

# THE RED KAFIRS

BY

M. A. SHAKUR, B.A., M.R.A.S.,

*Curator, Peshawar Museum, Peshawar.*

WITH A FOREWORD

BY

Sardar Abdur Rab Nishtar.

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1946

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AS A PROOF OF HIS KEEN INTEREST IN  
ARCHAEOLOGY AND HIS DEEP LOVE  
FOR THE UPLIFT OF THE PEOPLE  
OF THIS PROVINCE AND OF THE  
TRIBAL AREAS, I RESPECTFULLY  
ASCRIBE ON THIS BOOKLET  
THE NAME OF Lt.-Col.  
G. L. MALLAM, C. I. E.,  
BAR - AT - LAW.



## F O R E W O R D

I T gives me a great pleasure to write a few lines in commendation of the delightful booklet produced by Mr. M.A. Shakur on the Red Kafirs. His archaeological studies of the wooden effigies of Kafirstan presented by H. H. the Mehtar of Chitral made him undertake a journey to this land and collect information about the extremely romantic people inhabiting it. Their remarkable physical features and their quaint customs and manners have a natural charm which presented in simple but graphic language will not fail to interest the reader. There are not many who realize that not far from the hills bordering the North-West Frontier Province there are such races and places of interest, untouched by any cultural influence from the outside, which recall some of the Stories of Arabian Night. They say that sometimes truth is stranger than fiction. Here is an example of it.

We are indebted to Mr. Shakur for making such valuable addition to our knowledge regarding this part of the world and the section of humanity living therein. I hope his example will inspire

others in exploring the hitherto neglected and forgotten areas surrounding them. Certainly here is a rich field for fresh findings of Geographical and Historical value.

Abdur Rab Nishtar.

Peshawar,  
4th. July 1946.

## P R E F A C E

A FEW wooden effigies presented to the Peshawar Museum by His Highness the Mehtar of Chitral inspired me to investigate into the history and culture of the people living in Kafiristan. A preliminary work on the subject enabled me to gather information which I read before the Delegates of the Indian History Congress at Hyderabad-Deccan in 1941 in the form of a paper. This interested them, especially Professor J. F. Bruce, Head of Department of History, University of the Punjab, who was presiding at the Sectional Meeting of the Session, and he encouraged me to conduct further researches in the field. So I undertook a journey to Kafiristan and collected fresh material for writing this pamphlet. Owing to shortage of paper as a result of World War II, its publication was postponed. The interest of Lt.-Col. G. L. Mallam, C. I. E., Bar-at-Law, Commissioner and Secretary to Government, Development Departments, N.-W. F. P. and Tribal Areas, in Archaeology has encouraged me to send it to the Press without further delay—

but nothing has been added to the subject matter then determined.

Though modest is the scope of this pamphlet, the readers would, doubtless, be interested to know of the manners and customs, beliefs and creeds, rites and ceremonies, speech and language of this strange and attractive people. Had it not been to the accounts left about them by a few European Officers (whose works I have made a free use of in preparing this pamphlet) they would still have been living in these mountain fastnesses not much known to the outside world. Presently they are coming in contact with civilised influences and hence they cannot preserve the custom and creeds of their ancestors. In spite of intense conservatism of their elders, there is a great revolution in the ideas of the younger generation of these Kafirs, and the future historians would find nothing of the old and picturesque in them if they change as fast as they are doing now; and the proof of what they had been would be what we can glean from these wooden effigies preserved here and there.

I shall be lacking in my duty if I do not thank Lt-Col. W. C. Leeper, O. B. E., the then

*Preface*

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Secretary to Government, N.-W. F. P., Development Departments, and Major K. C. Packman, the then Political Agent, Dir, Swat and Chitral, who readily agreed to my undertaking this journey to Kafiristan. My gratitude is also due to the late His Highness Captain Nasir-ul-Mulk, the Mehtar of Chitral, for his personal interest in the subject and providing me a strong escort and all facilities to move freely about in the Bomborat and Rumber valleys. My thanks are also due to Mr. Faramooz Khan who served me as interpreter among the Kafirs. And, last but not least in my admiration and gratitude I hold Captain and Mrs. D. G. Thornborough under whose hospitable roof I felt at home in a foreign land and whose company I fully enjoyed during my short stay in Chitral.

M. A. Shakur

Peshawar,  
18th. April 1946.



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# THE RED KAFIRS<sup>1</sup>

## CHAPTER I.

### TOPOGRAPHY

The Red Kafirs are the inhabitants of Kafiristan, a tract of country which literally means the 'land of infidels'. This is the name given to this country by its Musalman neighbours, because its inhabitants are idol worshippers. Its geographical position lies between latitude 35°. 30' and 36° North and from about longitude 70° to 71° 30' East. It is bounded by Badakhshan on the north, Chitral on the east, the Kuner Valley on the south and the Hindu Kush Range on the west. Its total area is about 5,000 square miles with a population of over 2,000,000.<sup>2</sup>

Geographical position, boundaries and area.

---

1. In Pashtu terminology *Red* here means *cruel*; and these Kafirs are called *Red* because they consider it a virtue and a deed in accordance with their religion to kill a Musalman. The term also sometimes means *staunch* or *conservative*.

2. The area and population of Kafiristan have considerably been reduced ever since these figures were recorded for the first time in 1895. Subsequently, a part of the country has been conquered by the Afghan Government which has been named *Nuristan* i. e., 'land of enlightenment'; and a part thereof has been occupied by His Highness the Mehtar of Chitral.

Moun-  
tains  
Fauna  
and  
Flora.

Kafiristan is a mountainous country consisting of an irregular series of valley, which are for the most part deep, narrow and tortuous, into which a varying number of still deeper, narrower and more inaccessible valleys, ravines and glens pour their torrent waters. Its mountain ranges which separate the main drainage valleys from one another are all of considerable altitude, rugged and toilsome. These mountains at the lower elevations are rich in fruit trees such as walnut, mulberry, apricot, apple, and are covered with wild olives and evergreen oaks. Grape vines are also plentiful. At higher elevations there are dense pine and fir (deodar) forests. The prairies of the deep valleys furnish rich pasturage which feed flocks of sheep and goats and herds of cattle. Numerous carpets of wild flowers are met with at different altitudes. Some of the dells are of the most romantic and picturesque description; others are bare ravined rocky defiles. Almost every kind of mountain scenery is to be met with in Kafiristan, from silent peaks and naked ridges, snow-fields and glaciers, to thickly wooded slopes echoing to the bleat and lowing of cattle and sheep, and wild vine and pomegranate thickets with tumultuous little streams bordering them.

Pheasants, the red legged partridge, as well as pigeons and doves abound. The chief wild animals of these mountains are the 'markhor' or wild goats which are extremely numerous, 'urial' (wild sheep), leopards and bears.

The important rivers of Kafiristan are the Alingar or Kao Bashgul, Manangul, Pittigul, Presun, Tsargul, Waigul, etc., which are each joined by many smaller tributaries. All these rivers pour their waters into the Kabul river, either directly to the south, as in the case of the Alingar, or after mingling their waters with those of the Kunar river at Arandu above Chigansarai. These rivers abound in fish which the Kafirs do not eat because they are considered to be unclean.

Rivers.

Being situated under the range of the Hindu Kush, the climate of Kafiristan is not hot in Summer and is extremely cold in Winter. The mountains remain snow-covered for more than five months in the year. In some of the Kafir valleys the absence of wind is remarkable. The rainfall is low and insufficient for the cultivation of crops which chiefly consist of wheat and millet of inferior quality. The inhabitants of the country largely depend on fruits and hunting.

Climate  
and rain-  
fall.

## CHAPTER II.

## HISTORY

It is in this country that there lives a race or a number of races which describe themselves as Arabs. There are tribes among them who hold that they originally came from Salarzai country. There are others who maintain that they are partly descended from the Arom people, and partly from the Jahiz. Some of the Western writers assign to them a Grecian origin. However there are no evidences such as rock inscription, ancient literature, coins, etc., to support either of these views. The only course which remains for a student of history is the comparative study of their language, their manners and customs, their religious ceremonies as well as their cranial measurements and other anthropometric observations. And the conclusion drawn from such a study has revealed the fact that they are neither the one nor the other. And, if there be any point or points of resemblance between these Kafirs and the ancient Greek sacrificial observances, and if certain of their domestic utensils such as the *Wai* wooden dish-stand may seem to be fashioned in Grecian style

or, if they drink wine in silver vases and use chairs and tables, it may fairly be conjectured that some of the Kafir tribes were, undoubtedly, influenced, like the ancient Indian population of Afghanistan, by the Greek colonists of Alexander the Great. But they are certainly not Greek in origin. There can be little doubt that the present dominant races of Kafiristan, i. e. the *Katir*, the *Kam*, and the *W'ai* are a number of Aryan tribes of Eastern Afghanistan who, from force<sup>1</sup> of circumstances, are living now in the same primitive state as before the commencement of the Muslim conquest of Asia.

The country they now occupy is divided into certain tribes that differ from one another in language, dress, manners and customs. The only connection they have with one another is in the fact that they are all non-Muslims. They describe the different parts of their country by the name of the different tribes that inhabit it. Thus the upper part of Kafiristan is called *Katirguli*, its middle portion *Waiguli* or *Muman* and the lower

Classifi-  
cation of  
Kafirs.

---

1. Because they refused to embrace Islam in the 10th century of the Christian Era and fled for refuge from the victorious Muslims to the hilly and inaccessible country of Kafiristan.

part *Bashguli*<sup>1</sup> or *Kam*. While the old division of Kafiristan into the countries held by *Siah Posh* and those inhabited by *Sufed Posh* is easier to understand.<sup>2</sup>

Siah-  
Posh

The *Siah Posh*, the black-robed Kafirs, are made up of several tribes, viz the *Katirs*, the *Madugul*, the *Kashtan*, the *Kam* and the *Gordesh*—among whom the *Katirs* inhabit many valleys and are entirely independent of one another. They live in several villages built of stone and wood and are divided into the following sub-sections:

1. The *Katirs* occupying the entire *Bashgul* valley.
2. The *Ktis* or *Katwar* living in the valley of the same name.
3. The *Kulam* inhabiting the whole of *Kulam* valley.
4. The *Ramgulis* populating the most western part of *Kafiristan*.

1. Col. Schomberg is of opinion that these two terms are mere invention of the British. To him it seems that the word *Siah Posh* stands for all kafirs and *Sufed Posh* for those who have embraced Islam and who are locally known as 'Sheikhs'.

2. However, the Chitralis refer to all Kafirs as 'Bashgulis' and the origin of this name seems to be a village 'Bazgul' situated in the *Bashgul* valley.

The next important *Siah Posh* tribe, i. e. the *Kam* inhabits the valley from the confines of the *Madugul* country to the *Kunar* valley and is subdivided into ten clans, viz. the *Garakdari*, the *Sukdari*, the *Bilezhedari*, the *Waidari*, the *Lanandari*, the *Kanaldari*, the *Gutkechdar*, and the *Batardari* are the largest, the *Demidari* are the wealthiest and *Utuhdari* are the priest producing tribes among them. But the main tribe as a whole, i. e. the *Kam*, as compared with the *Katirs*, hold together better and are greatly respected by the neighbouring tribes. They are described as polite and dignified and carry themselves with a free, independent and self-satisfied air.

The *Sufed Posh* that is the white-robed kafirs, consist of the *Presuns*, the *Wai* and the *Ashkund*, among whom the first two tribes stand out as of great importance. The *Presuns* tribe is very ancient and it inhabits the *Presungul* valley and is entirely different from the *Siah Posh*. These people are remarkable for their peaceful disposition. They are simple, industrious and capable of wonderful feats of endurance. They have patient stolid faces and wear very thick clothes.

The *Wai* people occupy a number of villages in the valley of the same name and are described

Sufed  
Posh

Wai

as brave, high spirited and very hospitable. They are also said to be very generous and are very highly spoken of by their neighbours.

Original  
races.

Of the primitive races of Kafiristan, the *Presuns* are the remnant of an ancient people, who are either subjugated or enslaved by the present dominant tribes. The remains of another ancient race are the *Jahiz* and the *Aroms*, who live at *Pittigul* in the valley of the same name, and at *Gourdesh* or *Istrat*. From inter-marriages with the *Kam* and others, they cannot now be distinguished from other Kafirs. But there is still a tradition that they once held possession of all the lower Bashgul valley, until the *Kam* invaded them from the West, and evicted or slew nearly the whole of the people they found there. It seems probable that the *Pittigul* and *Gourdesh*, being somewhat out of the direct path of the invader, were not called upon to resist the *Kam*; or perhaps they put up a better resistance than the rest of the inhabitants and finally amalgamated with the conquerors on more or less equal terms.

Government  
of  
Kafirs.

All these Kafirs are independent of one another but the affairs of each tribe are managed by a *Jast* or a Headman, who rules, in a more or less, absolute manner. Disobedience to the *Jast* is

punished by burning the house of the offender. The *Jast* himself must be a brave man and a good orator. Several *Jasts* together make a parliament or a *jirga*. On all questions of policy, whether external or internal, Kafirs of various clans sit together and discuss the matter but the opinion of the *Jasts* usually prevails. Besides *Jasts*, thirteen individuals are annually selected to act as Magistrates who are generally known as *Urir*. They regulate the amount of water that each agriculturist is to receive and keep the artificial water-courses in good order. They are responsible to see that no one picks or eats grapes or walnuts or other fruit before the appointed time. The penalty for disobedience is a fine which compensates the *Urir*s. The penalty for theft is fine of seven or eight times the value of the thing stolen. A murderer may atone for the shedding of blood by paying a large sum of money. The punishment for a murderous assault is payment of a large number of goats as compensation. The ordinary punishment for a man caught in adultery is a fine in cows. Besides, the authority exercised by the *Jast* and the *Urir*, the Kafirs are influenced very strongly by traditions and customs—the unwritten and even unspoken law of the people.

*The Red Kafirs*  
CHAPTER. III.  
GENERAL

Kafirs  
physique  
and fea-  
tures.

Kafirs are generally lightly-built men, who seem to be almost always in hard training. Their average height is 5'. 6". The shortest among them is just over 5' and the tallest is 6. 2". Their features are Aryan. Their noses, as a rule, are particularly well-shaped. The *Kam* and the *Wai* contain the handsomest people, especially the *Wai*. The *Katir* have few good-looking men and the *Presuns* are spoilt by their heavy and stupid look. There are distinct gradations in their types from the best-looking of the chief families to the shepherds, and so on down to the slaves. In the highest types, the men have well-shaped heads, good features and quiet steady eyes. Their cast of feature is grave, one might almost say intellectual. The lowest type of face is of two different kinds. There is the bird of prey type-hooked nose, low forehead, receding chin, quick-glancing, and close set eyes. In such cases the fore-head is particularly small being narrow and low, with the hair not unfrequently growing almost down to the eyebrows. The other variety of the degraded type is often seen among the slaves. It has stupid or crafty, dark, rounded, somewhat heavy features,

while the nose is badly shaped and coarse. Between the extremes of the highest and the lowest types there is every possible gradation and shape of features, colour of skin and size of head. The headmen, as a rule, are the best-looking of the race. The colour of the Kafirs is, on the whole, less fair than that of the upper classes of Chitral, and many Badakhshanis. Generally they do not approach the black races, but are equally removed from those with a white skin. In tint they resemble more the average inhabitant of the Punjab. Of the various Kafir tribes, the *Wai* seem to be the fairest,<sup>1</sup> while some of the *Katirs*, the *Kashtans* and the *Presuns* are the darkest. The darkness of their skin is attributed to the fact that the people use a fuel which gives forth a particularly grimy smoke, the effect of which seems to be seldom or never neutralised by washing. It is also partly due to the extreme cold climate, when some of them are particularly

---

1. The *Wai* have got the features of the Greek. This is due to the fact that this tribe which belong to the aristocratic class among the Kafirs had come in direct touch with the Bactrian Greeks under whose domination their country was for a considerable long period. There was undoubtedly a mixture of blood owing to intermarriages among them. This is the reason why they claim Greek descent even today.

reluctant to wash their faces.

The Kafirs, in short, are thoroughly Eastern in colour, as well as in every other respect. With very few exceptions, all Kafirs wear the "Karunch" or scalp lock, which is formed in the following way. The whole of the head is shaved except a round patch some 4" in diameter over the occiput, where it is not cut at all. A tiny lock in front of each ear is often permitted to remain also. Their hair is not very long, seldom more than 12" or 14" and, with very rare exceptions, is quite straight. The hair is usually extremely dirty and matted into a rat's tail. The crop of hair, in certain cases, on the head is prodigiously thick. They admire beards and love to dye them red as soon as they begin to become grey. The young men are particularly fond of applying antimony to their eyes. The Kafir women are, as a rule, short and of light built, with muscular limbs. Pretty faces are rare. Little girls are decidedly good-looking, but the hard field-work and constant exposure to all kinds of weather quickly darkens the complexion and makes it coarse. Their features are often good, and their types vary precisely as it does in the case of the men. They look powerful and are wonderful walkers and

capable of undertaking extremely long journeys carrying heavy loads. All Kafir women roll their hair up and confine it in some sort of a cap. Girls confine their locks with a double thread round the brows. The virgins wear a red fillet round their heads. Their head dress is usually decorated with cowries. The age of marriage among them is from 20 to 30 for the men and 15 to 16 for the women.

The whole dress of the common people among the Kafirs is composed of four goat skins, two of which form a vest, and two a kind of petticoat. The skins have long hair on the outside; the upper ones do not cover the arms; the whole is fastened on with a leathern belt<sup>1</sup>. They used to go bareheaded, unless they had killed a Mussalman.

Dress.

Their food is chiefly cheese, butter, honey and milk, with bread or a sort of suet pudding; they also eat flesh (which they like half raw); and the fruits which they grow. They wash their hands before eating and generally begin by some kind of grace. Both sexes drink wine to great excess. They drink during their meals and are elevated, but do not become quarrelsome by this indulgence.

Food.

---

1. See Plate I.

Kafirs  
charac-  
teristics.

Kafirs are by no means simple in character. They can intrigue concoct plots and then carry them out with the secrecy and tenacity of the average Oriental. Their mental powers are often considerable and so is their judgment and intelligence. Their strength of memory is very acute. They are highly imaginative and even curious. Kafirs are in their own way a model of politeness. They generally give precedence to superiors and each man unaffectedly takes his own proper position. They are also very sociable among themselves. In spite of their avarice they are among themselves, both by nature and of necessity, most hospitable. They are also wonderfully brave. A small party of two or three will stealthily penetrate many miles into an enemy camp or country, will plunder a village, stab right and left and then fly to their country without being caught or slightly injured. They are good throwers and goods swimmers and play skilfully at games requiring a good eye and a good wrist. They are very loyal to one another and are accustomed to acts of self-sacrifice. They have the enviable faculty of being able to sleep at their own sweet will and pleasure.

Intense conservatism amongst them and the isolated nature of their experience make them distrustful of new ideas. All Kafirs have real

admiration for their own customs. Their inter-tribal hatred is so intense that it often entirely deadens their political foresight. A tribe is always ready to beg help of its most inveterate Mussalman enemy during a temporary peace and introduce him into its territory in order to help in the chastisement of some other Kafir tribe. Bows, arrows, daggers and swords are their chief arms (Pls. II and III.) They also know the use of the match lock. It is absolutely necessary for one to pick a quarrel at the instance of a mere provocation to assert his manhood. But if quarreling is a manly thing to them, peace making is a sacred virtue. Their jealousy of one another is so great that they are often ready to break out into murderous quarrels on mere suspicion.

It is as natural for Kafirs to thief as it is for them to eat. If anything is stolen, traced and finally returned, the excuse always made is that it was carried off by boys. They encourage their children to steal. Little girls are accomplished pilferers. They would persuade, say, a hawker to show them a mirror or a comb, and the instant it is in their hands, they would throw it on a neighbouring housetop, to which the hawker could not climb, while the girls would go straight up the difficult walls like monkeys and would disappear in an instant. They are very fond of black-

mailing and seem to prefer to attain their ends by threats even when other methods are obviously more promising. They are also very untruthful. A successful lie excites their admiration and a plausible liar is to them a sensible and sagacious man. They can easily be bribed.

Kafirs, wild and independent as they appear at first sight, have a strange reluctance to act on their own responsibility on any important and doubtful question. They love to go off with a fellow and noisily discuss what should be done in certain circumstances. With a single Kafir it is easy to do as you please, provided one does not transgress his unwritten code of manners or run athwart his national custom. They are never rough and cruel to animals, but they do not care for dogs. Family affection in Kafiristan is very strong. Some tribes among them are in the habit of selling little girls, Money will tempt them even to sell their children. But generally it is the offspring of the slave population that they dispose of most promptly. Boys are rarely sold in this way but little girls are often looked upon as mere goods and chattels; though Kafirs' delight in a son is very great.

Kafirs think it a virtue and in accordance with their religion to kill a Mussalman. The

young Kafir is deprived of various privileges till he has performed this exploit, and numerous distinctions are conferred to stimulate him to repeat it as often as may be in his power. At the solemn dances on certain festivals each man wears a sort of turban, in which is stuck a long feather for every Mussalman he has killed; the number of bells he wears round his waist on that occasion is regulated by the same criterion and a Kafir who has not killed his man (Mussalman) is not permitted to flourish his axe (Pl-III. 3 and 4) above his head in the tribal dance. Those who have slain Mussalmans are visited and congratulated by their acquaintances and have afterwards a right to wear a little red woollen cap. Those who have killed many may erect a high pole before their doors, in which are holes to receive a pin for every Mussalman the owner has killed and a ring for everyone he has wounded. They spare neither women nor children. Sometimes they arrange a peace or truce with Mussalmans. Their way of striking such a pact is as strange as their mode of war. They kill a goat and dress the heart, bite off half, and give the rest to the Mussalman; the parties then gently bite each other about the region of the heart, and the treaty is concluded.

Although in hunting they may appear to employ brutal methods for obtaining game yet they are

not cruel by nature. To any one who considers how wild they are, their comparative freedom from brutality is astonishing. A really good and fine man among Kafirs is one who is a successful homicide, a good hill-man, one who is ever ready to quarrel and of an amorous disposition. He must be also a good dancer, a good shot with bow and arrow and a good stone-quoit player. It is necessary for him to be a rich man or at least a good orator. His eloquence may even make amends for his lack of riches.

Kafir  
Pan-  
th-on.

The Kafir religion is a somewhat low form of idolatry, with an admixture of ancestor-worship and some traces of fire-worship also.<sup>1</sup> Their gods and goddess are numerous and of varying degrees of importance or popularity. *Imra* is the Creator of all things in heaven and earth and *Moni* is his prophet. *Gish*, *Baghshii*, *Indrjee* (who may perhaps be the Hindu God Indar or Indra with

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1 The Kafir religion is now no longer practised in Afghanistan where these Kafirs have been converted to Islam and where the Afghan Government have not permitted them to continue this pagan form of worship. As a result of this restriction a few of the Kafirs fled to some of the western valleys of Chitral, where they continued, for some time, to carry out their religious observances. But here too their contact with a Muslim population and civilized influence hastened to suppress their pagan ideas, and many have, voluntarily, accepted Islam.

the Indian title of *Jee* annexed to his name), *Shee Mahadao*-which terms they always use for salutation to each other, *Sewa*, *Sataram*-the weather God, etc, etc, are their other gods. There are several inferior deities, who seem to be peculiar to particular localities. Every village in Kafiristan is more or less supposed to be under the care of a special god, whom they worship and honour above all others. It would seem that in Kafiristan the forms of religion only remain, while the philosophy which those forms were originally intended to symbolise is altogether forgotten. This is not, perhaps, surprising in a country in which there are no records of any kind and everything depends on oral traditions.

The *Bashgul* Kafirs, or at any rate the younger portion of the community, are inclined to be somewhat sceptical. They are superstitious, of course, and will scoff at each other when two or three wagish young men get together. Two of their traditions, more or less, resemble the Hindu festivals<sup>1</sup> of *Holi* and *Dusehra* which are celebrated with great pomp and show in Kafiristan. The older people are devoted in their res-

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1. When Kafirs<sup>2</sup> throw ashes at each other, as the Hindus do a sort of powder in *Holi* and burning of effigies on the occasion of *Dusehra* festival.

pect for all the gods, but Bashgul Kafirs seem ready to abandon their religion at any time without much regret. They leave it, as they return to it, chiefly from motives of material advantage and rarely appear to trouble themselves about religious convictions. It must be remembered that Bashgul Kafirs are no longer an isolated community. They frequently visit Chitral and have dealings with other Mussalman people as well. Many of their relatives have embraced Islam without abandoning the ties of relationship. One of the results of this free intercourse with Mussalmans is that these Kafirs at the present day are very apt to mix up their own religious traditions with those of their Mussalman neighbours.

In the Kafir theology there appear to be both heaven and hell. It divides the universe into *Urdesh*, the world above, the abode of gods; *Michdesh*, the earth; and *Yurdesh*, the nether world. According to them both the heaven and hell for mortals is in *Yurdesh*, which is reached through a great pit, at the mouth of which a custodian named *Maramalik*, especially created by *Imra* for the purpose, is always seated. He permits no one in *Yurdesh* to return to the upper world. When a man dies, his soul, according to Kafirs' conception, enters into one of the

shadow forms we see in dreams, which then becomes a *Partir*. Good people appear to wander about as shades in a paradise in *Yurdesh* called *Bisht*; or *Bhasht*; while wicked sinners are always burning in fire. Kafirs have no fear of death, and they cannot understand suicide.

Their gods are worshipped by sacrifices<sup>1</sup> of cows, sheep, goats and bear, by dances,<sup>2</sup> and by singing hymns and by uttering invocations.

---

1. The mode of sacrifice is to light the fire and a number of cedar branches prepared. The officiating priest bares his feet, while one of his attendants holds a bowl of water with a piece of butter in hand. The priest after washing his hands sprinkles on the animal and on the fire, muttering some words of invocation. Then taking a branch of cedar he places it on the fire. He then sprinkles the animal several times with water till the animal shakes itself, which is the sign of its having been accepted by the deity. After this the animal is thrown down and its throat is cut. The priest catches some of the blood in his hand and sprinkles it on the fire along with the butter and the head of the animal.

2. Such dances consist of three hops on one foot and then a stamp: the women place their hands at their shoulders, and leap with both feet, going round in a circle. Their musical instruments are an instrument of two strings, and a kind of drum.

Owing to the generosity of H. H. the Mehtar of Chitral, Dr. Morgenstierne, who was deeply interested in their language and culture, was permitted to carry out a tour of their villages in 1934. Even at that time he had great

Among them *Imra* is sacrificed to very frequently, sometime from motives of simple and general piety, especially by the older and more thoughtful members of the community; sometimes for particular reasons, such as recovery from sickness, thanksgiving for seasonable weather and for other material benefits. At religious dances he is not honoured above other gods and goddesses. He generally receives three turns but there is none of the enthusiasm which is infused into the dances for *Gish*. In former times *Imra*, the Creator, was chiefly worshipped, but at present *Gish* is certainly the popular deity in the Bashgul valley, while *Imra* probably retains his proper ascendancy in Presungul and in other places. Cows are commonly sacrificed to *Imra* everywhere in kafiristan,

The chief temple to *Imra* is at Presungul, which is undoubtedly the most sacred village in the whole of Kafiristan. The temple itself is an imposing structure, elaborately ornamented. The carving of its wooden pillars which are fashioned after one of three designs is very fine. A favourite design is

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difficulty in inducing the Red Kafirs' priests to repeat or perform their religious dances and sacrificial ceremonies; and it was found that these religious ceremonies are fast disappearing. The Kafirs, however, maintain their traditional tribal mode of dancing and singing and it is not uncommon for a Kafir dancing party to be summoned to Chitral to perform their dances before distinguished visitors.

a row of rams' heads, one on each column extending from the top to the base. Another popular design is to carve at the foot of the pillar an animal's head, the horns of which are made to extend up the entire height of the pillar, crossing and recrossing each other at intervals, and ending above in points, between which a grotesque face appears with a hand grasping each horn a few inches from the top. The third variety is of the common basket type. Huge effigies of *Imra* which are hewn out of wood are placed at the doors of the temple, in the centre of which there is a square fire-place for worship. This temple is regarded by them and by all other Kafirs as a stupendous monument to the glory of *Imra*.

It would seem that *Moni*, the prophet, ought to be ranked next to *Imra*. He is worshipped with more respect than enthusiasm, especially at *Kamdesh*. In *Presungul* he retains his rightful position in the Kafir Pantheon. Traditionally he is the God always selected by *Imra* to carry out his orders to exterminate demons, and so forth. In almost every village he has a shrine. At *Kamu* his temple is more ornate than that of any other god, but at all places he is occasionally sacrificed to by pious persons. At the religious dances *Moni* is honoured equally with the other gods by being given three rounds.

*Gish*, the war god, is by far the most popular god of the Bashgul Kafirs. Every village has one or more shrines dedicated to his worship. However sceptical the Bashgul youths may be on some points, they are all fervid in their admiration for and devotion to *Gish*. In order to compliment a Kafir and to make his eyes glisten, it is only needful to compare him to *Gish*; and it is impossible to say anything more complimentary to a Kafir woman than to call her "Gish Istri"; that is the wife of *Gish*. He is supposed to be the first and foremost warrior, with iron nerves, fierce and sudden in his terrible onslaught. He spent his life in fighting and died as a hero should. In his furious lightning like attacks and in his desperate enterprises he was successful above all others. He was the Kafir type of a true man. Several villages pride themselves on possessing two idol-houses dedicated to *Gish*. An extraordinary number of bulls and goats are sacrificed before his temple every year. Drums are also beaten morning, noon and night in honour to *Gish*. Every small raiding party which has been successful in that it has killed some one is taken to the *gromma*, where the heroes, with their female relatives, dance solemnly to *Gish*.

*Baghsit* is another popular god, who presides over rivers, lakes, and springs and helps good

men in various ways in their struggle for wealth and power. It is more particularly because the Kafirs believe that by sacrificing to *Beghsit* they will become rich that they are assiduous in his worship. The usual offerings to this deity are sheep, although goats are also sometimes given.

*Arom* is the tutelary deity of the *Kam*. His shrine, a simple wooden frame-work enclosing a large fragment of stone, is made of short beams hewn square and placed over each other in pairs alternatively. When a war is brought to a successful close and the terms of peace are agreed upon, the animals which are sacrificed in token of the ratification of the treaty are taken to *Arom's* shrine and sacrificed there.

Other gods and goddesses are often associated—three, four or even five being worshipped in one idol house and are sacrificed to during several months in the year. Their names are *Sanarau*, *Duzhi*, *Parade*, *Shomde*, *Dizane*, (who takes care of crops), *Nimali* and *Shumai*. with the exception of a very few the functions of all deities of the kafirs are more or less the same we know of an hindu mythology.

*Marriage.* Marriages in Kafirstan are very simple affairs. Girls are actually purchased. When a man wants to marry a particular girl, he sends

Other  
customs  
and cere-  
monies  
of Kafirs.

a friend to her father to ask his consent and arrange about the price. When the amount to be paid has been settled the suitor sends some fine clothes and ornaments to the proposed bride. He also sends the material for a feast to the girl's house. One night he spends in feasting and on the next the bride-groom comes for his bride who is dressed in the finery he has given to her. The father adds a silk handkerchief and some other ornaments and articles of dress for the bride, and gives a cow, and perhaps a slave to the bridegroom. The girl is then led out with a basket on her back containing fruits and walnuts prepared with honey, and (if the family can afford it) a silver cup. In this manner she proceeds to her husband's house, the whole village attending, dancing and singing. Pl IV. I. The price of a girl in case of a marriage depends entirely upon the status of the suitor, but it is probably from 8 to 20 cows. A woman in Kafiristan is really a chattel. She cannot inherit, and she has no property which she can call her own.

If a young woman remains unmarried she is looked down upon and is considered a hopelessly bad character. Although they are very immoral, not because their natural disposition is either

better or worse than that of a woman of other tribes and races, but because public opinion is all in favour of what may be called "gallantry".

It is considered a reproach to have only one wife in Kafiristan which is a sign of poverty and insignificance. All well-to-do Kafirs have from 3 to 5 wives and middle class people marry not less than 4. It is not necessary that a Kafir should marry in his own tribe. He is at liberty to marry where-ever he likes but in Kafiristan. If a woman misbehaves badly in the Kafir sense of the word, the divorce is simple and easy. Many sell their wives or send them away. Yet with well-born wife the woman's family and public opinion have sometimes to be considered.

At the birth of a child or during the period of her monthly course, the lady is sent to a house called 'Bashali'. built for the purpose outside the village; she remains there from ten to twenty-four days, during which time she is reckoned to be unclean. At the expiration of 24 days both mother and child are bathed, and carried back with dancing and music to the village. The other lady usually returns to her home after ten days.

The funeral ceremonies of the Kafirs are curious and fantastic. They neither burn nor bury their

Funeral  
ceremo-  
nies.

dead but place the body in a box, arrayed in a fine dress, which consists of goat-skins or Kashghar woollens: they then remove it to the summit of a hill near the village or lean it at the foot of the hill, where it is placed on the ground, but never interred.

**Kafir  
Effigy.**

One year after the death of a Kafir an effigy has to be erected to his memory. This is both a duty and a privilege and consequently has to be paid for by feeding the community. The style of image to be erected depends entirely on the amount and quality of food distributed. One day's feasting is sufficient for an ordinary type of effigy; but to have it placed on a throne or astride a couple of horses, a three days banquet would certainly be required. Women as well are glorified after death in the same way and they may be placed on equality with men by being given a throne to sit upon. Pl. V. II.

Some of these wooden images are of various sizes and descriptions. They are all carved on conventional models and are made solely with axes and knives. The more ponderous kinds are roughly fashioned in the forest, and are then brought into the village to be finished. Some of the best

images have a manikin seated on the left arm holding a pipe, others have similar little images perched on their chairs. Several of the large images have all manner of quaint designs and carvings on their bodies. They are often decorated with wisps of cloth bound round the head, and, where the juniper-cedar is easily obtainable, by springs of that tree fastened to the brows. The faces of the effigies are carved precisely like the idols, and similarly white round stones are used for the eyes, and vertical cuts for the mouth, or rather the teeth. They are provided with matchlocks, gunpowder bags,  bows and arrows, axes and daggers, carefully but grotesquely carved, and commonly have a cartwheel-shaped ornament in the middle of the back or in front. The effigies of males are usually given turbans, or a cap of the ancient Persian type, (Pl. VI 4. I,) while those of females have a peculiar head-dress, which is possibly a rough imitation of the horned cap Pl. VI. 2. The Peshawar Museum has acquired a few specimens of these images, generally known as the *Grave Monuments of the Red Kafirs*, the photographs of which are reproduced for study on Pls. V—VII. It is this addition to the Peshawar

Museum that has inspired me to investigate the history of these people and write this paper.

Langua-  
ges of  
Kafirs.

Four different languages are spoken by these Kafirs viz. Bashguli, Wai Ala, Vasi-veri or Veron or Presun and Ashkhund, which are derived from Dardic Language of the Indo-Aryan Family. The first two of these languages are closely connected with each other while the third shows important points of difference from them. The Ashkhund is quite unintelligible. Even the Kafirs speaking these different languages cannot easily converse with one another without the help of interpreters. There can be no doubt that the general phonaetic structure of most of them is distinctly Indian, but their grammatical structure differs from that of an Indian language. Specimens of their languages are given in Appendix A.

Conclu-  
sions.

A conquering race may progress in the arts and civilisation and may excel in warlike skill, but not so isolated a people like the Kafirs. Civilisation abruptly fell asleep centuries ago in Kafiristan and is still dormant. They are degenerated so much so that their tribal headquarters are merely robbers' nests. In the various shifts and expedients to which they have been forced in order to preserve their freedom and their lives,

lying, running away and underhand devices have been particularly serviceable. In their mode of warfare no spark of chivalry is possible. The silent archer, his face protruding from a ticket, his wild eyes glancing swiftly and fearfully around, or his little form wriggling like a snake along the ground to stab his sleeping enemy, man, woman or child—these are the pictures which arise in ones mind while thinking of a brave Kafir. Their present ideas and all the association of their history and their religion are simply bloodshed, assassination and blackmailing, yet they are not savages. Some of them have the heads of philosophers but intense conservatism among them and the isolated nature of their experience make them distrustful of new ideas. In other respects they are what they have been made by uncontrollable circumstances. For them the world has not grown older. Its youth could not be crueler than its present maturity, but if they had been different, they would have been enslaved centuries ago. Their love of decoration, their carving, their architecture, all point to a time when they were higher in the human scale than they are at present.

## APPENDIX

A few words by way of explanation are necessary in respect of the term 'Dardic' referred to under the subhead Languages of the Kafirs. The word is used for all the Aryan languages spoken in the mountainous tract between the Hindu Kush and the frontiers of India proper. The people bearing the name 'Dard' are a very ancient race referred to in the Epic Poems and in the Puranas. Herodotus has spoken of them in his famous description of the 'gold-digging ants'. They are also mentioned by the name of *Dardrai* by Ptolemy, the *Dardai* by Strabo, the *Dardae* by Pliny and the *Dardanoi* by Dionysios. The name *Daradas* or *Darads* occurs in the *Rajatarangini* of Kulhana as a people inhabiting the country where the Shin tribes are settled now-a-days. Therefore at the present day this tract is known by the conventional name of *Dardistan*, and the four languages spoken here are derived from the 'Dardic' Language of the Indo-Aryan Family. Here are their specimens with brief notes:

*Bashguli*.—This dialect is the typical language of the *Siah Posh* Kafirs and is spoken in the Bomborat Valley (Chitral side) and the Bashgul Valley (Afghanistan side). This language is also

*Appendix*

spoken to some extent in the Katiwar and Ramgul valleys of Afghanistan. The absence of *article* is noteworthy in this language. There is no *Common Gender* as well. The *Plural* is usually formed by adding *i, e, ie, io, a* or *o* to the *Nominative*. The use of the *Agent Case* is seldom adopted. However, the direct construction with the *Nominative* is sometimes found. With the exception of the *Accusative* and the *Vocative*, the other cases are made by adding postpositions to the *Oblique* form. The *Accusative* is generally the same as *Nominative*. The *Genitive* precedes the noun which govern it. The *Ablative* is formed by adding *ste* and the postpositions of the *Dative* by *ta*; after vowels it becomes *da* and *ke* or *ka* after consonants. The *Locative* is formed by the prefix *ba* or *'pa* before vowels and the *Vocative* by suffixing *a* or *o* or by prefixing *eh* to the *Nominative*.

## SPECIMENS

1. UZ KATIR ASSUM.  
*I kafir am.*
2. TU KORASTAN AIYUSH ?  
*you from where have come ?*
3. PUT BUJURASHE OCHHE UREN ASIL.  
*road long and steep is.*
4. STREK ZIR ZIM BELUK PTAW  
*This year snow much has-fallen.*
5. KATAGUL CHUCK GROM AI ?  
*Bashgul How-many villages are ?*
6. IMMU PTUL GOOM JUWARI KARON-  
TIMUSH.  
*We fields wheat maize are-sowing.*
7. QUIAN IMMU TSAQ KAPPEL ASSIMISH  
*Formerly we all Kafirs were.*
8. IMMU BURR GROM VIAGULI VERI  
NA ZARN LAI.  
*We all villages Wai language not are-under-  
standing*
9. KATIR VERI OCHHE KASWAR VERI  
*Bashgul language and Kalash language*  
FARQ ASIL.  
*difference is*

## Specimens

10. KATIR VERI BIMBORET KUNISHT  
*Bashgul language Bimboret Rambur*  
 OCHHE BARRIK VALLATAT.  
*and Barrik is spoken.*

*Wai-Ali*.—The Wai Kafirs call the country in which they live 'Waiguli, and their language as *Wai-Ali* or *W'ai-Ala*. It is nearly related to Bashguli and the grammatical construction of the two closely agree, although their vocabularies often differ. It is mostly spoken with a little hard accent.

## SPECIMENS

1. TAI NOM KIE SHIU.  
*your name What is.*
2. MAI PI-SHUMBER KASI.  
*me before Walk.*
3. TEV RUPAYAN TRSHO-KA VECH.  
*those rupees from-him Take.*
4. WAIGULI PACHA WAIST A NU  
*Waiguli king there any*  
 WAIR  
*Is.*
5. NISHTUPREN WAI JALALABAD  
*Formerly the-Wai-pl. in-Jalalabad*  
 NISHINASTA VARI.  
*dwelt were.*

## Specimens

- 6 SEO-BE EEBI WAIGUL NISHINOT.  
*There-from havng-come in-Waigul they-dwelt.*
7. EK MANASHE-BE DU PIUTR VARI  
*One man-of two sons were.*
8. AKA SHATINOT.  
*They became-merry*
9. TO-KE ITI KOIDAM KURA.  
*To thee so-much service was-done.*
10. EEMA BA DESHUKNA NATEE  
*Your in country dance*  
CHAST?  
*do-they?*

*Veron or Presun*.--This language is spoken by the Presuns, one of the *Sufed-Posh* tribes in Kafirstan in the Presungul Valley. It differs extremely from Bashguli but its composition evidently belong to the same stock. It is spoken in the Rumbur Valley of Chitral. There does not appear to be a dual *Number* in this language. As regards *Cases* the Genitive frequently *ha* the termination of *uri*, e. g. *warjemi-uri*; of a man; *iri-uri*, of the horse; *kizhga-uri*, of the swine. The *Dative* is formed either by adding *sh*, such as *vash*, to the father; *piesh*, to the son; or *an* as in *palean* and the Locative Case by suffixing *munj*. Thus, *uneok-*

## Specimens

*tu-munj*, to-in-fields; *tulu-munj*, in longing. For the detailed grammar of the language reader is referred to Sir George Grierson's Linguistic Survey of India, Volume VIII, Part II, pages 59-67.

1. A CHHATRUMA ASUM.  
*I Bashgul am.*
2. TU KAWEL ITA ASAS.  
*You from-where come have.*
3. PON BO-DREIGHA BO-CHUM SHIEW.  
*Road long steep is.*
4. AJ KAOW BO KIRIK DEI SHIAW.  
*This year many snow fallen have*
5. CHATRU MA DESHI KEMUN DUR  
*Bashgul in villages how-many houses*  
SHIEW.  
*are.*
6. HOMA CHETTR GOM JUWARI  
*We fields wheat maize*  
KISHIK DHAIE.  
*are-sowing.*
7. SHUMBESH ZAMANA ABI KAW'ER  
*Formerly times all kafir*  
ASIMI.  
*were.*

*Specimens*

8. ABI DRUSHTI VIAKIK MUNH NE  
*All villages Vai words not*  
 JAWANIK.  
*understanding.*
9. KALASHA CHATRUMA MUNH KIA  
*Kalasha Bashguli words what*  
 FARAQ SHIEW ?  
*difference is ?*
10. HOMA CHIAW MUNH SHIEW.  
*Our four languages are*  
 VETTRE VIEK CHATRUMA MUNH  
*Prasan Vaiguli Bashguli*  
 CHETTRAR UNA VETTRE VEIK
10. HOMA CHIAW MUNH SHIEW  
*Our four languages are*  
 VETTRE, VEIK, CHATRIMA,  
*Prasan, Vaiguli Bashguli*  
 KALASHA MUNH. CHETTRAR UNA  
*Kalash languages. Chitral territory*  
 VETTRE VEIK MUNH NA DEIM  
*Prasan Vaigul Language not talking.*  
 DHEI.

A S H K U N D

Sir George Grierson is of opinion that there is no dialect of this name, while Major White holds that an Afghan Kafir tribe do speak this language, which is actually Bashguli and is not different or a separate dialect. The latter further says that it is spoken both in the Kitiwar and Ramgul valleys of Afghanistan. However, no specimen of this language could successfully be collected for examination for inclusion in this list.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

- J. A. S. B.... *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.*  
 J. R. A. S. B. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal.*  
 J. R. S.....*Journal of the Royal Society of London.*  
 J. U. S. I.... *Journal of the United Service Institute of India.*

## ERRATAS

- Page 6.—Read Footnote 1 as 2 and *vice versa*.  
 „ 13.—Line 27 Read Plate I. 1. for Plate I.  
 „ 17.— „ 12 Delete 'and 2' after Pl. III.  
 „ 23.— „ 17 Read that for than.  
 „ 24.— „ 16 Read lightning-like for lightning like.  
 „ 25.— „ 25 Read in for an.  
 „ 26.— „ 18 Read Pls. IV. 1 and 2 for Pl. IV. I.  
 „ 28.— „ 5 Read leave for lean.  
 „ 28.— „ 20 Read Pl. VII. 1. and 2 for Pl. V. II.  
 „ 29 — „ 14 Delete XX.  
 „ 29.— „ 19 Read Pl. V. 1. and 2 for Pl. VI.4.1.  
 „ 29.— „ 23 Read Pl V. 2. for VI. 2.  
 „ 31.— „ 14 Read the for that.

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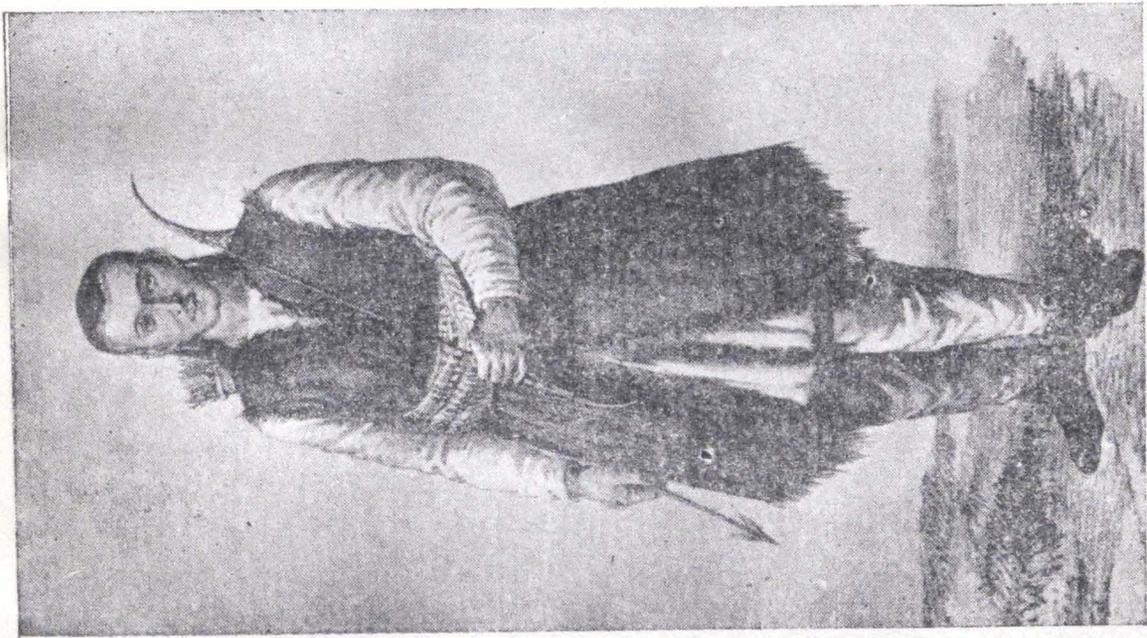
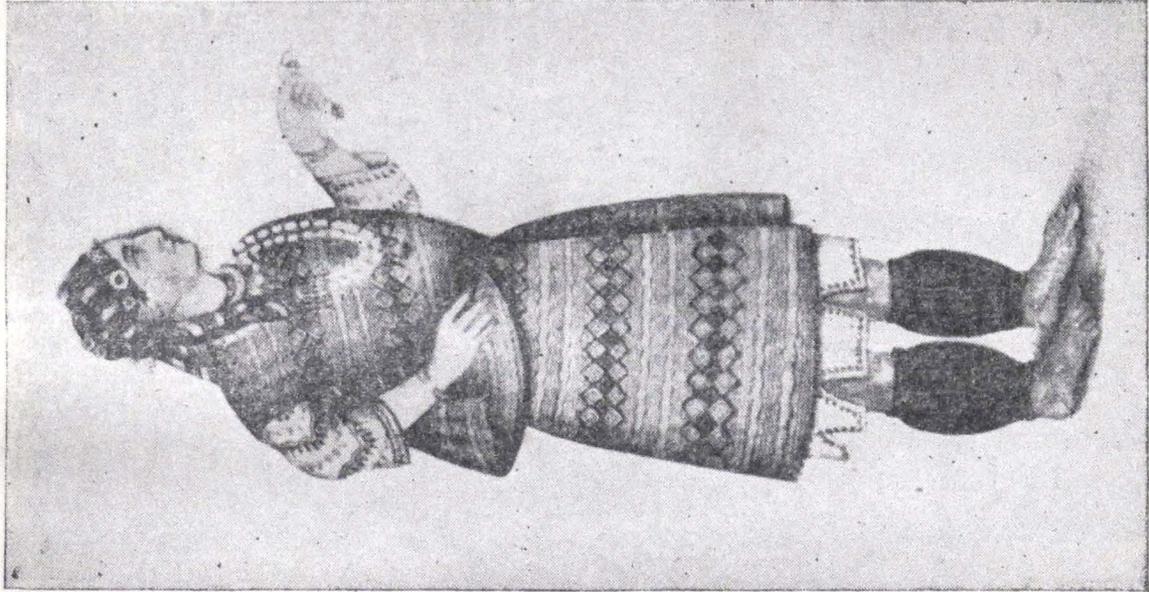
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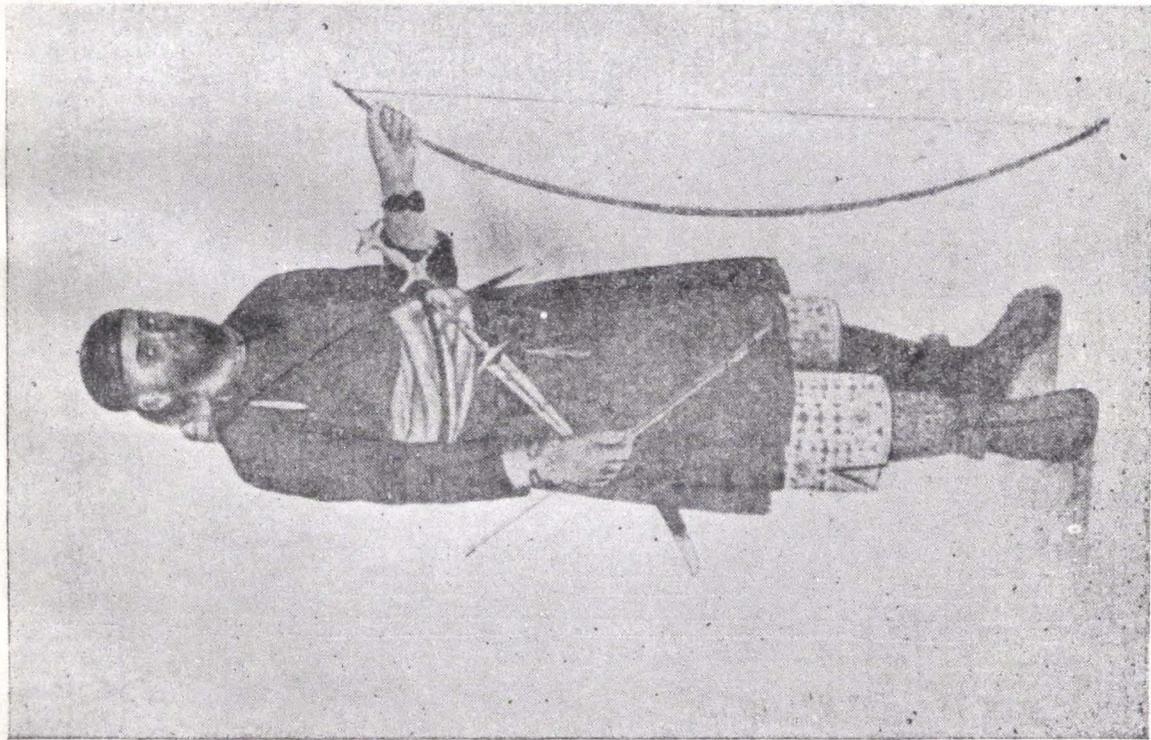
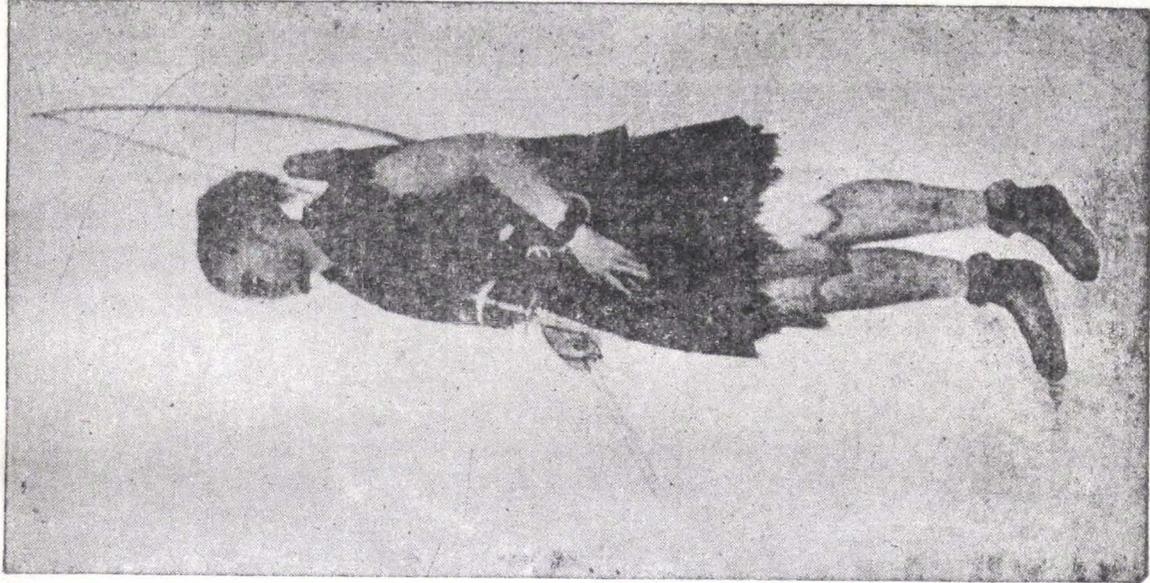
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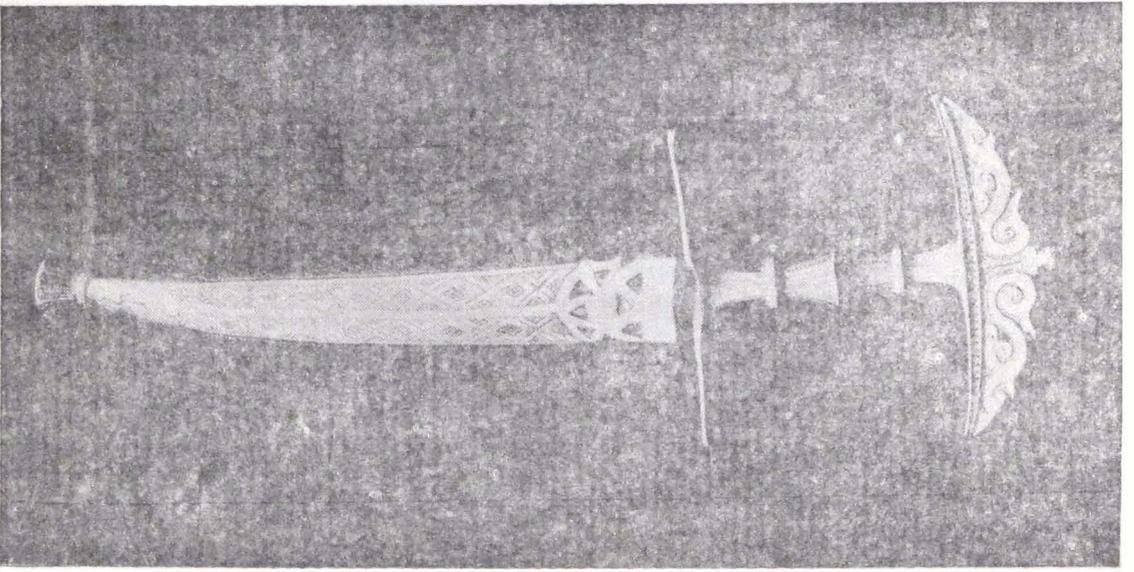
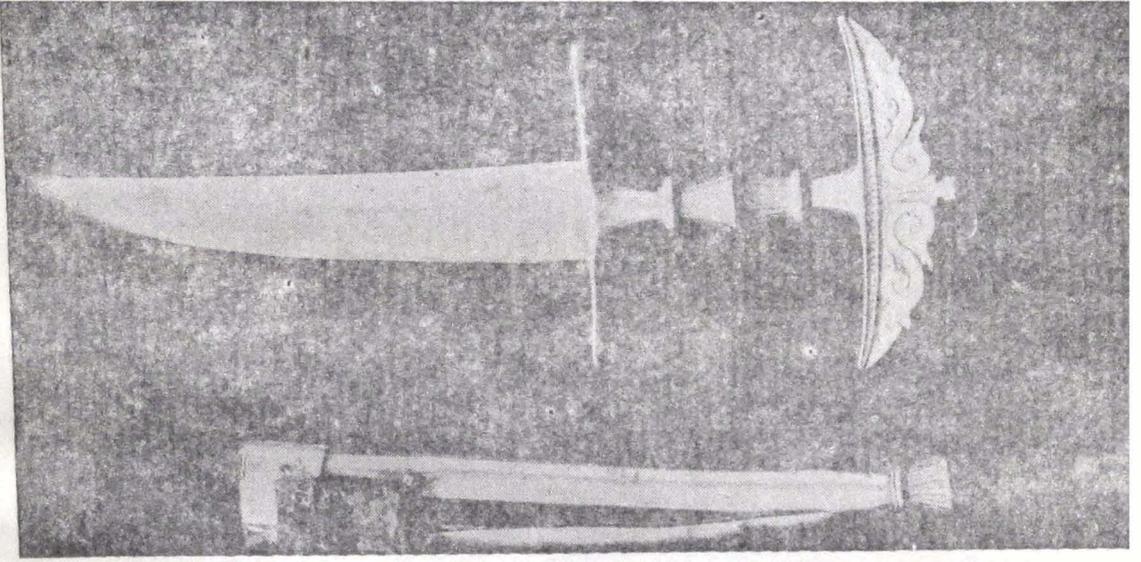
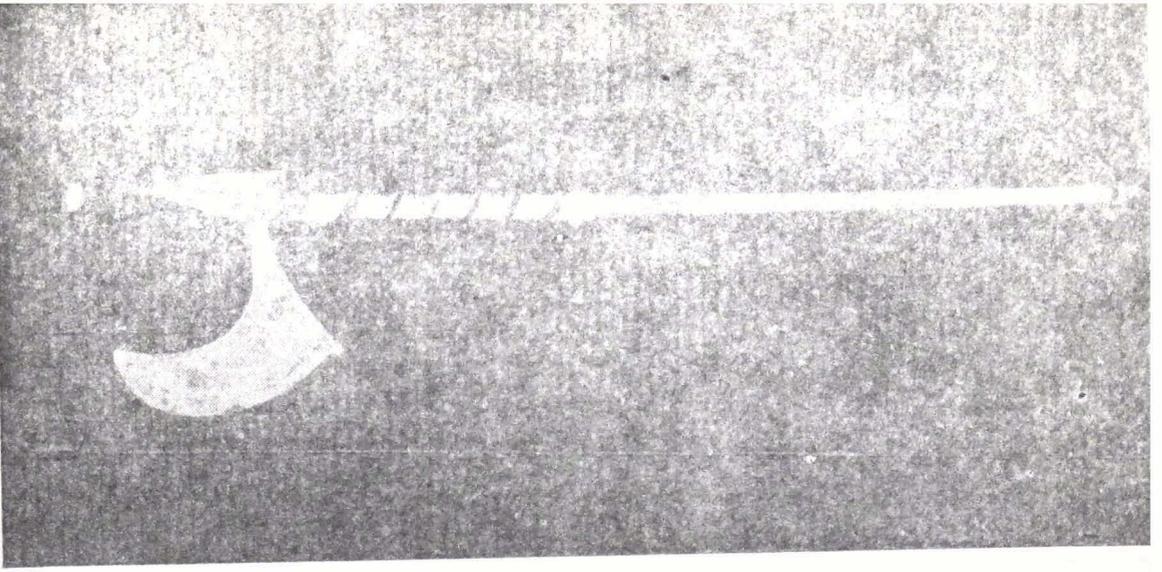




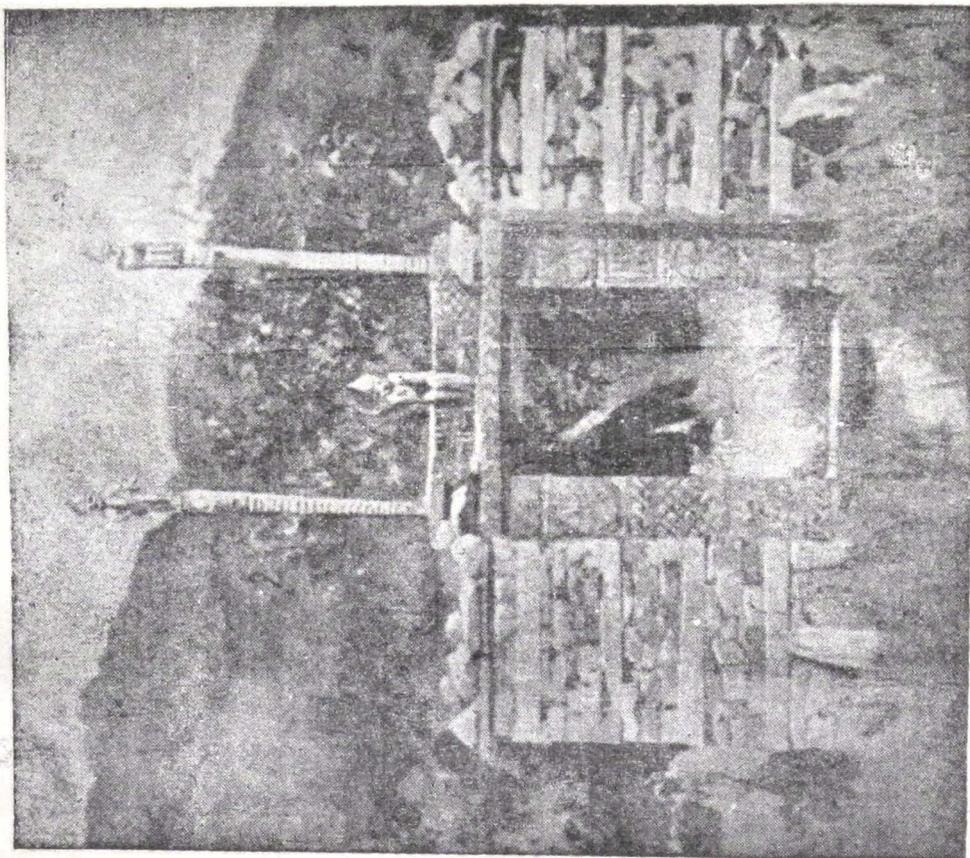




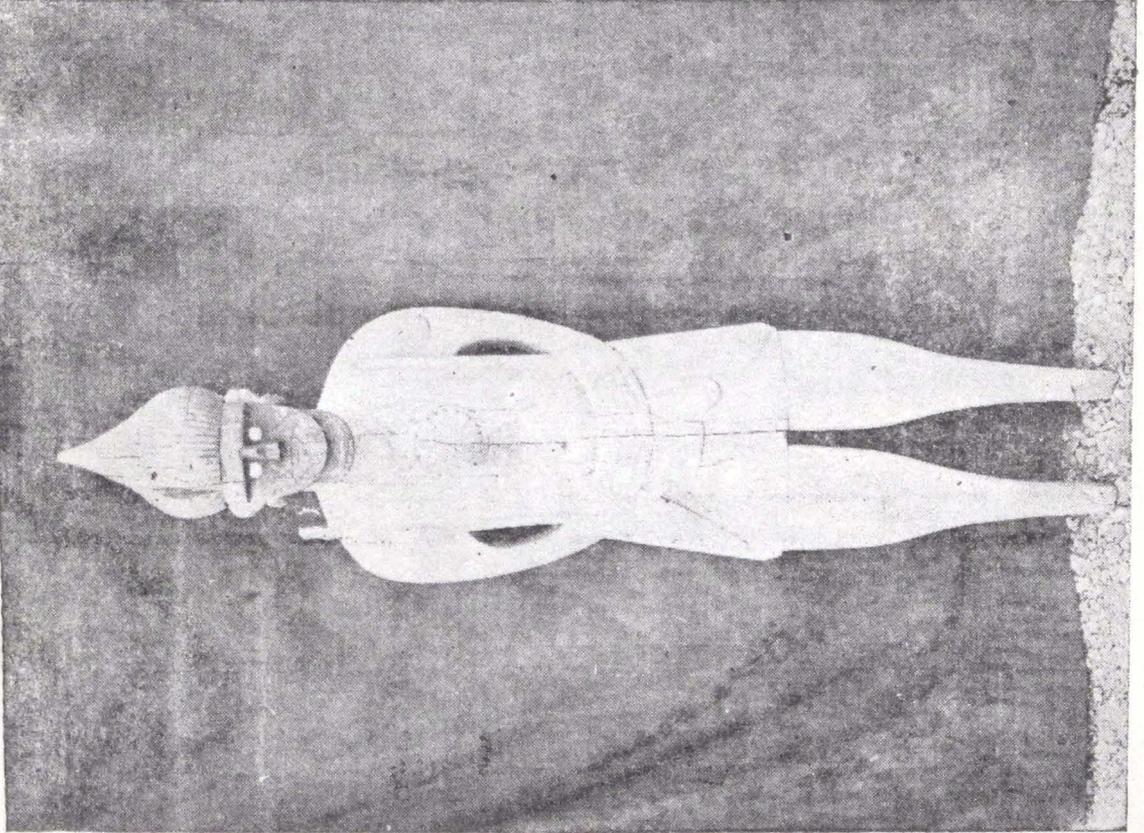




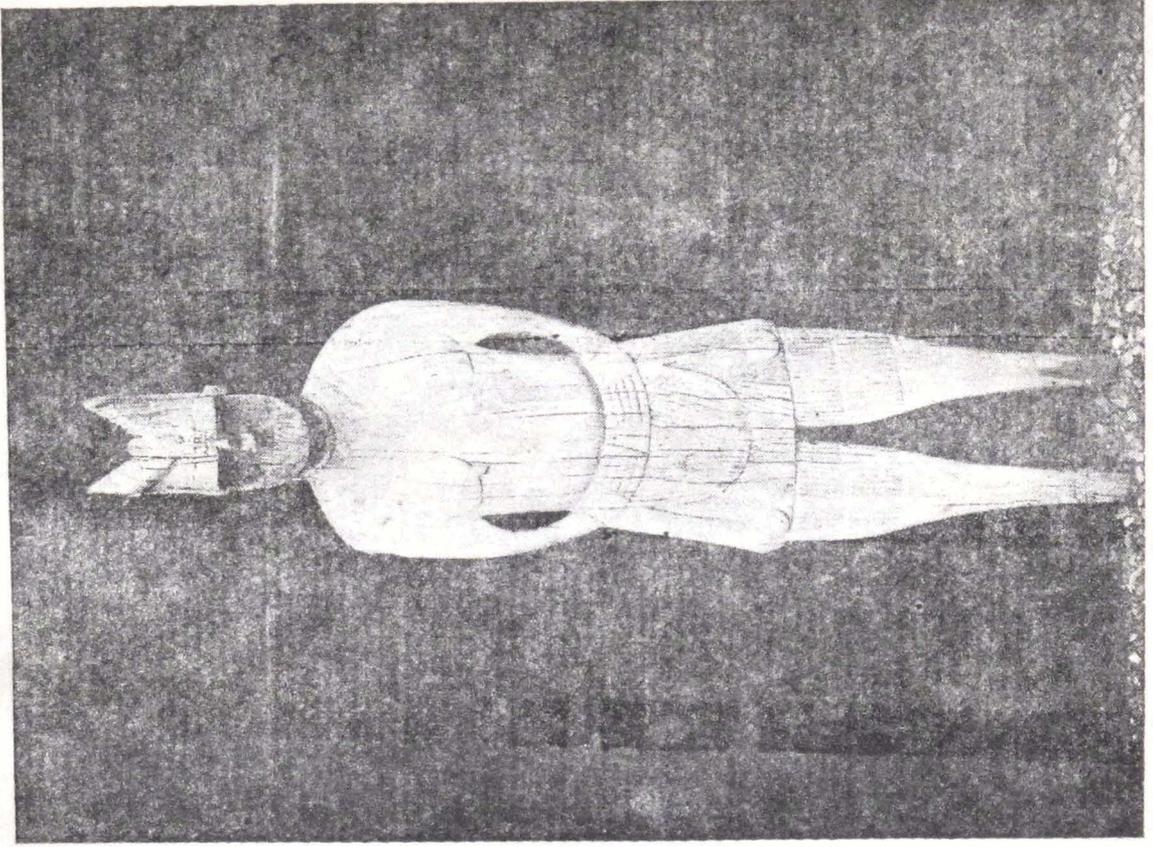






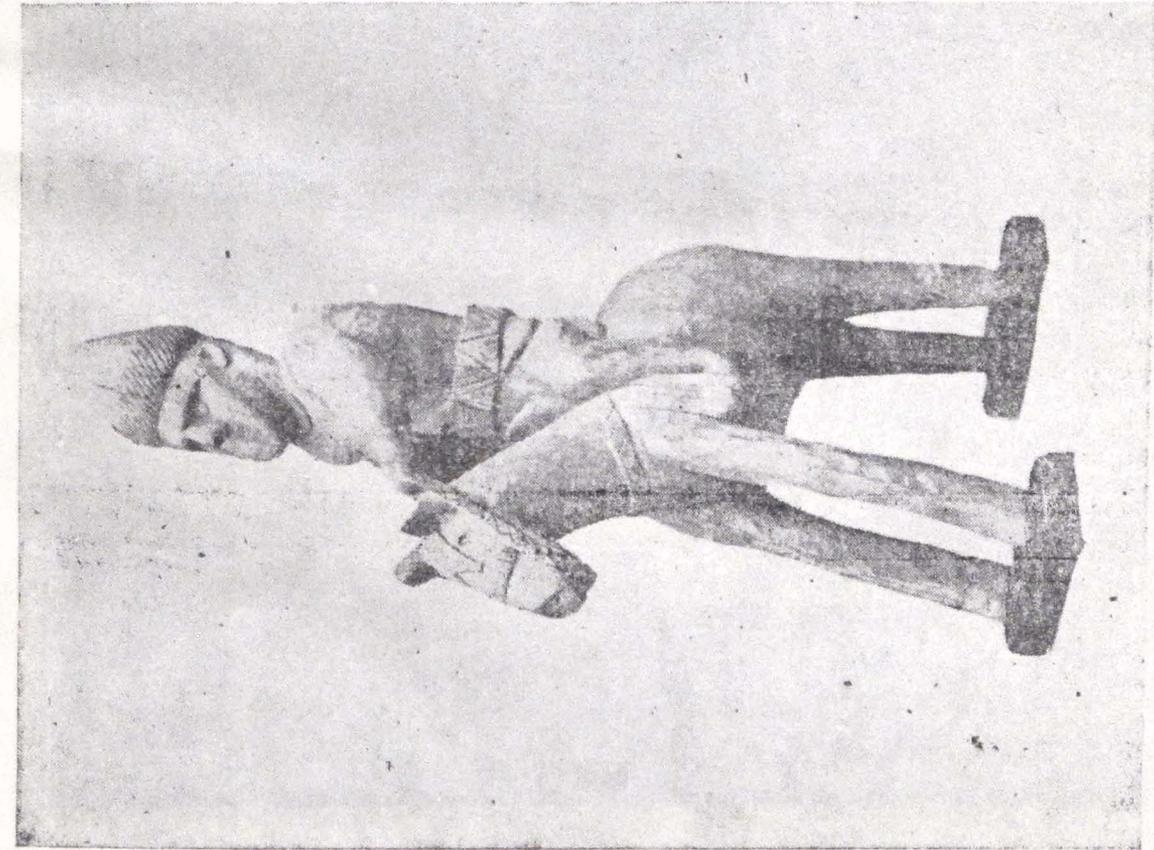


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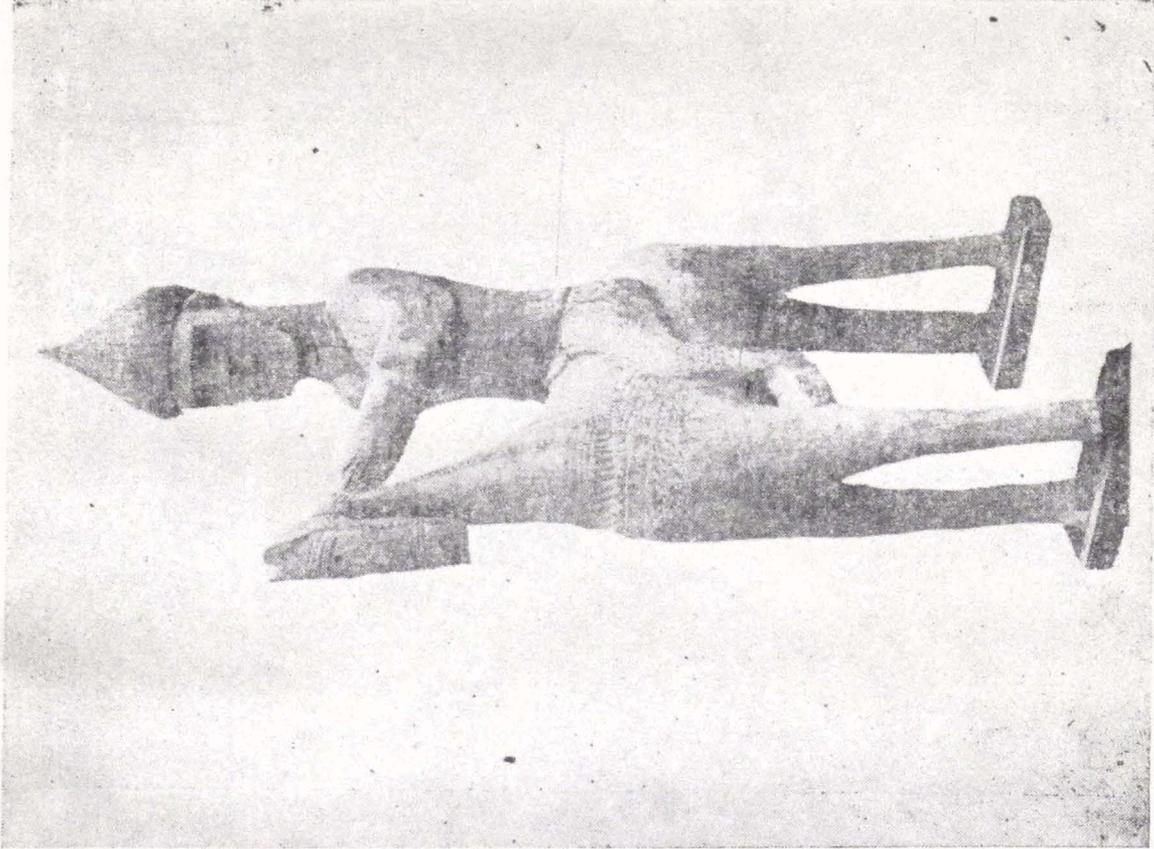


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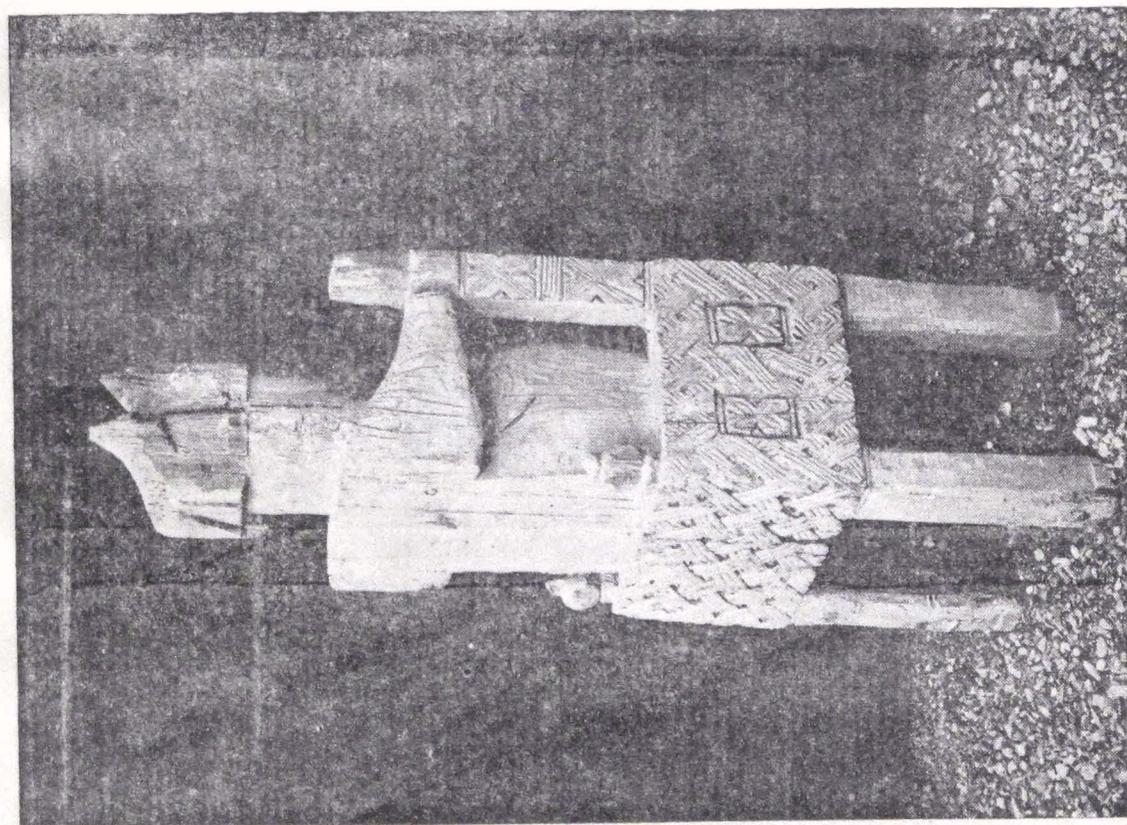


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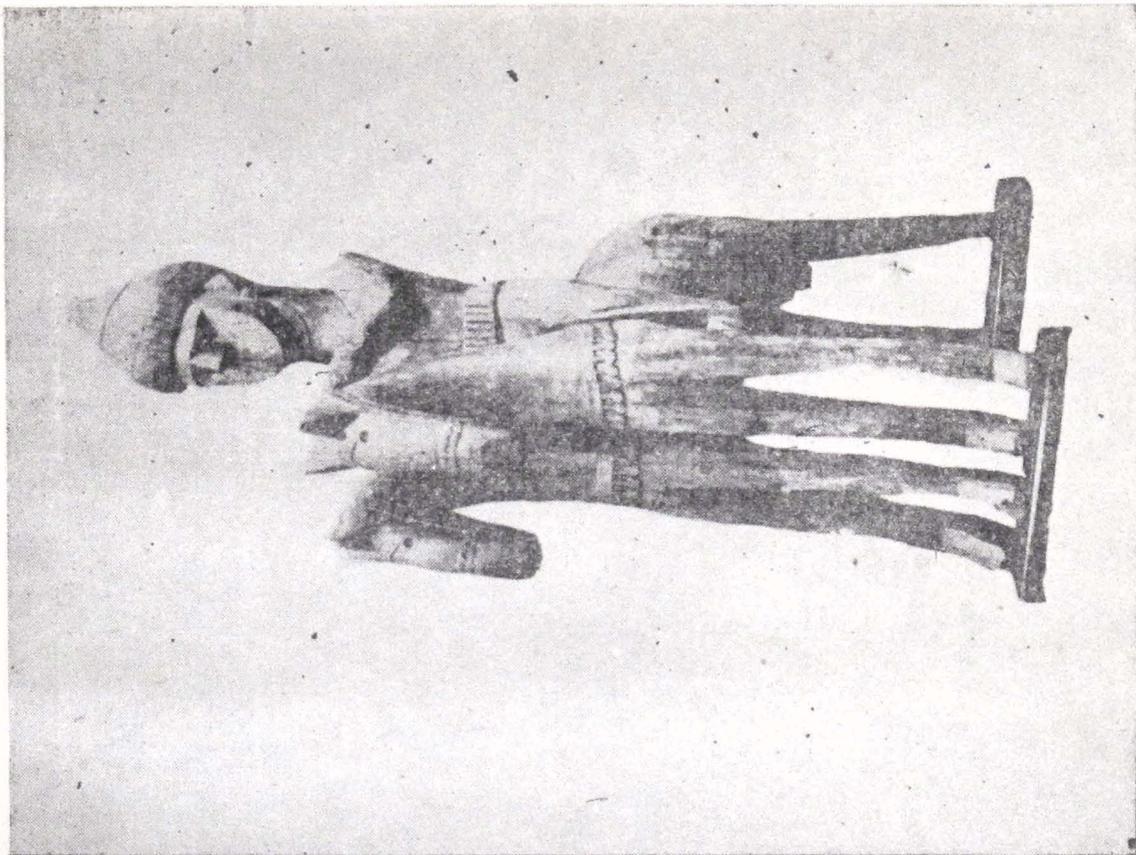


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