The Evangelical Quarterly

APRIL 15TH, 1935

NOTES ON THE CULTURE AND PEOPLE OF BHUTAN

(WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE RELIGIOUS ELEMENTS)

I

THE country of Bhutan is situated between the lines 26° 40′ and 28° North latitude and 89° 10′ and 91° 45′ East longitude, in that part of Asia where the three great areas, China, India and Tibet, are very close together. Geological factors seem to have resulted not so much in comparative isolation, but in lack of opportunities for interpenetration, since the huge mountainous range of the Himalayas separates India from Tibet and the sheer gorges of the Irrawaddy, Salwen and Mekong rivers, with their well-nigh uncrossable divides, effectively bar communication for man at any rate between India and south-west China. Even so these three areas have distinctive peoples, climates, plants and animals, but types appear in common and tend to intermingle occasionally where the boundaries of the areas march together. Few breaks occur in these separating features which allow of intercommunication, and the factors controlling the use of these channels determine the successful immigrants.

In the case of plants it is known that those adopted for survival in harsh environments, and which are common to areas where such conditions prevail, are found along the fringes of those, penetrating less inclement areas at spots where the harsher condition predominates. Thus it is found that plants normally (!) inhabiting the drier areas of the Indus and Brahmaputra sources are also found much further east in the moister east Himalaya, where the lie of the land and the confluence of the two contrasting climatic types result in the dominance of the drier, even though the locality is in the area considered wet (5).

As far as can be ascertained, the trend of peoples in this part of Asia has been from Mongolia to the west and south-west, and it can be appreciated that any movements of virile Mongolians, whatever their cause, would be affected by such natural features as mountain ranges and impenetrable valleys. Life for races living under the much more benign Indian climate would not tend to produce movements to the same extent or on such a scale. Has not the history of India been one of invasion rather than one of emigration? It is logical to assume that the original inhabitants of the Bhutanese valleys were of Indian origin, settled in the temperate and broader portions of the valleys, often nearly a mile wide, which occur at elevations between 7-9,000 ft. in the centre of the areas width.

The difficulties presented by a high, sheer, ice-crested mountain range would be sufficient to turn the larger groups of nomadic yet predatory (for such would be their intent) Mongols, but it is quite conceivable how occasional, smaller groups would discover the few places whereat the divide was penetrable. These would be inclined to settle in the fertile areas about the gaps, since conditions would supply their annual needs apparently for as long as they could conjecture. The intruders, recognizing the necessity to hold what they had obtained, would perforce erect defensive barriers to the south of their newly acquired territory, and, as time went on, would extend further south until they had driven the locals into the foothills by the Indian plains. By this time they would have become sufficiently independent to wish to keep out any further invasion from the north, and would therefore erect defensive barriers at the most vulnerable point of the path, below the crest of their own land—a point where invaders would be enfeebled by the rigours of crossing the passes.

Peaceful penetration has done its work and there is now no longer any need for the maintenance of such barriers, but the most recent system of defence, consisting of Bhutanese forts in two lines, one overlooking the foothills and the other just south of the high northern passes, is still in existence. The Bhutanese are now a distinctive race, while in the foothills is a tribe, of ever diminishing numbers, considered sub-original of the main area—the *Mech*.

Eastward from the line of 91° E. the configuration of the Himalayan chain alters. No longer do the secondary ranges

trend southward from the main divide. This itself shows signs of disintegration, and the secondary ranges begin to stretch from broken sections of it in other directions. The observable tendency is a swinging to the north-east and south-west, a changing of direction which culminates in the direct north and south trend of the divides of the big Assam and Burmese gorges. In a paper on the Sino Himalayan Flora, Kingdon Ward offers an ingenious explanation of the origin of this geological feature (9).

The earliest nomads were the explorers who blazed the trail from the Tibetan plains down the valleys and between the spurs to the plains of Bengal, so that in time this path became a well-known route through which the impetus of a mongolian drive urged its constituents as in the case of " one Sangaldip, emerging from the environs of Kooch, subdued the countries of Bengal and Behar . . . and was in his turn defeated by Piran Vasah, general of Afrasiab, King of Turan or Tartary " (7) in the seventh century B.C.

As water eddies through an irregular channel bearing drift on its surface and swirls into side ways where the drift is often deposited, so groups of people are to be found on this route who are united by the evidence of a common stock in their features, but who in their speech and dress differ considerably among themselves.

Since the rocks—beds and mountain ranges about the two ends of Bhutan are quite differently aligned, immigrants into these areas might quite possibly come from different sources. Even the flora shows differences (5). The ridge trending southwards, almost coincident with the line of 91° E. long., has very sheer sides on its eastern exposure sufficient to daunt prospective visitors from that direction, while the country on the west of it is so very fair that the need of settlers in it to look further east would scarcely arise. Herein lies the reason for the occurrence of two distinct elements in the population which can live in adjacent valleys and yet remain aloof. If one of them has come from Mongolia southwards via Tibet and the other has come from a more westerly area, say China via Szechuan or Yunnan, the two can obviously be fundamentally different. This is the case in Bhutan concerning the people of which it has been said, " The population of Bhutan may be roughly divided into two, those living on the West and those living on the East of the Pele-la. The people of the West are for the most part of Tibetan origin

who came into the country centuries ago. They are of the same original stock as the Bhuteas in Sikhim, but have developed in Bhutan into a magnificent race of men physically. Why there should be this marked contrast I cannot say, it may be due to the difference in climate, but there is no comparison between the two, although the Sikhim Bhutea is a strong sturdy fellow in his own way. The Bhutanese are fine, tall, well-developed men with an open, honest cast of face, and the women are comely, clean and well-dressed, and excellent housekeepers and managers." . . .(7)

* * * *

" Amongst the people of the East who live beyond the Pele-la the bulk of the population is not of Tibetan origin, nor do they speak Tibetan. I give a few words they use, spelt phonetically, which seem to me different to those of Tibetan derivation. *Gami*—fire, *Nut*—barley, *Mai*—house, *Tyu*—milk, *Yak*—hand, *Tsoroshai*—come here. Their origin is not clear, but they are allied to the people of the Assam Valley and to those living in the hills to the east beyond Bhutan. They are of a different type from those in the west, smaller in stature, the complexion is darker and features finer cut, and their dress is different " (7).[1]

Sentiment would urge the invaders to retain such of their own festivals as they appreciated and the possibilities of barter would encourage peaceful association with any neighbour they could find. Their intelligence would doubtless be stimulated by any wonders of their neighbours' land, and their feet be moved to visit them. A source of natural fire would be such a wonder, and one occurrence of this is known in the areas of the foothills between Behar's plains and the east (Bhutan) Himalayas. Another is known from Nepal, where it has become associated with the charming legend—" Many aeons ago Vipasya Buddha came from Vindumati Nagar and after due circumambulations repeated certain charms over a root of the Lotus and then threw it into the lake prophesying 'When this Lotus shall flower Swayambhu shall be revealed as a flame.' " . . .

" Except for the legend connected with it, it is insignificant and could attract the attention of no one. Yet in all Oriental literature there is probably no clearer description of a petroleum spring than that which is given by seventh-century visitors to Nepal " (4).

[1] Further notes on one group of the latter are recorded in (3).

" The early history of this remarkable country (Bhutan) is enveloped in great obscurity, for unfortunately, owing to fire, earthquake, flood, and internecine wars, its annals, which had been carefully recorded, were destroyed. The burning of Poonakha in 1832, and the widespread destruction of buildings by the earthquake of 1897 were particularly noticeable in this connection. The latter disaster is responsible for the almost total destruction of the library of the present Tongsa Penlop, only a few MSS., from which I have gathered some information, having escaped. Their great printing establishment of Sonagachi was burnt down about eighty years ago " (7).

II

The earliest legend known of them is that quoted on page 115. Nomads who live under the stars are very conscious of the seasons and natural phenomena, and develop a nature consciousness which includes appreciation and apprehension which results in festivals and propitiatory rites associated with the phenomena and the unseen influences which control them. Appreciating the effects of the sun, the people would bemoan its diminishing exposure and applaud its increase above the horizon as the days became shorter and commenced again to lengthen. The awakening of life in the spring would augment the rejoicing for the promise of the ensuing season, which would have as a natural corollary thanksgiving for the harvest linked with festival since the year's labour in the fields had been brought to fruition or gathered in. The advent of the season of rains and their cessation synchronizing so closely with agricultural practice would engender further celebration. The terrors of darkness and the winds that howl during its hours, the cold intemperate fury of blizzards of snow and ice, and the awe of glittering and inhospitable façades with their seasonal variations all seem to operate at the behest of superhuman agencies and provoke the need for their propitiation. Human nature being what it is, the possessors of more sagacious minds among the people would come to be considered as oracles or prophets, and therefore intermediaries of the unseen powers. The oracle in every land is a living and highly popular institution. These would naturally accept any gifts offered to them with a view to secure benefits from the exercise of their prophetic, and therefore propitiatory, faculties. In their turn, the oracles would

invest their circumstance with pomp and some forms of ritual and ceremony, and thus acquire the opportunities for self-acclamation in the organizing of festivals, etc. In course of time an oracle would be a necessary adjunct to the personnel of a foray, as when Chingis Khan, before a battle, " commanded his astrologers and magicians to declare to him which of the two armies in the approaching conflict should obtain the victory. Upon this they took a green reed, and, dividing it lengthways into two parts, they wrote upon one the name of their master, and upon the other the name of Un-Khan. They then placed them on the ground, at some distance from each other, and gave notice to the king that during the time of their pronouncing their incantations the two pieces of reed, through the power of their idols, would advance towards each other, and that the victory would fall to the lot of that monarch whose piece should be seen to mount upon the other. The whole army was assembled to be spectators of this ceremony, and whilst the astrologers were employed in reading their books of necromancy, they perceived the two pieces begin to move and to approach, and after some small interval of time, that inscribed with the name of Chingis-khan to place itself upon the top of its adversary. Upon witnessing this, the king and his band of Tartars marched with exultation to the attack of the army of Un-Khan, broke through its ranks and entirely routed it " (10).

This omen of the reeds is a very pretty piece of work and can be performed with guaranteed result if the winning piece is pared a trifle thinner and the reeds are laid on a dry placque (a shield) in the sun. No doubt the astrologers were aware of the numbers and condition of the opposing forces and the odds must have been obviously in favour of the tougher, hardened fighting men of Chingis Khan, upon whom the psychological effect of the winning reed would be to stimulate their zeal. Soldiers of that type would be much bolder if they were confident of winning.

Thus their rites and insignia would accompany them to new lands, suppressing local observances here and accommodating them there, but always becoming more and more a feature of the communal life.

Apply the same development to the practise of agriculture (tools and crops), metal and wood work, building, dress and decoration, and the development of a culture is begun which includes also a crude code ensuring some degree of social standard

by reason of the perils for offence. The terrors of life after death based on associations of nature's known terrors such as ice and fire, and extravagant elaborations of human tortures, as well as the ordinarily understood pains, of inordinate indulgence, of thirst and hunger, abdominal pains, etc., are proffered as punishments in several Plutonic regions, residence in which can only be offset by living a blameless life. Since only a teacher can lead the life which results in progressive spiritual sojourn in regions not of the hellish type, the benefits of which can only be appreciated, incidentally, by teachers and prophets, this implies a very subtle reservation. Allow the influence thus obtained to affect the seasonal festivals and to depict the characters of the figurative agencies of natural phenomena, and there begins to emerge something approximating the earliest Tibetan culture outlined.

The Tibetan New Year was formerly celebrated when the grain had " been harvested since two months, and the yak and sheep flesh since four to six weeks ", and the days first show signs of lengthening. This is a period which has been celebrated by every nation of any culture. The date was altered to make it a spring carnival for the Buddhists analogous with the feast of Bacchus of Greece, and the *Holi* of India. The rain deities, the dragons of the sky, are worshipped at a time corresponding to the break of the rains in India. The appearance at early dawn of Sirios, the Dog Star, is the occasion of another water festival approximating the end of the rainy season.

A feast of lights takes place when the days are shortest, and is associated with the native festival found in other nations at this season. The Mongols have their Fire and other deities.

The old year, with all its bad luck, is despatched with rites of a clearly demonistic character combined with the well-known " devil " dance, now modified and incorporated with incidents in the history of the Buddhist church. The New Year's eve is comparable with that of Scotland, but lasts almost for a month.

" And so they go on, feast following feast, till the end of the year when the pantomime and carnival commences."

" Up till the seventh century Tibet was inaccessible even to the Chinese. The Tibetans of this prehistoric period are seen, from the few glimpses that we have of them in Chinese history about the end of the sixth century, to have been rapacious savages and reputed cannibals, without a written language, and followers

of an animistic and devil-dancing or Shamanist religion, the *Bon*, resembling in many ways the Taoism of China " (1).

III

Long, long ago a certain pastoral tribe dwelt in the northern countries of Jorza and Bargu where there were extensive plains, good pastures, large rivers and plenty of water. They had no fixed habitation and no sovereign of their own, but were tributary to a powerful prince to whom they paid, as yearly tribute, the tenth part of the increase of their cattle.

In the process of time the tribe multiplied so exceedingly that this prince, becoming apprehensive of their strength, began to divide them into different bodies ; settling them in different parts of the country and also sending drafts of some few hundred to quell rebellions in any of the provinces subject to him.

At length, becoming sensible of the slavery to which he attempted to reduce them and seeing that nothing short of their final ruin was in contemplation, they adopted the measure of moving from the places they then inhabited and proceeded in a northerly direction across a wide desert until they felt assured that the distance afforded them security, when they refused any longer to pay the accustomed tribute.

Some time after the migration to this place they proceeded to elect for their king, one of approved integrity, great wisdom, commanding eloquence and eminent for his valour.

Thus did the Tartars attain their independence and elect Temujin to be their head.

The first place in which the Tartars established their residence in remote time, was called " black sand " (in contrast to sandy steppes) written as Kara-korum, and they surrounded it with a strong rampart of earth.

No traces of this city have been visible for many centuries, but in D'Anville's map the plains of Jorza and Bargu, as well as the site of " black sands ", is indicated in the vicinity of Lake Baikol.

The fame of the good and great qualities of their leader spread abroad, so that all the Tartars of adjacent countries placed themselves under his command. How, being ambitious of emerging from the deserts and wildernesses with which he was surrounded, he trained his adherents to be warriors and so

rendered himself master of cities and provinces, is a story of further occasion.

Temujin, who from this time when he obtained command of the Mongol armies must be called Chingis Khan, at length met his erstwhile ruler—Prince Un-Khan, who was a Christian—in the battle of the reeds already quoted. After the victory which entailed also winning Un-Khan's kingdom, Chingis Khan espoused Un-Khan's daughter and begot four sons to found the line of the Tartar kings.

The strength and manifold direction of the subsequent conquests by Chingis Khan and his sons have affected the cultures of the old world to the present day.

Of the four sons the eldest, called Juji, died during the life of his father, but left a son Batu, who by his conquests in Russia, Poland and Hungary, became the terror of Europe. The second son, Jagatai, held only the country of the Usbek Tartars. The third son, Oktai, was named by Chingis to be his successor as the supreme head of the dynasty—the first " kaan ". He controlled the original home of the Mongols and also of the then conquered portions of northern China. The fourth son was called Tuli. He also begat four sons, one of whom, named Mangu, sent Hulagu his brother with an army, to conquer the countries of Persia, Chaldea and most of Syria. Hulagu founded the great dynasty of the Moghuls of Persia, but died during the pursuance of a war in Sechuan in China. His brother Kublai, who was with him at the time, assumed command of the armies there and soon after was chosen to be the fifth Grand Khan. This was the Grand Khan Kublai to whom Marco Polo gave seventeen years of honourable service from A.D. 1275 to 1292, and of whose achievements he treats in his book.

Kublai subdued the kingdom of Southern China, annexed it to his own and became the first Emperor of China. One of his acts, which is relevant here, was the creating of a pope of the Lama of the Saskya monastery in Tibet, in the thirteenth century A.D.

Chingis Khan appears identical with the son of a warlike king who arose in Tibet in the seventh century, and established his authority over the other bold clans of Central Tibet. The son, Sron Tsan Gampo, harassed the western borders of China so that the Emperor, T'aitsung of the Tang dynasty, was glad to come to terms with him and gave him as bride, in A.D. 641, the

Princess Wench'eng of the Imperial house. This princess was a Buddhist, and through her interest Buddhism was first introduced into Tibet. The new belief lapsed after his death in the middle of the seventh century until one of his descendants sent to India for a Buddhist priest to establish again the order in Tibet. The result of this introduction was not so much Buddhism, but a Tantrik form of it which is called Lamaism. The teacher was a native of Udyana or Urgyan, north-west of Kashmir, a region famed for the proficiency of its priests in sorcery, exorcism and magic. " On his arrival in A.D. 747 he vanquished all the chief devils of the land, sparing most of them on their consenting to become defenders of his religion while he on his part guaranteed that in return for such services they would be duly worshipped and fed " (1). The *guru* who came was called *Ugyan*—a corruption or local tonguing of his town name (cf. the modern name common in the country *Ugyen* in Sir Ugyen Wan Chuk, K.C.I.E., late Maharaja of Bhutan, and Raja Ugyen Dorjie, his Prime Minister, also deceased)—and " his most powerful weapons in warring with the demons were the *Vajra* (Tibetan—*dor-je*), symbolic of the thunderbolt of India (Jupiter), or spells from the Mahāyāna gospels " (1). From this it is seen that such books as *The Land of the Thunderbolt* accept without question as a typically Tibetan emblem one which is Indian perhaps, but certainly not Tibetan or Chinese in original association.

As logical a symbol is the swastika, the mystic fly foot cross of the Bon religion. " It is one of the most widely diffused of archaic symbols, having been found at Troy and among ancient Teutonic nations as the emblem of Thor. . . . It is especially associated with the divinity of Fire as representing the two cross pieces of wood which, by friction, produces fire " (1). In adopting this emblem the *Bon* have turned the ends in the reverse direction.

The range of wall paintings and images in temples throughout Bhutan contain an interesting medley of portraits with Aryan and Mongol features sometimes combined or associated with Bon, Tantrik, Vedic and purely Buddhist symbols as well as forms of pure Chinese mural decoration often framed in cross and key patterns based on the swastika, or bands of colours (the significance of which is considered further on). The guru proceeded to Tibet by way of Kamrup (Gauhati) in north-east Bengal, near which town is Hajo hill 26° 11′ 18″ north and 91° 47′ 26″ east, a place of natural fire (6) and traversed one of the eastern valleys

of Bhutan to get to his destination. Places where he halted in this passage, and gave manifestations of his powers, have had shrines built about them and are still revered. The shape of these shrines again are based on the stupas or topes (Caitya) of northern India which, in original form, are a simple and massive hemisphere (the name Caitya—*garbha*—means "womb") of masonry crowned with a square capital and surmounted by an umbrella, the symbol of royalty in almost every continent. The capitals have often eyes painted on them like the sacred eyes met with in ancient Greek, Roman and Egyptian vases, etc. (believed to be connected with sun worship) and are surmounted by a series of thirteen tapering steps typical of the thirteen heavens of the Buddhists, being finally capped by an emblem which may be a crescent moon, a flame leaping from a ball or a lotus flower. Some of the "chortens" are like those of Japan in that they are composed of five shapes symbolic of the elements into which the body is resolved at death, a cube—the earth, a sphere—water, a cone—fire, a crescent—the inverted vault of the sky, and a tapering grenade—ether.

IV

Although oracles often fail to recognize the limitations of their power over nature they must realize that their work is based on chance, so they safeguard it by calling it luck and issue charms to reduce the odds as it were. The explanation or legend of earth movements was based on vague memories handed down for countless generations (and distorted in the passage of time) of primaeval lizard-like creatures emerging from their wallows or lying up in cliff caverns. Herein lies a basis for the traditional dragon, linked with softer-skinned snakes of less harsh climes. These malignant creatures needed propitiation of some sort. The lakes of Tibet, although many, are decreasing still in size (Naga worship still holds in India), while the only known creature comparable to the dragon is found in Komono.

Nomads of the steppes whereon wild asses graze would hold their beasts of transport in high esteem (the gypsy still calls his son "little horse"). As the "*long* horse" of China, where it is symbolic for grandeur, has been adopted into Tibetan mythology, albeit in quite a different spirit, so that it has become the lucky "wind horse" which carries prayers from the prayer flags away to Nirvanah for the benefit (or luck) of the erector (so ably set out

by Waddell (1), page 412), so it is as possible for the gradual association of saurian and equine memories to have originated the dragon.

In conjunction with the dragon another mythical creature called the Garuda is formulated to offset its malignancies, and these two are almost invariably associated one to counteract the other. This may be seen on buildings where Garudas are placed on the corners to nullify the effects of dragons placed elsewhere on the walls. " Anyone who like myself (Waddell) has seen the Garuda (namely the Adjutant or Stork) devouring snakes must realize why the Indians fixed upon such a homely simile to represent their myth " (1, p. 396). This can be seen as frequently on so-called Tibetan teapots, but here again Indian influence creeps in, bringing on occasion the elephant in place of the Garuda. This creature is invested by the Chinese with properties for the different parts of its body, and the Lamas seem to have adopted this idea.

From the fact that it is the feathers of the peacock, an emblem of nobility in China and India, which are placed in vessels on altars and incorporated about mirrors and fans, it is now suggested that the outstanding glories of this bird would lend themselves better to emblification. In any case the influence is foreign to Tibet although pheasants with almost as gay colouring abound in adjacent forests (cf. the Garuda on Siamese Air Mail stamps).

The use of colours in paintings is based upon a group of colours used collectively, and often in a definite order of association. They are white, red, yellow, green and blue. Their origin, in the case of red and yellow, may be ferrugineous earths, or derived from the juice of *Bixa orellana*, *Artocarpus integrifolia*, both Indian plants, the stamens of the saffron crocus or the madder plant ; blue dyes are obtainable from a species of *Indigofera* (the Indigo plant), Indian and Chinese, white from a porcelain clay. Purple, another commonly used colour, is known to be obtained from the fruits of temperate hill brambles and also from those of *Phytolacca acinosa* plants of which have been seen growing near the weaving sheds in Bhutan, having grown from the seed of crushed and discarded fruits.

Three colours are considered to be the spectrum colours of the rainbow—red, yellow and blue, another three are white for gods, red for goblins, and black for devils. Four are sometimes

associated with the cardinal points as mythical colours—north yellow, south green, east white, and west red, or in the case of white, yellow, green and red also associated with the furies and consorts of demons. Five are variously grouped—associated with the five celestial buddhas in order of precedence, white for those of space, blue for those of the air, golden-yellow for the earthly ones, red for those of light, and green for those of the water. These colours are also associated in the same definite allocation to the syllables of sacred phrases. Astrologers are said to associate them as follows—wood green, fire red, earth yellow, iron white, water blue.

The main buildings of Bhutan are of the Tibetan square, quadrangle block type with tall tapering walls above which the low-angled, almost flat roofs are poised on huge rafters, the actual roofing consisting of several layers of split pine, which is naturally grooved in the splitting, held down by tie-poles which are held in position by many stones. The walls are made of mud and stones packed down between moulding planks and, varying in thickness, are broadest based to get the greatest height. This is perhaps a development of the mud wall raised by Mongols around their camps of skin tents, partly for wind-break and, surmounted by thorns, to keep out unwanted animals or bipeds. The proportion of height and width of wall and taper seems to be remarkably constant. The walls are whitewashed with a broad band of maroon colour, which is again of constant proportion and position to the eaves, ornamented with occasional large circular discs in while or gold, and, of course, a Garuda is often fixed on the corners. Panelling, such as is to be seen in similar positions and in comparable proportion on Chinese temples, was not noticed. The ends of beams may be worked by dicing and painting either in plain colour or symbolic design into a continuous and attractive frieze. The smaller houses are made with more vertical walls of a wooden framework filled in with clay and whitened. Windows, in both cases, are unglazed but fitted with sliding wooden shutters, the tops of the frames being cut to a triple arch comparable to Saracenic design, and in the case of the large buildings built out from the walls as to permit of control of their base in times of assault. Sanitary arrangements are facilitated by such structures, one emplacement having holes in the floor of the window and disposal being at the mercy of the elements or by dogs and pigs which haunted the spot.

Groves of trees, usually Cypress (*Cupressus funebris*) favoured for their aromatic wood, are often planted near the larger buildings. In Indian Buddhist writings the name *Sangharama* (the resting place of the clergy) is more applicable to a grove of trees than a monastery to which it is applied, and this planting together with the reverence for several very ancient specimens of cypress about the country is another link with the Indian Buddhists, although the plant is Chinese. Lines of willows are sometimes planted on moist banks near the main buildings and also occasional groups of poplars by a monastery, but the forests are naturally regenerated, and the felling of big trees is controlled by the chief officials, who cut according to requirements for buildings and bridges, etc. The main crops of the fields are maize and rice on elevations below six thousand feet ; wheat and buck-wheat on elevations from six to ten thousand feet, with patches of cucumbers, potatoes, *eleusine* for spirit making, turnips and egg plants. In hardly any case is the plant indigenous, and its origin and introduction is wrapt in the darkness of ages. Buck-wheat has the best claim to be indigenous (2).

The cultivation of rice, with the science of water control, which necessitates the bringing of water from side streams along the hillsides to the fields, often crossing the valley on the way (in one case its conduit was incorporated in a bridge), and the high standard of cultivation that a terraced hillside implies with its working of the soil, making of " bunds ", levelling of terrace floors, flooding and withholding water as required as well as the handling of a crop requiring very special treatment, even though the total acreage is tremendous, in the various countries where it is grown, indicates an influence as ancient as it is successful. One which was certainly never brought from the Tibetan steppes and yet was used before the Indian influence, as it is understood, came into play. Or may it be that the influence was aboriginal Indian, while Tibet was more dominated by the increased waters which its still shrinking lakes indicate ? . . . or as early Chinese.

V

So the Bhutanese appear as an amalgam of two or three races : broad-faced and stocky in stature, long-faced and tall, or of small build with oval heads, wearing kilted Tibetan (?) dresses woven of several grades of fibre from indigenous (?) plants, or wool,

ornamented with coloured threads woven and applied in embroidery of various colours in definite association and in patterns not as yet allocated, living in houses which are of a steppe-country type decorated after an apparently Chinese fashion, practising a religion which is a blend of Tibetan, Chinese and Indian influence, protecting their land in a way that implies attack from both India and Tibet, and sitting amid fields of crops common to vast areas outside of their own continent. The Bhutanese trade more extensively with Tibet than India, and hold themselves to a considerable extent aloof from both in politics and religion.

Their system of administration is successful in that there is no particular discontent among the people, and, now that warring between the governors of the different valleys has ceased, should make for prosperity in spite of the fact that twenty years ago there were no European timepieces in the land, shops and money-lenders practically non-existent, and for that reason few monetary tokens circulating. They have a culture and social standard that conforms to the best tradition without the influence of any religion except their form of Buddhism. The latter, it is true, may seem to make a drain upon the country's men, material, labour and food, yet is still an incentive to progressive work and simple pleasure. It is doubtful, however, if they can continue thus. Their neighbours, anxious to enable them to meet the world, are educating the young men in a new school; and a new tradition and a much more complex one is being imbibed. Foreign clothes in non-bhutanese weave, design and colour are appreciated for their novelty and their use spreads. (Modern hairdressing can put a permanent wave in Mongol hair with the loss of so much national character.)

New connections mean new ideas, and with the introduction of commercial ways of thought and mayhap proselytizing by a religion whose professors seem to have varying standards among themselves, is it to be wondered at that the descendants of the oracles curse and condemn the encroachments upon their creed (which has for so long kept them happily sustained) by such things as covetousness of foreign clothes and habits, and the amelioration (*sic*) of their arts and crafts by aniline dyes, magazine pictures and mass-produced earthen, enamel and iron ware of no historic tradition except the royal colour of the building where they are sold, arts, which have developed to a standard that is both good and high because it is based on a tradition of craftsmanship.

They do find solace in the " turn of the Wheel ", but can they be expected to trace a connective thread in a kaleidoscope?

R. E. COOPER.

Edinburgh.

REFERENCES

(1) *Buddhism of Tibet*, L. A. Waddell.

(2) *L'Origine des Plantes Cultivées*, A. De Candolle.

(3) *Man*, 1933, No. 131, R. E. Cooper.

(4) *Nepal*, Vol. I, P. Landon.

(5) *Notes Roy. Bot. Gard. Edin.*, Vol. 18, pp. 67-118, R. E. Cooper.

(6) *Posthumous Papers, Journal of W. Griffith*, McLelland.

(7) *Sikhim and Bhutan*, J. C. White.

(8) *Tibet, Past and Present*, C. Bell.

(9) *Trans. Bot. Soc. Edin.*, Vol. 27, pp. 13-54, Kingdon Ward.

(10) *Travels of Marco Polo.*