

NOTES ON
THE THADOU KUKIS

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EDITED

WITH INTRODUCTION, NOTES, APPENDICES,
ILLUSTRATIONS AND INDEX.

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The memories they possess for these matters are wonderful, as often far distant persons unknown to each other go through the same long list of names without an error.

The prevailing trait of self-importance and self-exaltation among the Thadous is understood when it is remembered that for long years they composed the levies of the Manipur State and were allowed to do very much as they pleased with all among whom they took up their abode. At times their ambitions have got the better of them and they broke out in open rebellion in 1918-19. Their tails are not down and I have heard it said that they hope to become a "Raj" some day.

The Thadous' developed, or perhaps natural, arrogance and truculence¹ has not abated much since that rebellion.

He is very litigious and his inclination to form small villages anywhere and everywhere with no respect of others' lands is a source of trouble administratively.

¹ When I first made the Thado's acquaintance and for years after, I regarded him merely as an administrative nuisance. His habit of splitting up his villages into scattered hamlets of two or three houses in the jungle, so that this year's village is never where you expected to find it, and his irritating way of making a fuss about the unpaid price of his defunct second cousin's great-grandfather's sister's bones are not calculated to endear him to a district officer. The operations against the rebellious Thado of the Manipur State in 1918 and 1919 led to a very much better acquaintance with him, and from then onwards the more I have seen of the Thado, the more I have respected him and the better I have liked him. For pluck, intelligence, straight-forwardness and cheerfulness he stands high among his neighbours. I cannot say so much for his industry or his sobriety. He is a bad cultivator, and much behind the surrounding tribes in agriculture, though as much ahead of them in such domestic arts as weaving or working in metal. When there is any killing afoot, he is bloodthirsty. Little game survives where the Thado settles. A few small villages, located for a few years in the Ti-Ho valley in the east of the Naga Hills, destroyed all the rhinoceros, almost all the wild mithun (*Bos gaurus*), all the elephant which did not escape back to Burma, and a very large proportion of the previously numerous sambhar (*Rusa Aristotelis*) there. In war the Thado, when he gets the chance, often carries out massacres on a fairly large scale, partly perhaps because he enjoys killing, partly, at any rate, from deliberate "frightfulness," adopting that method of cowing the other side. Thus during the Thado rebellion referred to, Thongngam, brother of the Dongngel chief Chengjapao, and acting probably under his instructions, joined with one of the Haokip chiefs from Somra to punish the Tangkhul village of Kashom for failing to supply the rebels with rice. The visitors billeted themselves through the village from house to house and got food and shelter for the night. The next morning their hosts awoke to find their weapons impounded. The men were all tied up and laid out in rows, the Khullakpa's wife being tied to the post in front of his house. The men were then butchered by gun, spear or dao according to the fancy of the various executioners, the Khullakpa's wife being presented with her husband's head and her release, and the women and children, who had naturally run off to hide, were partially rounded up and added to the holocaust. Altogether about 40 were killed. Fortunately affairs of this sort were not very frequent but there is no doubt but the Thado is a brigand by disposition.—(Ed.)