‘This is Io’ – photographs from Tamlu, Nagaland, 1902

I acquired a family archive of colonial documents and photos taken in the first years of the 20th century, the majority relating to the Naga Hills. The most substantial and interesting of these is a diary, enhanced by images, which covers tours made by Connie Shakespear while accompanying her husband, the commandant of the Naga Hills Military Police based in Kohima. To determine what could be made of her record, in December 2019 I went to some of the villages she had visited to provide background for a potential publication of the diary. Whilst my visit was an informal exercise and not made for anthropological purposes it did provide experience of a kind reflected in academic texts linking photography with anthropology and history (Morton: The Anthropology of Photography). By showing photographs to people living there today I hoped to guage their level of interest and to ask for comment and my presentation of these images in the village of Tamlu is one focus of this essay. A second focus is to show how Connie’s text and photographs from Tamlu refl ect her interest in the village and her engagement with the people, an important element in deciding to publish the diary. The third aspect of the essay addresses the villagers’ attitude to the camera and the business of being photographed, also relevant to assessing Connie’s relationship with them. My visits to Tamlu and other villages made it clear to me that the diary and photographs belong in the public domain.