

CORRESPONDENCE

From
Romesh Bhattacharjee
New Delhi

To
Editor, Himalayan Journal
Mumbai

Ma'am.

To Harish Kapadia's interesting article *Trek to passes on India-Burma Border* in *HJ* 69 I would like to add a few titbits.

Nuwang yang (Nam yang in Burmese maps) means 'lake sinking'. Its nick name 'Lake of No Return' had nothing to do with lost aircraft. The point of no return idea was enforced when the first Ahom armies and settlers circuted the lake in the 13th C on their way to Assam. After this lake there was no return as the worst was over.

After some battles between the Assam Ahom King Sudangpha at that time resident at Tipaimukh and Surumpha, the King of Maing Kwan of today's Kachin Province of Burma peace was declared between the two in 1401. This was sanctified by cutting of a chicken. From then on Patkai became the border of India and Burma. The full name of Patkai is Pat-kai-seng-kau, which means 'cut fowl oath sworn'. The former name of Pangsus Pass was Dai Kau Rang meaning 'the junction of nine peaks'.

Weary refugees escaping the advancing Japanese during WW II started calling it the point of no return and that is how the lake got its name.

This lake and Pangsus were not on the designated flight path of the planes flying to Kunming from Dibrugarh, unless they were out of control. Their flight took them through Hpungan Pass and a couple of others near it. If you see a map this is the direct route to Dibrugarh, Dinjan and Dumduma airfields.

Margherita was the name given to a camp by Italian engineers who were working at the nearby coal mines of Lekhapani and Tipaimukh etc. She was the wife of an Italian count.

Vijay Nagar's old name was Jahu Natu - a Lisu (Yobin) name. In 1961 an army patrol led by later Maj. Gen. Grover renamed it Vijay Nagar - after the officer's son's name; an arbitrary practice that ought not to be consecrated no matter what the political compulsions.

Singphos and Khamptis are still settled in E. Arunachal and adjacent parts of Upper Assam and till the 70s had had slaves, who were not maltreated at all.

My sources are :

A History of Assam by Sir Edmund Gait

Gazetteer of Lohit District (1974)

Buranjis

The Retreat from Burma by Lt. Co. Tony Mains

The Saga of CNAC # 53 by Capt. Fletcher Hanks who used to fly the Hump to Kunming

Best Wishes,
Ramesh Bhattacharji