

GARO HILLS LAND AND THE PEOPLE

L. S. GASSAH



This book on 'Garo Hills-Land and the People', contains a collection of research papers contributed by various scholars drawn from different disciplines of Sciences, Social Sciences, Humanities and Environmental Sciences.

The book offers detail information in understanding about the History and Culture of the Garo people, the land and its Physical Setting, including Agriculture, Ecosystem, Forest, Flora and fauna, Geology and Mineral Resources, Pattern of Economic Change and Modernisation of the society. Besides these main important features about the land and its people, the book also gives us an interesting insight about the other communities found in Garo Hills like the Koches, Hajongs and Rabhas. The book is therefore a rich collection of materials on varied subjects.

The uniqueness of the book is that it covers almost all the important aspects on Garo Hills right from the pre-historic era to the present period. One could therefore find in these different papers huge treasure of knowledge about Garo Hills-the land and its people. It therefore provides immense resource materials for those who are interested in knowing more and making an indepth study on the people of the area and there society. The book will therefore be of great help to the students, research, scholars, administrators and the public in general.

Rs. 300/-

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**GARO HILLS
LAND & THE PEOPLE**

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GAUHATI NEW DELHI

Genl.
Distributed by

WESTERN BOOK DEPOT
Pankazar, Gauhati-781001
Assam

NE
915.4164
GAS; 2

© NEICSSR

First Edition 1984

Published by

R. Kumar, Omsons Publications
T-7, Rajouri Garden,
New Delhi

Printed at

Dhawan Printing Works,
A-26, Mayapuri, Phase I,
New Delhi-110064

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INTRODUCTION

This book 'Garo Hills—Land and the People' is dedicated to the memory of late Dr. Parimal Chandra Kar, a well-known, active and eminent scholar on the Garos. The Book contains a collection of research papers contributed by various scholars drawn from different disciplines of Sciences, Social Sciences, Humanities and Environmental Sciences.

Dr. Parimal Chandra Kar was one of the founder members of the North-East India Council for Social Science Research (N.E.I.C.S.S.R.), Shillong. Dr. Kar was not only a founder member of the Council, but was a very active member and scholar who contributed his academic scholarship immensely to the Council through his books, original research papers and constructive discussions and deliberations in many Seminars held by the Council and in many other aspects also. His death caused a great loss to the Council and its members. As a mark of respect to the contributions made by late Dr. Kar, the NEICSSR felt it duty-bound to put something in a concrete shape in memory of this great scholar. Thus, this book.

Dr. Kar's untimely passing away on 27 April 1982 at Tura in Garo Hills, the land which is so dear and near to his heart, where he also adopted for his academic interest, cast a shadow of gloom to his fellow members in the Council in particular and the people of Garo Hills in general. Dr. Kar was born in the Mymensing district of undivided Bengal in 1933. He had his schooling and collegiate education in Calcutta. He passed the B. Com. (Hons.) Examination of the Calcutta University in 1954 from the City College, M. Com. of the same University in 1956, M.A. in Economics of the Benaras Hindu University in 1963, and obtained his Ph. D. (Anthropology) degree from

Gauhati University in 1979. He joined the Tura College (a Government College since 1967) as early as 1958 as a Lecturer in Economics. The job had brought him to Garo Hills but did not end only within the four walls of the classrooms. It was rather a turning point in his academic career and interest.

Dr. P.C. Kar identified himself with the land and its people and these had fascinated him. He had been associated with the Garo society since 1958 when he joined the Government College at Tura. He adopted the land as his own, learnt the local tongue in course of his intimate association with the Garos and later on spoke the language fluently and commenced enquiry into the history and culture of the people and the life and condition in their hills. In course of his studies and field work among the Garos, he stayed with them, observed their seasonal agricultural activities and he often participated in jhumming, plantation and other economic and socio-cultural activities of the villagers. He, himself vividly said in his book—*The Garos In Transition* (unfortunately he did not live to see the book) that—

“In the field of socio-economic researches, an investigator fails to achieve his objective if he does not make his tools effective by promoting his informant’s confidence in him. This gaining of confidence of the people lies at the very root of success of all sociological investigations, more particularly in dealing with the hill people. With some initial difficulties gradually overcome, the author could get himself well received by the villagers even to the extent of being taken in as a member of their Bolwari clan. It was only after such a psychological involvement of the author in their central social institution called *A’kim*, that he could get a free sail in his investigations.”

No one could have said it better than the man who wholeheartedly identified himself with the people. Dr. Kar was one such scholar who was true to what he said and realised as to how important it is to be identified with the people whom he wanted to really investigate in one’s research activities. Only by doing so, one could understand the intricacy of the tribal societies. Moreover, Dr. Kar placed the importance of inter-

disciplinary approach when he himself took pain to make use not only the limited methods of the disciplines he had mastered but also drew from the other relevant sources available in the other allied disciplines. Such approach is of utmost importance especially when one engages himself in study and research on the tribal people of North-East India. Dr. Kar understood very well the vital importance of this aspect at a very early stage of his research.

There are altogether fifteen papers in this book. In Dr. T.C. Sharma's paper, he dwelt at length with the history of Meghalaya in pre-historic times in general and Garo Hills in particular and the role played by this young State of the Indian Union in the light of prehistoric investigations and research. The author raised such pertinent questions which are really thought provoking and essential for the people of the State to ponder and sit down for a moment to think and try to answer them. Further, the materials on archaeological investigations in Meghalaya are not sufficient to reveal the sequence of prehistoric culture that might have evolved. It is a pity, lamented the author, that archaeologically a very potential area in the North-East has been neglected except Garo Hills which is now archaeologically better known.

Mr. P.G. Momin gives a detail picture of the physical setting of Garo Hills in his paper. The paper also covers all the important aspects of the area from the geographical point of view. Similarly, the paper on 'Geology and Mineral Resources of Garo Hills, Meghalaya', by Mr. K. Gogoi provides interesting information. With regards to Geology, the author opines, the Garo Hills area is characterised by the presence of a wide variety of rock types which originated during various epochs of the earth's evolution starting from Archaean period (about 3600 million years) upto the recent time. An elaborate description of stratigraphic sequence of the various rock formations as observed in Garo Hills with geological age, group name, formation name (with thickness), rock types and some of the most important rocks was also given.

In Zahid Hussain's paper on 'Ecosystem and Human Response—A case study of Garo Hills', he first started with the concept of Ecology keeping in view its relevance to Garo Hills. In that background, the functioning of the ecosystem and

maintenance of ecological balance, the Garó Hills ecosystem and human response to it have been studied. Further, the role played by human beings in changing the structure, function and potentiality of the ecosystem through food producing techniques has also been highlighted in the paper. In another related paper by Dr. Medhi on 'Jhum Fire and the Ecology of the Garó Hills', a detail discussion on the effect of jhum cultivation in the area is given. In the paper, Dr. Medhi also identified seven major evils caused by jhumming in the area and tries to analyse each and everyone of these evils. The author suggests that for better understanding and to help solve the problems raised in the paper, it requires systematic investigations which will involve the expertise of different disciplines like anthropology, archaeology, botany, zoology, geology and geography. Such an integrated inter-disciplinary approach will be of immense help in eradicating the evils of jhumming on the ecology of the area where such practice is prevalent as a primary method of cultivation of cereals, vegetables and other commercial goods.

Dr. Ghosh's 'Faunal Resources of Garó Hills: Need for Conservation', is a very interesting study because it raises many important and pertinent issues on the need for conservation of the faunal resources of Meghalaya in general and Garó Hills in particular. The need for conservation of the resources arises because of the presence of many destructive elements who systematically utilised the wild life resources through illegal trade for commercial benefits. Another major threat to wild life in the area is due to population pressure which will obviously lead to pressure on land utilisation and cultivation and the want of food, fodder and fuel. Added to sheer human need, opined the author, the developmental projects like opening up of railway lines, new roads, industries and hydel-power plants, will invariably have additional thrusts. Moreover, the practice of jhum cultivation and wanton destruction of forests, the floristic components, undergrowths and other living forms of an ecosystem will surely interfere and disturb the faunal resources of the area. Thus Garó Hills requires a well thought management plan for its natural resources, so as to offer development without endangering environment. An exhaustive

list of mammals, reptiles and butterflies is an additional important information provided by the author in the paper.

Dr. Jaswal's paper on 'Bio-Anthropology of Garo Hills' provides very interesting findings on the people of the area. The author is of the opinion that there is evidence of the activities of prehistoric man in Garo Hills. This is further supported by the findings of archaeologists from the stone tools and related artefacts from sites in Garo Hills and the neighbouring areas.

The paper by Dr. Acharyya on 'A Cursory Glance on the History of the Garo Hills from the Original Historical Records', offers nothing new about the land and its people but provides systematic arrangement of the published records on the Garos. The paper of course, will surely be of great help to the researchers as it gives ready reference materials. Dr. Milton Sangma a Garo himself and a devout historian on his own people and the society, dwelt at a greater length about the 'History and Culture of the Garos'. His paper gives us a detail insight of the Garo people and also the society as a whole including both the past history and the present condition prevailing in the area. He started with the general description of the location of the area, the origin of divisions of different clans, the ecology of the area, British ascendancy and policies adopted by them in the area, laws and customs of the people and many other related and interesting aspects of the Garo society.

'An Account of the Hinduized Communities of Western Meghalaya' is the paper presented by Dr. D N. Majumdar. Dr. Majumdar, who like Dr. Kar has also identified himself with the Garos. He gives us a vivid and detail account of the Hinduized communities—Koches, Rabhas and Hajongs of western Meghalaya. As one of the authorities on the Garos, Dr. Majumdar unveiled many of the hidden characteristics of these communities. He did not concentrate only on their religious practices but threw open the other important aspects of these communities like their habitat, material culture, social organisation, language, origin and migration and also the hierarchy of Hinduization as adopted by the people. He did not forget to discuss in the paper the inter-community relationship

and relationship with other neighbouring communities. The paper will be of immense help to those research scholars who are interested in the social and religious life of the communities.

'The Koches of Garo Hills' is another paper presented by Mr. S.N. Koch. The author describes in detail about the history, culture and organisations of one of the lesser known communities among the Garos—the Koches. He is of the opinion that the Koches of Garo Hills are different in many respects from the Koches found in other parts of India, but their difference appears to be the difference of the degree of their acculturation and not racial. At the same time, the author said it will be a travesty of truth, mutilation of fact and denial of history to say that the Koches of the area are different from the Koches of Bengal and Assam. They have their own tribal dialect, animistic religion and non-Hindu culture and traditions.

Prof. J.B. Bhattacharjee dwelt at length in his paper on the 'Pattern of Economic Change in Garo Society'. He traces from the point of view of historical facts about the whole history of economic change in Garo Hills since the period of the pre-colonial economy to the colonial transformation and post-colonial trends. The paper provides a detail treatment of the whole issue based on original data.

In his paper on 'Modernisation of a Tradition: The Garo Dimension', Mr. B.B. Dutta makes an attempt to record certain significant trends of development in Land-Man relationship in a tribal setting in Garo Hills of Meghalaya. This paper is confined to cover the development measures initiated by only one state agency, namely, the Soil Conservation department of the Government of Meghalaya. He also discusses about the jhum control scheme, its aims and the many problems faced by jhumias which again create certain other crucial developmental problems obstructing the process of economic growth and the process of planned development. Other aspects like terracing, erosion control work, afforestation, etc. under general land Development Schemes were also discussed. The inferences drawn by the author in the paper added vital importance to the problems under discussion.

Mr. K.R. Dasgupta in his article on 'Agriculture in Garo Hills—Its *locus standi* in Meghalaya State', laments that the

prevalence of shifting cultivation is a bane of agriculture in Garo Hills districts. In spite of having immense potentialities of growing various crops, from cereals to fruits and vegetables, agriculture in the districts suffers from a few serious disabilities like—poor irrigational facilities, inadequate physical and social infra-structure, scarcity of capital; use of modern techniques are not popular. These are a few important factors standing in the way of accelerated pace of development of agriculture in the districts, opines the author. However, it is expected that with the introduction of various developmental programmes, the districts will contribute in pulsating with the growth impulse particularly in the agricultural sector and the districts' contribution in the total agricultural output of the State will therefore be very significant.

The paper under the joint authorship of Dr. R.R. Rao and Dr. K. Hari Desan deals with the 'Forest and Flora of Garo Hills'.

I take this opportunity to express my thanks and gratefulness to the Governing Body of the North-East India Council for Social Science Research, Shillong, for asking me to edit the volume and particularly, to its Secretary, Dr. B. Datta-Ray, whose constant help and support made the task easier. I am aware of my shortcomings and would like very much to crave the indulgence of the readers for the errors that might have crept in.

Shillong
December, 1983

L. S. GASSAH

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HISTORY AND CULTURE OF THE GAROS

MILTON SANGMA

The Location

The Garo Hills which were formed into a district in 1866 with Captain W.J. Williamson as its first Deputy Commissioner, is today one of the major constituent units of the State of Meghalaya. It is situated between $25^{\circ} 9'$ and $26^{\circ} 1'$ of north latitude and between $89^{\circ} 49'$ and $91^{\circ} 21'$ of east longitude. It has an area of 8164 sq. kms and it is bounded on the north and west by the district of Goalpara of Assam, on the east by the West Khasi Hills district of Meghalaya; and on the south by the Mymensing district of Bangladesh.

Ecology

As the name implies, the Garo Hills districts consist mainly of hills which form the western extremity of the range separating the valleys of the Brahmaputra and the Surma. These hills rise sharply from the plains on the south and attain their highest elevation at the Nokrek Peak of the Tura range which runs from west to east near the centre of the districts. Nokrek Peak is 1,457 metres high and is the highest Peak among the Garo hills but second highest in the Meghalaya State. On the Northern side of the district a succession of low hills fall away towards the Brahmaputra. The hills and ranges include steep ridges separated from one another by valleys and swamps most of which have been now converted into rice fields, Government

establishments and plantations. At the foot of the hills are the fringes of plain lands into which outlying spurs project.

The largest river is Simsang which the non-Garos call Some-swari, after the Someswari goddess and falls into the Kangsa river in Mymensing District of Bangladesh. Other big rivers on the south flowing towards Bangladesh are the Moheskeli, Dareng and Bugi, while, on the North and the West are the Ildek, Manda, Didram, Didak, Jinjiram, Rongai, Galwang, Ganol and Rongkai. Some of these rivers flow through rocky gorges overgrown with huge trees, creepers and giant ferns.

The district is also gifted with beautiful water-falls and lakes abound with fishes, eels, etc.. It has also beautiful Plateaus and landscapes connected with traditional folklores and religious beliefs. The Garo Hills which presented a wild appearance and grim picture in the past because of the dense forest and wild animals, have now almost become a desert due to wanton destructions of the forests by the jhummers and the unscrupulous administrators and bussinessmen.

The Garo Hills are the abode of wild animals and birds, such as, the elephants, tigers, leopards, wild pigs, wild Cats, deer of various kinds, bison, wild goats and monkeys. Of all the animals, the elephants and the wild pigs are still a great menace to the Jhummers as they invariably destory their jhum crops.

There are also many rare and interesting birds including hornbills, patridges pheasants, teals, snipes, geese, duck, drongos, etc. The hills are also rich in variegated flora such as, Sal trees and teak, aghur and Tezpatta, orchids of various kinds and other medicinal herbs and the most rare citrus. It is also rich in mineral resources like coal, limestone, China clay, silliminite, petrified stones and neolitic cells.

The People

Majority of the population of the districts are the Garos. Other indigenous inhabitants are the Hajongs, Rabhas, Koches, Rajbansis, Meches, Kacharis and the Dalus, Other inhabitants are the Bengalees, Muslims, Marwaries, Biharies and a few others from North India and the Nepalese. Most of them are concentrated in the urban and Semi-urbanised areas and in the

edges of the districts leaving the interior of the districts almost ethnically pure. The only people other than the Garos who are dispersed throughout the districts are the Nepalese who maintain herds of cattle and sell milk or manufacture ghee.

No Outline History

Linguistically and ethnologically, the Garos belong to the Bodo family, who at one time, occupied a large part of the Brahmaputra valley and were probably pushed but from the plains into the hills by the later invaders. The Bodos are a section of the Tibeto-Burman race of the Tibeto-Chinese family, whose cradle is said to have been the north western China between the upper water of Yang-Tse-Kiang and Hoangho.

The Garos have a strong tradition that they have come from Tibet and settled in Koch Behar for about 400 years. Next place they made mention of was Rangamati, in the present day Bangladesh where they are said to have become rich and prosperous. This incurred the wrath and jealousy of the King of the place and on the pretext that they do not observe any caste system and rules, were pushed out of his territory. They then moved on to Dhubri where ruled the King Dhobani. He would not allow them to settle down permanently. So they moved up the right bank of the Brahmaputra until they reached its affluent, the Manas river. Here the local King was attracted by the beauty of the Garo maiden named Jugi-silche and attempted to carry her off by force. To defeat his ends the Garos hid her in a cave at a place called Jugighopa (Jugi-Girl's name, and Ghopa means to burry) and hence the name of the present Jogighopa. Eventually, the Garos left the place and crossed over the Brahmaputra by means of rafts of Plaintain-stems. They were however followed by the King who attacked them while they were having their midday meals at a place called Garo Mari, in the Goalpara district of Assam.

They then proceeded up the Brahmaputra river until they reached Kamakhya where they suffered persecution at the hands of the King named Lilasing. A neighbouring Chief named Arambit, having fallen in love with a Garo maiden, married her and allowed the Garos to settle in his Kingdom. But Arambit began to enslave them and so they took up their residence on

Baghmela Pahar, a hill about eight Kms. east of Boko, in the Kamrup district. The hill was however infested with tiger-men or demons and this enkindled their old roving instinct again.

This time, they started off westwards and thus practically retracing their steps. It was in the course of this journey that the tribe broke into different branches. The names of places they visited were numerous and it is impossible to identify them but the most important seems to have been ola-olding-Tebrong-Changsim, which the Garos now identify with Tukesar hill near Krishnai in the Goalpara district. In this neighbourhood, they appear to have become rich and established a kingdom, of which, the first reigning King was Abra or Abrasen. A dissension however sprang up amongst them and as a result, some of them set out on their travels again and entered into the hills now called the Garo Hills, under the leadership of Abing-Noga and his Queen Silme-Doka, who first settled at Nokrek hills and then spread to different parts of Garo Hills.

Though some of the names mentioned in the legend like the king Lilasing and Arambit can be found nowhere in Assam history but there are certain names like Koch Behar, Rangamati, Jogighopa, Garo mari, which are still in existence today. Therefore, the legend cannot be brushed aside so easily.

The history of the Garos before the advent of the British was a series of raids on the plains the blood feuds among themselves. They constantly attacked the unarmed unsuspecting villages in the plains and carried away the heads as trophies to their own villages. On return, they would collect the whole village, eat drink and dance round the slain heads, singing songs of triumph. There were also internal warfares among them as many blood feuds existed among individuals and villages. At the slightest opportunity they attacked their villages and the heads of their victims were brought home in triumph as coveted trophies. During the Moghul days, the Moghuls allowed landholders of Hindu or possibly of mixed Hindu and Garo blood, to whom they gave the title of not Zamindar but of Choudry to run the administration as they pleased. So long as the Choudries paid their dues and presented occasional gifts of elephants or sandalwood to the Muhumadan Fouzdar, they were left to manage their estates as they liked. Their policy of non-interference encouraged some of the

ambitious estate-holders to conquer and annex some of the out-lying Garo villages. The natural consequence of these annexations and of the chicanery and oppressions practised on the Garos at the frontier markets, was a chronic enmity between the Garos and the Zamindars. The Zamindars of Bijni, Mechpara, Kalumalupara, Karaibari, Sherpore and Susung were the chief land holders of this kind. Thus the activities of the Garos appeared not to have gone beyond their intermittent conflicts with the Zamindars lying at the foot of their hills. But on two occasions the Garos have taken part in a contest for mastery of Assam. One was during the Moghul campaigns between 1608-1624 when Mirza Nathan recruited about 4000 Garos to attack a fortress of Rongjuli in the Goalpara district of Assam. The other was in 1671 when the Garos along with the Raja of Rani helped the Ahoms to expel the Muhammadan invasion led by Raja Ram Singh.

British Ascendency

The establishment of the de facto authority of the company in the province of Bengal on August 12, 1765 brought it into contact with the independent and semi-independent tribes in North-East frontiers.

In 1775, the Zamindars of Mechpara and Karaibari to avenge some Garo raids, invaded the Garo Hills bordering their estates and brought a large tract under their control. Even the great Garo Chief named Renghta became subjected to the Zamindar of Karaibari. Renghta then appealed to Elliot, Commissioner of Dacca, to free him from the influence of the Karaibari Zamindar by offering to become company's ryots. Elliot eager to avail himself of the trade advantages promised by such arrangements, at once supported the proposal and the Government accordingly directed in 1790 that Renghta should be made a Zamindar under the company. The negotiations however, fell through owing to the stiff opposition of the Karaibari Zamindar who arrested the Government messengers sent to conclude the arrangements.

In the meantime, the raids of the Garos on the plains continued. In order to stop these atrocities and to have peace in the frontiers, Thomas Sisson, the Joint Magistrate of Rangpur,

in his report on 15 February, 1815, recommended the appointment of the Native Agents and a local corps, and the deputation of an experienced officer to collect information necessary for formulation of a scheme for peace and security in the frontiers. Ultimately, the choice for this task fell on David Scott, the Magistrate of Rangpur, who after months of touring the Garo areas submitted a report containing practical suggestions. These suggestions were approved by the Government and the Regulation X of 1822 was passed embodying Scott's proposals. Accordingly, the Garos were separated from the Zamindars' control and were brought under Government management. The Regulation also suspended the operations of the Bengal Regulations on the Garos, and the administration of Civil and criminal justice, collection of revenues, superintendence of Police and every branch of Government within the Garo Hills were vested in an Officer appointed by the Governor-General-in Council, and denominated Civil Commissioner for North-Eastern parts of Rangpur. Thus emerged a new form of administration commonly known as the Non-Regulation system.

The Government nominated David Scott as the First Civil Commissioner for North-Eastern parts of Rangpur in December, 1821. After assuming the office of the Civil Commissioner, Scott entered into agreements with the independent Garo Chiefs and up to 3rd, December, 1824, 121 or about two-third of the whole of the independent Chiefs of the interior signed the agreements promising to acknowledge the British Authority, pay tributes, report criminal cases to Police, assist in apprehensions and investigations and help to suppress the murder of human being for their skulls. In return, they would receive presents from the Government Officers. David Scott could have completed the work of signing agreement with all the Garo independent Chiefs had he not been assigned a greater work as the Governor-General's Agent for North-Eastern Frontier on November 20, 1823. His place was taken by the Principal Assistant of Goalpara aided by a Garo Sarbarakar, but no effective steps were taken by them to continue the work of David Scott. Rather, a policy of Non-interference was followed and this resulted in constant raids and murders.

Punitive Expeditions and Conciliations

The Am'bang or the Western Garos were the first to have come into clash with the British. In 1822-23 they were assessed at 196 Naraines rupees, for which, they threw off their allegiance to British Government. Therefore, Scott sent an expedition under Surbarakar Mirza Bundally Beg. The Garos were suppressed and were asked to pay tribute to the British which was increased to 200 Narainee rupees in 1824-25. The Am'bangs continued to evade the payment of revenue upto 1832 and murdered four Burmese hunters who went to their areas for shooting elephants. Therefore, Major Davidson sent a force under Mirza Bundally Beg. The Garos suddenly attacked the party and killed one subundy and two Burmese, but they themselves lost 25 men. Then the Garos came and surrendered and promised to pay a fine of Rs. 1000.

Despite their promises, the Garo Chiefs evaded payment and so, in 1834-35, Lieutenant Brodie was sent to enquire into the causes of non-payment of dues. On his approach, the Garo Chiefs came and settled the matter.

In 1825, peasants' insurrection broke out in the Sherepore Pargana of Mymensing district in which about 700 Garos attacked the Zamindar of Sherepore for imposing heavy taxes. The British intervened and the grievances of the Garos were met. In 1833, the Garos again stirred up a peasant insurrection but was soon suppressed and their rent grievances were settled.

In 1836 disturbances broke out on the Assam side when an expedition was sent under Lieutenant Abbot against Hullal and Khoorgaon villages for accumulation of arrears.

An expedition was sent again in 1837 under John Strong, a sub-assistant, in-charge of Garo Frontiers, who realised all the arrears of revenues and received their submission.

In January, 1838, some disturbances took place at the Garo Frontier markets due to the circulation of company's new currency, John Strong, however, visited a number of markets and persuaded the Garos to accept the new coins.

In July, 1839, two Assamese women were murdered at Luki duar by the Garos. The same people showed a contumacious attitude and refused to pay the Government tributes. In April, 1840, murder of a whole family of seven members by upper

hill Garos was reported. In November, 1841, murder of two more tributary Garos by the independent Garos was reported. Instead of punishing them, Captain Jenkins, Commissioner of Assam, proposed the appointment of a separate officer for the Garos and a survey of the hills. But the Governor-General-in-Council rejected the proposal and asked him to continue the conciliatory and civilising policy earlier formulated by David Scott.

In August, 1844, there were fresh Garo murders. The Government again refused to allow a display of military force. In the winter season of 1845-46 Captain Stuart accompanied by the Commissioner visited all the Frontier markets and met all the Garo Chiefs, thereby gained their goodwill and confidence. This contact was renewed by Lieutenant Dalton, the following winter season. Despite these contacts, a revolting massacre was committed by some Am'beng Garos on the family of the Chief of Rissogiri village in 1847, for demanding their tribute. A small party was sent towards Rissogiri village but the party was attacked by a large body of Garos and was compelled to retire.

In January, 1848, a strong detachment of sepoy of 2nd Assam Light Infantry under Lieutenant Belli was sent to subdue these rebellious people. The expedition was led by Captain C.S. Reynolds who brought them under subjection after long persuasions and coercions.

In June, 1852, some Garos attacked the police Burkandazes who came to quell the disturbances in the Nibari market on the Assam side and Sub-assistant Driver was sent to capture the culprits but could not identify the main culprits.

In September, again there were reports of outrages and in the following month, there were five cases of murders committed by the Garos of the interior hills. Lieutenant Agnew, Principal Assistant of Goalpara, proposed an expedition into the hills. Accordingly, an expedition was despatched under Lieutenant Agnew but failed to bring the Garos to book. Therefore, he suggested the closing of the Frontier markets until they surrender the culprits. But this economic blockade was not found feasible. However, Lord Dalhousie supported the idea of economic blockade until they surrender the murderers. This policy was successful to some extent, as three of the offenders were surrendered.

Colonel Jenkins, the Commissioner, however, was strongly of the view that their only hope of securing permanent tranquility lay in taking military possessions of the hills. On the other hand, Mills opined that unless a European functionary could reside, in the interior and superintend the administration they should not attempt to extend British rule over the Garo Hills. Nothing was however, done in this respect till that time.

In 1856, the Garos recommenced their raids on both Goalpara and Mymensing side, yet the Government did not formulate any comprehensive policy towards the Garos.

Between 1857 and 1859, there were nine raids on the Goalpara side. In 1859, the Commissioner of Assam reported that raids were on the increase and the Closure of markets were of no use in stopping the raids. So, an expedition was sent again under Beckett in 1860 but returned due to shortage of food.

Forward Policy

In March, 1860, reports came again of more outrages and murders. Therefore, colonel Jenkins, Commissioner of Assam proposed, to take all the Garo villages from the Zamindars, a good road to be constructed all along the Frontiers, raise a Police Militia and appoint a Sub-Assistant for the special charge of the Garo hills. But the Government did not take any action on those proposals. An expedition was despatched under Captain Morton from Mymensing side and under Lieutenant Chambers from the Goalpara side and secured the submission of the Garos. The Punitive expeditions and conciliatory policy of the government failed to produce the desired effect on the Garos as they committed another heinous murder in the Daggal village in June, 1864. The Police party sent against them failed two times. Therefore, the Government sent a strong force under Dundas who entered the Daggal village in 1865 and the village was occupied. In the meantime, raids continued on the Mymensing side in 1866. Therefore, the Commissioner colonel Hopkinson advocated the appointment of a special officer for the Garo hills, to be located at the Tura hills.

In the midst of these prevailing raids and increasing heinous crimes, the Lieutenant-Governor proposed to detach the Garo hills and Goalpara from the control of the Assam Commissioner

and place them under the control of the Commissioner of Cooch Behar as two separate districts. Sanction being granted, Lieutenant W.J. Williamson, was appointed the Assistant Commissioner on July 12, 1866 but actually joined his assignment in December, 1867 as the first Deputy Commissioner of Garo Hills District. The Act XXII of 1869 outlined the administrative system to be introduced in the Garo Hills District.

The Garos were not still reconciled to the British occupation. Resistance went on which culminated in the triangular attack on Rongrenggiri village in 1872-73, when the Garos made the last stand. Having been defeated in this combined resistance the Garos surrendered and the whole Garo hills were annexed, to the British empire. However, sporadic raids and murders took place in 1875, 1877 and 1881. They were suppressed with some difficulties and the ring leaders were arrested.

The Inner Line Regulation was passed for the Garo Hills in 1876 which was extended upto 1882. The implementation was left in the hands of the Deputy Commissioner.

Between 1899 and 1916, the Garos of the Garo Hills and Goalpara districts combined together to demand the following under the leadership of Sonaram. R. Sangma:— (1) The Habraghat Pargana in the Goalpara District, (2) to stop the British from further conversion of Garo lands as Reserve Forests, and (3) Abolition of Forced Labour. A series of memoranda were submitted and Processions held and the Government ultimately responded by appointing Mr. J.C. Arbuthnot, the Commissioner of the Hills and the Surma valley in 1906. On the receipt of the reports, the Government of India decided in March, 1908, that full payment be made for the labour: further conversion of new areas as reserved forest will be stopped, but did not concede to the demand of the Habraghat Paragana as Garo lands. But Sonaram continued to press for it in the Calcutta High Court until his own death in 1916.

In 1914, Garo National Conference was formed with a view to have integrated policy on Garo education for all the Garos. In 1924, the Garos also had a share in the administration of the Province when Janggin Sangma (Laskar), M.B.E. was nominated to the Assam Legislative Council. In the first General Election of India in 1937, two Garo leaders, namely, Jobang D. Marak and Benjamin Ch. Momin were elected to the Assam

Legislative Aseembly and Benjamin Momin was appointed as the Parliamentary Secretary.

As yet, there was no political party in the Garo Hills but few educated Garos in Tura used to have meetings about forming a political party and used to have discussion on the great Indian National Movement for Independence but they were strictly watched by both the American Baptist Missionaries and the Government. However, in 1942 Quit India Movement, Phukan Sangma started the movement in Garo Hills for which he was jailed.

In 1946, Garo National Council, the first Political Party was born with Mody Marak and Emonsing Sangma as its President and General Secretary respectively. When the Eastern India Tribal Union was formed in 1954, the Garo National Council became one of its constituent units. When the APHIC Party was formed in 1960, to demand for a separate Hill State, the Garo National Council was affiliated to it and it continues, to be its branch even today. Side by side, the Indian National Congress was also organised in the Garo Hills and Sri Phukan Sangma became its first President. Thus after Independence the Garo National Council and the Congress contested in the District Council Elections and the Garo Hills District Council became the main administrative agency in the district till today.

The Society

The Garos have a number of dialectical and cultural groups. Each of them originally settled at a particular area of the Garo Hills and the outlying plain lands. They are as follows:—

- (1) The A'Wes settled in the whole of northern hills and the plains at their foot
- (2) The plain Garos of Assam are known as A'Kawes,
- (3) The Chisak Sub-Tribe occupies the north-eastern hill touching the A'was in the north,
- (4) The Duals occupy the areas immediately to the south of the Chisaks
- (5) The Matchis inhabit the central valley of the Simsang river, to the west of the Duals. They occupy the heart of the Garo Hills and were famous for the production of cotton,
- (6) The Matjangchis or Matabengs are found in the areas north of the Simsang river. It is likely that they are a mingling of the

Ambengs and the Matchis, (7) By far the most numerous division of the Garos is that of the Am'bengs. They occupy nearly half the area of the districts including Tura town. They occupy the whole of the western hills and the greater part of the districts of the south of the central range. There is also an island of Am'beng settlement in the south-eastern most corner of the district, (8) The Chiboks live immediately to the east of the Am'bengs. They are few in number whose myth and general culture show considerable variations from those of other dialectical groups. They have various forms of folkdances which are distinct from other Garo dances and are fast disappearing, (9) The Rugas reside to the south of the Chiboks, in the low hills bordering on the Mymensing district. They are also a small and diminishing group whose general culture, dances and songs are different from the other Garos, (10) The Garos or Ganchings live in the south of the district bordering Mymensing along the Dareng river. They are famous for their craftsmanship in sculpture and house buildings, (11) The Atongs form an important division of the tribe. They occupy the south-eastern portion of the Garo Hills bordering Mymensing. They have quite a different dialect from the other Garos. Their dialect is more akin to the Koch language than to other Garo dialects, (12) The Megams are found on the eastern border of the East Garo Hills and in the West Khasi Hills Districts. They are called Lyngngams by the Khasis and are a fusion of the Garos and the Khasis and can be taken as a hybrid race. Their appearance and customs resemble more closely the Garos but their language is more akin to the Khasis.

A great number of the Garos live outside Garo Hills and are spread all over North-East India, as far as Bangladesh and West Bengal. In present day Bangladesh, they are still spread over as far as Dacca and among them are found most of the divisions that exist in Garo Hills. In most cases, they retain their language and custom but have been greatly influenced by the language and way of life around whom they live. The Garos of the plains of North-east India are taken as belonging to the A'Kawe group.

But though the Garos are ridden with dialectical groups and varied cultural traits, their roots are basically the same and all of them have the same tribal consciousness. Besides, the

spread of education and the development of Garo literature in A'we dialect by the American Baptist Missionaries have greatly accentuated the process of disappearance of the small dialects.

Origin of Divisions

Regarding the origin of these divisions of dialectical groups, there is a legend which says that after the Garos have occupied the Garo Hills, there arose a line of powerful chiefs who enslaved their own people. These chiefs assigned particular tasks to their subjects, which in course of time, became hereditary. The Am'bengs were assigned as pickers of cotton, the Garas to carve out Pig troughs, the Chisaks to collect edible bamboo-shoots, etc. .

The Clans

There are five clans or exogamous septs called chatchi, among the Garos, with a number of sub-clans called Ma'chong. Originally there were only two clans viz. Sangma and Marak. Later on, Momin, Areng and Shira have been evolved, out of the two original clans. The Momin clan is said to have come out from the union of a Garo girl with a Muslim from Bihar during Mir Jumla's invasion on Assam in 1661. The Areng clan is said to have come out of Marak, whereas, the Shira clan has come out of the Sangma clan and formed themselves into independent clans.

Each of these clans have a number of sub-clans called Ma'chong or Motherhood. The Ma'chongs are named after animals, birds, trees, bamboos, rivers and hills in whose neighbourhood they live. It was because of this Sub-clans' names that some scholars called the Garos as Totemists. Though the titles of their Sub-clans have been named after the animals or birds, they have no reverence or fear for them, and the persons belonging to Do'po (Owl) Sub-clan, for example, will not hesitate to eat its meat. In many cases, the Sub-clans have localised lineage groups.

Domestic Life

The Family—The simplest pattern of Garo family consists

of the husband, wife and children. But the composition of the family changes with the cycle of family life. The family increases with the marriage of the heiress and begetting of children. The other daughters go away with their husbands after their marriage to form a new and independent family. This aspect of family structure remains the same even in urban areas.

Under a normal Garo marriage a husband is given the paternal authority in his new house. If the husband is a **NOKKROM** (husband of the heiress), he is placed next to his father-in-law, whose place he takes after his death. In a family, the husband is also given all the responsibilities for the family affairs. The wife is subordinate to him in spite of uxorial residence. This is evident from their day to day life. The husband is first served by his wife. According to Garo custom, the husband can beat his wife if she acts unreasonably, but the wife cannot beat her husband under any circumstances. Moreover (the Garo custom permits a husband to have more than one wife, with the consent of the first wife but Polyandry is never permitted.)

House—The Garos of Garo Hills build their houses on piles and mostly on slopes of the hills. One end of the house is founded on the ground, while the other end of the house is generally about 10 ft to 15 ft high. The style and design and the internal arrangements of the house is the same everywhere. But the houses in the plains and the houses of the Christians are different in designs and structures. They are influenced by western and the plains people.

Household Utensils—The Garo household utensils are simple and limited. They consist mainly of cooking pots, large earthen vessels for brewing liquor, the pestle and the mortal with which paddy is husked. They have also bamboo baskets of different shapes and sizes and a few daos and hoes. In the ancient past, they wove their own cloths and were expert in blacksmithy and making earthen potteries.

Furniture—They have very limited furniture at home. The bamboo floor is generally enough for all their requirements. They also use a wooden stool hewn by themselves. In some houses, chairs made out of cane or bamboo are used which are offered to the guests.

Weapons—Any kind of firearms are not indigenous to the

Garos. They have their own local weapons, One of the principal weapons is two-edges sword called Milam. It is made of one piece of iron from hilt to point. There is a cross-bar between the hilt and the blade where attached a bunch of cow's tail-hair. Originally, yak's tails were attached which they brought from Tibet and is replaced in course of time, by cow's tail's hair.

Other weapons are the shields, which are of two kinds, one is made of wood called *sepi* and the other is called *Danil* which is made of bear skin or cowhide stretched on wooden frame. Another formidable weapon is spear. Bows and arrows are also known to the Garos but is not so popular as in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills. Other weapons are choppers of different kinds, axes, daggers, etc..

Food—The staple cereal food is rice. They also eat millet, maize, job's tears and tapioca. In times of scarcity, they take to yams and some other jungle roots. Their method of cooking rice is simple. Rice is simply boiled with water in the earthen pots. It is also sometimes boiled in a piece of bamboo, which is more tasty than cooked in the pots.

They are very liberal in their food habits. They rear goats, pigs, fowls, ducks and cows and relish their meat greatly. Some of them eat dogs, cats and some other animals, such as, deer, bison, wild pigs. The eggs of lizards are considered delicacies. They also eat fish, prawns, crabs, eels, but dryfish is the favourite article of their food. Some quantities of dryfish is prepared by them but a great bulk of them were supplied from the plains of Bengal. Their *Jhum* fields and the forests provide them with a number of vegetables and roots for their curry but bamboo shoots are esteemed as a delicacy. They never cooked with oil or ghee. They used a kind of potash in curries which they obtained by burning dry pieces of plaintain stems or young bamboos. After they are burnt, the ashes are collected and are dipped in water and are strained in conical-shaped bamboo strainer. These days, most of the town people used soda from the bazaar in place of this ash water.

Drinks—The country liquor plays an important part in the life of the non-Christian Garos. They use it as their food and drink from childhood. The mothers start feeding their babies from the time they are carried on their backs. Usually, they

do not get drunk but they drink to excesses during the festivals. The liquor is brewed and not distilled. It is prepared from rice, millet, maize or job's tear, but the best liquor is brewed from sticky rice. Preparation of liquor is comparatively much less now, due to less production of rice, millets and other ingredients, whereas, some of the moneyed men have taken to distilled liquor.

Dress—Their dress is very scanty. The principal garment of the men is a strip of woven cloth about six inches wide and about six ft. long. In the past, they wove these clothes, some of which were ornamented with rows of white beads made of conch-shells along the end of the flap.

They have no shirt to cover their bodies, but many of them put on vast of black colour with lining at its ends. They are sold by the merchants from Bengal. Both males and females wear turbans, which are of dark or blue cotton, while some are white. On important occasions, the Chiefs, wear a turban of red Assamese silk with an ornamented fringe.

The dress of the women is equally scanty. It consists of a piece of cloth about 18 inches long and about 14 inches broad. It is tied at the waist and allow it to remain open on the thigh. During the winter or when they visit other places, they put on shawl of blue or white cotton, but during the hot season, they leave the upper part of the body bare as men. On gala occasions, women wear a dress which is dyed Assamese silk.

Ornaments—The Garos are fond of ornaments. Both men and women enjoy adorning themselves with varieties of ornaments. Some of them are commonly used by both men and women, while some, are exclusively worn by women only. These ornaments are:—(1) Nadongbi nr sisha made of a brass ring worn in the lobe of the ear, (2) Nadirong or a brass ring worn in the upper part of the ear, (3) Natapsi or a string of beads and is worn in the upper part of the ear, (4) Jaksan or Bangles of different materials and sizes, (5) Ripok or Necklaces, made of long barrel-shaped beads of cornelian or red glass while some are made out of brass or silver and are worn on special occasions, (6) Jaksil or Elbow ring worn by rich men on Gana ceremonies, (7) Penta or a small piece of ivory struck into the upper part of the ear projecting upwards parallel to the side of the head, (8) Seng'ki or a waist band consisting of

several rows of conch-shells worn by women, (9) Pilne or a head ornament worn during the dances only by the women.

Dances—Dancing and drinking to the accompaniment of music forms an integral part of the life of the Garos. The Garos have various kinds of folk dances, like Gana or Investiture of a Nokma (Chief), Annual worship at the sacrificial stones, Agricultural festivals, the posts Funeral Ceremonies, etc. They are also dances during the inauguration of a new house or the new Bachelors' Louse. In each of these festivals, there are varieties of styles and forms of dances. But the greatest varieties of dance forms are found in the Wangala or Harvest Festival.

Musical Instruments—They have a variety of musical instruments manufactured by themselves. The Garo drums are (1) Dama which is about 4 or 5 ft. long, made out of wood, (2) Kram which is larger than a Dama and is made out of wood with both ends covered with cowhides. This is usually used during funeral and religious ceremonies, (3) Nadid or a small wooden drum and serves as accompaniment for the Kram, (4) Nagra or a large drum of earthen pot covered with cowhide and is used only to call the people to assemble at the Chief house and is considered a sacred possession. They have also trumpets called Adil and Singga and Flutes of various kinds. They have also the Gongs made out of brass or metal and are played as musical instruments. They have also different kinds of Cymbals used during festivals.

Games—The Garos have different kinds of sports, some of which are (1) Wa'pang Kala in which two persons place a strong bamboo on a big stone and try to lift each other, (2) Gando Makkal pala, in which two persons hold each other on their waists and try to pin down to the ground for a considerable period of time, (3) Sue Goa or two groups of men of any number take the opposite side and try to finish the sues or round beans which are placed standing in row, (4) Ja'kol Kala which consists of chasing from one home to another, and try to catch the person running from one house to another. Other games are, wrestlings, cockfighting, high and long jumps, climbing of hanging ropes, tug of war, etc.

Nokpante or Bachelor's Dormitory—The Bachelors' Dormitory is a common institution in the Garo villages. They have

this house in every village. In some villages, two or three Bachelors' dormitories are built, by each clan. No females are allowed to enter this house. Here the bachelors sleep at night and learn discipline, songs, music, musical instruments, dances, arts and crafts. In fact, they are taught all the arts which are necessary for their future life.

In conclusion, it may be said that the above descriptions of the Garó culture are only the main features and not exhaustive. Besides, tremendous changes have been taking place since then and many aspects of their life and culture have been giving way to adaptation and adoption of western culture.

Laws and Customs

Inheritance—The Garós are matrilineal. Descent is traced through the mother only. All property belongs to the women, remains with her clan and is passed on from mother to daughter. Sons do not receive any part of the property which they themselves might have acquired by their own labour. On the day of his marriage, the man leaves his mother's house and goes with his wife to form a new family. His children also take their mother's clan's name.

Marriage Laws—The Garó marriage is regulated by two important laws, viz., Exogamy and A'Kim. According to the belonging to the same clan. Thus a Sangma can not marry a Sangma, a Marak can not Marry a Marak and so on. If a marriage takes place between members of the clan, they are looked down upon by the society.

According to the law of A'Kim, a man or a woman who has once contracted marriage will never be free to remarry person of another clan, even after the death of his wife. They have a custom of supplying another wife from the same clan, in case their consort is dead. Usually, when a wife dies, one of the sisters of deceased wife is given in marriage. Similarly, when a husband dies, one of the nephews of the deceased husband is given to her. It is only when no substitute can be arranged that the marriage bond is broken and the man/woman is free to marry any one of their own choice.

A man is allowed to marry as many wives as he likes, with the consent of his first wife, but three is usually a maximum.

He may marry two sisters, but he must marry the elder one first. They may marry from the father's side but not from the mother's side.

Engagement—Proposal for marriage must come from the girl's side and not from the boy's side. When a girl falls in love with a boy, she indicates her love to one of her relations, after which, her parents, uncles and other relations go to the boy's house on an appointed day, to negotiate the marriage. If everything goes well a marriage day is fixed.

Forms of marriage—There are different forms of marriage among the Garos. The recognised and normal form of marriage is called Do'sia. This is celebrated by killing two fowls in front of the couple, which is followed by the social jovialities. Other forms of marriage are marriage by Capture, by Elopment, marriage after a girl goes and sleeps with the boy stealthily at night, marriage after a girl invites a boy to eat with her and the boy eats with her; marriage after a girl goes to the boy's house and works in his house for several years for his hand. On'songa marriage, that is, when a nephew is made to marry the widow, after the death of his uncle or when a girl is made to marry to man, after the death of her elder sister. They have also a custom of marrying their mother-in-law, after the death of his father-in-law. This is done by the heir and not by other sons-in-law. The Christians, however, are governed by the Christian marriage Act, 1872.

Divorce—According to the customs, divorce is permitted when the husband and the wife cannot live together any more and desire separation by mutual consent; when either party is guilty of adultery and when one of them proved sterile and no substitute is provided by the clan.

Adoption—Adoption is practised when the couples have no daughters or when the parents have no suitable daughter to become the heiress or when heiress quarrels with her parents and runs away. Sometimes, the parents adopt an orphan not necessarily for inheritance. The adopted children enjoy the same status as that of the real children.

Other Laws—The Garos have laws governing their moral behaviours, religious laws, civil, criminal and penal laws, breach of which, is tried by the Nokma (Chief) and his Council.

Administration of Justice—Prior to the advent of the British,

all cases were tried by the Nokma (Chief) and his council or elders in an open assembly. Before the trial is started, both the plaintiff and the accused were required to take oath affirming that they will speak the truth. The Garó oaths were in the nature of ordeals and to swear falsely would be extremely dangerous. There are different ways of taking oath. Some take oath by biting tiger's tooth or bone, meaning thereby that if they swear falsely they may be killed by such a tooth or bone. Some swear by grasping weapons, while some by touching the meteoric stones. Another way of taking oath was by cutting off the head of fowl and running a slip of bamboo from one side to the other side of the head, meaning that if he has spoken falsely, he may suffer the same fate as the fowl. Another way of taking oath is by touching the heads of their child, whereas, some swear by calling upon the wild animals to come and devour them if they have spoken falsely.

When the oaths have no more effect on the oath-taker, they are tried by means of ordeals. There are different kinds of ordeals, such as, diving into a river, when the one who comes out first is taken to be guilty. Tying the accused to tree in the wilderness, the ordeal of Boiling water or the Burning or Iron. But when the ordeals have failed, cases were tried in an open court with three witnesses. But the British have introduced a system of trial in the courts of the Duputy Commissioner.

Village administration—The system of administration of village is simple. The whole Garó-hills were owned by a large number of A'King Nokmas or the clan chiefs. Each of these A'King lands were owned by a clan chief called A'King Nokma and was administered by the chief and his council of elders. Administrations were carried on in accordance with the customs and traditions.

Traditional Religion

The Pantheon—The Garós believe in the existence of Supreme being. They also believe in the existence of a multitude of benevolent and malevolent spirits. These good and evil spirits are everywhere, in the sky above, on the earth below, in the depth of the water, in the dark caverns, and so on. Some of these spirits are attributed to the creation of the world, to

others, the control of the phenomena and the destinies of man from birth to death are governed by a host of spirits whose anger must be appeased by sacrifices.

The principal spirits are (1) Tatar-Rabuga at whose command the world was made by two lesser spirits, Nostu-Nopantu and Machi. It can also cure Kalaazar and fevers. An expensive sacrifice has to be performed to him by killing a bull, a goat and a fowl, (2) Saljong is one of the greatest gods and a giver of all things to man. He is represented by the Sun. The greatest harvest festival called Wangala is celebrated in his honour, (3) Nostu-Nopantu, who with another spirit called Machi fashioned the earth but no sacrifice is offered to them as they do not harm any man, (4) Chorabudi is a benign spirit and is a Protector of crops. Sacrifices are offered to him for pain in the ears and for boils, (5) Goera is a god of Thunder and causes lightning and thunder. A pig, a fowl or a duck must be offered to him; (6) Kalkame is a brother of Goera and keeps all men safe from danger, from wild animals and diseases. A goat or cock is sacrificed to him; (7) Susime causes lameness and deafness and so a pig or a fowl must be offered to her. Besides, there are still a number of other good and evil spirits to whom sacrifices must be offered to please them to gain their favour.

They also believe that the constellation of stars have power and represent the spirits. Therefore, animals must be sacrificed to them.

Religious Beliefs

They believe in the existences of Supreme being but they do not worship him by sacrifices. They also believe in the lesser spirits whom they consider to be harmful and whom they try to appease by sacrifices.

They also believe in the existence of spirit in man which after death goes to the abode of spirits. Napak village and Balpakram Plateau are believed to be the places where the spirits of the dead persons go and these spirits dwell there for a period of time before being re-incarnated.

They believe in the transmigration of souls, as a state of reward and punishment. They believe that when a man dies,

his soul leaves his body and enters the body of some animals or human being as it comes into the world to begin its career and the process may be repeated generation after generation. They believe that those who are not wicked and offered many offerings to the gods, are born in high and wealthy families. The lowest form of re-incarnation is that in the shape of insects and plants. The next highest is in the shape of animals and birds and then in human form. The greatest reward for a virtuous life is to be born into the same motherhood as before. They have no concept anything like heaven or hell. To them, a man is good so long as he does not offend gods and goddesses and offers sacrifices and worships them regularly. However, these beliefs and worships gave way to the doctrine of Christian thought by the Foreign Missionaries.

Christian Missions

It was David Scott, who first broached the idea of Christianising the Garos. His idea was to win them over through the spiritual force of christianity and through the medium of schools. As early as 1822, he corresponded with the Serampore Mission on the subject of appointing a Missionary for the Garos but failed. But he succeeded in establishing a School for 40 Garo boys at Singimari at the western end of Garo Hills which ran from 1826-29 and then died away for lack of teachers.

The American Baptist Mission was the first to have established their Mission in the Garo Hills. It was Omed Momin and Remake Momin who first became Christians and was baptised at Gauhati on Feb. 8, 1863. In 1864 they came back to Garo Hills. Ramke opened a School at Damra and preached while Omed went to his village and preached among his relatives. After three years of labour, they were able to convince 37 of the Garos. They then invited Dr. Bronson of Nowgong Baptist Station, who came to Rajasimla village and baptised 37 converts and organised these, with three already baptised into a Church ordaining Omed as their Pastor. Between 1867 and 1877, successive missionaries worked on the northern side of the Garo Hills only, with Goalpara as the Mission station. In 1877, Rev. E.G. Philips went to live at Tura for the first time,

leaving Rev. M.C. Mason at Goalpara. In the following year, Rev. Mason also left the Goalpara station and shifted to Tura. From then on, the American Baptist Mission extended their works over the whole of Garo Hills.

The next Mission to have come to Garo Hills was the Roman Catholic Mission who set up their Mission station at Tura in 1933.

Another Christian Mission to have come to Garo Hills was the Seventh Day Adventist, who established their Mission station at Rajasimla in 1954.

Thus today, as a result of the active part played by these Missions with the full cooperation of the Garo converts, about 60 per cent of the Garos have become Christians of one denomination or the other.

The Christian Missions not only preached to the people but also were responsible for the spread of education, development of Garo literature and health care.

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