

Some account of the Hill Tribes in the interior of the District of Chittagong, in a letter to the Secretary of the Asiatic Society. By the Rev. M. BARBE, Missionary.

MY DEAR SIR,—During my late trip to Chittagong I took advantage of the favourable state of the weather to visit the Hill tribes of that district, as a few months before I was amongst the Kookies I visited in my last trip the Bunzoo tribe. Having in my account of the Kookies described the banks of Chittagong river, I will not repeat here what has been mentioned before. I stopped one night at Rangunia, which is about 25 miles from Chittagong; and when there, I engaged the services of my old guide: this man had been of great use to me when I visited the Kookies. Having spent part of his life amongst the hill tribes, he is well acquainted with their habits; and I think that a person who is not a Government officer accompanied by him, might go with security to any of their villages. This Burman is a sportsman by profession, and consequently he can give correct information respecting the different species of animals which are found on those hills; but the characteristic custom of his nation being not to contradict persons whom they consider superior to them, when any question is put, the answer is not to be anticipated, because in every circumstance he will approve of it; so the only way to get the truth is to let him answer by himself, deducting of course something on account of exaggerations to which they are very much inclined. On the evening of my departure from Rangunia, I reached the east part of Sitacra hill, which is at two tides from Chittagong, and slept in a small village situated on the top of a hill, elevated from three to four hundred feet above the level of the river. The house in which I took up my abode belonged to an Arracanese who, having spent some years at Rangoon, spoke Burmese passably. The entrance to the house, which was elevated nine feet from the ground, was a spacious uncovered verandah; the building had several rooms: the hill being very steep on one side, the house was raised about fifteen feet on that side, and supported only by bamboos of small size. The old man received me with great kindness. He had with him eight children, one only being married. He said he was very anxious to see all his boys established; but as it was the custom to expend about 100 rupees for a bride, his means did not allow

him to marry them. Seeing the respect paid to the venerable old man and to his consort, reminded me of the life of the patriarchs.

On the morning we had a storm and heavy rain till 8 o'clock, so I could not begin the ascent of Sitacra hill before 10 o'clock; at that time the thermometer was 82°. Ascending the hill I was scorched by the rays of the sun, but the effect of the elevation was marked on the temperature; when I reached the top of the hill it was past 11 o'clock. I had the pleasure to enjoy a refreshing breeze; and at 12 o'clock, the thermometer was only 78°. Sitacra is one of the highest hills of the chain, which extends from the east to the north-east; its elevation is from twelve to fifteen hundred feet above the level of the river, and it affords the most magnificent sight I have ever witnessed. The view was extensive and charming—the sea to the S.W.; to the W., Chittagong and Sitacoond; to the N. W. the Ranee house, situated in a vast plain covered with water; Chittagong river flowing in serpentine lines, and to the E. and N. E. a succession of peaks more or less elevated, clothed with vegetation, and appearing to draw closer together as they disappeared. The horizon was an immense circle; and although the scenery was diversified, a single place could not be seen stripped of vegetation; the most elevated spots were covered with shrubs, the hills have been crowned with *Jarool* and *Toon* trees, but they have been cut down by the different tribes, when they have cleared the ground; all those places have been cultivated, with the exception of the narrow valleys which lie between the ridges of the hills. The humidity occasioned by five or six months of rain produces a vegetation full of vigour; from the edge of the water to the top of the highest hill, the flourishing aspect of nature is a proof of the fertility of the land. Few of those hills are without springs. The air appears to be very good.

People living on those hills appear to be healthy and strong. I saw some persons above 70 years old; and I was told that there was a woman whose age was 100 years. Last year many persons died of cholera. This disease was unknown to them fifteen years ago. Fever is the general complaint. I admired the idea of the Kookies, who believe that the greatest happiness of man after his death, consists in being placed on the summit of the highest hill to enjoy the pleasure of seeing the beauties of nature. The existence of a

Supreme Being who is to give a spiritual reward being above their conception, how can they imagine a greater happiness than the view of the most beautiful scenery?

Following the edge of the hill to the S. E., I passed through a village situated on the top of another hill, about 200 feet lower than Sitacra, whose inhabitants were Arracanese. I saw some Oolock and other monkeys on a high jungly jack tree, whose fruits are smaller than the common jack; they are good to eat, but have an acid taste: this tree grows very large; the wood is of a beautiful yellow color; the Burmese use it in building their boats.

When I reached the banks of the river it was four o'clock, the thermometer being at that time 88° ; there I met several persons, who were waiting for me to get medicine: they begged of me to go to their village; but as it was too much out of my way, I declined their invitation. Some of them wished to accompany me; but as I knew that they were busy in sowing their crops, I would not accept their offer. These Arracanese are very hospitable, kind, and disinterested; I have been several times in their villages. They have accompanied me in my excursions, and I could never prevail on them to accept any reward for their trouble, nor for the different articles furnished during my stay amongst them. On the following morning I started from my boat, and crossed a plain for one hour in a southerly direction following a small path, and crossing several times a small stream and then ascended a hill elevated from three to four hundred feet above the level of the river, following the edge of that hill in an easterly direction. I saw at the distance of three or four miles the Bunzoo houses, situated on top of another hill called the Diamond mine; on another hill thirty or forty persons were busy in sowing paddy and cotton. It is the custom that all the people of the same village join in assisting one another for that purpose. When I reached the village it was past 10 o'clock, and the sun at that time began to be very powerful; the houses nearest to the creek were inhabited by Arracanese. The Bunzoo dwellings were on the summit of the hill; and hearing that no Bunzoo was at home, I went to the house of an Arracanese whose wife was from Tippera; she dressed like the Burmese women do, spoke a little of that language, and her features so much resembled those of the Burmese, that I took her for one of that nation. She offered me some

fruit, and a bottle of liquor distilled from rice ; some time after, the house was filled with women and children : being the first European they had ever seen, their curiosity did not surprise me. In the evening the men came from their work, and the most respectable Bunzoo of the village asked me to take up my abode in his house. His dwelling being in a higher situation, I accepted with pleasure his offer ; the house was elevated three or four feet from the ground, being twenty feet broad and eighty or ninety feet long, without any partition ; to one side was a small room which he offered me. At the entrance of the house the heads of hogs, deer, and other animals killed in his hunting excursions were kept ; a large fire-place was in the centre of the dwelling. Conical baskets, earthenware, and mats were all the furniture. The principal post of the house is considered by them sacred, and the head of the family is the only person who can touch it ; should any other person do the same he becomes the slave of the master of the house. This Bunzoo was fifty-six years old, he stood five feet ten inches, and was well built ; his hair was long, and tied after the fashion of the Burmese ; he had projecting cheek bones, flat visage, scanty beard, and was of dark yellow complexion ; his dress was a piece of cloth, one foot broad, round his loins. His wife and daughters were of middle size, but very stout ; they had the Burmese dress, but the cloth was red and black ; their breast was covered with another piece of cloth of the same color, one cubit broad and four feet long. His family consisted of four boys and three girls ; he had two children from eight to ten years old, with black eyes, small lips, and displaying great intelligence. The other Bunzoos which I saw were not so tall as the men before mentioned, and the average is, I believe, from five feet two inches, to six inches. The women are, generally speaking, much stouter than the men. This tribe appeared to be grave and silent ; this is remarkable in children, they shew no petulance, and partake of the character of their parents ; six or seven of them were with me a part of the evening, and to my great surprise they paid as much attention to the conversation, as if the subject had been adapted to their intelligence. I was particularly struck with their civility, no one took a thing offered to him without previously saluting by joining his hands towards the person who gave, and the same ceremony was repeated by the donor : men, women, and children do the same ; when spirits is offered,

the women dip their finger in the liquor, and then salute as before stated.

The Bunzoo food consists of rice, fruit, roots, vegetables, young leaves of trees, blochein, (which is prepared by the Mugs of *Rangunia* of shrimps salted and pounded,) and deer, hogs, fowls and goats. The Bunzoos admit the existence of a Supreme Being whom they do not worship, the reason being that "they have never heard about him nor seen him;" but it is not the same with the devil, whom they consider as the cause of all evil,—to him they attribute their diseases, the failure of their crops, &c., and to gain his favour they offer him pigs, goats, fowls, &c.; they believe in a place of torment, but what are the offences that deserve such punishment they don't know; they think that the greatest part of the dead come again into the world to animate other bodies, and persons who have been fortunate enough to secure the head of many wild animals are entitled to be rewarded in their future life: this is the reason for which they keep with the greatest care the heads of animals slain by them. The Kookies burn the dead, the Bunzoos do not. They hollow a piece of wood, deposit the dead in it, and bury it in the summit of some hill, putting in the same grave the heads of animals killed by them, spears, cloth, and money belonging to the deceased. On the Tenasserim coast the Kareans burn the dead, and keep one of the bones of the head for one year, and after feasting for some days, they take it with all the articles belonging to the deceased, on a hill where all articles are deposited which belonged to persons of the same caste. The Bunzoos never marry to persons of another tribe, and a wedding never takes place without spending much money. The father and mother of the young man apply for the bride, which is never promised unless she give her consent; should the young man be without parents the head of the village is to ask the bride's hand, the relations of the lady ask then a sum of money, from one hundred to one hundred and fifty rupees; if the young man has that money he pays it immediately; but if he has not, the bride's relations agree to receive it by instalments. The day of marriage being fixed, a feast is given to the relations and friends, and the young woman is taken by them to the house of the bridegroom, and without any further ceremony, the maid becomes wife. They have but one wife, and if she leaves her

lord's house without a just cause, her relations are obliged to give back the money received, but should the husband send her away he has no more claim. Should the Bunzoo, in his warlike excursions, capture any young women he generally sells them, but if he cannot he has them under his keeping without being considered his wives; their consorts are generally well treated, but they are far from paying them the same attention as the civilized people do. One of them asked me in the most serious manner if it was true, "that Europeans worshipped their wives." The chain of hills which separates Chittagong and the Tippera district from the Birman Empire is inhabited by a number of tribes differing little in appearance, but partly in habits and language; but the features of those tribes, particularly the flatness of the occipital bone, resemble the Burmese so much that I am not far from believing they have a common origin, and if the Bunzoos are not so strongly built, and so well made as the Burmese, it might be in consequence of their mode of living, which, as it has been observed by Cuvier, in few generations will deteriorate the physical character of the highest races of mankind. The Kookies appear to be the most numerous of all tribes; to the N. E. of Chittagong, not far from *Casalon* which is a branch of the Chittagong river is one of their kings, who rules over six or seven thousand houses; he has on his hill ponies, cows, &c. How far he takes advantage of his authority, I have not been able to ascertain. The Bunzoo tribe is chiefly centered towards the S. E.; having no annals of their own it is impossible to trace their origin, and to warrant an opinion on the subject, requires more information than I could get. According to them, formerly they were more powerful and numerous than they are now. The Kookies taking advantage of their number, subjected them to their yoke. Their language appears very poor, they have no word to express the days of the week, but borrow them from the Burmese. Their dialect contains many Kookie and Burmese words. They compute their years as the Kookies do by the number of their crops. Persons who build theories on the analogies of language, will find at the end of this letter a small vocabulary which will assist them. The Bunzoos distil from rice a fermented liquor, the drinking of which seems to afford them great luxury. They pour into a cup the spirit; which goes round the company, every person, not excepting the women and children, taking a draught, and they never separate till the liquor is finished; but how far

drunkenness prevails, or if they are addicted to intoxication, is more than I can tell. The Arracanese who live on the hills pay from three to four rupees of land-tax a year, but the Kookies and Bunzoo are rent-free; and should they be compelled to pay, being a wandering tribe free as birds, they would immediately leave their residence, and retire to the interior of mountains where no person could molest them. They are certainly the most independent people that can be seen: a no-made life is for them the greatest happiness, and, as children of nature, their wants are few; and these wants they can supply in any place. They venture on hunting excursions when their agricultural labors are finished; spears and bows are their principal arms, and their dogs are always their faithful companions. Their exertions and agricultural labors are directed only to the growth of articles necessary for their subsistence, as paddy, yams, plantains, melons, tobacco, cotton, &c. They manufacture their own cloth, and exchange the cotton they do not require for salt, earthenware, &c. They plant a species of indigo growing about two feet high, the leaves which are large are employed to dye their clothes, which is done in the following way:—Taking a certain quantity of leaves, they put them in an earthenware vessel; when the water boils they dip in it the thread, mixing with it an extract of an astringent bark; they dry then the thread, and they repeat twice again the same process. The jungle affords them roots of trees or shrubs to dye green, yellow, &c.: salt is the only thing which they procure with some difficulty, but the hills contain several springs of salt water; two of those are found at Sitacoond, and there is another one in a creek on the opposite side of Sitacra. The greatest part of salt used by people living on the banks of the river was manufactured formerly there, and the spring is so impregnated with salt that it gives in weight half the quantity of the salted water; some of the tribes by burning trees procure an alkali, which supplies the use of salt.

The Guayal, *Bos frontalis*, is found amongst the hills, particularly to the south of Sitacra: there are two species, differing in size and little in color; the large one is of dark brown, and the male is nearly as high as a female elephant; the small one is of a reddish brown, it is the Tenasserim Bison, and the Arracanese call them by the same name as the Burmese do. Those Guayals are perfectly distinct from the Shio of the Kookies, which are smaller, have a projecting skin to their neck, and

differ also by the form and direction of the horns. Three species of wild dogs are found on those hills: the first species is known by the Burmese by the name *Oobe-looe*, and by the Bunzoos *Izenia*; this dog has pendant ears, from five or six inches long, muzzle from eight to ten inches, straight bushy tail fifteen inches long, length of the body three feet six inches, height from the ground two feet six inches; they are seen going alone or in pairs, and they never feed on animals killed the day before. The second species is called Mungui; they have the ears semi-pendant, going in packs from four to five; their color is white bay or spotted. The third species is *Tokooi*, they are small with straight ears, and go in packs from fifteen to twenty. The description of these dogs was given to me by my guide, and it was confirmed by the Bunzoos; I have no doubt of its being correct.

Returning from the Bunzoo villages, instead of following the same road by which I went there, I followed the course of a small stream protected from the rays of the sun by bamboos and other trees; another reason which made me choose this way was, that I had been informed that limestone was found in that creek; till now rocks of that nature are unknown at Chittagong, lime used in the district is carried from Sylhet, and purchased at the rate of thirty-five to forty rupees the hundred maunds.

It took me about three hours to get to Chittagong river; both banks of the creek were bordered either by rocks or by hills of various heights, presenting steep sides covered in some places with shrubs, the spring was not considerable, the water was fresh and clear as crystal; in some places the stream rolled gently down, and in others the water descended with impetuosity, forming basins of different dimensions according to the size of the defile: the place where the rock was mentioned is about a mile from the large river, it is from thirty to twenty-five feet high, and in a large cavity is deposited stalagmite, so I have very little doubt that the rock is a limestone; but as I expect a specimen of it, all doubts will be removed on the subject. At some distance from that rock was a bank of black clay, which the Burmese doctor recommends as a medicine to women who are in the family-way to strengthen them. I took some with me, the clay was then very soft, but the next day it was as hard as a brick.

This is, my dear Sir, all the information I could get about the Bunzoo tribe; had I remained longer amongst them, as I intended to do, this people would have given me other details which are desideratum in this imperfect sketch of their manners and customs, but my guide having taken ill with fever, I thought it was useless to prolong my stay amongst them, being imperfectly acquainted with the corrupted Burmese language spoken in the district.

V. BARBE.

Calcutta, 15th July, 1845.

| <i>English.</i> | <i>Bunzoo.</i> | <i>Kookies.</i> |
|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| God, | Lookar, | Ngion mse. |
| Devil, | Krec, | Khasin. |
| Worship, | Mai-moo-roon, | Maimeck. |
| Person, | Mreiur, | Meiaur. |
| Man, | Mepa, | Mepa. |
| Woman, | Loo-now, | Noonoo. |
| Children, | Now-pow, | |
| Son, | Mepanow, | |
| Daughter, | Kemenow, | |
| Maiden, | Loogua, | Ar. |
| Husband, | Noo-pa, | |
| Wife, | Kamadoon, | |
| Head, | Loo, | Loo. |
| Forehead, | Mare, | |
| Hair, | Ssom, | Ssam. |
| Eyes, | Mhe, | Mut, |
| Nose, | Nhar, | Naar. |
| Ear, | Na, | Na. |
| Lips, | Mekka, | Noor. |
| Teeth, | Ah, | |
| Beard, | Mekkamoor, | |
| Neck, | Rhin, | King. |

| <i>English.</i> | <i>Bunzoo.</i> | <i>Kookies.</i> |
|--------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Breast, | Atak, | Fsan. |
| Arm, | Keeb-an, | |
| Hand, | Coot, | |
| Finger, | Cootmatsar, | |
| Nail, | Cootmetee, | Coot. |
| Belly, | Madeer, | Madil. |
| Thigh, | Racoot, | Ell. |
| Leg, | Pai-ma-rai. | |
| Foot, | Pai, | Phai. |
| European, | Lhen, | Mengeaco. |
| Bunzoo, | Bom. | |
| Khookies, | Panguai, | Langet. |
| Shiamdu, | Koosak, | |
| Burman, | Ouksah, | |
| Arracanese, | Mareim. | |
| House, | Cur, | Teug. |
| Roof, | Curchun, | |
| Thatch with grass, | Phar, | |
| Bamboo, | Rhooar, | Koee. |
| Ratan, | Kotoi, | |
| Posts, | Jurtoom, | |
| Door, | Ma kott, | |
| Window, | Wham kott, | |
| Dog, | Woe, | Hooee. |
| Cow, | Fswepai, | |
| Buffalo, | Fseloi, | |
| Guyal, | Tsar, | |
| Ditto Kooku, | Huesha, | Shio. |
| Pig, | Wai, | Wet. |
| Bird, | Wha, | |
| Peacock, | Oohdong, | |
| Snake, | Marooi, | |
| Hill, | Kamoor, | Toung. |
| Tree, | Teiu, | Thinn. |
| Ditto leaves, | Teiuna, | |
| Flower, | Par, | Paar. |

| <i>English.</i> | <i>Bunzoo.</i> | <i>Kookies.</i> |
|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Grass, | Bair, | |
| Good, | Hatsar, | |
| Bad, | Hats-aloo, | |
| Heaven, | Van, | |
| Hell, | Hatsoopatee, | |
| Black, | Neekna, | |
| White, | Pooahklan, | |
| Red, | Pooahtsin, | |
| Green, | Pooahrin, | |
| Yellow, | Pooahapaal, | |
| Water, | Tooe, | Tooe. |
| Paddy, | Ts-am, | Tsan. |
| Rice, | Tsaksai, | Thathin. |
| Ditto boiled, | Boo, | Boo. |
| Oil, | Kersee, | |
| Brandy, | Arahani, | |
| Sick, | Hatchong, | |
| Fever, | Damlou, | |
| Vomit, | Mailoo, | |
| Evacuate, | Sun-yute, | |
| Fool, | Maremkloh, | |
| Cool, | Atakdye, | |
| Knife (table,) | Tsenzoon, | Tsur. |
| Fire, | Men, | |
| Silver, | Tongkha, | |
| Gold, | Guoon, | Gnoon. |
| Copper, | Dhar, | |
| Necklace, | Maisee, | Shal. |
| Bracelet, | Arkhoil, | |
| Handkerchief, | Beaar, | |
| Governor, | Kophoo, | |
| Bengalee, | Koar, | Lowoon. |
| Death, | Meetec, | |
| River, | Whaa, | Boo. |
| Firelock, | Tselei, | Thali. |
| Powder, | Tseleitsec, | Talaitse. |

| <i>English.</i> | <i>Bunzoo.</i> | <i>Kookies.</i> |
|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Shot, | Tseleimoo, | |
| Bottle, | Pelan, | |
| Year, | Koomnee, | |
| Month, | Tsakkar, | |
| Day, | Neekar, | |
| Night, | Zytye, | |
| One, | Kakar, | Keaka. |
| Two, | Penakar, | Panika. |
| Three, | Toomkar, | Toomka. |
| Four, | Leckar, | Ta. |
| Five, | Raignakar, | Nga. |
| Six, | Rhookar, | Koo. |
| Seven, | Sreckar, | Sree. |
| Eight, | Raika, | Rae. |
| Nine, | Khooakar, | Ko. |
| Ten, | Tswurkar, | Sunka. |
| Eleven, | Tswinlakakar, | |
| Twelve, | Tswinlanekar, | |
| Twenty, | Roobookar, | |
| One hundred, | Raizaaker, | Rasa. |
| One thousand, | Tsankar, | Sunka. |
| Man's dress, | Ram, | |
| Woman's dress, | Kyer, | |



Barbé. 1845. "Some account of the Hill Tribes in the interior of the District of Chittagong, in a letter to the Secretary of the Asiatic Society." *The journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 14(161), 380–391.

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