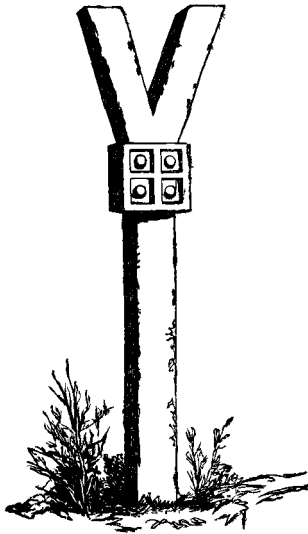


6. DIMĀPŪR.

DEAR SIR,—As I remarked at the time, I was extremely pleased to note as the chief feature of the Dimāpūr ruins, described to-day by Surgeon-Captain F. H. Burton Brown, some curious Y-shaped stones, and I now send you a facsimile of a drawing I made in the year 1870, and attached to my Report on the Hill Tracts of Arakan, of a similar wooden post common outside the villages of the Mrs.



The following is the paragraph which explains it:—
26. “During the dry weather numerous feasts are given at which large numbers of cattle are killed and eaten, and rice-beer and spirits consumed. It is a mark of distinction amongst them to have it said ‘that they have killed so many head of cattle at a feast.’” The largest number I have heard of was 150.

The gayals, buffaloes, and oxen are tied up to a post and speared behind the right shoulder, but other animals have

their throat cut. Dogs are castrated when young for use at these feasts.

The post used by the Mros is Y-shaped, and, just below the fork, carved so as to represent two or more breasts. There is some peculiar significance attached to this symbol, both by the Mros and 'Kamies, and it is often carved on the posts of herdmen's houses and the house ladder. As with most of these customs, I have not been able to discover the real meaning of this symbol; the only answer one gets is, "It is a custom inherited from our forefathers." It appears to be, however, an emblem of fecundity. The 'Kamies and Chins do not carve their posts, but set them up rough, and in the Chin villages I have observed rough stones.

It is, I think, clear from the above that these Mros must at one time have been intimately acquainted with the customs of the inhabitants of Dimāpūr, and the question arises as to whether this post is derived from intercourse with Brahmans, or one peculiar to the worshippers of the spirits of the forest and the stream. Unfortunately, I have no note as to the names given to it by the various tribes.

It will be noted that these people *do not use it for the insertion of the victim's neck*, and that the stones at Dimāpūr would have been too large for that purpose. The carvings on the Dimāpūr stones, too, seem to show that they were used for animal sacrifice and not human. Can we be sure that the round pillars were also unstained with human blood? I fear not. Some of them were probably what the Burmese call Tu-raing posts, which are planted near the gates of a palace or city. In the story of Prince Sri Gutta of Madhūra, it is said that King Samuddha "made his city secure with fortifications, moats, barbicans, palisades, gates, and tu-raing posts (Skr. *torāṇa* ?)."

A description of what these are is to be found in the "Burman: his life and notions," by Shway Yoe, pp. 476, 477—

"On the foundation of a new capital, there are always a certain number of people buried alive. The idea is that

they become *nat-thehn* (guardian spirits); that their spirits haunt the place where they were put to death, and attack all persons approaching with malevolent intentions."

"When the foundations of the city [Mandalay] wall were laid, fifty-two persons, of both sexes and of various age and rank, were consigned to a living tomb. Three were buried under each of the twelve gates, one at each of the four corners, one under each of the palace gates, and at the corners of the timber stockade, and four under the throne itself." And this was in 1858 A.D. ! "Along with the four human beings buried at the corners of the city were placed four jars full of oil, carefully covered over and protected from any damage that might come from the weight of earth pressing down on them."

"In 1880 it was found that the oil in two of the jars was either completely dried up or had leaked out. At this time a terrible scourge of small-pox was decimating the town, and two of the royal house, King Theebaw's infant son, his only child, and the ex-Pagahn Min, had fallen victims."

"At the instance of the Pohnna Woon, it was resolved that the number of victims should be the highest possible: a hundred men, 100 women, 100 boys, 100 girls, 100 soldiers, and 100 foreigners." So great was the panic that everyone began to fly from the capital, which so frightened the ministers that the whole thing was countermanded and denied.

However, it is still declared that victims were buried under each of the posts at the twelve gates. "Each of these posts bears an image of an animal from one of the seals of the king, and before the post sits a figure of a beeloo [Rakshas] with a thick club."

As far as I know, however, the Y-shaped post is not used by either Burmese or Talaings, and consequently has not been introduced by the Puṇṇā¹ (𑄎𑄚𑄚𑄚) astrologers.

¹ Shway Yoe's transliterations of Puṇṇā and Pagan are incorrect.

These Puṇṇās are a Brahminical sect who were brought to Burma from Manipūr.

It has been stated that a post of this kind has been seen in the Nāga villages. If it be the Brahminical "Yupo" mentioned in the 'Kaṇḍahāla Jātaka and elsewhere, it would probably be still found in Manipūr, which is still under Brahminical rule.

Mr. B. Houghton, in January, 1895, gave two lists of 'Kamie words, but he does not show whether the Mro has any affinity to it. My impression is that they are connected rather closely, though the two tribes differ considerably in their character, habits, and appearance.

The 'Kamies are tall, light-coloured, well-dressed (for hill-men), and prone to improve; whereas the Mros are dirty, darker, and less inclined to improvement.

The 'Kamies build large and commodious houses, whereas those of the Mros are small. In fact, one would be led to infer that though these two tribes had migrated from the north together, the 'Kamies had held a higher position than the Mros before they were forced to shift their habitat.

I see nothing in these stones to lead one to suppose that they were connected with either Brahminical or Buddhist cults; and it is clear from Rajendralāla Mitra's description (Journal of Bengal Asiatic Society, 1872, i, p. 184) and description found elsewhere, that the "Yupo" must be of *wood* and *pointed*, not *forked*.

It seems to me that if round-capped stones are found in front of gates and elsewhere, as described by Shway Yoe, they are "Tu-raings"; but if in rows headed by the forked stones, they are a development of the ancient "Nat" (spirit) worship of the Nāga tribes.

In Sir A. Phayre's "History of Burma," p. 33, it is stated that the system of Nāga worship which prevailed in the north of Burma, A. D. 1010, "excited the indignation and horror of Anoarathā," king of Pagan, and that the priests of this religion, who were called Arî အရည်, lived in monasteries like Buddhist monks, but their practices

resembled those attributed to the votaries of the sect of Vāmācharis in Bengal. I do not know where these practices are recorded, or what may have been the practices of Vāmācharis, but the word အရပ် is evidently the same as the Pali *araññaṃ* (forest), and should be transliterated *Arañ* or *Ariñ*, and not *Arî*.

The following questions would naturally arise:—

1. Were these *Arañ Nāga* priests or merely hermits?
2. Do the forked posts represent a forked stick used for the purpose of controlling serpents?
3. Why is the tree *Mesua ferrea* called *Nāga Kesura*, and was it supposed to have any power over serpents?
4. If so, are the flowers carved on these stones, which look somewhat like a lotus, really the flowers of the *Nāga Kesura*?

My notes on the Hill tribes of Arakan were published in the *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, vol. ii, 1872.—Yours truly,

R. F. ST. ANDREW ST. JOHN.

March 13, 1897.

7. TĀO.

DEAR SIR,—I quite share Professor Douglas' regret that he was unable to be present on the occasion of my reading a paper "On the most appropriate equivalent for the word 'Tāo' as used by Lāo-tsze"; for had he been, and also heard the few remarks I made at the close of the proceedings in reply to objections, I feel convinced he would have seen reason to modify the views put forward in the letter to the President read at the meeting, and published *in extenso* in the report of the proceedings. As it is, I think it is only due to myself, as well as to those who