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On a "Drop-Door" Fishing Trap used in the Myitkyina District, Upper Burma.

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While investigating the fauna of the Indawgyi Lake and its connected streams in Upper Burma in the winter of 1926 special efforts were made to study the methods of fishing and the fishing appliances used in the area. The Indawgyi Lake has a rich fish fauna, and there are, consequently, a number of important fishing centres in the locality.

The Indawgyi¹ is a very extensive freshwater lake, being about 16 miles long and as much as 5 miles broad, and is connected with the water-system of the Irrawady through the Indaw river, which flows out of the lake at its north-east end. The Indaw after flowing for a dozen miles or so is joined by another stream, the Namting, and at the confluence of the two lies Chaungwa, the most important fishing village in the locality, on account of the rich fisheries flourishing there.

By far the largest quantity of fish is caught round about Chaungwa in large fishing enclosures that are set up in the course of the rivers, but netting and trapping of fish is also extensively pursued. The traps, or *myon* as they are called, are placed in the course of the streams near the banks, especially in the midst of vegetation, and are responsible for a great deal of fish caught in the locality. The trap most commonly used in the locality is the *kathey myon*, and is supposed to have come from Manipur² in Assam. But the *kya myon*, or the drop-door trap, that forms the subject of this note, is supposed to be indigenous. It is perhaps not quite as efficient as the Manipuri trap and is, no doubt for that reason, being gradually ousted by the latter.

The *kya myon* works on the same principle as a rat-trap does—the door drops down with a snap as soon as the victim, a rat in the case of a rat-trap and the fish in the case of a *myon*,

¹ For physical features of this lake see *Soc. of Bengal*, (N.S.) XXII, p. 203, (1926).

² Hora in his account of the fisheries XXII, pp. 209-214, pls. xi, xii, (1921) does not like the "Manipuri trap" as used in Upper I

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happens to touch the spring. It is a long cone-shaped basket, the major portion of which is made out of a single piece of bamboo, and has a wide mesh. The narrow end of the basket is formed of a bamboo node; the stem is split up into long narrow strips, which, with other spare ones inserted in between, form the long axis of the basket. These strips are woven together in the form of a cone-shaped basket with other strips going round, but leaving a very wide mesh. At the large open end, a double rectangular or squarish frame is fitted up, through which a door made of strong bamboo matting or bamboo strips woven together slides up and down. By the sides of the door two long poles are fixed vertically, one on each side, and the door-frame is further strengthened by shorter bamboo sticks tied near the base. The long poles are grooved to allow of the door sliding up and down. The door has at about the middle of its upper side a pocket-like structure fashioned out of bamboo strips and in this is placed a fairly heavy stone. A long cane string is tied to the upper side of the door and passes over a roller (formed by passing a stick through a hollow piece of bamboo) fixed horizontally between the vertical poles near their upper end. At the free end of this string a small stick is tied. Inside the net at about its broadest point a number of cane strings fixed to the bottom of the net at different points are brought up above the net and tied together to a small bamboo stick. At this point, on the outside of the basket, there is a small loop made of cane string and with its help the two small sticks—one at the end of the string connected with the door and coming over the roller and the other at the end of the inner strings—are so adjusted that even a comparatively light touch to one of the strings inside the basket releases the door string and the door, weighed as it is with the heavy stone, comes down with a snap. A small loop, behind the ramification of the strings, is used for tying a bait to it, and any fish of a large size in trying to reach the bait is almost sure to touch at least one of the strings. Once this happens the door is automatically released and it is impossible for the fish to get out.

The trap is used for catching large fish only and is fixed in fairly deep water, where it is totally submerged, only a part of the vertical poles being visible above the surface.

The *kya myon* appears to be rather a crude trap as only one fish can be caught at a time and once the door is released, even by some floating piece of wood, etc., it ceases to function until it is set again. The very large mesh precludes the possibility of any small fish being trapped. On account of the amazing richness of the fish-fauna in this area, however, this trap has its uses and a fairly large number of fish are trapped by it. Also the large size of the fish that are caught in this trap must be a strong inducement in favour of its use as opposed to the other kinds of traps in which a large number of comparative-

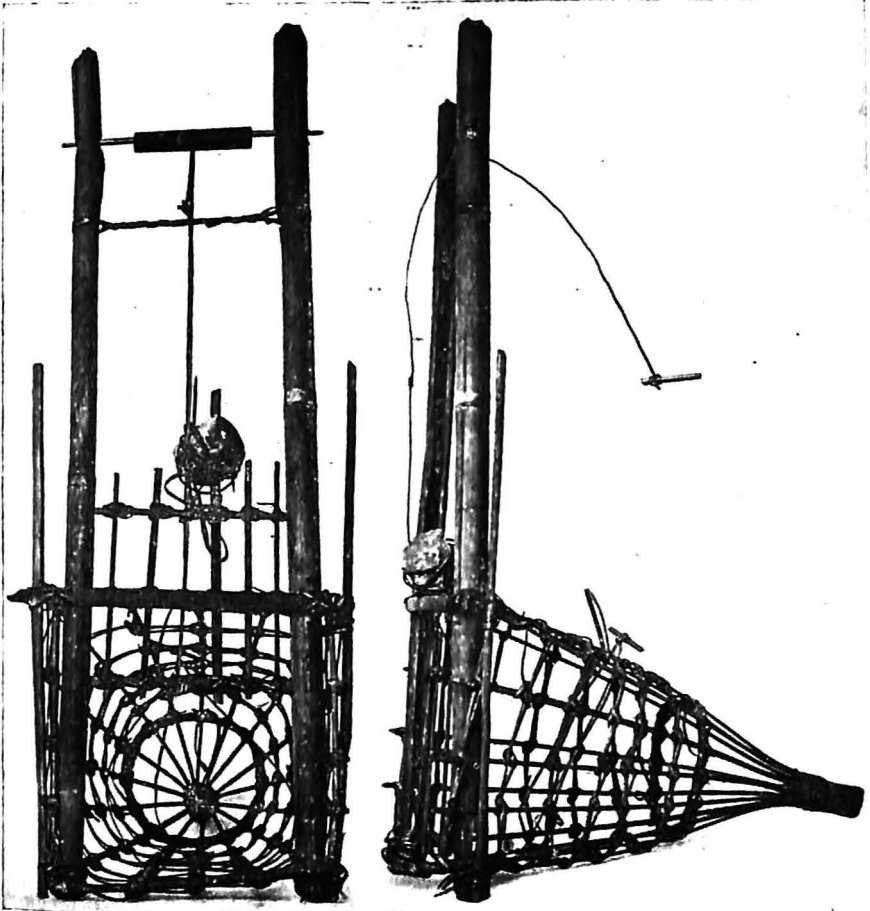
ly small fish are caught. As stated above, however, this trap is gradually falling out of use. One man generally uses 10-15 of these traps, clearing them, with the help of a small boat, twice a day, in the morning and evening.

The tax for each *myon*, I was told by the Headman of Chaungwa, is Rs. 2/8/-per year.

Kya myon is made in different sizes, but a fairly large specimen examined had the following measurements:—

Greatest length of the basket	..	..	50"
" breadth a little behind the mouth	..	..	19 $\frac{3}{4}$ "
Length of door-frame from inside	..	..	15 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
Height	"	"	11 $\frac{3}{4}$ "
Height of vertical poles	..	..	78 $\frac{1}{2}$ "

The photographs accompanying this note are from a model of the trap made by a fisherman at Chaungwa. The right hand figure shows the trap in side view, with the door closed; that on the left is from front and shows the door open.



Upper Burma "Drop-Door" Fishing Trap.

