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A SELECTED STUDY ON CHIN LIFE STYLE

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research paper is to present a selected study on chin life style . The aim of this paper is to give a guide line of reference sources for the researchers who need to know about chin life and culture status. In this paper, all of chin life are divided into two groups. They are domestic life and social life. Under one of these groups is domestic occupation, housing, animal husbandry, division, family ties, courtesy, practice of cooperation and entertainment. The result of this study will be useful to bibliographers, researchers, librarians and who interested in Chin life style. So, it is useful as a reference tool for the researchers.

1.Introduction

There are many races in Myanmar. Such as, Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Chin, Mon, Myanmar, Rakhine and Shan are altogether stay in Myanmar. Among them, Chin are included in one of the race.

Chin group of tribes of Mongol origin, occupying the Southernmost part of the mountain ranges separating Myanmar from India. Chin villages, often of several hundred houses, were traditionally self-contained units, some ruled by councils of elders, others by headmen. There were also hereditary chiefs who exercised political control over large areas and received tribute from cultivators of the soil.

The Chin have much in common with the Kuki, Lushai, and Lakher people and speak related Tibeto-Myanmar languages. They practice polygyny and trace their descent through the paternal line: young people are expected to marry outside the paternal clan.

Traditional religion comprises a belief in numerous deities and spirits, which may be propitiated by offerings and sacrifices. Christian missions have made many converts. The tribes have retained their identity, however, and Myanmar influence has remained limited.¹

1.1 Aims and Objectives

1. To give a guideline of reference source the Chin people life style.
2. To extract the valuable and high standard of the role of Chin.
3. To be regarded as a reliable reference for future use.

¹ *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica : Macropedia. 15th ed. . s.v. " Chin ."*

1.2 History of Chin

Chin State in Western Upper Myanmar, occupying an area of 13,907 sq mi and lying along Myanmar's border with India and Bangladesh. The Chin Hill dominate the state, with Mount Victoria the highest point at 10,150 ft. Designated in 1949, Chin's boundaries were determined by its ethnography and topography to provide a homeland for the Chin tribal group in the Chin Hills. The Chin a variety of peoples with related languages, came originally from India. They belong to the Tibeto-Myanmar linguistic group. The Chin in the north are more settled than those in the south. After World War II, Lushai Chin from India migrated to the region to join the Myanmar Chin, possibly to escape famine and the dislocation of war.²

2. A Study on the Chin Domestic Life and Social Life

2.1 Domestic Life

2.1.1 Domestic Occupation

They are essentially an agriculturalist. A few Chin carry on petty trade and commerce in that they collect goods from house to house and sell these at another village while visiting house to house. A few engage in iron work. Therefore, a blacksmith is still seen at every village. Every housewife owned a handloom and clothes were woven for house members. The Chin male took the responsibility for providing meat by hunting wild animals and fishing.

2.1.2 Housing

As the Chin homes are on hilly country the sites chosen for houses are generally steep and on a slope. Therefore, earth has to be removed to create sufficient flat land upon which to build. An ordinary house was usually about 30 feet long and 15 feet wide and consisted of a front verandah which was open and used as a visiting room and weaving room for women. The second is the inner part which was used for cooking and sleeping with stores for food. The house had no windows. Only two doors; one was at the front and the other at the rear. Some houses had an additional door in the right central part of a building and was used for throwing out refuse. Every house has an open space at the front of which is used for keeping and utensils. Table, chair and benches are never used. The only furniture was the cane-stool.

² *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica : Macropedia*, 15th ed. . s.v. " Chin ."

2.1.3 Animal Husbandry

The main purpose of animal husbandry among the Chins was for their use in sacrifice and feasts. Among livestock, the Mithun is the most valuable animal. Western writers used to describe the Chin culture as Mithun culture. Though the Chin might own buffalo, cows or other domestic animals, no animal other than Mithun could be used for sacrifice. A Chin's wealth is calculated on the number of Mithun he owns and he slaughter them for feasts. The price is so high that ordinary people cannot afford one.

Other animals, like buffalo, cows, goats, pigs, dogs and chickens also are reared. Pigs are reared and the grain for rice beer. Horses and donkeys are reared for transportation.

2.1.4 Division

The ancient Chin had a self-supporting home economy. The family is the smallest organization in their society, and has to produce everything it needs for self-sufficiency for the year. There is division of labor in the family, in agriculture, animal husbandry, hunting and weaving.

As the Chin society practices a kind of paternalism, the father is the head of the family. He takes a responsibility for the family. His duty is to find the land to farm, deal with others in family matters, hunting and felling trees for the farm.

The mother is responsible to help the husband. She rears the children, cooks and manages the entire household, weaving the clothes needed by her family members. She must prepare tobacco liquid for her husband.

Male children help the father to fell trees for the field, in hunting and guarding the grain from the birds before harvesting. The daughters help mother to cook, carry water from the wells in gourd pitchers, bamboo pitchers. The mother instructs her young daughters in the art of weaving.

The entire family works responsibly together in the field, particularly in sowing, clearing weeds, harvesting and carrying crops home.³

³ Sui Hliang, " The history and the development of Chin language and literature" (Diploma Thesis. . University of Yangon, 2004) . 9-15.

2.2 Social Life

2.2.1 Family Ties

Social relationships among the Chin is counted from the paternal side. When a girl marries she becomes part of her husband's family. In Chin society the clan is the strongest relationship. A clan means those descendants of one common father. Women cannot take the family name of her father. She can only take her husband's family name. The clan or family relationship is so strong that even when a man travels to a distant country or a village, he inquires for his own clan to lodge there, even if they have never met before. These two men who do not know each other come together as they belong to the same family and regard each other as brothers.

2.2.2 Courtesy

The Chins are a courteous people and they teach their children to be courteous. Children are taught to respect the elders. Parents teach their children to eat a little only when food is not sufficient so that the larger portion of food can be left for others. In hunting and fishing, when the booty is divided, the old folk, women and guests who are from another villages get the bigger portions.

The villagers will build a window's house from scratch. The field of the sick or the disabled is looked after by the whole village. When a big four-legged animal is brought in by a hunter, the whole village shares the meat. All villagers are automatically invited to weddings and to a feast. The entire village goes to mourn a dead person and young men take the responsibility for the burial. When the whole village goes fishing or hunting, the disabled or the sick who cannot attend are given their share of the catch or booty.

2.2.3 Practice of Cooperation

Although the Chins practice some of capitalism, and feudalism, the overall social structure was communal, particularly in fishing and hunting. The entire village came out to fish and they fished together using nets, or some poisonous bark or root of trees. Everyone is assigned a task and at last, the catch is gathered and divided equally among the people, reserving some larger portions for some selected older persons.

Besides this Chins practice helping each other in building their houses. Building houses are not the particular duty of one person but of all the villagers who help in the building by gathering materials like thatch and bamboo.

2.2.4 Entertainment

The Chins are simple, courteous and friendly people. Entertaining a visitor or a guest is compulsory for them. If the usual visitor comes to his house, the host never lets him leave without giving him some refreshment. The more important visitor is entertained with zu. The Chin will entertain his guests, even if it means borrowing.

The Chin has kept some dry meat or fish always as storage as fresh meat is not always available. The main purpose for keeping dry meat is to cook it for a guest who may come for a visit. The important guest is given chicken curry. A pig is killed for a more important guest and pork curry is prepared. For the most important guest a Mithun is killed and dinner is prepared in his honor.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, the Chins are those ethnic or linguistic or cultural grouping of people who commonly inherited the history, tradition and culture of zo. Thus now the term, Chin denotes a particular people having a social identity in relation to the historic development of the new nation called the Union of Republic of Myanmar.

Therefore, the journey of the revolution of life for Chins, surely will come to an end one day, yet it is still on her long tour. In the process of formulating common life, different people offered different ideas. Ideologies are so far so good until a better one is found. All are informative and somehow supportive. The best one or the most appropriate has been still in searching.

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