



---

33. Note on the Manipuri "Yek."

Author(s): J. Shakespear

Source: *Man*, Vol. 10 (1910), pp. 59-61

Published by: [Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2787995>

Accessed: 08/01/2015 21:25

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Man*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

If the reader will study this table by the help of the diagram he will see that its results may be summarised in the following law :—*Amongst the Chingalee, when a man, instead of marrying into his regular class, enters into a marriage of Type II or Type III, the children belong to the class to which they would belong if they had been the offspring of their actual mother by a marriage of Type I, and they do not belong to the class to which they would belong if they had been the children of their actual father by a regular marriage.* That is, the Chingalee reckon descent, in so far as concerns the class, through the mother.

It is obvious that irregular marriages may make a difference as regards descent of phratry. Dealing first with the Arunta, we find that marriages of Types III and IV apparently never take place. If we regard the phratries, on Spencer and Gillen's evidence, as consisting of A + D and B + C, we can say that among the Arunta the phratry is always strictly exogamous, and descent as regards phratry is patrilineal.

Amongst the tribes of the Chingalee type, on the other hand, the phratries (A + D and B + C) are not strictly exogamous, since marriages of Types III and IV are marriages within the phratry. Further, when marriages of these two types occur, the children belong to the phratry which is not that of their parents. Thus if an A' man marries an A'' woman the child is C'' and does not belong to the phratry of its father and mother.

The facts concerning descent in tribes having eight matrimonial classes may be summarised as follows :—

(1) *Phratry.*—In tribes of the Arunta type the phratries are strictly exogamous and descent is patrilineal. In tribes of the Chingalee type the phratry is not strictly exogamous, and descent, while generally patrilineal, is sometimes irregular.

(2) *Class.*—In tribes of the Chingalee type the class of the child is determined by that of its mother. In tribes of the Arunta type the class of the child is determined by that of its father.

(3) *Totem.*—In tribes of the Arunta type the totem is not acquired by inheritance. In tribes of the Chingalee type it would seem that the totem of a child is generally inherited from its father, but there are numbers of exceptions. About these exceptions further information is urgently needed.

The tribes of the Arunta type are the Arunta, Ipirra, Iliaura, Unmatjera, and Kaitish. To the Chingalee type belong all the other eight-class tribes of which we have any information.

I have been concerned only in this note to elucidate the facts, not to theorise about them. The facts I have pointed out do not, however, seem to have been understood by the writers who have dealt with the problems of the social organisation of the eight-class tribes, and much of what has been written on that subject is on this account unsatisfactory. Any theory of the origin of the eight-class system, and the relation of the Arunta to tribes of the Chingalee type, must take account of the facts I have presented if it is to be of any value.

A. R. BROWN.

## India : Assam.

Shakespear.

**Note on the Manipuri "Yek."** By Lieut.-Colonel J. Shakespear, C.I.E.,  
D.S.O.

**33**

With reference to my remarks regarding the possibility of the Manipuri "Yek" being a totemistic division (MAN, 1908, 106), I have made inquiry, and the following is the result :—

There are in the Meithei population seven main divisions called Salai or Yek, each is named after a mythical ancestor. There were originally nine such divisions,

but in the Raja Gharib Nawaz's reign the Nangang division was made to amalgamate with the Ningthouja and the Khaba with the Nalba division, forming the division now known as Khabanalba; in both these cases the smallness of the division absorbed was given as the reason for the action taken. Each of these Salais or Yeks is subdivided into a large number of Sageis or Yumnaks, each named after its founder.

Each Salai or Yek has a certain flower, animal, &c., which is preferred by the god of the Salai and used in his worship. The following is a translation of a portion of a paper given me by Mr. Hodson for purposes of inquiry :—

“Angom was born from the brain (of Guru, the most excellent spirit) : his day it is Sunday, his month it is Wakching, his star it is Chingjaroibi, his letter (ma, his Yek letter) it is Ko, his flower it is Leisang, his fruit it is heibong, his fish it is ngawa, his animal it is the crow-pheasant, his direction it is north-west towards Kaobaru, his Lai (god) it is Soraren-namungba, his leaf it is leihou, his firewood it is chinghao, his navel, cord, and after-birth all three are in the Kongba river. His dao is the Dao Pukap. The woman who received him on his birth was Khakpa Ningthauchanu, his colour is white, his fire is sixfold.”

The explanation given me is that the direction is that in which Angom was born, and his descendants face that way in domestic worship; the various flowers, fruits, &c. are offered in this worship, and they are eaten by the worshippers; the bird, on account of the people having become Hindus, is no longer killed or eaten, but my informants say that probably it used to be eaten. The fire of the god must be lit in this way : first one piece of wood is lit, then from that another, and so on six times, and with the sixth the fire is lit. There are similar rules for all the seven Salais.

None of these articles are in any way tabued to the clan.

The Salais are exogamous. Further, marriages of persons connected on the maternal side within three generations are prohibited, though they belong to different Salais, for children take the Salai of their father. Formerly this restriction extended to five generations, but Maharajah Chandra Kriti changed it. The letter Ko is chosen, as it represents Kok, *i.e.*, head whence Angom was born. It seems that Yek, used as an equivalent for Salai, is taken from the fact that each Salai has a special letter. Ziak in Lushai means “to write.” Angom is now considered a Lai or god, but the domestic worship is paid to Soraren-namungba.

There is no common tabu for the whole Angom clan, but each of the Sageis, or Yumnaks, into which the Salai is divided, has particular tabus of its own. Thus, the Sarangthem Yumnak of the Chenglei Salai, may not eat, cut or plant a tree called Heinang, touching or seeing it is not prohibited. Nor must a member of that Yumnak kill a bamboo rat, and, though seeing it is not unlucky, my informant said he would fear to touch one. The penalty for breaking one of these tabus is a serious illness in the family of the offender. To avoid this the god of the Salai is worshipped by the head of the household, who makes offerings of the appropriate flowers, fruits, &c., which are subsequently eaten by the family. If the householder likes he may call a Maiba (priest) to perform the ceremony. The reason of these tabus in this Yumnak is said to have been an order from the god to the founder of the family, but I think this is a guess; probably there is some more definite reason as in the case of the Hijam, Yumnak, of the Luang Salai, whose members are prohibited from eating gourds, because their ancestor was accidentally killed trying to pluck a gourd. The Thaurem Yumnak of the Khumul Salai may not put the wood of the Semel cotton tree into their mouths nor use its charcoal in the hukahs because the clan Lai, Pakhangba, once turned himself into a semel tree and fell into the river, and Khumul drank of the water and went mad. Cutting and touching and looking at it are not prohibited. The same Yumnak may not kill nor eat the uthum bird. When I asked the reason I was told

glibly that the reason was that the uthum was the bird of the Salai, but on my asking if, then, the tabu extended to the whole Salai I was told no; only to the Thaurem Yumnak, and my informant could not account for this, but further enquiries elicited the fact that once when the ancestor of the Thaurem was offering the uthum bird to the lai of the Salai, the bird flew away, and so the Thaurem no longer kill it.

It appears, therefore, that I was wrong in saying that there were some reasons for thinking the Manipuri Yek a totemistic division. J. SHAKESPEAR.

## REVIEWS.

### Archæology.

Lockyer.

*Stonehenge and other British Stone Monuments Astronomically considered.* **34**  
By Sir Norman Lockyer, K.C.B., F.R.S., &c. London: Macmillan & Co. 1909. Second edition. Pp. xvi × 499. With 106 illustrations. 23 × 15 cm. Price 14s. net.

Sir Norman Lockyer's work amongst our rude stone monuments is so well known to all students of the subject, that the adjustment of their own views towards it is probably settled beyond the possibility of being materially changed by anything that may be said in the small space available for a notice in MAN: it will, therefore, be better to devote that space to a consideration of the new matter brought into this edition rather than to a review of the whole book. Chapters 1 to 30 are apparently a verbatim reprint of the first edition; the new matter begins at page 325 and extends to page 479, after which there are various appendices and the index, also in part new. Beginning at the end—not always a bad thing to do—we find from “A General Summary” (Chapter 44) that the inquiry has been carried on at intervals since March, 1890, when Sir Norman Lockyer observed the magnetic bearing of the temple axis of the Parthenon, and that until 1894 the research was almost entirely limited to Egypt, where the author “found that the Egyptians carefully built their temples so that the rising and the setting of certain stars, and of the sun at certain times of the year, could be watched along the temple axis by the priest in the sanctuary,” for the purposes of:—(1) determining the time at night; (2) observing a star rising or setting about an hour before sunrise on the chief festivals (so as to have sacrifices, &c., ready); and (3) to determine when the sun had reached a certain part of its yearly path at which the festivals occurred. A further conclusion was that the Egyptians “commenced with a year beginning in May—the ‘May-year’ the first used in Britain, and still determining the quarter-days in Scotland; later they passed to the ‘solstitial year,’ June 21, the beginning of the Nile rise, and the longest day, being the *new new* year’s day. This is the origin of our present English year.”

A consideration of our rude stone monuments on the basis of their having served similar purposes causes Sir Norman Lockyer to think that the “stone-rows” and other avenues, whether of stone or earth, were the simplest and the oldest, the cromlechs or dolmens, simple and compound, and *allées couvertes* following, and being connected with the avenues until in them “we are absolutely face to face with the ground-plan of Egyptian temples, so much so that there can be no question that those who built those magnificent monuments in Egypt some 2,000, 3,000, or 4,000 years B.C. got their ideas of the buildings they wished to erect from the traditions of people who built cromlechs, and who had lived in and used them.” This statement will doubtless delight Sir Norman Lockyer's Druidic friends, but we would rather not be between them and the Egyptologists when they discuss that phase of the matter. The circles, though connected with the avenues and dolmens, represent in the author's eyes “a later development, and this view is strengthened by the fact that there are no circles in