

## FACES of ASIA

*This communication is one result of a trip around the world taken by Mrs. Coon and myself in the fall, winter, and spring of 1956-57, on behalf of The University Museum. We also received support from The Wenner-Gren Foundation, the Research Institute of the United States Air Force, and LIFE magazine. All the pictures shown here were taken on that trip and none has been published before.*

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Asia is the mother of continents. Europe, the cradle of our own civilization, is nothing but a peninsula of Asia, comparable to India, Malaya, and Korea. America is a back-room of Asia first entered over Bering Straits by Asiatic people. Only Australia and Africa have, from the standpoint of human geography, an argument for separate continental status. Our own continent, North America, hollow in the middle with mountain rims to either side, draws people together. Asia is like a half-erected tent with a peak in the middle and separate folds on every side; its bleak core of mountains and deserts pushes people apart. Europe, Siberia, China, Malaya, India, and Arabia, all are separate geographic compartments distinct in landscape, climate, and population. Over the hundreds of thousands of years that Asia has been inhabited these geographic differences have come to be reflected in the faces of the people bred there.

## THE ABORIGINES

Few in number but rich in anthropological significance are the scattered remnants of once widespread races who lived so simply that they have been pushed and crowded off the most fruitful lands into the refuges of cold islands, barren mountains, and deep jungles, making way for tillers and craftsmen who do not mind living at close quarters. In most parts of Asia it is not easy to find the aborigines without a little planning and effort, but now that airplanes and automobiles have penetrated almost everywhere, aboriginal peoples are not hard to reach if you know where to look.

Although not many generations ago they once inhabited all of Hokkaido, the Kurile Islands, and much of Sakhalin, the Ainu are now mostly confined to the southern shore of the largest of these islands. Of the three or four thousand that remain, a few have chosen to profit by their strangeness; old chief Miyomoto (Fig. 1), seated in his straw house in front of a battery of antique Japanese lacquer boxes, makes a living by posing for photographs, and by giving lectures on Ainu life and lore to visiting Japanese students. Most of the Ainu have chosen to shave off their beards and live by fishing and farming, like their Japanese neighbors (Fig. 2). The Ainu have often been compared to Europeans because their skins are white, their beards and body hair abundant and wavy, and their features Caucasian in an archaic way. There can be little doubt that they are a very ancient people.

Formosa too has its aborigines, members of nine tribes of mountain folk who within the lifetime of people still living were feared by the lowlanders because of their inveterate head-hunting. The people of the northernmost and largest tribe, the Atayals, are physically variable; many of them look as Caucasoid as the Ainu, whom some, like this woman, seem to resemble (Fig. 3). The people of the other tribes are archaic Mongoloids, looking more like the pagan tribes of northern Luzon, their nearest neighbors to the south. The Bunun tribesman (Fig. 4), has a curious double eyefold, like that of a Christian Filipino (Fig. 5), photographed at Clark Field.

The true aborigines of the Philippines, however, are the Negritos, who live at five different places in the islands, always in refuges away from areas of intense cultivation. The largest group is concentrated in the

extensive territory of Clark Field. This old woman (Fig. 6) was photographed at Crow Valley, a settlement visited by cub airplane. Other Negritos are found in the mountains of New Guinea, in the jungles of the Malay Peninsula, on the Andaman Islands, in India, and in Africa. No one knows where they came from or when. It was formerly believed that once very long ago these woolly-haired pygmies spread out of a simple center, from Africa to Asia or vice-versa, but that theory is hard to support with either factual evidence or sound biological theory. Nowadays a more popular explanation is that in two or more different places, full-sized peoples with frizzly hair and black skins shrank separately and independently, by an identical process of mutation and natural selection.

India too has her Negritos, but they are few and scattered. In the Cardamon Hills of Kerala State, near the southern tip of the peninsula, a few family bands of food-gatherers known as Kadars roam the jungle in search of roots, fruits, honey, and other forest products. Some of the Kadars are Negritos (Fig. 7), in skin color, hair form, facial features, and short stature; others, with straighter hair and taller stature, are Australoid in appearance.

In Central India we came across a camp of almost equally primitive people, the Birhors, who live in tiny domed huts built of sticks and leaves, and get their living by hunting monkeys, which they eat, and making bark rope, which they sell. In facial features these people are predominantly Caucasoid (Fig. 9); this fact indicates the vast antiquity of a prototype of the racial element to which most Indians belong. In Ceylon too, the most ancient inhabitants, the Vedda (Fig. 8), who once hunted over all its jungles, and are now reduced to a few small settlements, are Caucasoids of an antique lineage and form. Which of the several ancient strains surviving in India and Ceylon is the most ancient, only time and much more work can tell.

## THE MONGOLOIDS

Occupying most of eastern, central, and southeastern Asia, the Mongoloids are numbered in the hundreds of millions. Although most of them have certain essential features in common, they vary regionally. This is



even true within Japan. A long-faced city dweller (Fig. 10), a lofty-browed intellectual (Fig. 11), and a round-faced countryman from the mountains in back of Kyoto (Fig. 12), show certain aspects of the wide Japanese national range. The Koreans (Fig. 13), with long faces, short heads, and narrow-lidded eyes are less variable. Since the last war about four million North Chinese have settled in Formosa; among them are generals and farmers, merchants and shopkeepers, and also members of a profession which the Chinese greatly honor—scholars. One of their greatest, and one of the world's top archaeologists, is Dr. Li Chi (Fig. 14), a native of Honan in north-central China, and director of the Academia Sinica. Half of the Chinese in Formosa, numbering about five million, are, however, descendants of immigrants from Fukien Province, on the south-central coast, who have come to the island within the last three centuries (Fig. 15). Living in the flanks of the hills nearest the aborigines are about one million members of an older wave of migration; these are Hakkas (Fig. 16), whose ancestors were river people from the vicinity of Swatow. Hakkas, Fukienese, and the northern Chinese all speak different forms of Chinese.

Just as we find it expedient to go to Formosa to see Chinese, so we visit Tibet and Mongolia vicariously in Nepal, Sikkim, and West Bengal. A few years ago a high-ranking lama from Mongolia, taking refuge from the Communist regime in his country, established a temple in Bodnath, in the Kathmandu valley of Nepal. He brought his own cook (Fig. 17), a typical broad-faced and round-headed Mongol. Among the most photogenic peoples of Asia are the Tibetans, by reason of their physique as well as for their costumes and gear. The Dalai Lama's secretary (Fig. 18), who is a long-faced aristocrat, a dark-skinned, curly-haired lama (Fig. 19), and an old man with a weather-beaten face (Fig. 20), cover part of the physical range of these people who live through winters of great cold in a region of high altitude. How they manage to survive and reproduce in thin air remains to be studied; by analogy with the Indians of the High Andes, whose physiological adaptations are now known, we can assume that both natural selection and individual acclimatization are concerned.

Although it is virtually impossible to go to the independent kingdom of Bhutan, nevertheless a part of Bengal, including the city of Kalimpong and the small town of Pedong, is racially and culturally Bhutanese. The Bhutanese are close relatives of the Tibetans, as the features of the nun at Pedong (Fig. 21), show. Other tribes and groups of tribes living under

the rim of the Himalayas, from Assam westward through Nepal, are more or less Mongoloid, forming a transition between the Tibetans and the peoples lower down. These include the Abors of Assam (Fig. 22), the Lepchas of Sikkim (Fig. 23), and the Rai (Fig. 24) and Tamangs (Fig. 25) of Nepal. South of the Brahmaputra in a cluster of low hills in southwestern Assam live tribesmen called Garos (Fig. 26), who speak a Tibetan-style language; although partly Mongoloid they are dark skinned, and partly Negroid looking; without doubt their ancestors intermarried with lowland aborigines.

## THE ARYANS

Around thirty-five hundred years ago India was invaded from the northwest by a people of European race who settled in the flatlands of the Indo-Gangetic plain. As they rode about in chariots and ox-carts, they kept to the type of terrain in which they could circulate without road-building; for the most part the hilly country was left to earlier comers and aborigines. Adapting an older and simpler Indo-European class system to local needs, they produced a complex social structure with hundreds of castes, bringing nearly everyone into an overall framework. At the top of the pyramid were and remain the Brahmins, the priestly class, who are believed to retain in greatest concentration the genetic structure of the invaders. An elderly Brahmin from Nepal (Fig. 27), blue-eyed and white-skinned, could pass for a European; another Brahmin from South India (Fig. 28), who speaks a non-Aryan (Dravidian) language, although darker skinned, still retains an essentially European configuration of the head and face. Possibly the greatest concentration of the Aryan element is to be found in the plains and deserts of Rajasthan, among the warrior-folk known as Rajputs. This old farmer (Fig. 29) from Palsana is also essentially European, as is a Sikh (Fig. 30), a member of a relatively new religion whose ancestors were mainly Rajputs (and Punjabis). The Gypsies (Fig. 31), who originated in western India, and who still wander about in their bullock carts forging iron, tinkering, and telling fortunes, show the same fine-featured Caucasoid facial type seen among their kinsmen in Europe and America.

A thousand years after the arrival of the Aryans in India some of them, going by sea from Bengal, invaded Ceylon, where they gradually



displaced the Veddas, and built an elaborate civilization of their own based on Buddhism. These were the ancestors of the Singhalese, the principal inhabitants of the island today (Fig. 32).

### THE DRAVIDIANS

When the Aryans reached India they found a high civilization flourishing in the Indus valley. They both destroyed and absorbed it. Although no one knows what kind of language the Indus people spoke, circumstantial evidence indicates that it was probably Dravidian, a family of languages spoken today throughout southern India among both civilized and primitive peoples. Among the aboriginal tribesmen who speak Dravidian are the Oraons (Fig. 33), an ethnic unit composed of over a million farmers, herdsmen, and food-gatherers living in the Chota Nagpur Hills. Physically they are good-sized, often handsome people with almost black skins, straight to wavy hair, and broad noses. Racially they fall into the Australoid category, owing to their general resemblance to Australian aborigines, although they tend to lack the archaic features, such as heavy browridges, of the Australians themselves. The Dravidians who fit into the Indian and Ceylonese caste structure as peoples of high culture are dark-skinned Caucasoids, as the features of this Tamil village headman from northern Ceylon show (Fig. 34).

### THE SEMITES

No country contains more climates, races, and cultures than India. Among the many survivors of early colonial settlements are the White Jews of Cochin, whose ancestors came to the peninsula, it is claimed, before the time of Christ. Once numbering about 1,500, they are now down to a total of about 150 persons, who have retained their white skins and Mediterranean features to this day. Undoubtedly a combination of endogamy (marriage inside the group) and the pursuit of indoor occupations out of the direct sunlight has aided their unaltered survival (Fig. 35). Later Semitic migrants were Muslim Arabs who came to Ceylon as merchants. They still marry among themselves and pray in their mosques. These people are known as Moors (Fig. 36).

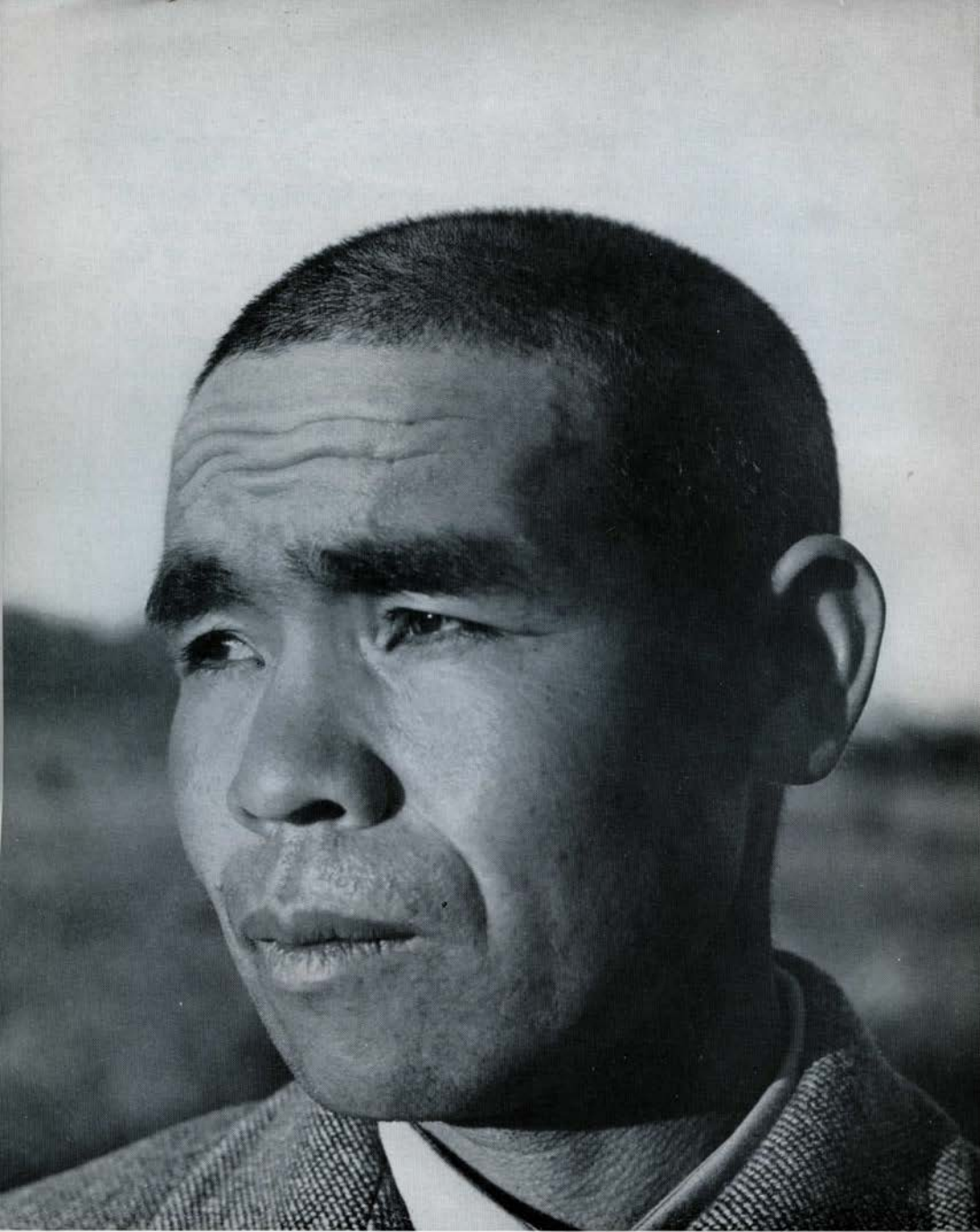
## THE AUSTRONESIANS

The most difficult to explain of all the groups and categories of people who inhabit southern Asia are a conglomeration of tribes and nations speaking languages of a family known as Austronesian. Members of this speech family include Polynesian, Malay, and Mon-Khmer. Mon is a language of Burma; Khmer is another word for Cambodian, the official language of an independent nation. The Cambodians and Mon-speakers are Mongoloids. In the Malay Peninsula two tribes of aborigines, the Semang and Senoi, speak Mon-Khmer languages, and the Semang are Negritos, while the Senoi are partly Australoid.

In India there are two Mon-Khmer linguistic groups: the Khasis of the Khasi Hills in Assam, who are predominantly Mongoloid (Fig. 37), and various tribal peoples such as the Mundas, Santals, and Ho in east central India, who are a combination of Australoid, Negroid, and Mongoloid in various blends. Fig. 38 is a Negroid Munda, Fig. 39, an Australoid-Mongoloid Munda, Fig. 40 predominantly Mongoloid Hos. Another Mon-Khmer-speaking group in the Chota Nagpur Hills is the Asuras, hereditary iron-smelters and smiths, who also combine these racial elements, but some of them could be taken for Negroes (Fig. 41 and cover). What the history of these various peoples is, and how these different racial elements came to be blended in such curious ways, are problems that cannot at the moment be unravelled.

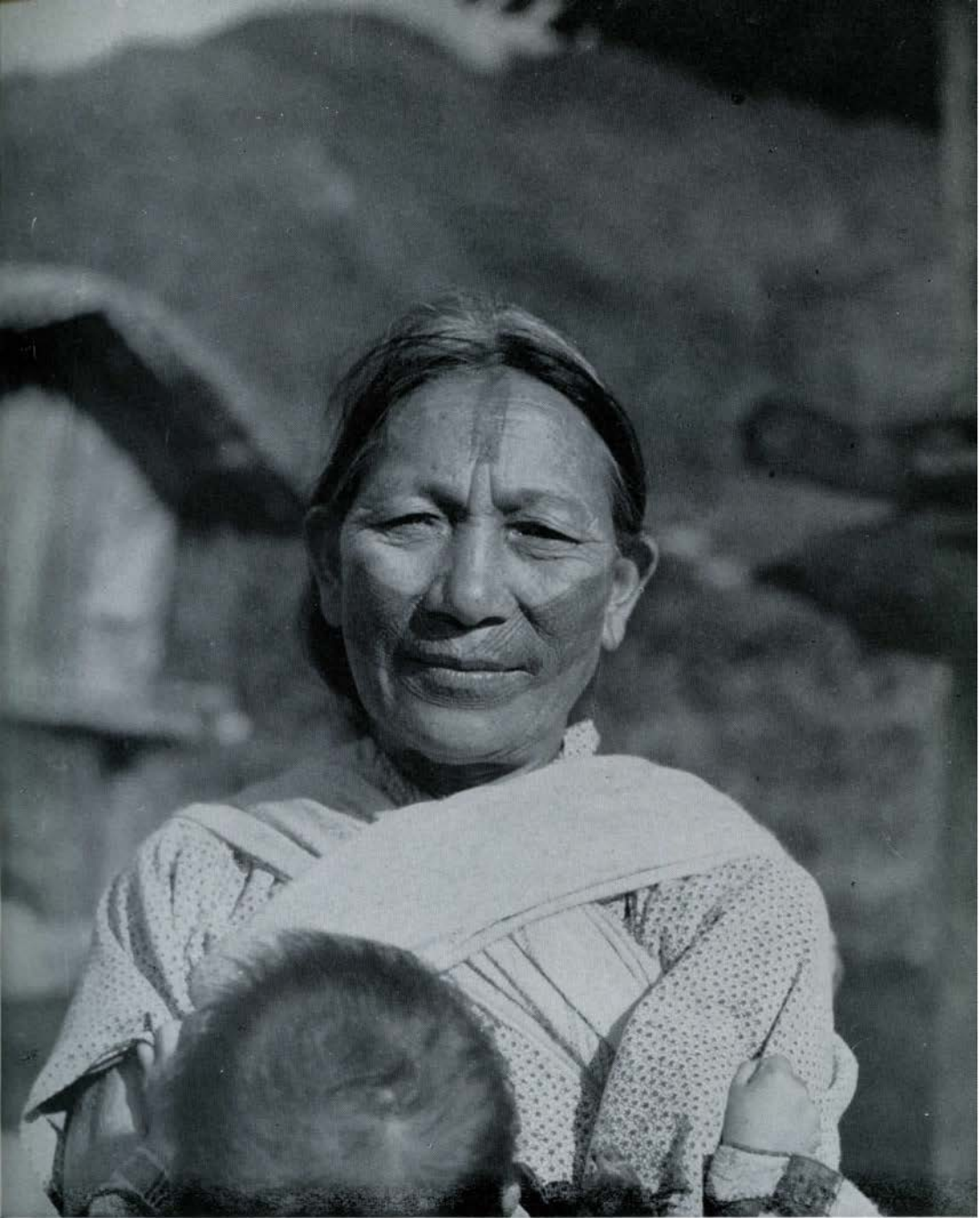
However India (including in this sense Pakistan) is unique in more than one sense. It contains deserts, tropical forests, savannahs, alpine meadows, glaciers—every climate in the world except tundra. Its fauna includes both lions and tigers, and other beasts typical of more than one zoological realm. It is little wonder that its people represent every major race in the world except those confined to Africa.

He who can explain the peopling of India will have the key to Asia and to the racial history of the world. The faces of Asia reproduced here give but a suggestion of the continent's immense human variability.

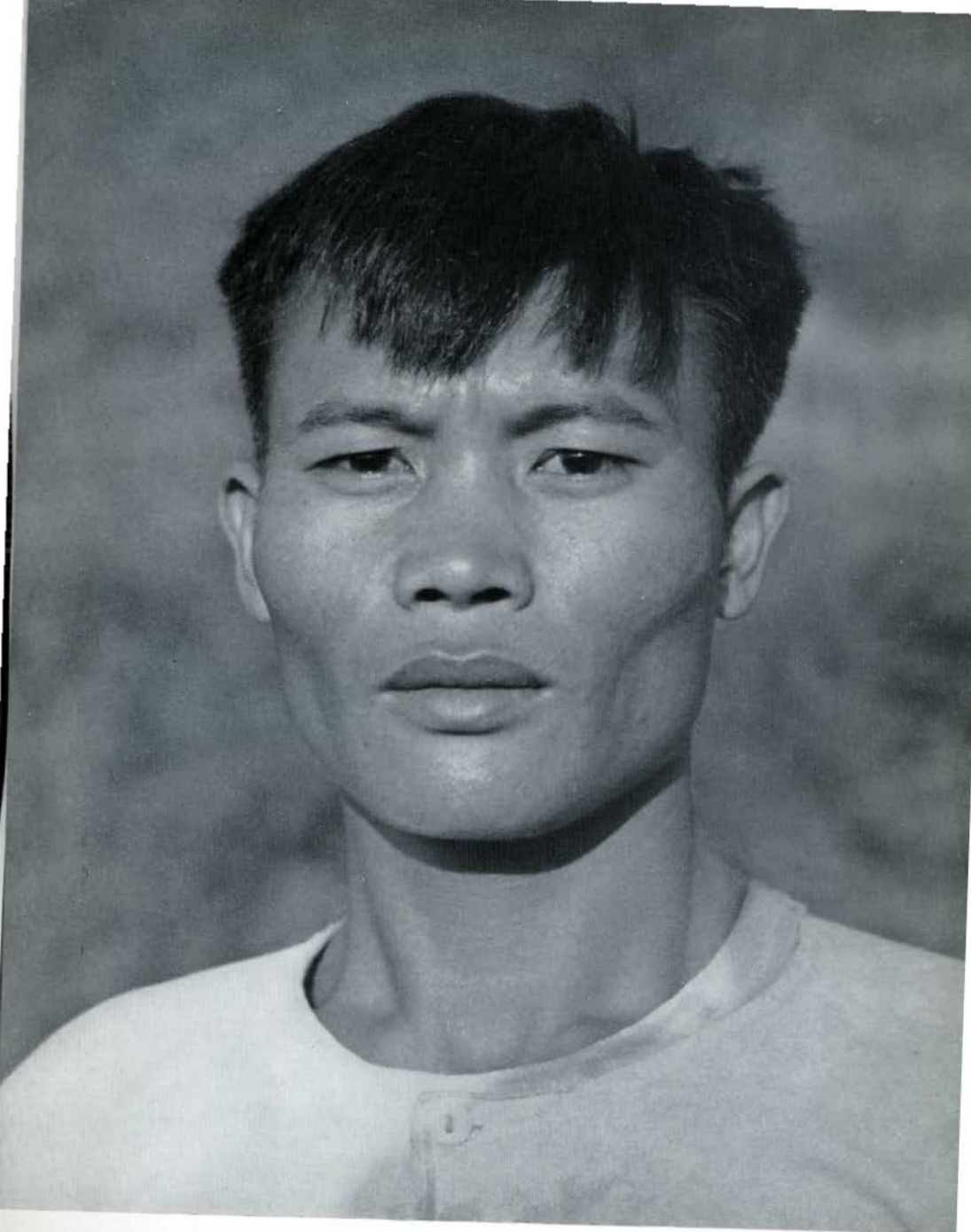


*Fig. 2. Ainu*

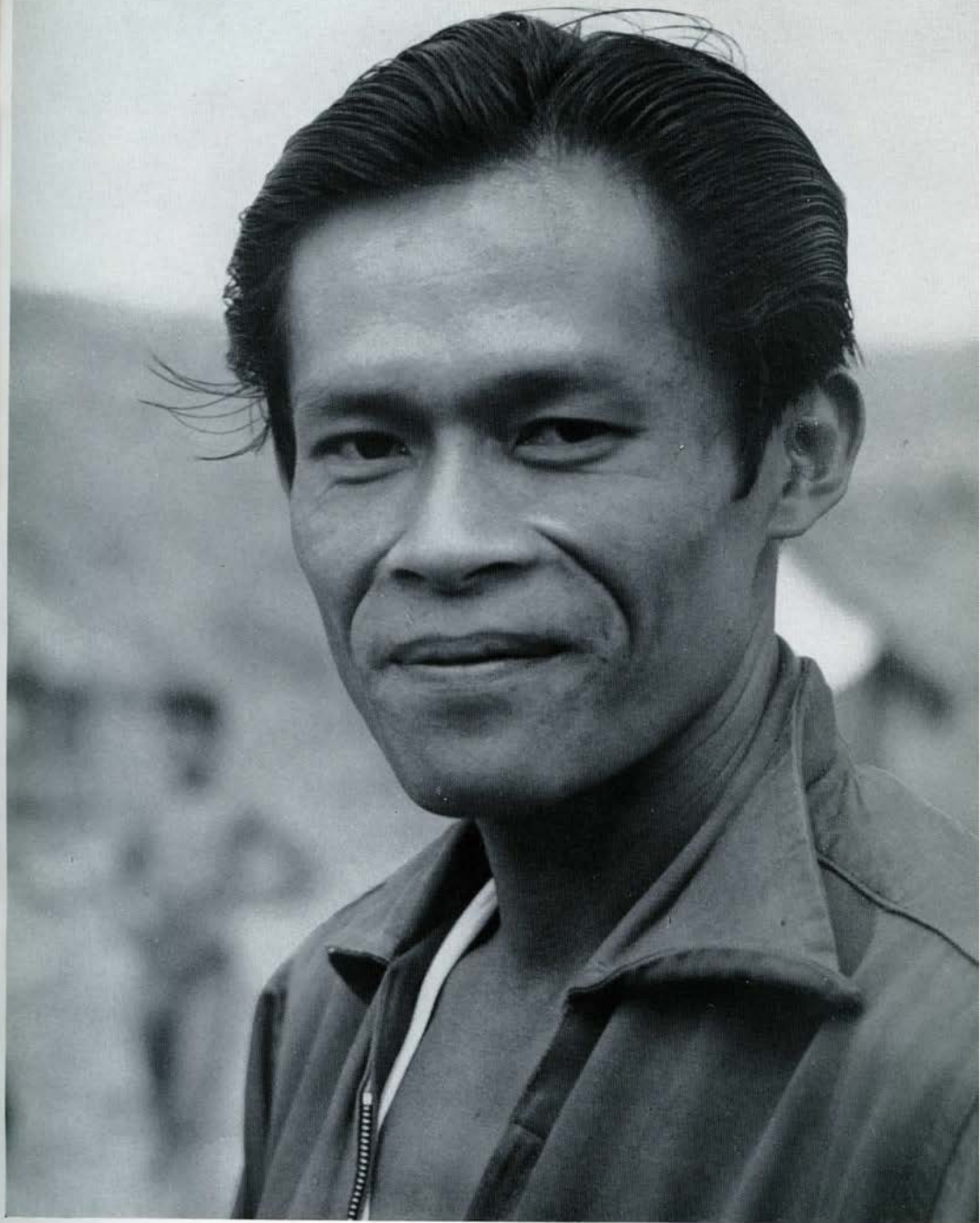




*Fig. 3. Atayal*

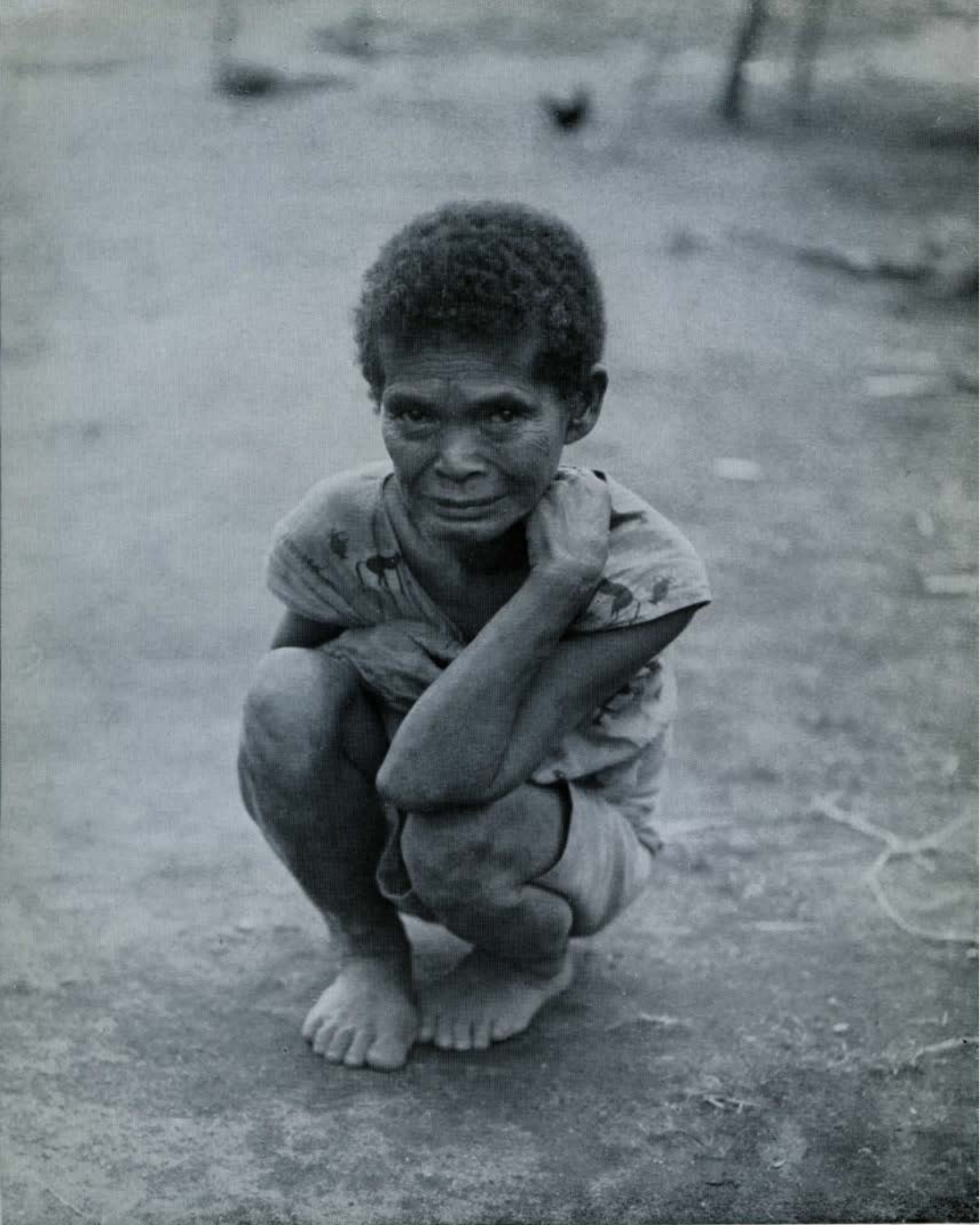


*Fig. 4. Bunun*



*Fig. 5. Filipino*





*Fig. 6. Negrito*

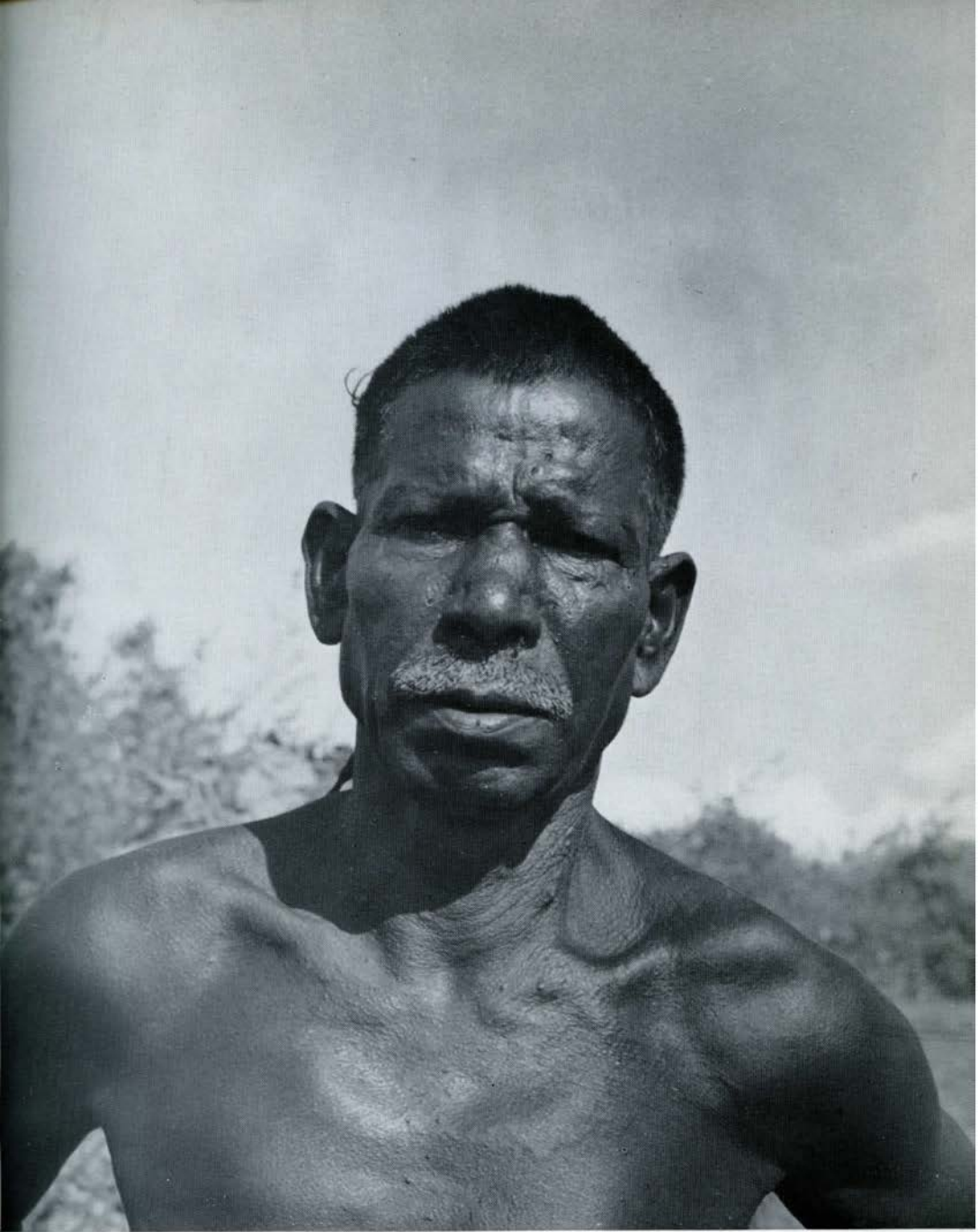


*Fig. 7. Kadar*

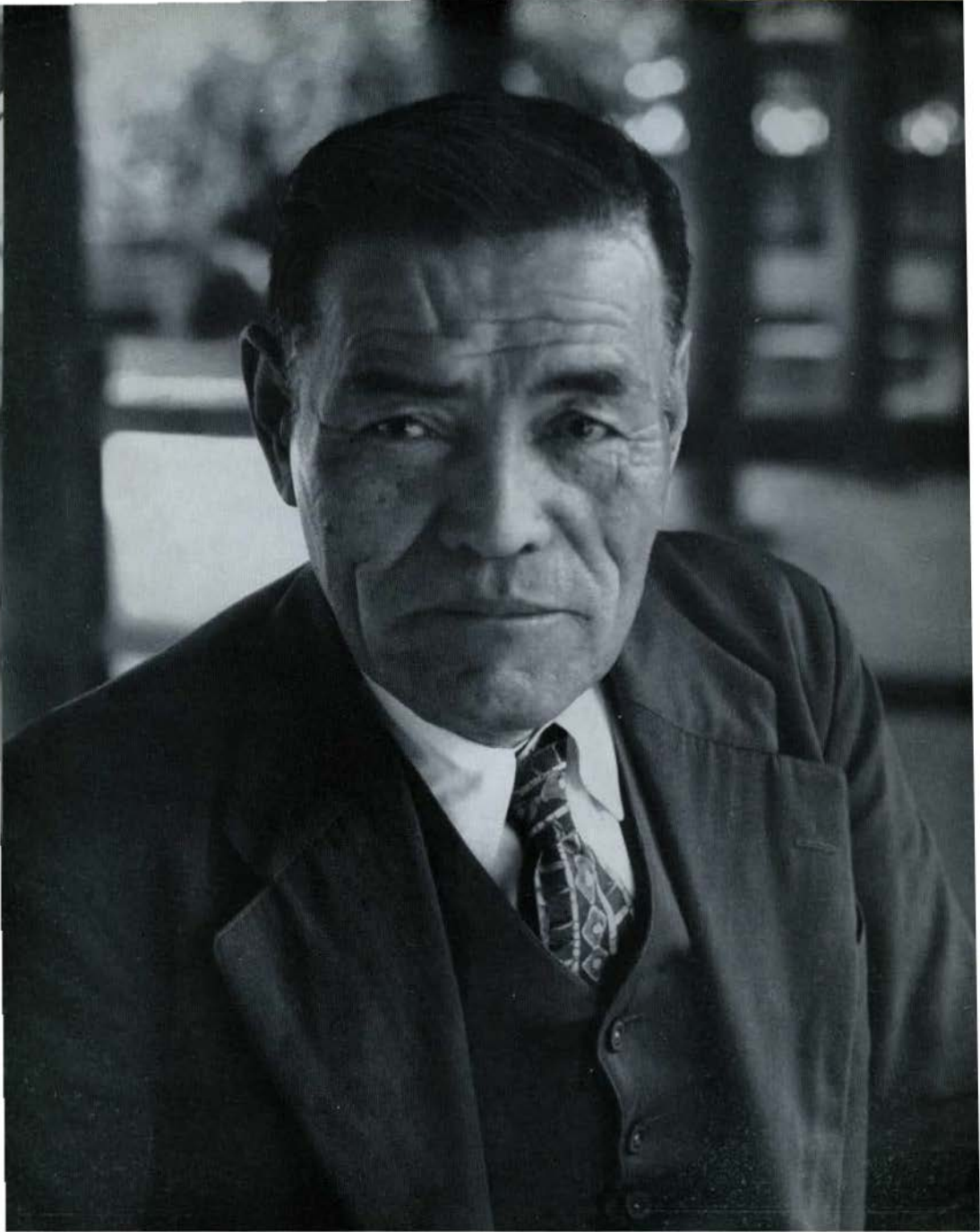


*Fig. 8. Veddah*

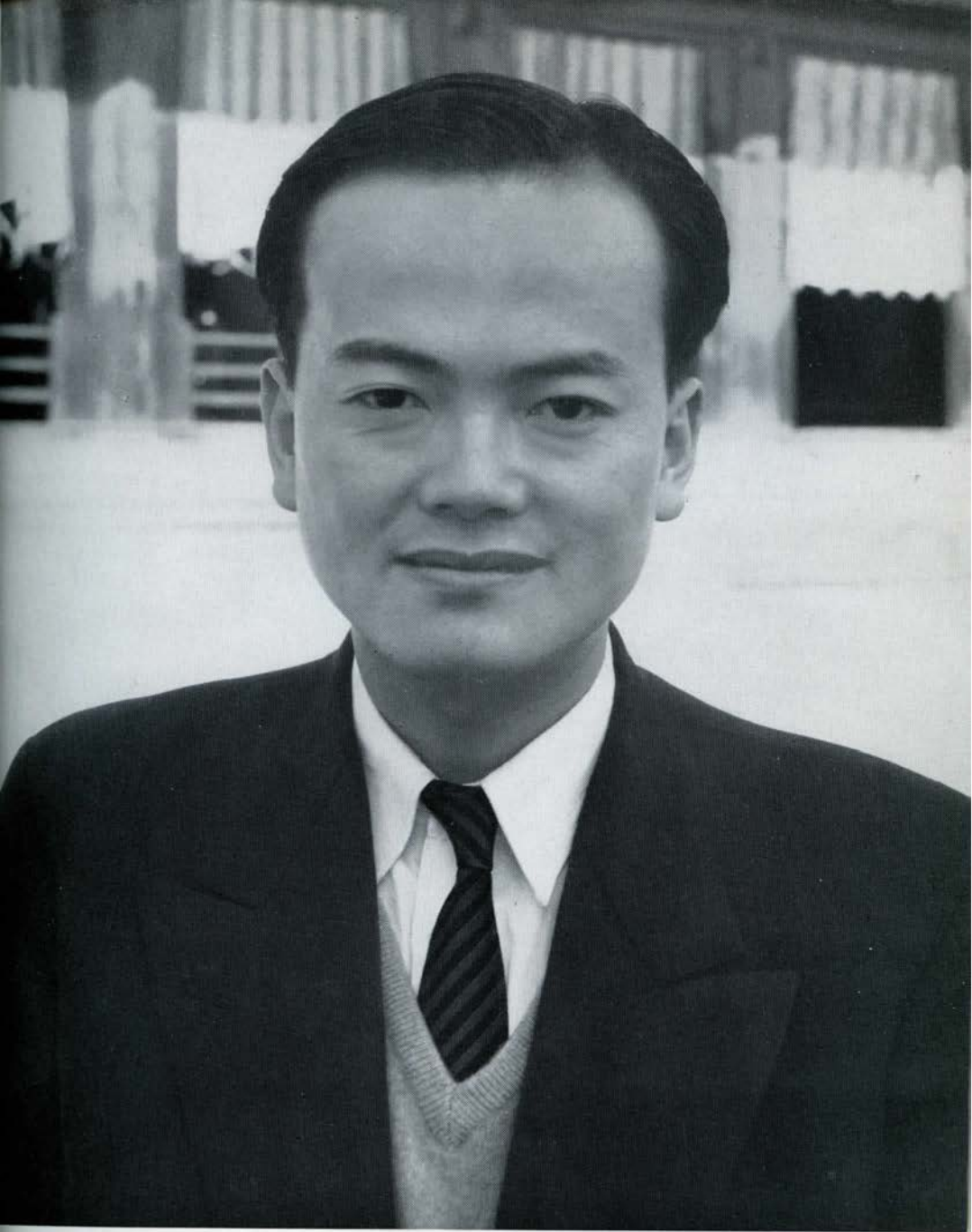




*Fig. 9. Birhor*



*Fig. 10. Japanese*

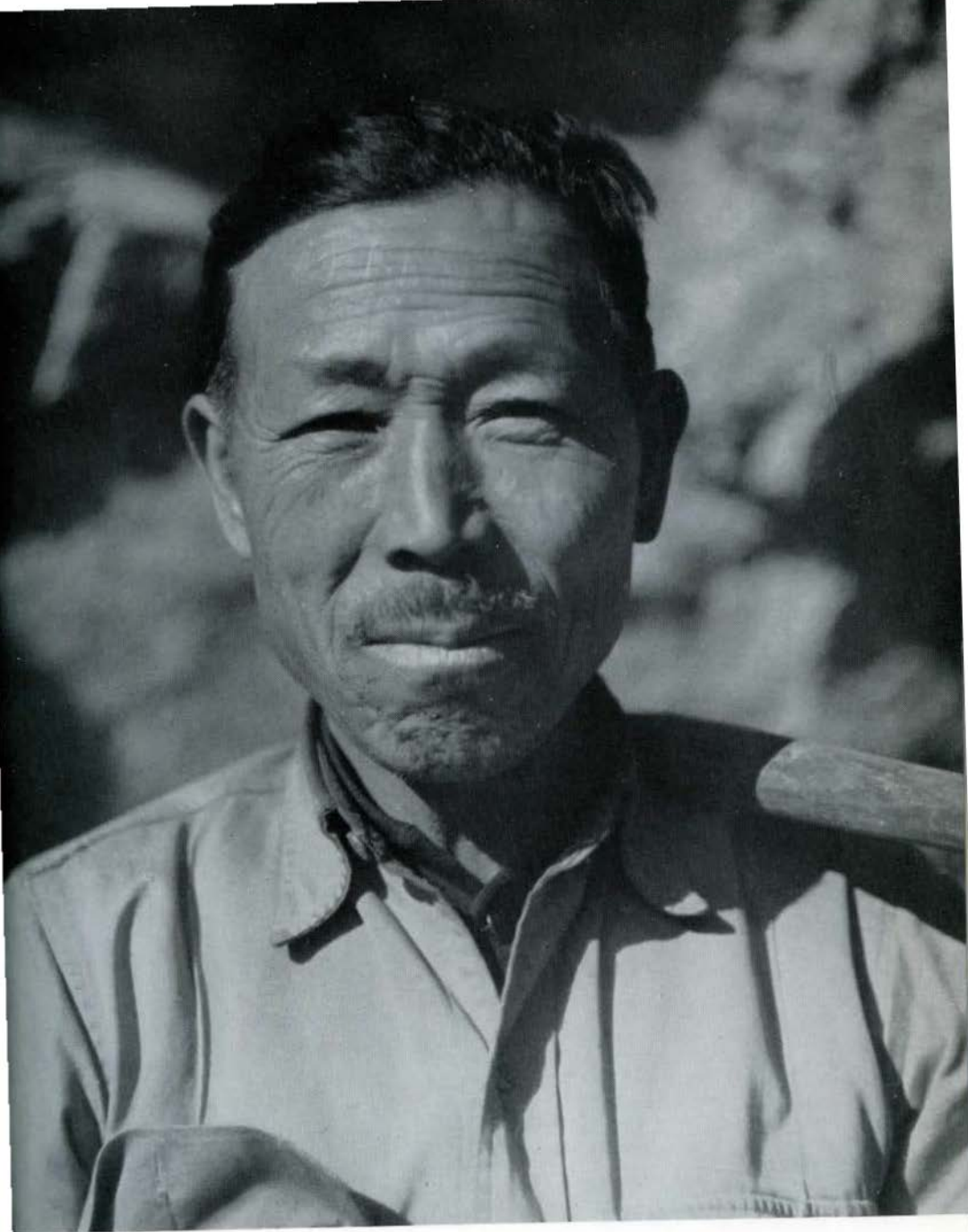


*Fig. 11. Japanese*





*Fig. 12. Japanese*



*Fig. 13. Korean*



*Fig. 14. North Chinese*

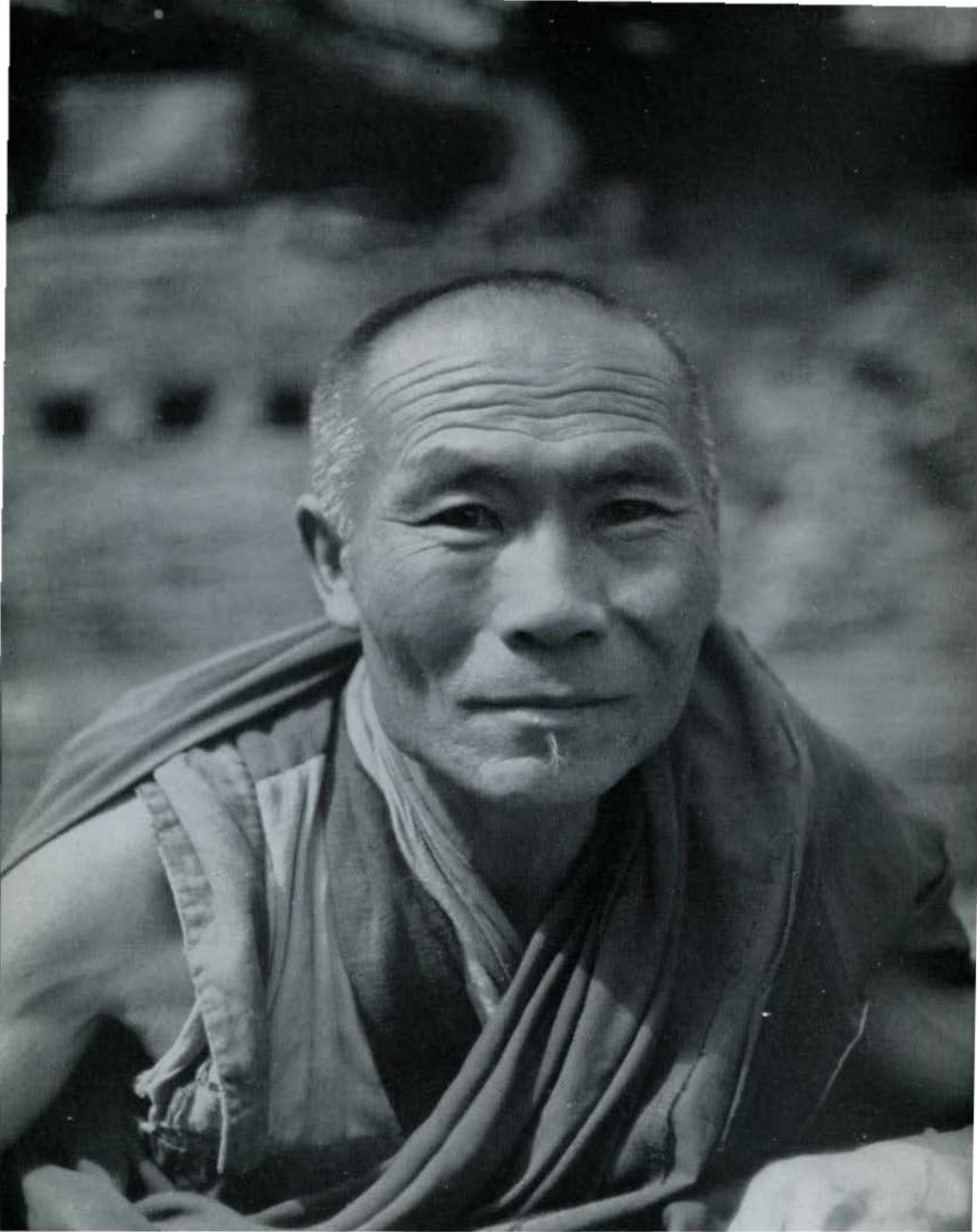




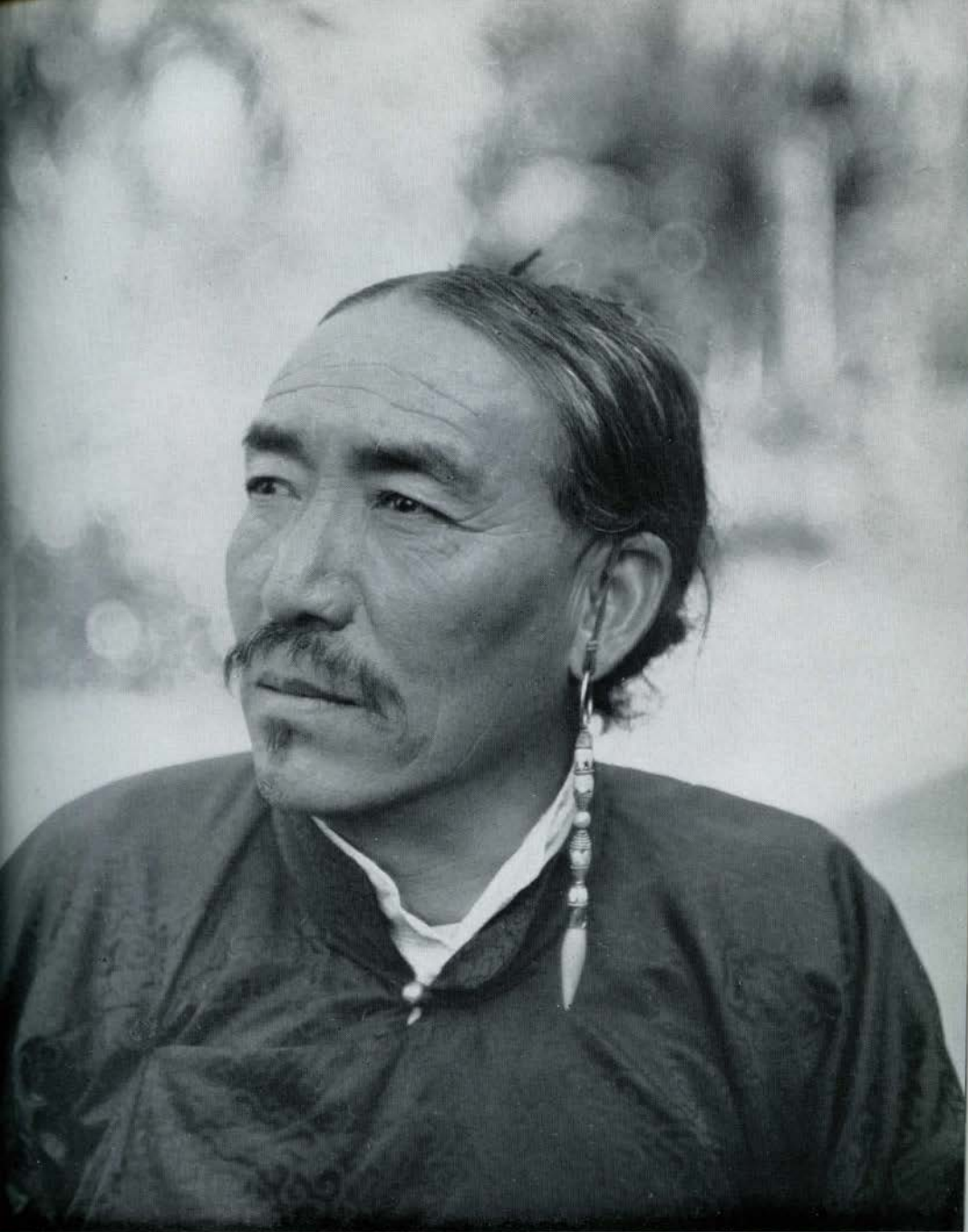
*Fig. 15. Fukienese*



*Fig. 16. Hakka*

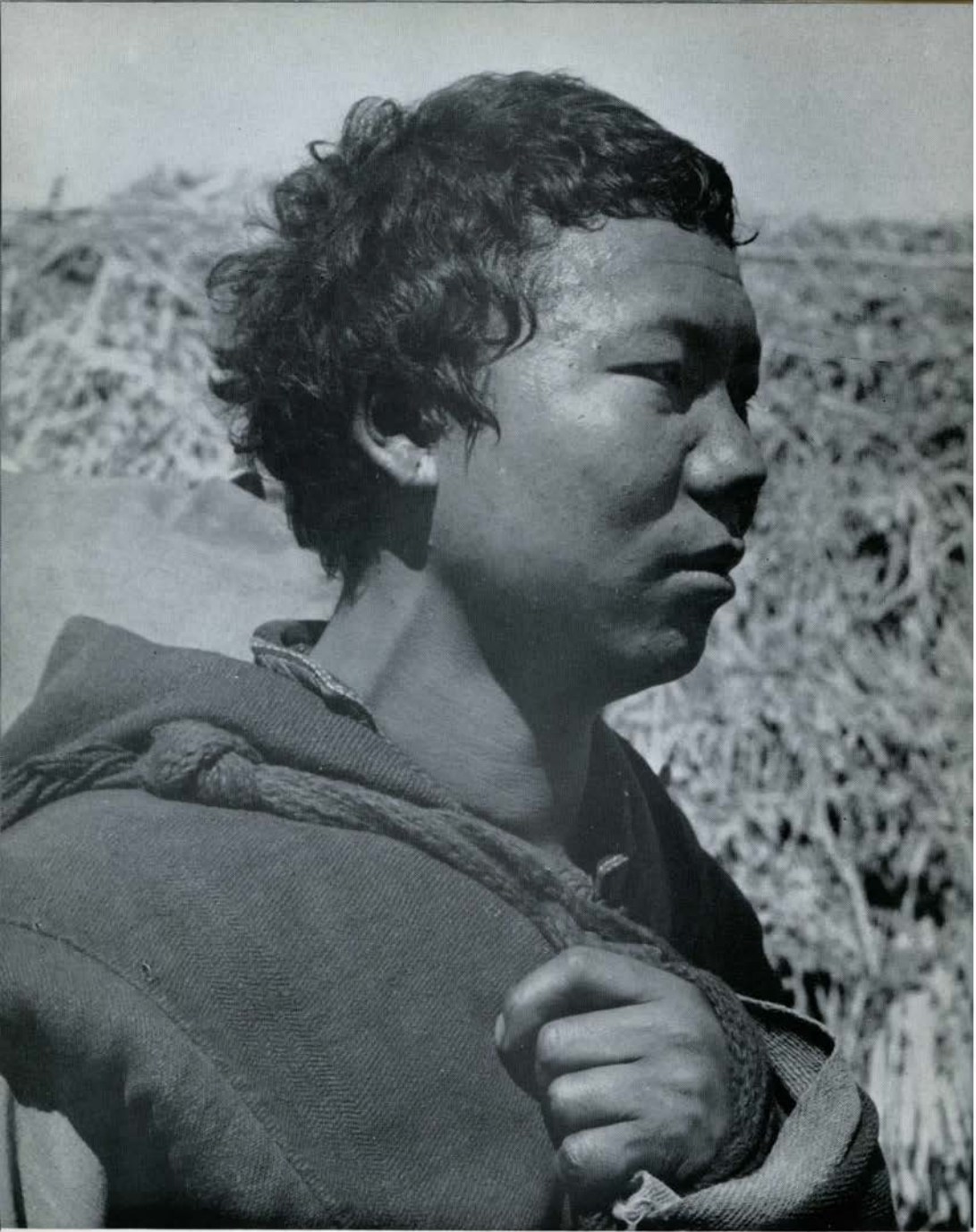


*Fig. 17. Mongol*



*Fig. 18. Tibetan*





*Fig. 19. Tibetan*

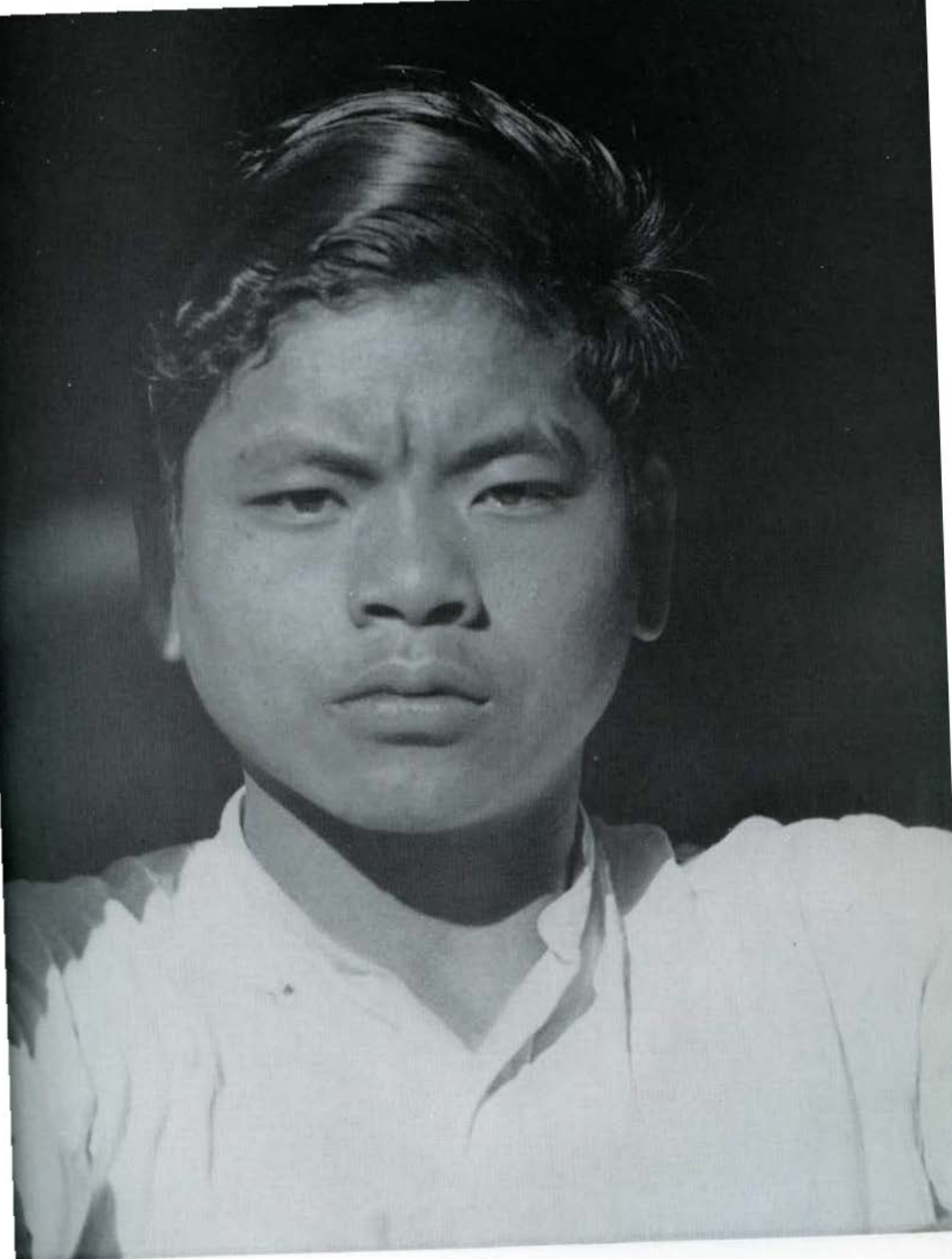


*Fig. 20. Tibetan*



*Fig. 21. Bhutanese*

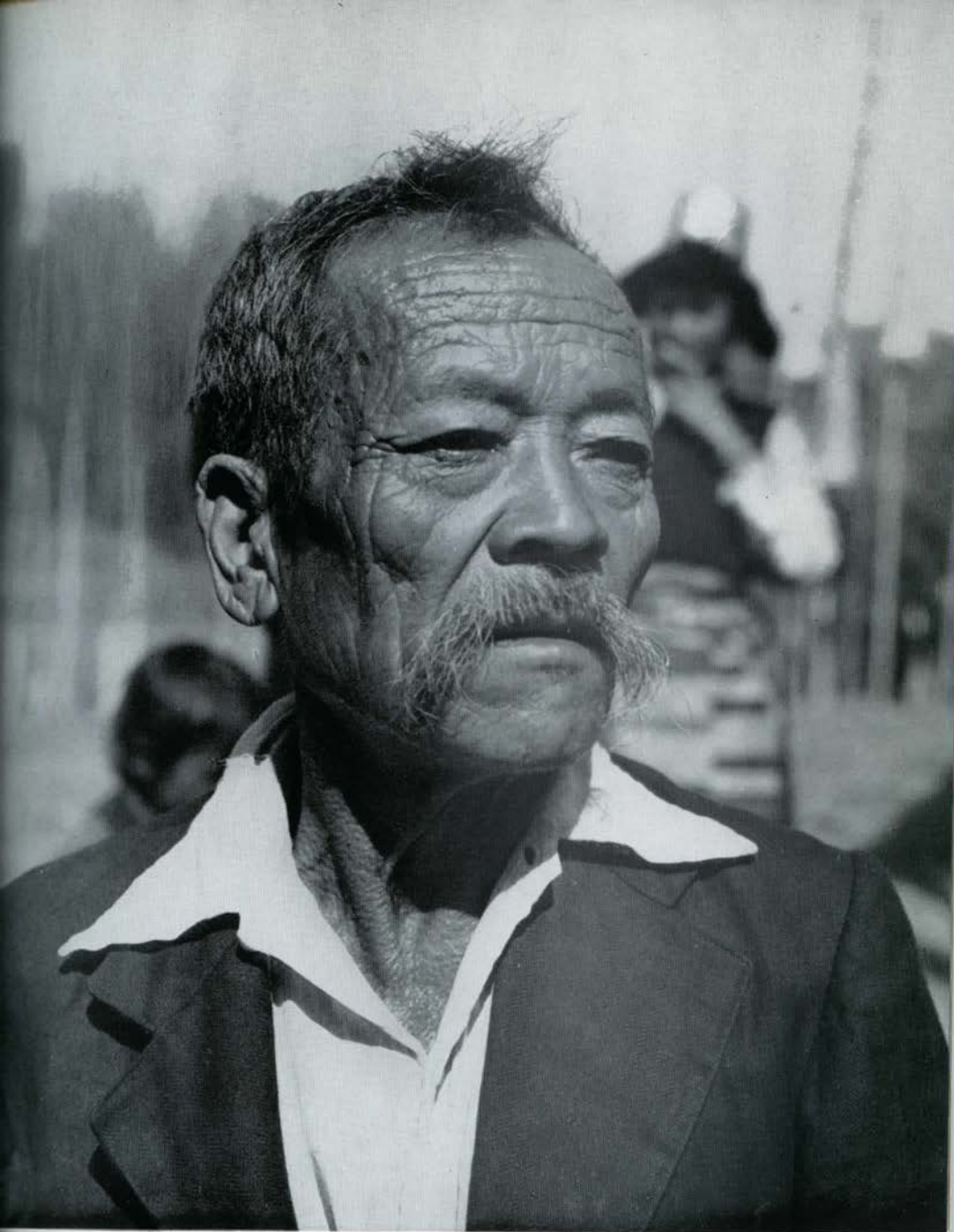




*Fig. 22. Abor*

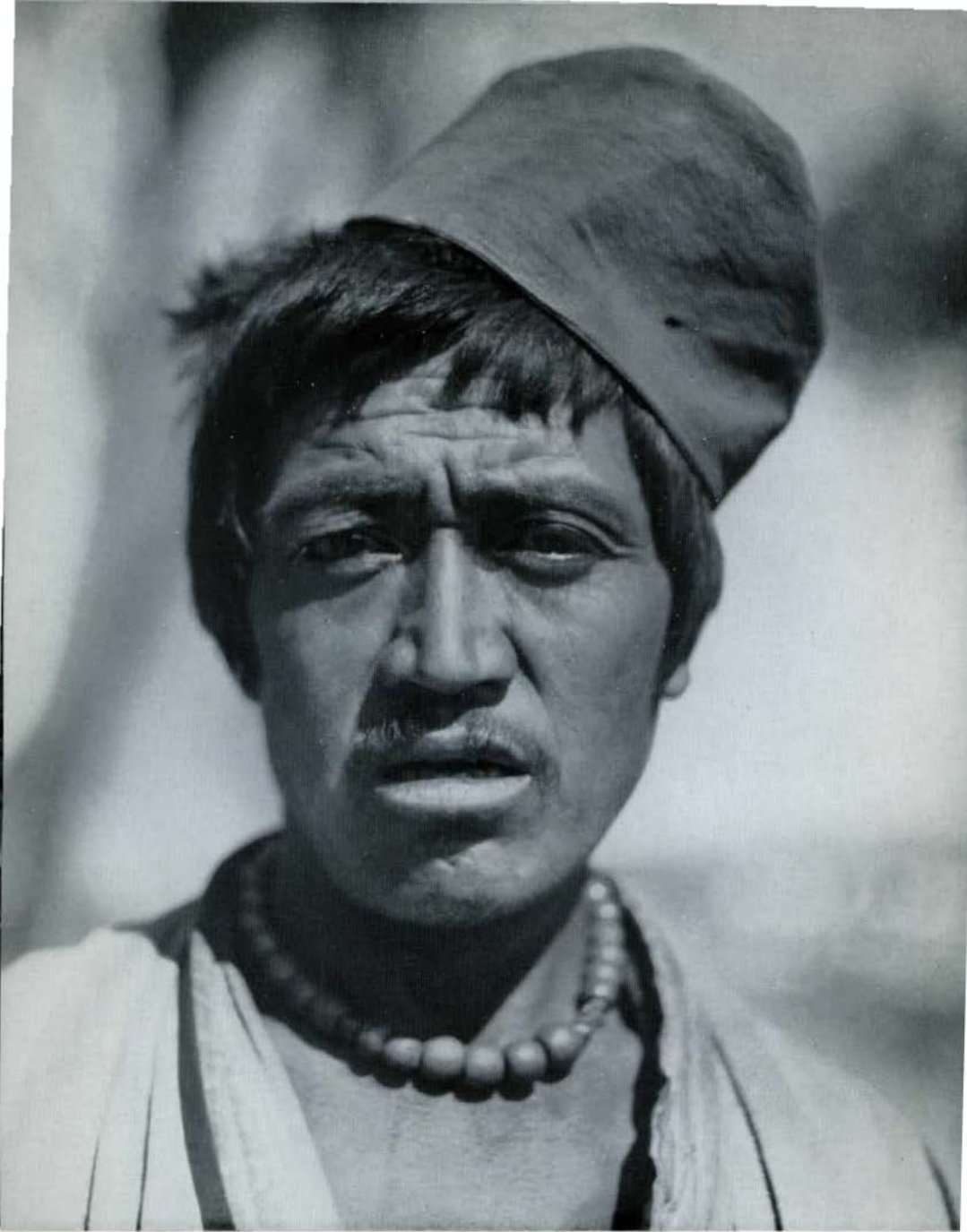


*Fig. 23. Lepcha*

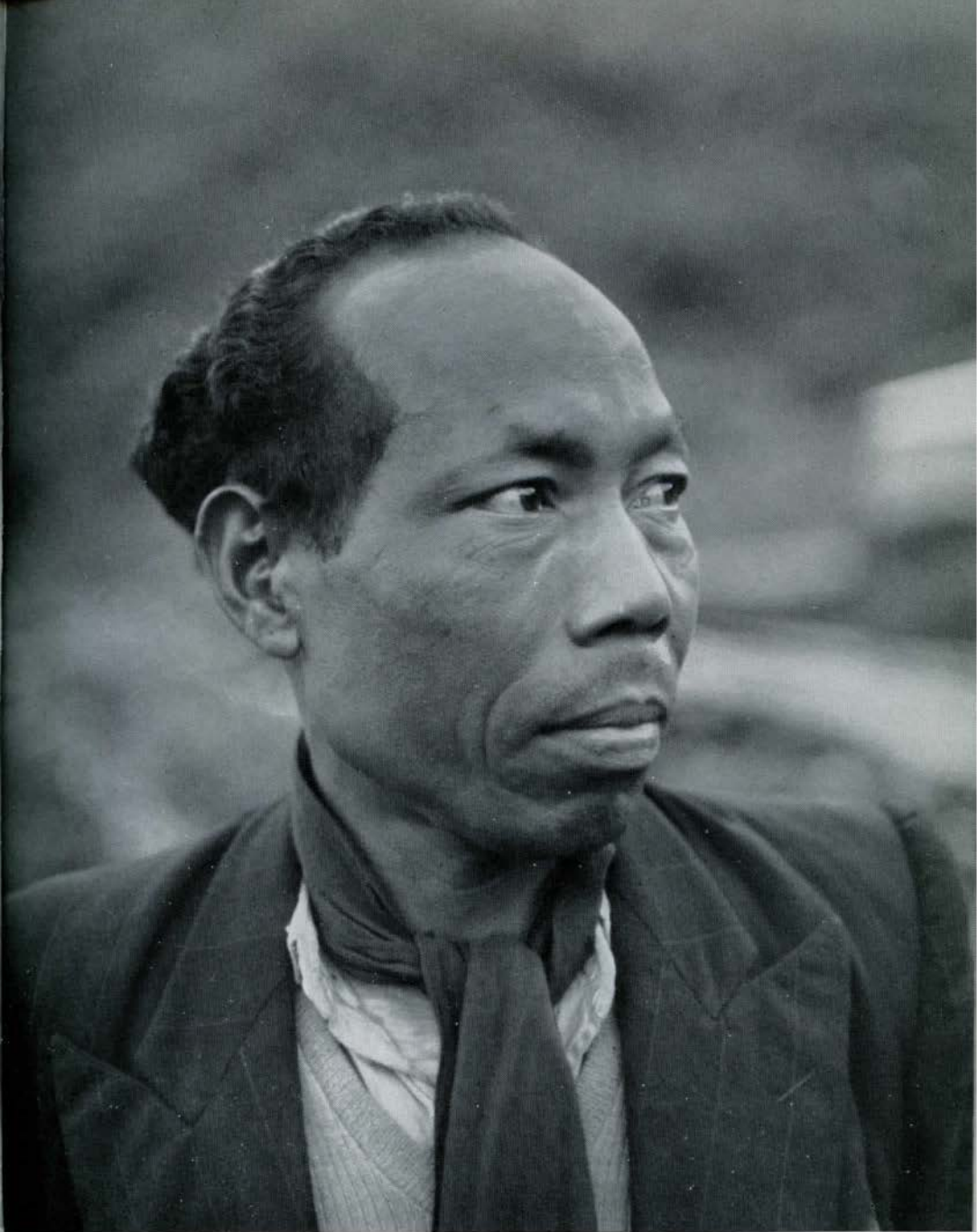


*Fig. 24. Rai*





*Fig. 25. Tamang*

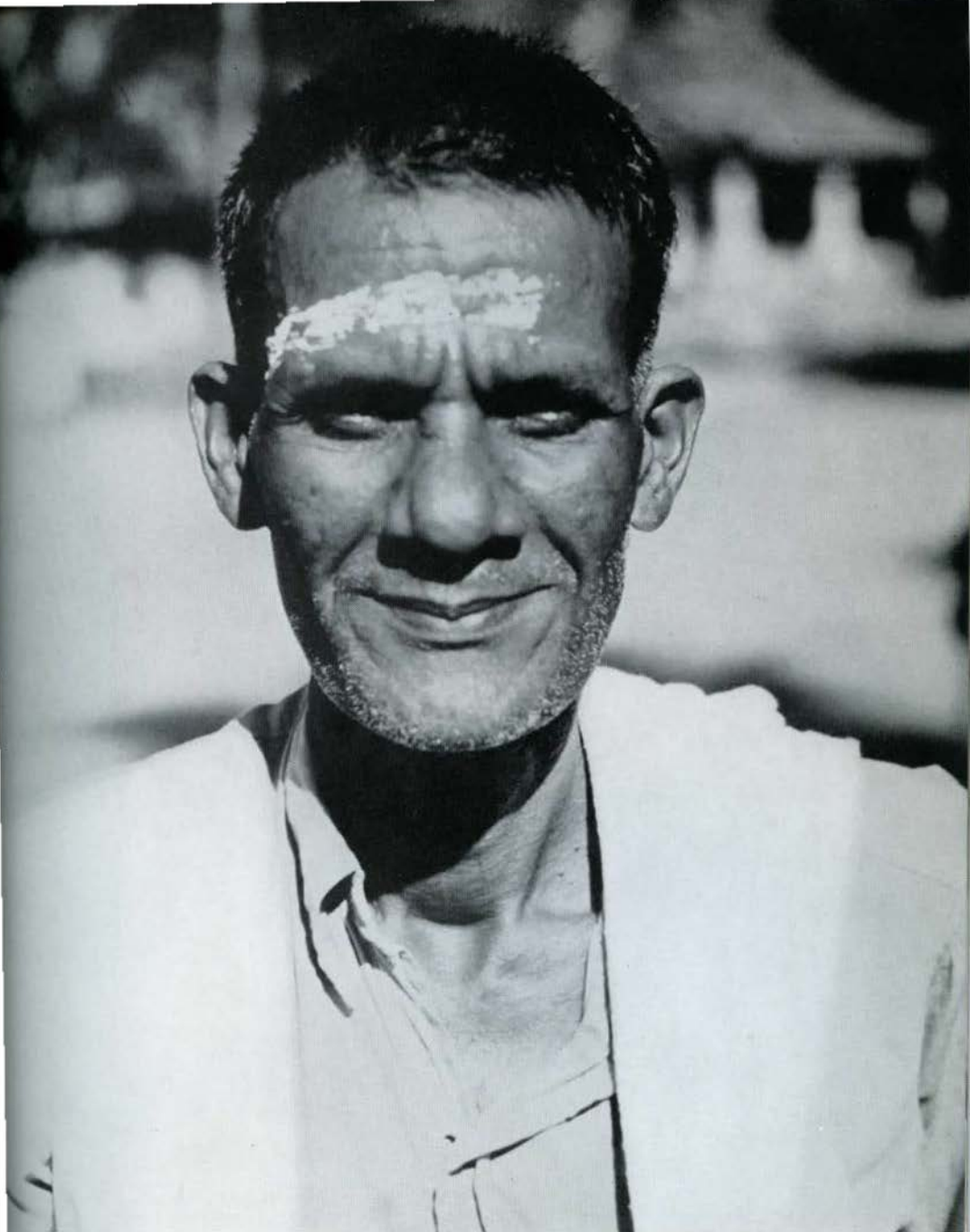


*Fig. 26. Garo*

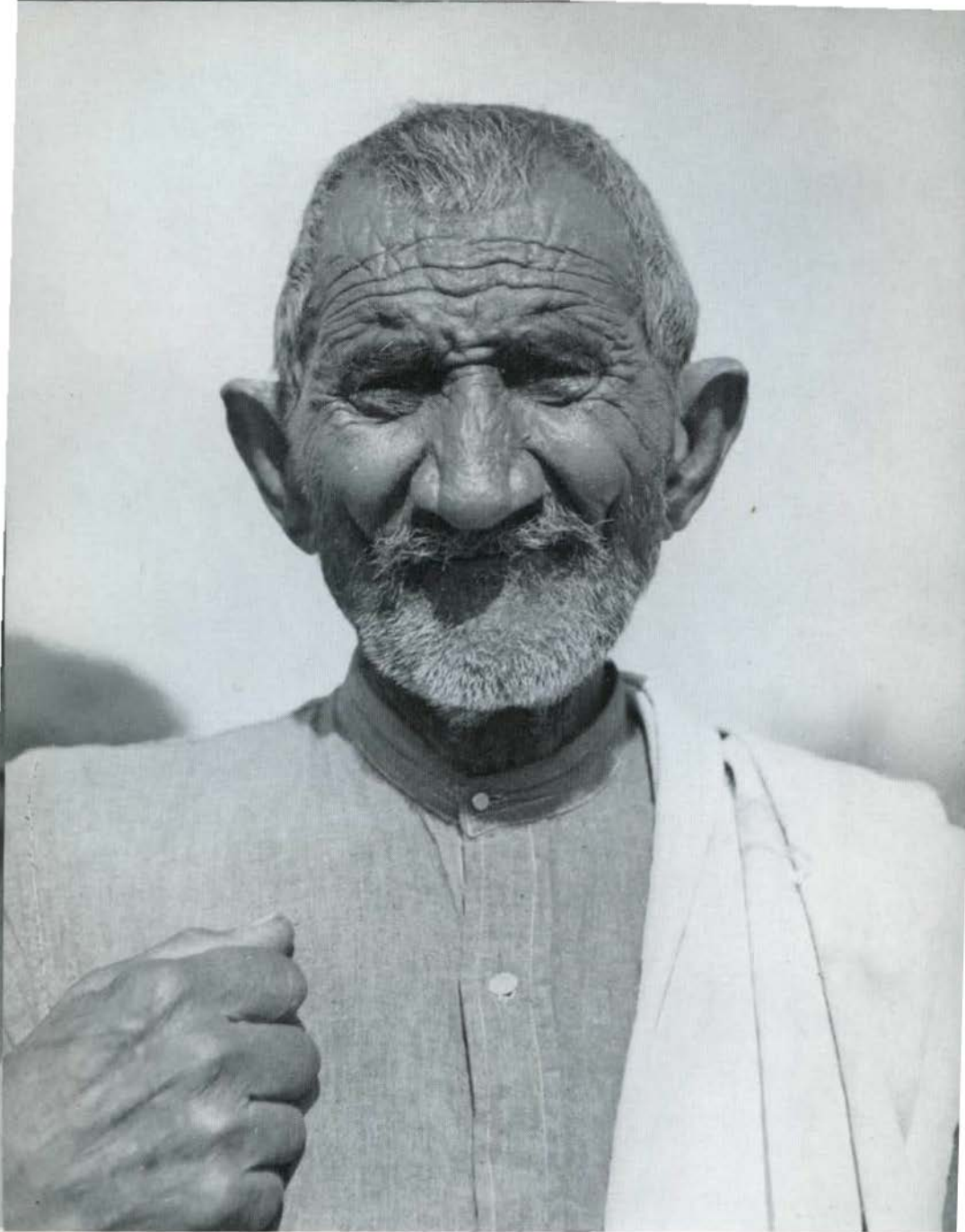


*Fig. 27. Nepalese Brahmin*





*Fig. 28. Kerala Brahmin*

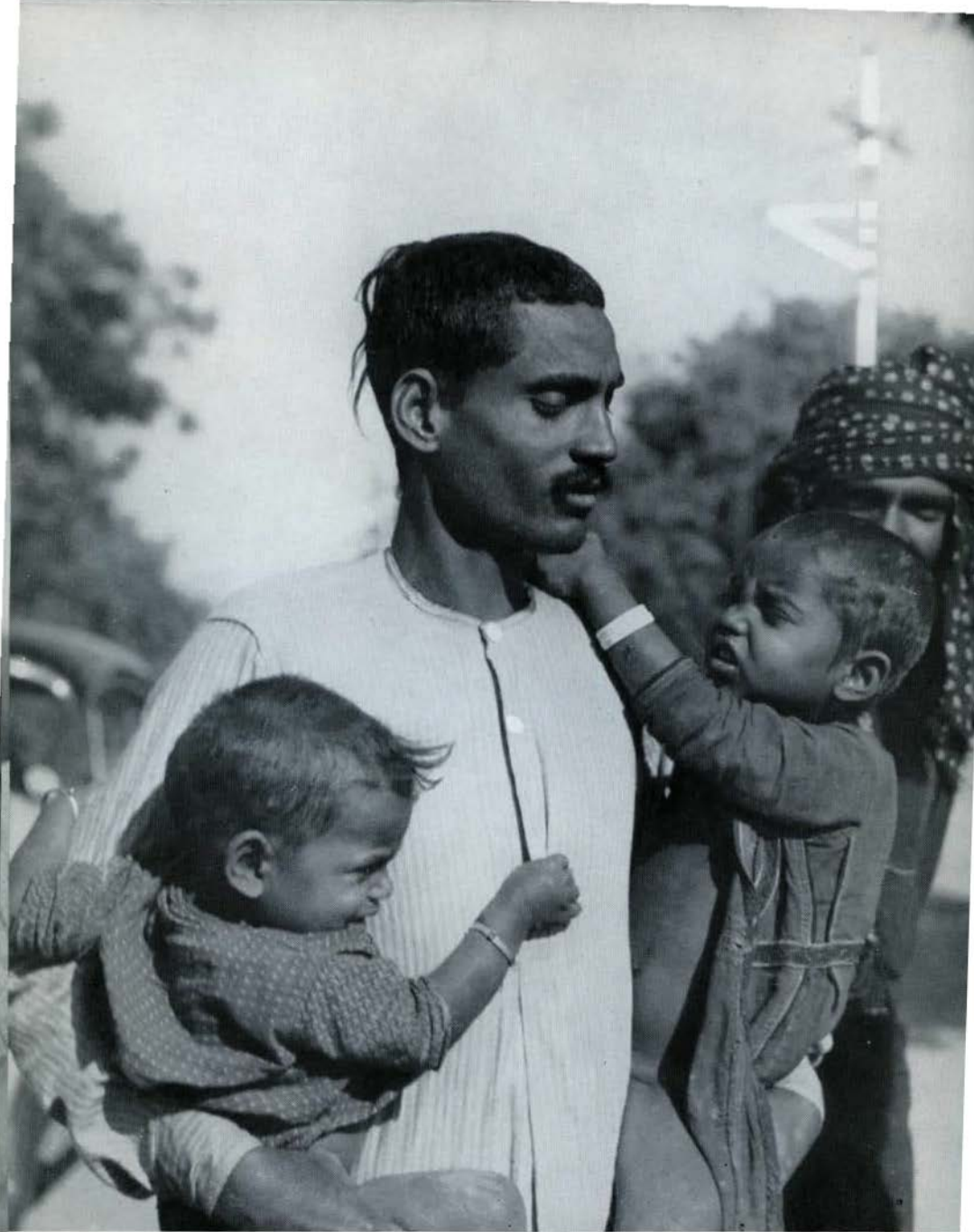


*Fig. 29. Rajput*

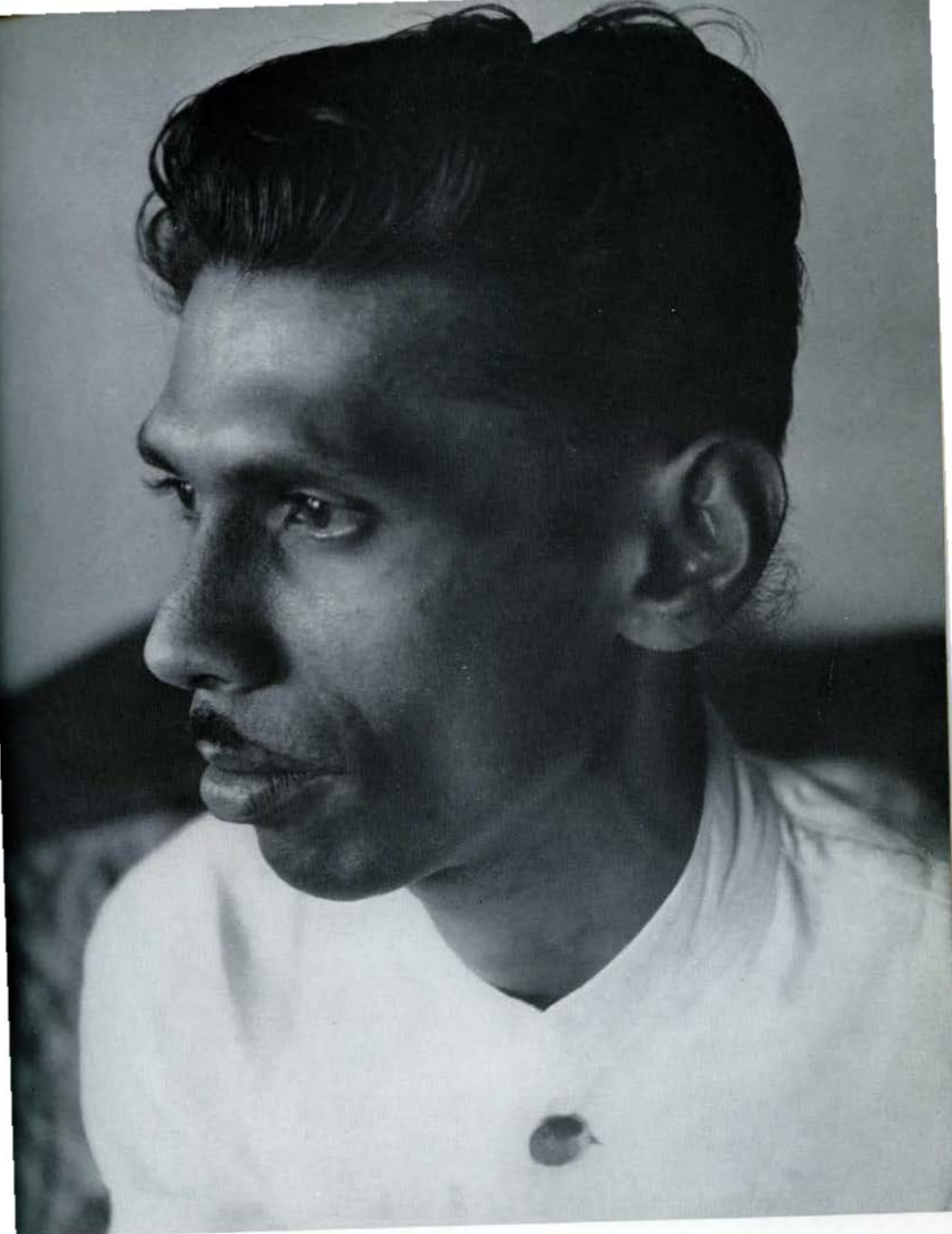


*Fig. 30. Sikh*





*Fig. 31. Gypsies*

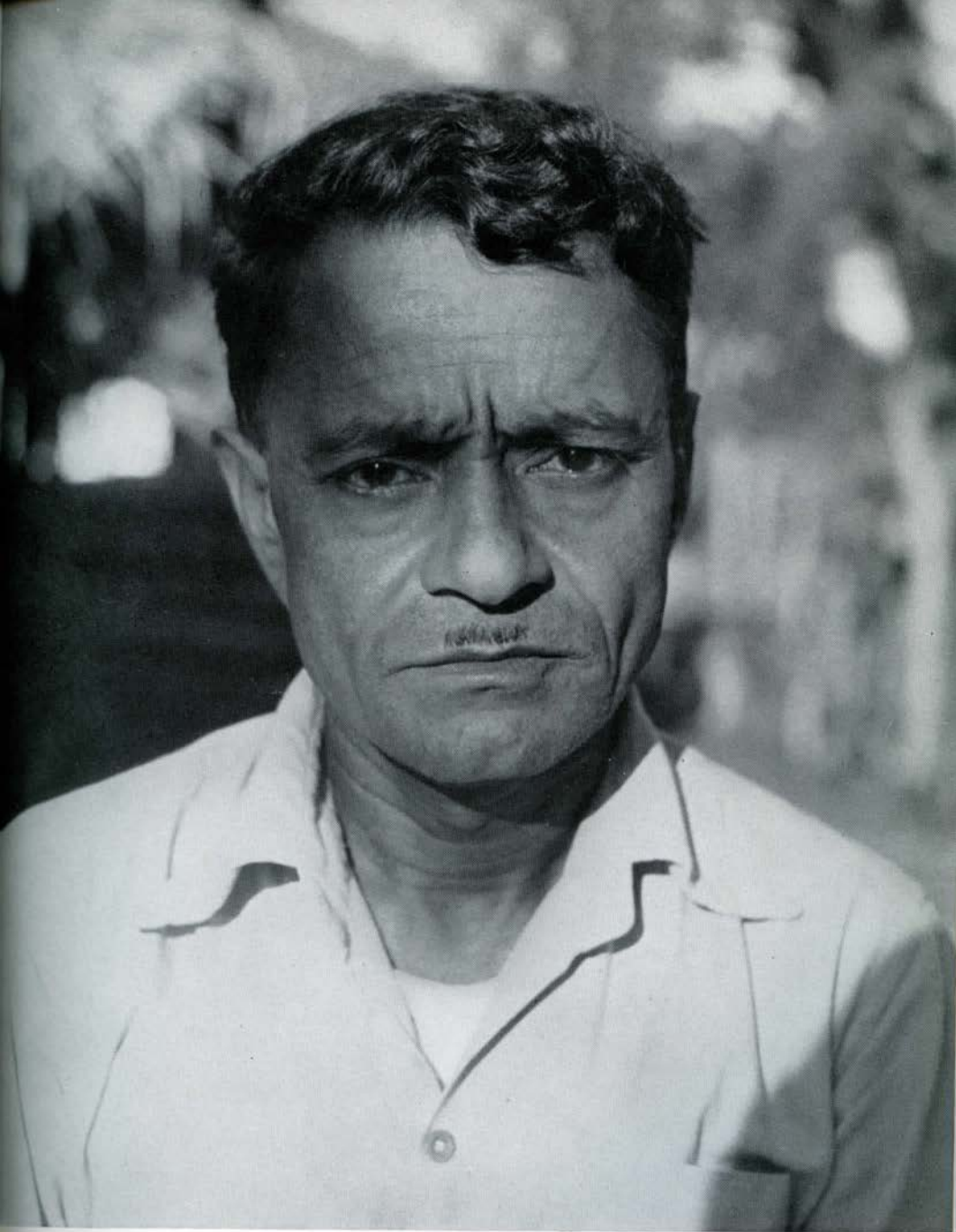


*Fig. 32. Singhalese*

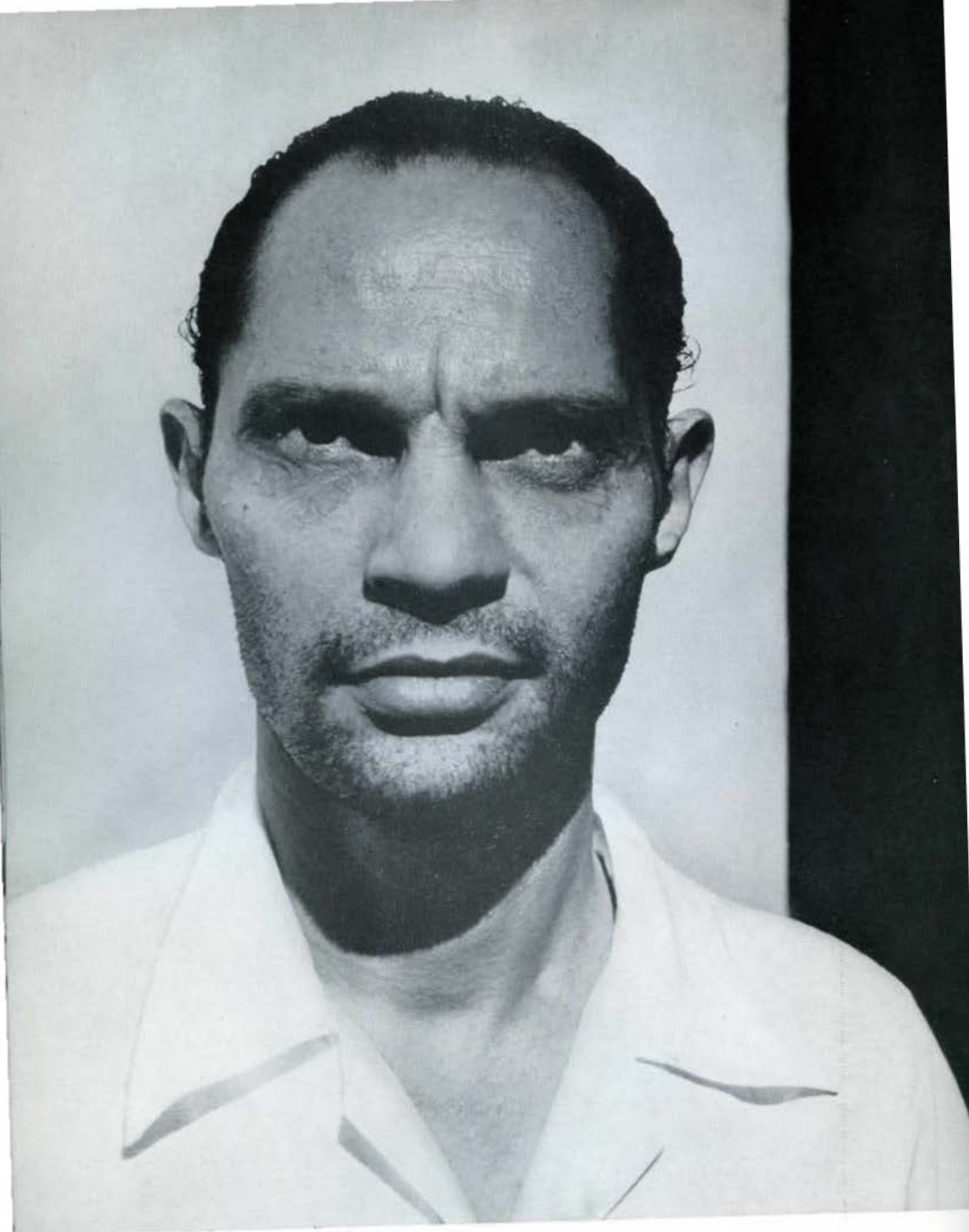


*Fig. 33. Oraon*

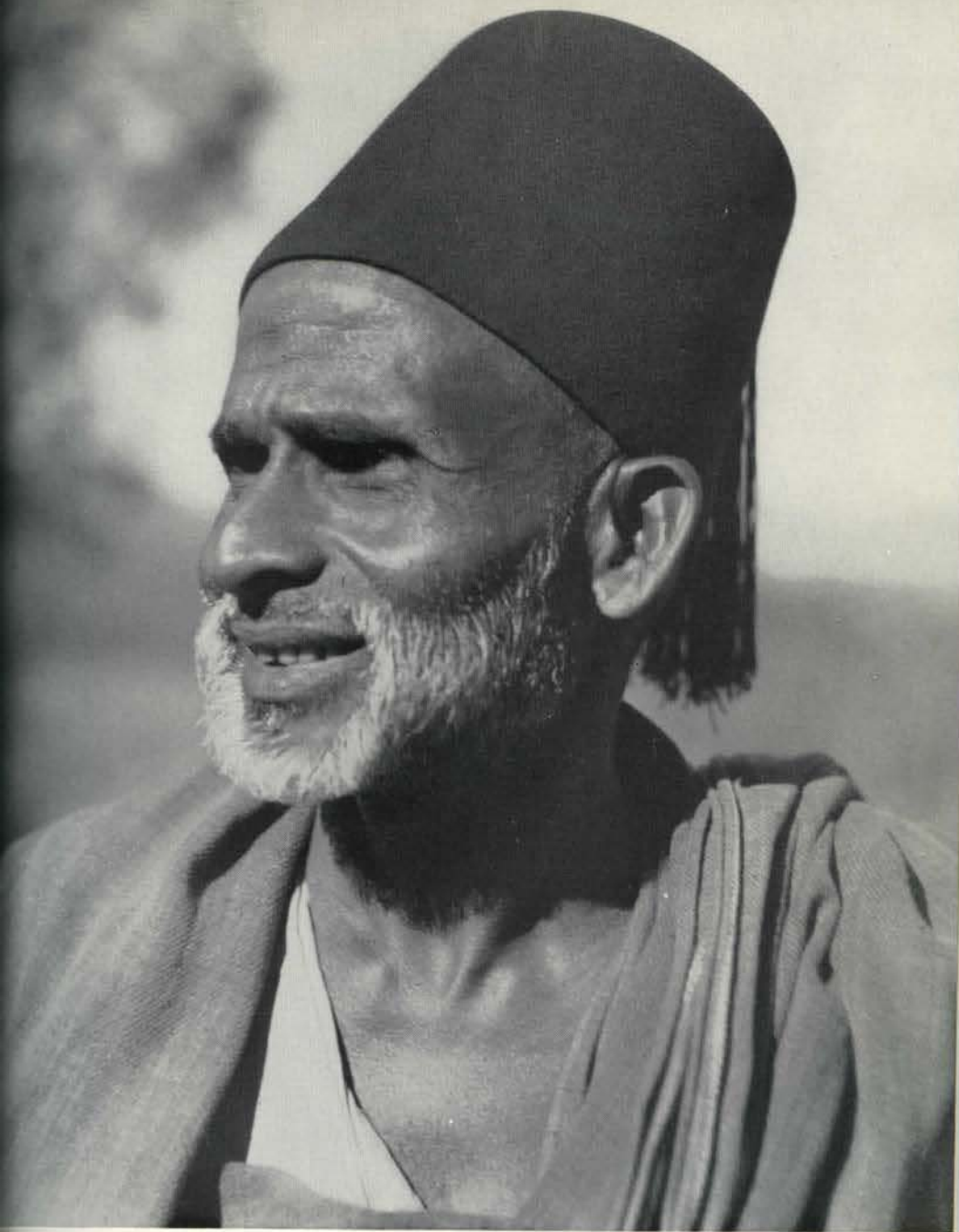




*Fig. 34. Tamil, Ceylon*



*Fig. 35. White Jew, Cochin*

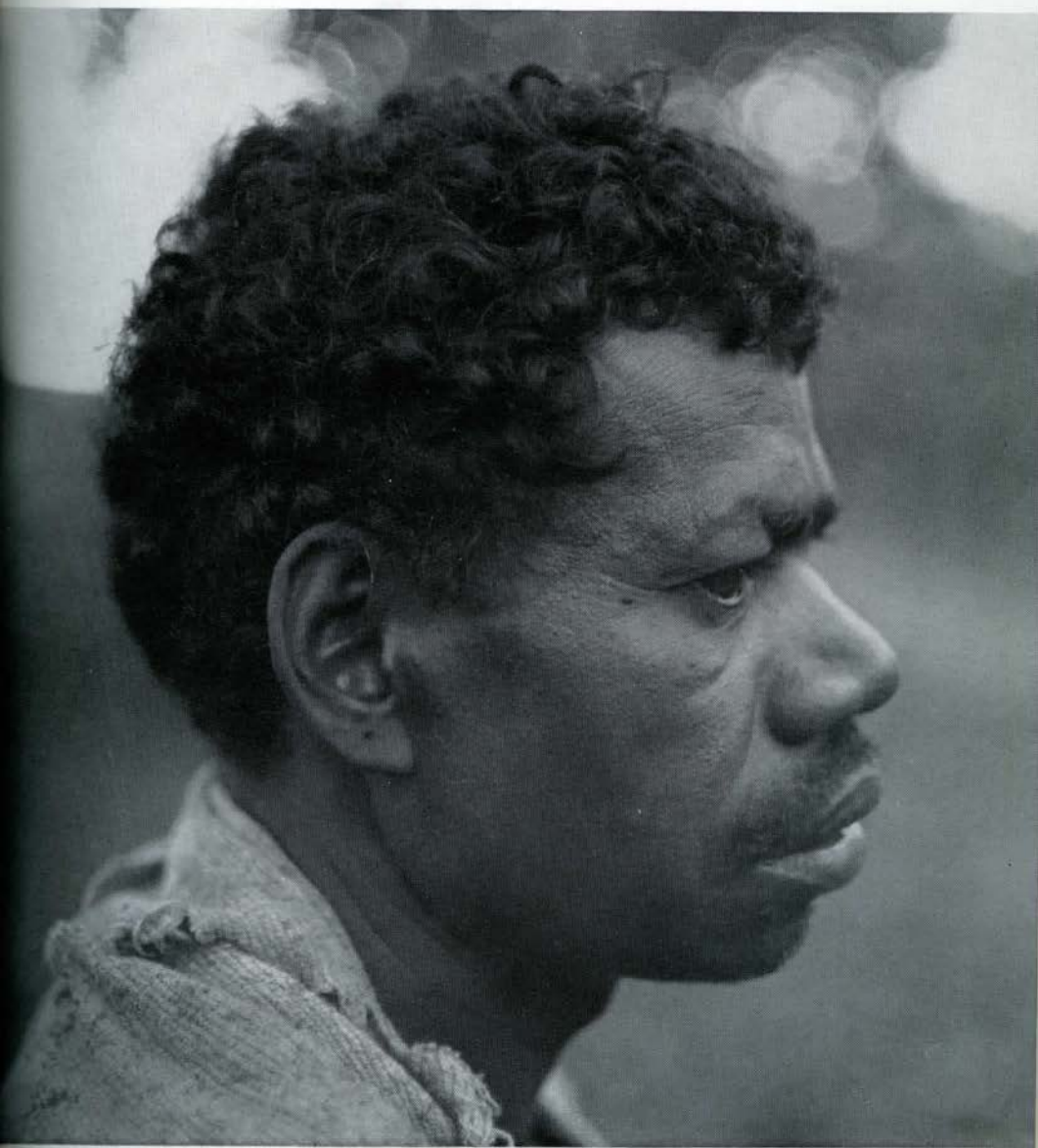


*Fig. 36. Moor, Ceylon*





*Fig. 37. Khasi*



*Fig. 38. Munda*



*Fig. 39. Munda*



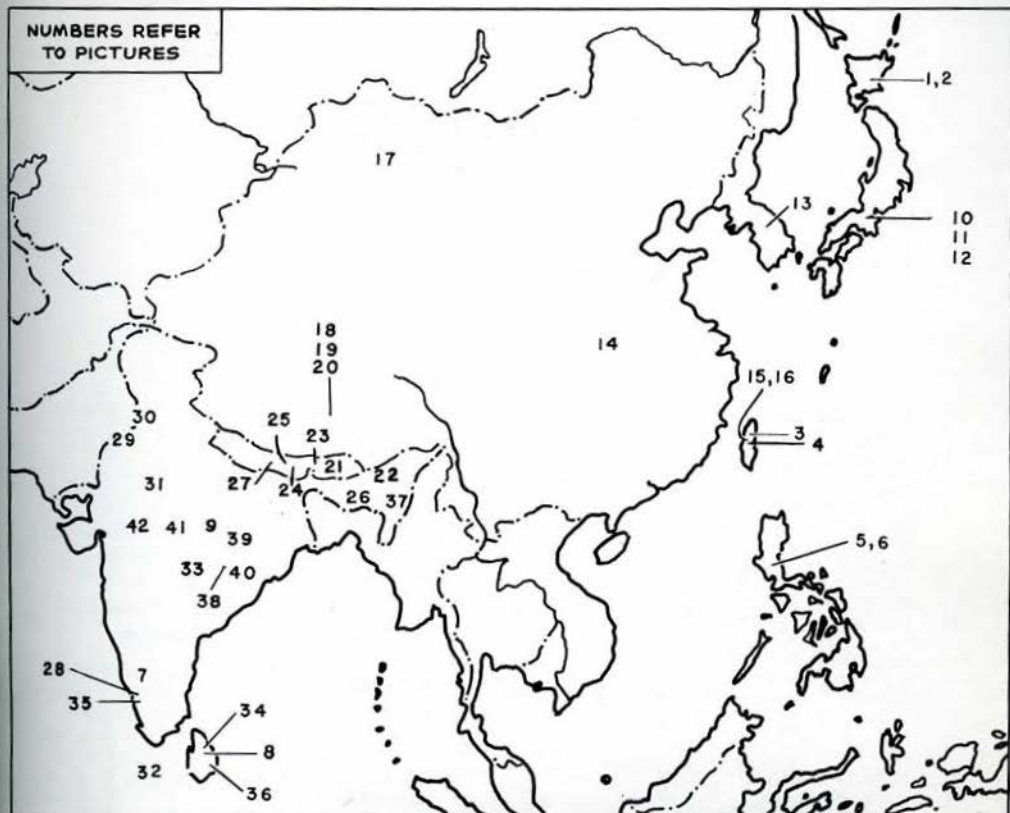


*Fig. 40. Ho*



*Fig. 41. Asura*

NUMBERS REFER  
TO PICTURES



- |                         |                              |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Ainu, Japan          | 22. Abor, Assam              |
| 2. Ainu, Japan          | 23. Lepcha, Sikkim           |
| 3. Atayal, Formosa      | 24. Rai, Nepal               |
| 4. Bunun, Formosa       | 25. Tamang, Nepal            |
| 5. Filipino             | 26. Garo, Assam              |
| 6. Negrito, Philippines | 27. Nepalese Brahmin         |
| 7. Kadar, India         | 28. Kerala Brahmin, India    |
| 8. Vedda, Ceylon        | 29. Rajput, India            |
| 9. Birhor, India        | 30. Sikh, India              |
| 10. Japanese            | 31. Gypsies, India           |
| 11. Japanese            | 32. Singhalese, Ceylon       |
| 12. Japanese            | 33. Oraon, India             |
| 13. Korean              | 34. Tamil, Ceylon            |
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| 15. Fukienese, Formosa  | 36. Moor, Ceylon             |
| 16. Hakka, Formosa      | 37. Khasi, Assam             |
| 17. Mongol              | 38. Munda, India             |
| 18. Tibetan             | 39. Munda, India             |
| 19. Tibetan             | 40. Ho, India                |
| 20. Tibetan             | 41. Asura, India             |
| 21. Bhutanese           | 42. (cover). Asura, India    |