirit priest (sah zah ya ma), and he will have a special spirit incantation (sah zah to-eu) which he will repeat over it, asking that the woman not have to relieve herself that day until all the ceremonies were over. Then they would let the chickens go. After that, they must never kill the chicken, although they can eat its eggs. When that hen dies, they take a small section of banana leaf and fix a special ‘packet’ (ceh cu) which includes: some broken rice, some cotton which has been torn free from a ball of cotton in the woman’s field, and a little sliver of silver. These are wrapped up in a leaf, put in the hen’s mouth, and then the hen is buried just outside the east side of the village.

While the spirit priest repeats incantations for the woman, he takes the ceremonial knife, and cuts off a little of the feathers from each chicken in three places, and drops them onto the winnowing tray. After the spirit incantations, the helpers cut off one wing from each bird before they are dressed. Then the spirit priest and elders eat another rice and curry meal. They have special fictive ‘material uncles’ (pi g’oe, jm g’oe, ma g’oe) for this just as they do for burial ceremonies. These also eat with the spirit priest, the village priest, and the husband of the ’ya yeh a ma’.

When the elders are finished eating, they take away the ‘rice table’ (haw jeh). Then the ‘important ones’ are each handed a dish with some meat in it, which is from the 15 chickens which have now been cooked. Each will have a piece of meat from the liver, the breast, and any other place. The spirit priest will have a piece of meat from the head. Each of those participating in this holds his own dish with both hands while the spirit priest repeats spirit incantations. It is generally the same theme that he repeated that morning before the ancestor altar: “may she have much ‘luck blessing’ (gui lah). Let as many animals as have been killed for this be multiplied back to her-and many more. Etc.”

When the spirit priest is through repeating the spirit incantations, the ‘ya yah a ma’ takes her dish and goes into the woman’s side (nym ma), and dumps the meat from her dish into a pot, especially prepared for this. Then the spirit priest sends his dish in with a child. The child hands it to the woman, and she dumps the meat from that into the pot. After that the others, in any order, send their dishes in, and she dumps the meat from each into the pot. Then the woman’s husband comes into the woman’s side, and he and his wife will eat all the meat that has been dumped into the pot. They do not eat rice at this time, since they have just had a rice meal. If the husband is dead, a son must eat this with her.

When this is finished, they put the ‘rice table’ down for tea (law baw jeh). Tea is then served to all of the honored guests, and while it is being served, the woman who is now a ‘ya yeh a ma’ does what is called ‘begs blessing’ (gui lah sha) but it is actually giving gifts to those who came. The woman will lead some of her children first of all to the spirit priest who recited the spirit incantations for her. The children put on him a new pair of leggings, a new coat, a new turban and at least one silver ring. Some say that they would give three silver rings for this. They also give a silver ring each to the village priest and to the three men in the ‘maternal uncle’ relationship.
If the family is well off, they must give a new jacket and a pair of pants to the spirit priest too. The new ‘ya yah a ma’ next takes the wings that have been cut off the 15 chickens, and puts them on the right side of the meat which is saved for the spirit priest to take home (pi sha), which in this case consists of 15 chicken halves. She puts them into a carrying basket (k’a ka) on the woman’s side of the house. After she puts the meat in the basket (yeh beh daw-eu), she puts a leaf wrapped packet of tealeaves in the basket as well.

Next the family of the ‘ya yeh a ma’ once again go in and ‘beg blessings’ from the spirit priest and other elders. This time they have some money, a bottle of liquor, and a cup. First of all one will go to the spirit priest, give him some money, then pour some liquor and have him drink it. After that, they will give honey and liquor to the other elders.

After they have done this, the ‘ya hey a ma’ takes the basket she has prepared with the 15 chicken halves and tea in it to the spirit priests house, or if he lives in another village, she will just leave it there, and the next day her son will carry it on to the spirit priest’s home. There is another chicken that the spirit priest killed at the same time he killed the 15, but it was left undressed and put up on the altar of the ancestor altar and left there during all of the spirit incantation. The chicken (la ui) is dressed by the ‘ya yeh a ma’ but some of the spirit priest’s helpers (boe maw a dzaw) actually cook it.

When it has been cooked they fix a dish for the ‘ya yeh a ma’ with the following pieces of meat in it: liver, thigh, breast, and a piece from another part of the chicken. They also fix a dish for the spirit priest which has the same things put in it, but his also has some meat from the head. This time the ‘ya yeh a ma’ is the first person to eat the meat. Since it is considered as ‘offered to the ancestors’ (a poe law dza). She takes out the meat with both hands and brings it to her mouth three times. Then the spirit priest does the same with his dish. Then the two of them feed this ‘ancestor food’ to the elders there, and they accept it with both hands. After that, all of the elders are called to eat the rest of the chicken (la ui dza eu). But this time there is no rice, just chicken.

At this time (usually 10 or 11 at night), the ‘ya yeh a ma’ is able to change from her white skirt to her dark skirt, and is able to relieve herself, since the ceremony is over. The next day there is another feast for the spirit priest and the elders, but this time the woman does not wear her white skirt but her dark one. The feast (yah shaw law ue) is named after the chicken they kill for it (yah shaw). The spirit priest takes the first bite at this feast. When they are through eating this meal, the spirit priest takes a ‘fermented rice container’ (ji si) and ‘plants’ it in the fireplace on the men’s side. While he is doing this, the village priest must also plant one along with him, and near his. While putting them in, the spirit priest will say, “The village priest and spirit are planting these. Suck it up!” Then the two men will ‘pretend’ (their word) that they are sucking up the liquor, but it is just the water that has been poured into the containers. The fermented rice itself may be all dried up and ‘turned to dust’, as they do it but that is all right. While the spirit priest and village priest are ‘drinking’ the liquor, the spirit priest will also repeat spirit incantations. The theme is that everything will be wonderful for this home in the future. After the two have ‘drunk’ some, then the three ‘maternal uncles’ (g’oe) drink some. Then the whole ceremony is finished.
For the first seven days after the ceremony, everyone in the household of the ‘ya yeh a ma’ must observe all of the taboos that have to do with ceremonial abstinence (no combing of hari, no spinning of thread, no sexual intercourse, etc.). After that the married ones of the family must observe the ‘no sexual intercourse’ (kui la lah-eu) taboo up until three months after the ceremony. Any unmarried sons can sleep with girls after the first seven days, however.

I asked what would happen if this was broken and they said it would not be ‘luck blessing’ (gui lah) for the family. A big Akha village may have as many as two or three of these ceremonies a year. Small villages will average perhaps every two or three years. For the big villages, they will usually kill a buffalo to feed the many people who come.

There is something additional that some women do. When their next good day arrives, they kill a pig and have a feast. The spirit priest who repeated spirit incantations for her is invited, along with the elders of the village. The ‘ya yeh a ma’ takes the first bite. If she does not have the pig or money to so it real soon after the ceremony, she can do it any time within three years after the ceremony. According to some, this is not obligatory, but others argue hotly that it is.

A ‘ya yeh a ma must offer one pig a year for three year, at one of the ceremonies mentioned above, where it says that she must wear a white skirt. She will also be the one in the household who will plant the rice first (ceh ka daw eu). The next three years she must offer at least one duck a year, and the next three years at yeast one chicken a year. At this point, they differ. Some say that at the tenth year, she makes offerings and does not plant the paddy first. Others say that as long as she offers a pig, she plants paddy first until she dies. No matter what, whenever she plants the paddy first, she must wear a white skirt. All of the informants stressed this.

When the husband of the ‘ya yeh a ma’ dies, she must not remarry. K-28 knows of one who did get married again, however. The man who married her had to give the cost of the ‘post-menopause ceremony’ back to the woman’s children (yeh po g’aw-eu). He said that this woman was later very hard up. But K-29 said that his own grandmother remarried after performing the ceremony, and she was well off. She had lots of animals etc. When she died, they killed seven buffalos.

There is a very important ceremony that they must perform for the last-born child (za shaw-eu), sometime after the post-menopause ceremony. They like to do it before that child, whose mother is now a ‘ya yeh a ma’, gets married. But if they do not have the animals needed, the child can go ahead and get married, and they will then do it to the child’s son or daughter that is, the woman’s grandchild). This is what they do for the ceremony (za shaw eu). They prepare three sows, two boars, three roosters and three hens. The spirit priest, who is called, must ceremonially sprinkle and then kill these animals. The sow (za lo) is given to the ancestors. One sow (ui k’eh a za) is offered to ‘open the path of luck-blessing’ (gui lah ga ma bi dah la -eu). One sow (ui ga), is the ‘companion’ to the one just above?? that is, performs the same function). One boar (nya jm) is offered to the second last ‘old woman’ (a pi) who died. In most cases this would be the mother. Of course there have to be other animals killed to feed the visiting village priest and other important elders from nearby villages. They must kill one large pig for this, or maybe a buffalo.
The spirit priest and his helpers then fix a winnowing tray with the following ‘dishes’: ‘Rice balls’ (ja leh), broken rice, liquor, tea, water, uncooked rice, ‘holy rice’, and onion (gu ci) with salt in it. Then the spirit priest repeats a special spirit incantation (za shaw to -eu) for the last-born child. It goes on for three hours. The theme is that he asks that the child might be ‘like God’s child’, that he or she might be ‘good, and cleansed’, etc.

They also kill a chicken and put it up on the ancestral altar (la ui), much the same as in the post menopause ceremony. While the spirit priest is repeating the spirit incantations, he ‘drops’ (la ka-eu) the things from the various dishes onto the winnowing tray. This is ‘feeding the ancestors’. Some of the spirit incantations have to do with the household having a lot of money and paddy etc.

When the spirit priest has finished his spirit incantations, the pigs are dragged to the men’s side of the house where they are cut open, and the livers are examined. They can tell from the livers whether the household will have plenty of paddy the coming year, whether the last child of the ‘ya yeh a ma’ will have a short life or not etc. Even if the signs are bad, however, the elders will always lie by saying, ‘oh, the signs of the liver are wonderful.’ K-28 explained the lying this way, ‘if you don’t say that, the family that is having the ceremony won’t be happy’.

Then they cut up the meat and cook it. While it is cooking, the last child, plus one ‘maternal uncle’ (a g’oe) as well as some elders, will leave the house. If there is no true ‘maternal uncle’ (a g’oe) in the village, someone will act on his part as a fictive ‘maternal uncle’. They then get out of the house, and down on the ground, the ‘maternal uncle’ takes a slingshot (ca oe), and shoots three clay pellets, ‘one in each direction’. The first he shoots to the east, the second one straight up and the third to the west. Each time he shoots it, he says ‘I’m shooting the slingshot to cleanse’ (ca oe peu shaw ma de).

Then he carries the last child on his back into the house. To hold the child on his back he uses a kind if blanket they buy from the Mon-Khmer (A boe). The blanket (pa jaw a bui) is red, black and white. It is the kind they give to their mother or father when they die. If the family of the ‘ya yeh a ma’ is wealthy enough, they will have a double strip of blanket sewn together (kah dzm), but if they are not so well off, just one strip (kah te) is all right.

If the last child is very large and the ‘maternal uncle’ is very small, then he does not really carry him. He merely drapes the blanket over the last born (called ‘shaw g’a here since he is being cleansed), with the ends around his shoulders and they walk. The important thing is that he ‘carry’ the last child (za sa) into the woman’s side, and put him down in front of the ancestral altar. Then the spirit priest takes the egg that was in the ‘holy rice’ dish, and breaks it open with the rice-stirring spoon (haw ceh da la). It is a boiled egg. The ‘ya yeh a ma’ then peels it and throws the shell into the fireplace near where the spirit priest broke the egg open.

Then the ‘ya yeh a ma’ takes some of the egg, with a little broken rice from the winnowing tray, along with some ‘holy rice’, and breaks it off (tseu neh eu), first to the spirit priest, who accepts it as an ancestor offering (a poe law dza). Before he eats it, he calls down a blessing (dam eu) something like this, ‘from now on may there be a ‘luck blessing’ here, and may it be easier for them. Today let the child be ‘holy’. May this household get along well. Let no young budding leaves fall off the plants. Silver and gold have been used by this household in purchasing strings. But don’t let the string from the purse go too. By means of the string of the purse bag may the silver and gold return.’ After the blessing, the spirit priest eats the food.
Next the ‘ya yeh a ma’ must give some of the food to the child (za shaw), then next to her husband, and then she breaks some off with both hands and eats it herself. After that she feeds the elders who have gathered at the table, with the village priest being the last one of their number to be fed.

Next, the ‘ya yeh a ma’ puts the following on the plate: ‘rice balls’ (ja leh), some sticky rice, broken rice and a little of the egg that is left over from the feeding of the various one mentioned above. The elders eat these things first. Then they have a rice and curry feast. Following which they drink liquor like mad. ‘During this ceremony we must drink lots of liquor’.

While they are eating, there are also seven special dishes put on the table, but they are not eaten yet. Each dish has a piece of liver and two pieces of meat. Besides this, the spirit priest’s dish has a chicken thigh and chicken head. The village priest’s dish has a pork rib in it. Two of the maternal uncles (jm g’oe, m g’oe) each have a pair of ribs extra, and the other maternal uncle (pi g’oe) has one rib. The ‘son in law’ (mi za in ceremonial language) gets the section between the ‘wrist and elbow’ of the pig (la du ti law). The husband of an older brother’s daughter (mi dze in ceremonial language) gets an extra rib. There is also an eighth dish (la k’o) for the husband which has nothing special in it, and is not put on the table. Instead, it is put up on the mat above the fireplace.

When they finished eating, the other dishes and rice bowls (haw g’aw) are cleared off the ‘rice table’ (haw jeh). Then the spirit priest reaches a finger into his dish and brings it to his mouth, and the others do the same, each from his own specially prepared dish. Then the spirit priest says, ‘lift up your dishes’ (k’m ci ci aw). Then he picks his dish up and the guest each pick up their own dish and holds it. The husband leaves his dish on the mat over the fireplace however. The ‘rice table’ (haw jeh) is then taken away, the spirit priest repeats incantations while all sit there holding their dishes (k’m ma taw). This spirit incantation is asking that the house will have money, health, paddy, livestock and ‘luck blessing’. It lasts about one hour.

After he has finished with the spirit incantation, he carries his dish to the ‘ya yeh a ma’ who is on the priest’s side. The ‘old ladies’ (a pi) have eaten there. She takes it and puts it down on a winnowing tray. Then next, the village priest brings his and so on. The last two to bring their dishes in must be the ‘son in law’ (ma dze). Then the woman puts the contents of the dishes into a pot, and she and her husband eat all that is in the pot. Any sons can also join them. Then they bring out the ‘tea table’ (law baw haw) and give the elders tea to drink. They put some of the meat on a dish. This is meat that was cooked as the meat for the feast. First everyone drinks tea, and then eats meat. They are not really hungry, of course so they usually eat just a little. Then they serve them tea.

Next, the ’cleansed child’ (za shaw) comes in and begs blessing’ (gui lah sha) the spirit priest by giving him liquor to drink, and a new set of clothes. If they do not have enough money to buy new set of clothes, at the very least they must give him a silver ring that has a design that is built up (na gah myeh dzeu), a pair of cloth shoes (like the Chinese sew), leggings, a turban (usually a towel they buy in the market).

If the child is an infant, then the infant’s mother, that is the daughter in law of the ‘ya yeh a ma’ will carry the infant in and guide his or her hands in giving these things to the spirit priest. They also put a silver ring on the hand of the village priest, and each of the ‘maternal uncles’ (a g’oe). Each of them also receives a ‘turban’ (towel).
They then pack up a carrying basket (k’a jo) with meat for the spirit priest (pi sha). This time it is carried by the ‘cleansed last child’ (za shaw). Then they pack it, they again ‘beg blessing’ (gui lah) the spirit priest by giving him plenty of liquor. Just before the basket is carried off, they cook the chicken (la ui) that was on the ancestral altar. It is ‘ancestral offering food’ (a poe law). The spirit priest takes the first bite, and then they do what they did for the similar part of the ‘post menopause ceremony’. After that they have a regular meal and the spirit priest returns home.

The next day they offer a chicken (yah shaw law see above). They call the spirit priest for this and he takes the first bite.

After the ceremony, they have much the same rule as observing ceremonial abstinence as for the original ceremony.

If an unmarried girl becomes pregnant during this time it is extremely bad. Also, a young person in that family must get married within 12 months of the ceremony.
HISTORICAL RECONSTRUCTION

MIGRATORY MOVEMENTS

Akhas have been migrating from China into Burma, Laos and Thailand for many years. I cannot be certain when they first came into Burma from China, but it was probably over 100 years ago. I get this figure by calculating the number of generations they have been in the country and also the ones they paid revenue to when they first came.

Since 1947, when I first arrived in Burma, the Akhas have tended to enter the country in waves. When the KMT nationalist Chinese) government made things too difficult for them in China and food was scarce, many of them came into Burma. Then later when the Communists took over, more villages came. Later, when the Communists forced the people into communes, others came. In that group was Na daw village, which used to be just a few miles north of the China border, then called ‘Ba gaw A ka’. In 1956 they came across to live in Burma, not too far south of the border.

This is how they came. They noted that the guards along the border, though guarding the border carefully during all of the night hours and most of the daylight hours, left it unguarded long enough for both shifts of guards to have an early morning rice meal together, as well as a pre-dusk evening meal. So they elders figured their best chance was to leave right after the guards went off duty to have their meal, and thus before the daytime guards came on duty. They quietly got everything ready that they could, without causing the guards suspicion, and on the day set they carried what they could and drove what animals they could, and make a dash for the border. They got across safely without having a single shot fired at them. But they had to leave behind almost all of their chickens, most of their pigs, many cows and buffaloes, and much of their rice. Later, there were a few who felt that conditions in Burma were worse, so they stole back across the border into China, and after living there for a year fled back again into Burma.

In June, 1965, the village sent two men (k-16, k-17) to scout out a new area for a village site in the extreme southern part of the state. They found a good site, so in January and February, 1966, 64 houses make their way to that new site. What with overcrowding in the northern part of the state, and the extremely high ‘taxes’ and fees they have to pay to insurgents, as well as supporting home guard troops, they felt they could not continue to live there. And thus the migration of the Akhas continues.
GENEALOGY

The ‘genealogy’ (tsui) of an Akha is extremely important to him. It is patrilineal. At what point it changes from history to myth is impossible to say. Following is a fairly typical genealogy (k-2), with the numbers following some of the names referring to notes that follow the genealogy.

M ma   Nyo za tsaw  Zui ci
M g’ah (1) Tsaw maw oe  Ci bya
d’ah ne  Maw oe dzoe  Bya deh
Ne zaw  Dzoe tah pah (3)  Oe ci (6)
Saw seu  Tah pah mah  Mah yah
To ma  Haw tah je  Zah dm
Na yaw  Je le nyaw  K’ah pyeu
Yaw neh  Nyaw ci la  Nyo dzah
Neh beh  La tah boe  Dzah lo
Beh sm  Tah boe soe  Lo naw
Sm mi o (2)  Boe soe leh (4)  Naw ce
O toe loe  Leh lm bo  Ce sah
Toe loe dzm  Bo mah po  Sah hui
Dzm maw yeh  Mah po ci  Hui ga
Haw yeh ca  Ci sha byeu  Pi sa (7)
Ca ti si  Byeu ma dzah  Sa dui
Ti si li  Dzah jeu  G’oe cm (8)
Li paw beh  Jeu bya (5)  Leh shaw (9)
Paw beh u  Bya zeu  Shaw tsui
U nyo za  Zeu zui  Tsui dzah (10)

The first two names represent the ‘creation’ (M ma) ‘God’s child’ (M g’ah), from whom all people descend (see pages 26-30, Vol. 1).

Usually they start their genealogy from this man (see page 36, Vol. 1).

The name of the ‘mother’ of people and spirits (see 36-37), Vol. 1).

When a spirit priest (bow maw) is?? (pg. 748)?? the soul of a person who has just died, back through his genealogy, he starts with the dead man’s name, and repeats the name of the father, grandfather, and on up (tsui gui da eu) to this name. According to some, she was the first ancestor who was bad, so that all under her are bad. Since those above her are all good, the soul of the person who died has no trouble going on up, so the spirit priest stops reciting the genealogy at this point. Also, the spirit priest feels that he must not go past this name, since he is still living. There is also some relationship between this woman and twins, which are sometimes called ‘Tah pah eu za’ (children of Tah pah). Some seem to feel she had twins (as P-1), but I could not substantiate this from what others say. I think almost all agree on the fact that anyone who has had twins cannot go higher than Tah pah in the spirit world.

the main branch of Akhas in Kengtung State come from Boe leh. He has at least four sons: Leh lm bo from whom the Jeu g’oe eventually come), Leh la zeu, Leh la tah, and Leh la tsi.
This is the name of this man’s clan (a jeu). The clan name usually occurs in this general part of the genealogy. Sometimes the actual clan name does not appear in the genealogy at all.

The speaker was not certain why this ancestor was called ‘Oe ci’ rather than ‘Deh mah’. Sometimes they know exactly why there is a ‘break in the genealogy’ (tsui tsaw), but this was so long ago he did not know. The most likely explanation is that there had been twins born in the family before this child was born and thus it could not be given the name of the father.

This person was almost certainly named ‘Ga sa’ originally, but as a child he was either sickly, or cried a lot. So a ‘spirit priest’ (pi ma) told the parents to rename him, since the original name was not proper for him. When the parents renamed him, they gave the credit to the spirit priest by incorporating pi (from pi ma) as the first part of the name. This is a woman’s name. The speaker’s great grandfather’s name was Dui leh, but he died from smallpox. Therefore his name must not appear in the genealogy (tsui tsaw). Those who have very such breaks consider that they have a very good genealogy. Dui leh had two brothers, Dui law and Dui ja. Dui law’s son was Law Sah, and his son Sah, a friend of mine for many years from Burma village. Dui ja’s son was Ja sho, and his son Sho k’ah (k-1).

The speaker’s grandfather was a village priest (dzoe ma) as well as a spirit priest (boe maw). He was the blacksmith (ba ji) for the village. Such men considered to have ‘complete spiritual capacity’ (dzoe sm pi ku eu). Since the grandfather was a village priest, the speaker could also have been a village priest, although he was not. Only his very closest friends and immediate family would know the name of the speaker. He is commonly called Maw boe, which as no connection with ‘Tsui dzah’. But those in his sub-clan (pa) would know the name since they would be able to recount his genealogy too. But they do not speak these names lightly. And the father or grandfather is still alive, they will repeat his name.

There is a different type of genealogy which represents those whose forefathers married into the Akha tribe. For example, k-7, when giving me his genealogy, exactly the same names as all other Akhas down to dzoe tah pah. Following that this is what he said:

Tah pah  Ta sui  K’oe zui  
A mo  Sui kah  Zui g’m  
Mo ta  Kah k’oe  G’m lo

The name ‘A mo’ is a non-Akha who married into the Akha tribe. He may have been Chinese or Lahu, the speaker did not know for sure. When he married an Akha woman, he took upon himself her clan, and carried on the Akha religious customs just the same as Akhas did. The speaker (G’m lo) is considered fully Akha today, and is fully accepted into his village. But from his genealogy, he will always be aware of his no Akha beginnings. In the Akha (A kui) genealogy there are basic similarities with Akha genealogies, down to where they branch off at ‘Tah pah tsui’, but with some interesting dialectical changes:
The speaker (Ga baw) belongs to the Leh pu clan. His wife’s clan was Dzaw koe. Other clans of the Akhui are: Dzaw ba, Hoe pu, Maw nehn, Tsi kaw, Gaw kui, and I’m sure many more. There are several things that puzzle me in the Akhui genealogy: why is there no ‘Sm mi o’, and why is there both a La sa, and a La sa dzi. Also, why are there only 18 of the so-called ‘spirit’ (neh) names instead of 25, and in the Jeu g’oe genealogies?

It is impossible to give all of the possible genealogies, but there are certain divisions that crop up constantly and appear to be quite important to the Akhas. They are also an aid to the village priests who must remember the genealogy of everyone in their village.

For convenience, I label Dzoe tah pah as generation 1. I mention the three sons above (Tah pah tsoe, Tah pah mah, Tah pah sha).

the ninth generation, descending from Tah pah Boe soe leh is very important, with his four sons (see page 749). In the 15th generation, a descendant of Leh la zeu, Shaw ma zeu, had three important sons: Zeu shaw, Zeu ceh, and Zeu ta.

In the 11th generation, descending from Leh lm bo, Bo mah po, who had two important sons, Mah po and Mah po shah.

Descending from Mah po ti, in the 15th generation is Dzah jeu, who is very important for historical reasons. He had at least four sons: Jeu jaw, Jeu g’oe, Jeu no, and Jeu bya. The sons of Jeu jaw were Jaw bah, the great Akha ruler (see page 40, vol.1), and Jaw ba. Jaw bah’s only son was Bah jui (page 46, vol.1). These two were the last Akha rulers. Bah jui’s sons were Jui lm and Jui ta.

Jeu g’oe had three sons: G’oe meh, G’oe jeh, G’oe zui (17th generation). The most important descendent, genealogically speaking, was Byah leh, who was in the 21st generation, descending from G’oe jeh. He had two sons, Leh zah and Leh nyi (22nd generation). Most of the clan names are from men in these 22 generations, although some are taken from lower down, especially when they wish to distinguish more clearly of which branch of the clan the other person is from.
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In the ‘spirit incantations’ (to eu) that Akhas repeat there are many legends that have to do with the history of Akhas. This includes the first Akha, the first place Akhas lived, Akhas moving down south, the ‘great tree’, the cutting of the tree so that only six Akhas and six a boe were left (see page 56, vol.1), etc. Each time Akhas hear an elder repeat spirit incantations, he gets a review of their ‘history’. This ‘history’ is in poetic form, and does not include very much detail.

A Lahu man who studied in Chinese schools and is now living in Kengtung (Yawtha Chang), told me some interesting things concerning the possible background of the Akhas. He feels that the Chinese historical records are badly biased, but taking what he read in he histories, and what he learned while living in china, he felt that the general idea of south-west Yunnan used to be some what divided up among the following groups: Lahus in the K’unning area (the two lakes there are called Naw naw naw shehn by them, then and now, and the Shans to this day call it Meun shehn, from the Lahu name (he thinks), the Akhas in the Yuan-chiang and Mochiang area, are the Mnchia in the Ta-li, Yang pi area, and the Lisus in the Lung-ling area. He says that the Yuan-chiang area is still called A baw Jaw deh country.

The Chinese name is simply a name which tells the name of the river flowing nearby. Is this the case, and I see no reason why is should not be, it fits the idea Akhas have told me about the ‘three western migrations of Akhas across the Mekong’. That is, some went due west across the Mekong from Yuan-chiang (A baw Jaw deh country), and are the ones now in China. Others went down into Laos and then came across the Mekong, and they are the ones in eastern Kengtung State. I thought at first a third group may have gone down and entered Thailand from Laos, but there does not appear to be any evidence of any Akhas entering Thailand except through Kengtung state, Burma.

Yawtha Chang told about an Akha girl from Mo-chiang who knew Chinese well, and had been trained in Chinese schools. When he was in Kunming in 1944 taking training, this girl came through with a troop of about 200 young people who were teaching and preaching the KMT doctrine. She was the head of the whole group. The Chinese in the group pointed her out to the other hill people by saying, ‘Look how far this Akha has come. You study hard and you can become like this too.’

Yuan-chiang is about 100 air miles south south-east of Kunming. The Akhas seemed to move south of there (when they tell about the Shans coming up they mention this), but of course went west as well. As far as I can tell now, the main concentration of Akhas would roughly fit into the following: 20 degrees as the south boundary (with not more than four or five villages located south of that), 99 degrees as the west boundary up to 22 degrees north, and then over to 99 degrees from 22 to 23 degrees north, and over 100 degrees from 23 to 24 degrees. The northern border would probable be 24 degrees, and the eastern border would be about 103 degrees or so. I would judge that 95% of all Akhas would be in this general area. of course, many of the Akhas have lost their identity, due to merging with the Chinese, or whatever predominant group they are living among.

K-16 and K-17 said that according to legend, the great general area in which Akhas originated is called Peu ci na ci. This is similar to a term Lahus use. Telford feels this indicates ‘Peking and Nankning’, but the Akhas I talked to do not feel this is so. They consider this a poetic way of referring to Jaw deh country, or somewhere near there. K-16 and K-17 told me about how many of these ‘Jaw deh Akha’ would come to their village while they were still in China. They were great traders.
I have heard from other groups that they have come down into northern Kengtung State, too. These Jaw deh Akhas, when they visited Ba gaw village, said that their main town was Jaw deh law dzah, which may be what the Chinese call Yuan-chiang.

They spoke of the Akha language well, and used Akha when speaking with the Akhas of that area. But among themselves they spoke Chinese.

From K-15 I got that they feel that originally Akhas came from their own Akha ruler. But they say this occurs only in their ‘spirit incantations’, so I wonder is it may be merely another way of saying Jaw deh country. K-15 went on to say that when the Akhas came from China into Burma, they came by way of ‘Jeh lu meu’ but this too is from their ‘spirit incantations’, and have no idea just what they mean by it.

K-29 told of an Akha village he was sure had been Burma more than 100 years. It is called Ba naw Akha, near Meu nyeh. It used to be very large, with over 300 houses in it, he heard. That was long before he was born. Now (1966) there are only 40 or so houses, since those who did not have terraced fields kept migrating south. All of those left have the terraced fields.

There is another village K-29 and K-28 told me of, Je mui Akha, on the Loimi mountain. Villagers from this village used to give tribute to Was when they ruled the country. At that time there were no coins, so they had to cut off a certain weight of silver from silver clumps. At first they were called ‘Loi mi Akha’, but when the Shans drove out the Was and started to rule, they had to give ‘sm mui’ (probably thirty viss of silver) to the Shans, so after that, and until this day, they are called ‘Je mui’. K-29 said that men in these two villages can count eleven generations that have died in Burma, which, if true, means that some Akha have been here quite a bit longer than 100 years.

ACCULTURATION

In November, 1965, I met an old Akha man at the home of K-24. He told me that Akhas are not able to live with Shans. He has lived with Shans, along with a couple of other Akha houses, for awhile. But he said that they argued all the time. I asked him why, and he said that the Shans would not only scold the Akha children, but they would also hit them. ‘And not just with their knuckles, but even strike them with sticks.’ The Akhas would not stand that. He said too that it was hard to live with the Shans because they were not ‘bashful’ (sha daw-eu) about asking for anything. ‘Give me that to eat, give me some of this- you have a lot etc.’

He started listing off the groups that Akhas could live with, and it turned out to be all the tribes in Kengtung state- apart from the Shans. But then he went on to say that there was one Shan household in his village now. He said that they get along fine with that Shan, ‘because he lives just as we do’.

There is a group of Akhas known as ‘turban Akhas’ (u dzah A ka), since their women wear turbans, evidently just like the men. They are Akhas, and speak Akha, and know their clans-which are the same as other Akhas. But the dress, especially of the women, is quite different. Besides wearing a turban like the men, their skirts are longer than other Akhas, and they wear less silver, especially the little spherical silver buttons (coe k’aw).
They themselves say that they have ‘ga si si-eu’, which evidently means they have has a change of religion. The term may come from ‘free’ (kai shin) in Chinese. This group of Akhas used to observe the ancestor offerings just as other Akhas, although I believe they may have spent a longer time observing ceremonial abstinence during the offerings than other Akhas observe.

When they realised that they spent so much time on their ancestor offerings that they could not work their fields properly, and saw weeds take over their paddy fields, they cut the number down to three: ka yeh, mi shu, do eu (pitch pine burning ceremony), and a third (which informants forgot). They felt that the second ceremony was borrowed from the Chinese, or perhaps from some Lahu who sometimes do it.

They have borrowed much more Chinese in their daily speech than other Akhashave, although they still speak Akha. There are a few villages in the northern part of the State noe, but most of them are still living in China.

ETHNOCENTRISM

Akhas have a loyalty to their tribe, which carries on down somewhat to their clan and sub clan, but it is not true ethnocentrism. They keep repeating how small their tribe is, and how far behind other tribes they are. A summary of their statement may be, ‘we are a small tribe. We cannot think as well as other tribes. We have not progressed as far as other tribes. We do not have any rulers.’ Of course, much of this is related in one way or another with their legends.

There are many Akhas, however, who feel that when their children get an education, they will gradually be able to catch up with other people.

In November of 1965 I talked with a young Akha policeman who wanted me to get ‘them’ (the Burmese government, I presume) to have regular Akha program from Rangoon. He said that once a year there is a program of Akha from China, and several of those around said this was true. They all wanted such a program very much in Burma. I felt that part of the reason they wanted the Akha program was because they felt ‘below’ (te-eu) everyone else. They felt this would build them up, and give them a name along with some of the other tribes of Burma. They mentioned, for example, that the Kachins, Shans etc. have their broadcasts. During this discussion one of the older men mentioned that Akhas are very good at learning other languages-which is true. The ones he mentioned were: Shan, Lahu, Chinese, and Burmese.
CULTURAL CHANGE

On one occasion in 1965 I was in the home of Ai kat, just outside the Kengtung west wall. As usual, there were all kinds of Akhas wandering in and out. I saw as I had many times before, a cross section of evidence of cultural change, and pressures for change, within a two hour period.

First of all I met a young man who used to live Mu ma village near Loimwe. He is married, and has three daughters. He learned to read Akha when his distant relative Maw boe (K-2) taught there about four years before. He and some friends went to Kengtung three years ago, and now he is living in a little Akha settlement on the outskirts of Kengtung, and as he puts is ‘not following any religion’. Part of the reason why he may not be following the Akha religion is that he has no sons, but this surely is not the whole story.

A big item is the fact that he is not living in a community that, as a community, is following the Akha religion. I asked him what they did when someone in the family got sick, and he said, “go to the hospital”. I asked him how they would bury a person in their ‘religion-less’ state, and he seemed fairly worried about that. Then he said, ‘Apart from sickness and death, this matter of having no religion presents no problems to me. But I must confess these two matters do have me concerned’. He then said that he was considering back to some Akha village, but was worried about living away from a hospital.

Ai Kat, the head of the house where I was, became Buddhist when he moved to Kengtung. According to him, he was the first Akha to become Buddhist. His reason for becoming a Buddhist was, ‘I moved down here to live with the Shans, didn’t I?’ I am not sure just why he moved to Kengtung. Partially he was concerned about getting his children educated—at least so he says. Also, he may have found it was hard to get opium in accordance with his requirements when he was in the village in the Loimi area. He is a pretty heavy opium smoker. He still knows the Akha religion well, and I feel quite sure that if he were still living in an Akha village, he would become one of the respected elders in carrying out the Akha religion. When we are talking about these matters, his wife said, ‘we may have the Shan type of ‘ancestor altar’ (a poe paw law) hanging up in our house, but whenever anything goes wrong, I still do just what we Akhas have always done’.

Later as she added details concerning what she meant, especially from a woman’s point of view, concerning the Akha religion, I noted a certain wistfulness. I am sure that she would be delighted to live in an Akha village again. However, after seeing her many times, I believe that she is quite happy in her present situation too, especially since there are so many Akhas coming and going all the time.

Then there was another old Akha man who was there, who said I spoke to him once about six years ago, and repeated the conversation. He is now a Catholic, living about two hundred yards above Ai Kat’s house. He dropped in to visit, and maybe to smoke opium, I don’t know. He did not smoke while I was there. He was so anxious that I get everything about the Akha culture just right that I asked with a bit of wonderment, just why he has become a Catholic.
Then he told me his story:

He was well off, and a member of a large Akha village when the KMT troops were causing so much trouble in that area about six or seven years ago. They would hold people for ransom and then kill them if the impossible sums of money they tried to extort were not forthcoming by their deadline. There were a total of seven people murdered by the KMT soldiers in his village, including his wife, and his only son. So he, and several other of the villagers, fled the Kengtung where they put themselves under the protection of the Catholic fathers.

His idea, as he expressed it quite freely to me, was not so much that he was anxious to become a Catholic, but the only way to get protection was to live in the Akha community that was under the direction of the Catholics, and thus, with his Akha background in mind, he was willing to accept the predominant religion of the village in exchange for the right to live there. He and some of the others told me during our conversation, however, that many of the Catholics still go to Akha shamans (nyi pa) who live near by.

There was another man I talked with there. He was anxious to get medicine for one of his daughters, who had night blindness and other problems. I suggested that he go to the hospital, but he said that he had been to the Civil hospital, and they had just ‘rubbed a little medicine on’, and sent him away. This man was ‘camping’ with Ai Kat. He and his daughters cooked their food separately and ate separately.

Up to now, he is still following the Akha religion, but the health of his children and other pressures are making him seriously thinking of moving to Kengtung. Of all the Akha men I talked with he was the only one who still has his queue.
The Akha language is in the Lolo group of the Tibeto-Burman languages. (See on Akha phonology in vol.1). The Akhas themselves do not seem to know much about the Lolo’s, or Nosus, but they do realize that their language has basic similarities with Lahe and Lisu. Some Akhas formerly from China told me of a tribe called Law pe by Shans and Chinese (they call themselves Pe law meh). They have three clans; Law beh, Law law and Law pe. They have ancestor offerings although somewhat different to the Akhas. Their ancestor shrine is on the opposite side of the house from the Akhas, as well. But their language is related to Akha, with many words being either identical or close enough to show a close relationship. They are no doubt part of the Lolo group. Whether the term ‘Law law’ has any relation to Lolo or not, I do not know.

Dialectical differences are not as great among Akha as among some other tribal languages, especially those of Loi (Mon Khmer) groups. No doubt this is because the men usually marry women from other villages, and this tends to cut down on the amount of linguistic variation. The Jeu g’oe dialect appears to be the one ‘standard’ dialect, with the A jaw dialect ranking perhaps second in importance. It is not terribly different from Jeu g’oe. For practical purposes, the two dialects can be called mutually intelligible. But even the A jaw recognize the Jeu g’oe to be the dominant group, and they tend to use Jeu g’oe when speaking with the Jeu g’oe.

The greatest extreme is between Jeu g’oe and the A kui dialects. They are almost different languages. The Jeu g’oe do not know A kui. The A kui must learn Jeu g’oe. Or, as K-13 put it, ‘we must learn Akha’, since they consider the Jeu g’oe to be the standard Akha.

I have not been able to make comparisons of the A kui and Jeu g’oe dialects, but at one time in getting names for birds I discovered that of 10 names, only two were the same (or nearly the same) in the two dialects. The others were so different that they would not be recognized as being the same words. When A kui speakers use Jeu g’oe, they speak with a very distinctive accent. Other Akha speakers can instantly recognize when a person is A kui. Their address is also different, which tends to increase the ease in distinguishing them as ‘different’.

For the most part Akhas are quite understanding of other Akhas from distant places who speak a markedly different type of Akha. They often start asking, ‘How do you say this, how do you say that?’ They ask this not so much in spirit of making fun, but with genuine interest. When a person is traveling among Akhas a long way from home, and finds a village that speaks just like his own home village, it thrills him no end.

From Loimi mountain (about 20 air miles north of Kengtung town, on north into China, there seems to be the ‘dialectical’ division that the Akhas recognize. It has nothing to do with clan, or anything else that I know of. Akhas in that area will often say just ‘ma’ for the negative, whereas Akhas in the rest of the state, and on down to Thailand, will give full negative statement. For example, if you ask a person from the north, ‘Ma i haw-a low’ (Have you never gone?), he will respond with ‘Ma’ (not). But if you ask one from the central and southern area, he will say, ‘Ma i haw-a’ (I’ve never gone). This shortening of the negative answer by the ‘northerners’ causes the ‘southerners’ to jokingly refer to them as the “ma A ka” the ‘not Akhas’.

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The greatest extreme is between Jeu g’oe and the A kui dialects. They are almost different languages. The Jeu g’oe do not know A kui. The A kui must learn Jeu g’oe. Or, as K-13 put it, ‘we must learn Akha’, since they consider the Jeu g’oe to be the standard Akha.

I have not been able to make comparisons of the A kui and Jeu g’oe dialects, but at one time in getting names for birds I discovered that of 10 names, only two were the same (or nearly the same) in the two dialects. The others were so different that they would not be recognized as being the same words. When A kui speakers use Jeu g’oe, they speak with a very distinctive accent. Other Akha speakers can instantly recognize when a person is A kui. Their address is also different, which tends to increase the ease in distinguishing them as ‘different’.

For the most part Akhas are quite understanding of other Akhas from distant places who speak a markedly different type of Akha. They often start asking, ‘How do you say this, how do you say that?’ They ask this not so much in spirit of making fun, but with genuine interest. When a person is traveling among Akhas a long way from home, and finds a village that speaks just like his own home village, it thrills him no end.

From Loimi mountain (about 20 air miles north of Kengtung town, on north into China, there seems to be the ‘dialectical’ division that the Akhas recognize. It has nothing to do with clan, or anything else that I know of. Akhas in that area will often say just ‘ma’ for the negative, whereas Akhas in the rest of the state, and on down to Thailand, will give full negative statement. For example, if you ask a person from the north, ‘Ma i haw-a low’ (Have you never gone?), he will respond with ‘Ma’ (not). But if you ask one from the central and southern area, he will say, ‘Ma i haw-a’ (I’ve never gone). This shortening of the negative answer by the ‘northerners’ causes the ‘southerners’ to jokingly refer to them as the “ma A ka” the ‘not Akhas’.
A place where linguistic differences show up quite consistently is when they borrow words from other languages, especially Shan. Often, they simply use an Akha-raised form of the Shan, such as ‘ma u’ for brick. Some feel however, that is should be translated into Akha and thus call a brick ‘mi bya’. Others so not like that translation, however, so they call a brick ‘tsa bya’. When we took a vote on this word in the Akha New Testament translation committee meeting, we had the following results: 4 felt it should be ‘mi bya’, 2 voted for ‘tsa bya’, 2 voted for ‘ma u’, 1 said he felt ‘mah u’ was best (a slight change on the Shan), and one said he did not want to vote since Akhas did not use bricks, but only built their houses of wood and bamboo.

When Akhas borrow from Shan, they tend to change the low tones to high and the high to low. They are not always consistent in this however. In the Eastern part of the State (Meung Yawng) they tend to follow this pattern more consistently than some other sections. For example, the name for ‘teacher’ in Shan is ‘sa la’ (low tones). In Meung Yawng area they say ‘sa la’ (high tones), which follows the normal pattern of reversal. For some reason the Akha in other parts of the state will say ‘sa la’, the same as the Shans, even though this can also mean ‘cotton’. Perhaps the reason is that it is a fairly recent borrowing.

The general drift on the part of many Akhas, especially those in close proximity to large towns, seems to use more and more Shan and Burmese. The Akhas as a group are anxious to identify more closely with the dominant groups and this is one way they have of doing so. Also, the more contact they have with newer cultural phenomenon that already has a Shan or Burmese name, the more likely they are to use the ready-made word, but with their own Akha modification. What I see now is a struggle between the older and younger generations. The older generation wants to retain, or at least they claim they do, the ‘true way’ of saying something in Akha.

The younger generation wants to use what they hear daily from Shans and Burmese - and more and more in their classes, for there are far more Akha children attending school than ever before.

For example, for the word ‘jail’, the elders insist on ku - the ‘true Akha word’, whereas the younger folks will say ‘taw’, from Shan and Burmese. But in spite of all the older folks say about deploiring the thoughtless youth who have no respect for the true Akha ‘language’, the elders themselves will often use ‘taw’ in everyday speech without thinking about it. There is also some borrowing from Lahu, especially in the Meung Yang area, where the Lahus predominate. The terms for ‘headman, soldier, school’, etc. are borrowed from Lahu.

TRADE LANGUAGES
Shan and Northern Tahi are the main trade languages for the Akhas who live in Burma and Thailand. Most of the men will know enough of the trade language to get around without too much difficulty. For those Akhas living in Laos (very similar to Northern Thai and Shan), and in china it is Yunnanese. Many Akha men who have lived in Burma and North Thailand for years can still speak enough Yunnanese to get around fairly well. I met two Akha men from China who had even has some training in written Chinese.

Many Akhas have remarkable linguistic ability. Most of them (the men that is) can speak not only the trading language, but also Lahu (which is more or less the trading language for the hills), and usually one or two other languages. Many of them are learning to speak Burmese.
SPECIAL LANGUAGES

Many elders know how to repeat ‘spirit incantations’ (neh to-to-eu). They say that this language was taught to their ancestors by the spirits. It has the consonants and vowels as regular Akha, but apart from that it could almost be another language. It takes quite a while for the men who use this to learn it. They seem to memorize the various phrases by rote. The tones seem to be predominantly high and low tones, with very few mid.

Another somewhat special language is that used in certain ceremonies that do not have ‘spirit incantations’ in them. For example, when the spirit priest (bow maw) calls back a soul, or when he offers to the ‘lords and rulers of earth and water’, this is the type of Akha used. It may be an older type of Akha, but I cannot be sure. They only say, ‘We don’t know where this language came from- it is the way our ancestors taught us to say these things.’ Most adult Akha men can understand this ‘language’ fairly well. Even when they do not know every word, they understand the general theme. There is a type of ‘language’ the young men and boys use when they are quite a distance apart, and want to call each other. It is a type of falsetto, with the statements very short. They appear to be understood more because of tone than anything else. The last part is usually drawn out and a bit louder than the rest.

When boys talk back and forth this way, and one does not understand what the other said, they can ask him to repeat the statement. Amusement, irritation and perplexity can all be expressed in this special language. Older men seem a bit ashamed to speak like this- at least in my presence. One time when I was with a group of boys calling like this, an older man told me what to say. When the boy did not call it in the way the adult thought he should, the adult explained to the boy how to correct his call, but the adult would still not call himself.

When Akhas repeat their proverbs (daw da), they tend to give syllables on either a low or a high tone. The syllables which would normally be mid are skewed to either high or low tone, depending on the context.

PICTURESQUE EXPRESSIONS

The Akhas have many expressions that are interesting. They will often speak of a person who ‘covers his goiter (law beh ba za-eu), meaning that he points out someone else’s mistakes just to cover his own.

They also speak of someone having a ‘sharp snout’ (meh boe yaw ta), which means they are very critical and have a sharp tongue.

To have an ‘extra tongue’ (meh la la dzeh tso-eu) means that a person talks a great deal, and often causes trouble by what he says.

They refer to people who are slow in their work as having a ‘heavy bottom’ (daw meh yaw kah), while those who do their work quickly have a ‘light bottom’ (daw meh yaw pya).

If a person shows partiality, he is ‘choosing big little face’ (mya pyaw hui nyi tse-eu).
A person who has a ‘stiff forehead’ (na k’aw yaw g’ah) will say anything anywhere.

A person who has been scolded severely has been scolded ‘more than even a dog can take’ (a kui ti mew ma taw ni deh-eu).

A person who does not know the ‘top from the buttocks’ (u du daw dah ma si) is one who does not know ‘top from bottom’.

Akhas love to use ‘couplets’ (daw poe daw ma- literally ‘male-female words’) in their speech, especially when it is a formal occasion. The elders will sprinkle them through their speech quite generously.
CLASSIFIERS

As with other Tibeto-Burman languages, Akhas use classifiers quite freely. Classifiers in Akha are nouns which occur immediately after numerals, after the question ‘how many’ (a mya...), or statement ‘this many’ (beu mya...). Classifier phrases, which consist of the numeral or ‘...mya’ preceding the classifier, often appear with a preceding noun expression, though not always: tsaw ha ti g’a (one person), ci ha ti saw (one barking deer).

But you can also have, I nah ti g’a i ma la-a. (Today not a single-human being understood-came.) I nah ti maw za-eu teh ma. (Today we got only one animal.)

There are three types of classifiers.

1. Those that represent some larger class, such as round things, flat things, humans, animals etc., and are often not the same as any part of the preceding noun expression.

Some of the more common ones are:

a. baw - a stem, tree, bamboo. da pya ti baw - one stem of bracken, seh baw ti baw - one onion stem
b. baw - a clump or cluster. da zaw ti baw - a clump of grass, tsaw ha ti baw - a cluster of people.
c. ca - for long cord-like things. a ca nga ca - five ropes (cords, chains), yeh saw ko ca - six silver chains men wear on their jackets.
d. dm - for large, long things. sa pa shi dm - seven bolts of cloth, dm ma yeh dm - eight logs.
e. du - for round short things, sa ji du g’oe du - nine cotton gin rollers, a du tse du - ten ears of corn.
f. du - for a dug place. tsa du ti du - one house site (dug), lah du nyi du - two wells.
g. dzah - for rolled up items. paw law sm dazh - three rolls of banana leaves (to wrap things up in), pa yo oe dzah - four bundles of cigars.
h. gaw - rivers and streams. Law ba ti gaw - one river, law gaw ti gaw - one stream.
i. gu - for a pair. la du ti g’a - one father, ba ji nyi g’a - two blacksmiths.
j. hm - for very general things, and often borrowed words. leh ma ti hm - one ticket (or permit), pyaw haw ti hm - one mirror.
k. kah - for clothing, tools, fishing and hunting tools, household goods and very long things. pi di ti kah - one Akha skirt, deu ha nyi kah - two axes, ka sm kah - three crossbows, a bui oe kah - four blankets.
l. kah - (1) for small stems and sprouts. u ji nga kah - five stems of thatch grass, g’oe yoe ko kah - six stems’ of straw.
(2) for very long straight things. paw coe ti kah - one length (not just a section) of sugar cane, da kaw to kaw - one board.
m. kaw - for a field. ya ti kaw - one hill field. It is also used for sticks and poles. i cu ba kaw ti kaw - one pole for carrying water.

2. Those that are different parts of the preceding noun:

p. k’eh - for an opening. meh k’eh ti k’eh - an opening in a bottle or pot, ma k’eh nyi k’eh - two open wounds.
q. k’m - for dishes and lamps. k’m ma ti k’m - one dish, tsi k’m g’oe k’m - nine lamps.
r. k’o - for a lump of something. k’a g’eu yeh k’o - eight lumps (pieces) of charcoal, tsaw tsui g’oe k’o - nine ‘chunks’ (lumps) of ginger root.
s. la - for those things that strike or stick. ka mya ti la - one crossbow arrow, ja g’a ti la tsaw-eu - one injection of medicine, na li ti la - one stroke of the clock.
t. law - for a slender and long section. a to em law - three sections of reeds, sha yoe oe law - four (longish) bones.
u. maw - animals. k’a hm sm maw - three bears, a kui oe maw - four dogs.
v. pyaw - for one pair. naw bah ti pyaw - one (of a pair) of leggings, nga ma ti pyaw - one grill of a fish.
w. si - round things, fruits, and vegetables. ya u ko si - six eggs, ma deh nyi si - two pumpkins, tsa pu sm si - three termite hills.
x. ta - for a thin, flat thing. le peu ti ta - a sheet of corrugated iron, sah bo ti ta - a book.
y. tm - for a somewhat long and bulky item. mah ti tm - one section of sweet potato, sa bya ti tm - one length of bar soap.
z. ya - flat and roundish. paw coe paw ca ti ya - a cake of jaggery, haw tah ti ya - a cake of sticky rice.

2. Those that have a more restricted usage, and are based on the preceding noun expressions. There seem to be four major types of these, according to the number of syllables in the noun expression.
a. In some one syllable noun expressions, the classifier is simply a repetition of that syllable. bah ti bah - one nest, leh ti leh - one bazaar, cu ti cu - one hot springs, etc.
b. In some two syllable noun expressions, the classifier is the same as the second syllable. law beh ti beh - a goiter, deh bah ti bah - a terrace (in a field), te bya ti bya - a board, k’a myeh ti myeh - a rattan headstrap for the carrying yoke.
c. In some three syllable noun expressions, the classifier is the same as the third syllable. leh shu jaw ti jaw - one area of unburned jungle in an otherwise burned area.
d. In some four syllable noun expressions, the classifier is the same as the fourth syllable. a kui k'o beh ti beh - a calf of the leg, mi dza mi bo ti bo - a faggot of wood, ya pyaw a do ti do - a stem for a broom handle.

3. Those that are usually not preceded by a noun expression. These most often have to do with time, weights, measures, distances, money and certain numbers.
a. Time. ti k’eh - just a moment, ti po - one time, ti coe ti law - a fairly short time, ti ga - one instance (or place), ti jaw - one cycle of days, ti jo - one generation, ti zi - one life span, ti mya - a twelve month cycle, ti nah jaw - a cycle of thirteen days, ti ye - 13 years (although nyi ye is 25 years, since after the first 13 you add 12 each time), ti sa - a long time, ti do - one trip, etc.
b. Weights. ti ja - one one-hundredth of a viss, ti ka - one tenth of a viss, ti jaw i - one viss, ti mui - 10 viss, ti seh - 100 viss, etc.
c. Measures ti peh - one measure (about one quart), ti mui - 10 peh, ti pu - one basket, ti jo (or ti da) - one load, etc.
d. Distance. ti da - one thumb width, ti peh one inch, ti tsi - distance from the thumb to the index finger, ti to - distance from the thumb to the tip of the middle finger, etc.
e. Money. ti peh - one pya, ti beh - one five pya bit, ti mo - one 10 pya bit, ti ceh - one twenty-five pya bit, etc.
f. Numbers (from 100 up). ti ya - 100, ti he- one thousand, ti mui - ten thousand, ti seh - one hundred thousand, ti lam - one million, ti dui - ten million, ti tah - one hundred million, ti myeh - one billion.
g. Special instances. ti k’aw i - one half (time and money), ti k’oe - one half (of a very long item, such as a road or stream), ti pa - one half, lengthwise, ti k’eh - one half crosswise, ti da- one father (as when speaking of two children who had the ‘same father’), ti je - one thing, ti yeh - one load of either firewood or water etc.

Often more than one classifier can be used for the same noun expression without changing the meaning in any way. gaw jaw jaw la (spur of a mountain) can use wither ti la, or ti jaw. jeh ka (rake) can use either ti ka, or ti kah.
There are instances, however where the use of the classifier will make a difference in the aspect of the noun expression which is being emphasized: mi dza ti bym - a fire (burning at one place) mi dza ti kaw - a stick of firewood mi dza ti geu - a cord of firewood.
GESTURES AND SIGNS

When Akhas hold out their hands to children to come, when especially, they often rub the ends of their fingers with their thumbs, while calling the child.

To show their disgust with someone or something, they often make a strong click with their tongues.

When a man is angry with someone, and wished he could hit that person, he will often raise his foot - the one nearest the person with whom he is angry, while he raises he opposite arm in a position as if he were about to strike the person. Often they bite the lower lip while doing this. Sometimes they just do this in fun, but sometimes they are really angry, and almost ‘asking for a fight’.

For affirmation they nod their heads up and down, and for negotiation they nod their heads from side to side, but usually not as vigorously as we do in the west.

To show the size of an animal with their hands, they usually show the girth. If it is small, such as a small pig or puppy, they will use just one hand for it. But if it is large, as a pig or buffalo, they will use two hands. For large fish, they will use one hand held palm up as if holding a grapefruit. When it is a smaller fish, they will hold their hands straight out up and down and indicate by the number of extended fingers how large the fish is. For example, for a fairly small fish, they will hold one hand palm up as if holding a grapefruit. When it is a larger fish, they will hold their hands straight out up and down and indicate by the number of extended fingers how large the fish is.

When someone is near you and you want them to move away, you motion away from yourself, with the back of the hand towards the one you want to move. There is a slight down motion, but the hand quickly comes back to the height from which it started.

When someone is coming up a path, or steps, and you want them to stop, you give a motion showing he palm of your hand towards them, and kind of pushing down and toward them. When someone is coming down a path, or steps and you want them to stop, you do a kind of chopping motion with the hand, with the back of the hand facing them.

They have a system of simple gestures for deafness but I have not found anyone who knows it. I do know that when the thumb is held up it means good, and when the little finger is held up it means bad.
TRANSMISSIONS OF MESSAGES

They do not use signaling devices, nor do they have signal codes. Sending messengers is the only means they have of transmitting messages. It used to be that when they send messages to people, especially if it was something rather official or important, they would wrap up tea leaves and tobacco leaves in a banana leaf and send it with the messenger. As to the message itself, the messenger would simply tell them. If they especially wanted to show respect to the one they were sending a message to, or if they wanted to beg favor, or both, they would tie a Chinese copper coin with a hole in it to the package of tea and tobacco so that would be the first thing the recipient would see. Sometimes, there would be more than one coin. However, it did not seem to be a matter of paying them for something, since the value was very little. It was regarded as a polite thing to do.

As far as I can tell, the above two customs are not carried out any longer, but Akhas agree that they used to do them.
ORAL LITERATURE

PROVERBS

The Akhas, especially the elder, often use ‘proverbs’ (daw da). There are many types of proverbs, or sayings. One type tells what usually happens when a certain thing happens: ‘If at night one eats to the full, the next morning one is hungry’ (Ci bo dza -a shaw na meh). Or, ‘If one digs up old rotten things and starts turning over things, then a snake will come out (Du peu ngaw -eh, a law do -eh). They say this when someone starts bringing up some old arguments, or faults of others, that this will just lead to trouble.

Another type is more of an admonition or warning: If the bamboo gopher does not have his escape route dug and ready ahead of time, it will be difficult when he needs it’. (Ho pi do g’o a za ma sha na do -i shaw ba zah teh -a) In other words, be well prepared, before the needs arise.

There are many which are either pleas for the listener to obey ‘old ways’, or warnings as to what will happen if they do not. ‘Listen with both ears to the customs and follow after. Look with both eyes at the way others embroidery their cloth’ (Nyi yaw tso -eu tah te na -i, nyi mya tso -eu sm bo haw -i). The second section is not talking about cloth, of course, but it is telling young people to follow all the intricate calls of the Akha religion carefully.

Following are some other proverbs I have recorded:

1. Ti nah deh maw na, u shaw shaw ji ta daw. Ti zi deh maw na, a caw mi za-ah ta bah. ‘If you want to live a day, don’t start drinking in the morning. If you want to live a lifetime, don’t wrong another’s wife’. (If you start drinking in the morning, you will not get a full days work done. If you commit adultery, your life span will be shortened.)

2. Law bi yaw g’a yaw zah, seh law yaw g’a yaw je. ‘Foreigners each have their customs, Akhas have their own’.

3. Si mui ja na nga ji bym, Mi mui jaw na yo dze bym. ‘If good fruit, birds will come. If good girls, boys will come’. They say this when a bunch of boys have come to a certain village to hunt wives, and there are a lot of pretty girls there.

4. Nyo maw ga oe si. Tsaw maw daw oe si. ‘Old buffalos know old paths. Old men know old ‘words’.’ (‘Words’ also means customs, etc.)

5. Meh le g’aw k’a ma dze, bo le sha tsu ma dza. ‘When one is hungry, he does not disdain even bitter greens. When one is full, one doesn’t even eat fat.’

6. Mi za nyo, yo za ca. ‘Wife is the buffalo, husband is the rope.’ The wife is tied to her husband, wherever he goes, she must follow.

7. Pa shui teh -eh ma ga, pa nyor k’aw ga ma je. ‘Not just yellow leaves fall. Some green leaves also fall.’ They say this when a child dies.
8. Nyi g’a ma shi, tsaw deh d ga ma gu. Mah nyo ma shi -a, coe dzm deu ga ma gu. ‘Two (true lovers) will love each other to death, even though both are buried alive, they are not afraid. A buffalo bull is not afraid, even if his horns should be cut off.’ This is from a love song. It tells of the eternal love the boy and girl feel for each other.


10. Ma la di na, ca la ya saw meh. ‘If you strike with the right hand, you must soothe with the left.’

11. Nga sha ti maw ba neh, baw yeh tse k’a bu. ‘Because of just one fish, ten fish will spoil.’ Because one person did something wrong, many people will suffer.

12. Ma tsa daw -i ta na, ma ci ca i ta pa. ‘Don’t listen to a wrong word. Don’t tie something with a weak cord.’

13. Ma tsa daw nah dzh g’eh. Tsa eu daw la ti k’oe lah ci-eh geu. ‘Throw away the wrong things you hear. Grasp and hold the right things you hear.’

14. Ma dzi mah pa doe, ma m dzaw za sha. “The unridden stallion gets lazy, the youth who does not learn skills will have difficulties.”

15. Bi cm a byah yaw ‘oe, tsui yeh yaw caw ma tw-aje. “Shans are good friends and trustworthy- until there is trouble, and then your own relatives help you, while the Shans forsake you.”

16. Sha daw mi shi, ka pyaw ti law. Ui you meh poe la k’aw k’aw ka. “Before something embarrassing, put a wall. Before a laughing mouth put a hand.” This is the reason they must have a wall between the men’s and women’s sections in the Akha house.

17. Tahjoe meh nah gah nga -eu. “To lend one’s spear to dacoits.” They say this of someone who indirectly helps or encourages wrong doers.

18. Tsaw cu-a, g’a daw. yaw cu-a, hm dm. “Raise people, you just eat up your strength. Raise sheep, you can wear wool.”

19. Yeh neh ma jah, ti cah ma zah. “There is nothing made that God did not make.”

20. Za mi pu-ah pyeh, za yo deh-ah pyeh-eu. “Girls are released in the village, boys are released in the playground.” Boys and girls have been thrown together- they should have all the sex they want.

21. Za si dza ngwh ma jo, g’a k’a dza ngeh ma lo. “If you have wisdom, you have enough and more. If you have brute strength, it is never enough for your needs.”

22. Zah k’oe ta dzoe ma m nya, peh za k’oe ta nyo ma le nya. “One does not have the ability to throw away the customs, any more than a buffalo has the ability to have its footprints and place and its body someplace else.”
23. Za i mi boe, ci i bu tseu. “Root along with pigs, pluck leaves along with goats.” One develops into the kind of person one makes friends with.

24. Yeh maw ma na, sa daw ma g’o. “The one who does not obey God’s word, or understanding the divine message.” They especially use this when speaking of those who do not follow the Akha customs.

25. Ceh leh gui o a nyi, kaw joe sha shi a ma. “Kidding around is the younger brother to court cases, throwing sticks is the mother of a ‘terrible’ death.” They say this to children playing around to roughly.

26. Deh bah byo ngeh ui k’eh ma byo. Za nyi hui eu-a, a g’oe-m je. “Even though the paddy terraces disappear, the ditch is still there. The important one among people is the ‘maternal uncle’ (a g’oe).” As long as the ditch is there, one can always repair the terraces. As long as there is a ‘maternal uncle’ one can always do the Akha customs.

27. Da yah geu ja a poe, nym sah ya nyi a ma. “Guests are as valuable as pheasants, members of the household are just like jungle fowl (in comparison)”

28. Je shui ceh tsaw shui g’oe. “New animals fight, new people trust one another.” As new animals get acquainted with others in the herd, they settle down. People are the opposite. Even though they trust each other at first, later they have quarrels.

29. I pu k’eh-ah ma tsoe nya-m je. “If you can’t plug a tiny hole in a gourd, you certainly can’t plug a hole in a bamboo section (used for carrying water).” If one person does wrong and is not stopped, then lots of others will do wrong, and they cannot be stopped then.

30. I tsui k’a ngeu-eu mah dza ma ngeu a. Na baw k’a tso-eu tsaw ha ma ngeu-a. “Not all grass is horse food, not all with ears stuck on the sides of their heads are truly people.”

31. Je g’eh doe na pa da ga. Tsaw g’eh doe na pa da ga. “If a domesticated animal is bad, the owner will get the blame. If a person is bad, the ‘sub clan’ (pa) will get the blame.”

32. Ti ya k’o eh za nyi ma dzo. Ti tah k’oh eh sah i ma dzo. Ti myeh k’o -eh lo i ma dzo. “People can’t last more than one hundred years. Trees can’t last more than one hundred million years. Rocks can’t last more than a billion years.”

33. Ga neh-a maw ga ma du. Maw neh-a, m ga ma du-a. “Seeing is better than hearing. Doing is better than seeing.”

34. Gui bah-ah ma di-eh, shm bah-ah ma zaw je. “If you hadn’t hit the brass box, the metal box would not have known about it.” This is said to a person who has made a mistake, and is now unhappy because others know about it.
35. Ha ta ha gah, ji ta ji ceh.
A matter left gets bigger. Liquor left gets sour.
If a matter needs to be decided, it should be taken care of straight away, or it will get bigger the longer it is left.

36. Pu sa zaw a bya
If a fly flies off, it will bring lots more flies. One lie will grow and grow.

37. Daw doe ma tm a daw mui ma do
If you don’t say the bad words the good words won’t be spoken. If there are bad things to say them first and end up with the good.

38 Mi si a yo ta ta dzeu. Mi kaw a yo hu ta hu. Mi za u lah ca pi nga. Pu u lu ah nym ma ma tso nya.
Wives don’t overstep your husbands in knowledge. Wives don’t over take your husbands on the path.

39 Peh za daw ceh ma dzoeh a m g’ah dzah ja a caw g’a lu pyeu m je
If there is any disharmony within a family others can push them around any way they please. This calls on family members to stick together no matter what.

40. Da shi shi a ya k’a ma shi. Da law ya k’a za a ta ya eu. Da shi ya k’a ma cu lu ma da. Da shi ya k’a za ah ta ya eu.
When the father dies the trouble and court cases he has with others do not die, but land on the child.

41. Ma shi shi a nm ngeh ma shi. Ma shi nm ngeh mi ah ta eu. Pui shes la za mi ah ta-eu. “When the mother dies, the daughter must go on weaving cloth. She leaves the tools and capable hands with her daughter.

42. Ma si boe mi sm tsaw, si la yaw ha tsaw ha. “Before knowing a person well, one thinks he is another tribe. Coming to know him, find he is your own clan.”

43. Ma byoe ma dah ga a ne si eu je. La noe ma de ga la ma ta si. “Where there was no hole, he threaded through a bamboo strip. Don’t stick your thumb unto a plate where your finger won’t fit.” Don’t make the matter worse by talking about it.
Akhas have many very interesting legends. Many of these have been mentioned or told briefly in other sections. Following are examples of three types of legend.

“God gives out books”

Long ago an Akha arrived at God’s (a poe mi yeh) place. God asked him, “Don’t you want this book?” When God asked him that he said, “Yes, I want it. I’ll go first and ask my mother and father. I’ll be back before long”, he said, and returned home.

On his way home, he saw a Lahu and said, “Go get a book from God”. The Lahu then told this to a Shan, The Shan went to God and begged for a book. After God gave him the book, while he was carrying it home, he met a white man, and a Chinese man. He told them, “God says that whoever wants a book can get it.”

After the Shan had told the white man and Chinese man this, the white man led a horse and went up to God’s place. God asked him, “How can you lead a horse along to a place where there is no path?” The white man answered, “If I get your book, it won’t matter if there is a path or not. I will clear a path.” So he took God’s book over on his horse and returned. (This is why it is that wherever white men live, there are always paths and roads.)

When the Akha man returned to God’s place, God said, “Others have taken all the books”. But he continued, “If you really want a book, I will write one on a buffalo skin for you”. As the Akha man carried the book written on the buffalo skin back to his home, on the way he cut off a banana tree with his machete. But it came right out again? (i.e., the white core inside). This was caused by carrying the Akha book, he reasoned.

Next, he caught a crab and roasted it by the fire. No matter how long he roasted it, it remained red, and did not get done. This was caused by carrying the right to rule” which belonged to the Akhas, he reasoned. So they said, “Let’s roast and eat this book. We remember it in our stomachs.” So, the right to rule disappeared there. After going a little further, they went to a stream where they drank, and they all got goiters.

And this is the reason why Akhas have no books and no rulers to this day, and are extremely hard up.

“How we got cats”

Long ago God created the heaven and earth, one thing after another. He created them all. But he had forgotten to create cats at that time. So, since there were no cats, wherever people lived were mice and rats. They were so numerous that people could not eat any of their garden produce. So a man went to God’s place and begged him for a cat. God rubbed all over his body and got three balls of dirt off. He put these in bamboo container (baw law), and put a stopper into the end of it very carefully. Then he said to the man, “On your way home, do not open this bamboo section and look in. If you do open it you will not be able to raise cats.” After carefully instructing him, he sent the man home.
On the way home, that man who are told by God not to open the bamboo section, wanted to open it very much. So he opened it once, and a striped wildcat (bya zui) jumped out. He was startled by this, and did not know what to think. So, he opened the end of the bamboo section again, and another striped wildcat jumped out. After that he figured that he would not open it again on the way. After he got home, he opened it again and a cat jumped out. It started eating the mice and rats.

To this day, cats still live with us.

“The two sisters”

Long ago there were two sisters. Their parents had died, so they divided all the parent’s goods that were left. But when they divided the goods, the older sister took everything, and drove the younger sister away without giving her a thing. But at that time the younger sister said, “The day will come when you have to depend on me.” She then said, “If you go to the east, I’ll go to the west. She then went to the east, and married an extremely wealthy young man.

Then, since the older sister had married early, she had lots of children. In order to feed everyone, they ran out of money and goods. Extreme poverty overcame the older sister and her family. So one say the older sister though, “Oh, I have reached the lowest point possible. I'll go beg something from my younger sister.” So she went to her younger sister’s place and said, “I’ve reached the depths of poverty. Therefore, please give me something so that I can feed my children.”

Then her younger sister, remembering the past, said I have nothing to give you. But, look for lice in my hair. Later I will give you a little rice.” So after the older sister had looked for lice for some time, the younger sister gave her a very small tin of rice. The older sister, thinking of her starving children, went running home.

At that moment, the younger sister discovered another louse in her hair. “I gave that rice for nothing.” she thought. So she sent her servant after the older sister with instructions to bring the rice back. The older sister felt the situation was hopeless, and that her children would starve, and started on home.

On the way, suddenly it was as if a city wall had been raised before her on the path. Huge stones blocked the way. And at that place she saw a huge snake asleep. She said, “Oh, my children are about to starve. If it is a good sign, run away. If not, strike me down now.” She begged this of the snake over and over. The snake then slowly began to slither into a huge shoulder bag.

Then the older sister, remembering her starving children, rushed home. The children said, “Mommy and Daddy, we are about to die of hunger.”, and they called out and cried. The mother, not knowing what to do, told the children to wait a moment, she would chop up the snake that was in the bag. So, she emptied the snake from the bag into the rice steamer. But the snake had become silver and gold.

So from that day on, the family had plenty of food, and plenty of everything else that it needed and they became a very rich family.
INTERPERSONAL AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS

SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

When a new family wants to move onto an Akha village, the villagers are happy, since it will swell their village. Not only will this add to their prestige, but it will help to level out the work and tax-load of the village. But they are also very suspicious, and often with good reason. They want to know first of all why the other family is leaving their old village. Is the man of the family a thief, or perhaps a bandit? Does he quarrel a lot? How did he get along with the village priest and the head man of the former village? They also want to know how well off he is. Does he have enough money to buy rice until a new harvest? How much will he have to be helped during the first year?

There is a great deal of discussion about what possible troubles might develop if he moves into the village. They always want some of the villagers from the former village to vouch for him before they are willing to let him come in.

A lu, of upper Jaw seu village, told of a Chinese man who wanted to move into his village. The various points of view were set forth and discussed at length before the villagers finally accepted him. When it turned out that he was a bandit, the villagers were upset at the man in their village who more or less sponsored this Chinese man.

When a person is about to move out of a village, he must have a special ceremony in the village he is moving out of. He will call the village priest and elders of the old village. Before eating a ceremonial meal, the man leaving the village will tie a string around the wrist of the village priest while saying, “I have to leave. Don’t die quickly, Live for a long time”. The village priest answers something like this, “Never mind your leaving. May you have good health and plenty to eat in the new village.”

After this the man leaving the village takes some of the meat he has cooked (either chicken or pork), and hands it to the village priest as if it were ancestor offering food, and the village priest accepts it in the same way. After that the other elders take some meat as well. When this is finished, they all gather around and have a feast. At the end of the feast, the man leaving the village gives some money to the village priest, usually two or three old coins.

There are times when the fields of some of the villagers are so far removed from the village that they build temporary houses (ya k’ah k’ah-eu) in the general vicinity of their fields. They are usually afraid to be too isolated, however, for fear of robbers. So they generally try to get other villagers to join them in this ‘semi village’. This sometimes is used as a means of gradually splitting off from a village. Often, however, it is fully legitimate.

During the last nine or ten years, the Akhas have had increasingly close contact with Burmese soldiers. If the Akhas know Burmese, the soldiers are friendly with them and very helpful, even though they expect quite a bit of work from them. But there are only a small number who can speak Burmese that well. As for those Akhas who do not know Burmese, the soldiers beat them, scold them, and generally give them a very hard time. They resent this bitterly, but for the most part they try not to make anything of it, since they hope it will pass away quickly and they can get back to their normal lives.
VISITING AND HOSPITALITY

Akhas are never supposed to visit someone else’s house before the morning rice. When that meal is finished, however, they can go. Also, in the evening after all of their work is done, they go visiting. This is the favorite time. When visitors come to someone’s house, they welcome them very graciously. The men will have someone in the house bring a stool for the visitor to sit on. They will also put down a gourd of water, and start making tea for the visitors. If they have liquor, they will often give the visitor some of that to drink too. They will also put out tobacco, and if it is a betel chewing area, they will put out the ‘makings’ for that as well.

When the visitors have been walking for some distance, the hosts will often massage their legs and arms. It really is very refreshing when one is tired. However, they sometimes overdo it, as when some Akha women pulled a tendon in the hand of a Lahu friend of mine, Sala Ai Pun.

When there is a guest present in a house where a child is born, the guest must give 25 pyas (ti ceh) to ‘buy back his life-span’ (zi zeu k’o-eu). This is put into the hand of the child first. Then the mother takes it, and either sews it to some part of the child’s clothing, or makes a hole in it and hangs it around the child’s neck on a string.

When young men are visiting around in various villages looking for wives, the young girls are usually the ones who will welcome them. If the girl knows how to fix tea and liquor real well, and can talk very nicely with them on almost any subject that comes up, they consider her to be very clever at welcoming guests (poe pyeh ya yu nya-eu).

ETIQUETTE

There are certain rules of etiquette that have already been mentioned in other sections, such as when a person enters the man’s side of an Akha house, he must leave by the woman’s door. Their etiquette is quite strict in the matters of eating and drinking. First of all, if they call a respected elder to a meal, they will cover the ‘rice table’ with banana leaves before they put any food on it. The fact that they put a bit of banana leaf in the rice bowl of the shaman when she goes into her trance may be related to this, I do not know. Whenever preparing a meal, or serving a man, a woman must have her complete outfit on, including leggings.

This is also important during a time when she is helping to prepare the food for the ancestor offering. If she does not have her full outfit on then, the ancestors will not eat the food, and she will also be ‘afflicted by the spirits’ (neh gu la-eu). When they eat, it is customary for two or three Akhas to use the same ‘rice bowl’ (haw g’aw). This means that they must not put any curry right into their rice bowl, or on their rice. Nor must they allow any rice that they have taken out to drop back into the bowl. Further, they must not take out any curry with their fingers, but must use chopsticks (ju da).

Whenever Akhas eat together, the oldest man present must take the first bite. If someone else were to take some food before that person, it would be very disrespectful. If there are elders present, it is also considered rude to finish eating early and leave the table. When it is just one’s own family this is not adhered to, however.
After a meal in someone else’s house, the guests will say, “It surely was delicious. The ‘luck-blessing’ will increase.” The second part is almost like, “thank you”, but quite different from our use in the west. When drinking liquor, the ‘polite’ amount to drink differs with the occasion. During the time a body is being prepared for burial, and during the funeral, it is not polite to drink too much, for then one might make mistake in carrying out customs. I have also been told that there are usually so many people present at funerals that it is not possible to get drunk. During weddings it seems to be all right to drink all one wants.

When a house is being built, they also drink liquor. But they will not put out too much in the morning, since the house will not built that way. At night, however, it is perfectly all right to drink quite a lot. At least one bit of etiquette seems to be borrowed from the Shan’s. When they walk in front of someone, they bend over (aw k’o-eu), and say ‘seu ma, sue ma’ something like ‘excuse me’, as they walk in front of them.

When a person receives a gift from someone else, it is polite to give a sort of blessing to the donor: “Wherever my brethren go and whatever they meet, may their feet not stumble and their arms not falter. With strong arms and body, bright be their path before them and shining the way behind them. May their speech prove true and their hopes fulfilled. May their labors bring them food and drink, and may all they raise flourish.”

One time some Akha men offered a cigarette to another Akha man they had never seen before and this is the ‘blessing’ he gave in exchange. When he was through, those Akhas turned to me and said, “Now that is the way to accept a gift!” Akhas say that if someone is disrespectful to someone else, the ancestors will ‘afflict’ (gu la-eu) him. Since one ‘has sin’ (i ba na-eu) there will be some type of tragedy develop in himself or his family, such as a child becoming either deaf and dumb, or for one’s wife to get sick, or for a newly born infant to develop as a deaf and dumb person.

They say they must not laugh at midgets (zah k’o). K-28 told of a Lahu midget who had come around Kengtung. Akhas would not dare say anything disrespectful to him. They all gave him a little money. K-28 even had his little grandson that he was carrying on his back at the time, give him a small coin. If they had not given money, then they would have ‘had sin’.

When a woman acts like a man, or tries to boss others, as a man would, they will scold her by saying, “You want to crow like a rooster”. (A poe poe la maw nga.) The idea is very strong that the man must be the head of the house, the village, and all Akha culture.

ELDERS

The elders of a village are usually the men who are about 50 years of age or over. Some feel that to be a ‘true elder’ you must be at the point of life where your wife can not longer have children. The reason for this is that it is the ‘condition’ of the wife which is often more important than that of her husband. That when she is pregnant, then her husband must not take part in various ceremonies. So if she has reached menopause then her husband is truly an ‘elder’ (tsaw maw).
COUNCILS

The village headman (bu seh) usually is the one who calls the elders together when there is something to discuss. He sends children to their homes and has them informed what there will be a meeting at his house that night. The village priest (dzoe ma) can also call such meetings. Often the purpose of his meetings will be different, since he will have them meet to discuss something which is more of a ‘religious’ matter.

There are some villages where some other man may call a meeting of the elders. This is usually done when he is not happy with the headman, and may presage a village split. When there is such a man in the village, they say, “There are two roosters in the village. Sometimes the elders lose their confidence in their headman, and then they may choose another. K-29 told how his village had to choose a new headman. The old one got awfully big-headed, and the people got fed up with him. The elders told him he did not have the majority behind him. So he called a meeting, and to his surprise he learned that he did not have a majority. So he stepped down as headman, and another man was chosen to take his place. He remained in that village, and had good relations with the new headman.

When the elders hold a discussion, they usually want to be on the side of the majority. If they are in the minority, they will often just keep quiet. There is never anything quite like a ‘vote’ (as a show of hands or the like). But usually they can sense when there is a major opinion being expressed. Outsiders may sometimes feel there must be unanimity, but this is only superficial. There are times when some man or men, even though in the minority, will feel so strongly about something that they will have to speak up about it. When a person gets quite worked up (as they do sometimes at these meetings), he may try to shout the others down. He will continue talking, often, even as long as he feels that even one other elder is listening to him. When he has completely lost the floor, he will often do something to try to show that he is not interested in the subject—or that it is a closed issue to him—by filling his pipe very carefully with tobacco, or starting to joke with someone near him about something that has nothing to do with the discussion.

The headman is responsible for order in the meeting he leads. If someone gets noisy or argumentative, he will try to calm and quiet them down. At the same time, if the headman himself gets to saying too much, some of the elders will tell him to calm down. The Akhas feel that much of the argumentative spirit comes from the drinking that takes place during the meeting.

The elders get very angry at men who do not show up for the meetings simply because they are afraid that their side will not win. These same men will often complain about the decisions made at the meetings they purposely ignored, which makes those who did go all the more angry. The elders who attended the meeting will say, “Those men are trying to break up our village”, and indeed many villagers have been broken up over arguments that stated in this way.

Though the headman is definitely the leader of the council of elders, the really popular headmen are the ones who really seek for a consensus of opinion and are able to lead the village in such a way that most of the important decisions are unanimous.
SOCIAL CONTROL

For the most part, Akhas will bow to the will of the elders. But this does not appear to be quite as broad as Telford indicates when he says that they cannot sell paddy at a different price from that stated by the headman. If they would sell paddy cheaply to a non villager, their relatives might scold them, especially if the relatives felt that this sale jeopardized the future of the family, since that rice might later need to be divided up among family members that did not have enough to eat. If the man sells his rice for a good price, however, the family members probably will not scold him. In the long run, it is his rice to do with as he wants, and the headman certainly does not have any jurisdiction over its sale.

For the most part, when Akhas become Christians, it is a matter of a fairly sizable social unit making the decision and going into it together. Usually one household will not become Christians; they take a certain amount of abuse by way of criticism and scolding. But this abuse comes not so much because they have accepted a new religion as it does because they have broken up the old stable social and tribal unit. Sometimes, if there is a large enough group of Christians, they can live with non-Christians without too much difficulty, as in the upper Naw haw village.

RELATIONS TO SHANS

Often the Akhas have very good relations with Shans, but many of them have also died at their hands.

In November of 1965, six Akha men from Beu pa pa ya-eu pu were traveling to the Thai border town of Meh Sai. They were formerly from Pa leh and Pa nga in the Loimi area, but now live in the Meung Hai area. They were going to buy things. As they walked along, they met a band of Shan ‘insurgents’ about mid day. The Shans first took their money, then gave it back to them, and wrote a record of how much money each man had. They went on a ways, and then suddenly pointed guns at them, took away their money again, and then tied their arms behind them (na ca pa-eu). They took three men one direction, and three another. They then attacked them with machetes. If the men tried to look see who these Shans were that were attacking them, the Shans would hit them with their machetes as hard as they could. They cut their necks, stomachs, and legs, killing four of them right then. One man from each group feigned death, and lay perfectly still until the Shans left, and then they got their ropes off by rubbing them against the sharp corners of the bamboo sections they had split by stepping on them.

K-28 pointed out that if they had been able to recount their genealogy, then tell the rope to come loose, it would have. Moreover, he said, if they had repeated their genealogy while being struck with the machetes and then called out something frightening, like ‘Tai!’ at the end, the Shans would have become unconscious, and then the Akhas could have run away, since they would have told the ancestors to “look, I have not wronged anyone.”

The two men, who did not realize that any other in their group were still alive at the time, were so weak from loss of blood that they could not walk properly. They had to crawl along. The man who later came to the Kengtung hospital, and who told K-28 and K-29 all about it, said that later that night he heard the Shans come looking for him, when they discovered a missing ‘body’ in each group. The injured Akha man was able to find a hollow tree where he hid that night. It was probably the night of November 28th or 29th.
The next morning the Shans were surrounding that area, but they were playing a record player quite loudly so he crept out of the tree (he still could not walk and worked his way around to the opposite side of where they were expecting him, and made his way to Meung Hai, where there were some soldiers. The soldiers immediately made six Shans carry him to Meung Hpya, where he was put on a lorry to Taichelaik, where Dr. Alfred Meung took care of him, gave him a new set of clothes, and sent him by plane to Kengtung.

The man’s name is Li ma. I wanted to meet him and talk with him, but he was afraid that I might get information back to the insurgents who tried to kill him, and then they would try to kill him or some member of his family.

The bodies of the four men killed in the jungle were not buried. The elders from their village went to look at the bodies and said, “Don’t untie them. Leave them.” K-28b and K-29 felt that it was because they did not know the customs that they did that. If they had ‘purified’ (m shaw-eu) them, they could have been given a good burial from their homes. K-28 especially was mad about this, since one of the dead men was the grandson of his older brother. The men said that even if they did not know the customs for a ‘purification’ ceremony, they could have put a little gold in the mouth of each man, and buried a dog over each of them. In that way there would not have been any ‘calling out of a terrible death’ (sha shi gu-eu), at least.

K-28 and K-29 figured, with me, that there have been over 800 Akhas killed by Shans during this period of insurgency. We could only guess in some cases, so the figure may not be too reliable. “There are no villages in our area without at least one person being killed, and most two or three, and up to five in some villages.” K-28 has had two sons-in law and three other close relatives killed by the Shans, so of course he feels quite strongly.

FEUDS

P-3 told of a village in the Meung Yawng area that had a feud. He learned about it from a friend. As he understood, there had been lots of trouble develop between two families in the village. The rest of the villagers tended to take sides with one or the other family.

Finally it became so bad that they made a division between the two sections of the village. If anyone from one side went to the other side, he was in danger of being killed. According to P-3 it was just like a war.

One day one side attacked the other side, raiding their houses and killing all the men they could. There was finally only one man left, but the other side did not know this. They were exhausted, and many of their men were dead, so they called out, “How many of you are left?”, and the one man called out, “There are eighty of us left”, so the other side quite.

Other Akhas (as K-28 and K-29), upon hearing of this said they had never heard of anything like this happening to them it sounded as if it were a ‘messianic movement’ (a poe seu-eu).
FAMILY
(See Kinship Charts following p. 876)

RESIDENCE

The oldest male in the house is the ‘father of the house’ (nym a da). This is usually the grandfather or the father if the grandfather has died. The oldest female in the house is the ‘mother of the house’ (nym sah a ma). This is usually the grandmother or the mother if the grandmother has died.

Even when the male members of the household move into other villages, they must remember these two, and they must ‘bring them first fruits’ (dza daw daw daw sha-eu), even if they have to bring them four or five days journey.

As long as the grandparents are living the grandchildren must ‘take first fruits’ to them first, and then to the parents. When all grandparents and parents have died, then they must take ‘first fruits’ to the ‘elder siblings’ (a yui). Akhas believe that ‘elder siblings’ take the place of the parents when the parents are dead.

For the ‘first fruits’ they give some of all they plant, including: tobacco, paddy, greens, melons, gourds, etc. If they get something in the jungle in large quantities (mushrooms, fruit) they must take some back to the father and mother of the house, or the ‘elder siblings’ (a yui) if all of the former are dead.

When they are living in the same ‘main house’, the ‘father of the house’ must eat before anyone else. If a son eats before the father, his mouth will get all ‘twisted to one side’ (k’a meh yaw yaw –i-eu). K-28 told of Tu gaw who had this happen to him, because he ate before his father once.

Theoretically a man does not move out of his father’s house until his wife has come of age to do the ‘postmenopause ceremony’ (ya yeh m-eu). “But if the men are big-headed they may want to move out when they are just 25 years old.” From what I have obtained and also heard from Akhas, I would judge the average age when the men leave their family home is about 40 years of age.

I have heard of young men being driven out of the family home by their fathers, but the Akha elders frown on this. They feel that even if a father and son argue all the time, they must not separate. As long as the sons are with the father, they must sleep in their small houses with their wives. When the father dies, the oldest son automatically starts sleeping in the ‘main house’ and becomes the ‘father of the household’. The younger brothers continue to live there but still use the small houses for sleeping. If the younger brother goes move out, then the older brother must give some of the ‘ancestor altar’ (a poe paw law) to him (nym dah dah bi bi –eu). What he actually gives is two cups of ‘fermented rice’ (ji ba a si), and a bamboo straw (ji teu) with which to suck up the liquor from the ‘cups’, or small bamboo actions, that hold the fermented rice. They have several of these with each ancestor shrine. K-28 has three of these containers of fermented rice he made when he still had his ancestor altar. This is so that if he ever wants to make an ancestor altar again he can use these for the basis of it. I feel he almost considers them an ‘ancestor altar’ now.
A partial indication of something of their feeling of sacredness surrounding the opening of these ‘fermented rice’ containers is the fact that when they are opened, the people of that house must refrain from sexual intercourse for three nights. This is a restriction that is placed on them by one of their ‘proverbs’ (daw da). When I questioned one man about this, he felt that the spirits would certainly afflict them if this taboo were broken. They have a simulate taboo for the period when they make ‘yeast’ (deh tse), he added.

HOUSEHOLD

The members of the household are considered to be all those member of the extended family who are ‘under’ a single ancestor altar. This includes adopted children, and also the ‘servant-slaves’ (za k’a). These latter are children of extremely poor people who farm their children out to others because their families do not have enough to eat. The children have to work for the family supporting them. They also take part in the ancestor offering (a poe law-eu) of that house, rather than going back to their own parent’s home for the offering. These ‘servant-slaves’ include Lahu, Wa, Shan, Palaung, and Chinese children, as well as Akha. Akhas only consider them to be ‘servant-slaves’ up to the time they marry.

The locus of authority in the household resides with the ‘father of the house’. He controls the economic aspects of the household, as well as everything related to discipline, relations to other villagers, and important decisions. He rules on all disputes, and his word is final. The females of the household must not strike any of the children, but if the ‘father of the household’ feels he should strike them, he may. If the fellow villagers feel he does it too hard, or too often, they may rebuke him somewhat. I have also heard of the villagers bringing a case against the ‘mother of the household’ for beating her children.

If the husband (or ‘father of the household’) beats his wife too severely, she can go and report this to her ‘male relatives’ (a mah a da) or the headman of the village in which she is living. Her family can bring a case against the husband for this, but I believe that in actual practice it is more likely that she will ‘run off’. That is, she will divorce her husband by leaving him.

POLYGAMY

The Akhas have a legend about a man who had two wives. He went into a cave once, and there was a rockslide at the mouth of the cave. He called to the older wife to roll away the rocks. She tried, but could not roll them away. He called the younger wife, and she rolled the stones away so that her husband could come out. “And that is the reason men love the younger wives best.”

Often the reason for marrying a second wife is that the first one is unable to produce sons. Usually the husband will ask permission of his first wife before he takes another. Often she is happy to have the help, and will give her permission. But if she does not want him to marry another wife, she can always run away and find a new husband herself.

I have heard of some men marrying as many as three or four wives, but the Akhas I talked with said it is hard to find that many women who will get along well together. One statement (p-2) was that the average Akha is only supposed to marry up to two women, but the ‘rulers’ can marry up to twelve. When a man marries a second wife, it is customary to give 12.50 old coins (5 ga) to the ‘male relatives’ (a mah a da) of the first wife (hu a mah dza je).
He next takes a big pig to the home of the woman he is to marry, and after killing the pig he cooks the fat. He gives two ribs to the ‘male relatives’ of the wife to be. This is done in a ‘begging’ manner. After that he gives them the money agreed upon, and then ties strings around their wrists. After that he calls the elders of the village and feeds them. This is considered to be a ‘begging blessing’ (gui lah sha – eu) ceremony. I believe it is to help the elders be willing for the man to marry a second wife while he still has a first.

When I asked if the man could remain in the village even if he had not performed this ceremony, the answer was that he could, “but he would not be following customs”. This ceremony is followed with a regular wedding ceremony, which is the same as for when they marry the first time.

ADOPTION

Their reasons for adopting children are usually either to have a male son when they die to hand on their ancestor altar (paw law bi lo), or to have workers in the fields – or both. If a person already has several children and he adopts more children, K-28 feels that he just wants a ‘servant-slave’ (za ka’a). When they adopt a child they change the name to one of their ‘ancestral’ names, provided the parents or relatives of that child have ‘given finally’ (bi tseh) the child to them. They generally call the village priest to come and name the child. Others can do it, but there is more ‘lucky-blessing’ (gui lah) when the village priest does it, they feel.

They kill a chicken for the feast – as a minimum. For those better off they kill a big. After the feast the village priest, or whatever elder the parents have chosen, give the name to the child that the adopting parents wish. It will be an ‘overlapping’ name, in that the first part will be the same as the last part of the father’s name.

Usually there is no payment involved when they adopt children in spite of the term ‘zea cu-eu’ (buy raise), which is used of adopted children sometimes, although also of ‘servant-slave’. There are some cases when the person wanting a child must pay up some debts incurred by the parents before they died. This was true in the case of the three children Thra Po Htun adopted, since their parents had incurred large debts due to twins having been born. He paid these off and adopted the children, one of them being the grandfather of K-30. When they adopt younger children (ci cu-eu), it is usually so they can carry on the family line. When they adopt those who are older (cu geu – eu), roughly 13 years of age and older, it is more often to have workers in the fields.

An adopted child cannot marry anyone in that family if he or she is truly adopted and the name has been changed. If the name has not been changed, and the person has only been living in the household for a relatively short period of time, marriage can be arranged – but only as long as it is held in the home of the ‘father’. This means that the girl involved must go stay in the house of a relative or friend for a night or two, and then the son will go get her.

When K-28 was a boy, his father lent money to a man. The man and his wife later died, and his thirteen year old son and fifteen year old daughter came to live with K-28’s family. The father more or less adopted them, although he did not give them his name. The boy called the father ‘grandfather’ (a baw). About a year later the girl got married. Later when the father died, the boy did not help with the expenses, since he was not really considered as adopted, but he did help out with the work that was involved. K-28 felt that he could not have married that girl, even though she was of another clan.
INTERRELATIONSHIPS

Grandparents can scold and teach the grandchildren, and even ‘strike’ (di) them if needs be. If anyone outside of the family, however, were to strike the child, they could have a case (gui o ti -eu) over this. The Grandparents usually stay home and look after the grandchildren and livestock while the parents go to the fields. Very deep ties often develop between these two generations, especially with the boys and their grandfathers.

When the grandchildren get sick, the grandparents must look after them with medicines etc. Even if the sick child is not their true ‘grandchild’, any child which can call them ‘a baw’, or ‘ a pi’ can claim the attention of these elders. On the other hand, the grandchildren must give some of their kill from the hunt to their grandparents, as well as the ‘first fruits’ from their fields or gardens. Also if a person hears that his grandparent is sick, he must take a ‘boiled chicken’ (ya ci maw pu), a live pig, lots of ‘rice balls’ (ja leh), and lots of eggs. If he hears of someone in the ‘a zaw’ relationships that is sick, he must treat him as his own father. Or if he hears of a ‘maternal uncle’ (a g’oe) who is sick, he treats him as he would his own mother. In any of these cases, Akhas feel that if the person does not go and do what he can, he ‘has sin on him’ (ba na la -eu).

The father of a girl, when she gets married, cannot force his son-in-law to do anything. However, often before he lets his daughter marry that young man, he will ask the young man to ‘feed’ him (the father-in-law) until he dies. The boy will always say yes, but often he does not keep his promise. The mother-in-law can tell the daughter –in-law what to do, but sometimes she will do it and sometimes she will not. No matter what, the mother-in-law cannot beat the wife – only the husband is allowed to do that. If the girl continues to disregard what the mother-in-law says the mother-in-law may urge her son to divorce (k’o) the girl.

Akha men are not ‘supposed’ to marry two women who are sisters but “we see it done sometimes”. They say that the Chinese and Lisus have Levirate marriages, but it is not ‘proper (ma sheu km) for us Akhas to do that.

ARTIFICIAL KIN RELATIONSHIPS

Two men will sometime make a promise (sa ja dza –eu) to each other that they will always be ‘siblings’, (a yui a nyi) and perform a ceremony (la ma gu shi daw –eu), to seal the bargain. K-28 was forced to do this once with a Shan insurgent. He had to promise to remain faithful to the Shans and never join the Burmese. He believes, however, that the Shans were the ones that broke it when they later tied him up and tried to beat him to death.

K-29’s older brother went through this ceremony with five other men about 1942. They were going out to trade opium, and wanted to make sure that they would not cheat each other. They promised each other that if anyone shot at one of them, they would all stand and fight, and not run away. “If we live, we live together. If we die, we die together.” For the ceremony, they took a large dish, and each of the men entering into this ‘sibling’ relationship place three grains of rice init. Then each put in a little water, a little tea-ginger combination, and a little liquor. They next killed a rooster by cutting its throat. They let the blood drip into the dish. Then the each stuck a needle into their ‘thumbs’ (thus the ‘la ma’ in the name of the ceremony), and let the blood drop into the dish. The oldest one there stirred it all up. Then he lifted it up, and they all ‘bowed before it’ (u du ah –eu). At that point they said a great deal about, “whoever breaks this, let him die,” and that type of thing.
Before drinking it, they pledged each other that down to their grandchildren they would be faithful in caring for each other in time of need and death, would look after each other’s children if one should die before the other, would not lie to each other, would not bring any court cases against each other, etc. Then they drank it.

K-28 said that when the Shans made his drink this concoction, they made him drink a whole bottle, and he later vomited it all up. The Shans said, “That is because your heart is not good”. After two people or groups have done this, Akhas consider them to be closer than actual relations.
Major factors which determine kinship terminology are: the sex of the speakers, whether one is older or younger than the other, and whether or not they are in the same ‘sub-clan’ (pa) or not.

The Akhas seem to differ a fair amount among themselves on terms, especially concerning the more remote relationships, just as we would tend to get confused about whether one was a first cousin once removed, or a second cousin. Secondly, they often use the same term for similar relationships over two generations. For example, I would call my fathers’ sisters’ children and my sister’s children by the same terms, ‘za oe za ma’.

Following is an alphabetical list of kinship terms. Following the term (v) stands for vocative, ® for referential, and (v.r) indicates that the term is used both in vocative and referential. Following the definition in parenthesis is the reciprocal term.

a do (or) bu do (v.r) both male and female call their older brother this (rec. a nyi).

a baw (v.r) generic term for old man, more specific for what a male or female would call grandfather, although a more specific term would be a da maw.

Also, anyone that a man can call ‘oe pa oe ma’ (as his wife’s older brother’s grandchildren) would call him a baw (rec oe pa oe oe ma)

a bu (v.r) what a male calls own daughter (rec a da a ma)

a cah (v.r) what a male or female speaker calls mother’s sisters children, whether male or female (rec. a cah)

a ceh (v.r) what male or female call their brother’s daughters (rec a ui for both male and female).

a da what male or female speaker calls father, and what wife calls husband’s father (rec. for father a li a bu. rec. for husband’s father – a tsu (v), kui ma (r ))

a du (v.r) what male and female will call brother’s sons (rec a zaw- both male and female).

a g’oe (v.r) what male or female will call mother’s brother (older or younger), and mother’s brother’s sons (rec. za oe za ma).

a k’o (v.r) what male or female will call father’s sister (rec. a du boy a ceh- girl).

a li (v.r) what male or female calls own son (rec. a da a ma).

a ma (v.r) what male or female will call mother, and wife will call husband’s mother (rec. for mother- a li a bu, rec. for husband’s mother – a tsu (v), kui ma (r ))

a maw (v.r) what male will call his wife’s mother and father (this seems to be preferred in Thailand and Meung Hsat other areas of this state prefer ‘tsaw maw’, (rec- a za).
a mui (v.r) what male and female speaker call father’s younger brother’s wife, mother’s brother’s wife, mother’s brother’s daughter, mother’s younger sister and her husband. Male also calls younger brother’s wife this. Female calls husband’s younger brother’s wife this. (rec. a ui, both m. & f. a ui considered older).

a nm (or) a yeh (I am not sure about v. & r.) what girls whose father’s are brothers call each other (rec. a nm, or, a yeh).

a nyi (v.r) what male or female call younger brother, and younger sister’s husband. Female also calls younger sister this, and husband’s younger brother. Female calls husbands younger sister and husband this, male calls younger sister’s husband this. Male or female calls spouse’s brother’s children this, except wife calls husbands older brother’s daughter-in-law ‘a tsu’ (rec. bu do, or a do – for the most part. Sometimes a yui.

a pi (v.r) generic name for old woman, more specific for what male or female calls grandmother (although a more specific term would be ‘a ma maw”). Also anyone that a woman can call ‘oe pa pe ma’ would call her ‘a pi’ (rec. oe pa pe ma).

a poe (v.r) male or female call great-grandfather this (except in the Meung Yawng area where it means grandfather) (rec oe leh).

a shah (v.r) what male or female call father’s sister’s husband, what male or female call older sister’s husband, and what male or female will call husband’s older sister’s husband (rec. oe k’a whether male or female).

a tsu (v) male or female calls son’s wife (rec. a da a ma). Also male or female will call older brother’s wife this (both v.r), and a female will call husband’s older brother’s daughter-in-law this. (rec. for older brother’s wife a nyi).

a ui (v.r) what male or female will call father’s older brother and older brother’s wife, and mother’s older sister and her husband. A wife calls husband’s older brother and his wife this (rec a ,ui).

a yeh (see a nm).

a yui (r. for older brother, v.r for others ) a generic term for an older sibling. More specifically, either male or female will call an older brother this referentially (as well as ‘bu do’ and ‘a do), females (and sometimes males) will call an older sister this, and male will call wife’s older brother this (rec a nyi).

a za (v.r) what a male or female will call daughter’s husband (rec. a maw).

a zaw (v.r) what male speaker calls father’s younger brother (his wife will call him the same thing) rec a du).

baw gaw (see tsui, yeh)

bu do (see a do)
ci ma (v.r) what male calls his wife’s younger sister, and his wife’s younger brother’s wife (rec. a shah). Most use ‘nyi ma’.

dm ma (r ) how a male refers to his sisters (rec. a mah a da).

meh nm (r I think) what a male calls his brothers and hid father’s brother’s children (usually the sons). it is also sometimes used as a general term for all male and female siblings and father’s brother’s children. they are all in the same sub-clan (pa). (rec. meh nm).

nyi ma (v.r) what female calls younger brother’s wife, and a male calls wife’s younger brother’s wife, and wife’s younger sister (although some dialects use ci ma for these last two). (rec. a shah).

oe k’a (v.r) a male will call his wife’s younger brother this (rec. a shah)

oe za (v) the term men call each other when their children marry (rec. oe za).

oe leh (v.r) what male or female will call all great grandchildren (rec. a poe – for both male and female).

oe ma (v.r) what male or female will call their granddaughter, also what a female will call her husband’s older and maybe younger brother’s granddaughters. Some have said that a male would also call his wife’s older brother’s granddaughters this, but others object. (rec. a baw, a pi male and female).

oe nm (v.r) what male or female will call all great-great grandchildren (some dialects use leh hm pa). (rec. a poe).

oe nm leh (v.r) what male or female will call great-great-great grandchildren (some dialects, oe nm oe leh rec. don’t have).

oe pa (v.r) what male or female will call their grandson, also what a female will call her husband’s older (and maybe younger too), brother’s grandsons. (rec. a baw, a pi male and female).

poe pi general term for great-grandmother, but not many use anymore (rec. oe leh).

tsaw maw (see a maw)

tsui yeh (v) what boys call each other whose fathers are brothers (rec. tsui yeh, or, baw gaw).

za ma (v.r) what male or female will call father’s sister’s daughter, sister’s daughter, and spouses sister’s daughter (the term for sons in this category is za oe) (rec. a g’oe).

za oe (v.r) what male or female will call father’s sister’s son, sister’s son, and spouses sister’s son (rec. a g’oe).
There is a general term that is a referential term for all of a man’s male relatives on his father’s side who are older than he is, but discounting his own brothers. The term is ‘ta tsui’. A term that is used in practically the same way is ‘a yui a zaw’.

There are also certain relationships where they will sometimes say, ‘We would just say the person’s name for this’. This may sometimes indicate that they either do not know what the proper term for that relationship is, or that it is far enough off and complicated enough that they do not bother to use it. On the other hand, it should be indicated that in the closer relationships they will usually use the kin term in preference to the person’s name - both vocative and referential.

For example, often when they see a relative in the distance they will say’ There is my ‘a shah’. Then while speaking to him they will call him ‘a shah’ as well.

KIN RELATIONSHIPS

There are certain people who are in an ‘embarrassed relationship’ (sha daw-eu) to one another. This means they will not talk about certain things to that person, or even in that person’s presence. Anything that has to do with courting 9 as singing love songs, even the word ‘flowers’- since it is used so much in courting), getting married, getting divorce, making love, committing adultery, and according to some at least, anything about urination, defecation or farting. Some hold these last terms do not reflect taboo subjects in the ‘embarrassed relationship’, but just impolite conversation.

These relationships occur between sexes. The mail kin relationships that are affected are: daughter to father, son to mother, son-in-law to mother-in-law, daughter-in-law to father-in-law, most a ui, a mui relationships (when the speaker is male), and I believe all ‘a ui a zaw’ relationships (when the speaker is female). A male is not in this relationships with his younger brother’s wife, however, even though she is his ‘a mui’. The fact that she is younger seems to be the main reason it does not constitute an ‘embarrassed relationship’.

Others who are in this type of relationship are: a person to the grandparent of the opposite sex, a male to his older brother’s wife and to his older sister, a female to her older brother, and to her husband’s older brother.

This relationship is not always reciprocal. For example, a male can say embarrassing things to his older brother’s daughter, but she must not say such things to him or in front of him. the same with a man’s older sister’s daughter.

This does not mean however that people in this relation can never communicate their thoughts concerning marriage, divorce, etc. But they cannot do so directly. If a mother thinks that one of her sons ought to get a divorce from his present wife, she will tell a sister-in-law, who will tell either her husband, or the boy himself, if she is not in an embarrassing relationship to him. The father also will send word through someone else to his daughter, ‘If you marry that man I’ll kill you’. The father would not actually kill his daughter, they hasten to say- ‘I just said that to frighten her’. Or he will send a warning to his daughter something like, ‘You won’t have anything to eat if you marry that good-for-nothing’. Such messages sent by g-betweens often create some very real tensions within the household.
CLAN
The clan (a jeu, a jeu, a ca, a jeu, a keu, a keu), is very important to an Akha. Whenever they meet another Akha that they do not know, they will ask him first what clan he is from. If they happen to be from the same clan, they compare genealogies until they find the last common ancestor.

They must have at least three clans to be able to have an Akha village. Many larger villages have many more than this, of course, but the minimum number is at least one representative from three clans. One reason for this is that when they have important ceremonies to perform in their village they must have three clans represented.

Sometimes when there are only three clans in a village, and one clan is represented by only one household, that ‘connecting link’ (tsaw tsm) may get big-headed since he feels that the village could not get along without him.

SUB CLAN
The sub-clan (pa) is also very important to an Akha. Evidently it includes all who are related to a person on his father’s side for seven generations.

There is a ‘head of the sub-clan’ (pa a yui). He must be consulted whenever there is a matter of someone within the sub-clan. They show special respect to the ‘head of the sub-clan’, giving him part of their first fruits.

When two people are removed by more than seven generations, them they are no longer in the same sub-clan, but are non-relative (boe mi si k’a) relationship. A boy and girl who are not in the same sub-clan can marry. When the girl marries the boy, she accepts his sub-clan (pa geu-eu).

If a boy wants to marry a girl from his own sub-clan, the elders will tell him not to. there are a few boys who listen to the elders, but most do not. So the boy goes ahead and starts living with the girl. Then the elders get together and discuss what to do. They must have a ‘splitting of the sub-clan’ (pa tseu tseu-eu or, pa dzeh dzeh-eu) ceremony for this. After this ceremony they are considered in different sub-clans. later when the children are grown up, they can even marry first paternal cousins, since they are now of different sub-clans.

For the ‘splitting of the sub-clan ceremony, the couple must go to the home of the ‘head of the sub-clan’ (pa a yui), or an important elder in the sub-clan if they cannot go to the head.

The young man will first put a fermented rice container (ji ba ji si) into the dirt in the fireplace. Then he will kill a pig, which he brought, after ceremonially sprinkling it. After the pig has been killed the elders look at the liver (za pi haw-eu), and all say ‘It is very good. There will be lots of children’.

The young man gives a bottle of liquor to the elders to drink, while he and his friends cook the pork. Two ribs are saved for the ‘head of the sub-clan’. In the meantime, his wife has made enough ‘rice balls’ (ja leh) to feed all of the elders that will be called. She also fixes some broken rice (ceh loe) in a dish with a boiled egg on top of the rice.
A ‘rice table (haw jeh) is placed in front of the ‘head of the sub-clan’. They place the following on the table: the cooked ribs (pa k’m), rice balls (ja leh), broken rice with a boiled egg, liquor, and tea.

Then the man who is breaking from the sub-clan (pa tseu tseu-eu), takes some of the meat with both hands, next a little of the rice balls, and then a little broken rice, and puts them, all at one time, into the outstretched, cupped hands of the ‘head of the sub-clan’. He accepts them and eats (pa k’m dza-eu) them in the same way he would ancestor-offering food (a poe law dza).

Next he hands a dish with liquor in it the ‘head of the sub-clan’, who takes it in both hands, and drinks a little. The same is done with the cup having tae in it. Each handles these items with both hands, the same as performing the ancestor offerings.

Then the village priest comes and eats a little and drinks a little of the things there. He does not take any of the meat, however. After he is finished, the other elders come and do the same as the village priest. After they have finished doing this, they are fed a poor curry and rice meal.

This above is done in the morning. then in the afternoon, they have the wedding. They have to kill another pig for this.

Akhas believe that if a couple from the same sub-clan get married without having the above ceremony, they will have either ‘dumb and stupid’ children (a dzaw a gah) children or grandchildren. They believe that if the couple does not have the ceremony, they have sin resting on them (ba na-eu). They will also have short lives (zi ma baw). I have heard Akhas say that sickness would plague them, and tigers would kill them.

There is also a means whereby a person can join another sub-clan (pa daw daw-eu). This usually happens when a boy is angry with his father, or a father does not like the girl he is going to marry. The boy will get fermented rice from a person who is not his relative. This may be a village priest, or someone else that he knows, and that takes pity on him. It also happens when a person has to flee from one area to another.

For example, K-28 told of a man who in 1958 fled from China because of Communist oppression. The man was about 32 years old at the time. His wife and children were with him. He did not have a sub-clan (pa) when he reached the village, so he came and asked K-28 to let him join his sub-clan (pa daw daw-eu). He kept his name (Law sa), and his genealogy as before.

K-28 gave him some fermented rice so that he could start his own ancestor altar. In all of the religious aspects of his life, he was in K-28’s sub-clan from that time on. He called K-28 ‘father’ (a da). ‘And this religion (zah) has been good to him. He has lots of pigs and domesticated animals now’.
INFANCY AND CHILDHOOD

NURSING
On the day of an infant’s birth, the husband prepares an egg for the mother. This is to help start the milk flowing. The mother also massages her breast to help start the milk flowing.

The colostrum (a coe yaw gah) is squeezed out and discarded (nyeh dzeh-eu) by the mothers.

When the milk begins to flow, the mother will first put a dab of boiled egg on the lips of the infant before she actually starts to nurse it.

Whenever the infant is hungry, the mother will give him her breast. ‘Only a crazy person, or one who wants to leave her husband, would deny the breast to her infant’.

The nursing mother will be careful of her diet all the time she is nursing her baby. She will avoid some things, such as eating too much chili, since this ‘makes tears run down the infants face’.

During the first five months of the infant’s life, the mother must always must always take a little food from the dish she is going to be about to eat. and while putting it on the infant’s lips she says, ‘Mother is going to eat, son (daughter)’. (A ma haw dza ma li-o, bu-o). Only then will she eat. If she did not do this, ‘God could not bear the sight’ (ma haw nah-a). One informant said they do this until the child is one year old.

There are certain types of behavior that are called for to insure the proper flow of milk. For example, if a person should walk between the mother and a nursing child, then the milk would no longer floe. So both the nursing mother- and others- must be careful to see that this does not happen.

Akhas are also very strict about a mother turning her back on her child during the night. ‘God made it that way’. If shed should do that, the next morning she would have to give a boiled egg to the child, and tie a string around its wrist. I believe this may go back to the myth about when Tah pah died and they decided whose mother she was by the way she turned. (Vol 1).

Some say that when a mother cannot nurse her child, she will ask some of the other women in the village to help her, but they hate to do this. K-29 strongly objects to the thought of doing that however. He told how he had raised two of his girls by chewing rice and feeding to them that way.

A very few of them may use milk to feed the infants, or to supplement the mother’s milk when it is not enough. But the Akhas say, ‘WE pity the calf’. They may be giving part of the story when they say that, but I believe they do not like milk, and rather look down on using cow’s milk for nursing infants. However, there are those now who buy condensed milk and give it to their children if their milk is not sufficient. They nurse their children for at least one year, many as long as two or three years.
WEANING
If the mother becomes pregnant, she will no longer nurse her child. ‘It would give the child a stomach ache if she nursed it.’ When the child is about one year old, they do something so that the child will not be thirsty for his mother’s milk. While she is gone to work in the fields in the daytime. The mother will take a banana leaf, put cooked rice and a boiled egg into it, and leave it with the child while she says, ‘Don’t get thirsty for milk, mother won’t come back for that’. (A coe ta meh la a ma ma g’o la-a k’oe-a). From this time on, it is alright if the mother turns over at night with her back to the child. She will not have to feed him an egg in the morning.

To help wean the child, they often put chili, or something very bitter on the nipple. After four or five days the child is weaned.

If the child continues to nurse for along time, the siblings of that child will often say, ‘aren’t you embarrassed? How can you stand to keep doing it at your age?’

BATHING
After the first bath (Vol 2), which is given by the ‘old lady’ (a pi) in charge of the birth, the mother bathes the child. For five months she will bath the child twice a day. At the end of the five months period (ba geu nah jaw, or, ma gui nah jaw) which is an important milestone in the baby’s and mothers lives, she will bath the baby once a day, until such time as it can ‘play and get around on its own’. They believe that once the infant gets large enough to play around, it does no good to wash them, since they just get dirty in the dust and dirt.

EXCESSIVE CRYING
When the infant cries a lot, they sometimes change its name, in the belief that the child is not happy with that name. Sometimes they believe the child is uncomfortable, so they give him a bath.

But if there is excessive crying for a period of time, they will bury three cowrie shells (hu si) under the place where the child’s bed is. If the child continues to cry they will kill and cook a chicken, and ‘feed’ him a little from the ‘five pieces’ (one from the liver, one from the thigh, and three from the breast). They actually just rub it on his lips.

If this still does not work, they must have a ceremony for the house spirit (dzah mi ca-eu). For this they will have a shaman (nyi pa) come ‘look’ (haw-eu). She will see whether dzah mi wants to eat chicken or pork. The parents will kill whichever animal dzah mi indicates. They kill the animal under the house. They cook and eat it there as well, along with the village elders. The mother and infant do not eat any of this. Before they eat the curry feats, however, they fix up a winnowing try with the following ‘dishes’: tea, liquor, ‘holy rice’, onions, water, rice (uncooked), an egg, broken rice, and three ‘rice balls’ (ja leh). Then the village priest will repeat spirit incantations (dzah mi ca neh-eu) for the child. This is designed to stop the ‘affliction’ of the child that the house spirit is causing. The same type of incantations (to-eu) will be recited anytime while the child is growing up when they feel the house spirit is ‘afflicting’ the child (gu la-eu).

After they have made the offering, and after they have eaten the feats, they go back up into the house, and tie a string around the wrist of the infant, and after that another string around the wrist of the mother.
GENERAL CARE
There are general taboos they have regarding infants, which form part of their ‘care’. For example, they will never say about an infant, ‘His face is not that good’. If they said that, God would hear it, and he ‘would take the child back’ –that is, the child would die.

When the mother first carries the baby to another house, she will give it a little salt and some money or silver ornament, so he won’t cry. The ornament will be sewn on some part of the infant’s clothing. Until a child is five months old, he must not wear any new clothes, but only old ones. I am not sure why they do this. If they use clothes for a child from one that died they must turn them inside out.

As the children get old enough to begin talking, they will teach them to say, ‘ma ma ma, da da da’ (mother, father). This is usually around one year. They say that some infants can walk then. The fathers and mothers both play with the children a great deal during this time.

When the child is three years old, they shave off the child’s hair (u du jeh-eu). With the boys, they leave the top knot, which must not be shaved off. But with the girls, they shave all the hair off. When they are finished, they give the child a boiled egg (u du jeh-eu ya u pu –eu).

CHILDREN’S GAMES AND PLAY
When small children play, the boys and girls some times play together, although often they separate when playing their own types of games. One game they sometimes play together is the ‘chicken thigh game’, (ya ci baw du the ni g’a-eu). For this game, they join hands in a circle. There is one person outside the circle with the ‘chicken thigh’, which is a stick. The person who is ‘it’, and starts on the inside of the circle, wants to get the ‘chicken thigh’. The circle helps the one with the ‘chicken thigh’ by trying to keep ‘it’ in the circle, or if the positions later reverse, they will try to protect the one with the ‘chicken thigh’ from being caught.

As they get larger, the girls tend to play things that are more typical of their female role. For example, they will carry cucumbers on their backs with a carrying cloth, as if they were their babies. They also enjoy playing with large black seeds (a beu). They stand some of them up, and the go back about six to eight feet from them, and ‘shoot’ (beu) their seeds at these trying to knock them down.

The boys play more active games, such as tug-of war, ‘steal the bacon’, and such group games. Their version of ‘steal the bacon’ is as follows: one person (it) holds a stick under his foot, and tries to keep the others from taking it. They can push and shove him, but he can strike them. If they get the stick three times, he takes the stick into the jungle, and hides it on his body. The others try to find it. If they find it, he has to be ‘it’ again.

There is a variation of the above, called ‘tsa gm tsaw-eu’, where the person who is ‘it’ holds onto a small stick the center of four sticks that are laid out like a square. Then the other boys try to take the sticks without the one who is ‘it’ kicking them. He can only kick them below the knee. If they get all of them before he can kick anyone, they pour dirty or sand on his head, and he is it again. If he kicks someone, that person is it.

Another game is ‘tiger and bear’ (k’a la k’a hm geu-eu). One person is the ‘tiger’ (or bear), and the others are either chickens or pigs. The chickens (or pigs) form into a line, and the tiger (or bear), tries to touch the last one in the line.
They sometimes take two long bamboos, and out them parallel on the ground. Then with one boy at one end, and another boy at the other, they slap them together, while one or more boys jump in and out (bah jaw deh-eu). They increase the tempo as they go, and try to catch a boy’s foot between the bamboos. If they do, he slaps the bamboos together, while the one who ‘caught’ him takes his place.

They often play tag (a bui bui gui ni g’a-eu). In order to decide who will be ‘it’, they often do the following (a g’oe g’oe gui-eu). While one person holds his hands out, palm down, the others who are going to play all hold their right finger below, but touching his palm. Then he repeats the rhyme they use for this. When he is finished he grabs a finger. The one he grabs is ‘it’. The rhymes they use are often different, but they usually start out: ‘A bui bui…’

The ones who are not ‘it’ run to hide, while ‘it’ covers his face. He calls out, ‘Have you all hidden?’ If they have, they call out ‘U’ in a falsetto, which they believe makes it harder for the one who is it to place. If they are not ready of course, they call out that they are not ready, and he gives them more time.

The boys love to spin tops, and will do it through most of the year. The older youth and young married men will join them in a very energetic top spinning contests during the new year festival (cah ti-eu, cah bi-eu).

Sometimes boys make some dish-shaped objects out of clay, spit in them, and then throw them on the ground real hard. If they do it right, it makes a loud noise.

There are also certain group games they play. In one, (a beu tseh-eu), the boys divide into two groups with an even number of players in each group. Then they try to touch (the-eu) either the head or from the knee down of someone on the other side. When a person is so touched, he must drop out until that round is over. If he is tired and just wants to rest for a moment, he can call out ‘aw-a’ (the call of the crow), and then he cannot be tagged.

When all have been caught on one side, the ‘captain’ (a yui) of the winning side takes a handful of dirt and pours it on the head of the ‘captain’ of the losing side.

In another game (meu da g’aw g’eu-eu) they plat that has two sides, they draw a line down the middle. Then they try to pull their opponents over the line. Once a person has been pulled over the line, he is ‘dead’ (shi ta-eu), and goes out of the game. The winning side can pour dirt over the head of the captain of the losing side. There are other variations of the game (aw-a the-eu), but it is played with basically the same rules.
SEX

LOVE MAGIC
Akhas talk quite a bit about casting a spell on something so that the one who eats it or wears it will fall madly in love with the one who casts the spell (ba ya to-eu). But in reality I do not believe they actually do it anymore.

If a young man is greatly infatuated with a girl, but she is not interested in him, he can either cast a love spell himself, or have someone else do it, usually a Shan. Often they use beeswax for this. After they have ‘repeated spirit incantations’ (to-eu) over the beeswax, the boy will rub a little of it on the girl’s clothing, or in her hair, but without her knowing about it. Then she will fall madly in love with him. The Akhas say that she will not be able to be out of sight of the boy.

They can use tobacco and betel over which to repeat the incantations. Later, when the person smokes that tobacco or chews the betel, she will fall in love with the person who gave the love spell to it.

Sometimes they put a small piece of the kind of clay they eat in a blanket and repeat the incantation. This may go back to the legend of the brother and sister that fell madly in love with each other after the girl inadvertently ate some clay in the brother’s blanket that had had a ‘love spell’ cast on it.

The innocent party, if she or her learns that a ‘love spell’ has been cast on something of theirs, can go to an elder and have the spell broken. This will pull them out of the clutches of the scheming person who ‘repeated spirit incantations’.

Akhas frown on this sort of thing very much. They say that if the boy and girl do get married as a result of a ‘love spell’ it will not be a ‘luck-blessed’ (gui lah ma hui-a) marriage. They believe that the girl will run home not long after the marriage. Or, even if she does not do that, there will be very few boys born to such a marriage (if any), and it will be generally an unhappy marriage. One informant said that their lives would be shortened as well.

When I asked about how often this has occurred in specific villages, I could not find one where the elders had known of its happening. Some did say that there were Shans about who claimed to be good at this, and would perform the ‘love magic’ for anywhere from five to eight old coins.

There is another type of ‘love spell’ that can be cast without using ‘spirit incantations’ (to-eu). They call this ‘ba ya ya-eu’.

INITIATION OF SEXUAL INTERCOURSE
When a boy gets to be nine or ten years old, his father or older brothers will encourage him to start sleeping with girls. If he does not sleep with girls he will not ‘grow up’. At the same time, mothers encourage their daughters not to sleep with boys yet, but as the Akhas admit, this does not do much good. For it is also believed that if girls do sleep not with boys, they will not develop, as they should.

If an adult is very small, about the size of an eleven or twelve year old, they call them ‘leh ti’, which is actually a term of derision. They believe they have not grown up since they have never slept with the opposite sex.
After either a boy or a girl has had successful coitus with the opposite sex, they are said to have ‘jaw k’aw pi-eu’, and from then on they will really develop and get big. A specific term (taboo in polite conversation) used for the boys when they have had successful coitus is ‘za k’a heu-eu). I wondered at first if this could be a general term for reaching puberty, but I believe puberty has little or nothing to do with it, as far as they are concerned. The first successful coitus is the thing to them. For the girls they say ‘a tah tah-eu’ (to be opened), also an impolite term.

K-28 felt very strongly that only after a girl has been opened up can she start her menstrual periods, and I have heard others say this too. Most of them believe it will around 12 months after the ‘opening up’ that the menstrual periods will start. When I showed amazement over this, K-28 immediately wanted to take me to his village where he could ask the women. Every one of them could vouch for the fact that their periods started about one year after having been ‘opened’ he said- and I could not negate that.

**TABOOS CONCERNING SEXUAL INTERCOURSE**

It is extremely important that they do not have sexual intercourse when they are supposed to have ‘ceremonial abstinence’ (lah-eu) in preparation for a ceremony or important event, such as a funeral. This is for those who are married that is. On the afternoon of night they are to refrain from intercourse, the village priest (dzoe ma) will ‘call out’ (nah gu gu-eu) from his uncovered porch. He will mention not spinning thread, not combing one’s hair, and being careful of one’s arms and legs’. The adults know that this latter means refraining from intercourse.

At no time must they have intercourse in a paddy field as it would wrong the ‘spirit owner’ (yaw sah) of the paddy. Since there is a field hut (ya cm) in the paddy field, this is a logical place to go for those who want to have intercourse. But if it is found out that a couple has had intercourse there, they must offer a pig at the ‘spirit field hut’ (k’m pi). Of course, they go on to say that if no one knows that a couple had intercourse there, then the spirits will not know either, and no special offering will need to be made. There must not be intercourse in the paddy house or on the porch of the paddy house, since this wrongs the ‘spirit owner’ of the paddy, and then that family will not have enough to eat. They fine people for doing this- if they find out about it.

It is felt that a man and his wife must not have intercourse on the night before he goes hunting. Also, during the rice planting and harvesting periods they refrain from it. When a person in the village dies, they are not supposed to sleep together until the second night after that person has been buried. When a man has been hunting and returns home, he will not sleep with his wife until the next cycle of days.

**BAD SIGN**

When a boy is courting a girl at night, he often brings up the matter of marriage. After much talk, and sometimes the exchange of gifts, and after the others who have been at the ‘playground’ (deh k’ah) have gone home, they go out into the jungle to sleep together. In the morning, when they wake up, if one of them would have his or her back turned to the other, that is a bad sign and they will not marry. If the girl becomes pregnant from that night’s intercourse, and she cannot find anyone else to marry her, that boy will have to marry her, whether it was a bad sign or not.

Or, if during that night or early the next morning, the couple should see a ‘bad omen’ (daw), they will not get married. They can sleep together after this has happened, but similar to the above, Akhas believe it would be a ‘bad marriage’, since their life-span would be shortened (zi ma baw-a).
IMPOTENCY
In the past, when a couple had been married for some time, and had no children, they sometimes ‘begged for children’ (za sha sha-eu) from the village elders. The elders would look around and find some man who had lots of children. They would have the woman live with him as if she were a second wife, until she became pregnant.

When the child was born, the couple would give the man of the house who sired the child, a new outfit of clothes and kill a pig and feast him and the elders. According to K-2 and K-18, the woman in the case would have to obey the decision of the elders. She would not be consulted. K-28 and K-29 felt that the woman had to be willing to sleep with that man. Also, they felt that it was something that had to be done without the rest of the village knowing about it. They told of one man who had done this. Later, after she had a child, she just wanted to sleep with the child’s father, so her husband had to move to another village.

It is difficult to find any actual cases of this now, I believe it is either dying out, or has died out.

MISCONCEPTION BY OUTSIDERS
The Akhas are both amazed and angry when they talk about the misconceptions Lahus have concerning their sexual activity. The fact that anyone would actually believe the things that Gordon Young wrote in his book on the Hill Tribes of North Thailand concerning an Akha ‘male’ who deflowers all the girls in the village, also makes amazed and very angry. It is completely foreign to their culture. ‘The spirits would afflict us like anything if we did stupid things like that’.

The ‘male’ that Gordon Young writes about is information he got from the Lahus. He even used the Lahus that live near Akhas do not believe this, but some of them who do not live near the Akhas rather seem to enjoy believing this type of thing and talking about it. It is not true of the Akhas in Thailand, either. The sooner this falsehood can be eradicated from the literature concerning Akhas the better.

The Akhas do get a certain satisfaction in seeing just how stupid the Lahus are to be gullible enough to believe what Akha youngsters say in joking. No doubt the Lahu concept of being deathly afraid of a type of civet cat (bya hi), and singing (a ceu gu-eu) to ‘frighten them away’, got started in this way. Actually, the ‘a ceu gu-eu’ song is a love song between boys and girls in distant mountain fields. Also, Akhas have no fear whatsoever of this type of civet cat. So when they learn that the Lahus actually believe this, they laugh uproariously, and do what they can to keep the Lahus ignorant of the true purpose of this kind of singing.
TRAVEL
Most travel that Akhas engage in is either for trading purposes, or for hunting. Only the men go. As for extended trading trips, they will often make one such trip a year, usually during the dry season, and usually between their new year and their rice planting time. As for extended hunting trips, these will be made more frequently – whenever their work allows them to go.

Those men whose wives are pregnant do not usually travel much, or if they do, they do not go far. When they feel the time for the birth is near, they stay close to their homes.

Before starting out on a long journey, an Akha man will ‘observe ceremonial abstinence’ (lah-eu) for two or three days. The most important feature, perhaps, of this is that he will not sleep with his wife. If he has a dream during this time, which he considers bad, he will not go on the trip.

Before setting out they will often kill a chicken to see what signs there are. First of all they look inside the skull of the chicken, to see if there is a bit of blood just above the opening for the beak. If they see the spot of blood there, some say that they will not start on their trip, since it will be a bad road. Only if it is clear will they start out. K-23 however, said that it is a good sign if they see the blood there. They also examine the tongue of the chicken. If it is in a normal position, that is a good sign. If it is twisted around, that means there will be a lot of arguing on the trip. They also take the thighbone and stick a straw or bamboo strip (a ne) into the holes in the end. Those who know how to do this (ya yoe ka-eu), can tell whether it is wise to go on the trip or not. They say that the Chinese are very good at this, which makes me wonder a bit if perhaps it could be borrowed from them.

Akhas will not start on a trip on certain days (za nah sheh nah) if they are going trading, since those days are not right for travel. They would have a slow trip. Also they would never start out on a day that it was discovered that a tiger or leopard had killed some animal in the village.

Even though the signs were good and they start out, they will turn around if they happen to run across any animals on their trip that frequent hot springs, such as barking deer, jungle fowl, pheasant, sambar deer, etc. Of course this restriction is just for those going on a trading trip. Also if they see a snake going from above their path and across it, then down the lower side, that means they will lose on their trading trip. If they see a snake go from the lower side to the upper side of the path though, that means they will have a very good trading trip.

When they travel quite far from home, upon getting up in the morning they will say to their soul, ‘Get up, get up, let’s go’ (Tu-aw, tu-aw, I ka-eu). Then they will shake their blankets, or scratch around a bit in the soil with a stick or their hand. I asked one why they do this. ‘We don’t want to leave our soul behind and have our souls ‘run away’ (la ba ba-ieu).

When traveling they must be careful what they eat. They will not eat anything that has been shot by someone, or anything that has been killed by a wild animal. They will only eat meat from animals that have been butchered properly. When they are home, and not traveling, they can eat the other things too. Also, they do not eat fish at all when traveling.
When they are traveling, especially when trading, if either a crow (aw-a) or a drongo bird (ji g’a ji yeu) flies around them, or over them back and forth, and keeps coming back, it is sent to tell them, ‘Don’t continue, return’. K-29 told of how he returned to his home when this happened and found one of his daughters had died and been buried. He was sure the bird had been ‘sent’, but by whom is somewhat hazy.

When they walk on their mountain trails, they get used to walking single file. When they come down to Kengtung and walk on broad streets, or across a football field, or what have you, they still persist in walking single file. Usually the leader will be the elder of the group. If there are men and women in the group, the men will walk first.

HUMOR
In their legends and stories, Akhas have many very humorous situations, although the humor is often not understood by those who do not know their culture. Also, there is often play on words. This is illustrated in the story of the young man who when he went courting ‘borrowed’ (nga-eu) lots of silver ornaments from his relatives and friends. When the girl he asked to marry him checked to be sure they were his, he said, ‘They are nga-eu’, which could mean either, ‘They are mine’, or ‘They are borrowed’. She understood him to say, ‘They are mine’, so she married him.

Several Akha men told me how they had fooled a Shan in a village north of Kengtung. The Shan man asked them what the Akha word was for a certain type of tree. The Akha man asked if he had quite a sense of humor, and also wanted to play a joke on the ‘big-headed Shan’, so he said, ‘We call it ‘Let-a-tiger-bite-me’. The Shan man repeated the Akha ‘Let-the-tiger-bite-me’ over and over until he could say it perfectly. The Akhas man praised him for his linguistic skill- without letting on that the Shan was not giving the name of the tree at all, but calling down a terrible curse upon himself.

When the Akha man got home, he told all his friends what he had done, and they all laughed at this beautiful joke. So when they went to that Shan man’s village they made it a point to tell him they had heard that he spoke their language beautifully, and wondered if he still remembered the name of that certain type of tree in Akha. He replied in Akha, ‘Let-the-tiger-bite-me’. He misunderstood their amusement at his reply, taking it as their amazement that a Shan could say something in Akha. When and how the Shan man learned of the joke – or if he ever did – I don’t know. But I know that Akhas in a large area thoroughly enjoyed it.

P-1 loved to tell of an old Akha man he saw sitting by the fireplace when something started to boil over. He had nothing to stir it with, so he yelled to a boy to bring a spoon. But since the child was slow, the old man took his long silver tobacco pipe out of his mouth and began to stir it with that. The memory of that sends P-1 into fits of laughter.

P-1 also told of the time a relative of his (A teu_ was extremely ill. The father called a spirit priest (boe maw) to repeat spirit incantations over him. The spirit priest was in the house repeating the incantations for some time, but A teu, who was delirious, kept tossing and turning, and calling out. Finally the spirit priest stopped in disgust and turning to the unconscious man said, ‘Why on earth do you keep moaning and twisting around like this? Here I am knocking my self out speaking to the spirits on your behalf and what do you do? Just moan and groan!’ P-1 got to laughing so hard at this time he had to leave the house.
K-8 felt Akhas laugh at a person who says he is good at something, as in a game, or hunting, and who then does poorly. They will laugh at him mercilessly. Also if someone says something they should not say, they all laugh at him.

BLACKSMITHS
Blacksmiths (ba ji, or in ceremonial language, ci g’a) are considered to be very important in the Akha society. There is a legend that long ago blacksmiths received no pay. But when some men who were not truly blacksmiths started acting as if they were, the true ones left, for they knew that things would get into an awful mess – as they did. So to get the true blacksmiths back, the Akhas had to promise to give them money, and they have been giving ever since.

When someone in the village goes to the blacksmith to have something fixed, he must furnish his own charcoal, and must also help work the bellows (baw baw-eu), as well as help with the ‘hammering’ (the-eu). They also take a token gift (ceh law dah-eu), in which there is some paddy which has been pounded only once (ceh dzeh), an egg, and a 25 pya coin in a dish. This is put near the place where they work. When the job is finished, the blacksmith gets this. If they do not finish that day, the one who brought it takes it back home for the night, and brings it again the next day.

Once a year everyone in the village takes his mattock and goes to work in the blacksmith’s field (la ci la g’a tseh-eu, or ya g’a tseh-eu). The blacksmith must kill a pig and feasts the villagers that help him. When a person from another village comes to have work done, the blacksmith can charge him whatever fee he wants. He has no obligation to work for that person. It used to be that they could only work on metal in the ‘cherry blossom month’ (g’eh la – about March). But they do not appear to follow this anymore.

The family of the blacksmith must be very careful, because of the ‘spirit owner’ (yah sah) of the bellows (baw). No one must urinate or defecate near it. Usually, in order that there will be less possibility of wronging the ‘spirit owner’, the bellows is put in a little shed near the edge of the village. During the ‘k’m, shui k’m mi’ ceremony, Akhas make an offering (baw tu-eu) to the bellows, as well as the other tools the blacksmith uses. That is, the anvil, hammers, and tongs. For this they kill a red cock, and ‘feed’ the bellows b y dropping a pinch of meat from each section (ti she ti jeh) by the bellows.

There is a ceremony (ci ha da-eu) held every three years. They do it because a blacksmith is ‘powerful’ (k’a) in the Akha religion. For this ceremony, a spirit priest (boe maw) goes to the blacksmith’s house. He repeats spirit incantations (to-eu) in the blacksmith’s house first, after killing two pigs and a ‘pair’ of chickens. Then he goes outside to repeat spirit incantations after killing a pig, a dog, and four chickens.

The theme of the incantations is: Let the blacksmith be healthy. May he and his family have plenty to eat. They can perform this custom before the three years is up if they wish. They often do it when they are not getting as much paddy as they think they should, or there are members of the family constantly getting sick, etc. There may be two blacksmiths in a village. if so, each must perform this ceremony. But before a person can qualify to be called a ‘blacksmith’ he must be able to make a spear, small hand hoe (la ngeu) a machete, ax and other tools. Otherwise he is considered only a ‘blacksmith helper’ (ci za).
LUMBERING
Akhas often come to feel that certain big trees have special powers. They come to realize which trees have this power, because various people over a period of time have noted that this is indeed a ‘special tree’. Also if someone mistreats the tree by hacking at it with a machete, or climbing up and cutting off a branch, that person will be ‘afflicted’ (gu la-eu) by the ‘spirit owner’ (yah sah) of that tree.

Since this is the type of tree that woodcutters especially like to cut down and saw lumber from, I asked if they were not ‘afflicted’, and my informants said no. Spirits never bothered them because the spirits (neh) were afraid of the big metal ‘teeth’ in the saws that were used by the woodcutters.

If a person cuts down a tree and is ‘afflicted’ by the ‘spirit owner’, that person must offer a cock and hen, and also plant a new tree of the very same kind, near the stump of the old one. While planting it, he says ‘Look I am repaying you a tree. Don’t afflict me’.

There are some who take a precaution at the time of cutting the tree down. They put a rock on the stump after they have cut the tree down, and they believe this keeps the spirits from afflicting them. They do nothing for small trees.

K-2’s father, A baw A eu, told what some Akhas do when they see a very big and good tree that they want to cut down. They hack a machete into the tree and leave it in there overnight. The next day they come back to look at it. If the machete is still in the tree the way they left it, then they have ‘permission’ from the spirit owner to cut the tree down. But if the machete has fallen to the ground, they do not have permission yet.

So they strike an ax into the tree, and the next day they come back to see if it is still there. If it is in the tree the same way they left it, they can cut the tree down. But if not, they must tie some ‘magic vine’ (meh) around the tree, and the next day come back again.

If the ‘magic vine’ has not been disturbed, then they can cut down the tree. But if it is lying on the ground, or has been changed in some way or other, then they will ‘worship’ (u du tah) the spirit of the tree and say, ‘What do you want me to offer you? Do you want chicken? Or pig? Or goat? Etc’. The that night they go home, and whatever they dream about is what the spirit of the tree wants.

So the next day they take the animal they dreamed of to the base of the tree, where they offer it. For the actual offering, they make a platform with steps just like in the altar for their offering to ‘the lords and rulers of land and water’ (see Vol 1).

While dropping some of the feathers, or fur (ca hm) from the offering onto the altar they say, ‘Even as you have requested, here, I offer this to you’.

Then he will boil the offering, take a bit of meat from each section and drop that onto the altar while saying, ‘A moment ago I offered you raw meat. Now here is the cooked meat’.

After this he cuts down the tree. If he has done everything properly, the owner spirit will not afflict him. I should add that some Akhas I talked with have never heard of doing all this.
There does not seem to be any special time that Akha people go out to saw lumber. Almost certainly, however, they will not do it during the paddy planting or harvesting time, nor during any of their ancestor offering times. They generally go out when they need some extra money.

Gathering firewood is done mostly by the women and children. They cut ‘fresh wood’ (mi dza mi jm) especially during March, April, and May before the rains. At other times, they look for dry wood.

Trees must never be cut near the village gate, or tigers will take off the livestock of the villagers. Also, the villagers will get sick. They must also never cut down trees or gather firewood in the vicinity of: the water source, the graveyard, the offering place for the ‘lords and rulers of land and water’.

Although they do not usually cut down trees in marshy areas, it does not seem to be a taboo exactly. They are afraid of spirit affliction if they do. Also, if a branch should go into the mud when they cut a tree down, it would mean that there would be sickness, eye disease, trouble from backaches etc. in that family.

Also they will usually not cut down trees in the sacred grove of the Shans. They are afraid that the Shan’s ‘spirit’ (neh) will afflict them.

Akhas say they must have two days supply of firewood under their house at all times. Part of the reason for this seems to be that they want to be ready in case someone should die, when they could not go out and gather firewood right away. Also, they want the ‘house spirit’ (dzah mi) to have a place where she can hide. I heard from one that if they did not have enough firewood at the house at all times, they would get sick, and not have enough to eat. This had something to do with the ‘house spirit’.

DAILY ROUTINE

The mother and daughters are usually the first to rise in an Akha home. They generally rise about the time of the ‘second cock crow’. Boys rise later, and the men rise last of all.

A daughter, or son, will often start the fire for cooking the morning meal. The mother, sons and daughters will carry water between other tasks. It is often the boy who will be responsible for having the pitch pine split up ready to start fires, and also for seeing that there is enough firewood at the fireplace to keep the fire going nicely.

The girls will pound paddy, help the mother with the cooking of the rice, and do their share of helping in the preparation of cloth, such as ‘shooting’ some cotton for that day's spinning.

Either a son or daughter will get the ‘rice table’ (haw jeh) and set it up for the meal. They will put the ‘rice bowls’ (haw g'aw), a pair of chopsticks (ju da ti dzm) for each member of the family old enough to use them, and spoons (ku tsa) etc. on the ‘rice table’ in preparation for the meal.

If there is meat for the curry, usually the man of the household or boys, take charge of preparing the curry. If there is no meat, then the mother and daughter have that task.
Before the morning medal, after the father gets up, he kind of wanders around the house seeing what needs to be done, or what things need to be repaired. Perhaps he will be getting items ready for those who go to the field that day.

After the morning rice, the father usually sends the children to the filed. He will only go a few times a year – just enough to make sure that the work and ceremonies are carried out properly. He will usually stay home and care for the livestock, or perhaps he will prepare the small bamboo strips (a ne) used for so many things around the house. If he knows how to weave baskets or mats he may do that. Simple repairs to tools will also be taken care of. He may make such things as a ‘cotton spindle’ (ya ah), used by the girls and women to spin cotton thread.

Those who go to the field will wrap up rice in leaves and carry this with them in their shoulder bags. They leave these in their field huts while they work. Some time around noon they take a break from work, look for some greens to cook up for curry, and eat their cold rice and greens.

When they are in the field working, it is usually the oldest son who is in charge. His main task, of course, is to carry out what the father has instructed him to do that day.

When the members of the family who have been working in the field get back to their house that night, the father usually has the evening meal prepared for them. If he does not, the children often ‘scold’ him, although usually not in too direct a manner. It is more grumbling than anything.

In families where the man is an opium smoker, the routine is basically the same. However he usually gets up much later, and may not eat the morning meal with the rest of the family before they go to the fields. Also, rather than spend his time finding things around the house to do, he will probably be looking for ways and means of trading articles in the house for opium. He knows the rest of the family will scold him when they get back from the fields, but the craving for opium outweighs all other concerns.

SLEEPING
Akhas have a saying that when it is time to sleep, they must not eat. Akhas are careful where they sleep. They feel that there must be a cover of some kind. They believe that if they sleep outside on the uncovered porch, or other places without a covering, they will become ‘pregnant with a spirit’s child’ (neh a nyi pi lu). This is actually dropsy. Sometimes small children will sleep on the porch, but not grown men, and especially not women and girls, who have to be even more careful of this than the men and boys.

When the father of a household is away from the house, as on a hunting or trading trip, then no one must sleep in his sleeping place. If they did, the father would get sick.

Before they sleep in the jungle, or in their hill fields, they clear their throats three times (eh heh sm te ka-eu). This scares away the spirits. In the jungle, they also strike three trees once each. While striking each tree they say, ‘You be my home. Don’t let bad fortune come, don’t let good fortune end. Watch over me’.
FIRE
In about the year 1945, K-29’s village burned down. It was at night, about 10 or 11 o’clock when it got started. They did not know how or where the fire started, since they were all asleep. Of 96 households, only 7 did not burn down. And there were only 3 paddy houses left.

The villagers felt that there was a ‘reason’ for this fire. Just 13 days before the fire broke out, a barking deer had run into their village. This was a ‘bad omen’ (daw). They should have had a ritual (daw sha sha le-eu) to prevent the ‘bad omen’ from bringing trouble to their village. This would have been accomplished by putting some silver and broken rice into the mouth of the barking deer, and carrying it outside of the village where they should have said, ‘Fire and flood, don’t chase us. We give you silver. We give you food and drink.’

But since the elders were out planting rice that day, and there were only ‘youngsters’ in the village, they did not know any better and did not perform this ceremony. They simply cut up the meat and eat it before the elders got back. This, they feel, is the reason the fire burnt down most of the village.

BATHING
Men and women must bathe separately. The main reason for this seems to be as follows. After a couple has had ‘human rejects’ (tsaw caw), as a part of the ‘purification’ ceremony (m shaw-eu, they have to bathe together under a spout made from the stalk of a wild banana tree (nga jeh). Therefore it is not ‘proper’ (dzui k’m) for them to bathe under the same spout, or in the same part of the stream, at any other time. It would cause them to have ‘human rejects’.

When bathing, men will take off all their clothes. Women will take off everything but their headdress (u coe), and skirt (pi di).

Some Akhas (as K-28 and others) say that women may wash their hair. But for the most part in the Loimwe area and on east, they feel it is not ‘proper’ (ma tsi k’m) for a woman to wash her hair. The women also say that it makes it very difficult to comb properly if they wash it.

TAXATION AND VILLAGE FUNDS
Each Akha village has a general fund that is used to pay for various village projects. For example, when insurgents or police come through the village and have to be fed, then money from this fund is then used. The Akhas feel that when Burmese troops come through it is not quite so bad, since they will pay something for their food, although not the full amount. They gave me an idea of how it worked by saying that the Burmese troops would pay three kyats for a chicken that would ordinarily sell for 15 to 18 kyats.

The way they get the bulk of the money for this fund is through fines. For example, while holding the ceremony for the renewal of the village gate (law kah m-eu), if anyone should come into the village, they fine him 25 pyas. Also, if a married man should sleep with a widow, he is fined 45 kyats. Of this 2.50 goes to the village priest. The balance goes into the village fund.
Also, when a girl in the village gets married for the first time, the groom must give one old coin to the elders of the village. They sometimes use a portion of this money to buy tea to drink together, but whatever would be left over would go into the fund.

The village priest, or some other trustworthy person, holds this money. At the end of the year they use it for whatever village expenses they had. If the money is not enough, they figure how much they will take from each villager to complete the amount they need.

Akhas that made the irrigated paddy fields (deh ma, or, deh ya) used to have to pay kyats 3.50 tax for every load (two baskets) of paddy seed they used to plant. But the farmers lied to the cycle officer (sa ma ti) so that they would not have to pay so much, and he in turn would lie to those in court, and ‘eat the balance’ – at least the Akhas felt he did. Since the Revolutionary Council has been in control, however, under the ‘Burmese Way to Socialism’, the farmers have not had to pay this tax anymore.
INFORMANTS

Since I started my study of the Akha language and culture in Pangwai (about 17 miles south-east of Kentung town) in 1951, my first informants were from that area.

P-1 Za po the one who was my first real informant and ‘language teacher’. He was a very good informant in many ways, although he had a slight tendency to run down certain aspects of the Akha culture, although he was quite ‘proud’ in a good sense) of it too. His father-in-law was an outstanding spirit priest in the area, and his father, though having no official position, was considered to be one of the leading Akha elders in the Naw haw area. The father’s family was originally from the Meung Yawng area.

P-2 A dah was a young man, who with his wife, moved to Pangwai for a period of several months in 1952 to teach my wife and me Akha, and also to help us learn something of the Akha customs. He too later became a Christian. He was not too good an informant, although he gave me interesting insights into what the average ‘younger’ Akha considered important in his culture.

P-3 A baw La bui (literally ‘grandfather Chinese’) is an Akha man from Meun Yawng. The reason for the name is that when he was an infant he was very ill with dysentery. A Chinese medicine man cured him, and after that he was called ‘Chinese’, even though he is fully Akha. He knew many of the old legends and quite a bit about the Akha culture, but he was not an awfully good informant.

P-4 A boe, a young man who is the nephew of P-1, and certainly an Akha mystic. As a boy his grandfather, a leading spirit priest, practically raised him. He is very emotional, but also very good in describing his emotional reactions to various experiences. He was very anxious that I write up the Akha culture properly. He enjoyed making tapes a great deal.

The following informants are the ones I worked with in Kentung, thus the K before their number.

K-1 Sho k’ah, a village priest from a village not far from Kentung, but presently living in Kentung. If he got over the liquor and opium habits he would be a better informant.

K-2 Maw boe, from a village near Loimwe. I knew him well while living in Pangwai, but most of the material about the Akha culture I got from him wax while I was in Kentung. He worked for hours on end to help me get everything down, and get it right. He views the Akha culture from quite an objective viewpoint, even though he is interested in Christianity, and in living in a ‘Christian village’.

K-3 A joe, who came from a village west of Kentung for treatment at the Kentung Christian Hospital early in 1965. He was very pleased to see my interest in Akha, and even invited me to come and be the teacher in his village. He is the headman for eight villages in his area. He is also a spirit priest.
K-4  A tu, from Na ju village, not far from Naw ga Shan village on the road to Meung Yang. He was born in 1928. There are 30 houses in his village. No one grows or smokes opium there, ‘because we are too poor’. On March 7th 1965, he and some villagers were eating some leopard meat when some bone got stuck in A tu’s throat. He had a spirit priest repeat spirit incantations over a cup of water and then drank it, ‘but it didn’t do a bit of good’. So he came to the Christian Hospital, where I met him and interviewed him. He does not know his genealogy. He had a lot of tattooing which he said was to improve his ‘flesh and blood’.

K-5  A mui and two friends from Ho lm village. A mui is the son of the former headman in upper Jaw seu village. When a boy of about 10 years of age, his father and other villagers became Christians, so he does not know too much about Akhas customs from the standpoint of taking part in them. But he is very observant, and interested in talking about things he sees in the non-Christian village where he now lives and works.

K-6  A eu, of Ba ma ju village in the Meung Yawng area. He fled China in 1959. He was taught some Chinese writing while in China. He has learned to read Akha since coming to Burma.

K-7  Da tu, also of Ba ma ju village, came with A eu, but did very little talking.

K-8  A dzo, step brother of K-2, living with his father a baw A eu in Naw leh village, where the father is the village priest.

K-9  Some men from Ho he village, who used to live in Loimi, but who have fled down to the Meung Yawng area. They came to Kengtung to ask my help in getting food supplies through the government offices.

K-10  A meh, from a village near Ta po. He had a son in the hospital. He was a poor informant in that he was not interested in ‘things Akha’.

K-11  Law pa, from Ho lo village. I just got his genealogy.

K-12  A go lo (from Ho lm village) was helpful in checking data I had gotten from others.

K-13  Ga baw, an Akhui man living in the Jaw sa section of Kengtung (that is a small Catholic area in the western part). He fled from the Chinese KMT forces about 1957.

K-14  Gui tu, also of Jaw sa, is the one that gave me a great deal of information on the ‘messianic movement’ during the second World War.

K-15  Dzoe dui, a woman shaman (nyi pa) who lives in the far Ya kam village. (See Vol 1).

K-16  Li sa, formerly of Ba gaw village in China, then of Na daw, and now living in a village about 12 miles north of the Thai border.
K-17A Baw A tu, also of Na daw, who came with K-16 in June 1965 to select the new village site in the southern part of the state. He is one of the finest Akhas I have met. The villagers hold him in very high esteem.

K-18 Law she, of an Akha village above Kat Tai. He was shot in the chest by a gang of bandits, and brought to the Kengtung Civil Hospital June 25 1965. Two were killed at that time; the headman, and a woman who tried to run away. He and another man were wounded.

K-19 Law ba of Pa leh village on the Loimi mountain. He brought his little boy, Li shaw, to the Christian Hospital September 27, 1965 to be treated. He was a good informant in many ways, but he was too concerned about his family left in the village to be much help.

K-20 Law ha, the brother of K-19. He was a poor informant, but excellent in giving bird and animal names.

K-21 A gaw, from the Meung Hsat area. He is the headman of eight villages. His father was Akhui who ran away from his village and lived with Jeu g’oe in Meung Hsat. The father ‘joined another sub-clan’ (pa daw daw-eu), so his genealogy was not that of an Akhui.

K-22 A’sheu, a woman from Pa the village, near Loimwe, who is a sister of the headman. She has been sick for a long time, which has warped her outlook on life a bit. But she was excellent in relating personal experiences to me that had to do with women and girls.

K-23 Three men from Ba jeh village, about 14 miles west of Kengtung town. They were very helpful informants, but I could only work with them for two days.

K-24 Tui keu (Ai Kat is his Shan name), lives in a little house just outside the western gate of the Kengtung town wall. He is nominal Buddhist, although he is still proud of his knowledge of Akha customs, but I found I had to check all the material I got from him quite carefully. Also he tended to dominate the conversations I had with other Akhas at his house. But in many ways he was a good informant when he was not smoking opium.

K-25 The wife of K-24, and an excellent informant, especially when her husband was not around. She is from lower Jaw seu village. She was anxious that I get the woman’s point of view regarding Akha customs.

K-26 A baw la ja, the headman of lower Jaw seu and the other villages in that complex. I have known him since 1949. He was a very restless informant, but he also worked hard to help me understand the various ceremonies they had, often giving more detail than I was really interested in.

K-27 G’oe ju, an Akha from China, who knows how to repeat spirit incantations so that broken bones will knit together properly, etc. By his own reckoning, at least, he is the ‘best Akha medicine man in Kengtung’. But he was not a very good informant.
K-28 A baw La zeh, or dzoe ma La zeh, of Ya kam village, just outside of Kengtung. He was born in 1909 in the Loimi area. From 1952 to January 1965 he had been both headman and village priest of his village. But in January 1965, his village was attacked by a large gang of Shan bandits. They held K-28 for 1,500 old coins, and when the villagers seemed reluctant to give it, they tied K-28 to a tree and got ready to kill him. So K-28 told his family and friends to get the money, which took virtually all the money they had. Even after they got the money the bandits started to kill him by beating with their rifle butts. When he would not die they cut off his queue, which bothered him then, and bothers him to this day. For that was the magic protection he had from being shot by a bullet or cut by a machete. When I asked why they cut it off he said they felt they could not kill him until it was cut off. Also, they could sell it as a kind of ‘good luck charm’ for anywhere from 15 to 50 old coins.

While they were beating on him, K-28 repeated his genealogy and asked them to look and help. He feels his ancestors did help, for a local Shan man who knew him well came by and told them to stop trying to kill a ‘good man; But K-28 was afraid that later, when the Shan friend was not around, they might come back and finish up what they had stated. So he fled with his wife, daughter and son. His daughter, with two sons, is living with the father and mother, and cooking for boarders in a nearby government school. She has been married twice, but both of her husbands have been killed by the insurgents. The son has gone to the southern part of the state, and his father does not know where he is now.

Although K-28 is temporarily following the Buddhist customs, his heart is certainly in the Akha way of doing things. But since he was not following the Akha way at the time, it was good for me, since he had virtually no taboos concerning the things he could tell me. He was most anxious that I understand Akhas fully, and that I write it down accurately. Often he would ask me to read back to him what I had written to make sure it was correct.

His wife was also an excellent informant, helping me to understand the Akha personality much better. Like her husband, she also had a wonderful sense of humor. It was a real joy to work with them both.

K-29 a baw Shaw za, also of Ya kam village, where K-28 lives. He is an Akha medicine man. He is very perceptive, and though only a ‘layman’ in the Akha way of doing things, he understands the ‘Akha ways’ very well. Also he has lived in many parts of the State, which makes him an even better informant.

He worked with K-28 and was very helpful in either explaining things to me, a non-Akha, that K-28 would take for granted I understood, or asking K-28 the kind of questions that would bring out certain aspects I had not seen before. He is the same age as K-28, and worked with him for many months, coming to my house daily, or meeting with me in their village. The two of them were ideal informants.
K-30 Sa la Mo’se (teacher Moses). He was born in the year 1935 in a village in the Meung Yawng area, of a Lahu father (sa la Ca Heh) and an Akha mother. Later the family moved into an Akha village in the Nawhaw area near Loimwe. Mose attended school in Pangwai, where I knew him as a boy. Later he was chosen to work with me in translating the New Testament into Akha. His bi-cultural background was helpful in many ways although it meant I had to check anything I got from him very thoroughly. I helped train him a little in anthropological methods so that he could write up materials for me (he was literate in four languages). He was perhaps best in observing difference between Akha, Lahus, Burmese, Karens, and other groups he had lived among. He passed away in December 1966.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Akha Term</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a beo</td>
<td>Mon Khmer (as the Wa tribe)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a jeu</td>
<td>a clan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a maw jaw-eu</td>
<td>a shaman who can produce bugs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a ne</td>
<td>a bamboo strip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a seh</td>
<td>a part of the body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a ya</td>
<td>authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a baw Ja deh</td>
<td>cultural hero</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a dzaw</td>
<td>spirit slave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a g’oe</td>
<td>maternal uncle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a k’o</td>
<td>paternal uncle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a mah a da</td>
<td>woman’s male relatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a pi</td>
<td>grandmother (old woman) respectful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a pi pi ta</td>
<td>mother of us all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a poe a pi</td>
<td>ancestors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a poe daw oe</td>
<td>a story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a poe law dza</td>
<td>ancestor offering food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a poe law-eu</td>
<td>ancestor offering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a poe mi yeh</td>
<td>God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a poe paw law</td>
<td>ancestor altar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a yui</td>
<td>elder sibling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a zaw</td>
<td>paternal uncle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a za za pa</td>
<td>castrated boar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>baji</td>
<td>blacksmith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>boe maw</td>
<td>spirit priest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>boe mi si k’a</td>
<td>a non relative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bu seh</td>
<td>village headman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ba ya to-eu</td>
<td>to cast magic love spell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>baw law</td>
<td>mans side of the house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bya yah sah pa ‘lord dragon’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ceh ka si yoe shaw-eu</td>
<td>to purify paddy seeds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ceh si tsi haw-eu</td>
<td>to divine with rice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>da leh</td>
<td>bamboo star</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>da ma</td>
<td>decoy animal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dam-eu</td>
<td>bless (before eating or drinking)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>daw</td>
<td>bad omen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>daw jaw-eu</td>
<td>to remedy a bad omen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>daw tah pu le-eu</td>
<td>to meet up with a bad omen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>daw da</td>
<td>a proverb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>daw ngeh g’eh-eu</td>
<td>to pronounce blessings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deh k’ah</td>
<td>village playground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dzah mi</td>
<td>the household spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dzoe byeh</td>
<td>‘no priest village’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dzoe ma</td>
<td>village priest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dzoe za</td>
<td>assistant village priest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
gui ga  open porch

gui lah  luck blessing

gui lah sa la ba-eu  to be thin souled

gui lah sa la hui-eu  to be spiritually potent

gui lah sha-eu  ‘beg blessing’ (pray)

gui lah yaw doe  bad luck

gui lah yaw hui  good luck

g’aw za dza-eu  to eat a meal of separation

haw  cooked rice

haw cu  packet of rice

haw g’aw  rice bowl

haw jeh  ‘rice table’ (low of rattan and bamboo)

haw sa bah  rice steamer

haw shaw  holy rice

ho pi  bamboo gopher

hu si  cowrie shell

i cu shaw  ‘holy water’

ja leh  ‘rice balls’

ja neh neh-eu  to perform black magic

je caw  animal reject

ji ba  rice liquor

ji ba ji si  fermented rice container

ji ba k’a-eu  to set up drinks

ji si teu da-eu  suck up ceremonial liquor

jm zeu  main house post

ja g’a  medicine

ka yeh  secondary gate

ku bah  small basket worn at waist by females

kui la sheh-eu  to ceremonially sprinkle

kui shi la shi shi-eu  to be paralyzed

k’m pi  field spirit hut

k’oe neh  inside spirit

k’a ji tightly woven carrying basket

k’a ka open weave carrying basket

k’o pu  a basket

la ba ba-eu  soul loss

la ku ku-eu  to call the soul back

la pya  werewolf

lah-eu  ceremonial abstinence

law-eu  make an offering

law gui  an altar

law kah  the village gate

law k’aw the water source for the village
law ka  the dividing wall
la ceu  village swing
la je tsaw-eu  men to dance
la k’oe m-eu  perform the inside ceremony
la nyi m-eu  perform the outside ceremony
la ngeu  a small hand hoe
la yeh  ceremonial knife
m  shaw-eu  to purify
m to baw ma  mythical tree
ma mui ma shaw  contaminated (unholy)
maw-eu  to divine (general)
meh  magic vine
meh gu gu-eu  ‘follow me not’ ceremony
mi o  underworld
mi sah cu sah  lords and rulers of land and water
mi ta  upper world
mi tsa a nah  type of clay they eat
mi za la-eu  to ‘take’ a bride
myo lah  a slow loris
nah mui  propitious day
nm shi shi-eu  to die a ‘good’ death
nui ma ja-eu  to have a bitter grievance
neh  a spirit
neh gu la-eu  for spirits to afflict
neh mya  a spirit arrow
neh to-eu  to repeat spirit incantations
nyi neh  outside spirit
nyi pa pi caw  a shaman’s helper
nyi pa sha ma  a powerful shaman
nym ma  woman’s side of the house
nym sah a da  man of the house
nym sah a ma  woman of the house
pa  sub clan
pa daw daw-eu  to enter another sub clan
ps tseu tseu-eu  to split from one’s sub clan
pi ma  a spirit priest (more formal than boe maw)
pi seu  a vampire
pi tso  the spirit that chooses shamans
pi za  junior spirit priest
pu da lah-eu  ceremony when move into a village
pu je  village fund
pu k’eh g’eh-eu  village protection
pu k’eh to-eu  epidemic protection
pu tu ancestor altar basket
pu tso-eu ceremony when shot some animals
pyu k’o lump of silver
sah pa lord
seh g’aw a temporary shelter
sa la soul
sha zi zi-eu to repeat poetic chants
shaw neh-eu to purify
shi pi a ghost
shi ne ku-eu to call a ghost
shi ne ti-eu a pre-ceremonial feast
shm byeh a ‘no-son’ person
shm kui a three-legged cooking stand (iron)
sha k’eh g’eh-eu terrible death protection ceremony
sha ma a powerful shaman
sha shi-eu to die a terrible death
sha daw-eu an embarrassing relationship
to-eu (see neh to-eu)
tsa pu a termite hill
tsa pu ys u a ceremonial termite hill egg
tsaw caw human rejects
tsaw k’a young married man
tsaw peh ‘twin’ (said in anger-impolite)
tsaw g’o a fireplace
tsaw ngoe ngoe-eu to wail (at time of death)
tso a lightning bolt
tsui gui-eu to recount ones genealogy
u coe a woman’s headdress
u ca shaw-eu to ‘clear’ a tragedy
u du tah-eu to bow the head (worship)
ya sa neh spirit of the field
ya ci maw pu stuffed chicken
ya shaw a ‘purifying’ chicken
ya yeh a ma a woman who has performed post-menopause ceremony
ya yeh m-eu to perform the post menopause ceremony
ya yoe ka haw-eu to divine with a chicken thigh
ya k’eh ya-eu to place a curse on someone
yah k’o neh unnamed child spirit
yaw doe evil
yaw mui good
yaw sah spirit owner
yaw shaw  holy, pure
yeh maw  guest of honor at a wedding
za k’a  a ‘servant slave’
za m-eu za sah a ma  a child-make spirit
zah  religion, religious customs
zah do ka-eu  for two people to be in taboo relation to each other
zi  lifespan
za pi  uncastrated boar
Volumes 3 and 4 of Lewis’ *Ethnographic of Akhas in Burma* have been published as the second and final unit in the series. Volumes 1 and 2 were published in 1969 and are available as a single unit HRAFlex (A04-001). The four volumes are paginated consecutively.

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


NAMES AND NAMING

PERSONAL NAMES

Every Akha has a name of two parts. Usually the first part of the child’s name is the second part of the father’s name, this is true for both boys and girls. These names are the official names (tsaw myah myah ma) - the official name is not used very much in everyday life, except when the person becomes an elder.

For about a year after a baby has been born, they usually just say ‘boy’ or ‘girl’, and don’t use any name. However, they also get nicknames (tsaw myah myah paw) during this period. Often the nickname is related to their official name. For example, if the official name is ‘Ym seh’, they may call the boy ‘A seh’ or they may call him something completely different, as with P-l, whose official name is ‘Saw ja’ but everyone calls him Za po.

There may be circumstances having to do with the birth that determines the everyday name of a child. For example, if the child was born with the cord wrapped around its neck, and was a boy, they will often call him ‘Lah tui’ or ‘Lah jui’ (both male names). The term ‘lah’ means ‘twisted around’. If a girl was born with the cord wrapped around her chest of over one shoulder, they will call her ‘Lah sha’ (the term ‘sha’ being the way they refer to someone carrying their shoulder bag in that fashion.

If one child dies, when the next child is born, they often give it the first name ‘Sa’, from ‘bi sa eu’ to make easy. They also sometimes do this after the birth of twins. It is kind of request that things will be ‘easier’ with this child and they will be able to rear it. This can either be a part of the official name, or it may be in the everyday name.

They sometimes hope to change the sex of the next child in their giving of a name. For example if a couple has three girls, and then the fourth child is also a girl, they will give that girl a boy’s name. ‘We are sure to get a son the next time’.

Some of the everyday names are somewhat derogatory, and they do not use them in front of the person. A boe and a friend of his told me the name of a man I asked about as ‘Mya shu’. Then the friend went on to say that no one would say that name to his face but would say A shu. Because he has a peculiar squint (mya eye) they call him Mya shu behind his back.

K-2 told of a man whose name is ‘Mui kah’, but is now called A pyeu (pyeu la eu = to become) by the Akhas. The reason for this is that he first became a catholic, then reverted to the Akha religion, then became a Catholic again, then ‘became’ an Akha again. It is not a complimentary name. He would never use it himself. When a man (Sah tse) was angry at him he did use it however, but he also added the word for ‘bad omen’ (A pyeu pyeu daw) which made it an extremely bad name to call him. The common initial syllables for the everyday names for boys are A, a (no special meaning), Law (from Chinese), Li (a li = boy), and Za (za = child). For girls the commonest are A, Bu (a bu = girl), and Mi (za mi = woman, girl).
Boys are sometimes given names that start with ‘Pu’, as ‘Pu jeu’, Pu lah’, and ‘Pu zi’. These are names which are usually given to a child which has been born just after the parents have moved into that village (pu), or to an infant that is being adopted and bought into another village. The idea is that this is an ‘addition’ (jeu) to the village, or a ‘blessing’ (lah) for the village, or that this child will help the village become more ‘firm’ (zi).

One strange thing to me is that there are a very few names that can be used by both girls and boys, such as ‘A sheu’. All that I have found like this start with ‘A’.

Often a person has more than one everyday name. As ‘A gu’, for example. He is often called ‘Gu za’.

There is one girl whose mother I once helped. I heard the girl referred to by three different names in the same afternoon: ‘A ti’, Bu ti, Puah ti’. The last one was her official name. The mother gave her own name as ‘Bu ne’, but since I heard others calling her ‘Mi ne’ I called her that too. I think this might be a matter of her being older, so her friends call her ‘woman’ (mi) rather than just girl (bu).

Often Akha men also take on a Shan name, especially for the benefit of Shans who cannot say the Akha name, or in case the way the Shans say their Akha name makes it a bad meaning in Akha. If the man is a first son he will be called Ai Lo, the third son Ai Sam, the last son Ai La, etc. This was true of Sah tse, for example, who id known as Ai Lo to the Shans. One time in Loimwe I said something about Sah tse and the shopkeeper had no idea who I was talking about, but some Akhas near by gave the Shan name, and they knew right away who it was. However, when Akhas talk about him, they never use the Shan name.

Akhas do not like to tell their own name. It is much more polite to ask someone with them. The women especially giggle and hide their mouths with their hands when they have to give their name. Unlike the Lahus, Akhas do not call a person ‘father of so and so’, or ‘mother of so and so’. If there is a kin relationship, they usually use that when speaking to each other, rather than the name. Or as A so did on the occasion of telling some other Akhas about Za po, who is his father’s sister’s husbands (a shah), he called him Shah po, a combination of the two.

NAMING

When a woman realizes she is pregnant, she sets aside a rooster (ya seh) to be killed for the naming ceremony. By the time of the ceremony, this rooster will have to be big enough to crow. Every Akha stresses this point when talking about this.

When they have the naming ceremony, the father of the baby is the one who must kill the rooster. When he kills it he must be extremely careful not to hit the eyes or ears. They seem to believe that this will cause some kind of injury or sickness to the baby if he does.

After the rooster is dead, the father will put out three long tail feathers (ya ci daw mi g’aw leu). He puts these in his turban, and leaves them there until the ‘naming meal’ is over. When he takes them out of his turban and sticks them into the wall on the woman’s side of the dividing wall (law ka), not too far from the ancestor altar. The feathers are carefully kept there for the one cycle of days, but after that they just allow them to disappear.
Then the father takes the rooster, dresses it and makes curry. The woman of the house will cook rice for the naming feast. When everyone is ready, the husband will put down the ‘rice table’ (haw jeh), and put the following ‘dishes’ on it: chicken meat (this includes the thigh, which is very important, a little piece of liver, and three small pieces of meat from any other section of the chicken), ‘holy rice’, liquor, and tea. The mother then sits at the ‘rice table’ holding the baby.

Then the old lady who is in charge (usually mother in law) will take a string and dip it in each of the dishes on the table, and then tie it around the mother’s wrist. Then she will take another cord, and after dipping that in each dish she will tie it around the infant’s wrist. There are some areas, I understand, where they just wave the string around the dishes three times, without actually taking pains to dip it in each dish. While the ‘old lady’ (a pi) is tying the string around the infant’s wrist she will say something like this, “‘Te hui’ is what I name you, ‘Te hui’.” The name that is actually chosen is one that the parents choose. The one used above is merely an example, although it is a possible name for a boy. The name given the child is the ‘official’ one, which connects the child to his paternal ancestors. It must not be the name of some dead person. They feel that the person who died is now a soul with the same name it had while alive, so that name must not be given to another.

After the woman has tied the string and given the name, she will say, “Don’t cry now. Get real big.” Some Akhas do this. The woman takes off her jacket and holds it up to the child a moment and says, “Hurry and get as big as this.” But others say that this is not done until a later ceremony (see below).

Then the old lady dips her finger into each dish on the ‘rice table’ and touches that to the lip of the infant, as if feeding it. After she has done that, the actual ceremony is over. The family and elders then gather around the ‘rice table’ and have a feast of rice and chicken curry. However, they do not eat the chicken thigh that was in one of the dishes described above. The reason for this is that if during the first cycle of the child’s life it cries a great deal, they feel that they have not given it the right name. So they have to re-name the child. In order to save having to kill another rooster, they keep the thigh, since that would be enough for a re-naming ceremony. If after 13 days (a cycle) the child does not cry abnormally and seems happy with the name that it has been given it, they can throw the chicken thigh into the fireplace to burn up. They must not feed it to a dog, or just throw it out carelessly. I noted that k-25 still had the thighbone she had used when naming her son, although he was nine months old when she told me. She would not have to use it since her son was happy with his name, she said. I think she might have kept it for good luck, although she did not say that.

When they re-name a child, often they consult a shaman (nyi pa). She will go into a trance, and the next morning she will often say something like this, “I found last night that your child is not happy with his (her) name. Why don’t you give him a name related to a spirit priest (pi ma-ah ta eu).” When the parents give this new name, they will make the first syllable ‘Pi’ (after ‘pi ma’). This means that the name will be different from the regular overlapping pattern. In many genealogies I have gotten, there has been at least one name starting with ‘Pi’ for this reason.

Sometimes they consult a ‘maternal uncle’ (a g’oe) about changing the name. If he changes it, the name will often start ‘G’oe’ (for a g’oe).
MESSIANIC MOVEMENT

About 1942-43 there was a messianic movement (a poe seu-ue) among the Akhas, that originated in China, but affected the Akhas in various areas of Kengtung State. I was able to interview a man (Gui-tu) who had taken part in this. He was 19 years old in 1943, and lived in Seu bo Akha village in the central eastern part of Kengtung State (roughly between Meung Kai and Meung Yawng). At that time, the Akhas in that area heard a great deal about messianic 'spirit' that had possessed some Akhas in China. They heard that this 'spirit' could possess them too, so two men each from over 50 villages started out to the village where the leader of this movement lived. They did not know the name of the village, or the way to it, but they just kept asking people on the way where the Akha village was that had received this 'spirit' (a poe seu-eu), and followed their directions. They traveled for 15 days before they got to the village.

The Akha village they came to is called Na-deh Akha and was said by Gui tu to be larger than Kengtung town, “although there were no cars in it, just lots of horses and mules”. As far as I can gather from his description it may have been in the mountains of the Ssu-mao area of Yunnan. Beside the regular villagers there, there were also hundreds of Akhas from other sections of China. Gui tu’s group was the first to have come from Burma, although more followed later. His group stayed there for three days.

During their stay, the leader taught them. His name was Kwa tsui, which is a Chinese name, although he was fully Akha. He told them how he and another man has gotten the ‘spirit’ first (the other man lived about 15 days journey north of that village-they did not go up to see him). He taught them certain things they must not do: they must not steal, argue, commit adultery, attack others, or covet other people’s goods. In regard to the last one he told them they would not need to covet anyone’s goods, since in the end they would ‘get more goods than they could possible use’. He also told them that they would never have to work again in order to eat. They would overcome the Chinese and Shans, and they could live in the valley in the Shans’ more permanent village and eat the Shans’ food, while the Shans would have to live up on the mountainsides where the Akha people formerly lived. He also told them, that he had conquered all of the Chinese and Shans in his area of China, and that he was the ruler (sah pa) of the Akhas. Note: there were no Lahus in that area.

The ruler, Kwa tsui then killed a pig for them to feast on. He did not repeat spirit incantations (to-eu) or anything of that sort, but he did seem to stab the pig in a special way. All of the men from Burma were gathered around the stabbed pig and watched it squirm and twist and turn in its death agonies. Suddenly it died right in front of a man by the name of Jadcze, from Burma. This was a sign, evidently, for later, after they returned home, Jadcze was the first to receive the ‘spirit’.

They then set out to return home. On the way, Jadze’s brother, Ja shui, saw some wealthy Shans, four of them on the path. He started brandishing his machete at the one who had the bulk of the money, and was able to get the money away from him. But the Shan man’s three friends came up to Ja shui with their machetes and cut him in the chest. It was not too serious, however. Gui tu felt that he got the cut because he has ignored the command from their ruler not to attack first.
When they got back to their village, Ja-dze was suddenly possessed by the ‘spirit’. He began to tremble violently and speak ecstatically, as he had seen the ruler and other doing in China. What he spoke was the Akha they speak everyday, but spoken in a very excited manner, and in a high pitched voice. He began to teach the things he had learned in China, and presently other Akha’s who had gone to China got the ‘spirit’ one by one, including Gui-tu, my informant. Even some who had not gone to China got the ‘spirit’ as well. When the movement was gathering speed, the Ja-shui who had stolen money on the way back from China, got angry at a Shan man and killed him. The Shan’s were then angry at Ja-shui, and set out to kill him. He went into hiding and sent word to all who had received the spirit, “come quickly with your arms- the Shans are attacking us”. He did not tell them that he had attacked first- they only learned of that later, which made them feel they had been tricked. When Ja-shui later went insane, Gui tu felt that it was because he had not obeyed the ruler’s commands.

All of those in the area where Ja-shui was hiding who had gotten the ‘spirit’ (40 of them, including my informant), gathered with their guns and machetes. They then attacked the Shan town of Wan Keng Hkam (Meung Wa), and drove out all the Shans. They were elated with this easy victory and began looking around the town. They went into the Buddhist temple, and took all of the offering money, and everything of value they found. They then began to knock the idols around and do whatever they wanted to them.

It was about that time when they were getting hungry, and they saw some plump white chickens. Now the ruler in China had told them that if they ate the meat from white chickens, or white buffalo, or white pigs, they would immediately lose the ’spirit’, but with their elation and hunger they ignored that, and quickly cooked and ate a hearty meal. In the meantime the Shans had stealthily come back into the outskirts of the village, and were watching the Akhas. After the Akhas had eaten the white chickens, the Shans felt emboldened to attack them. Since the Akhas were both taken by surprise, and since they had lost their magic by eating the meat of the white chickens, they did not put up a fight. They ran away as fast as they could. One Akha man was wounded by a bullet that went right through his leg behind and a little above his ankle. They did not think any Shans were killed, and they were sure no Akhas were killed in the skirmish.

Then the Shans called the Thai soldiers, who had just recently come into the country, and with them they went to three of the Akha villages and burnt them down. They probably would have burnt down more, but all of the Akhas in that area had fled.

The Akhas had lost their ‘spirit’, so the movement petered out rather rapidly. I asked if the ruler in China had lost his ‘spirit’ too. They did not know, and did not seem especially interested. They never heard of him or the movement again. Gui-tu later had trouble from KMT Chinese soldiers (his wife and one son were killed by them), so he moved into a Catholic village in Kengung, and his is now a Catholic.

I checked on the movement with other Akhas, and got virtually the same story. K-2 added, “If the Thai soldiers had not come at the time they did, they Akhas would have conquered the Shans for sure”. He gave an exaggerated account of the actual fighting (“many Akhas and many Shans died”), and he also said that the Akhas controlled all of Meung Wa and Ce Hkam-which is almost certainly not true. Of course, he admitted that he was just telling me what he had heard others say.
P-2, who lived in Meung Yamng at the time, but was never involved in the movement, told of two men he knew Sheh dzah and Sheh pyu, who had gone to China and gotten the ‘spirit’. They went around recruiting people to their cause, and told them that if people did not obey what the two of them said, those people would go crazy. Later those two men were killed by the Shans, and it died out in the area. K-28 and K-29 also told me of the repercussions in their area. There were three men from their area who went to China and ‘got the spirit’: Gaw dzoe, Gaw sui and Gui shah. Each was given a little length of bamboo with some paper with writing on it. Every third day they had to offer a chicken to the bamboo section with this magical paper in it. They got the ‘spirit’ and sang (ca-eu~) in Chinese. They would also shake all over.

There were a good many from the Loimi area and north who got swept up into the movement, but as far as I know, they did not actually fight the Shans. The movement quickly died out when a man named A Naw-i, who had gone and ‘worshipped’ (u du tah le-eu) Gui shah, became crazy and killed his own son. He then lived in Ba naw village. The men feel his is still alive, but do not know where he lives now (1966). After killing his son he called his wife and said, “Bring some hot water, I’ve killed a pig”. She thought that he really had killed a pig, and bought some hot water in. When she came in she saw him cutting up the legs of her son in preparation for cooking, and instantly she screamed, and the villagers came in and tied him up. They built a cage and put him. When he began to speak rationally they called a spirit priest (boe maw) to repeat spirit incantations (to-eu) for him. Later he was able to get out of the cage, and seemed to be all right. His ‘spirit owner’ (yaw sah) took him out, the Akhas felt. But when people in the area heard of this, they dropped the movement immediately. The movement is finished, but many Akhas still remember, a bit wistfully I think, “The time we almost defeated the Shans”.

IDEAS ABOUT NATURE AND MAN

ETHNOMETEOROLOGY

In their proverbs, and when they repeat spirit incantations (to eu), Akhas call the sun ‘younger sister’ (A gm), and the moon ‘older brother’ (La k’eu). Whenever Akha’s have difficulties, they beg the sun and moon to “look down”. Also, when they harvest their first rice, they “shew the sun and moon” the first rice that they get.

The sun and the moon are married. At first the sun carried letters every day between the lord of the east and the priestess of the west, but she did it at night. She told God, “I’m afraid to go at night”. God said, “All right, go in the day then”. She said, “Oh no, I’m ashamed since I am married to my brother, and I don’t want people on earth to see me”. God said, “If anyone looks at you, he will get a needle in the eye”. And that is why we cannot look at the sun now.

Akhas believe that day and night came about when the ‘great tree’ was cut down. Before, it was always like night. But then the sky, which is considered something solid, with stars ‘stuck’ into it, was too low and close to the ground, and also it had too many suns and moons in it, so they had to shoot out all but one of each, and each time one was shot out, it raised up higher from the earth, so that no it is just right. Shooting stars which are see high up in the sky are called “stars that are going to get married” (a gui sm mi i-eu). If a shooting star swings down and seems to enter the horizon, this is called “lump of silver” (pyu a ma), for they believe there is a lump of silver or money where the shooting star entered the “mountain”.

Akhas believe that when the sun is eclipsed (nah ma nah keu dza eu, or nah ma sha eu), it is the sun and the moon having intercourse. This is also true of an eclipse of the moon (ba la keu dza-eu), which, custom wise is handled in much the same way as an eclipse of the sun.

Where there is an eclipse of either the sun or the moon, Akha men will fire their guns, but I have heard two explanations for it. One is that they shoot their guns towards the vicinity if the sun or moon to bring it back out, and the other is that they shoot their guns during this time so that the guns will not explode the next time they shoot at one of the big four animals.

When there is an eclipse, Akhas are deadly afraid that blood from the son (who is female) will drip down on them. If that blood (ca shi, or nah ma ba la-eu shi) drips on a person, they can see it. Later, that person will have blood come out of his mouth, and he will die. Women especially are afraid of this. When I observed this in K-28’s village, I noted that his wife went running back into the house when the sun was going into an eclipse, “because I was afraid like anything”.

Women who are pregnant must not look at an eclipse of either the sun or the moon. During an eclipse when they go out of their house, they must have three leaves (or sticks or the sort) on their head, and keep them on as long as the eclipse is going on. I believe they may consider this to be the same as being in the house, and therefore the blood cannot drip on them.

During eclipses of the moon they believe that dead people rise up and start walking around. K-28 and K-29 told several stories of Shans (one was of the royal family) who have had this happen, “since the Shans do not know how to handle this like we Akhas do”. It seems that the Shans are not willing to leave a body unburied if there is an eclipse of the moon.
Akhas also fear hail (u yeh a si), especially if it hails during the time they are growing paddy. If it should hail during that time, the village must observe ceremonial abstinence (lah-eu) for one day. The elders will beg the hail not to return. Note: the term hail (u yeh a si) is pretty much of a taboo word in polite conversation.

When there are strong winds that blow, Akhas seem to have different reactions. Some say they fear them, others say that “if we know what to do, we don’t need to fear them”. Often when a person dies a ‘terrible death’ (sha shi-eu) there will be a very strong wind, which is his spirit. To stop it they will blow three notes on a buffalo horn, or on their gourd pipes (la je). They will also take some ‘cold rice’ (haw ga), and throw some first in the direction the wind is coming from, and then some in the opposite direction, repeating spirit incantations while doing it. They do this in their own homes. The theme of the spirit incantations is, “Don’t come this way. Go to some other country. Go to a far distant place”. They will not observe ceremonial abstinence for this. However, if the wind blows down a tree or a big branch from a tree within the environs of their village, the whole village will (lah-eu) for one day. They also believe that there is a relationship between some winds and a ‘no-son person’s’ death (shm byeh). They do not consider this to be such a strong wind, however.

Akhas have a great fear of lightning and the lightning-bolt (tso) that is thrown down when there is lightning. They believe this ‘tso’ is thrown from the sky with permission from God. It will rip right through a tree and plunge into the ground. If the ‘tso’ is not damaged, it will later go back into the sky. If however, there is a bit of metal at the end which is broken off, then the ‘tso’ is dead, and will not return to the sky.

If the ‘tso’ strikes a person, he will be killed, and it will be because he has committed a great sin. His bones, however, will be considered excellent for medicine. Also, if it strikes a buffalo and kills it, the bones of that buffalo are good for medicine. The ‘tso’ is used by Akhas as medicine, and also as protection. That is, if one has a ‘tso’, a bullet cannot enter one’s body etc. These ‘lightning bolts’ are very old axe heads they find in their fields. They say there are also stone ones, which I have not seen, but I imagine they would be from tools used during the Stone Age.

As to earthquakes, there are several theories concerning it, all based on various legends and proverbs. But the most consistently believed one seems to be that it is ‘Ja bi oe lah’, the creator of the world, who is checking to see if people are still on earth or not, and to this day they say, “We are here”. See the following section for more detailed discussion of this.

ETHNOGEOGRAPHY

K-2 told me of a special type of spring water in the Na bo area, which is near the top of a mountain. The water does not run out, but bubbles around in this hole. If people stand there and talk a bit, some very small fish will come, and you can see them swimming around. If the people keep talking, those fish disappear and bigger fish come, and so on until there are 12 kinds of fish, each of them larger than the last group. The 12th kind is a single fish, and a whopper. When they can see it they are frightened and run. They consider that these fish are the servants and soldiers, of the ‘lord dragon’ (bya yah sah pa). Akha considers them to be very powerful spirits (neh yaw k’a). If you do anything disrespectful to them, such as spitting into the water, or urinating near by, then the spirits of those will be sure to afflict (gu la-eu) you.
To Akhas upstream and downstream are important directions, as well as ‘up and down’ (that is, for all their terms of going, coming, returning, etc., they have a choice of two words, one of which indicates from a lower to a higher point, and one from a higher to lower point.) This carries over into their feeling about cardinal points. They consider that ‘east’ (‘sun comes out direction’) is the upper side and the ‘west’ (‘sun fall down direction’) is the lower side, so that as the day wears on the sun is going down hill, so to speak. We found that when Akhas look at a map, they want the upper part to be east rather than north. It is very difficult to indicate north and south in Akha, except to say “China direction” for north and “Thailand direction” for south.

As far as I can tell, Akhas do not have any concept of the ‘beauty of nature’. They appreciate pretty flowers but not as part of the beauty of nature. It is a means of personal decoration, as well as to hiding body odor. When they look at what a westerner would call a ‘beautiful scene’, they do not see it as beautiful but as a good place to hunt barking deer, or a good area for making fields, etc. I do not mean to disparage the Akha sense of beauty, for they have it in their decoration etc., but they do not seem to have much interest in the broader, less personal type of beauty.

On September 22nd, 1965, I was sitting with four Akhas in the Christian Hospital waiting room, when there was an earthquake. When the two Akha men and two Akha women realized it was an earthquake, the men began saying, “za nyi boe a n m jaw 1” (“All we people are still living on earth”). They did not say it very loudly but certainly in earnest. Then one of them, a spirit priest, asked the other, “Have you said it yet?” He said, “yes”, and then they both repeated it, as the tremors continued. The two said nothing, but sat perfectly still. The nurses and hospital workers were running out of the brick hospital, but the four Akhas stayed right where they were. K-30 felt this was because they were afraid of falling down in an epileptic fit if they tried to run during an earthquake. When the quake was over and the Akha men were discussing it, right away they started talking about the possible implications of the quake to the rice crop.

They said that if it happens too often, it is not good for the rice. They said that one was the “second one this year”. The spirit priest also explained something about the world being up on pillars, and the other man started asking him about the great dung beetle, but their turn to be examined came, and afterward I did not have a chance to speak further with them.

I have gotten the following four reasons for earthquakes:
1. The ‘lord dragon’ (bya yah sah pa) pulls at the roots of the earth and that is what makes it shake. This probably comes from the legend of the woman, when asked by the dragon to tell him were any people on earth, told him not to believe anyone, but to shake the earth each time to check for himself.
2. The earth is situated on a giant frog, and when the frog moves, the earth shakes. This is also based on a legend, and on the premise that the earth is kind of floating on four pillars over an expanse of water.
3. There is a giant dung beetle who made the earth, and it wants to check and see if there are animals and people still on the earth. This dung beetle may be the same as ‘Ja bi oe lah’.
4. When a person with very great power and influence dies, as a king or the like, the earthquakes, somewhat in sympathy.
ETHNOBOTANY

Akhas believe that there are one hundred and ten, plus two more, kinds of things that live. Also there is one hundred and ten, plus three more, kinds of rice. This comes from their proverbs, and perhaps shows their feeling that rice is more important than animals.

ETHNOZOOLOGY

If some wild animal comes into the village, without being chased by either humans or other animals, it is a ‘bad omen’ (daw), and the villagers must perform a village protection ceremony’ (pu k’eh g’eh-eu). If they do not, some houses in the village will catch on fire. K-28 and K-29 told me of a case they both knew about where a barking deer came into the village and they did not perform this ceremony. Before long, three villages burned down. The two men seemed dumbfounded that Akhas would think they could “get by without performing the ‘village protection ceremony’ at that time”.

The kinds most likely to come in are: pheasant, jungle owl and barking deer. K-29 has seen animals come into the village that were being chased by wolves, and were seeking sanctuary. This does not seem to be a bad. They can kill and eat these animals if they want to.

When a tiger takes a dog off, they must not chase the tiger. They can shout and beat things, but “it is not right to chase it”. Later, they can look for the dog. If it is dead, then they must just discard it. If it is still barely alive, though, they say, “Oh, look at the dog, about to die of hunger”, and quickly stuff some cold rice (haw ga) into the dogs mouth. If they do this, then they can eat the meat when it dies, since it was not ‘killed by a tiger’ (k’a la seh-eu), but ’killed by hunger’ (meh seh-eu). If a tiger or leopard takes other animals off, they follow in hot pursuit. but they say that dogs are different, since they live with them. Therefore it is not ‘proper’ (teh k’m) to chase dogs.

When a dog howls (a kui tseh ngoe ngoe-eu), Akhas believe it is a very bad sign, although Shans take it to be a good sign. They call a spirit priest and have him repeat incantations (to-eu) so that the dog’s owner will not get sick. They say that the dogs see the legs of ‘Maw hui’ and ‘Maw nyi’ (brothers in an important legend). That is why he has hid head up when he howls-he is looking up where ‘Maw nyi’ disappeared into the sky. The spirit priest will perform an ‘inside ceremony’ (la k’oe m-eu), and a ceremony to keep the person from getting sick of dying (sa dah k’eh g’eh-eu).

There is a type of very small civet cat (bya hi la kaw), which the Akhas fear very much. They consider them the “dogs of the spirits”. If these civet cats get mad at a person, they may try to attack him. If the animal can run through the person’s legs, they believe, that person is sure to die-unless he can repeat the correct spirit incantations right away. So if they are attacked, they sit down quickly and fold their legs under them in such a way that the animal cannot run through their legs. K-28 told about shooting at one, and it got scared and ran off. He was scared too, he said. They do shoot them sometimes when hunting. If they are dead, they do not fear them. They also eat the meat.

If a tiger or leopard has killed some animal and another animal comes and jumps over (tsaw dzeu-eu) that kill, the tiger or leopard will not eat it.
Akhas believe that they must not strike a cat while their wife is pregnant, or the child, when it is born, will be like a cat. Actually, Akhas try to do all they can to please and pamper cats, since “if we didn’t have cats we could not have a village, rats and mice would eat all the food up”.

Akahs believe that snakes will have one of three possible names: Ai Lo, Ai Yi, and Ai Sam- all Shan names. When they call to a large snake, they will call all three names, since they figure that one of them will be right. (Note: they do not pay attention to small ones) Akhas believe that snakes can understand Shan and Chinese. If they tell a snake in Shan or Chinese to stay where it is for a bit, it will stay there up to a day or two. Or, if you tell it to spit out medicine for you it will. I imagine that these are from Shan or Chinese beliefs. Akhas have quite a few legends and myths that have to do with snakes and magical things they can do, but in at least one I am sure it comes from Shans.

They have many ideas about certain birds, most of which are written up in other sections.

ETHNOANATOMY

If when a child is born, any of the ‘parts’ (a seh) is missing (a seh dah-eu), the child must be killed. It is considered a ‘human reject’ (tsaw caw). If all of the ‘parts’ are present (a seh lo-eu), the parents and the villagers are very happy. Akhas like a person who has a well developed body, whether male of female. There is not much concern about the parts of the body, other than that they are all present. But, they feel that a person who has not grown up properly is one who has not had sexual intercourse with the opposite sex, and is therefore something of a queer.

They say that a thief or a dacoit will have an extra bone in his body. They do not seem to know just where it will be, although I noticed K-2 pointed to his ribs when he told me. There will also be something different too if the person is very smart, or extremely well gifted in some field. Akhas believe that they are bound to be different in their bodies as well.

Akhas do not kill albinos, actually they consider then to have ‘luck blessing’ (gui lah). Often they will become spirit priests of shamans, as the A jaw woman who was a ‘powerful shaman’ (nyi pa sha ma) the one whose husband committed suicide. Albinos are called white people (tsaw pyu). There do not seem to be many among Akhas. The only one I have definitely heard of is the A Jaw woman mentioned above, wife of Lo zeh, and grandmother of La bah from Ya ka.

Akhas say that those people who have their eyebrows go across the bridge of their nose (mya sheh sheh dzoe) will have lots of money (pyu gui lah yaw hui). If they have two forks of receding hairline (u ca ca eu), this means that is they are well off they will be very well off, but if they are poor they will be very poor. “However, you do not see many poor people like this.” For those who have sideburns (ba sheh sheh lah te-eu), they say that they will have lots of ‘luck blessing’, and lots of buffalos.

I am not sure what they do to those born with a clubfoot. But there is a man in Pa teh with clubfeet, and he was allowed to live. Perhaps the parents kept it hidden at first, and when he was larger and it was found out the villagers did not have the heart to kill him, but I don’t know. For harelips and others considered ‘human rejects’ (tsaw caw) they kill them, as I have described elsewhere.
ETHNOPHYSIOLOGY

If a person has a twitchy right eye, it means that that person, or someone in his family, will get very sick. If it is in the left eye, it means the person will see an argument or death among his own relatives. If they get a bad twitch in their left shoulder or left hip, then it means that they will meet some very bad people (as robbers, dacoits, or the likes) that very day. If the twitch is on the right side, “it has no meaning”.

If a bug or insect (a maw) enters one’s mouth, it means that one is going to have meat to eat. “This is true, too, since the other day when I was urinating a bug flew into my mouth, and that evening your wife gave the two of us some pork to take home to eat.” (K-29)

They say that when a person has the hiccups (i tui tui-eu, or ui tui tui-eu), it means he has stolen and eaten an egg. I have a feeling this is just said in joking rather than being an actual belief. They believe that clearing your throat three times is a potent way of scaring the spirits away. Spirit priests will do this before starting to repeat spirit incantations. Before they camp in the jungle, they will clear their throat three times, “and if there are any spirits around they will be afraid and run”.

Evidently they do not attribute and special meaning to sneezing, except as a test to see if a person is still being attacked by a ‘werewolf’ (la pya).

ETHNOSOCIOLOGY

In their legends you gather a bit of their general philosophy about their relationships with other races and groups. I would summarize it by saying that they take it for granted that their race is God’s favorite race, and that they are the really important group in the world—even though numerically they are smaller than many others.

ACTIVITIES OF THE AGED

The aged among the Akhas stay around the house and do what they can. Often, they take care of the grandchildren while the children’s parents go to the fields to work. They help feed the animals. Some of them are still fairly skilled at weaving things out of bamboo and rattan.

The ‘post-menopause ceremony’ (ya yeh m-eu) is performed for older Akha women, and is to be considered very important. The reason it is held is so that when a woman dies, she will not go back to her ‘male relatives’ (a meh a da), but will always stay with her husband. She must have a living son in order to do it. It does not matter whether her husband is alive or not. However, it takes a lot of sacrifices etc., plus food to feed the people who come, since they invite all the nearby villages. So only those who are pretty well off can do it. They will save up for years in advance. K-28 was in the process for saving up to do this ceremony for his wife when he had to flee because of the insurgence in his area. I heard from one (P-2) that if the woman’s husband is dead, and a son or sons is also dead, she must also do many extra customs, but others believe she must have a living son if her husband is dead in order to do this ceremony. They all seem quite agreed that she must not do it if there is anyone in the household who is pregnant at that time.
The women who do this ceremony are supposed to have reached menopause (za baw tsi eu), although I have heard of some who have had children after performing this. They say that to have children after doing this is all right—provided they are not ‘human rejects’. That would be ‘extremely bad’. I asked if it would be possible for a woman who had had a ‘human reject’ before menopause to perform the ceremony, and they said yes, since it would ‘make her good’ (m mui m ja).

Akhas seem to feel that after a woman has done this ceremony, her household will be much better off. Even though it takes many animals, they will get all those animals back as well as have many, many more because of performing ceremony.

When this woman who performs this ceremony goes through the various rituals, and later on for certain ceremonies, she must wear a white skirt. The other ceremonies are: paddy planting, getting the new rice, opening the paddy house (ceh ji tsi-eu). No other women must wear white skirts at these times, but women who have done the ceremony (ya yeh a ma), must wear white skirts for them.

This is what they do for the ceremony. First, they have to call a spirit priest. If a woman’s husband is a spirit priest, he cannot do it for his own wife. They must get another spirit priest (boe maw).

After they have had a pre-ceremonial feast (shi ne ti-eu) for the spirit priest, he will perform an ‘inside ceremony’ (la k’oe m-eu) for the spirits, killing one pig and one chicken. They must be of the opposite sex. He will repeat spirit incantations in front of the ancestor altar. In this the important point is what he asks the last ‘old woman’ (a pi) who died. Usually this woman’s mother, to please move up a ‘notch’ (?? ti) to make way for this woman to make way for this woman to take over that position. They next morning the woman again wears her white skirt, and makes a lot of ‘fermented rice containers’ (ji ma ma-eu). She will make around forty.

When she is finished with that, members of her family will bring back 15 chickens, of both sexes, and put them in a big basket (k’a pah). Before they put them in, they wash their legs carefully, and also examine them to make sure they are all right for the sacrifice.

The next day, when they are ready for the actual ceremony, the spirit priest and some elders will take out the 15 chickens and examine them carefully again, especially the combs and the legs. If there is one that is not good, they will exchange it. But if there are as many as three that are not good, they consider this to be a sign, since they were all good when they were put in the day before. So, they will not hold the ‘post menopause ceremony’ that year, but wait at least one year.

They have a ‘pre ceremonial feast’ (shi ne ti-eu) for the spirit priest that morning, and then his helpers take the 15 chickens out of the basket again and the spirit priest kills them. The helpers also prepare the following dishes on a winnowing basket: ‘rice balls’ (ja leh) in one dish, broken rice with an egg in it in another dish, ‘holy rice’ in another, liquor, tea, water (with some salt in it), onion (gu ci), and uncooked rice (ceh pyu) in the remaining dishes. The bodies of the 15 chickens are laid beside the tray.

This is also a large castrated boar killed, which is primarily for food for the people who come from that and other villages for the ceremony. When everything is ready, the spirit priest goes into the woman’s side or the house and site in front of the ancestor altar.
The woman who is becoming a ‘ya yeh a ma’ sits right behind him. They start this about 8 in the morning, and this first spirit incantation will go on to about 11 in the morning. During this time and during the time they are doing the things which immediately follow it, neither the shaman or the woman must relieve themselves.

I did hear from one (K-29) that if a woman needed to ‘go to the jungle’, all she needed to do was to go down under the house, rub the ‘main post’ (jm zeu), and tell it, ‘I am going to the jungle’, and it would be alright. If she had to do that, however, her ‘luck blessing’ would not be as great. They have a magical help, however, so that the woman would not need to go relieve herself. She will bring a hen to the spirit priest (sah zah ya ma), and he will have a special spirit incantation (sah zah to-eu) which he will repeat over it, asking that the woman not have to relieve herself that day until all the ceremonies were over. Then they would let the chickens go. After that, they must never kill the chicken, although they can eat its eggs. When that hen dies, they take a small section of banana leaf and fix a special ‘packet’ (ceh cu) which includes: some broken rice, some cotton which has been torn free from a ball of cotton in the woman’s field, and a little sliver of silver. These are wrapped up in a leaf, put in the hen’s mouth, and then the hen is buried just outside the east side of the village.

While the spirit priest repeats incantations for the woman, he takes the ceremonial knife, and cuts off a little of the feathers from each chicken in three places, and drops them onto the winnowing tray. After the spirit incantations, the helpers cut off one wing from each bird before they are dressed. Then the spirit priest and elders eat another rice and curry meal. They have special fictive ‘material uncles’ (pi g’oe, jm g’oe, ma g’oe) for this just as they do for burial ceremonies. These also eat with the spirit priest, the village priest, and the husband of the ‘ya yeh a ma’.

When the elders are finished eating, they take away the ‘rice table’ (haw jeh). Then the ‘important ones’ are each handed a dish with some meat in it, which is from the 15 chickens which have now been cooked. Each will have a piece of meat from the liver, the breast, and any other place. The spirit priest will have a piece of meat from the head. Each of those participating in this holds his own dish with both hands while the spirit priest repeats spirit incantations. It is generally the same theme that he repeated that morning before the ancestor altar: “may she have much ‘luck blessing’ (gui lah). Let as many animals as have been killed for this be multiplied back to her-and many more. Etc.”

When the spirit priest is through repeating the spirit incantations, the ‘ya yah a ma’ takes her dish and goes into the woman’s side (nym ma), and dumps the meat from her dish into a pot, especially prepared for this. Then the spirit priest sends his dish in with a child. The child hands it to the woman, and she dumps the meat from that into the pot. After that the others, in any order, send their dishes in, and she dumps the meat from each into the pot. Then the woman’s husband comes into the woman’s side, and he and his wife will eat all the meat that has been dumped into the pot. They do not eat rice at this time, since they have just had a rice meal. If the husband is dead, a son must eat this with her.

When this is finished, they put the ‘rice table’ down for tea (law baw jeh). Tea is then served to all of the honored guests, and while it is being served, the woman who is now a ‘ya yeh a ma’ does what is called ‘begs blessing’ (gui lah sha) but it is actually giving gifts to those who came. The woman will lead some of her children first of all to the spirit priest who recited the spirit incantations for her. The children put on him a new pair of leggings, a new coat, a new turban and at least one silver ring. Some say that they would give three silver rings for this. They also give a silver ring each to the village priest and to the three men in the ‘maternal uncle’ relationship.
If the family is well off, they must give a new jacket and a pair of pants to the spirit priest too. The new ‘ya yah a ma’ next takes the wings that have been cut off the 15 chickens, and puts them on the right side of the meat which is saved for the spirit priest to take home (pi sha), which in this case consists of 15 chicken halves. She puts them into a carrying basket (k’a ka) on the woman’s side of the house. After she puts the meat in the basket (yeh beh daw-eu), she puts a leaf wrapped packet of tealeaves in the basket as well.

Next the family of the ‘ya yeh a ma’ once again go in and ‘beg blessings’ from the spirit priest and other elders. This time they have some money, a bottle of liquor, and a cup. First of all one will go to the spirit priest, give him some money, then pour some liquor and have him drink it. After that, they will give honey and liquor to the other elders.

After they have done this, the ‘ya hey a ma’ takes the basket she has prepared with the 15 chicken halves and tea in it to the spirit priests house, or if he lives in another village, she will just leave it there, and the next day her son will carry it on to the spirit priest’s home. There is another chicken that the spirit priest killed at the same time he killed the 15, but it was left undressed and put up on the altar of the ancestor altar and left there during all of the spirit incantation. The chicken (la ui) is dressed by the ‘ya yeh a ma’ but some of the spirit priest’s helpers (boe maw a dzaw) actually cook it.

When it has been cooked they fix a dish for the ‘ya yeh a ma’ with the following pieces of meat in it: liver, thigh, breast, and a piece from another part of the chicken. They also fix a dish for the spirit priest which has the same things put in it, but his also has some meat from the head. This time the ‘ya yeh a ma’ is the first person to eat the meat. Since it is considered as ‘offered to the ancestors’ (a poe law dza). She takes out the meat with both hands and brings it to her mouth three times. Then the spirit priest does the same with his dish. Then the two of them feed this ‘ancestor food’ to the elders there, and they accept it with both hands. After that, all of the elders are called to eat the rest of the chicken (la ui dza eu). But this time there is no rice, just chicken.

At this time (usually 10 or 11 at night), the ‘ya yeh a ma’ is able to change from her white skirt to her dark skirt, and is able to relieve herself, since the ceremony is over. The next day there is another feast for the spirit priest and the elders, but this time the woman does not wear her white skirt but her dark one. The feast (yah shaw law ue) is named after the chicken they kill for it (yah shaw). The spirit priest takes the first bite at this feast. When they are through eating this meal, the spirit priest takes a ‘fermented rice container’ (ji si) and ‘plants’ it in the fireplace on the men’s side. While he is doing this, the village priest must also plant one along with him, and near his. While putting them in, the spirit priest will say, “The village priest and spirit are planting these. Suck it up!” Then the two men will ‘pretend’ (their word) that they are sucking up the liquor, but it is just the water that has been poured into the containers. The fermented rice itself may be all dried up and ‘turned to dust’, as they do it but that is all right. While the spirit priest and village priest are ‘drinking’ the liquor, the spirit priest will also repeat spirit incantations. The theme is that everything will be wonderful for this home in the future. After the two have ‘drunk’ some, then the three ‘maternal uncles’ (g’oe) drink some. Then the whole ceremony is finished.
For the first seven days after the ceremony, everyone in the household of the ‘ya yeh a ma’ must observe all of the taboos that have to do with ceremonial abstinence (no combing of hari, no spinning of thread, no sexual intercourse, etc.). After that the married ones of the family must observe the ‘no sexual intercourse’ (kui la lah-eu) taboo up until three months after the ceremony. Any unmarried sons can sleep with girls after the first seven days, however.

I asked what would happen if this was broken and they said it would not be ‘luck blessing’ (gui lah) for the family. A big Akha village may have as many as two or three of these ceremonies a year. Small villages will average perhaps every two or three years. For the big villages, they will usually kill a buffalo to feed the many people who come.

There is something additional that some women do. When their next good day arrives, they kill a pig and have a feast. The spirit priest who repeated spirit incantations for her is invited, along with the elders of the village. The ‘ya yeh a ma’ takes the first bite. If she does not have the pig or money to so it real soon after the ceremony, she can do it any time within three years after the ceremony. According to some, this is not obligatory, but others argue hotly that it is.

A ‘ya yeh a ma must offer one pig a year for three year, at one of the ceremonies mentioned above, where it says that she must wear a white skirt. She will also be the one in the household who will plant the rice first (ceh ka daw eu). The next three years she must offer at least one duck a year, and the next three years at yeast one chicken a year. At this point, they differ. Some say that at the tenth year, she makes offerings and does not plant the paddy first. Others say that as long as she offers a pig, she plants paddy first until she dies. No matter what, whenever she plants the paddy first, she must wear a white skirt. All of the informants stressed this.

When the husband of the ‘ya yeh a ma’ dies, she must not remarry. K-28 knows of one who did get married again, however. The man who married her had to give the cost of the ‘post-menopause ceremony’ back to the woman’s children (yeh po g’aw-eu). He said that this woman was later very hard up. But K-29 said that his own grandmother remarried after performing the ceremony, and she was well off. She had lots of animals etc. When she died, they killed seven buffalos.

There is a very important ceremony that they must perform for the last-born child (za shaw-eu), sometime after the post-menopause ceremony. They like to do it before that child, whose mother is now a ‘ya yeh a ma’, gets married. But if they do not have the animals needed, the child can go ahead and get married, and they will then do it to the child’s son or daughter that is, the woman’s grandchild). This is what they do for the ceremony (za shaw eu). They prepare three sows, two boars, three roosters and three hens. The spirit priest, who is called, must ceremonially sprinkle and then kill these animals. The sow (za lo) is given to the ancestors. One sow (ui k’eh a za) is offered to ‘open the path of luck-blessing’ (gui lah ga ma bi dah la -eu). One sow (ui ga), is the ‘companion’ to the one just above?? that is, performs the same function). One boar (nya jm) is offered to the second last ‘old woman’ (a pi) who died. In most cases this would be the mother. Of course there have to be other animals killed to feed the visiting village priest and other important elders from nearby villages. They must kill one large pig for this, or maybe a buffalo.
The spirit priest and his helpers then fix a winnowing tray with the following ‘dishes’: ‘Rice balls’ (ja leh), broken rice, liquor, tea, water, uncooked rice, ‘holy rice’, and onion (gu ci) with salt in it. Then the spirit priest repeats a special spirit incantation (za shaw to -eu) for the last-born child. It goes on for three hours. The theme is that he asks that the child might be ‘like God’s child’, that he or she might be ‘good, and cleansed’, etc.

They also kill a chicken and put it up on the ancestral altar (la ui), much the same as in the post menopause ceremony. While the spirit priest is repeating the spirit incantations, he ‘drops’ (la ka-eu) the things from the various dishes onto the winnowing tray. This is ‘feeding the ancestors’. Some of the spirit incantations have to do with the household having a lot of money and paddy etc.

When the spirit priest has finished his spirit incantations, the pigs are dragged to the men’s side of the house where they are cut open, and the livers are examined. They can tell from the livers whether the household will have plenty of paddy the coming year, whether the last child of the ‘ya yeh a ma’ will have a short life or not etc. Even if the signs are bad, however, the elders will always lie by saying, ‘oh, the signs of the liver are wonderful.’ K-28 explained the lying this way, ‘if you don’t say that, the family that is having the ceremony won’t be happy’.

Then they cut up the meat and cook it. While it is cooking, the last child, plus one ‘maternal uncle’ (a g’oe) as well as some elders, will leave the house. If there is no true ‘maternal uncle’ (a g’oe) in the village, someone will act on his part as a fictive ‘maternal uncle’. They then get out of the house, and down on the ground, the ‘maternal uncle’ takes a slingshot (ca oe), and shoots three clay pellets, ‘one in each direction’. The first he shoots to the east, the second one straight up and the third to the west. Each time he shoots it, he says ‘I’m shooting the slingshot to cleanse’ (ca oe peu shaw ma de).

Then he carries the last child on his back into the house. To hold the child on his back he uses a kind if blanket they buy from the Mon-Khmer (A boe). The blanket (pa jaw a bui) is red, black and white. It is the kind they give to their mother or father when they die. If the family of the ‘ya yeh a ma’ is wealthy enough, they will have a double strip of blanket sewn together (kah dzm), but if they are not so well off, just one strip (kah te) is all right.

If the last child is very large and the ‘maternal uncle’ is very small, then he does not really carry him. He merely drapes the blanket over the last born (called ‘shaw g’a here since he is being cleansed), with the ends around his shoulders and they walk. The important thing is that he ‘carry’ the last child (za sa) into the woman’s side, and put him down in front of the ancestral altar. Then the spirit priest takes the egg that was in the ‘holy rice’ dish, and breaks it open with the rice-stirring spoon (haw ceh da la). It is a boiled egg. The ‘ya yeh a ma’ then peels it and throws the shell into the fireplace near where the spirit priest broke the egg open.

Then the ‘ya yeh a ma’ takes some of the egg, with a little broken rice from the winnowing tray, along with some ‘holy rice’, and breaks it off (ts eu neh eu), first to the spirit priest, who accepts it as an ancestor offering (a poe law dza). Before he eats it, he calls down a blessing (dam eu) something like this, ‘from now on may there be a ‘luck blessing’ here, and may it be easier for them. Today let the child be ‘holy’. May this household get along well. Let no young budding leaves fall off the plants. Silver and gold have been used by this household in purchasing strings. But don’t let the string from the purse go too. By means of the string of the purse bag may the silver and gold return.’ After the blessing, the spirit priest eats the food.
Next the ‘ya yeh a ma’ must give some of the food to the child (za shaw), then next to her husband, and then she breaks some off with both hands and eats it herself. After that she feeds the elders who have gathered at the table, with the village priest being the last one of their number to be fed.

Next, the ‘ya yeh a ma’ puts the following on the plate: ‘rice balls’ (ja leh), some sticky rice, broken rice and a little of the egg that is left over from the feeding of the various one mentioned above. The elders eat these things first. Then they have a rice and curry feast. Following which they drink liquor like mad. ‘During this ceremony we must drink lots of liquor’.

While they are eating, there are also seven special dishes put on the table, but they are not eaten yet. Each dish has a piece of liver and two pieces of meat. Besides this, the spirit priest’s dish has a chicken thigh and chicken head. The village priest’s dish has a pork rib in it. Two of the maternal uncles (jm g’oe, m g’oe) each have a pair of ribs extra, and the other maternal uncle (pi g’oe) has one rib. The ‘son in law’ (mi za in ceremonial language) gets the section between the ‘wrist and elbow’ of the pig (la du ti law). The husband of an older brother’s daughter (mi dze in ceremonial language) gets an extra rib. There is also an eighth dish (la k’o) for the husband which has nothing special in it, and is not put on the table. Instead, it is put up on the mat above the fireplace.

When they finished eating, the other dishes and rice bowls (haw g’aw) are cleared off the ‘rice table’ (haw jeh). Then the spirit priest reaches a finger into his dish and brings it to his mouth, and the others do the same, each from his own specially prepared dish. Then the spirit priest says, ‘lift up your dishes’ (k’m ci ci aw). Then he picks his dish up and the guest each pick up their own dish and holds it. The husband leaves his dish on the mat over the fireplace however. The ‘rice table’ (haw jeh) is then taken away, the spirit priest repeats incantations while all sit there holding their dishes (k’m ma taw). This spirit incantation is asking that the house will have money, health, paddy, livestock and ‘luck blessing’. It lasts about one hour.

After he has finished with the spirit incantation, he carries his dish to the ‘ya yeh a ma’ who is on the priest’s side. The ‘old ladies’ (a pi) have eaten there. She takes it and puts it down on a winnowing tray. Then next, the village priest brings his and so on. The last two to bring their dishes in must be the ‘son in law’ (ma dze). Then the woman puts the contents of the dishes into a pot, and she and her husband eat all that is in the pot. Any sons can also join them. Then they bring out the ‘tea table’ (law baw haw) and give the elders tea to drink. They put some of the meat on a dish. This is meat that was cooked as the meat for the feast. First everyone drinks tea, and then eats meat. They are not really hungry, of course so they usually eat just a little. Then they serve them tea.

Next, the ‘cleansed child’ (za shaw) comes in and begs blessing’ (gui lah sha) the spirit priest by giving him liquor to drink, and a new set of clothes. If they do not have enough money to buy new set of clothes, at the very least they must give him a silver ring that has a design that is built up (na gah myeh dzeu), a pair of cloth shoes (like the Chinese sew), leggings, a turban (usually a towel they buy in the market).

If the child is an infant, then the infant’s mother, that is the daughter in law of the ‘ya yeh a ma’ will carry the infant in and guide his or her hands in giving these things to the spirit priest. They also put a silver ring on the hand of the village priest, and each of the ‘maternal uncles’ (a g’oe). Each of them also receives a ‘turban’ (towel).
They then pack up a carrying basket (k’a jo) with meat for the spirit priest (pi sha). This time it is carried by the ‘cleansed last child’ (za shaw). Then they pack it, they again ‘beg blessing’ (gui lah) the spirit priest by giving him plenty of liquor. Just before the basket is carried off, they cook the chicken (la ui) that was on the ancestral altar. It is ‘ancestral offering food’ (a poe law). The spirit priest takes the first bite, and then they do what they did for the similar part of the ‘post menopause ceremony’. After that they have a regular meal and the spirit priest returns home.

The next day they offer a chicken (yah shaw law see above). They call the spirit priest for this and he takes the first bite.

After the ceremony, they have much the same rule as observing ceremonial abstinence as for the original ceremony.

If an unmarried girl becomes pregnant during this time it is extremely bad. Also, a young person in that family must get married within 12 months of the ceremony.
HISTORICAL RECONSTRUCTION

MIGRATORY MOVEMENTS

Akhas have been migrating from China into Burma, Laos and Thailand for many years. I cannot be certain when they first came into Burma from China, but it was probably over 100 years ago. I get this figure by calculating the number of generations they have been in the country and also the ones they paid revenue to when they first came.

Since 1947, when I first arrived in Burma, the Akhas have tended to enter the country in waves. When the KMT nationalist Chinese government made things too difficult for them in China and food was scarce, many of them came into Burma. Then later when the Communists took over, more villages came. Later, when the Communists forced the people into communes, others came. In that group was Na daw village, which used to be just a few miles north of the China border, then called ‘Ba gaw A ka’. In 1956 they came across to live in Burma, not too far south of the border.

This is how they came. They noted that the guards along the border, though guarding the border carefully during all of the night hours and most of the daylight hours, left it unguarded long enough for both shifts of guards to have an early morning rice meal together, as well as a pre-dusk evening meal. So they elders figured their best chance was to leave right after the guards went off duty to have their meal, and thus before the daytime guards came on duty. They quietly got everything ready that they could, without causing the guards suspicion, and on the day set they carried what they could and drove what animals they could, and make a dash for the border. They got across safely without having a single shot fired at them. But they had to leave behind almost all of their chickens, most of their pigs, many cows and buffaloes, and much of their rice. Later, there were a few who felt that conditions in Burma were worse, so they stole back across the border into China, and after living there for a year fled back again into Burma.

In June, 1965, the village sent two men (k-16, k-17) to scout out a new area for a village site in the extreme southern part of the state. They found a good site, so in January and February, 1966, 64 houses make their way to that new site. What with overcrowding in the northern part of the state, and the extremely high ‘taxes’ and fees they have to pay to insurgents, as well as supporting home guard troops, they felt they could not continue to live there. And thus the migration of the Akhas continues.
The ‘genealogy’ (tsui) of an Akha is extremely important to him. It is patrilineal. At what point it changes from history to myth is impossible to say. Following is a fairly typical genealogy (k-2), with the numbers following some of the names referring to notes that follow the genealogy.

The first two names represent the ‘creation’ (M ma) ‘God’s child’ (M g’ah), from whom all people descend (see pages 26-30, Vol. 1).

Usually they start their genealogy from this man (see page 36, Vol. 1).

The name of the ‘mother’ of people and spirits (see 36-37), Vol. 1).

When a spirit priest (bow maw) is?? (pg. 748)?? the soul of a person who has just died, back through his genealogy, he starts with the dead man’s name, and repeats the name of the father, grandfather, and on up (tsui gui da eu) to this name. According to some, she was the first ancestor who was bad, so that all under her are bad. Since those above her are all good, the soul of the person who died has no trouble going on up, so the spirit priest stops reciting the genealogy at this point. Also, the spirit priest feels that he must not go past this name, since he is still living. There is also some relationship between this woman and twins, which are sometimes called ‘Tah pah eu za’ (children of Tah pah). Some seem to feel she had twins (as P-1), but I could not substantiate this from what others say. I think almost all agree on the fact that anyone who has had twins cannot go higher than Tah pah in the spirit world.

the main branch of Akhas in Kengtung State come from Boe leh. He has at least four sons: Leh lm bo from whom the Jeu g’oe eventually come), Leh la zeu, Leh la tah, and Leh la tsi.
This is the name of this man’s clan (a jeu). The clan name usually occurs in this general part of the genealogy. Sometimes the actual clan name does not appear in the genealogy at all.

The speaker was not certain why this ancestor was called ‘Oe ci’ rather than ‘Deh mah’. Sometimes they know exactly why there is a ‘break in the genealogy’ (tsui tsaw), but this was so long ago he did not know. The most likely explanation is that there had been twins born in the family before this child was born and thus it could not be given the name of the father.

This person was almost certainly named ‘Ga sa’ originally, but as a child he was either sickly, or cried a lot. So a ‘spirit priest’ (pi ma) told the parents to rename him, since the original name was not proper for him. When the parents renamed him, they gave the credit to the spirit priest by incorporating pi (from pi ma) as the first part of the name. This is a woman’s name. The speaker’s great grandfather’s name was Dui leh, but he died from smallpox. Therefore his name must not appear in the genealogy (tsui tsaw). Those who have very such breaks consider that they have a very good genealogy. Dui leh had two brothers, Dui law and Dui ja. Dui law’s son was Law Sah, and his son Sah, a friend of mine for many years from Burma village. Dui ja’s son was Ja sho, and his son Sho k’ah (k-1).

The speaker’s grandfather was a village priest (dzoe ma) as well as a spirit priest (boe maw). He was the blacksmith (ba ji) for the village. Such men considered to have ‘complete spiritual capacity’ (dzoe sm pi ku eu). Since the grandfather was a village priest, the speaker could also have been a village priest, although he was not. Only his very closest friends and immediate family would know the name of the speaker. He is commonly called Maw boe, which as no connection with ‘Tsui dzah’. But those in his sub-clan (pa) would know the name since they would be able to recount his genealogy too. But they do not speak these names lightly. And the father or grandfather is still alive, they will repeat his name.

There is a different type of genealogy which represents those whose forefathers married into the Akha tribe. For example, k-7, when giving me his genealogy, exactly the same names as all other Akhas down to dzoe tah pah. Following that is what he said:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tah pah</th>
<th>Ta sui</th>
<th>K’oe zui</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A mo</td>
<td>Sui kah</td>
<td>Zui g’m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mo ta</td>
<td>Kah k’oe</td>
<td>G’m lo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The name ‘A mo’ is a non-Akha who married into the Akha tribe. He may have been Chinese or Lahu, the speaker did not know for sure. When he married an Akha woman, he took upon himself her clan, and carried on the Akha religious customs just the same as Akhas did. The speaker (G’m lo) is considered fully Akha today, and is fully accepted into his village. But from his genealogy, he will always be aware of his no Akha beginnings. In the Akha (A kui) genealogy there are basic similarities with Akha genealogies, down to where they branch off at ‘Tah pah tsui’, but with some interesting dialectical changes:
The speaker (Ga baw) belongs to the Leh pu clan. His wife’s clan was Dzaw koe. Other clans of the Akhui are: Dzaw ba, Hoe pu, Maw nehng, Tsi kaw, Gaw kui, and I’m sure many more. There are several things that puzzle me in the Akhui genealogy: why is there no ‘Sm mi o’, and why is there both a La sa, and a La sa dzi. Also, why are there only 18 of the so-called ‘spirit’ (neh) names instead of 25, and in the Jeu g’oe genealogies?

It is impossible to give all of the possible genealogies, but there are certain divisions that crop up constantly and appear to be quite important to the Akhas. They are also an aid to the village priests who must remember the genealogy of everyone in their village.

For convenience, I label Dzoe tah pah as generation 1. I mention the three sons above (Tah pah tsoe, Tah pah mah, Tah pah sha).

the ninth generation, descending from Tah pah Boe soe leh is very important, with his four sons (see page 749). In the 15th generation, a descendant of Leh la zeu, Shaw ma zeu, had three important sons: Zeu shaw, Zeu ceh, and Zeu ta.

In the 11th generation, descending from Leh lm bo, Bo mah po, who had two important sons, Mah po and Mah po shah.

Descending from Mah po ti, in the 15th generation is Dzah jeu, who is very important for historical reasons. He had at least four sons: Jeu jaw, Jeu g’oe, Jeu no, and Jeu bya. The sons of Jeu jaw were Jaw bah, the great Akha ruler (see page 40, vol.1), and Jaw ba. Jaw bah’s only son was Bah jui (page 46, vol.1). These two were the last Akha rulers. Bah jui’s sons were Jui lm and Jui ta.

Jeu g’oe had three sons: G’oe meh, G’oe jeh, G’oe zui (17th generation). The most important descendant, genealogically speaking, was Byah leh, who was in the 21st generation, descending from G’oe jeh. He had two sons, Leh zah and Leh nyi (22nd generation). Most of the clan names are from men in these 22 generations, although some are taken from lower down, especially when they wish to distinguish more clearly of which branch of the clan the other person is from.
In the ‘spirit incantations’ (to eu) that Akhas repeat there are many legends that have to do with the history of Akhas. This includes the first Akha, the first place Akhas lived, Akhas moving down south, the ‘great tree’, the cutting of the tree so that only six Akhas and six a boe were left (see page 56, vol.1), etc. Each time Akhas hear an elder repeat spirit incantations, he gets a review of their ‘history’. This ‘history’ is in poetic form, and does not include very much detail.

A Lahu man who studied in Chinese schools and is now living in Kengtung (Yawtha Chang), told me some interesting things concerning the possible background of the Akhas. He feels that the Chinese historical records are badly biased, but taking what he read in he histories, and what he learned while living in china, he felt that the general idea of south-west Yunnan used to be some what divided up among the following groups: Lahus in the K’unming area (the two lakes there are called Naw naw naw shehn by them, then and now, and the Shans to this day call it Meun shehn, from the Lahu name (he thinks), the Akhas in the Yuan-chiang and Mochiang area, are the Mnchia in the Ta-li, Yang pi area, and the Lisus in the Lung-ling area. He says that the Yuan-chiang area is still called A baw Jaw deh country.

The Chinese name is simply a name which tells the name of the river flowing nearby. Is this is the case, and I see no reason why is should not be, it fits the idea Akhas have told me about the ‘three western migrations of Akhas across the Mekong’. That is, some went due west across the Mekong from Yuan-chiang (A baw Jaw deh country), and are the ones now in China. Others went down into Laos and then came across the Mekong, and they are the ones in eastern Kengtung State. I thought at first a third group may have gone down and entered Thailand from Laos, but there does not appear to be any evidence of any Akhas entering Thailand except through Kengtung state, Burma.

Yawtha Chang told about an Akha girl from Mo-chiang who knew Chinese well, and had been trained in Chinese schools. When he was in Kunming in 1944 taking training, this girl came through with a troop of about 200 young people who were teaching and preaching the KMT doctrine. She was the head of the whole group. The Chinese in the group pointed her out to the other hill people by saying, ‘Look how far this Akha has come. You study hard and you can become like this too.’

Yuan-chiang is about 100 air miles south south-east of Kunming. The Akhas seemed to move south of there (when they tell about the Shans coming up they mention this), but of course went west as well. As far as I can tell now, the main concentration of Akhas would roughly fit into the following: 20 degrees as the south boundary (with not more than four or five villages located south of that), 99 degrees as the west boundary up to 22 degrees north, and then over to 99 degrees30 from 22 to 23 degrees north, and over 100 degrees from 23 to 24 degrees. The northern border would probable be 24 degrees, and the eastern border would be about 103 degrees or so. I would judge that 95% of all Akhas would be in this general area. of course, many of the Akhas have lost their identity, due to merging with the Chinese, or whatever predominant group they are living among.

K-16 and K-17 said that according to legend, the great general area in which Akhas originated is called Peu ci na ci. This is similar to a term Lahus use. Telford feels this indicates ‘Peking and Nankning’, but the Akhas I talked to do not feel this is so. They consider this a poetic way of referring to Jaw deh country, or somewhere near there. K-16 and K-17 told me about how many of these ‘Jaw deh Akha’ would come to their village while they were still in China. They were great traders.
I have heard from other groups that they have come down into northern Kengtung State, too. These Jaw deh Akhas, when they visited Ba gaw village, said that their main town was Jaw deh law dzah, which may be what the Chinese call Yuan-chiang.

They spoke of the Akha language well, and used Akha when speaking with the Akhas of that area. But among themselves they spoke Chinese.

From K-15 I got that they feel that originally Akhas came from their own Akha ruler. But they say this occurs only in their ‘spirit incantations’, so I wonder is it may be merely another way of saying Jaw deh country. K-15 went on to say that when the Akhas came from China into Burma, they came by way of ‘Jeh lu meu’ but this too is from their ‘spirit incantations’, and have no idea just what they mean by it. K-29 told of an Akha village he was sure had been Burma more than 100 years. It is called Ba naw Akha, near Meu nyeh. It used to be very large, with over 300 houses in it, he heard. That was long before he was born. Now (1966) there are only 40 or so houses, since those who did not have terraced fields kept migrating south. All of those left have the terraced fields.

There is another village K-29 and K-28 told me of, Je mui Akha, on the Loimi mountain. Villagers from this village used to give tribute to Was when they ruled the country. At that time there were no coins, so they had to cut off a certain weight of silver from silver clumps. At first they were called ‘Loi mi Akha’, but when the Shans drove out the Was and started to rule, they had to give ‘sm mui’ (probably thirty viss of silver) to the Shans, so after that, and until this day, they are called ‘Je mui’. K-29 said that men in these two villages can count eleven generations that have died in Burma, which, if true, means that some Akha have been here quite a bit longer than 100 years.

ACCULTURATION

In November, 1965, I met an old Akha man at the home of K-24. He told me that Akhas are not able to live with Shans. He has lived with Shans, along with a couple of other Akha houses, for awhile. But he said that they argued all the time. I asked him why, and he said that the Shans would not only scold the Akha children, but they would also hit them. ‘And not just with their knuckles, but even strike them with sticks.’ The Akhas would not stand that. He said too that it was hard to live with the Shans because they were not ‘bashful’ (sha daw-eu) about asking for anything. ‘Give me that to eat, give me some of this- you have a lot etc.’

He started listing off the groups that Akhas could live with, and it turned out to be all the tribes in Kengtung state- apart from the Shans. But then he went on to say that there was one Shan household in his village now. He said that they get along fine with that Shan, ‘because he lives just as we do’.

There is a group of Akhas known as ‘turban Akhas’ (u dzah A ka), since their women wear turbans, evidently just like the men. They are Akhas, and speak Akha, and know their clans-which are the same as other Akhas. But the dress, especially of the women, is quite different. Besides wearing a turban like the men, their skirts are longer than other Akhas, and they wear less silver, especially the little spherical silver buttons (coe k’aw).
They themselves say that they have ‘ga si si-eu’, which evidently means they have has a change of religion. The term may come from ‘free’ (kai shin) in Chinese. This group of Akhas used to observe the ancestor offerings just as other Akhas, although I believe they may have spent a longer time observing ceremonial abstinence during the offerings than other Akhas observe.

When they realised that they spent so much time on their ancestor offerings that they could not work their fields properly, and saw weeds take over their paddy fields, they cut the number down to three: ka yeh, mi shu, do eu (pitch pine burning ceremony), and a third (which informants forgot). They felt that the second ceremony was borrowed from the Chinese, or perhaps from some Lahu who sometimes do it.

They have borrowed much more Chinese in their daily speech than other Akhas have, although they still speak Akha. There are a few villages in the northern part of the State noe, but most of them are still living in China.

ETHNOCENTRISM

Akhas have a loyalty to their tribe, which carries on down somewhat to their clan and sub clan, but it is not true ethnocentrism. They keep repeating how small their tribe is, and how far behind other tribes they are. A summary of their statement may be, ‘we are a small tribe. We cannot think as well as other tribes. We have not progressed as far as other tribes. We do not have any rulers.’ Of course, much of this is related in one way or another with their legends.

There are many Akhas, however, who feel that when their children get an education, they will gradually be able to catch up with other people.

In November of 1965 I talked with a young Akha policeman who wanted me to get ‘them’ (the Burmese government, I presume) to have regular Akha program from Rangoon. He said that once a year there is a program of Akha from China, and several of those around said this was true. They all wanted such a program very much in Burma. I felt that part of the reason they wanted the Akha program was because they felt ‘below’ (te-eu) everyone else. They felt this would build them up, and give them a name along with some of the other tribes of Burma. They mentioned, for example, that the Kachins, Shans etc. have their broadcasts. During this discussion one of the older men mentioned that Akhas are very good at learning other languages—which is true. The ones he mentioned were: Shan, Lahu, Chinese, and Burmese.
CULTURAL CHANGE

On one occasion in 1965 I was in the home of Ai kat, just outside the Kengtung west wall. As usual, there were all kinds of Akhas wandering in and out. I saw as I had many times before, a cross section of evidence of cultural change, and pressures for change, within a two hour period.

First of all I met a young man who used to live Mu ma village near Loimwe. He is married, and has three daughters. He learned to read Akha when his distant relative Maw boe (K-2) taught there about four years before. He and some friends went to Kengtung three years ago, and now he is living in a little Akha settlement on the outskirts of Kengtung, and as he puts is ‘not following any religion’. Part of the reason why he may not be following the Akha religion is that he has no sons, but this surely is not the whole story.

A big item is the fact that he is not living in a community that, as a community, is following the Akha religion. I asked him what they did when someone in the family got sick, and he said, “go to the hospital”. I asked him how they would bury a person in their ‘religion-less’ state, and he seemed fairly worried about that. Then he said, ‘Apart from sickness and death, this matter of having no religion presents no problems to me. But I must confess these two matters do have me concerned’. He then said that he was considering back to some Akha village, but was worried about living away from a hospital.

Ai Kat, the head of the house where I was, became Buddhist when he moved to Kengtung. According to him, he was the first Akha to become Buddhist. His reason for becoming a Buddhist was, ‘I moved down here to live with the Shans, didn’t I?’ I am not sure just why he moved to Kengtung. Partially he was concerned about getting his children educated—at least so he says. Also, he may have found it was hard to get opium in accordance with his requirements when he was in the village in the Loimi area. He is a pretty heavy opium smoker. He still knows the Akha religion well, and I feel quite sure that if he were still living in an Akha village, he would become one of the respected elders in carrying out the Akha religion. When we are talking about these matters, his wife said, ‘we may have the Shan type of ‘ancestor altar’ (a poe paw law) hanging up in our house, but whenever anything goes wrong, I still do just what we Akhas have always done’.

Later as she added details concerning what she meant, especially from a woman’s point of view, concerning the Akha religion, I noted a certain wistfulness. I am sure that she would be delighted to live in an Akha village again. However, after seeing her many times, I believe that she is quite happy in her present situation too, especially since there are so many Akhas coming and going all the time.

Then there was another old Akha man who was there, who said I spoke to him once about six years ago, and repeated the conversation. He is now a Catholic, living about two hundred yards above Ai Kat’s house. He dropped in to visit, and maybe to smoke opium, I don’t know. He did not smoke while I was there. He was so anxious that I get everything about the Akha culture just right that I asked with a bit of wonderment, just why he has become a Catholic.
Then he told me his story:

He was well off, and a member of a large Akha village when the KMT troops were causing so much trouble in that area about six or seven years ago. They would hold people for ransom and then kill them if the impossible sums of money they tried to extort were not forthcoming by their deadline. There were a total of seven people murdered by the KMT soldiers in his village, including his wife, and his only son. So he, and several other of the villagers, fled the Kengtung where they put themselves under the protection of the Catholic fathers.

His idea, as he expressed it quite freely to me, was not so much that he was anxious to become a Catholic, but the only way to get protection was to live in the Akha community that was under the direction of the Catholics, and thus, with his Akha background in mind, he was willing to accept the predominant religion of the village in exchange for the right to live there. He and some of the others told me during our conversation, however, that many of the Catholics still go to Akha shamans (nyi pa) who live near by.

There was another man I talked with there. He was anxious to get medicine for one of his daughters, who had night blindness and other problems. I suggested that he go to the hospital, but he said that he had been to the Civil hospital, and they had just ‘rubbed a little medicine on’, and sent him away. This man was ‘camping’ with Ai Kat. He and his daughters cooked their food separately and ate separately.

Up to now, he is still following the Akha religion, but the health of his children and other pressures are making him seriously thinking of moving to Kengtung. Of all the Akha men I talked with he was the only one who still has his queue.
The Akha language is in the Lolo group of the Tibeto-Burman languages. (See on Akha phonology in vol.1). The Akhas themselves do not seem to know much about the Lolo’s, or Nosus, but they do realize that their language has basic similarities with Lahe and Lisu. Some Akhas formerly from China told me of a tribe called Law pe by Shans and Chinese (they call themselves Pe law meh). They have three clans; Law beh, Law law and Law pe. They have ancestor offerings although somewhat different to the Akhas. Their ancestor shrine is on the opposite side of the house from the Akhas, as well. But their language is related to Akha, with many words being either identical or close enough to show a close relationship. They are no doubt part of the Lolo group. Whether the term ‘Law law’ has any relation to Lolo or not, I do not know.

Dialectical differences are not as great among Akha as among some other tribal languages, especially those of Loi (Mon Khmer) groups. No doubt this is because the men usually marry women from other villages, and this tends to cut down on the amount of linguistic variation. The Jeu g’oe dialect appears to be the one ‘standard’ dialect, with the A jaw dialect ranking perhaps second in importance. It is not terribly different from Jeu g’oe. For practical purposes, the two dialects can be called mutually intelligible. But even the A jaw recognize the Jeu g’oe to be the dominant group, and they tend to use Jeu g’oe when speaking with the Jeu g’oe.

The greatest extreme is between Jeu g’oe and the A kui dialects. They are almost different languages. The Jeu g’oe do not know A kui. The A kui must learn Jeu g’oe. Or, as K-13 put it, ‘we must learn Akha’, since they consider the Jeu g’oe to be the standard Akha.

I have not been able to make comparisons of the A kui and Jeu g’oe dialects, but at one time in getting names for birds I discovered that of 10 names, only two were the same (or nearly the same) in the two dialects. The others were so different that they would not be recognized as being the same words. When A kui speakers use Jeu g’oe, they speak with a very distinctive accent. Other Akha speakers can instantly recognize when a person is A kui. Their address is also different, which tends to increase the ease in distinguishing them as ‘different’.

For the most part Akhas are quite understanding of other Akhas from distant places who speak a markedly different type of Akha. They often start asking, ‘How do you say this, how do you say that?’ They ask this not so much in spirit of making fun, but with genuine interest. When a person is traveling among Akhas a long way from home, and finds a village that speaks just like his own home village, it thrills him no end.

From Loimi mountain (about 20 air miles north of Kengtung town, on north into China, there seems to be the ‘dialectical’ division that the Akhas recognize. It has nothing to do with clan, or anything else that I know of. Akhas in that area will often say just ‘ma’ for the negative, whereas Akhas in the rest of the state, and on down to Thailand, will give full negative statement. For example, if you ask a person from the north, ‘Ma i haw-a low’ (Have you never gone?), he will respond with ‘Ma’ (not). But if you ask one from the central and southern area, he will say, ’Ma i haw-a’ (I’ve never gone). This shortening of the negative answer by the ‘northerners’ causes the ‘southerners’ to jokingly refer to them as the “ma A ka” the ‘not Akhas’.
A place where linguistic differences show up quite consistently is when they borrow words from other languages, especially Shan. Often, they simply use an Akha-raised form of the Shan, such as ‘ma u’ for brick. Some feel however, that is should be translated into Akha and thus call a brick ‘mi bya’. Others so not like that translation, however, so they call a brick ‘tsa bya’. When we took a vote on this word in the Akha New Testament translation committee meeting, we had the following results: 4 felt it should be ‘mi bya’, 2 voted for ‘tsa bya’, 2 voted for ‘ma u’, 1 said he felt ‘mah u’ was best (a slight change on the Shan), and one said he did not want to vote since Akhas did not use bricks, but only built their houses of wood and bamboo.

When Akhas borrow from Shan, they tend to change the low tones to high and the high to low. They are not always consistent in this however. In the Eastern part of the State (Meung Yawng) they tend to follow this pattern more consistently than some other sections. For example, the name for ‘teacher’ in Shan is ‘sa la’ (low tones). In Meung Yawng area they say ‘sa la’ (high tones), which follows the normal pattern of reversal. For some reason the Akha in other parts of the state will say ‘sa la’, the same as the Shans, even though this can also mean ‘cotton’. Perhaps the reason is that it is a fairly recent borrowing.

The general drift on the part of many Akhas, especially those in close proximity to large towns, seems to use more and more Shan and Burmese. The Akhas as a group are anxious to identify more closely with the dominant groups and this is one way they have of doing so. Also, the more contact they have with newer cultural phenomenon that already has a Shan or Burmese name, the more likely they are to use the ready-made word, but with their own Akha modification. What I see now is a struggle between the older and younger generations. The older generation wants to retain, or at least they claim they do, the ‘true way’ of saying something in Akha.

The younger generation wants to use what they hear daily from Shans and Burmese - and more and more in their classes, for there are far more Akha children attending school than ever before.

For example, for the word ‘jail’, the elders insist on ku - the ‘true Akha word’, whereas the younger folks will say ‘taw’, from Shan and Burmese. But in spite of all the older folks say about deploring the thoughtless youth who have no respect for the true Akha ‘language’, the elders themselves will often use ‘taw’ in everyday speech without thinking about it. There is also some borrowing from Lahu, especially in the Meung Yang area, where the Lahus predominate. The terms for ‘headman, soldier, school’, etc. are borrowed from Lahu.

TRADE LANGUAGES
Shan and Northern Tahi are the main trade languages for the Akhas who live in Burma and Thailand. Most of the men will know enough of the trade language to get around without too much difficulty. For those Akhas living in Laos (very similar to Northern Thai and Shan), and in china it is Yunnanese. Many Akha men who have lived in Burma and North Thailand for years can still speak enough Yunnanese to get around fairly well. I met two Akha men from China who had even has some training in written Chinese.

Many Akhas have remarkable linguistic ability. Most of them (the men that is) can speak not only the trading language, but also Lahu (which is more or less the trading language for the hills), and usually one or two other languages. Many of them are learning to speak Burmese.
SPECIAL LANGUAGES

Many elders know how to repeat ‘spirit incantations’ (neh to-eu). They say that this language was taught to their ancestors by the spirits. It has the consonants and vowels as regular Akha, but apart from that it could almost be another language. It takes quite a while for the men who use this to learn it. They seem to memorize the various phrases by rote. The tones seem to be predominantly high and low tones, with very few mid.

Another somewhat special language is that used in certain ceremonies that do not have ‘spirit incantations’ in them. For example, when the spirit priest (bow maw) calls back a soul, or when he offers to the ‘lords and rulers of earth and water’, this is the type of Akha used. It may be an older type of Akha, but I cannot be sure. They only say, ‘We don’t know where this language came from- it is the way our ancestors taught us to say these things.’ Most adult Akha men can understand this ‘language’ fairly well. Even when they do not know every word, they understand the general theme. There is a type of ‘language’ the young men and boys use when they are quite a distance apart, and want to call each other. It is a type of falsetto, with the statements very short. They appear to be understood more because of tone than anything else. The last part is usually drawn out and a bit louder than the rest.

When boys talk back and forth this way, and one does not understand what the other said, they can ask him to repeat the statement. Amusement, irritation and perplexity can all be expressed in this special language. Older men seem a bit ashamed to speak like this- at least in my presence. One time when I was with a group of boys calling like this, an older man told me what to say. When the boy did not call it in the way the adult thought he should, the adult explained to the boy how to correct his call, but the adult would still not call himself.

When Akhas repeat their proverbs (daw da), they tend to give syllables on either a low or a high tone. The syllables which would normally be mid are skewed to either high or low tone, depending on the context.

PICTURESQUE EXPRESSIONS

The Akhas have many expressions that are interesting. They will often speak of a person who ‘covers his goiter (law beh ba za-eu), meaning that he points out someone else’s mistakes just to cover his own.

They also speak of someone having a ‘sharp snout’ (meh boe yaw ta), which means they are very critical and have a sharp tongue.

To have an ‘extra tongue’ (meh la la dzeh tso-eu) means that a person talks a great deal, and often causes trouble by what he says.

They refer to people who are slow in their work as having a ‘heavy bottom’ (daw meh yaw kah), while those who do their work quickly have a ‘light bottom’ (daw meh yaw pya).

If a person shows partiality, he is ‘choosing big little face’ (mya pyaw hui nyi tse-eu).
A person who has a ‘stiff forehead’ (na k’aw yaw g’ah) will say anything anywhere.

A person who has been scolded severely has been scolded ‘more than even a dog can take’ (a kui ti mew ma taw ni deh-eu).

A person who does not know the ‘top from the buttocks’ (u du daw dah ma si) is one who does not know ‘top from bottom’.

Akhas love to use ‘couplets’ (daw poe daw ma-literally ‘male-female words’) in their speech, especially when it is a formal occasion. The elders will sprinkle them through their speech quite generously.
CLASSIFIERS

As with other Tibeto-Burman languages, Akhas use classifiers quite freely. Classifiers in Akha are nouns which occur immediately after numerals, after the question ‘how many’ (a mya...), or statement ‘this many’ (beu mya...). Classifier phrases, which consist of the numeral or ‘...mya’ preceding the classifier, often appear with a preceding noun expression, though not always: tsaw ha ti g’a (one person), ci ha ti saw (one barking deer).

But you can also have, I nah ti g’a i ma la-a. (Today not a single-human being understood-came.) I nah ti maw za-eu teh ma. (Today we got only one animal.)

There are three types of classifiers.

1. Those that represent some larger class, such as round things, flat things, humans, animals etc., and are often not the same as any part of the preceding noun expression.

Some of the more common ones are:

- a. baw - a stem, tree, bamboo. da pya ti baw - one stem of bracken, seh baw ti baw - one onion stem
- b. baw - a clump or cluster. da zaw ti baw - a clump of grass, tsaw ha ti baw - a cluster of people.
- c. ca - for long cord-like things. a ca nga ca - five ropes (cords, chains), yeh saw ko ca - six silver chains men wear on their jackets.
- d. dm - for large, long things. sa pa shi dm - seven bolts of cloth, dm ma yeh dm - eight logs.
- e. du - for round short things, sa ji du g’oe du - nine cotton gin rollers, a du tse du - ten ears of corn.
- f. du - for a dug place. tsa du ti du - one house site (dug), bah du nyi du - two wells.
- g. dzah - for rolled up items. paw law sm dazh - three rolls of banana leaves (to wrap things up in), pa yo oe dzah - four bundles of cigars.
- h. gaw - rivers and streams. Law ba ti gaw - one river, law gaw ti gaw - one stream.
- i. gu - for a pair. la du ti g’a - one father, ba ji nyi g’a - two blacksmiths.
- k. hm - for very general things, and often borrowed words. leh ma ti hm - one ticket (or permit), pyaw haw ti hm - one mirror.
- l. kah - for clothing, tools, fishing and hunting tools, household goods and very long things. pi di ti kah - one Akha skirt, deu ha nyi kah - two axes, ka sm kah - three crossbows, a bui oe kah - four blankets.
- m. kah - (1) for small stems and sprouts. u ji nga kah - five stems of thatch grass, g’oe yoe ko kah - six stems of straw.
- (2) for very long straight things. paw coe ti kah - one length (not just a section) of sugar cane, da kaw to kaw - one board.
- n. kaw - for a field. ya ti kaw - one hill field. It is also used for sticks and poles. i cu ba kaw ti kaw - one pole for carrying water.
- p. k’eh - for an opening. meh k’eh ti k’eh - an opening in a bottle or pot, ma k’eh nyi k’eh - two open wounds.
- q. k’m - for dishes and lamps. k’m ma ti k’m - one dish, tsi k’m g’oe k’m - nine lamps.
- r. k’o - for a lump of something. k’a g’eu yeh k’o - eight lumps (pieces) of charcoal, tsaw tsui g’oe k’o - nine ‘chunks’ (lumps) of ginger root.
- s. la - for those things that strike or stick. ka mya ti la - one crossbow arrow, ja g’a ti la tsaw-eu - one injection of medicine, na li ti la - one stroke of the clock.
- t. law - for a slender and long section. a to em law - three sections of reeds, sha yoe oe law - four (longish) bones.
- u. maw - animals. k’a hm sm maw - three bears, a kui oe maw - four dogs.
- v. pyaw - for one pair. naw bah ti pyaw - one (of a pair) of leggings, nga ma ti pyaw - one grill of a fish.
w. si - round things, fruits, and vegetables. ya u ko si - six eggs, ma deh nyi si - two pumpkins, tsa pu sm si - three termite hills.

x. ta - for a thin, flat thing. le peu ti ta - a sheet of corrugated iron, sah bo ti ta - a book.

y. tm - for a somewhat long and bulky item. mah ti tm - one section of sweet potato, sa bya ti tm - one length of bar soap.

z. va - flat and roundish. paw coe paw ca ti ya - a cake of jaggery, haw tah ti ya - a cake of sticky rice.

2. Those that have a more restricted usage, and are based on the preceding noun expressions. There seem to be four major types of these, according to the number of syllables in the noun expression.
   a. In some one syllable noun expressions, the classifier is simply a repetition of that syllable. bah ti bah - one nest, leh ti leh - one bazaar, cu ti cu - one hot springs, etc.
   b. In some two syllable noun expressions, the classifier is the same as the second syllable. law beh ti beh - a goiter, deh bah ti bah - a terrace (in a field), te bya ti bya - a board, k’a myeh ti myeh - a rattan headstrap for the carrying yoke.
   c. In some three syllable noun expressions, the classifier is the same as the third syllable. leh shu jaw ti jaw - one area of unburned jungle in an otherwise burned area.
   d. In some four syllable noun expressions, the classifier is the same as the fourth syllable. a kui k'o beh ti beh - a calf of the leg, mi dza mi bo ti bo - a faggot of wood, ya pyaw a do ti do - a stem for a broom handle.

3. Those that are usually not preceded by a noun expression. These most often have to do with time, weights, measures, distances, money and certain numbers.

   a. Time. ti k’eh - just a moment, ti po - one time, ti coe ti law - a fairly short time, ti ga - one instance (or place), ti jaw - one cycle of days, ti jo - one generation, ti zi - one life span, ti mya - a twelve month cycle, ti nah jaw - a cycle of thirteen days, ti ye - 13 years (although nyi ye is 25 years, since after the first 13 you add 12 each time), ti sa - a long time, ti do - one trip, etc.
   b. Weights. ti ja - one one-hundredth of a viss, ti ka - one tenth of a viss, ti jaw i - one viss, ti mui - 10 viss, ti seh - 100 viss, etc.
   c. Measures ti peh - one measure (about one quart), ti mui - 10 peh, ti pu - one basket, ti jo (or ti da) - one load, etc.
   d. Distance. ti da - one thumb width, ti peh one inch, ti tsi - distance from the thumb to the index finger, ti to - distance from the thumb to the tip of the middle finger, etc.
   e. Money. ti peh - one pya, ti beh - one five pya bit, ti mo - one 10 pya bit, ti ceh - one twenty-five pya bit, etc.
   f. Numbers (from 100 up). ti ya - 100, ti he- one thousand, ti mui - ten thousand, ti seh - one hundred thousand, ti lam - one million, ti dui - ten million, ti tah - one hundred million, ti myeh - one billion.
   g. Special instances. ti k’aw i - one half (time and money), ti k’oe - one half (of a very long item, such as a road or stream), ti pa - one half, lengthwise, ti k’eh - one half crosswise, ti da- one father (as when speaking of two children who had the ‘same father’), ti je - one thing, ti yeh - one load of either firewood or water etc.

Often more than one classifier can be used for the same noun expression without changing the meaning in any way. gaw jaw jaw la (spur of a mountain) can use wither ti la, or ti jaw. jeh ka (rake) can use either ti ka, or ti kah.

There are instances, however where the use of the classifier will make a difference in the aspect of the noun expression which is being emphasized: mi dza ti bym - a fire (burning at one place) mi dza ti kaw - a stick of firewood mi dza ti geu - a cord of firewood.
GESTURES AND SIGNS

When Akhas hold out their hands to children to come, when especially, they often rub the ends of their fingers with their thumbs, while calling the child.

To show their disgust with someone or something, they often make a strong click with their tongues.

When a man is angry with someone, and wished he could hit that person, he will often raise his foot - the one nearest the person with whom he is angry, while he raises he opposite arm in a position as if he were about to strike the person. Often they bite the lower lip while doing this. Sometimes they just do this in fun, but sometimes they are really angry, and almost ‘asking for a fight’.

For affirmation they nod their heads up and down, and for negotiation they nod their heads from side to side, but usually not as vigorously as we do in the west.

To show the size of an animal with their hands, they usually show the girth. If it is small, such as a small pig or puppy, they will use just one hand for it. But if is large, as a pig or buffalo, they will use two hands. For large fish, they will use one hand held palm up as if holding a grapefruit. When it is a smaller fish, they will hold their hands straight out up and down and indicate by the number of extended fingers how large the fish is. For example, for a fairly small fish, they hold out the whole hand. When they want to show the length of the fish, they hold out one arm, and with the other hand they make a chopping motion on the extended arm two or three times to show about what point the fish would come to if held there. I think this motion may indicate ‘this is approximate. When they want to show how large a deer was they got, they hold up their hand to show the height. When they do this they move their hand back and forth a few inches. When they do this they move their hand back and forth a few inches. When they show how high their paddy is, they do the same thing.

When they call people to come with their hand, they hold the palm down, and bring the hand down toward themselves. When they motion to people to be quiet, they hold up a closed fist (with the thumb on top- as if they are going to strike the person if he made any noise).

If another person says something they do not like, they hold up their hand with the fingers partially bent and the knuckles pointed to the person they are gesturing to. This indicates, ‘I’ll rap my knuckles on your head if you don’t watch out.’

When someone is near you and you want them to move away, you motion away from yourself, with the back of the hand towards the one you want to move. There is a slight down motion, but the hand quickly comes back to the height from which it started.

When someone is coming up a path, or steps, and you want them to stop, you give a motion showing he palm of your hand towards them, and kind of pushing down and toward them. When someone is coming down a path, or steps and you want them to stop, you do a kind of chopping motion with the hand, with the back of the hand facing them.

They have a system of simple gestures for deafness but I have not found anyone who knows it. I do know that when the thumb is held up it means good, and when the little finger is held up it means bad.
TRANSMISSIONS OF MESSAGES

They do not use signaling devices, nor do they have signal codes. Sending messengers is the only means they have of transmitting messages. It used to be that when they send messages to people, especially if it was something rather official or important, they would wrap up tea leaves and tobacco leaves in a banana leaf and send it with the messenger. As to the message itself, the messenger would simply tell them. If they especially wanted to show respect to the one they were sending a message to, or if they wanted to beg favor, or both, they would tie a Chinese copper coin with a hole in it to the package of tea and tobacco so that would be the first thing the recipient would see. Sometimes, there would be more than one coin. However, it did not seem to be a matter of paying them for something, since the value was very little. It was regarded as a polite thing to do.

As far as I can tell, the above two customs are not carried out any longer, but Akhas agree that they used to do them.
ORAL LITERATURE

PROVERBS

The Akhas, especially the elder, often use ‘proverbs’ (daw da). There are many types of proverbs, or sayings. One type tells what usually happens when a certain thing happens: ‘If at night one eats to the full, the next morning one is hungry’ (Ci bo dza -a shaw na meh). Or, ‘If one digs up old rotten things and starts turning over things, then a snake will come out (Du peu ngaw -eh, a law do -eh). They say this when someone starts bringing up some old arguments, or faults of others, that this will just lead to trouble.

Another type is more of an admonition or warning: If the bamboo gopher does not have his escape route dug and ready ahead of time, it will be difficult when he needs it’. (Ho pi do g’o a za ma sha na do -i shaw ba zah teh -a) In other words, be well prepared, before the needs arise.

There are many which are either pleas for the listener to obey ‘old ways’, or warnings as to what will happen if they do not. ‘Listen with both ears to the customs and follow after. Look with both eyes at the way others embroidery their cloth’ (Nyi yaw tso -eu tah te na -i, nyi mya tso -eu sm bo haw -i). The second section is not talking about cloth, of course, but it is telling young people to follow all the intricate calls of the Akha religion carefully.

Following are some other proverbs I have recorded:

1. Ti nah deh maw na, u shaw shaw ji ta daw. Ti zi deh maw na, a caw mi za-ah ta bah. ‘If you want to live a day, don’t start drinking in the morning. If you want to live a lifetime, don’t wrong another’s wife’. (If you start drinking in the morning, you will not get a full days work done. If you commit adultery, your life span will be shortened.)

2. Law bi yaw g’a yaw zah, seh law yaw g’a yaw je. ‘Foreigners each have their customs, Akhas have their own’.

3. Si mui ja na nga ji bym, Mi mui jaw na yo dze bym. ‘If good fruit, birds will come. If good girls, boys will come’. They say this when a bunch of boys have come to a certain village to hunt wives, and there are a lot of pretty girls there.

4. Nyo maw ga oe si. Tsaw maw daw oe si. ‘Old buffalos know old paths. Old men know old ‘words’.’ (‘Words’ also means customs, etc.)

5. Meh le g’aw k’a ma dze, bo le sha tsu ma dza. ‘When one is hungry, he does not disdain even bitter greens. When one is full, one doesn’t even eat fat.’

6. Mi za nyo, yo za ca. ‘Wife is the buffalo, husband is the rope.’ The wife is tied to her husband, wherever he goes, she must follow.

7. Pa shui teh -eh ma ga, pa nyor k’aw ga ma je. ‘Not just yellow leaves fall. Some green leaves also fall.’ They say this when a child dies.
8. Nyi g’a ma shi, tsaw deh d ga ma gu. Mah nyo ma shi -a, coe dzm deu ga ma gu. ‘Two (true lovers) will love each other to death, even though both are buried alive, they are not afraid. A buffalo bull is not afraid, even if his horns should be cut off.’ This is from a love song. It tells of the eternal love the boy and girl feel for each other.


10. Ma la di na, ca la ya saw meh. ‘If you strike with the right hand, you must soothe with the left.’

11. Nga sha ti maw ba neh, baw yeh tse k’a bu. ‘Because of just one fish, ten fish will spoil.’ Because one person did something wrong, many people will suffer.

12. Ma tsa daw -i ta na, ma ci ca i ta pa. ‘Don’t listen to a wrong word. Don’t tie something with a weak cord.’

13. Ma tsa daw nah dzeh g’eh. Tsa eu daw la ti k’oe lah ci-eh geu. ‘Throw away the wrong things you hear. Grasp and hold the right things you hear.’

14. Ma dzi mah pa doe, ma m dzaw za sha. “The unridden stallion gets lazy, the youth who does not learn skills will have difficulties.”

15. Bi cm a byah yaw ‘oe, tsui yeh yaw caw ma tw-aje. “Shans are good friends and trustworthy- until there is trouble, and then your own relatives help you, while the Shans forsake you.”

16. Sha daw mi shi, ka pyaw ti law. Ui you meh poe la k’aw k’aw ka. “Before something embarrassing, put a wall. Before a laughing mouth put a hand.” This is the reason they must have a wall between the men’s and women’s sections in the Akha house.

17. Tahjoe meh nah gah nga -eu. “To lend one’s spear to dacoits.” They say this of someone who indirectly helps or encourages wrong doers.

18. Tsaw cu-a, g’a daw. yaw cu-a, hm dm. “Raise people, you just eat up your strength. Raise sheep, you can wear wool.”

19. Yeh neh ma jah, ti cah ma zah. “There is nothing made that God did not make.”

20. Za mi pu-ah pyeh, za yo deh-ah pyeh-eu. “Girls are released in the village, boys are released in the playground.” Boys and girls have been thrown together- they should have all the sex they want.

21. Za si dza ngwh ma jo, g’a k’a dza ngeh ma lo. “If you have wisdom, you have enough and more. If you have brute strength, it is never enough for your needs.”

22. Zah k’oe ta dzoe ma m nya, peh za k’oe ta nyo ma le nya. “One does not have the ability to throw away the customs, any more than a buffalo has the ability to have its footprints and place and its body someplace else.”
23. Za i mi boe, ci i bu tseu. “Root along with pigs, pluck leaves along with goats.” One develops into the kind of person one makes friends with.

24. Yeh maw ma na, sa daw ma g’o. “The one who does not obey God’s word, or understanding the divine message.” They especially use this when speaking of those who do not follow the Akha customs.

25. Ceh leh gui o a nyi, kaw joe sha shi a ma. “Kidding around is the younger brother to court cases, throwing sticks is the mother of a ‘terrible’ death.” They say this to children playing around to roughly.

26. Deh bah byo ngeh ui k’eh ma byo. Za nyi hui eu-a, a g’oe-m je. “Even though the paddy terraces disappear, the ditch is still there. The important one among people is the ‘maternal uncle’ (a g’oe).” As long as the ditch is there, one can always repair the terraces. As long as there is a ‘maternal uncle’ one can always do the Akha customs.

27. Da yah geu ja a poe, nym sah ya nyi a ma. “Guests are as valuable as pheasants, members of the household are just like jungle fowl (in comparison)”

28. Je shui ceh tsaw shui g’oe. “New animals fight, new people trust one another.” As new animals get acquainted with others in the herd, they settle down. People are the opposite. Even though they trust each other at first, later they have quarrels.

29. I pu k’eh-ah ma tsoe nya-m je. “If you can’t plug a tiny hole in a gourd, you certainly can’t plug a hole in a bamboo section (used for carrying water).” If one person does wrong and is not stopped, then lots of others will do wrong, and they cannot be stopped then.

30. I tsui k’a ngeu-eu mah dza ma ngeu a. Na baw k’a tso-eu tsaw ha ma ngeu-a. “Not all grass is horse food, not all with ears stuck on the sides of their heads are truly people.”

31. Je g’eh doe na pa da ga. Tsaw g’eh doe na pa da ga. “If a domesticated animal is bad, the owner will get the blame. If a person is bad, the ‘sub clan’ (pa) will get the blame.”

32. Ti ya k’o eh za nyi ma dzo. Ti tah k’oh eh sah i ma dzo. Ti myeh k’o -eh lo i ma dzo. “People can’t last more than one hundred years. Trees can’t last more than one hundred million years. Rocks can’t last more than a billion years.”

33. Ga neh-a maw ga ma du. Maw neh-a, m ga ma du-a. “Seeing is better than hearing. Doing is better than seeing.”

34. Gui bah-ah ma di-eh, shm bah-ah ma zaw je. “If you hadn’t hit the brass box, the metal box would not have known about it.” This is said to a person who has made a mistake, and is now unhappy because others know about it.
35. Ha ta ha gah, ji ta ji ceh.
A matter left gets bigger. Liquor left gets sour.
If a matter needs to be decided, it should be taken care of straight away, or it will get bigger the longer it is left.

36. Pu sa zaw a bya
If a fly flies off, it will bring lots more flies. One lie will grow and grow.

37. Daw doe ma tm a daw mui ma do
if you don’t say the bad words the good words wont be spoken. if there are bad things to say them first and end up with the good.

38 Mi si a yo ta ta dzeu. Mi kaw a yo hu ta hu. Mi za u lah ca pi nga. Pu u lu ah nym ma ma tso nya.
Wives don’t overstep your husbands in knowledge. Wives don’t over take your husbands on the path.

39 Peh za daw ceh ma dzoe eh a m g’ah dzah ja a caw g’a lu pyeu m je
If there is any disharmony within a family others can push them around any way they please. This calls on family members to stick together no matter what.

40. Da shi shi a ya k’la ma shi. Da law ya k’a za a ta ya eu. Da shi ya k’a ma cu lu ma da. Da shi ya k’a za ah ta ya eu.
When the father dies the trouble and court cases he has with others do not die, but land on the child.

41. Ma shi shi a nm ngeh ma shi. Ma shi nm ngeh mi ah ta eu. Pui shes la za mi ah ta-eu. “When the mother dies, the daughter must go on weaving cloth. She leaves the tools and capable hands with her daughter.

42. Ma si boe mi sm tsaw, si la yaw ha tsaw ha. “Before knowing a person well, one thinks he is another tribe. Coming to know him, find he is your own clan.”

43. Ma byoe ma dah ga a ne si eu je. La noe ma de ga la ma ta si. “Where there was no hole, he threaded through a bamboo strip. Don’t stick your thumb unto a plate where your finger won’t fit.” Don’t make the matter worse by talking about it.
LEGENDS

Akhas have many very interesting legends. Many of these have been mentioned or told briefly in other sections. Following are examples of three types of legend.

“God gives out books”

Long ago an Akha arrived at God’s (a poe mi yeh) place. God asked him, “Don’t you want this book?” When God asked him that he said, “Yes, I want it. I’ll go first and ask my mother and father. I’ll be back before long”, he said, and returned home.

On his way home, he saw a Lahu and said, “Go get a book from God”. The Lahu then told this to a Shan. The Shan went to God and begged for a book. After God gave him the book, while he was carrying it home, he met a white man, and a Chinese man. He told them, “God says that whoever wants a book can get it.”

After the Shan had told the white man and Chinese man this, the white man led a horse and went up to God’s place. God asked him, “How can you lead a horse along to a place where there is no path?” The white man answered, “If I get your book, it won’t matter if there is a path or not. I will clear a path.” So he took God’s book over on his horse and returned. (This is why it is that wherever white men live, there are always paths and roads.)

When the Akha man returned to God’s place, God said, “Others have taken all the books”. But he continued, “If you really want a book, I will write one on a buffalo skin for you”. As the Akha man carried the book written on the buffalo skin back to his home, on the way he cut off a banana tree with his machete. But it came right out again? (i.e., the white core inside). This was caused by carrying the Akha book, he reasoned.

Next, he caught a crab and roasted it by the fire. No matter how long he roasted it, it remained red, and did not get done. This was caused by carrying the right to rule which belonged to the Akhas, he reasoned. So they said, “Let’s roast and eat this book. We remember it in our stomachs.” So, the right to rule disappeared there. After going a little further, they went to a stream where they drank, and they all got goiters.

And this is the reason why Akhas have no books and no rulers to this day, and are extremely hard up.

“How we got cats”

Long ago God created the heaven and earth, one thing after another. He created them all. But he had forgotten to create cats at that time. So, since there were no cats, wherever people lived were mice and rats. They were so numerous that people could not eat any of their garden produce. So a man went to God’s place and begged him for a cat. God rubbed all over his body and got three balls of dirt off. He put these in bamboo container (baw law), and put a stopper into the end of it very carefully. Then he said to the man, “On your way home, do not open this bamboo section and look in. If you do open it you will not be able to raise cats.” After carefully instructing him, he sent the man home.
On the way home, that man who are told by God not to open the bamboo section, wanted to open it very much. So he opened it once, and a striped wildcat (bya zui) jumped out. He was startled by this, and did not know what to think. So, he opened the end of the bamboo section again, and another striped wildcat jumped out. After that he figured that he would not open it again on the way. After he got home, he opened it again and a cat jumped out. It started eating the mice and rats.

To this day, cats still live with us.

“The two sisters”

Long ago there were two sisters. Their parents had died, so they divided all the parent’s goods that were left. But when they divided the goods, the older sister took everything, and drove the younger sister away without giving her a thing. But at that time the younger sister said, “The day will come when you have to depend on me.” She then said, “If you go to the east, I’ll go to the west.” She then went to the east, and married an extremely wealthy young man.

Then, since the older sister had married early, she had lots of children. In order to feed everyone, they ran out of money and goods. Extreme poverty overcame the older sister and her family. So one say the older sister though, “Oh, I have reached the lowest point possible. I’ll go beg something from my younger sister.” So she went to her younger sister’s place and said, “I’ve reached the depths of poverty. Therefore, please give me something so that I can feed my children.”

Then her younger sister, remembering the past, said I have nothing to give you. But, look for lice in my hair. Later I will give you a little rice.” So after the older sister had looked for lice for some time, the younger sister gave her a very small tin of rice. The older sister, thinking of her starving children, went running home.

At that moment, the younger sister discovered another louse in her hair. “I gave that rice for nothing.” she thought. So she sent her servant after the older sister with instructions to bring the rice back. The older sister felt the situation was hopeless, and that her children would starve, and started on home.

On the way, suddenly it was as if a city wall had been raised before her on the path. Huge stones blocked the way. And at that place she saw a huge snake asleep. She said, “Oh, my children are about to starve. If it is a good sign, run away. If not, strike me down now.” She begged this of the snake over and over. The snake then slowly began to slither into a huge shoulder bag.

Then the older sister, remembering her starving children, rushed home. The children said, “Mommy and Daddy, we are about to die of hunger.”, and they called out and cried. The mother, not knowing what to do, told the children to wait a moment, she would chop up the snake that was in the bag. So, she emptied the snake from the bag into the rice steamer. But the snake had become silver and gold.

So from that day on, the family had plenty of food, and plenty of everything else that it needed and they became a very rich family.
INTERPERSONAL AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS

SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

When a new family wants to move onto an Akha village, the villagers are happy, since it will swell their village. Not only will this add to their prestige, but it will help to level out the work and tax-load of the village. But they are also very suspicious, and often with good reason. They want to know first of all why the other family is leaving their old village. Is the man of the family a thief, or perhaps a bandit? Does he quarrel a lot? How did he get along with the village priest and the head man of the former village? They also want to know how well off he is. Does he have enough money to buy rice until a new harvest? How much will he have to be helped during the first year?

There is a great deal of discussion about what possible troubles might develop if he moves into the village. They always want some of the villagers from the former village to vouch for him before they are willing to let him come in.

A lu, of upper Jaw seu village, told of a Chinese man who wanted to move into his village. The various points of view were set forth and discussed at length before the villagers finally accepted him. When it turned out that he was a bandit, the villagers were upset at the man in their village who more or less sponsored this Chinese man.

When a person is about to move out of a village, he must have a special ceremony in the village his is moving out of. He will call the village priest and elders of the old village. Before eating a ceremonial meal, the man leaving the village will tie a string around the wrist of the village priest while saying, “I have to leave. Don’t die quickly, Live for a long time”. The village priest answers something like this, “Never mind your leaving. May you have good health and plenty to eat in the new village.”

After this the man leaving the village takes some of the meat he has cooked (either chicken or pork), and hands it to the village priest as if it were ancestor offering food, and the village priest accepts it in the same way. After that the other elders take some meat as well. When this is finished, they all gather around and have a feast. At the end of the feast, the man leaving the village gives some money to the village priest, usually two or three old coins.

There are times when the fields of some of the villagers are so far removed from the village that they build temporary houses (ya k’ah k’ah-eu) in the general vicinity of their fields. They are usually afraid to be too isolated, however, for fear of robbers. So they generally try to get other villager to join them in this ‘semi village’. This sometimes is used as a means of gradually splitting off from a village. Often, however, it is fully legitimate.

During the last nine or ten years, the Akhas have had increasingly close contact with Burmese soldiers. If the Akhas know Burmese, the soldiers are friendly with them and very helpful, even though they expect quite a bit of work from them. But there are only a small number who can speak Burmese that well. As for those Akhas who do not know Burmese, the soldiers beat them, scold them, and generally give them a very hard time. They resent this bitterly, but for the most party they try not to make anything of it, since they hope it will pass away quickly and they can get back to their normal lives.
VISITING AND HOSPITALITY

Akhas are never supposed to visit someone else’s house before the morning rice. When that meal is finished, however, they can go. Also, in the evening after all of their work is done, they go visiting. This is the favorite time. When visitors come to someone’s house, they welcome them very graciously. The men will have someone in the house bring a stool for the visitor to sit on. They will also put down a gourd of water, and start making tea for the visitors. If they have liquor, they will often give the visitor some of that to drink too. They will also put out tobacco, and if it is a betel chewing area, they will put out the ‘makings’ for that as well.

When the visitors have been walking for some distance, the hosts will often massage their legs and arms. It really is very refreshing when one is tired. However, they sometimes overdo it, as when some Akha women pulled a tendon in the hand of a Lahu friend of mine, Sala Ai Pun.

When there is a guest present in a house where a child is born, the guest must give 25 pyas (ti ceh) to ‘buy back his life-span’ (zi zeu k’o-eu). This is put into the hand of the child first. Then the mother takes it, and either sews it to some part of the child’s clothing, or makes a hole in it and hangs it around the child’s neck on a string.

When young men are visiting around in various villages looking for wives, the young girls are usually the ones who will welcome them. If the girl knows how to fix tea and liquor real well, and can talk very nicely with them on almost any subject that comes up, they consider her to be very clever at welcoming guests (poe pyeh ya yu nya-eu).

ETIQUETTE

There are certain rules of etiquette that have already been mentioned in other sections, such as when a person enters the man’s side of an Akha house, he must leave by the woman’s door. Their etiquette is quite strict in the matters of eating and drinking. First of all, if they call a respected elder to a meal, they will cover the ‘rice table’ with banana leaves before they put any food on it. The fact that they put a bit of banana leaf in the rice bowl of the shaman when she goes into her trance may be related to this, I do not know. Whenever preparing a meal, or serving a man, a woman must have her complete outfit on, including leggings.

This is also important during a time when she is helping to prepare the food for the ancestor offering. If she does not have her full outfit on then, the ancestors will not eat the food, and she will also be ‘afflicted by the spirits’ (neh gu la-eu). When they eat, it is customary for two or three Akhas to use the same ‘rice bowl’ (haw g’aw). This means that they must not put any curry right into their rice bowl, or on their rice. Nor must they allow any rice that they have taken out to drop back into the bowl. Further, they must not take out any curry with their fingers, but must use chopsticks (ju da).

Whenever Akhas eat together, the oldest man present must take the first bite. If someone else were to take some food before that person, it would be very disrespectful. If there are elders present, it is also considered rude to finish eating early and leave the table. When it is just one’s own family this is not adhered to, however.
After a meal in someone else’s house, the guests will say, “It surely was delicious. The ‘luck-blessing’ will increase.” The second part is almost like, “thank you”, but quite different from our use in the west. When drinking liquor, the ‘polite’ amount to drink differs with the occasion. During the time a body is being prepared for burial, and during the funeral, it is not polite to drink too much, for then one might make mistake in carrying out customs. I have also been told that there are usually so many people present at funerals that it is not possible to get drunk. During weddings it seems to be all right to drink all one wants.

When a house is being built, they also drink liquor. But they will not put out too much in the morning, since the house will not built that way. At night, however, it is perfectly all right to drink quite a lot. At least one bit of etiquette seems to be borrowed from the Shans. When they walk in front of someone, they bend over (aw k’o-eu), and say ‘seu ma, sue ma’ something like ‘excuse me’, as they walk in front of them.

When a person receives a gift from someone else, it is polite to give a sort of blessing to the donor: “Wherever my brethren go and whatever they meet, may their feet not stumble and their arms not falter. With strong arms and body, bright be their path before them and shining the way behind them. May their speech prove true and their hopes fulfilled. May their labors bring them food and drink, and may all they raise flourish.” (A yui a nyi i-eu tah pu la-eu tah dzoe-u- a kui ah sah ti la-ah taw hu ma ja ni g’a la seh la dui ni bi ba bya meh ba law, a tm k’a tso k’a dzeh k’a zaw-ch ja lu u. ngeh ya dza k’aw ngeh ya daw, mya-a ka cu-eu deh lu-u.)

One time some Akha men offered a cigarette to another Akha man they had never seen before and this is the ‘blessing’ he gave in exchange. When he was through, those Akhas turned to me and said, “Now that is the way to accept a gift!” Akhas say that if someone is disrespectful to someone else, the ancestors will ‘afflict’ (gu la-eu) him. Since one ‘has sin’ (i ba na-eu) there will be some type of tragedy develop in himself or his family, such as a child becoming either deaf and dumb, or for one’s wife to get sick, or for a newly born infant to develop as a deaf and dumb person.

They say they must not laugh at midgets (zah k’o). K-28 told of a Lahu midget who had come around Kengtung. Akhas would not dare say anything disrespectful to him. They all gave him a little money. K-28 even had his little grandson that he was carrying on his back at the time, give him a small coin. If they had not given money, then they would have ‘had sin’.

When a woman acts like a man, or tries to boss others, as a man would, they will scold her by saying, “You want to crow like a rooster”. (A poe poe la maw nga.) The idea is very strong that the man must be the head of the house, the village, and all Akha culture.

ELDERS

The elders of a village are usually the men who are about 50 years of age or over. Some feel that to be a ‘true elder’ you must be at the point of life where your wife can not longer have children. The reason for this is that it is the ‘condition’ of the wife which is often more important than that of her husband. That when she is pregnant, then her husband must not take part in various ceremonies. So if she has reached menopause then her husband is truly an ‘elder’ (tsaw maw).
COUNCILS

The village headman (bu seh) usually is the one who calls the elders together when there is something to discuss. He sends children to their homes and has them informed what there will be a meeting at his house that night. The village priest (dzoe ma) can also call such meetings. Often the purpose of his meetings will be different, since he will have them meet to discuss something which is more of a ‘religious’ matter.

There are some villages where some other man may call a meeting of the elders. This is usually done when he is not happy with the headman, and may presage a village split. When there is such a man in the village, they say, “There are two roosters in the village. Sometimes the elders lose their confidence in their headman, and then they may choose another. K-29 told how his village had to choose a new headman. The old one got awfully big-headed, and the people got fed up with him. The elders told him he did not have the majority behind him. So he called a meeting, and to his surprise he learned that he did not have a majority. So he stepped down as headman, and another man was chosen to take his place. He remained in that village, and had good relations with the new headman.

When the elders hold a discussion, they usually want to be on the side of the majority. If they are in the minority, they will often just keep quiet. There is never anything quite like a ‘vote’ (as a show of hands or the like). But usually they can sense when there is a major opinion being expressed. Outsiders may sometimes feel there must be unanimity, but this is only superficial. There are times when some man or men, even though in the minority, will feel so strongly about something that they will have to speak up about it. When a person gets quite worked up (as they do sometimes at these meetings), he may try to shout the others down. He will continue talking, often, even as long as he feels that even one other elder is listening to him. When he has completely lost the floor, he will often do something to try to show that he is not interested in the subject—or that it is a closed issue to him—by filling his pipe very carefully with tobacco, or starting to joke with someone near him about something that has nothing to do with the discussion.

The headman is responsible for order in the meeting he leads. If someone gets noisy or argumentative, he will try to calm and quiet them down. At the same time, if the headman himself gets to saying too much, some of the elders will tell him to calm down. The Akhas feel that much of the argumentative spirit comes from the drinking that takes place during the meeting.

The elders get very angry at men who do not show up for the meetings simply because they are afraid that their side will not win. These same men will often complain about the decisions made at the meetings they purposely ignored, which makes those who did go all the more angry. The elders who attended the meeting will say, “Those men are trying to break up our village”, and indeed many villagers have been broken up over arguments that stated in this way.

Though the headman is definitely the leader of the council of elders, the really popular headmen are the ones who really seek for a consensus of opinion and are able to lead the village in such a way that most of the important decisions are unanimous.
SOCIAL CONTROL

For the most part, Akhas will bow to the will of the elders. But this does not appear to be quite as broad as Telford indicates when he says that they cannot sell paddy at a different price from that stated by the headman. If they would sell paddy cheaply to a non villager, their relatives might scold them, especially if the relatives felt that this sale jeopardized the future of the family, since that rice might later need to be divided up among family members that did not have enough to eat. If the man sells his rice for a good price, however, the family members probably will not scold him. In the long run, it is his rice to do with as he wants, and the headman certainly does not have any jurisdiction over its sale.

For the most part, when Akhas become Christians, it is a matter of a fairly sizable social unit making the decision and going into it together. Usually one household will not become Christians; they take a certain amount of abuse by way of criticism and scolding. But this abuse comes not so much because they have accepted a new religion as it does because they have broken up the old stable social and tribal unit. Sometimes, if there is a large enough group of Christians, they can live with non-Christians without too much difficulty, as in the upper Naw haw village.

RELATIONS TO SHANS

Often the Akhas have very good relations with Shans, but many of them have also died at their hands.

In November of 1965, six Akha men from Beu pa pa ya-eu pu were traveling to the Thai border town of Meh Sai. They were formerly from Pa leh and Pa nga in the Loimi area, but now live in the Meung Hai area. They were going to buy things. As they walked along, they met a band of Shan ‘insurgents’ about mid day. The Shans first took their money, then gave it back to them, and wrote a record of how much money each man had. They went on a ways, and then suddenly pointed guns at them, took away their money again, and then tied their arms behind them (na ca pa-eu). They took three men one direction, and three another. They then attacked them with machetes. If the men tried to look see who these Shans were that were attacking them, the Shans would hit them with their machetes as hard as they could. They cut their necks, stomachs, and legs, killing four of them right then. One man from each group feigned death, and lay perfectly still until the Shans left, and then they got their ropes off by rubbing them against the sharp corners of the bamboo sections they had split by stepping on them.

K-28 pointed out that if they had been able to recount their genealogy, then tell the rope to come loose, it would have. Moreover, he said, if they had repeated their genealogy while being struck with the machetes and then called out something frightening, like ‘Tai!’ at the end, the Shans would have become unconscious, and then the Akhas could have run away, since they would have told the ancestors to “look, I have not wronged anyone.”

The two men, who did not realize that any other in their group were still alive at the time, were so weak from loss of blood that they could not walk properly. They had to crawl along. The man who later came to the Kengtung hospital, and who told K-28 and K-29 all about it, said that later that night he heard the Shans come looking for him, when they discovered a missing ‘body’ in each group. The injured Akha man was able to find a hollow tree where he hid that night. It was probably the night of November 28th or 29th.
The next morning the Shans were surrounding that area, but they were playing a record player quite loudly so he crept out of the tree (he still could not walk and worked his way around to the opposite side of where they were expecting him, and made his way to Meung Hai, where there were some soldiers. The soldiers immediately made six Shans carry him to Meung Hpya, where he was put on a lorry to Taichelaik, where Dr. Alfred Meung took care of him, gave him a new set of clothes, and sent him by plane to Kengtung.

The man’s name is Li ma. I wanted to meet him and talk with him, but he was afraid that I might get information back to the insurgents who tried to kill him, and then they would try to kill him or some member of his family.

The bodies of the four men killed in the jungle were not buried. The elders from their village went to look at the bodies and said, “Don’t untie them. Leave them.” K-28b and K-29 felt that it was because they did not know the customs that they did that. If they had ‘purified’ (m shaw-eu) them, they could have been given a good burial from their homes. K-28 especially was mad about this, since one of the dead men was the grandson of his older brother. The men said that even if they did not know the customs for a ‘purification’ ceremony, they could have put a little gold in the mouth of each man, and buried a dog over each of them. In that way there would not have been any ‘calling out of a terrible death’ (sha shi gu-eu), at least.

K-28 and K-29 figured, with me, that there have been over 800 Akhas killed by Shans during this period of insurgency. We could only guess in some cases, so the figure may not be too reliable. “There are no villages in our area without at least one person being killed, and most two or three, and up to five in some villages.” K-28 has had two sons-in law and three other close relatives killed by the Shans, so of course he feels quite strongly.

FEUDS

P-3 told of a village in the Meung Yawng area that had a feud. He learned about it from a friend. As he understood, there had been lots of trouble develop between two families in the village. The rest of the villagers tended to take sides with one or the other family.

Finally it became so bad that they made a division between the two sections of the village. If anyone from one side went to the other side, he was in danger of being killed. According to P-3 it was just like a war.

One day one side attacked the other side, raiding their houses and killing all the men they could. There was finally only one man left, but the other side did not know this. They were exhausted, and many of their men were dead, so they called out, “How many of you are left?”, and the one man called out, “There are eighty of us left”, so the other side quite.

Other Akhas (as K-28 and K-29), upon hearing of this said they had never heard of anything like this happening to them it sounded as if it were a ‘messianic movement’ (a poe seu-eu).
RESIDENCE

The oldest male in the house is the ‘father of the house’ (nym a da). This is usually the grandfather or the father if the grandfather has died. The oldest female in the house is the ‘mother of the house’ (nym sah a ma). This is usually the grandmother or the mother if the grandmother has died.

Even when the male members of the household move into other villages, they must remember these two, and they must ‘bring them first fruits’ (dza daw daw daw sha-eu), even if they have to bring them four or five days journey.

As long as the grandparents are living the grandchildren must ‘take first fruits’ to them first, and then to the parents. When all grandparents and parents have died, then they must take ‘first fruits’ to the ‘elder siblings’ (a yui). Akhas believe that ‘elder siblings’ take the place of the parents when the parents are dead.

For the ‘first fruits’ they give some of all they plant, including: tobacco, paddy, greens, melons, gourds, etc. If they get something in the jungle in large quantities (mushrooms, fruit) they must take some back to the father and mother of the house, or the ‘elder siblings’ (a yui) if all of the former are dead.

When they are living in the same ‘main house’, the ‘father of the house’ must eat before anyone else. If a son eats before the father, his mouth will get all ‘twisted to one side’ (k’a meh yaw yaw –i-eu). K-28 told of Tu gaw who had this happen to him, because he ate before his father once.

Theoretically a man does not move out of his father’s house until his wife has come of age to do the ‘postmenopause ceremony’ (ya yeh m-eu). “But if the men are big-headed they may want to move out when they are just 25 years old.” From what I have obtained and also heard from Akhas, I would judge the average age when the men leave their family home is about 40 years of age.

I have heard of young men being driven out of the family home by their fathers, but the Akha elders frown on this. They feel that even if a father and son argue all the time, they must not separate. As long as the sons are with the father, they must sleep in their small houses with their wives. When the father dies, the oldest son automatically starts sleeping in the ‘main house’ and becomes the ‘father of the household’. The younger brothers continue to live there but still use the small houses for sleeping. If the younger brother goes move out, then the older brother must give some of the ‘ancestor altar’ (a poe paw law) to him (nym dah dah bi bi –eu). What he actually gives is two cups of ‘fermented rice’ (ji ba a si), and a bamboo straw (ji teu) with which to suck up the liquor from the ‘cups’, or small bamboo actions, that hold the fermented rice. They have several of these with each ancestor shrine. K-28 has three of these containers of fermented rice he made when he still had his ancestor altar. This is so that if he ever wants to make an ancestor altar again he can use these for the basis of it. I feel he almost considers them an ‘ancestor altar’ now.
A partial indication of something of their feeling of sacredness surrounding the opening of these ‘fermented rice’ containers is the fact that when they are opened, the people of that house must refrain from sexual intercourse for three nights. This is a restriction that is placed on them by one of their ‘proverbs’ (daw da). When I questioned one man about this, he felt that the spirits would certainly afflict them if this taboo were broken. They have a simulate taboo for the period when they make ‘yeast’ (deh tse), he added.

HOUSEHOLD

The members of the household are considered to be all those member of the extended family who are ‘under’ a single ancestor altar. This includes adopted children, and also the ‘servant-slaves’ (za k’a). These latter are children of extremely poor people who farm their children out to others because their families do not have enough to eat. The children have to work for the family supporting them. They also take part in the ancestor offering (a poe law-eu) of that house, rather than going back to their own parent’s home for the offering. These ‘servant-slaves’ include Lahu, Wa, Shan, Palaung, and Chinese children, as well as Akha. Akhas only consider them to be ‘servant-slaves’ up to the time they marry.

The locus of authority in the household resides with the ‘father of the house’. He controls the economic aspects of the household, as well as everything related to discipline, relations to other villagers, and important decisions. He rules on all disputes, and his word is final. The females of the household must not strike any of the children, but if the ‘father of the household’ feels he should strike them, he may. If the fellow villagers feel he does it too hard, or too often, they may rebuke him somewhat. I have also heard of the villagers bringing a case against the ‘mother of the household’ for beating her children.

If the husband (or ‘father of the household’) beats his wife too severely, she can go and report this to her ‘male relatives’ (a mah a da) or the headman of the village in which she is living. Her family can bring a case against the husband for this, but I believe that in actual practice it is more likely that she will ‘run off’. That is, she will divorce her husband by leaving him.

POLYGAMY

The Akhas have a legend about a man who had two wives. He went into a cave once, and there was a rockslide at the mouth of the cave. He called to the older wife to roll away the rocks. She tried, but could not roll them away. He called the younger wife, and she rolled the stones away so that her husband could come out. “And that is the reason men love the younger wives best.”

Often the reason for marrying a second wife is that the first one is unable to produce sons. Usually the husband will ask permission of his first wife before he takes another. Often she is happy to have the help, and will give her permission. But if she does not want him to marry another wife, she can always run away and find a new husband herself.

I have heard of some men marrying as many as three or four wives, but the Akhas I talked with said it is hard to find that many women who will get along well together. One statement (p-2) was that the average Akha is only supposed to marry up to two women, but the ‘rulers’ can marry up to twelve. When a man marries a second wife, it is customary to give 12.50 old coins (5 ga) to the ‘male relatives’ (a mah a da) of the first wife (hu a mah dza je).
He next takes a big pig to the home of the woman he is to marry, and after killing the pig he cooks the fat. He gives two ribs to the ‘male relatives’ of the wife to be. This is done in a ‘begging’ manner. After that he gives them the money agreed upon, and then ties strings around their wrists. After that he calls the elders of the village and feeds them. This is considered to be a ‘begging blessing’ (gui lah sha – eu) ceremony. I believe it is to help the elders be willing for the man to marry a second wife while he still has a first. When I asked if the man could remain in the village even if he had not performed this ceremony, the answer was that he could, “but he would not be following customs”. This ceremony is followed with a regular wedding ceremony, which is the same as for when they marry the first time.

ADOPTION

Their reasons for adopting children are usually either to have a male son when they die to hand on their ancestor altar (paw law bi lo), or to have workers in the fields – or both. If a person already has several children and he adopts more children, K-28 feels that he just wants a ‘servant-slave’ (za k’a). When they adopt a child they change the name to one of their ‘ancestral’ names, provided the parents or relatives of that child have ‘given finally’ (bi tseh) the child to them. They generally call the village priest to come and name the child. Others can do it, but there is more ‘lucky-blessing’ (gui lah) when the village priest does it, they feel.

They kill a chicken for the feast – as a minimum. For those better off they kill a big. After the feast the village priest, or whatever elder the parents have chosen, give the name to the child that the adopting parents wish. It will be an ‘overlapping’ name, in that the first part will be the same as the last part of the father’s name.

Usually there is no payment involved when they adopt children in spite of the term ‘zea cu-eu’ (buy raise), which is used of adopted children sometimes, although also of ‘servant-slave’. There are some cases when the person wanting a child must pay up some debts incurred by the parents before they died. This was true in the case of the three children Thra Po Htun adopted, since their parents had incurred large debts due to twins having been born. He paid these off and adopted the children, one of them being the grandfather of K-30. When they adopt younger children (ci cu-eu), it is usually so they can carry on the family line. When they adopt those who are older (cu geu –eu), roughly 13 years of age and older, it is more often to have workers in the fields.

An adopted child cannot marry anyone in that family if he or she is truly adopted and the name has been changed. If the name has not been changed, and the person has only been living in the household for a relatively short period of time, marriage can be arranged – but only as long as it is held in the home of the ‘father’. This means that the girl involved must go stay in the house of a relative or friend for a night or two, and then the son will go get her.

When K-28 was a boy, his father lent money to a man. The man and his wife later died, and his thirteen year old son and fifteen year old daughter came to live with K-28’s family. The father more or less adopted them, although he did not give them his name. The boy called the father ‘grandfather’ (a baw). About a year later the girl got married. Later when the father died, the boy did not help with the expenses, since he was not really considered as adopted, but he did help out with the work that was involved. K-28 felt that he could not have married that girl, even though she was of another clan.
INTERRELATIONSHIPS

Grandparents can scold and teach the grandchildren, and even ‘strike’ (di) them if needs be. If anyone outside of the family, however, were to strike the child, they could have a case (gui o ti -eu) over this. The Grandparents usually stay home and look after the grandchildren and livestock while the parents go to the fields. Very deep ties often develop between these two generations, especially with the boys and their grandfathers.

When the grandchildren get sick, the grandparents must look after them with medicines etc. Even if the sick child is not their true ‘grandchild’, any child which can call them ‘a baw’, or ‘a pi’ can claim the attention of these elders. On the other hand, the grandchildren must give some of their kill from the hunt to their grandparents, as well as the ‘first fruits’ from their fields or gardens. Also if a person hears that his grandparent is sick, he must take a ‘boiled chicken’ (ya ci maw pu), a live pig, lots of ‘rice balls’ (ja leh), and lots of eggs. If he hears of someone in the ‘a zaw’ relationships that is sick, he must treat him as his own father. Or if he hears of a ‘maternal uncle’ (a g’oe) who is sick, he treats him as he would his own mother. In any of these cases, Akhas feel that if the person does not go and do what he can, he ‘has sin on him’ (ba na la -eu).

The father of a girl, when she gets married, cannot force his son-in-law to do anything. However, often before he lets his daughter marry that young man, he will ask the young man to ‘feed’ him (the father-in-law) until he dies. The boy will always say yes, but often he does not keep his promise. The mother-in-law can tell the daughter –in-law what to do, but sometimes she will do it and sometimes she will not. No matter what, the mother-in-law cannot beat the wife – only the husband is allowed to do that. If the girl continues to disregard what the mother-in-law says the mother-in-law may urge her son to divorce (k’o) the girl.

Akha men are not ‘supposed’ to marry two women who are sisters but “we see it done sometimes”. They say that the Chinese and Lisus have Levirate marriages, but it is not ‘proper (ma sheu km) for us Akhas to do that.

ARTIFICIAL KIN RELATIONSHIPS

Two men will sometime make a promise (sa ja dza –eu) to each other that they will always be ‘siblings’, (a yui a nyi) and perform a ceremony (la ma gu shi daw –eu), to seal the bargain. K-28 was forced to do this once with a Shan insurgent. He had to promise to remain faithful to the Shans and never join the Burmese. He believes, however, that the Shans were the ones that broke it when they later tied him up and tried to beat him to death.

K-29’s older brother went through this ceremony with five other men about 1942. They were going out to trade opium, and wanted to make sure that they would not cheat each other. They promised each other that if anyone shot at one of them, they would all stand and fight, and not run away. “If we live, we live together. If we die, we die together.” For the ceremony, they took a large dish, and each of the men entering into this ‘sibling’ relationship place three grains of rice init. Then each put in a little water, a little tea-ginger combination, and a little liquor. They next killed a rooster by cutting its throat. They let the blood drip into the dish. Then the each stuck a needle into their ‘thumbs’ (thus the ‘la ma’ in the name of the ceremony), and let the blood drop into the dish. The oldest one there stirred it all up. Then he lifted it up, and they all ‘bowed before it’ (u du ah –eu). At that point they said a great deal about, “whoever breaks this, let him die,” and that type of thing.
Before drinking it, they pledged each other that down to their grandchildren they would be faithful in caring for each other in time of need and death, would look after each other’s children if one should die before the other, would not lie to each other, would not bring any court cases against each other, etc. Then they drank it.

K-28 said that when the Shans made his drink this concoction, they made him drink a whole bottle, and he later vomited it all up. The Shans said, “That is because your heart is not good”. After two people or groups have done this, Akhas consider them to be closer than actual relations.
KINSHIP TERMINOLOGY

Major factors which determine kinship terminology are: the sex of the speakers, whether one is older or younger than the other, and whether or not they are in the same ‘sub-clan’ (pa) or not.

The Akhas seem to differ a fair amount among themselves on terms, especially concerning the more remote relationships, just as we would tend to get confused about whether one was a first cousin once removed, or a second cousin. Secondly, they often use the same term for similar relationships over two generations. For example, I would call my fathers’ sisters’ children and my sister’s children by the same terms, ‘za oe za ma’.

Following is an alphabetical list of kinship terms. Following the term (v) stands for vocative, ® for referential, and (v.r) indicates that the term is used both in vocative and referential. Following the definition in parenthesis is the reciprocal term.

a do (or) bu do (v.r) both male and female call their older brother this (rec. a nyi).

a baw (v.r) generic term for old man, more specific for what a male or female would call grandfather, although a more specific term would be a da maw.

Also, anyone that a man can call ‘oe pa oe ma’ (as his wife’s older brother’s grandchildren) would call him a baw (rec oe pa oe oe ma)

a bu (v.r) what a male calls own daughter (rec a da a ma)

a cah (v.r) what a male or female speaker calls mother’s sisters children, whether male or female (rec. a cah)

a ceh (v.r) what male or female call their brother’s daughters (rec a ui for both male and female).

a da what male or female speaker calls father, and what wife calls husband’s father (rec. for father a li a bu. rec. for husband’s father – a tsu (v), kui ma (r )

a du (v.r) what male and female will call brother’s sons (rec a zaw- both male and female).

a g’oe (v.r) what male or female will call mother’s brother (older or younger), and mother’s brother’s sons (rec. za oe za ma).

a k’o (v.r) what male or female will call father’s sister (rec. a du boy a ceh- girl).

a li (v.r) what male or female calls own son (rec. a da a ma).

a ma (v.r) what male or female will call mother, and wife will call husband’s mother (rec. for mother- a li a bu, rec. for husband’s mother – a tsu (v), kui ma (r )

a maw (v.r) what male will call his wife’s mother and father (this seems to be preferred in Thailand and Meung Hsat other areas of this state prefer ‘tsaw maw’, (rec- a za).
a mui (v.r) what male and female speaker call father’s younger brother’s wife, mother’s brother’s wife, mother’s brother’s daughter, mother’s younger sister and her husband. Male also calls younger brother’s wife this. Female calls husband’s younger brother’s wife this. (rec. a ui, both m. & f. a ui considered older).

a nm (or) a yeh ( I am not sure about v. & r.) what girls whose father’s are brothers call each other (rec. a nm, or, a yeh).

a nyi (v.r) what male or female call younger brother, and younger sister’s husband. Female also calls younger sister this, and husband’s younger brother. Female calls husbands younger sister and husband this, male calls younger sister’s husband this. Male or female calls spouse’s brother’s children this, except wife calls husbands older brother’s daughter-in-law ‘a tsu’ (rec. bu do, or a do – for the most part. Sometimes a yui.

a pi (v.r) generic name for old woman, more specific for what male or female calls grandmother (although a more specific term would be ‘a ma maw’). Also anyone that a woman can call ‘oe pa pe ma’ would call her ‘a pi’ (rec. oe pa pe ma).

a poe (v.r) male or female call great-grandfather this (except in the Meung Yawng area where it means grandfather) (rec oe leh).

a shah (v.r) what male or female call father’s sister’s husband, what male or female call older sister’s husband, and what male or female will call husband’s older sister’s husband (rec. oe k’a whether male or female).

a tsu (v) male or female calls son’s wife (rec. a da a ma). Also male or female will call older brother’s wife this (both v.r), and a female will call husband’s older brother’s daughter-in-law this. (rec. for older brother’s wife a nyi).

a ui (v.r) what male or female will call father’s older brother and older brother’s wife, and mother’s older sister and her husband. A wife calls husband’s older brother and his wife this (rec a ,ui).

a yeh (see a nm).

a yui (r. for older brother, v.r for others ) a generic term for an older sibling. More specifically, either male or female will call an older brother this referentially (as well as ‘bu do’ and ‘a do), females ( and sometimes males) will call an older sister this, and male will call wife’s older brother this (rec a nyi).

a za (v.r) what a male or female will call daughter’s husband (rec. a maw).

a zaw (v.r) what male speaker calls father’s younger brother (his wife will call him the same thing) rec a du).

baw gaw (see tsui, yeh)

bu do (see a do)
ci ma (v.r) what male calls his wife’s younger sister, and his wife’s younger brother’s wife (rec. a shah). Most use ‘nyi ma’.

dm ma (r ) how a male refers to his sisters (rec. a mah a da).

meh nm (r I think) what a male calls his brothers and hid father’s brother’s children (usually the sons). it is also sometimes used as a general term for all male and female siblings and father’s brother’s children. they are all in the same sub-clan (pa). (rec. meh nm).

nyi ma (v.r) what female calls younger brother’s wife, and a male calls wife’s younger brother’s wife, and wife’s younger sister (although some dialects use ci ma for these last two). (rec. a shah).

oe k’a (v.r) a male will call his wife’s younger brother this (rec. a shah)

oe za (v) the term men call each other when their children marry (rec. oe za).

oe leh (v.r) what male or female will call all great grandchildren (rec. a poe – for both male and female).

oe ma (v.r) what male or female will call their granddaughter, also what a female will call her husband’s older and maybe younger brother’s granddaughters. Some have said that a male would also call his wife’s older brother’s granddaughters this, but others object. (rec. a baw, a pi male and female).

oe nm (v.r) what male or female will call all great-great grandchildren (some dialects use leh hm pa). (rec. a poe).

oe nm leh (v.r) what male or female will call great-great-great grandchildren (some dialects, oe nm oe leh rec. don’t have).

oe pa (v.r) what male or female will call their grandson, also what a female will call her husband’s older (and maybe younger too), brother’s grandsons. (rec. a baw, a pi male and female).

poe pi general term for great-grandmother, but not many use anymore (rec. oe leh).

tsaw maw (see a maw)

tsui yeh (v) what boys call each other whose fathers are brothers (rec. tsui yeh, or, baw gaw).

za ma (v.r) what male or female will call father’s sister’s daughter, sister’s daughter, and spouses sister’s daughter (the term for sons in this category is za oe) (rec. a g’oe).

za oe (v.r) what male or female will call father’s sister’s son, sister’s son, and spouses sister’s son (rec. a g’oe).
There is a general term that is a referential term for all of a man’s male relatives on his father’s side who are older than he is, but discounting his own brothers. The term is ‘ta tsui’. A term that is used in practically the same way is ‘a yui a zaw’.

There are also certain relationships where they will sometimes say, ‘We would just say the person’s name for this’. This may sometimes indicate that they either do not know what the proper term for that relationship is, or that it is far enough off and complicated enough that they do not bother to use it. On the other hand, it should be indicated that in the closer relationships they will usually use the kin term in preference to the person’s name - both vocative and referential.

For example, often when they see a relative in the distance they will say’ There is my ‘a shah’. Then while speaking to him they will call him ‘a shah’ as well.

KIN RELATIONSHIPS

There are certain people who are in an ‘embarrassed relationship’ (sha daw-eu) to one another. This means they will not talk about certain things to that person, or even in that person’s presence. Anything that has to do with courting as singing love songs, even the word ‘flowers’- since it is used so much in courting), getting married, getting divorce, making love, committing adultery, and according to some at least, anything about urination, defecation or farting. Some hold these last terms do not reflect taboo subjects in the ‘embarrassed relationship’, but just impolite conversation.

These relationships occur between sexes. The mail kin relationships that are affected are: daughter to father, son to mother, son-in-law to mother-in-law, daughter-in-law to father-in-law, most a ui, a mui relationships (when the speaker is male), and I believe all ‘a ui a zaw’ relationships (when the speaker is female). A male is not in this relationships with his younger brother’s wife, however, even though she is his ‘a mui’. The fact that she is younger seems to be the main reason it does not constitute an ‘embarrassed relationship’.

Others who are in this type of relationship are: a person to the grandparent of the opposite sex, a male to his older brother’s wife and to his older sister, a female to her older brother, and to her husband’s older brother.

This relationship is not always reciprocal. For example, a male can say embarrassing things to his older brother’s daughter, but she must not say such things to him or in front of him. the same with a man’s older sister’s daughter.

This does not mean however that people in this relation can never communicate their thoughts concerning marriage, divorce, etc. But they cannot do so directly. If a mother thinks that one of her sons ought to get a divorce from his present wife, she will tell a sister-in-law, who will tell either her husband, or the boy himself, if she is not in an embarrassing relationship to him. The father also will send word through someone else to his daughter, ‘If you marry that man I’ll kill you’. The father would not actually kill his daughter, they hasten to say- ‘I just said that to frighten her’. Or he will send a warning to his daughter something like, ‘You won’t have anything to eat if you marry that good-for-nothing’. Such messages sent by g-betweens often create some very real tensions within the household.
The clan (a jeu, a jeu, a ca, a jeu, a keu, a keu), is very important to an Akha. Whenever they meet another Akha that they do not know, they will ask him first what clan he is from. If they happen to be from the same clan, they compare genealogies until they find the last common ancestor.

They must have at least three clans to be able to have an Akha village. Many larger villages have many more than this, of course, but the minimum number is at least one representative from three clans. One reason for this is that when they have important ceremonies to perform in their village they must have three clans represented.

Sometimes when there are only three clans in a village, and one clan is represented by only one household, that ‘connecting link’ (tsaw tsm) may get big-headed since he feels that the village could not get along without him.

The sub-clan (pa) is also very important to an Akha. Evidently it includes all who are related to a person on his father’s side for seven generations.

There is a ‘head of the sub-clan’ (pa a yui). He must be consulted whenever there is a matter of someone within the sub-clan. They show special respect to the ‘head of the sub-clan’, giving him part of their first fruits.

When two people are removed by more than seven generations, then they are no longer in the same sub-clan, but are non-relative (boe mi si k’a) relationship. A boy and girl who are not in the same sub-clan can marry. When the girl marries the boy, she accepts his sub-clan (pa geu-eu).

If a boy wants to marry a girl from his own sub-clan, the elders will tell him not to. there are a few boys who listen to the elders, but most do not. So the boy goes ahead and starts living with the girl. Then the elders get together and discuss what to do. They must have a ‘splitting of the sub-clan’ (pa tseu tseu-eu or, pa dzeh dzeh-eu) ceremony for this. After this ceremony they are considered in different sub-clans. Later when the children are grown up, they can even marry first paternal cousins, since they are now of different sub-clans.

For the ‘splitting of the sub-clan ceremony, the couple must go to the home of the ‘head of the sub-clan’ (pa a yui), or an important elder in the sub-clan if they cannot go to the head.

The young man will first put a fermented rice container (ji ba ji si) into the dirt in the fireplace. Then he will kill a pig, which he brought, after ceremonially sprinkling it. After the pig has been killed the elders look at the liver (za pi haw-eu), and all say ‘It is very good. There will be lots of children’.

The young man gives a bottle of liquor to the elders to drink, while he and his friends cook the pork. Two ribs are saved for the ‘head of the sub-clan’. In the meantime, his wife has made enough ‘rice balls’ (ja leh) to feed all of the elders that will be called. She also fixes some broken rice (ceh loe) in a dish with a boiled egg on tip of the rice.
A ‘rice table (haw jeh) is placed in front of the ‘head of the sub-clan’. They place the following on the table: the cooked ribs (pa k’m), rice balls (ja leh), broken rice with a boiled egg, liquor, and tea.

Then the man who is breaking from the sub-clan (pa tseu tseu-eu), takes some of the meat with both hands, next a little of the rice balls, and then a little broken rice, and puts them, all at one time, into the outstretched, cupped hands of the ‘head of the sub-clan’. He accepts them and eats (pa k’m dza-eu) them in the same way he would ancestor-offering food (a poe law dza).

Next he hands a dish with liquor in it the ‘head of the sub-clan’, who takes it in both hands, and drinks a little. The same is done with the cup having tae in it. Each handles these items with both hands, the same as performing the ancestor offerings.

Then the village priest comes and eats a little and drinks a little of the things there. He does not take any of the meat, however. After he is finished, the other elders come and do the same as the village priest. After they have finished doing this, they are fed a poor curry and rice meal.

This above is done in the morning. Then in the afternoon, they have the wedding. They have to kill another pig for this.

Akhas believe that if a couple from the same sub-clan get married without having the above ceremony, they will have either ‘dumb and stupid’ children (a dzaw a gah) children or grandchildren. They believe that if the couple does not have the ceremony, they have sin resting on them (ba na-eu). They will also have short lives (zi ma baw). I have heard Akhas say that sickness would plague them, and tigers would kill them.

There is also a means whereby a person can join another sub-clan (pa daw daw-eu). This usually happens when a boy is angry with his father, or a father does not like the girl he is going to marry. The boy will get fermented rice from a person who is not his relative. This may be a village priest, or someone else that he knows, and that takes pity on him. It also happens when a person has to flee from one area to another.

For example, K-28 told of a man who in 1958 fled from China because of Communist oppression. The man was about 32 years old at the time. His wife and children were with him. He did not have a sub-clan (pa) when he reached the village, so he came and asked K-28 to let him join his sub-clan (pa daw daw-eu). He kept his name (Law sa), and his genealogy as before.

K-28 gave him some fermented rice so that he could start his own ancestor altar. In all of the religious aspects of his life, he was in K-28’s sub-clan from that time on. He called K-28 ‘father’ (a da). ‘And this religion (zah) has been good to him. He has lots of pigs and domesticated animals now’.
INFANCY AND CHILDHOOD

NURSING
On the day of an infant’s birth, the husband prepares an egg for the mother. This is to help start the milk flowing. The mother also massages her breast to help start the milk flowing.

The colostrum (a cəw ɣah) is squeezed out and discarded (nyeh dzeh-eu) by the mothers.

When the milk begins to flow, the mother will first put a dab of boiled egg on the lips of the infant before she actually starts to nurse it.

Whenever the infant is hungry, the mother will give him her breast. ‘Only a crazy person, or one who wants to leave her husband, would deny the breast to her infant’.

The nursing mother will be careful of her diet all the time she is nursing her baby. She will avoid some things, such as eating too much chili, since this ‘makes tears run down the infants face’.

During the first five months of the infant’s life, the mother must always must always take a little food from the dish she is going to be about to eat. , and while putting it on the infant’s lips she says, ‘Mother is going to eat, son (daughter)’. (A ma haw dza ma li-o, bu-o). Only then will she eat. if she did not do this, ‘God could not bear the sight’ (ma haw nah-a). One informant said they do this until the child is one year old.

There are certain types of behavior that are called for to insure the proper flow of milk. For example, if a person should walk between the mother and a nursing child, then the milk would no longer flow. So both the nursing mother- and others- must be careful to see that this does not happen.

Akhas are also very strict about a mother turning her back on her child during the night. ‘God made it that way’. If she should do that, the next morning she would have to give a boiled egg to the child, and tie a string around its wrist. I believe this may go back to the myth about when Tah pah died and they decided whose mother she was by the way she turned. (Vol 1).

Some say that when a mother cannot nurse her child, she will ask some of the other women in the village to help her, but they hate to do this. K-29 strongly objects to the thought of doing that however. He told how he had raised two of his girls by chewing rice and feeding to them that way.

A very few of them may use milk to feed the infants, or to supplement the mother’s milk when it is not enough. But the Akhas say, ‘WE pity the calf’. They may be giving part of the story when they say that, but I believe they do not like milk , and rather look down on using cow’s milk for nursing infants. However, there are those now who buy condensed milk and give it to their children if their milk is not sufficient. They nurse their children for at least one year, many as long as two or three years.
WEANING
If the mother becomes pregnant, she will no longer nurse her child. ‘It would give the child a stomach ache if she nursed it.’ When the child is about one year old, they do something so that the child will not be thirsty for his mother’s milk. While she is gone to work in the fields in the daytime. The mother will take a banana leaf, put cooked rice and a boiled egg into it, and leave it with the child while she says, ‘Don’t get thirsty for milk, mother won’t come back for that’. (A coe ta meh la a ma ma g’o la-a k’oe-a). From this time on, it is alright if the mother turns over at night with her back to the child. She will not have to feed him an egg in the morning.

To help wean the child, they often put chili, or something very bitter on the nipple. After four or five days the child is weaned.

If the child continues to nurse for along time, the siblings of that child will often say, ‘aren’t you embarrassed? How can you stand to keep doing it at your age?’

BATHING
After the first bath (Vol 2), which is given by the ‘old lady’ (a pi) in charge of the birth, the mother bathes the child. For five months she will bath the child twice a day. At the end of the five months period (ba geu nah jaw, or, ma gui nah jaw) which is an important milestone in the baby’s and mothers lives, she will bath the baby once a day, until such time as it can ‘play and get around on its own’. They believe that once the infant gets large enough to play around, it does no good to wash them, since they just get dirty in the dust and dirt.

EXCESSIVE CRYING
When the infant cries a lot, they sometimes change its name, in the belief that the child is not happy with that name. Sometimes they believe the child is uncomfortable, so they give him a bath.

But if there is excessive crying for a period of time, they will bury three cowrie shells (hu si) under the place where the child’s bed is. If the child continues to cry they will kill and cook a chicken, and ‘feed’ him a little from the ‘five pieces’ (one from the liver, one from the thigh, and three from the breast). They actually just rub it on his lips.

If this still does not work, they must have a ceremony for the house spirit (dzah mi ca-eu). For this they will have a shaman (nyi pa) come ‘look’ (haw-eu). She will see whether dzah mi wants to eat chicken or pork. The parents will kill whichever animal dzah mi indicates. They kill the animal under the house. They cook and eat it there as well, along with the village elders. The mother and infant do not eat any of this. Before they eat the curry feats, however, they fix up a winnowing try with the following ‘dishes’: tea, liquor, ‘holy rice’, onions, water, rice (uncooked), an egg, broken rice, and three ‘rice balls’ (ja leh). Then the village priest will repeat spirit incantations (dzah mi ca neh-eu) for the child. This is designed to stop the ‘affliction’ of the child that the house spirit is causing. The same type of incantations (to-eu) will be recited anytime while the child is growing up when they feel the house spirit is ‘afflicting’ the child (gu la-eu).

After they have made the offering, and after they have eaten the feats, they go back up into the house, and tie a string around the wrist of the infant, and after that another string around the wrist of the mother.
GENERAL CARE
There are general taboos they have regarding infants, which form part of their ‘care’. For example, they will never say about an infant, ‘His face is not that good’. If they said that, God would hear it, and he ‘would take the child back’ – that is, the child would die.

When the mother first carries the baby to another house, she will give it a little salt and some money or silver ornament, so he won’t cry. The ornament will be sewn on some part of the infant’s clothing. Until a child is five months old, he must not wear any new clothes, but only old ones. I am not sure why they do this. If they use clothes for a child from one that died they must turn them inside out.

As the children get old enough to begin talking, they will teach them to say, ‘ma ma ma, da da da’ (mother, father). This is usually around one year. They say that some infants can walk then. The fathers and mothers both play with the children a great deal during this time.

When the child is three years old, they shave off the child’s hair (u du jeh-eu). With the boys, they leave the top knot, which must not be shaved off. But with the girls, they shave all the hair off. When they are finished, they give the child a boiled egg (u du jeh-eu ya u pu –eu).

CHILDREN’S GAMES AND PLAY
When small children play, the boys and girls sometimes play together, although often they separate when playing their own types of games. One game they sometimes play together is the ‘chicken thigh game’, (ya ci baw du the ni g’a-eu). For this game, they join hands in a circle. There is one person outside the circle with the ‘chicken thigh’, which is a stick. The person who is ‘it’, and starts on the inside of the circle, wants to get the ‘chicken thigh’. The circle helps the one with the ‘chicken thigh’ by trying to keep ‘it’ in the circle, or if the positions later reverse, they will try to protect the one with the ‘chicken thigh’ from being caught.

As they get larger, the girls tend to play things that are more typical of their female role. For example, they will carry cucumbers on their backs with a carrying cloth, as if they were their babies. They also enjoy playing with large black seeds (a beu). They stand some of them up, and the go back about six to eight feet from them, and ‘shoot’ (beu) their seeds at these trying to knock them down.

The boys play more active games, such as tug-of war, ‘steal the bacon’, and such group games. Their version of ‘steal the bacon’ is as follows: one person (it) holds a stick under his foot, and tries to keep the others from taking it. They can push and shove him, but he can strike them. If they get the stick three times, he takes the stick into the jungle, and hides it on his body. The others try to find it. If they find it, he has to be ‘it’ again.

There is a variation of the above, called ‘tsa gm tsaw-eu’, where the person who is ‘it’ holds onto a small stick the center of four sticks that are laid out like a square. Then the other boys try to take the sticks without the one who is ‘it’ kicking them. He can only kick them below the knee. If they get all of them before he can kick anyone, they pour dirt cloth or sand on his head, and he is it again. If he kicks someone, that person is it.

Another game is ‘tiger and bear’ (k’a la k’a hm geu-eu). One person is the ‘tiger’ (or bear), and the others are either chickens or pigs. The chickens (or pigs) form into a line, and the tiger (or bear), tries to touch the last one in the line.
They sometimes take two long bamboos, and put them parallel on the ground. Then with one boy at one end, and another boy at the other, they slap them together, while one or more boys jump in and out (bah jaw deh-eu). They increase the tempo as they go, and try to catch a boy’s foot between the bamboos. If they do, he slaps the bamboos together, while the one who ‘caught’ him takes his place.

They often play tag (a bui bui gui ni g’a-eu). In order to decide who will be ‘it’, they often do the following (a g’oe g’oe gui-eu). While one person holds his hands out, palm down, the others who are going to play all hold their right finger below, but touching his palm. Then he repeats the rhyme they use for this. When he is finished he grabs a finger. The one he grabs is ‘it’. The rhymes they use are often different, but they usually start out: ‘A bui bui…’

The ones who are not ‘it’ run to hide, while ‘it’ covers his face. He calls out, ‘Have you all hidden?’ If they have, they call out ‘U’ in a falsetto, which they believe makes it harder for the one who is it to place. If they are not ready of course, they call out that they are not ready, and he gives them more time.

The boys love to spin tops, and will do it through most of the year. The older youth and young married men will join them in a very energetic top spinning contests during the new year festival (cah ti-eu, cah bi-eu).

Sometimes boys make some dish-shaped objects out of clay, spit in them, and then throw them on the ground real hard. If they do it right, it makes a loud noise.

There are also certain group games they play. In one, (a beu tseh-eu), the boys divide into two groups with an even number of players in each group. Then they try to touch (the-eu) either the head or from the knee down of someone on the other side. When a person is so touched, he must drop out until that round is over. If he is tired and just wants to rest for a moment, he can call out ‘aw-a’ (the call of the crow), and then he cannot be tagged.

When all have been caught on one side, the ‘captain’ (a yui) of the winning side takes a handful of dirt and pours it on the head of the ‘captain’ of the losing side.

In another game (meu da g’aw g’eu-eu) they plat that has two sides, they draw a line down the middle. Then they try to pull their opponents over the line. Once a person has been pulled over the line, he is ‘dead’ (shi ta-eu), and goes out of the game. The winning side can pour dirt over the head of the captain of the losing side. There are other variations of the game (aw-a the-eu), but it is played with basically the same rules.
SEX

LOVE MAGIC
Akhas talk quite a bit about casting a spell on something so that the one who eats it or wears it will fall madly in love with the one who casts the spell (ba ya to-eu). But in reality I do not believe they actually do it anymore.

If a young man is greatly infatuated with a girl, but she is not interested in him, he can either cast a love spell himself, or have someone else do it, usually a Shan. Often they use beeswax for this. After they have ‘repeated spirit incantations’ (to-eu) over the beeswax, the boy will rub a little of it on the girl’s clothing, or in her hair, but without her knowing about it. Then she will fall madly in love with him. The Akhas say that she will not be able to be out of sight of the boy.

They can use tobacco and betel over which to repeat the incantations. Later, when the person smokes that tobacco or chews the betel, she will fall in love with the person who gave the love spell to it.

Sometimes they put a small piece of the kind of clay they eat in a blanket and repeat the incantation. This may go back to the legend of the brother and sister that fell madly in love with each other after the girl inadvertently ate some clay in the brother’s blanket that had had a ‘love spell’ cast on it.

The innocent party, if she or her learns that a ‘love spell’ has been cast on something of theirs, can go to an elder and have the spell broken. This will pull them out of the clutches of the scheming person who ‘repeated spirit incantations’.

Akhas frown on this sort of thing very much. They say that if the boy and girl do get married as a result of a ‘love spell’ it will not be a ‘luck-blessed’ (gui lah ma hui-a marriage. They believe that the girl will run home not long after the marriage. Or, even if she does not do that, there will be very few boys born to such a marriage (if any), and it will be generally an unhappy marriage. One informant said that their lives would be shortened as well.

When I asked about how often this has occurred in specific villages, I could not find one where the elders had known of its happening. Some did say that there were Shans about who claimed to be good at this, and would perform the ‘love magic’ for anywhere from five to eight old coins.

There is another type of ‘love spell’ that can be cast without using ‘spirit incantations’ (to-eu). They call this ‘ba ya ya-eu’.

INITIATION OF SEXUAL INTERCOURSE
When a boy gets to be nine or ten years old, his father or older brothers will encourage him to start sleeping with girls. If he does not sleep with girls he will not ‘grow up’. At the same time, mothers encourage their daughters not to sleep with boys yet, but as the Akhas admit, this does not do much good. For it is also believed that if girls do sleep not with boys, they will not develop, as they should.

If an adult is very small, about the size of an eleven or twelve year old, they call them ‘leh ti’, which is actually a term of derision. They believe they have not grown up since they have never slept with the opposite sex.
After either a boy or a girl has had successful coitus with the opposite sex, they are said to have ‘jaw k’aw pi-eu’, and from then on they will really develop and get big. A specific term (taboo in polite conversation) used for the boys when they have had successful coitus is ‘za k’a heu-eu). I wondered at first if this could be a general term for reaching puberty, but I believe puberty has little or nothing to do with it, as far as they are concerned. The first successful coitus is the thing to them. For the girls they say ‘a tah tah-eu’ (to be opened), also an impolite term.

K-28 felt very strongly that only after a girl has been opened up can she start her menstrual periods, and I have heard others say this too. Most of them believe it will around 12 months after the ‘opening up’ that the menstrual periods will start. When I showed amazement over this, K-28 immediately wanted to take me to his village where he could ask the women. Every one of them could vouch for the fact that their periods started about one year after having been ‘opened’ he said- and I could not negate that.

TABOOS CONCERNING SEXUAL INTERCOURSE
It is extremely important that they do not have sexual intercourse when they are supposed to have ‘ceremonial abstinence’ (lah-eu) in preparation for a ceremony or important event, such as a funeral. This is for those who are married that is. On the afternoon of night they are to refrain from intercourse, the village priest (dzoe ma) will ‘call out’ (nah gu gu-eu) from his uncovered porch. He will mention not spinning thread, not combing one’s hair, and being careful of one’s arms and legs’. The adults know that this latter means refraining from intercourse.

At no time must they have intercourse in a paddy field as it would wrong the ‘spirit owner’ (yaw sah) of the paddy. Since there is a field hut (ya cm) in the paddy field, this is a logical place to go for those who want to have intercourse. But if it is found out that a couple has had intercourse there, they must offer a pig at the ‘spirit field hut’ (k’m pi). Of course, they go on to say that if no one knows that a couple had intercourse there, then the spirits will not know either, and no special offering will need to be made. There must not be intercourse in the paddy house or on the porch of the paddy house, since this wrongs the ‘spirit owner’ of the paddy, and then that family will not have enough to eat. They fine people for doing this- if they find out about it.

It is felt that a man and his wife must not have intercourse on the night before he goes hunting. Also, during the rice planting and harvesting periods they refrain from it. When a person in the village dies, they are not supposed to sleep together until the second night after that person has been buried. When a man has been hunting and returns home, he will not sleep with his wife until the next cycle of days.

BAD SIGN
When a boy is courting a girl at night, he often brings up the matter of marriage. After much talk, and sometimes the exchange of gifts, and after the others who have been at the ‘playground’ (deh k’ah) have gone home, they go out into the jungle to sleep together. In the morning, when they wake up, if one of them would have his or her back turned to the other, that is a bad sign and they will not marry. If the girl becomes pregnant from that night’s intercourse, and she cannot find anyone else to marry her, that boy will have to marry her, whether it was a bad sign or not.

Or, if during that night or early the next morning, the couple should see a ‘bad omen’ (daw), they will not get married. They can sleep together after this has happened, but similar to the above, Akhas believe it would be a ‘bad marriage’, since their life-span would be shortened (zi ma baw-a).
IMPOTENCY
In the past, when a couple had been married for some time, and had no children, they sometimes ‘begged for children’ (za sha sha-eu) from the village elders. The elders would look around and find some man who had lots of children. They would have the woman live with him as if she were a second wife, until she became pregnant.

When the child was born, the couple would give the man of the house who sired the child, a new outfit of clothes and kill a pig and feast him and the elders. According to K-2 and K-18, the woman in the case would have to obey the decision of the elders. She would not be consulted. K-28 and K-29 felt that the woman had to be willing to sleep with that man. Also, they felt that it was something that had to be done without the rest of the village knowing about it. They told of one man who had done this. Later, after she had a child, she just wanted to sleep with the child’s father, so her husband had to move to another village.

It is difficult to find any actual cases of this now, I believe it is either dying out, or has died out.

MISCONCEPTION BY OUTSIDERS
The Akhas are both amazed and angry when they talk about the misconceptions Lahus have concerning their sexual activity. The fact that anyone would actually believe the things that Gordon Young wrote in his book on the Hill Tribes of North Thailand concerning an Akha ‘male’ who deflowers all the girls in the village, also makes them amazed and very angry. It is completely foreign to their culture. ‘The spirits would afflict us like anything if we did stupid things like that’.

The ‘male’ that Gordon Young writes about is information he got from the Lahus. He even used the Lahus that live near Akhas do not believe this, but some of them who do not live near the Akhas rather seem to enjoy believing this type of thing and talking about it. It is not true of the Akhas in Thailand, either. The sooner this falsehood can be eradicated from the literature concerning Akhas the better.

The Akhas do get a certain satisfaction in seeing just how stupid the Lahus are to be gullible enough to believe what Akha youngsters say in joking. No doubt the Lahu concept of being deathly afraid of a type of civet cat (bya hi), and singing (a ceu gu-eu) to ‘frighten them away’, got started in this way. Actually, the ‘a ceu gu-eu’ song is a love song between boys and girls in distant mountain fields. Also, Akhas have no fear whatsoever of this type of civet cat. So when they learn that the Lahus actually believe this, they laugh uproariously, and do what they can to keep the Lahus ignorant of the true purpose of this kind of singing.
TRAVEL
Most travel that Akhas engage in is either for trading purposes, or for hunting. Only the men go. As for extended trading trips, they will often make one such trip a year, usually during the dry season, and usually between their new year and their rice planting time. As for extended hunting trips, these will be made more frequently – whenever their work allows them to go.

Those men whose wives are pregnant do not usually travel much, or if they do, they do not go far. When they feel the time for the birth is near, they stay close to their homes.

Before starting out on a long journey, an Akha man will ‘observe ceremonial abstinence’ (lah-eu) for two or three days. The most important feature, perhaps, of this is that he will not sleep with his wife. If he has a dream during this time, which he considers bad, he will not go on the trip.

Before setting out they will often kill a chicken to see what signs there are. First of all they look inside the skull of the chicken, to see if there is a bit of blood just above the opening for the beak. If they see the spot of blood there, some say that they will not start on their trip, since it will be a bad road. Only if it is clear will they start out. K-23 however, said that it is a good sign if they see the blood there. They also examine the tongue of the chicken. If it is in a normal position, that is a good sign. If it is twisted around, that means there will be a lot of arguing on the trip. They also take the thighbone and stick a straw or bamboo strip (a ne) into the holes in the end. Those who know how to do this (ya yoe ka-eu), can tell whether it is wise to go on the trip or not. They say that the Chinese are very good at this, which makes me wonder a bit if perhaps it could be borrowed from them.

Akhas will not start on a trip on certain days (za nah sheh nah) if they are going trading, since those days are not right for travel. They would have a slow trip. Also they would never start out on a day that it was discovered that a tiger or leopard had killed some animal in the village.

Even though the signs were good and they start out, they will turn around if they happen to run across any animals on their trip that frequent hot springs, such as barking deer, jungle fowl, pheasant, samber deer, etc. Of course this restriction is just for those going on a trading trip. Also if they see a snake going from above their path and across it, then down the lower side, that means they will lose on their trading trip. If they see a snake go from the lower side to the upper side of the path though, that means they will have a very good trading trip.

When they travel quite far from home, upon getting up in the morning they will say to their soul, ‘Get up, get up, let’s go’ (Tu-aw, tu-aw, I ka-eu). Then they will shake their blankets, or scratch around a bit in the soil with a stick or their hand. I asked one why they do this. ‘We don’t want to leave our soul behind and have our souls ‘run away’ (la ba ba-ieu).

When traveling they must be careful what they eat. They will not eat anything that has been shot by someone, or anything that has been killed by a wild animal. They will only eat meat from animals that have been butchered properly. When they are home, and not traveling, they can eat the other things too. Also, they do not eat fish at all when traveling.
When they are traveling, especially when trading, if either a crow (aw-a) or a drongo bird (ji g’ a ji yeu) flies around them, or over them back and forth, and keeps coming back, it is sent to tell them, ‘Don’t continue, return’. K-29 told of how he returned to his home when this happened and found one of his daughters had died and been buried. He was sure the bird had been ‘sent’, but by whom is somewhat hazy.

When they walk on their mountain trails, they get used to walking single file. When they come down to Kengtung and walk on broad streets, or across a football field, or what have you, they still persist in walking single file. Usually the leader will be the elder of the group. If there are men and women in the group, the men will walk first.

HUMOR
In their legends and stories, Akhas have many very humorous situations, although the humor is often not understood by those who do not know their culture. Also, there is often play on words. This is illustrated in the story of the young man who when he went courting ‘borrowed’ (nga-eu) lots of silver ornaments from his relatives and friends. When the girl he asked to marry him checked to be sure they were his, he said, ‘They are nga-eu’, which could mean either, ‘They are mine’, or ‘They are borrowed’. She understood him to say, ‘They are mine’, so she married him.

Several Akha men told me how they had fooled a Shan in a village north of Kengtung. The Shan man asked them what the Akha word was for a certain type of tree. The Akha man asked if he had quite a sense of humor, and also wanted to play a joke on the ‘big-headed Shan’, so he said, ‘We call it ‘Let-the-tiger-bite-me’. The Shan man repeated the Akha ‘Let-the-tiger-bite-me’ over and over until he could say it perfectly. The Akhas man praised him for his linguistic skill- without letting on that the Shan was not giving the name of the tree at all, but calling down a terrible curse upon himself.

When the Akha man got home, he told all his friends what he had done, and they all laughed at this beautiful joke. So when they went to that Shan man’s village they made it a point to tell him they had heard that he spoke their language beautifully, and wondered if he still remembered the name of that certain type of tree in Akha. He replied in Akha, ‘Let-the-tiger-bite-me’. He misunderstood their amusement at his reply, taking it as their amazement that a Shan could say something in Akha. When and how the Shan man learned of the joke – or if he ever did – I don’t know. But I know that Akhas in a large area thoroughly enjoyed it.

P-1 loved to tell of an old Akha man he saw sitting by the fireplace when something started to boil over. He had nothing to stir it with, so he yelled to a boy to bring a spoon. But since the child was slow, the old man took his long silver tobacco pipe out of his mouth and began to stir it with that. The memory of that sends P-1 into fits of laughter.

P-1 also told of the time a relative of his (A teu) was extremely ill. The father called a spirit priest (boe maw) to repeat spirit incantations over him. The spirit priest was in the house repeating the incantations for some time, but A teu, who was delirious, kept tossing and turning, and calling out. Finally the spirit priest stopped in disgust and turning to the unconscious man said, ‘Why on earth do you keep moaning and twisting around like this? Here I am knocking my self out speaking to the spirits on your behalf and what do you do? Just moan and groan!’ P-1 got to laughing so hard at this time he had to leave the house.
K-8 felt Akhas laugh at a person who says he is good at something, as in a game, or hunting, and who then does poorly. They will laugh at him mercilessly. Also if someone says something they should not say, they all laugh at him.

BLACKSMITHS
Blacksmiths (ba ji, or in ceremonial language, ci g’a) are considered to be very important in the Akha society. There is a legend that long ago blacksmiths received no pay. But when some men who were not truly blacksmiths started acting as if they were, the true ones left, for they knew that things would get into an awful mess – as they did. So to get the true blacksmiths back, the Akhas had to promise to give them money, and they have been giving ever since.

When someone in the village goes to the blacksmith to have something fixed, he must furnish his own charcoal, and must also help work the bellows (baw baw-eu), as well as help with the ‘hammering’ (the-eu). They also take a token gift (ceh law dah-eu), in which there is some paddy which has been pounded only once (ceh dzeh), an egg, and a 25 pya coin in a dish. This is put near the place where they work. When the job is finished, the blacksmith gets this. If they do not finish that day, the one who brought it takes it back home for the night, and brings it again the next day.

Once a year everyone in the village takes his mattock and goes to work in the blacksmith’s field (la ci la g’a tsheh-eu, or ya g’a tsheh-eu). The blacksmith must kill a pig and feasts the villagers that help him. When a person from another village comes to have work done, the blacksmith can charge him whatever fee he wants. He has no obligation to work for that person. It used to be that they could only work on metal in the ‘cherry blossom month’ (g’eh la – about March). But they do not appear to follow this anymore.

The family of the blacksmith must be very careful, because of the ‘spirit owner’ (yah sah) of the bellows (baw). No one must urinate or defecate near it. Usually, in order that there will be less possibility of wronging the ‘spirit owner’, the bellows is put in a little shed near the edge of the village. During the ‘k’m, shui k’m mi’ ceremony, Akhas make an offering (baw tu-eu) to the bellows, as well as the other tools the blacksmith uses. That is, the anvil, hammers, and tongs. For this they kill a red cock, and ‘feed’ the bellows by dropping a pinch of meat from each section (ti she ti jeh) by the bellows.

There is a ceremony (ci ha da-eu) held every three years. They do it because a blacksmith is ‘powerful’ (k’a) in the Akha religion. For this ceremony, a spirit priest (boe maw) goes to the blacksmith’s house. He repeats spirit incantations (to-eu) in the blacksmith’s house first, after killing two pigs and a ‘pair’ of chickens. Then he goes outside to repeat spirit incantations after killing a pig, a dog, and four chickens.

The theme of the incantations is: Let the blacksmith be healthy. May he and his family have plenty to eat. They can perform this custom before the three years is up if they wish. They often do it when they are not getting as much paddy as they think they should, or there are members of the family constantly getting sick, etc. There may be two blacksmiths in a village. If so, each must perform this ceremony. But before a person can qualify to be called a ‘blacksmith’ he must be able to make a spear, small hand hoe (la ngeu) a machete, ax and other tools. Otherwise he is considered only a ‘blacksmith helper’ (ci za).
LUMBERING
Akhas often come to feel that certain big trees have special powers. They come to realize which trees have this power, because various people over a period of time have noted that this is indeed a ‘special tree’. Also if someone mistreats the tree by hacking at it with a machete, or climbing up and cutting off a branch, that person will be ‘afflicted’ (gu la-eu) by the ‘spirit owner’ (yah sah) of that tree.

Since this is the type of tree that woodcutters especially like to cut down and saw lumber from, I asked if they were not ‘afflicted’, and my informants said no. Spirits never bothered them because the spirits (neh) were afraid of the big metal ‘teeth’ in the saws that were used by the woodcutters.

If a person cuts down a tree and is ‘afflicted’ by the ‘spirit owner’, that person must offer a cock and hen, and also plant a new tree of the very same kind, near the stump of the old one. While planting it, he says’ Look I am repaying you a tree. Don’t afflict me’.

There are some who take a precaution at the time of cutting the tree down. They put a rock on the stump after they have cut the tree down, and they believe this keeps the spirits from afflicting them. They do nothing for small trees.

K-2’s father, A baw A eu, told what some Akhas do when they see a very big and good tree that they want to cut down. They hack a machete into the tree and leave it in there overnight. The next day they come back to look at it. if the machete is still in the tree the way they left it, then they have ‘permission’ from the spirit owner to cut the tree down. But if the machete has fallen to the ground, they do not have permission yet.

So they strike an ax into the tree, and the next day they come back to see if it is still there. If it is in the tree the same way they left it, they can cut the tree down. But if not, they must tie some ‘magic vine’ (meh) around the tree, and the next day come back again.

If the ‘magic vine’ has not been disturbed, then they can cut down the tree. But if it is lying on the ground, or has been changed in some way or other, then they will ‘worship’ (u du tah) the spirit of the tree and say, ’What do you want me to offer you? Do you want chicken? Or pig? Or goat? Etc’. The that night they go home, and whatever they dream about is what the spirit of the tree wants.

So the next day they take the animal they dreamed of to the base of the tree, where they offer it. For the actual offering, they make a platform with steps just like in the altar for their offering to ‘the lords and rulers of land and water’ (see Vol 1).

While dropping some of the feathers, or fur (ca hm) from the offering onto the altar they say, ‘Even as you have requested , here, I offer this to you’.

Then he will boil the offering, take a bit of meat from each section and drop that onto the altar while saying, ‘A moment ago I offered you raw meat. Now here is the cooked meat’.

After this he cuts down the tree. If he has done everything properly, the owner spirit will not afflict him. I should add that some Akhas I talked with have never heard of doing all this.
There does not seem to be any special time that Akha people go out to saw lumber. Almost certainly, however, they will not do it during the paddy planting or harvesting time, nor during any of their ancestor offering times. They generally go out when they need some extra money.

Gathering firewood is done mostly by the women and children. They cut ‘fresh wood’ (mi dza mi jm) especially during March, April, and May before the rains. At other times, they look for dry wood.

Trees must never be cut near the village gate, or tigers will take off the livestock of the villagers. Also, the villagers will get sick. They must also never cut down trees or gather firewood in the vicinity of: the water source, the graveyard, the offering place for the ‘lords and rulers of land and water’.

Although they do not usually cut down trees in marshy areas, it does not seem to be a taboo exactly. They are afraid of spirit affliction if they do. Also, if a branch should go into the mud when they cut a tree down, it would mean that there would be sickness, eye disease, trouble from backaches etc. in that family.

Also they will usually not cut down trees in the sacred grove of the Shans. They are afraid that the Shan’s ‘spirit’ (neh) will afflict them.

Akhas say they must have two days supply of firewood under their house at all times. Part of the reason for this seems to be that they want to be ready in case someone should die, when they could not go out and gather firewood right away. Also, they want the ‘house spirit’ (dzah mi) to have a place where she can hide. I heard from one that if they did not have enough firewood at the house at all times, they would get sick, and not have enough to eat. This had something to do with the ‘house spirit’.

DAILY ROUTINE
The mother and daughters are usually the first to rise in an Akha home. They generally rise about the time of the ‘second cock crow’. Boys rise later, and the men rise last of all.

A daughter, or son, will often start the fire for cooking the morning meal. The mother, sons and daughters will carry water between other tasks. It is often the boy who will be responsible for having the pitch pine split up ready to start fires, and also for seeing that there is enough firewood at the fireplace to keep the fire going nicely.

The girls will pound paddy, help the mother with the cooking of the rice, and do their share of helping in the preparation of cloth, such as ‘shooting’ some cotton for that day's spinning.

Either a son or daughter will get the ‘rice table’ (haw jeh) and set it up for the meal. They will put the ‘rice bowls’ (haw g’aw), a pair of chopsticks (ju da ti dzm) for each member of the family old enough to use them, and spoons (ku tsa) etc. on the ‘rice table’ in preparation for the meal.

If there is meat for the curry, usually the man of the household or boys, take charge of preparing the curry. If there is no meat, then the mother and daughter have that task.
Before the morning medal, after the father gets up, he kind of wanders around the house seeing what needs to be done, or what things need to be repaired. Perhaps he will be getting items ready for those who go to the field that day.

After the morning rice, the father usually sends the children to the field. He will only go a few times a year – just enough to make sure that the work and ceremonies are carried out properly. He will usually stay home and care for the livestock, or perhaps he will prepare the small bamboo strips (a ne) used for so many things around the house. If he knows how to weave baskets or mats he may do that. Simple repairs to tools will also be taken care of. He may make such things as a ‘cotton spindle’ (ya ah), used by the girls and women to spin cotton thread.

Those who go to the field will wrap up rice in leaves and carry this with them in their shoulder bags. They leave these in their field huts while they work. Some time around noon they take a break from work, look for some greens to cook up for curry, and eat their cold rice and greens.

When they are in the field working, it is usually the oldest son who is in charge. His main task, of course, is to carry out what the father has instructed him to do that day.

When the members of the family who have been working in the field get back to their house that night, the father usually has the evening meal prepared for them. If he does not, the children often ‘scold’ him, although usually not in too direct a manner. It is more grumbling than anything.

In families where the man is an opium smoker, the routine is basically the same. However he usually gets up much later, and may not eat the morning meal with the rest of the family before they go to the fields. Also, rather than spend his time finding things around the house to do, he will probably be looking for ways and means of trading articles in the house for opium. He knows the rest of the family will scold him when they get back from the fields, but the craving for opium outweighs all other concerns.

SLEEPING
Akhas have a saying that when it is time to sleep, they must not eat. Akhas are careful where they sleep. They feel that there must be a cover of some kind. They believe that if they sleep outside on the uncovered porch, or other places without a covering, they will become ‘pregnant with a spirit’s child’ (neh a nyi pi lu). This is actually dropsy. Sometimes small children will sleep on the porch, but not grown men, and especially not women and girls, who have to be even more careful of this than the men and boys.

When the father of a household is away from the house, as on a hunting or trading trip, then no one must sleep in his sleeping place. If they did, the father would get sick.

Before they sleep in the jungle, or in their hill fields, they clear their throats three times (eh heh sm te ka-eu). This scares away the spirits. In the jungle, they also strike three trees once each. While striking each tree they say, ‘You be my home. Don’t let bad fortune come, don’t let good fortune end. Watch over me’.
In about the year 1945, K-29’s village burned down. It was at night, about 10 or 11 o’clock when it got started. They did not know how or where the fire started, since they were all asleep. Of 96 households, only 7 did not burn down. And there were only 3 paddy houses left.

The villagers felt that there was a ‘reason’ for this fire. Just 13 days before the fire broke out, a barking deer had run into their village. This was a ‘bad omen’ (daw). They should have had a ritual (daw shu sha le-eu) to prevent the ‘bad omen’ from bringing trouble to their village. This would have been accomplished by putting some silver and broken rice into the mouth of the barking deer, and carrying it outside of the village where they should have said, ‘Fire and flood, don’t chase us. We give you silver. We give you food and drink.’

But since the elders were out planting rice that day, and there were only ‘youngsters’ in the village, they did not know any better and did not perform this ceremony. They simply cut up the meat and eat it before the elders got back. This, they feel, is the reason the fire burnt down most of the village.

Men and women must bathe separately. The main reason for this seems to be as follows. After a couple has had ‘human rejects’ (tsaw caw), as a part of the ‘purification’ ceremony (m shaw-eu, they have to bathe together under a spout made from the stalk of a wild banana tree (nga jeh). Therefore it is not ‘proper’ (dzui k’m) for them to bathe under the same spout, or in the same part of the stream, at any other time. It would cause them to have ‘human rejects’.

When bathing, men will take off all their clothes. Women will take off everything but their headdress (u coe), and skirt (pi di).

Some Akhas (as K-28 and others) say that women may wash their hair. But for the most part in the Loimwe area and on east, they feel it is not ‘proper’ (ma tsi k’m) for a woman to wash her hair. The women also say that it makes it very difficult to comb properly if the by wash it.

Each Akha village has a general fund that is used to pay for various village projects. For example, when insurgents or police come through the village and have to be fed, then money from this fund is then used. The Akhas feel that when Burmese troops come through it is not quite so bad, since they will pay something for their food, although not the full amount. They gave me an idea of how it worked by saying that the Burmese troops would pay three kyats for a chicken that would ordinarily sell for 15 to 18 kyats.

The way they get the bulk of the money for this fund is through fines. For example, while holding the ceremony for the renewal of the village gate (law kah m-eu), if anyone should come into the village, they fine him 25 pyas. Also, if a married man should sleep with a widow, he is fined 45 kyats. Of this 2.50 goes to the village priest. The balance goes into the village fund.
Also, when a girl in the village gets married for the first time, the groom must give one old coin to the elders of the village. They sometimes use a portion of this money to buy tea to drink together, but whatever would be left over would go into the fund.

The village priest, or some other trustworthy person, holds this money. At the end of the year they use it for whatever village expenses they had. If the money is not enough, they figure how much they will take from each villager to complete the amount they need.

Akhas that made the irrigated paddy fields (deh ma, or, deh ya) used to have to pay kyats 3.50 tax for every load (two baskets) of paddy seed they used to plant. But the farmers lied to the cycle officer (sama ti) so that they would not have to pay so much, and he in turn would lie to those in court, and ‘eat the balance’ – at least the Akhas felt he did. Since the Revolutionary Council has been in control, however, under the ‘Burmese Way to Socialism’, the farmers have not had to pay this tax anymore.
INFORMANTS

Since I started my study of the Akha language and culture in Pangwai (about 17 miles south-east of Kentung town) in 1951, my first informants were from that area.

P-1 Za po the one who was my first real informant and ‘language teacher’. He was a very good informant in many ways, although he had a slight tendency to run down certain aspects of the Akha culture, although he was quite ‘proud’ in a good sense) of it too. His father-in-law was an outstanding spirit priest in the area, and his father, though having no official position, was considered to be one of the leading Akha elders in the Naw haw area. The father’s family was originally from the Meung Yawng area.

P-2 A dah was a young man, who with his wife, moved to Pangwai for a period of several months in 1952 to teach my wife and me Akha, and also to help us learn something of the Akha customs. He too later became a Christian. He was not too good an informant, although he gave me interesting insights into what the average ‘younger’ Akha considered important in his culture.

P-3 A baw La bui (literally ‘grandfather Chinese’) is an Akha man from Meun Yawng. The reason for the name is that when he was an infant he was very ill with dysentery. A Chinese medicine man cured him, and after that he was called ‘Chinese’, even though he is fully Akha. He knew many of the old legends and quite a bit about the Akha culture, but he was not an awfully good informant.

P-4 A boe, a young man who is the nephew of P-1, and certainly an Akha mystic. As a boy his grandfather, a leading spirit priest, practically raised him. He is very emotional, but also very good in describing his emotional reactions to various experiences. He was very anxious that I write up the Akha culture properly. He enjoyed making tapes a great deal.

The following informants are the ones I worked with in Kentung, thus the K before their number.

K-1 Sho k’ah, a village priest from a village not far from Kentung, but presently living in Kentung. If he got over the liquor and opium habits he would be a better informant.

K-2 Maw boe, from a village near Loimwe. I knew him well while living in Pangwai, but most of the material about the Akha culture I got from him wax while I was in Kentung. He worked for hours on end to help me get everything down, and get it right. He views the Akha culture from quite an objective viewpoint, even though he is interested in Christianity, and in living in a ‘Christian village’.

K-3 A joe, who came from a village west of Kentung for treatment at the Kentung Christian Hospital early in 1965. He was very pleased to see my interest in Akha, and even invited me to come and be the teacher in his village. He is the headman for eight villages in his area. He is also a spirit priest.
K-4  A tu, from Na ju village, not far from Naw ga Shan village on the road to Meung Yang. He was born in 1928. There are 30 houses in his village. No one grows or smokes opium there, ‘because we are too poor’. On March 7th 1965, he and some villagers were eating some leopard meat when some bone got stuck in A tu’s throat. He had a spirit priest repeat spirit incantations over a cup of water and then drank it, ‘but it didn’t do a bit of good’. So he came to the Christian Hospital, where I met him and interviewed him. He does not know his genealogy. He had a lot of tattooing which he said was to improve his ‘flesh and blood’.

K-5  A mui and two friends from Ho lm village. A mui is the son of the former headman in upper Jaw seu village. When a boy of about 10 years of age, his father and other villagers became Christians, so he does not know too much about Akhas customs from the standpoint of taking part in them. But he is very observant, and interested in talking about things he sees in the non-Christian village where he now lives and works.

K-6  A eu, of Ba ma ju village in the Meung Yawng area. He fled China in 1959. He was taught some Chinese writing while in China. He has learned to read Akha since coming to Burma.

K-7  Da tu, also of Ba ma ju village, came with A eu, but did very little talking.

K-8  A dzo, step brother of K-2, living with his father a baw A eu in Naw leh village, where the father is the village priest.

K-9  Some men from Ho he village, who used to live in Loimi, but who have fled down to the Meung Yawng area. They came to Kengtung to ask my help in getting food supplies through the government offices.

K-10  A meh, from a village near Ta po. He had a son in the hospital. He was a poor informant in that he was not interested in ‘things Akha’.

K-11  Law pa, from Ho lo village. I just got his genealogy.

K-12  A go lo (from Ho lm village) was helpful in checking data I had gotten from others.

K-13  Ga baw, an Akhui man living in the Jaw sa section of Kengtung (that is a small Catholic area in the western part). He fled from the Chinese KMT forces about 1957.

K-14  Gui tu, also of Jaw sa, is the one that gave me a great deal of information on the ‘messianic movement’ during the second World War.

K-15  Dzoe dui, a woman shaman (nyi pa) who lives in the far Ya kam village. (See Vol 1).

K-16  Li sa, formerly of Ba gaw village in China, then of Na daw, and now living in a village about 12 miles north of the Thai border.
K-17A baw A tu, also of Na daw, who came with K-16 in June 1965 to select the new village site in the southern part of the state. He is one of the finest Akhas I have met. The villagers hold him in very high esteem.

K-18 Law she, of an Akha village above Kat Tai. He was shot in the chest by a gang of bandits, and brought to the Kengtung Civil Hospital June 25 1965. Two were killed at that time; the headman, and a woman who tried to run away. he and another man were wounded.

K-19 Law ba of Pa leh village on the Loimi mountain. He brought his little boy, Li shaw, to the Christian Hospital September 27, 1965 to be treated. He was a good informant in many ways, but he was too concerned about his family left in the village to be much help.

K-20 Law ha, the brother of K-19. He was a poor informant, but excellent in giving bird and animal names.

K-21 A gaw, from the Meung Hsat area. he is the headman of eight villages. His father was Akhui who ran away from his village and lived with Jeu g’oe in Meung Hsat. the father ‘joined another sub-clan’ (pa daw daw-eu), so his genealogy was not that of an Akhui.

K-22 A’sheu, a woman from Pa the village, near Loimwe, who is a sister of the headman. She has been sick for a long time, which has warped her outlook on life a bit. But she was excellent in relating personal experiences to me that had to do with women and girls.

K-23 Three men from Ba jeh village, about 14 miles west of Kengtung town. They were very helpful informants, but I could only work with them for two days.

K-24 Tui keu (Ai Kat is his Shan name), lives in a little house just outside the western gate of the Kengtung town wall. He is nominal Buddhist, although he is still proud of his knowledge of Akha customs, but I found I had to check all the material I got from him quite carefully. Also he tended to dominate the conversations I had with other Akhas at his house. But in many ways he was a good informant- when he was not smoking opium.

K-25 The wife of K-24, and an excellent informant, especially when her husband was not around. She is from lower Jaw seu village. She was anxious that I get the woman’s point of view regarding Akha customs.

K-26 A baw la ja, the headman of lower Jaw seu and the other villages in that complex. I have known him since 1949. He was a very restless informant, but he also worked hard to help me understand the various ceremonies they had, often giving more detail than I was really interested in.

K-27 G’oe ju, an Akha from China, who knows how to repeat spirit incantations so that broken bones will knit together properly, etc. By his own reckoning, at least, he is the ‘best Akha medicine man in Kengtung’. But he was not a very good informant.
K-28 A baw La zeh, or dzoe ma La zeh, of Ya kam village, just outside of Kengtung. He was born in 1909 in the Loimi area. From 1952 to January 1965 he had been both headman and village priest of his village. Bur in January 1965, his village was attacked by a large gang of Shan bandits. They held K-28 for 1,500 old coins, and when the villagers seemed reluctant to give it, they tied K-28 to a tree and got ready to kill him. So K-28 told his family and friends to get the money, which took virtually all the money they had. Even after they got the money the bandits started to kill him by beating with their rifle butts. When he would not die they cut off his queue, which bothered him then, and bothers him to this day. For that was the magic protection he had from being shot by a bullet or cut by a machete. When I asked why they cut it off he said they felt they could not kill him until it was cut off. Also, they could sell it as a kind of ‘good luck charm’ for anywhere from 15 to 50 old coins.

While they were beating on him, K-28 repeated his genealogy and asked them to look and help. He feels his ancestors did help, for a local Shan man who knew him well came by and told them to stop trying to kill a ‘good man; But K-28 was afraid that later, when the Shan friend was not around, they might come back and finish up what they had stated. So he fled with his wife, daughter and son. His daughter, with two sons, is living with the father and mother, and cooking for boarders in a nearby government school. She has been married twice, but both of her husbands have been killed by the insurgents. The son has gone to the southern part of the state, and his father does not know where he is now.

Although K-28 is temporarily following the Buddhist customs, his heart is certainly in the Akha way of doing things. But since he was not following the Akha way at the time, it was good for me, since he had virtually no taboos concerning the things he could tell me. He was most anxious that I understand Akhas fully, and that I write it down accurately. Often he would ask me to read back to him what I had written to make sure it was correct.

His wife was also an excellent informant, helping me to understand the Akha personality much better. Like her husband, she also had a wonderful sense of humor. It was a real joy to work with them both.

K-29 a baw Shaw za, also of Ya kam village, where K-28 lives. He is an Akha medicine man. He is very perceptive, and though only a ‘layman’ in the Akha way of doing things, he understands the ‘Akha ways’ very well. Also he has lived in many parts of the State, which makes him an even better informant.

He worked with K-28 and was very helpful in either explaining things to me, a non-Akha, that K-28 would take for granted I understood, or asking K-28 the kind of questions that would bring out certain aspects I had not seen before. He is the same age as K-28, and worked with him for many months, coming to my house daily, or meeting with me in their village. The two of them were ideal informants.
K-30 Sa la Mo’se (teacher Moses). He was born in the year 1935 in a village in the Meung Yawng area, of a Lahu father (sa la Ca Heh) and an Akha mother. Later the family moved into an Akha village in the Nawhaw area near Loimwe. Mose attended school in Pangwai, where I knew him as a boy. Later he was chosen to work with me in translating the New Testament into Akha. His bi-cultural background was helpful in many ways although it meant I had to check anything I got from him very thoroughly. I helped train him a little in anthropological methods so that he could write up materials for me (he was literate in four languages). He was perhaps best in observing difference between Akha, Lahus, Burmese, Karens, and other groups he had lived among. He passed away in December 1966.
GLOSSARY OF AKHA TERMS

a beo  Mon Khmer (as the Wa tribe)

a jeu  a clan

a maw jaw-eu  a shaman who can produce bugs

a ne  a bamboo strip

a seh  a part of the body

a ya  authority

a baw Ja deh  cultural hero

a dzaw  spirit slave

a g’oe  maternal uncle

a k’o  paternal uncle

a mah a da  woman’s male relatives

a pi  grandmother (old woman) respectful

a pi pi ta  mother of us all

a poe a pi  ancestors

a poe daw oe  a story

a poe law dza  ancestor offering food

a poe law-eu  ancestor offering

a poe mi yeh  God

a poe paw law  ancestor altar

a yui  elder sibling

a zaw  paternal uncle

a za za pa  castrated boar

ba ji  blacksmith

boe maw  spirit priest

boe mi si k’a  a non relative

bu seh  village headman

ba ya to-eu  to cast magic love spell

baw law  mans side of the house

bya yah sah pa  ‘lord dragon’

ceh ka si yoe shaw-eu  to purify paddy seeds

ceh si tsi haw-eu  to divine with rice

da leh  bamboo star

da ma  decoy animal

dam-eu  bless (before eating or drinking)

daw  bad omen

daw jaw-eu  to remedy a bad omen

daw tah pu le-eu  to meet up with a bad omen

daw da  a proverb

daw negh g’eh-eu  to pronounce blessings

deh k’ah  village playground

dzah mi  the household spirit

dzoe byeh  ‘no priest village’

dzoe ma  village priest

dzoe za  assistant village priest
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>gui ga</td>
<td>open porch</td>
<td>ji ba ji si</td>
<td>fermented rice container</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gui lah</td>
<td>luck blessing</td>
<td>ji ba k’a-eu</td>
<td>to set up drinks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gui lah sa la ba-eu</td>
<td>to be thin souled</td>
<td>ji si teu da-eu</td>
<td>suck up ceremonial liquor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gui lah sa la hui-eu</td>
<td>to be spiritually potent</td>
<td>jm zeu</td>
<td>main house post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gui lah sha-eu</td>
<td>‘beg blessing’ (pray)</td>
<td>ja g’a</td>
<td>medicine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gui lah yaw doe</td>
<td>bad luck</td>
<td>ka yeh</td>
<td>secondary gate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gui lah yaw hui</td>
<td>good luck</td>
<td>ku bah</td>
<td>small basket worn at waist by females</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g’aw za dza-eu</td>
<td>to eat a meal of separation</td>
<td>kui la sheh-eu</td>
<td>to ceremonially sprinkle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>haw</td>
<td>cooked rice</td>
<td>kui shi la shi shi-eu</td>
<td>to be paralyzed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>haw cu</td>
<td>packet of rice</td>
<td>k’m pi</td>
<td>field spirit hut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>haw g’aw</td>
<td>rice bowl</td>
<td>k’oe neh</td>
<td>inside spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>haw jeh</td>
<td>‘rice table’ (low of rattan and bamboo)</td>
<td>k’a ji tightly woven carrying basket</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>haw sa bah</td>
<td>rice steamer</td>
<td>k’a ka open weave carrying basket</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>haw shaw</td>
<td>holy rice</td>
<td>k’o pu</td>
<td>a basket</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ho pi</td>
<td>bamboo gopher</td>
<td>la ba ba-eu</td>
<td>soul loss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hu si</td>
<td>cowrie shell</td>
<td>la ku ku-eu</td>
<td>to call the soul back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i cu shaw</td>
<td>‘holy water’</td>
<td>la pya</td>
<td>werewolf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ja leh</td>
<td>‘rice balls’</td>
<td>lah-eu</td>
<td>ceremonial abstinence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ja neh neh-eu</td>
<td>to perform black magic</td>
<td>law-eu</td>
<td>make an offering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>je caw</td>
<td>animal reject</td>
<td>law gui</td>
<td>an altar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ji ba</td>
<td>rice liquor</td>
<td>law kah</td>
<td>the village gate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>law k’aw the water source for the village</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
law ka  the dividing wall
la ceu  village swing
la je tsaw-eu  men to dance
la k’oe m-eu  perform the inside ceremony
la nyi m-eu  perform the outside ceremony
la ngeu  a small hand hoe
la yeh  ceremonial knife

m shaw-eu  to purify
m to baw ma  mythical tree
ma mui ma shaw  contaminated (unholy)
maw-eu  to divine (general)
meh  magic vine
meh gu gu-eu  ‘follow me not’ ceremony
mi o  underworld
mi sah cu sah  lords and rulers of land and water
mi ta  upper world
mi tsa a nah  type of clay they eat
mi za la-eu  to ‘take’ a bride
myo lah  a slow loris

nah mui  propitious day
nm shi shi-eu  to die a ‘good’ death
nui ma ja-eu  to have a bitter grievance

neh  a spirit
neh gu la-eu  for spirits to afflict
neh mya  a spirit arrow
neh to-eu  to repeat spirit incantations
nyi neh  outside spirit
nyi pa pi caw  a shaman’s helper
nyi pa sha ma  a powerful shaman
nym ma  woman’s side of the house
nym sah a da  man of the house
nym sah a ma  woman of the house

pa  sub clan
pa daw daw-eu  to enter another sub clan
ps tseu tseu-eu  to split from one’s sub clan
pi ma  a spirit priest (more formal than boe maw)
pi seu  a vampire
pi tso  the spirit that chooses shamans
pi za  junior spirit priest
pu da lah-eu  ceremony when move into a village
pu je  village fund
pu k’eh g’eh-eu  ceremony
pu k’eh to-eu  epidemic protection

nui ma ja-eu  to have a bitter grievance

pu je  village fund
pu k’eh g’eh-eu  ceremony
pu k’eh to-eu  epidemic protection
pu tu  ancestor altar basket
pu tso-eu  ceremony when shot some animals
pyu k’o  lump of silver
sah pa  lord
seh g’aw  a temporary shelter
sa la  soul
sha zi zi-eu  to repeat poetic chants
shaw neh-eu  to purify
shi pi  a ghost
shi ne ku-eu  to call a ghost
shi ne ti-eu  a pre-ceremonial feast
shm byeh  a ‘no-son’ person
shm kui  a three-legged cooking stand (iron)
sha k’eh g’eh-eu  terrible death protection ceremony
sha ma  a powerful shaman
sha shi-eu  to die a terrible death
sha daw-eu  an embarrassing relationship

(see neh to-eu)
to-eu

tsaw k’a  young married man
tsaw peh  ‘twin’ (said in anger-impolite)
tsaw g’o  a fireplace
tsaw ngoe ngoe-eu  to wail (at time of death)
tso  a lightning bolt
usui gui-eu  to recount ones genealogy
u coe  a woman’s headdress
u ca shaw-eu  to ‘clear’ a tragedy
u du tah-eu  to bow the head (worship)
y sa neh  spirit of the field
ya ci maw pu  stuffed chicken
ya shaw  a ‘purifying’ chicken
ya yeh a ma  a woman who has performed post-menopause ceremony
ya yeh m-eu  to perform the post menopause ceremony
 ya yoe ka haw-eu  to divine with a chicken thigh
ya k’eh ya-eu  to place a curse on someone
yah k’o neh  unnamed child spirit
yaw doe  evil
yaw mui  good
yaw sah  spirit owner
yaw shaw  holy, pure

yeh maw  guest of honor at a wedding

za k’a  a ‘servant slave’

za m-eu za sah a ma  a child-make spirit

zah  religion, religious customs

zah do ka-eu  for two people to be in taboo relation to each other

zi  lifespan

za pi  uncastrated boar