

**REVIVALISM  
IN  
KHASI-SOCIETY**

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A THESIS SUBMITTED  
IN  
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To



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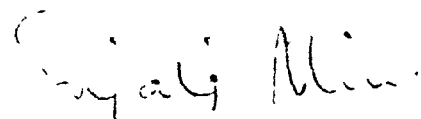
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Certified that the subject matter of this dissertation is the record of work done by MISS H. KELIANI SYNREM, that the contents of this dissertation did not form a basis of the award of any previous degree to her, or to the best of my knowledge, to anybody else, and that the dissertation had not been submitted by her for any research degree in any other University.

In habit and character MISS H. KELIANI SYNREM is a fit and proper person for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

  
( Sujata Miri )  
Supervisor

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PREFACE

The present study has been undertaken under the supervision of Dr. Sujata Miri in the Department of Philosophy. This has been done mainly due to the very nature of the problem which cannot be adequately grasped unless sociological data are meaningfully combined with philosophical orientation. Accordingly, the data collected through (a) Primary Sources that is, face to face contact with the people, interview and observation, (b) Various documentary sources such as information from the Census Office, Block Development Office, village durbar report etc. have been used with a view to analyse themes such as revivalism, cultural identity, regionalism, nationalism, and so on and so forth.

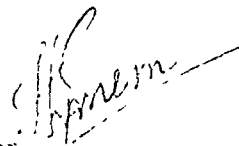
At the very outset I would like to offer my deepest and sincerest gratitude to Dr. Sujata Miri, Department of Philosophy, for the immeasurable help, encouragement, and guidance in the preparation of this work. Without her helpful suggestions in analysing the data, my present work would not have seen the light of day.

I would also like to take the opportunity to express my gratitude to Prof. M. Miri, Dean, School of Social

work. It was he who initiated my research work and has always been supportive of it.

My gratitude also goes to Mr. K. Mawlong, Deputy Director, Mr. P. Kharkongor from the Office of the Director, Census Operations, for all the cooperation and help rendered. My special thanks to Mr. K. S. Rynlatbiang, who assisted me with the mappings. Other people who also gave generously of their time and help to support my work are Mr. Quershi from Anthropological Survey of India, Mr. Hipshon Roy Kharshing, who was the General Secretary of Seng Khasi, Mr. D. Nongbri, Mr. D. Khongwir, Dr. Deb, Dr. Xaxa from Sociology Department, NEHU, and the Block Development Officers of Shella Bholaganch NES (Block), Cherrapunjee. My hearty thanks also goes to the villagers of Laitkynsaw for giving me cooperation in every matter.

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(K. MAWLONG)

## INTRODUCTION

The Khasi tribe is said to be of Austro-Asiatic origin. Tradition points out that the Khasi came either into Assam from Burma via the Patkoi range or from the North with Sylhet as the terminus of their advance where from, they were driven back into their present hill-sites by a great flood. It is very difficult to say definitely for lack of historical data as to how and when this tribe has migrated from Burma or its neighbouring country to the part of Assam now known as Meghalaya as they have been living there since time immemorial. Their main language is known as the Khasi dialect and their family system is based on matrilineal and matrilocal practice right from the old days. The Khasis are agriculturists by occupation. Their religion is known as Ka Niam Khasi, although many of them have got converted into Christianity after the advent of the British.

Confronted with the challenges emanating from modernization, Christianization and industrialization today, the Khasi society is making a conscious effort to preserve its identity through revivalism. Revivalism generally aims at the restoring of a former golden age (of the past). Amongst the Khasi revivalism however, has to a limited extent made people revert back to their own religion. But

by and large, revivalism has made people conscious of their past heritage though in practice most revivalists have aimed at merely cultural revivalism excluding Khasi religion. The Khasi society like any other society possesses a certain unity and has what we may call a certain life of its own. The last few years in this society have threatened its very existence as an organised structure. Its various parts, religious, ethical, legal, and economic are no longer knitted together in harmony, but are being pulled in different directions for various reasons.

Chapter I of my thesis, analyses the concept of society and the need for the society to organise itself to pursue revivalism of its traditional culture. One hears the cry "Ngi U Khun Khasi Khara U Khun U Hynniew Trep Hynniew Skun"\* in almost every part of Khasi Jaintia Hills. This has given impetus to the already started work of the Seng Khasi Organization. For the Khasi, Christianity was a tough contender anxious to replace the tribal customs and institutions, under its advent the Khasi stood spell-bound, for it brought modernisation and its attractive adjuncts.

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\*We the Khasi-Khara the descendants of the seven huts-seven clans.

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The love of Christianity and its impact on the Khasi I have discussed in Chapter II. Here I have shown that in spite of massive Christianisation one factor which has helped to retain some elements of Khasi-customs are kin-ship ties. In this connection, I have discussed the village community of Laitkynsew in the East Khasi Hills district, a distance of 90 kilometres from Shillong, the capital city of Meghalaya.

In Chapter III, I have asked the question: Who is a Khasi? The answer is not easy, as in the present situation, it is a difficult task to identify the true and pure Khasi traits of culture. The material culture seems to be rapidly changing, the institutions, the homes and so on can rarely be identified as pure Khasi. I have discussed the problems of Khasi identity in terms of space as well as social and cultural customs. However, all has been done while keeping the dimension of time in mind. Life of the Khasi in the past and the life of the Khasi today, I have gone on to assert that today Khasi definitely looks upon the traditional concept of a good Khasi with yearning and respect and that is the main reason which makes me assert the presence of revivalism among the Khasis. (Revivalism in Khasi is unique and is not based on hatred of the present). The conclusion to my Chapter III attempts to identify

the ideal Khasi. An answer to this today is difficult for while tradition as contained in the Niam Khasi defined somewhat clearly what is expected of a good Khasi, the Post-British period shows a climate of confusion.

\*The impact of the awakening of the consciousness about the past was not limited to the non-Christian only, the Christian Khasis too contributed to the new-spirit. Interestingly, many of the Christian elders reverted back to the Niam Khasi, such as H.O. Mawrie, B.D. Pugh, D. Shanpplam, Alhar Nylom, P. Dkhar, P. J. Lyngdoh, etc. Chapter IV of my thesis, discusses the various elders who made a collective effort to save Khasi-culture such as Rabon Singh, Hormurai Diengdoh, Babu Jeebon Roy, Sibcharan Roy, and others. It also contains a recent major mechanism of the Seng Khasi Organisation to alert the Khasi against the dangers of losing their own culture, tradition and religion. The mechanism is the Seng Kyrsew meetings taking place in different parts of Khasi and Jaintia Hills. A survey of the geographical areas where Seng Kyrsew meetings have started to take place, have made it possible

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- \* i). See Tribal Movements in India Vol. I., Manohar 1982, p. 184.  
 ii). Refer also to Nalini Nataranjan: The Missionary among the Khasis, 1977, Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, pp. 181-82.  
 iii). See also P.R.G. Mathur: Khasi of Meghalaya, 1979, New Delhi.

for me to produce the map along with the enclosed chart lists of table that shows the extent of Seng Kyrseiw revivalism in eight Community Development Blocks which cover 24 villages, five towns and three of them are in Shillong City of Khasi Hills. Revivalism can be exploited by certain sections of the Khasis resistant to change, to convert nationalism into communalism. The Seng Khasi is sometimes criticized as an organization which does not want the Khasis to change over to an open society. This however, does not appear to be the case. The fourth chapter discusses the role of the traditional elders as great nationalists.

In Chapter V of my thesis, I have taken pains to differentiate localism from regionalism. In the wake of the emergence of strong regionalism in the state, in order to get a better of fact I have given a short history of the various regional political parties. All various leaders from different parties though wish to guard to preserve the identity of the Khasi people are interested, more to my mind, in getting economic benefit for the State from the Centre. At present, a strong section of Khasi-youths wish to confine their creativity as Khasi to their role in political parties and their sole calculation cannot be

inhibit them from entering into a debate and serious discussion of religious and social issues. The same factor turns them towards regional chauvinism instead of genuine revivalism. I had hinted earlier that revivalism is a phenomenon limited not merely to the non-Christians. To prove my point I have listed the revivalist activities of the non-Christian Khasi youths as well as Christian Khasi youths. My interviews with them led me to classify them into three groups. Group A sees the necessity of common religion for the unity of the Khasi. Group B takes the idea of revivalism as only limited to culture, traditions and festivals but without Khasi religion. To them the Khasi identity is more important. Group C realised the importance of religion in constituting the identity of the race but they felt helpless in changing once again their faith from Christianity to Niam Khasi. The same dilemma is being experienced by the educated elite in the Khasi society. The youths today work hard to join hands in order to revive their own culture and traditions. The Khasi Students Union organised 'Khasi Cultural Blow Up' in the form of debates, seminars, discussions on different topics regarding culture, heritage, customs, traditions, festivals, old values etc. etc. The main points of difference here between Christian revivalists and Niam Khasi reviva-

lists appear to be this. While the Jeng Khasi (Niam Khasi) revivalists feel that religious revivalism is a must for the Khasi if he has to retain his tradition, the Christian revivalists only wish to revive culture.

In the context of regionalism and communalism that appears to grip India today, some of the culture heroes of the Khasi like U Tirot Sing\* and others are becoming regional and communal symbols. Social scientists fear that instead of integrating and strengthening the nation, revivalism promotes racial and linguistic rivalries. "The revivalist technique of boosting up group consciousness of the ancient days is unpatriotic in the sense that it would go against the contemporary national interest of unity and harmony among the various people of India".<sup>1</sup> I am in disagreement with this understanding of revivalism. The past tradition of the Khasis is one that exhibits a long process of give and take with other cultural traditions of their neighbours. There is a long history of inter-group marriages between the Khasis and the Bengalees and Assamese for instance. Then there are also Khasi intellectuals of the calibre of Babu Jeebon Roy who wrote a commentary on the

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\* A freedom fighter imprisoned by the British in Dacca 1832.

1. Gangadharan, K.K.: Sociology of Revivalism: A Study of Indianization Sanskritisation and Galwalkarism 1971. Kalam Prakashan, New Delhi, p. 143.

Hitopodesa, Lord Buddha, Chaitanaya, and the Ramayana. I must also recall here the literary merits of another Khasi writer called U Hari Charan Roy, who wrote the story of 'Ka Savitri' (Pativrata Mahatma) taken from a story of the Mahabharata. Such a conclusion that recalling of one's past gives rise to unpatriotic feelings today may have justification if the Khasi past was completely cut off from that of its other Indian neighbours. But as I have just shown it is not so.

I reiterate this point in the conclusion of my thesis where I try to show that revivalism should not be considered as anti-nationalism and as opposed to development. Development should not be viewed merely as the production of material goods but as the improvement of the total human conditions. I refer to Gandhi's model of development, which was based on knowledge of local condition while at the same time preserving the national identity. The conflict between tradition and modernity that has been talked about in recent times has limited validity in the context of revivalism. Khasi revivalists are not opposed to changing modern techniques of development.

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CHAPTER - I

SOCIETY AND REVIVALISM

SOCIETY AND REVIVALISM

Social life as a totality, with the whole intricate network of social institutions and groups constitutes a society. Adam Ferguson (1967) treats society as a system of interrelated institutions. To put it simply, society, consists of the ideas and feelings that the members of that society have, and share, in common. Durkheim calls these ideas, feelings, etc. "collective representations".<sup>1</sup> These collective representations have social utility or social values. Individuals are left with practically no other course than to respond to them almost spontaneously. Durkheim sees society as the most powerful combination of physical and social forces of which nature offers us an example; "the most highest form of the psychic life... being placed outside of an above individual and local contingencies... sees farther and better, than individuals."<sup>2</sup>

The Khasi society like any other society is a definite collection of people united by certain special relations with one another and in some way marked off by these relations from others who do not enter into them, possessing in fact a certain unity and in general a structure and

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1. Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* - Translated by Joseph Ward Swain, 1947, p. 444.
  2. *Ibid.*, p. 444.

what for want of a better metaphor we are accustomed to call a certain life of its own.

Men live together and share common opinions, values, belief and customs, they also continually interest, responding to one another and shaping their behaviour and expectations of others. George Simmel, one of the founders of modern sociology, considered a society to be "a number of individuals connected by interaction,"<sup>3</sup> while the anthropologist Ralph Linton identified a society as "any group of people who have lived and worked together long enough to get themselves as social unit with well-defined limits."<sup>4</sup>

The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics<sup>5</sup> distinguishes three types of societies. (1) The effective kindred growing out of the ties of parenthood and sex, forming a structure of a definite and durable kind deeply rooted in human impulses: (2) \*"The community, which is the entire society occupying a certain territory as long as it is united by certain connective relations that do not extend

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3. George Simmel, *Sociology*, Trans. by Kurt H. Wolf (New York, Free Press, 1950), p.10.

4. Ralph Linton, *The Study of Man* (New York Appleton, 1936), p. 91.

5. *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*. Edited by James Hastings and Louis H. Gray, Vol.II - 1974, pp.654-655.

\* The Khasi society may be safely put under classification of Number 2 above.

beyond its borders; (3) What is called the 'Association' by which is meant not one society only or even one species which are based on specific purposes and needs of man.

If society is the tissue of relationships between men, a society may be defined as a structure of which the elements are human beings living in certain enduring and defined relations to one another. Any given human being is as a rule a member of many societies — e.g. family, house of business, trade union, church and State — and those societies may either be concentric (the smaller group being members of the larger) or intersect (e.g. a world church or an internal labour organisation cuts across State divisions). Running through and beyond all these societies are the social relationships that have not thrown up any organised structure. Thus the influence of science, philosophy, art, and literature is international and extremely pervasive, but, though we speak of the republic of letters or of science, this is no more than a metaphor. The mutual influence of thought and discovery among the people is of old standing and is very great, while such organisation as it has attained in the shape, e.g. of world congresses is recent and very partial. Nevertheless the tendency of social relationship to take shape in some definite organisation is interesting and important here as elsewhere.

For one of the few generalizations that can be laid down with confidence about society is that all its different parts, however clearly distinguishable for thought, are in their actual development interwoven. The religious, the ethical, the legal, the scientific, the economic relations of life of course can be distinguished from one another. Yet change in any of these relations may affect all the others. The economist is apt to see the industrial and commercial relationships as the true and solid foundation of society, the ground-work of its development, the root of its diseases and decay. The political philosopher is convinced that the state is society — not merely the governmental organisation which serves as a shell, but the essence and spirit of society itself. The religious man will find all that is of real account in the character of the beliefs current among a people. The biologist sees racial character everywhere, and the historian of thought is inclined to the view that intellectual development is the sole cause of profound changes in civilisation. Sociology considers all these approaches as biased. Its fundamental thesis is that all parts of society interact, and that no pre-eminence over the remainder can be claimed a priority for any one element of social life. What is the extent of the influence of each is a very difficult problem

to be solved inductively, and probably is destined to receive a different answer in relation to different societies and different periods.

The Sociologist understands the people in the entire fabric of their life, including their relationships, their industry, commerce, religion, art, and relaxation. What is generally necessary to the maintenance of the community is that the general relations between individuals, families and associations within it, should be compatible with one another. However, complex, they must, taken together, be self maintaining; economically, e.g. the relationships between motive and effort must so work out that the community produces enough to maintain itself on the side of law and order its members must on the whole know what they may of others and what others expect of them.<sup>6</sup>

In every society, there are certain rules and procedures, certain norms, conduct, traditions, heritage and cultural values to be followed and observed. Like any other society, the Khasi society also have an elaborate system of cultural values and traditional norm. As long as a Khasi still follows and feels proud of his own traditional culture and custom, he feels a sense of love and belonging with the tribe he partakes of in the tribal cultural values.

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6. Ibid., pp. 659-60.

The Khasi is one of the three major tribes that constitute the population of Meghalaya. Until January 1972 the three districts, namely Khasi Hills, Jaintia Hills and Garo Hills were parts of the composite State of Assam. It was on the 21st January 1972 that the separate state of Meghalaya was carved out of Assam.

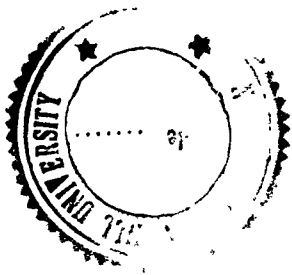
Meghalaya is located in the North-Eastern part of India. It is located within the range of  $25^{\circ}47'$  -  $26^{\circ}10'$  latitude and  $89^{\circ}45'$  and  $92^{\circ}47'$  East longitudes. It is a hilly State with a height of 6445 ft. above the sea-level. And as such its climate remains cool throughout the year. Situated between Lower Assam plain on the North and South, it is bordered on the North by the Goalpara and Kamrup districts of Assam. On the East by North-Cachar and Mikir Hills and on the West and South by the Bangladesh, districts of Mymensing and Sylhet. The southern border is the country's International border as well.

After the formation of the State of Meghalaya the three districts have been further divided into five districts, four sub-divisions and six administrative units. The five districts\* are:

- 1) The Jaintia Hills district with its Headquarter at Jowai.

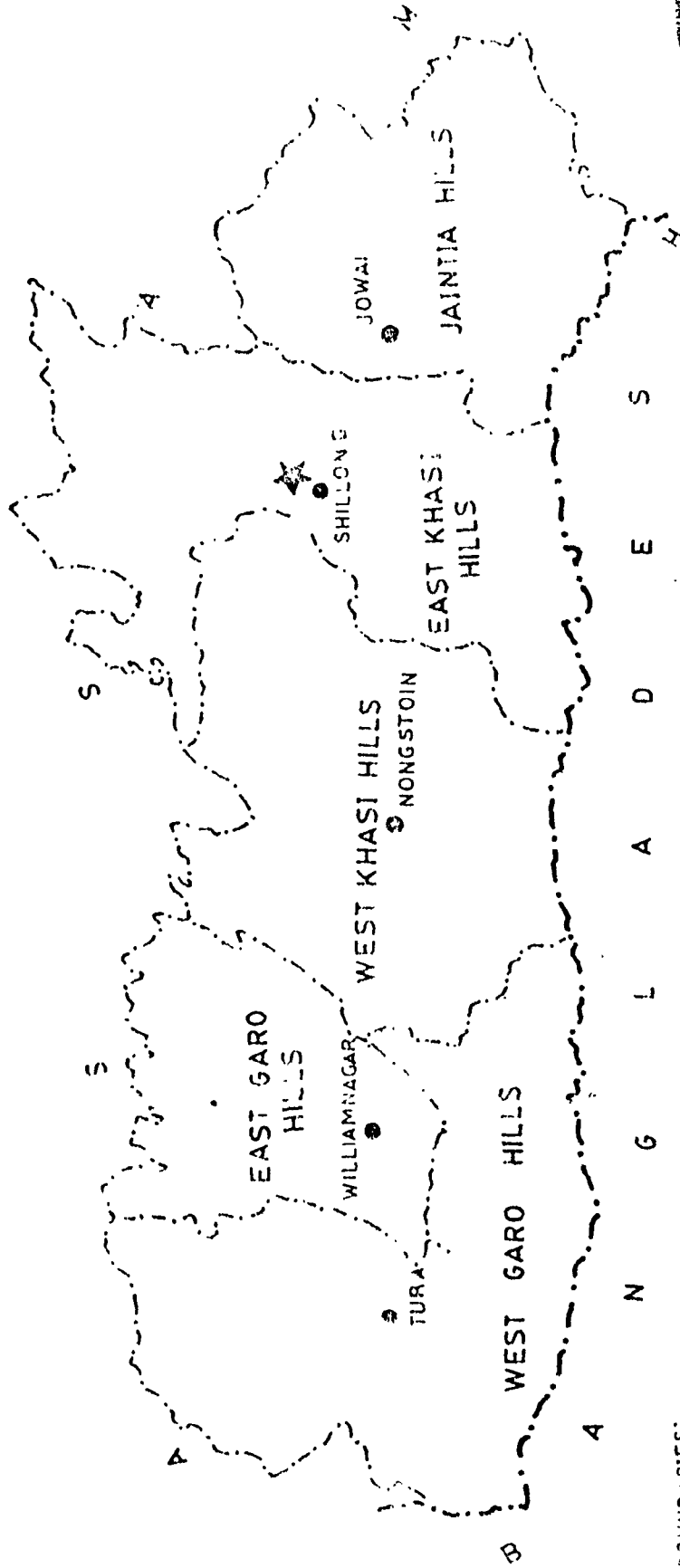
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See Map I

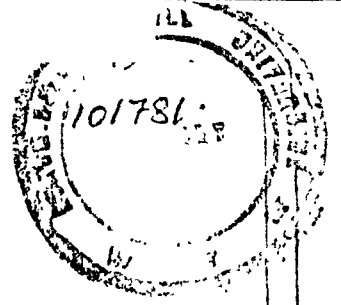


# MAP OF MEGHALAYA

(SCALE: 1 INCH = 16 MILES)



BOUNDARIES:—  
INTERNATIONAL .....  
STATE .....  
DISTRICT .....  
HEADQUARTERS:—  
STATE .....  
DISTRICT .....



- ii) The East Khasi Hills District with its Headquarter at Shillong.
- iii) The West Khasi Hills district with its Headquarter at Nongstoin (This district was created on 28th October, 1976).
- iv) The East Garo Hills district with its Headquarter at Williamnagar (This district was created on 22nd October 1976).
- v) The West Garo Hills district with its Headquarter at Tura.

The total area of the State is 22,547 sq. kilometres (8665 sq. miles)\*. The total population of the State as per the Census of 1971\*\* is 10,11,699.

The Khasis live mainly in the 4 Hill districts of (i) The Khyntiam or the Nongphlang of the Middle ranges of Khasi Hills; (ii) The Pnar or the Synteng of the Central

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\*Khasi Hills - Area of Land 11,168.1 sq. Km.  
 Jaintia Hills - Area of land 3,295.5 sq. Km.  
 Garo Hills - Area of land 8,084.0 sq. Km.  
 Total area of land - 22,547.6 Sq. Km.

\*\*

Districts	Persons	Male	Female	Urban	Rural
Khasi Hills	491209	255510	235699	122751	398452
Jaintia Hills	113875	56959	56916	8929	104946
Garo Hills	406615	208498	198117	15489	391126
Total	1011699	520967	490732	147175	864524

Plateau of Jaintia Hills; (iii) The War of the South Khasi Hills and Jaintia Hills of the Amwi of South Jaintia Hills; (iv) The Bhoi of the North-Khasi Hills and Jaintia Hills.

A distinctive feature of the Khasi-Pnar society is its customary law of inheritance. The succession of property is through female line and the Khatduh (youngest daughter) is the custodian of it. But the management of the property is in the hands of the maternal uncles along with the understanding of the women-folk. And the sole manager is the first uncle or the eldest son of the clan family. Their religion is known as "Ka Niam Khasi" - Ka Niam Tip-Briew-Tip-Blei (The Khasi Religion - the religion of knowing Man-Knowing God); although many of them have got converted into Christianity. As a matter of fact today there are two major religious systems among the Khasi, viz. the original Khasi religion and the Christianity\* of the converted Khasi.

According to the International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences Revivalism and Nativism<sup>7</sup> are considered

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\*Christianity here means different Christian dominations such as Catholicism and Protestantism. Protestantism are Presbyterian, Baptist, Church of God, Church of Christ, Pentecostal Church, Anlegian Church, etc.

7. International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences. David L. Sills editor. Volume 11 and 12. The Macmillan Company & The Free Press, New York, 1972, p. 75.

as two aspects of what is called "Revitalization movement". While "Revitalisation movement" is defined as "a conscious, deliberate, organised effort on the part of some members of a society to create a more satisfying culture. In revivalism, the aim of the movement is to return to a former era of happiness, to restore a golden age, to revive a previous condition of social virtue. In the Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary also, revivalism has been defined as ... 'the tendency or desired to revive former ways, customs, institutions etc.'<sup>8</sup>

Revival movements occur in societies which have been subjected to stress and whose culture has suffered disorganisation. Sociologists divide the typical process of revival movement into six stages<sup>9</sup>-

- 1) The inspiration of the prophet;
- 2) the preaching of the inspired new code;
- 3) the development of an organisation of disciples and followers;
- 4) the Codification of the new code;
- 5) the transformation of the society's culture along the lines of the new code;

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8. Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary  
 9. Op. cit., p. 75.

- 6) the redefinition of the new code as traditional and the translation of the revolutionary organization into a conservative status.

Revivalistic, and other kinds of revitalization movements have been generally observed to go through certain stages. These stages, if effectively fulfilled, are characterized by the initiation of certain functional tasks without which the movement cannot achieve its aim, i.e. the transformation of society. Manifestly, all movements do not complete the cycle, sometimes because the movement is suppressed by force, because its Millenarism or messianic hopes are disappointed, or because it cannot attract or retain a sufficient membership.

The successful movement, however, passes through the following stages:<sup>10</sup>

1. Pre-movement phase

- (a). Steady State - The society is satisfied with itself; no major group is experiencing sufficient stress or is sufficiently disillusioned to be seriously interested in radical change.

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10. Ibid., pp. 75-76.

(b) Period of increased individual stress - As a consequence of one or more of many possible circumstances—depression, famine, conquest by an alien society, acculturation pressure, or whatever there appears an awareness of a growing discrepancy between life as it is and life as it could be (and is for someone else) —growing numbers of people experience psychological and physical stress.

(c) Periods of cultural distortion - As increasing numbers of individuals, singly and in small groups, find their situation both intolerable and without hope of relief by the use of available, culturally sanctioned means, they turn to idiosyncratic or systematically deviant means. This period of anomie (Merton 1949) leads to the distortion of the cultural fabric by the institutionalisation of such socially disfunctional customs as drug and alcoholic addictions, organised crime, excessive corruption of officials, mob violence, sabotage, and vandalism etc.

## 2. Movement Phase

(d) Prophetic formulation of a code - A prophet formulates a code, frequently (in religious movements) as a result of a vision in which he is instructed by supernatural beings and in which he and his people are promised salvation if the instructions are followed. The code

defines what is wrong with the existing culture, delineates a goal that is described as better than the existing culture (if not Utopian), and outlines a cultural transfer, by the use of which the people can move from the bad existing culture to the good future culture.

(e) Communication - Special disciples and then mass followers join the prophet. As the number of members in the group increases and as the complexity of the mission grows, a division of labour develops. Different disciples take over the responsibility for various aspects of the movement's activities.

(f) Organization - Special disciples and later mass followers join the prophet. As the number of members in the group increases and as the complexity of the mission grows, a division of labour develops. Different disciples take over the responsibility for various aspects of the movement activities.

(g) Adaptation - The movement will encounter resistance from vested interests. These must be either defeated in political or military combat or converted; sometimes conversion is accomplished by making modifications in the code that will remove the fears of the reluctant.

(h) Cultural transformation - Of the whole, or a controlling portion, of the population comes to accept the new code, the system of cultural transfer, and perhaps even the goal culture, is instituted.

### 3. Post-movement phase

(i) Routinization - Once the cultural transformation has been accomplished, or is well under way, the organisation structure is divested of executive control of many spheres of the culture and contracts, maintaining responsibility only for the maintenance of doctrine and for the performance of ritual. It thus ceases to be a movement and becomes, in effect, a church or a political party.

(j) Steady State - Once the cultural transformation has been accomplished and the movements organisation has been routinised in its activities, a new steady State may be said to exist. Even if the professed aim of the movement was revivalistic, this new state will also most certainly be different from the initial steady State. Now the cycle is ready to begin again.

I would like here to refer to four major sociological explanations given to account for the condition under which these movements arise. My purpose here is to see if

any or all of these explanations could throw light on the revivalism that I am trying to record in the Khasi society. Perhaps the most and least sophisticated theory is the view that revivalism is caused by absolute deprivation, among tribal peoples coming in contact with European civilization. The acculturation pressure, it is implied, produces a state of "Cultural shock", in which the tribal people experience a sort of collective hysterical syndrome to a Utopian social movement. The nature of the trauma inflicted by the higher civilization upon the lower may be conceived as the imposition of a competitive way of life, or as the requirement of an unfamiliar pattern of culture, or simply as interference with tradition. The code of the movement will, it is argued represent some sort of compromise between withdrawal from, and approach to, the highest civilization. Although this viewpoint has merit as far as it goes, its relevance appears to be restricted largely to tribal population in culture-contact situations; and even here it is only a partial explanation, since it fails to account in the sense of a low material standard of living, leads to dissatisfaction with the status quo and eventually to the adoption of a revolutionary ideology. This viewpoint, in political application, leads to a "broad and circuses" theory of social control. Mere material depriva-

set of cultural traits by another, as in references to individuals in contact situations as more or less "acculturated."<sup>11</sup>

Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups. <sup>12</sup>

Scholars working in the tradition of social criticism and analysis founded by Karl Marx have pointed out that in many revivalistic and nativistic movements it is possible to discern the expression of social protest by disadvantaged classes or groups. Furthermore, the historical significance in a programme of social evolution of a given kind of movement may be defined by the Marxian theory. Thus, Millenarian movements in early modern European history and the Taiping Rebellion in nineteenth century China have been interpreted as premature popular protests against oppressive social melanesia as an early, naive, supernaturalistic effort to overturn a social order that

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11. International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences  
Vol. 1 & 2, p. 21.

12. Redfield et al., (1935), p. 149.

can be effectively challenged only by more rational revolution. As Worsely (1957) has indicated, the organisation and tactics of even primitive social movements can be usefully analysed by applying the Marxist model of revolutionary procedure.

The most generally acceptable theory of revivalistic, nativistic, and other types of revitalization movement would seem to be one that recognized, on the one hand, the influence of local and temporal circumstances, and, on the other, the effect of a situation of increasing discrepancy between level of aspiration and level of realization. This theory has been called the "relative deprivation theory" (Aberle 1962). According to this view, the content of the movement, as expressed in the code promulgated by the prophet or other leaders, will be determined by the cultural materials locally available at the time, including in particular, the myth-dream, the traditional customs of the society, and the customs of the society that may be exerting the acculturation pressure. The occurrence or non-occurrence and timing of the movement will be determined by the degree of disillusionment of a significant number of members of the society with the way of life now available to them. This disillusionment must be based on an awareness of extreme discrepancy between some available

image of the good life and the prevailing image of life as it is. The good life will be conceived as the life of another group (a higher class, an acculturating alien society, or a foreign nation). The good life, however, generally is defined not only as a materially more comfortable existence but also as a life with self respect and the respect of significant others. The precise movement at which the movement crystallizes is difficult to predict, and even the content is not easy to forecast in detail, because these factors will be heavily determined by the knowledge, personality, and circumstances of the prophet and other leaders of the movement. Paradoxically, individual variability in society thus plays a crucial role in determining the nature and timing of a movement whose motivation derives from widespread social and cultural conditions.

An organization comes into existence when explicit procedures are established to co-ordinate the activities of a group in the interest of achieving specified objectives. The collective efforts of men may become formally organized either because all of them have some common interests or because a sub-group has furnished inducements to the rest to work on behalf of its interest. Factory workers organise themselves into unions to bargain collectively

with management, and management has organised the workers' tasks for the purpose of producing goods marketable for a profit. Unions and factories exemplify formal organisation, as do government bureau and political parties, armies and hospitals.

There are two basic principles that govern social life, and organisations manifest one of these. Social structures may emerge as the aggregate result of the diverse actions of individuals, each pursuing his own ends, or they may reflect the joint endeavours of individuals pursuing commonly accepted ends. Thus, as individuals and groups in a community compete, enter into exchange relations, and use their resources to exercise power over others, an economic system and a class structure develop, which reveal organised patterns of social conduct, although nobody has explicitly organised the endeavours of individuals. The government of a society and a football team, on the other hand, are social structures deliberately established to achieve certain objectives, and the regularities observable in them reflect deliberate design. The distinction is essentially the one made by William Graham Sumner between "crescive" and "enacted" institutions. Social systems produced by formally enacted procedures,

rather than merely emergent forces, are organisations. The distinction is an analytical one, since crecive and enacted forces typically interact in their effects on social systems. Nevertheless, the distinction finds concrete expression in the difference between organisations and other collectivities. This phenomena can be witnessed in the present Khasi society. In the medley of interests and conflicts that constitute present Khasi society one hears today the cry "Ngi U Khun Khasi-Khara - U Khun U Hynniew Trep Hynniew Skum". The implications of this to my mind are the following.

The demand of being a Khasi assumes that there is an ideal cultural type who may be described as truly and purely a Khasi. Naturally the implication is that, all the Khasis are not at present on the ideal level of being Khasi.

A transformation hence is required for them which may mean either acculturation or conversion.

As per my discoveries the Khasi revivalism lies in the ideal deriving its imagery at least to some extent from the past, it may not of course

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\*We the Khasi-Khara - the sons and daughters of U Hynniew Trep Hynniew Skum ( 7 huts - 7 clans).

include the taller demand of going back to the golden age. But the goal of the movement as most other revivalistic movements is the well being and survival of the Khasi culture. One of the mechanism for achieving this goal has been the Seng Khasi organisation.\*

The Seng Khasi organisation was established on 23rd November, 1899, by some farsighted Khasi leaders. Suffering humiliation at the hands of the British, they saw that the future of their race was being eroded, their moral ties weakened and bonds of unity disintegrated by the inroad of foreigners, especially the Welsh Calvinist Mission who mercilessly attacked their culture, condemned their religion and encouraged its followers to discard and disown the Kur-Kha concept of kinship which is the pivot existence of the Khasi matrilineal race, while the British Company exploited them economically, the missionaries did the same culturally and spiritually. The two went hand in hand with political domination. The first meeting of the organisation was held first in Brahma Samaj Hall at Mawkhar,

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\*Nalini Nataranjan in her article, has referred to the Seng Khasi as a revivalist movement. I disagree with her for movements last for short periods of time whereas the Seng Khasi had been active now for a relatively longer period of time.

Shillong in order to mould again its people, to foster a sense of unity and oneness founded on tradition and to revive the moral teachings and tenets passed on from generation to generation.

The word "Seng" is multi-significant and rich in meaning. It has social, political, cultural and economic connotations; it means organisation, community, meeting of the community or clan, and even wealth. And understandably so far, these things generally go together. Those who lose their community life also lose their economic status. The organisation could not produce tangible results but it kept the fire burning. Thanks to this organisation, the Khasis have not totally got converted to Christianity like their tribal sisters, the Mizos and the Nagas of the North Eastern Hills.

The aims and objectives of the Seng Khasi are as follows:

- (1) To foster a sense of brotherhood among the Khasi who still retain their socio-cultural and religious heritage.
- (2) To revive the true faith of their forefathers.

- (3) To understand the true meaning of conscience and truth as handed down by them, which are being neglected, misled and blinded by the teachings of foreigners.
- (4) To create consciousness about U Blei who always resides in the heart of a devotee and therefore the devotee need not to be imported or borrow from outside.
- (5) To earn righteousness through service and to respect one's own fellowmen with the sense of humanity and divinity strictly the precept of Kur and Kha.\*
- (6) To work for the mental and physical development of the fellow members, and to regulate the way of living both for moral and social conduct.
- (7) To work for advancement of education.
- (8) To encourage national sports like archery, cultural dances and other social festivals.
- (9) To undertake welfare and development activities such as maintenance of cremation ground for those who dispose of the dead bodies according to tradition and religion.

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\*Kur are those who are having the same blood relation inherited from the common ancestress. Kha has two meanings. The first is the tie of relationship which the Khasi is having from the father's side only. The second meaning refers to all other Khasis who are not from the same clan. With them known as Iadei kha - Iadei man that is relationship of marriage can take place.

Broadly the Seng Khasi aimed at making the Khasi not only conscious of his own cultural heritage but also tried to instil love and respect in his heart for his past; This was achieved with the help of religious and cultural usages; The members and patrons of the Seng Khasi have put to writing the maxims of Khasi religion, the customs and usages and thereby enriched the Khasi literature; The Seng Khasi uphold the ancient norms and tunes and created conditions for such preservations by acquiring dancing and cremation grounds and maintaining halls for regular prayers and religious songs. In the absence of an organised effort by the Seng Khasi, many of these ancient usages would have been completely obliterated. The impact of Seng Khasi was not confined within the boundary of Shillong. But it spreads to every nook and corner of Khasi and Jaintia Hills. It is now a member of the Indian Tribal Cultural Forum (I.T.C.F.) and a newest associate member group of International Association for Religious Freedom (I.A.R.F.). This impact has also woken up the many Khasis who had given up their religion. Many converts have reverted back to their own original faith. Such as U Rabon Singh, U Hormurai Diengdoh, U Radhon Singh, U H.O. Mawrie, U B.D. Pugh, and other whose writings display a strong admiration for the indigenous culture. Most Khasis today (whether a Christian

or an Anglo Khasi) are beginning to participate in the traditional dance, sports, and festivals which they viewed before as taboo.

The founder leaders of this organisation were: U Rash Mohon Roy Nongrum, U Chandra Nath Roy Dkhar, U Kupardon Dkhar, U Mohon Roy Rynjah, U Rubi Singh Swer, U Burton Sing, U Raibon Singh, U Nalak Singh Iangblah; U Joshon Tariang, U Said Sing Dkhar, U Ram Charan Dympep, U Roberts Dkhar, U Rajinshon Marbaniang, U Nadon Roy Diengdoh, U Rotonmuni Roy War and U Indromuni Jyrwa. The members had as their mentor, inspirer and guide U Jeebon Roy, who in 1897 brought out his book "Ka Niam Khasi" (Khasi Religion) because he wanted to put the teaching in writing lest the people be led astray by imported religions. The others behind this movement who pioneered this organisation were U Sib Charan Roy, U Radhon Singh Berry, U Haricharan Roy, U Dinonath Roy, U Ijune Singh Lyngdoh, U Hendri Mohon, U Bamon, U Jymbun Singh Giri, U Kante Singh, U Mustan Singh, U Doliph Singh Diengdoh, U Rahim Singh Nongkynrih, U Mohon Massar and U Nawoon Thabah.

Babu Jeebon Roy was regarded as the apostle of the Khasi Renaissances leading to the establishment of the Seng Khasi. He donated a plot of land at Mawkhar, Shillong

for this organisation. On 23rd November 1899, the Seng Khasi was formally inaugurated with Rash Mohon Roy Nongrum as the Chairman and Babu Chandra Nath Roy as the Secretary of the organisation.

The subsequent leaders of the organisation has emerged as a more effective association by extending the organisation's activities in the rural areas of Khasi and Jaintia Hills and intensifying its educational programmes, publications and public addresses. The new leaders are the following:

U Nowoon Lyngdoh, Maham Singh, Kynpham Singh, J.S. Khongphai, A.S. Khongphai, Adrenal Nongkynrih, Weltrolip Blah, K. Shabong, D. Shabong, R.T. Rymbai, R. Hynniewta, H.K. Pariat, R. Kostan Roy, B.S. Thangkhiew, J.S. Kharkongor, M.M. Berry, Hores Nongkynrih, K. Tariang, R. Diengdoh, Hipshon Roy Kharshing, Rash Mohan Roy, Morning Suting, D. Khongwir, Synshar, Phen, H.O. Mawrie, and others.

The General Secretary of the organisation was U Hipshon Roy (1969-1986) a dynamic and reflectional personality. He teaches that the religion and traditions of the people are two sides of the same coin. He was also the editor of "Ka Seng Khasi" a quarterly journal which had stopped publication and has now been revived and is being published

on behalf of the Seng Khasi. The present General Secretary of the organisation is Mr. Konstan Roy Khongtim and the editor of the Seng Khasi journal is Mr. Khlur.

A review of the origin and functions of the Seng Khasi organisation would lead me to the conclusion that of all the explanations of Revivalistic movements given (refer pp.14-17) it is the threat of acculturation that really prompted the Khasi elders to hasten the phenomena of revivalism of course added factors of deprivation, oppression were present to some extent. But mainly it was the threat to their cultural identity that led to the birth of the Seng Khasi organisation. The Marxian model here also does not suffice as the movement was really not - led by one disadvantaged class against the advantaged group. It was not so much a matter of jealousy either against the British or against the privileged converted Christians, but a genuine conscious vision of maintaining the Khasi identity for the future history of the country. Later I would like to show that this was the reason that the Seng Khasi movement did not emerge and disappear as other movements (for example like American Indian Nativistic movements) but has today become the stalwart of Khasi culture and tradition.

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CHAPTER - II

LAIKYNSEW (A VILLAGE) IN THE EYE OF CHANGE

LAIKYNSEW (A VILLAGE) IN THE EYE OF CHANGE

In the early period of the 19th century, the Khasi Hills felt the breeze of change with the arrival of the Britishers and Christian missionaries. With the emergence of the alien rulers and the Christian missionaries, the strong, close knit and an integrated Khasi society, was bound to be affected. Social scientists have repeatedly emphasized that when the Western colonialists establish control over tribal societies they always brought about changes which led sooner or later to the disappearance of their simple system of integration. This disappearance may or may not be followed or replaced by a complex wider system. Prior to the arrival of the British, the Khasis constituted a normal integrated society with laws which were based on and were the expression of the moral consciousness of the community. Confusion was created when the dominant people (the missionaries protected by the British authorities) declared wrong in law things which the Khasi had not learnt to think as wrong. Though because of fear they tried to 'keep the law' this led eventually towards the divorce of law and morality in their society. Somethings were wrong while others were merely forbidden under threat of punishment.\* They got

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- \* (i) For more detail refer P.R.G. Mathur: The Khasi Solidarity Movement, 1979, New Delhi.  
(ii) Seng Khasi Series No. 2, 'Where lies the Soul of our Race, 1982, Ri Khasi Press, Shillong, pp.9-10 & 31.

compelled to obey new laws and were forced to abandon customs that their forefathers had practised for centuries. While taking over the new tools, new crops, new gods, from the British there was a period when most of the Khasi were faced with certain fundamental dilemmas like the following. Should they seek employment to earn money for the purchase of westernised goods that were now so necessary, or stay at home to grow food for their family and care for their ageing parents? Should they accept the judgement of their headman (rangbah shnong), who now has no power to enforce it but at least knows all the surrounding circumstances intimately or take the charge to an official magistrate and submit to the tedious, and to him meaningless, procedure of the white man's law? Again, should a wife divorce her unsuitable husband for the sake of this continuity of her clan or remain till 'death do us part' as per the dictates of the Catholic missionary? These and similar problems kept cropping up all the time with the coming of an alternative morality and religion in the Khasi Hills.

The Khasi moral system as well as system of leadership definitely having collapsed, most people however did not feel this as a terrible loss. They like the people all over the globe accepted the superiority of western technology

and western ways. "It could be truthfully said that during the nineteenth century the road to hell for many primitive societies was paved with the good intentions of missionaries."<sup>1</sup> There is also a credit side; these same missionaries studied the tribal language, produced the first dictionaries and translate the Bible into Khasi language and taught them to read and write. Nonetheless their work definitely divided the Khasis.

Prior to colonial rule, the Khasi had no differentiation in group structure. But when the British came to India and captured the Hills, the Khasi was slowly divided into different groups. The original Khasi and the converted Christians Khasi. Today, after nearly 140 years of the beginning of proselytisation in a concerted manner in the Khasi Hills there are about 2,48,000 Christians in a population of 4,91,209 (1971) in the Khasi Hills. After the conversion of Krishna Chandra Pal in 1800, seven Khasis and about 30 percent of the total population became Christian. In 1962, only 39.7 percent of the population had become Christian. In 1965, the figure

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1. Ian Hogbin: Social Change, Josiah Mason Lectures delivered at the University of Birmingham, Melbourne University Press, Second Impression, 1970, p.53.

was 47 percent of the population in the district, today 60 percent approximately of the Khasi are Christians.\*

The Christian Missionary, confident that his is the only true faith, offers converts the assurance both of life eternal after death and present peace of mind amid everyday troubles. He tells them that if they accept Christ sincerely and abide by the precepts of the church they will be enveloped forever in heavenly love and have no serious cause for future worry. Here, indeed, is a promise of full security. This landed many of the Khasi straight into the lap of different Christian missionaries. The new dilemmas outlined above which were a result of the arrival of the British could not find the right answers in their own religion. The Khasi religion which had earlier guaranteed security was dismissed as superstition. The Khasi ceased attending the ritual ceremonies, started treating the tribal elders with disrespect and allowed their sacred places like 'law kyntang and 'law adong (sacred grove and prohibited forest) to stay neglected. Not only the old religious system was robbed of its supernatural sanction, the Khasi were even obliged to revise many of their moral values. They had to learn to condemn certain actions formerly encouraged

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\* For details see Nalini Nataranjan: The Missionary among the Khasis, 1977.

and to encourage actions formerly condemned. It is difficult to understand why the Khasi instead of rejecting this kind of innovation were so eager for acceptance. The earlier converts probably treated the Christian God as though he was more or less an equivalent of their 'U Blei' probably, they had become disgruntled because their prayers to their own God had not been followed by prosperity or because their blameless conduct had still not saved them from disasters. They decided to experiment in order to see whether God exercised similar power and would give them a better deal. They hoped by attending church services to secure His goodwill but were prepared, or so they said, to accept punishment for violating any of the Ten taboos set forth so clearly in Commandments.

Moreover these missionaries, to begin with, were members of the politically and economically superior group and for this reason inevitably acquired some status. Like the other white men, they also appeared to be rich, owned so many possessions, and obviously knew so much. In addition, they were in a position to win more personal respect and even love. They alone of the permanent foreign residents in the colony followed a calling that compelled them to live side by side with the Khasi community and learn

the vernacular tongues. They visited the afflicted, tended the sick, and were interested in the villagers and prepared to work for their well being. In conversations they discussed many other matters besides religion, and some of their statements could be put to the test and proved right. The converts made the transfer and concluded that therefore everything must be correct. Many of us follow the same false reasoning when an acknowledged expert in physics or chemistry makes a pronouncement on social affairs. We conclude that because he is a scientist in one field his thinking will be scientific also in others in which he knows no more, and possibly less, than the average citizen.

The Khasi wanted economic equality with the whites, and many of them have come to recognize that education is a necessary preliminary. The village schools, however, were controlled and staffed by the churches. Christians alone therefore had the opportunity to learn reading and writing. For all these the abandonment of Khasi ways was not considered to be too big a price to pay.

Finally, there are Khasis who become Christians to satisfy their ambition. Church elders, catechists, and teachers all exert some influence in the village, and such offices are in consequence thought by some to be desirable.

Tangible rewards of a different kind had earlier contributed much to the conversion of the tribals. Missionaries in the first half of the nineteenth century were often prepared to distribute arms, thus enabling the Khasis to carry on their old feuds under the guise of a crusade against the heathen. Negative rewards can have almost as strong an appeal. Many religious observances are burdensome, and a declaration by a missionary that those connected with Khasi beliefs were unnecessary, sometimes served as an excuse for neglecting them.

In spite of the massive Christianization of the Khasi population, the social structure of the Khasi has withstood the challenge of change. One factor which has helped to retain some elements of Khasi custom are kinship ties. Kinship still provides the essential basis for the Khasi social structure, as a matter of fact, it has proved to be the most conservative element in Khasi society.

I would like to undertake an analysis of the Khasi kinship ties with reference to one village called Laitkynsew in East Khasi Hills. The village Laitkynsew is situated in the border area of Bangladesh, covering an area of 31 sq. miles, it is located on the top of a plateau. Village

community of Laitkynsew is divided into three groupings, the Khlieh shnong or Mawamor for upper locality; the Pdeng shnong for the middle locality and the Kiat shnong or mission compund for the lower locality. Most of the villagers in Mawamor are Catholic and the Catholic Mission boarding and the church are situated in this part of the village. The original Khasi are mainly found in the Pdeng shnong and the market place (hat) is situated here. The Presbyterian mission compound has also a church and the presbyterian Inspection Bungalow are situated there. Besides these three there are also other localities such as Mot, Wah Khim or Sohsarat, Wah Krem, are shown here in Map I.

As per the map given the location of the village may be defined by the following boundaries.

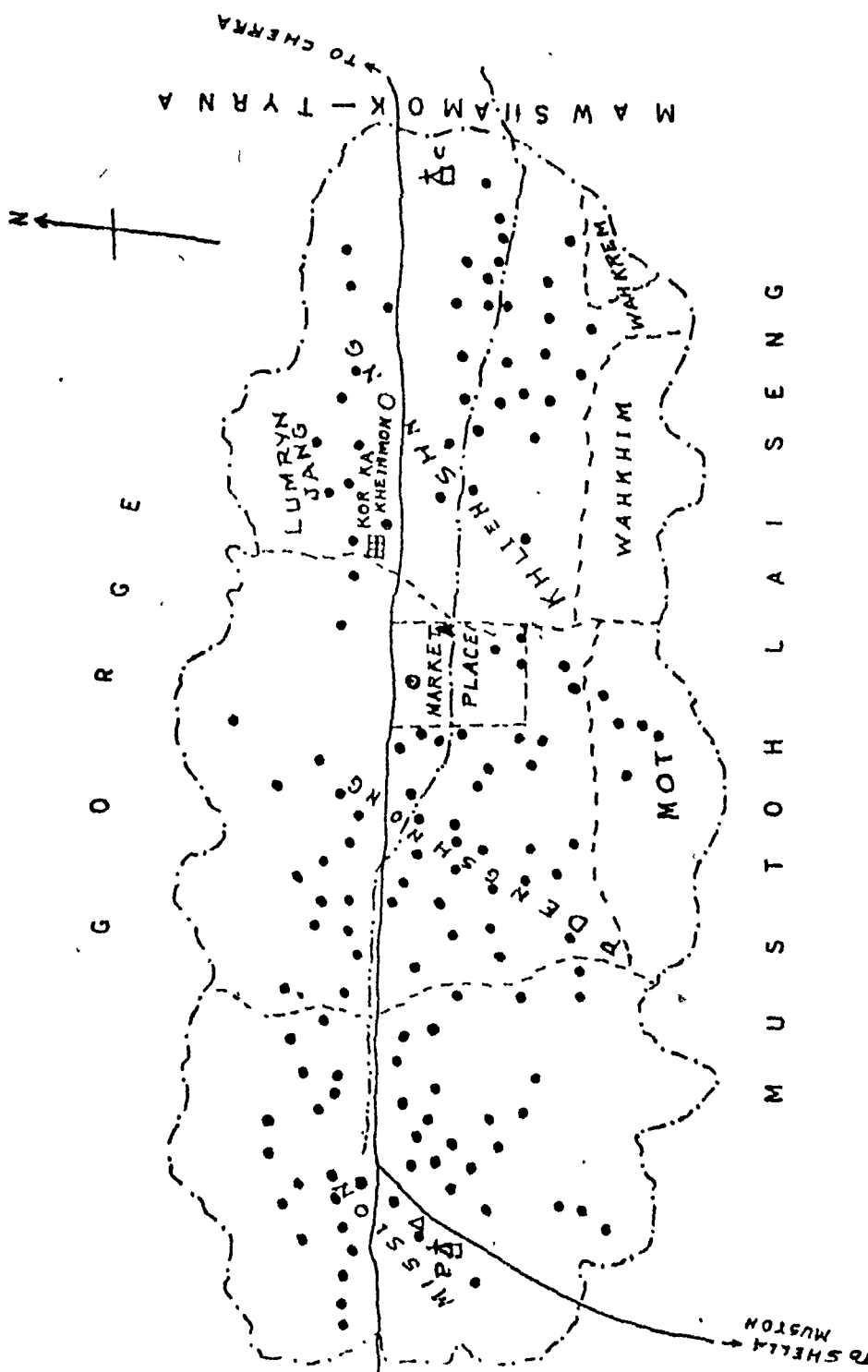
1. On the North the gorge and precipies.
2. On the South Mustoh village.
3. On the East Mawshamok and Tyrna villages.
4. On the West Nongwar village.

The village is full of deciduous trees and some cultivable areas and jungles. Some areas of land are community owned lands known as 'Ri Raid', some are privately owned land 'Ri Kynti' and some prohibited forests which are known as 'Law adong'. The public is not allowed to cut any tree

MAP NO II

LAITKYNSEW--VILLAGE

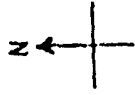
AREA 31 SQ.M



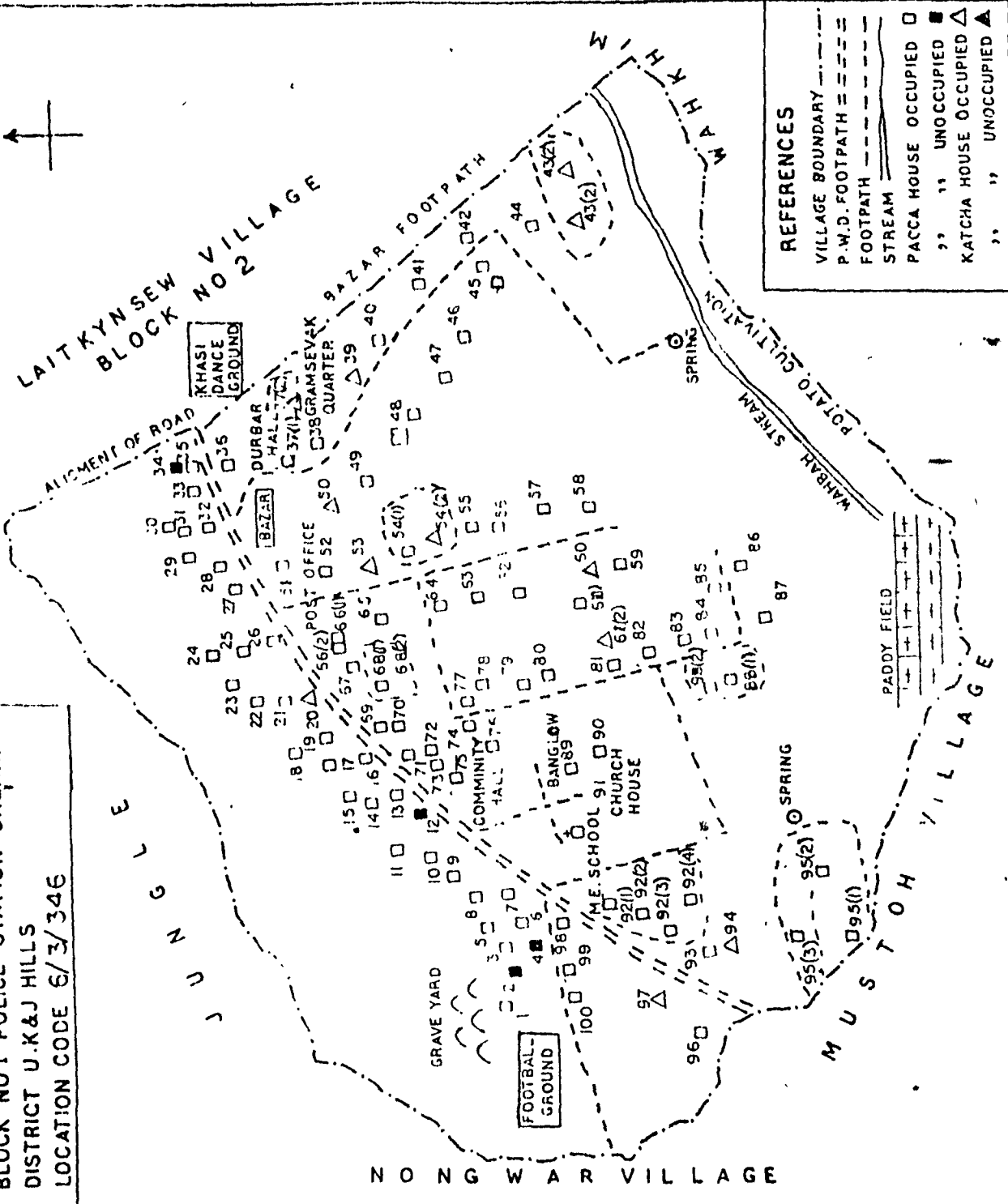
BOUNDARIES		REFERENCES	
--- (dashed line)	VILLAGE	— (solid line)	P.W.D. ROAD
... (dotted line)	LOCALITY	— (dashed line)	WATER SUPPLY
• (dot)		⊠ (square)	MONO LITH
⊠ (square)		⊕ (circle with cross)	CHURCH
△ (triangle)		△ (triangle)	BUNGALOW
• (dot)		• (dot)	HOUSEHOLD

or firewood from such forests ('law adong). As can be seen in the two maps (III) of Laitkynsew is divided into two blocks. Block I consists of the Mission Compound and Pdengshnong and Block II of Khlieh shnong. There was no water supply in the village previously. So the people had to carry water from the springs and streams, but at present with the help of the government through the Block Development Project water supply is available throughout the whole village. In the year 1962, motor road from Mawshamok to Laitkynsew was constructed. But during rainy season landslides are prevailing here and there. The road is not yet metalled. The road is connected with Cherrapunjee-Shillong road through Cherra-Shella road. On the way from Cherra to Shella there is one road which lead to Mawshamok from Gate Mawlong. There are foothpaths which pass through the village. As the village itself is the centre of communication the neighbouring villages of Nongwar, Mustoh, Nongkroh, Siej have to pass through this village in order to go to Shillong, Cherrapunjee and Mawmluh. One foothpath is from Laitkynsew to Shella via Mustoh. The villagers through this lane have connection in trade and commerce with the border people as well as with Bangladesh. Another important foothpath is from Laitkynsew to Hal Tyllap. This road again is

NOTIONAL MAP OF LAITKYNSEW VILLAGE  
 BLOCK NO 1 POLICE STATION CHERRA  
 DISTRICT U.K&J HILLS  
 LOCATION CODE 6/3/346



LAITKYNSEW VILLAGE  
 BLOCK NO 2

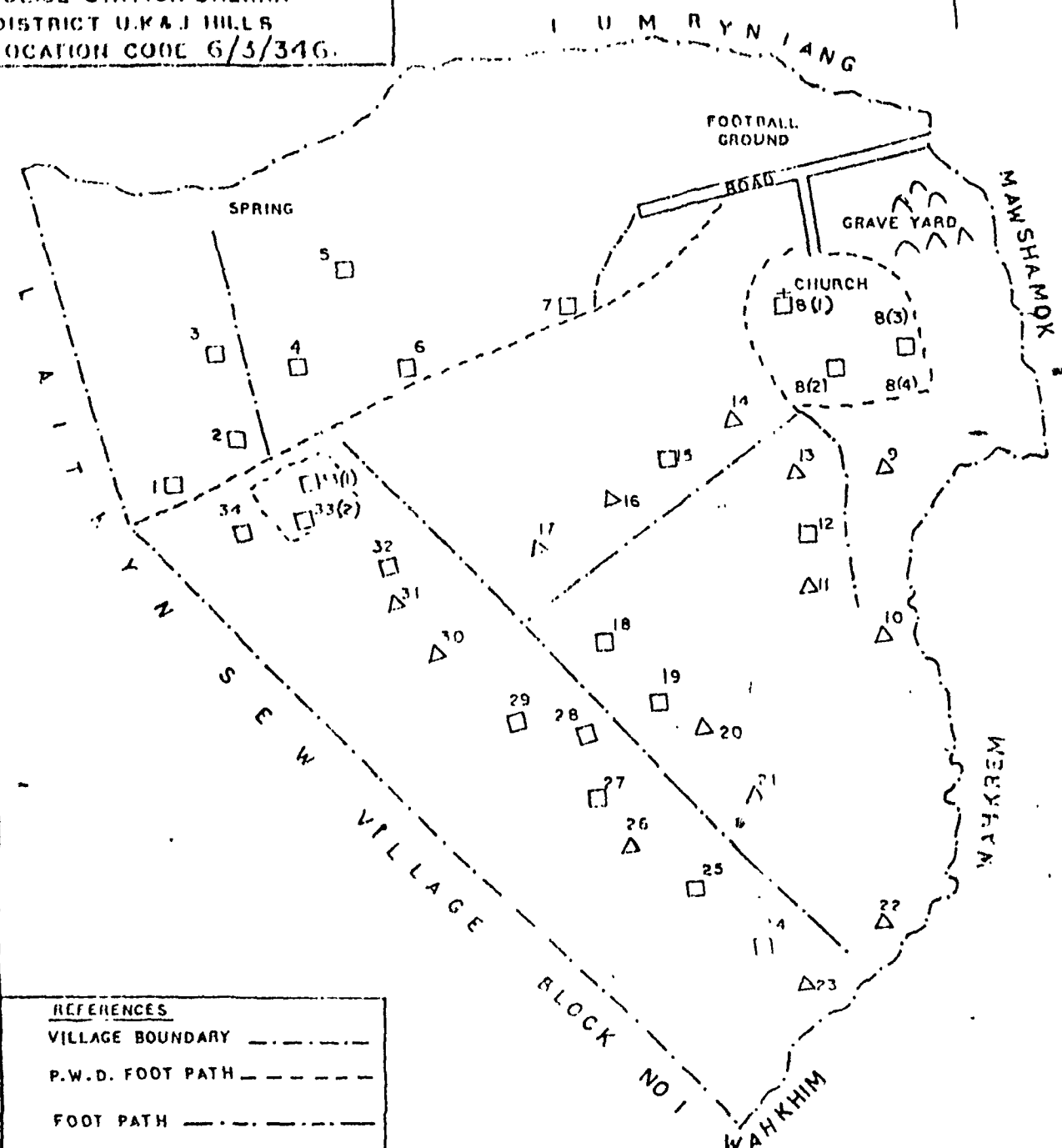


**REFERENCES**

VILLAGE BOUNDARY	---
P.W.D. FOOTPATH	==
FOOTPATH	- - - -
STREAM	~~~~~
PACCA HOUSE OCCUPIED	□
UNOCCUPIED	■
KATCHA HOUSE OCCUPIED	△
UNOCCUPIED	▲

NO NG WAR VILLAGE

NOTIONAL MAP OF LAITKYNSEW  
 VILLAGE BLOCK NO 2  
 POLICE STATION CHERRA  
 DISTRICT U.K.A.J HILLS  
 LOCATION CODE 6/3/34G.



REFERENCES	
VILLAGE BOUNDARY	-----
P.W.D. FOOT PATH	- - - - -
FOOT PATH	.....
ROAD	=====
PACCA HOUSE OCCUPIED	□
"    "    UNOCCUPIED	■
KATCHA HOUSE OCCUPIED	△
"    "    UNOCCUPIED	▲

for the purpose of trade and commerce with the borders people of Bangladesh. There is yet another footpath which connects Laitkynsew to Nongwar.

According to the Census Report (1971) the total population being 516,255 males and 261 females. The total households of the village are 134. The village community of Laitkynsew is divided into three sets of groupings, viz. the original Khasi, the Catholic Christian and the Presbyterian Christian. The point I wish to note is that the villagers belong to different religions yet everyone adheres to a matrilineal from which he/she receives his/her land rights. Members of common lineage have mostly land in common (ri-kur) and unite together, for clearing, fencing and other agricultural works. Though now many of the members of the village community serve as school teachers, daily wage labourers, small business etc. Cultivation of their land still remains the main occupation of the villagers which demands cooperation and understanding between them. Even socially, one tends to meet mostly with one's own matrilineal kinsfolk. The ordinary Khasi villager of today can no more satisfy his basic need for food and shelter alone than his ancestors could. He still depends on his relatives who equally depend on him. It is morally binding for him to offer for assistance even if the Khasi

traditional belief about the concept of U Blei, the Iawbei (ancestral mother of the clan) and the Thawlang (ancestral father) are forgotten by the Christians. It is interesting to note that Jesus and Saints (Christians) seem to have taken over many of the Khasi deities functions. Under the auspices of their religion, Khasi<sup>or</sup> Christian, all able members of both sexes work hard for the production of all necessary commodities. Unfortunately, it is the educated members of the village who have gone to towns and other urban centres, have mostly ceased to participate in the economic and social life<sup>r</sup> the village. Still close kinship ties are being maintained. They visit their immediate family members for functions and rituals.

However, distance Kinship ties have not withstood the resent pressure on the Khasi society. Distant cousins no longer interact regularly. Also new agricultural foods have reduced the size of working groups in the field, ritual ceremonies which used to bring all relatives together, have ceased with the arrival of the missionaries. The converts have ceased to visit their relatives in their home place at the time of cremation, funeral ceremonies and cultural festivals. As for example, if there is any festival or marriage or any religious ceremonies in the

village it is very difficult for all the members of the clan especially those staying in town and cities to attend the same as it does not suit with their schedules.

A change occurred also in the practice of maintaining the bonds of kinship by giving gifts of food. Earlier, when any member in the family visits his kith and kin he used to take along with him some gifts of food. A newly wed man for instance takes his wife first to his mother's house. It was the custom for the wife to give gifts of food to her husband's relatives. It was a custom for 'Ki Khun Kha' (male's children) who are cultivators that before selling their crops to the market place they should send some crops to their Meikha's house (father's mother house) for the first taste and their blessing. And first it is the duty of the Knia Kha (father's relatives) should present gifts of cloths to Ki Khun Kha as a sign of blessing for them to be healthy and prosperity. Then again, was given by a Khasi cultivator who preferred to acquire prestige gave whatever extra he earned as gifts to all those whom he regarded as relatives.

But with the introduction of money the situation became different, in the Khasi & Jaintia Hills as in the rest of the country, for with it came the temptation to

buy all kinds of westernised goods. The villager returning home from the city (Shillong for instance) like to retain his cash for personal spending. He might part with a few paise for his immediate kin, he however has totally learnt to neglect the distant kinfolk. This neglect creates a guilty conscience with the result while in the olden days no man would have attributed any serious misfortunes to a kin's man, now, even if he becomes ill, he will suspect that a Kin's man is taken vengeance on him. As for example, if one family lives prosperously in the city and neglects the others who are still in the village, then the bond of relationship between the families fall apart. One family will talk ill of the other. If any member in the urban city falls ill, they will think that a Kins' man in the village has taken vengeance (lehsniew) against them. And if anybody falls ill in the village, they will start spreading - false rumours to damage the reputation of the family in the town and especially if the latter are well to do and live better in comparison with others they will say that they are keeping "U Thlen".\* These sorts of jealousy and superstitious belief is still there among the Khasis and it arises not only between the families but more between neighbours and within a community itself.

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\*U Thlen is popularly known as the serpent-demon. It is said to represent the force of evil in the world.

Though outward expression of resentment are mainly confined to distant kin, there is also a friction between the generations because of modernisation. In the stable conditions of primitive times the knowledge and experience of the elders entitled them to respect and regard them. They knew how problems had been solved previously and were thus in a position to deal with difficulties as they arose. With Christianisation and the new system of education past experience has become of lesser worth. The younger people felt better equipped to meet their new needs. Here again the introduction of money provided another complication. Formerly, the elders owned all the valuables and other people left all economic undertakings to them. Now, in most cases cash comes in through the effort of the young labourers. So also the older men are no longer responsible for the spiritual well-being of their families. Anyone, who can approach the Christian pastors and Catholic priests thinks he knows all about the supernatural power. Before in every Khasi house it was the duty of 'U\_Kni'\* to look for the welfare of his clan family. It is he who will communicate with 'Blei'\*\* for the all round prosperity of the clan. So the whole clan family respected and adored

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\*Maternal uncle.

\*\* Sacred/Supernatural Power/Ultimate Reality.

<sup>12</sup>him like they would do a king. But nowadays the Kni has no place anywhere because his role was taken over by the Christian pastors, elders of the church and the priests. The importance of the uncle has dwindled in all spheres religious and social such as marriage, death, birth etc. The new marriage customs also reduced the need for all relatives near and remote, to come together. In the earlier marriage ceremony 'U Kni' is the prominent figure in the ceremony. He acted as 'U Ksiang' (co-between) who represents the bride's side as well as the groom's side. He is the one who conducts the marriage ceremony and shower prayers of blessing to the new married couples. But with the coming of Christianity a change took place, the Catholic priests, the pastors and the foreign missionaries have taken the position of 'U Kni' and they are the initiative figures in the ceremony. The Kni and the relatives are the secondary figures and sometimes they are not necessary to be present in the ceremony at all.\* The youngsters of today not only neglect their own traditional customs but also show superiority in their own account.

In this village a few Khasis who are economically more advanced stand apart. Industrialisation and new

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\*But nowadays a group of young Khasi boys who having realised that the position of male members in the society has gone down, have tried to revive the position of male (Kni) members in the society.

opportunities being offered to persons of intelligence and initiative, mostly, it is this class of people who are becoming foreigners to their own traditional way of life they try to adopt the western and modern way of civilization. With the emergence of this structure the lineage and clan-structures of the Khasi society is definitely getting weakened. This appears in sharp contrast to the traditional social system of the Khasi which was egalitarian, everyone did similar work, ate similar food, and enjoyed a similar standard of living. As for example, there is no class nor clan distinction among the Khasi. The Syiem, the Lyngdoh and any other clan names are the same in stature. The Syiem can marry any clan except his own clan as the Khasi society practices clan exogamy. And everyone has to work, even the Syiem or the Lyngdoh or the headman besides their titular duties have to work for their livelihood. Those who can work and have better occupations can enjoy a better life. A person could become extraordinary only by acquiring prestige, as a headman, as a warrior, as a craftsman and so on. Money however has opened up other possibilities. Anyone who can acquire a bank balance or ready cash feels that he is different from the others and wants to be treated with respect. Whereas this might become the criteria of getting honour in the cities like Shillong, the villagers

still expect other conditions as helping the kin's men and village men and observing the social and moral norms of the society as a condition for respect. With the result that budding politicians and newly rich class who have migrated to the cities, keep in touch with the village by visiting their kinfolk occasionally, donate land as well as cash for social welfare activities including education. The high school of Tiro Singh Memorial that exist today in the village has been sponsored and financed to a great extent by the concern of this class.

Nonetheless as already pointed out it must be acknowledged that many of the inhabitants of Meghalaya villages are withdrawing themselves from the meshes of kinship. They are becoming more and more individualistic. Instead of working at agriculture they all want to become skilled workers or clerks. Here modern education plays a vital role in the field of Meghalaya politics as well as in the sphere of economic development. Education in the shape of university degrees helped in raising the aspiration of the people and has also formulated new values of life. At present there is not much educated youths in the village because most of the educated ones have migrated to urban centres in search of white collared jobs. Few cases of

of prominent figures can be cited here such as \*Professor G.G. Swell, \*\*Mr. J.E. Tariang, Mr. B.M. Pugh and many others such as doctors, officers, lecturers, businessmen and even the third grade and the fourth grade employees. Reference to the prominent figures brings another point to note regarding the Khasi leadership in Laitkynsew.

Before the coming of the British, the village headman exercised leadership, provided hospitality, kept up the Khasi rituals, gave feasts, and generally look after trade and welfare. It was under his leadership and enthusiasm that the village could prosper, progress and live in harmony. His power rested on his personality rather than on his position and its role in the system. He was the one who organised all the functions necessary in the village.\*\*\* If he be energetic and intelligent the 'hat' (a small market) will expand and Ka Khrong - Ka Musur (revenue) will increase. Ka Khrong - Ka Musur is taken only from those outside the village. The headman along with other members of the village court settles all sorts

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\*One is M.P. in the Lok Sabha and the other

\*\*M.P. in the Rajya Sabha.

\*\*\*It is worth mentioning here that during the time of U Hoken Sirdar (1949-1962) the hat Laitkynsew was one of the biggest and the largest commercial centre in those side. People from surrounding villages such as from Shella, Nengnong, Mustoh, Tynrong, Tyllap, Mawlong, Cherrapunjee, Mawmluh, Tyrna, Siej, Nongwar and others came to exchange their goods.

of individual and group disputes at the village level. No one, not even the state authority could exercise power within the village without contacting the headman\* first. Of course now a days with the existence of the District Council and the Judicial Court in the State, all disputes are referred to them for final decision.

To continue the discussion, the role of the village headman, the villagers record that it was he who provided hospitality and gave feast to the villagers. As for example, if any outsider or government officials visited the village, food and shelter use to be provided by the headman. Once a year a feast called Bamkhana Shnong use to be made by the villagers. On this occasion the headman donated at least one pig or a pretty sum of money to spend for the Bamkhana. On the picnic day, the villagers along with drums, musical instruments accompanied by dance and songs came to fetch the headman from his house to the picnic spot.

But at present, with the administration getting out of the hands of the traditional headman his authority has become undermined. This has led eventually to the emergence

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\*Even today, for example, the police cannot arrest a man in the village without information to the headman.

of the new leadership of district councillors such as Member District Council (MDC) and the elected representative of the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly (MLA). In some cases, the rare individual who was devoted to the welfare of his people and was of outstanding character is not elected (maybe he is indifferent to the elections process). Thus, society consequently, suffered from the lack of his integrating influence. All kinds of means came to be adopted to get elected. Persons were elected who not only did not have the welfare of their community at heart but interestingly knew very little about the history and culture of their people. Their only qualification being that they look westernised or were christians or spoke good English. They became exploiters and enriched themselves at the expense of their people.

CHAPTER - III

ETHNIC IDENTITY OF KHASI: IN PERSPECTIVE

ETHNIC IDENTITY OF KHASI: IN PERSPECTIVE

Any person can claim or identify himself as a Khasi if he or she fulfils any one of the conditions below:

- i) That he or she believes that his or her forefathers were the Hynniewtrep Hynniewskum (seven huts seven clans), the first inhabitants of these hills, who resided in the House of God.
- ii) That he or she is born of Khasi parents.
- iii) That at least his or her mother is a Khasi. ✓
- iv) That should a Khasi (man) marry a non-Khasi women, his wife and their offsprings become Khasis if she agrees to obey, follow and adopt all the traditional norms, religion, customs and rituals performed by the Khasi. (As the Khasi is a matrilineal society, the offsprings of their lineage from the father could not claim their lineage from the father's side). So a non-Khasi mother has to become a Khasi by performing some necessary rites in this connection (see Sneng Khasi Journal Vol. 2 No.5, 1979). Religious sanctions have to be obtained for the new title of the clan through rituals. From that moment onwards the woman becomes a Khasi and she is the first Iawbei (mother) of that particular

clan. Her husband becomes the first Thawlang (father) and her son becomes Suidnia (uncle) of the clan. The women and all her offsprings, inherit that new clan name. From that time onwards, that clan is taken to be one of the many Khasi clans, as for instance Khar Wanlang, Khar Sawian, Khar Phanbuh, Kharpuria, Khar Kongor, Kharsapa and others.

The Khasis follow the matrilineal system tracing their descent from the mother. The Mother is a very important member of the family, who looks after her children, is custodian of the ancestral properties and guardian of the hearth and home, which is a central place in a Khasi family, it is where they speak and pray to their Creator, it is here that the family rituals are performed. Therefore, Khasi religion is "Ka Niam Iing" a family religion and is more a personal religious relationship between "U Blei" and the family.) The mother would not meddle with the affairs of the State as this would interfere with her duties and responsibilities in the home. The position of a woman in a Khasi family is unique. It is not only that her right over the house, home and property have been guaranteed and sanctified by custom and religious tradition

but also the very continuation of lineage and inheritance depends on her. She is the one who will prepare (taiar) all the necessary items (Ki dah ki dong) for rituals and hand over to the Kni (Maternal Uncle) or to Hymmen Rangbah (eldest brother), to conduct, or to perform the actual rituals and to communicate with U Blei for the prosperity of the clan-family. However, it would like to make clear here that in a non-Christian Khasi family a man has a double role to play as U Kni (maternal uncle) in his mother's house and as U Kpa to his wife's house. As U Kni he plays a very important role for the welfare of his clan and acts as the counsellor and guardian to his nieces and nephews. And as U Kpa his role is for promoting the welfare of his wife and children. The mother is the bond of unity and on her death custodianship passes to her youngest daughter. There is a Khasi saying "Ban roi ka jait ka kynia, ban iar u Tnum u Tyndai" bad "ban mih ki Simpah ki Simsong". It always goes with the blessing and prayers of the old people to the younger generation of the clan family. From the above saying it may be understood that both sexes male as well as female are required in a Khasi family. Absence of any of them creates a gap in the family household. Because as it is believed, it is from the woman that the clan will multiply i.e. Ban roi

ka jait ka kynja, and the family household will continue to expand i.e. Ban iar u Tnum u Tyndai. The male members are required in the family as they are the Simpah the Simsong of the clan the one who will shower prayers and plead for the prosperity of the clan.

I would like to clarify that the Khasi is not a ✓  
✓ matriarchal society as it is misunderstood by many people. The \*Mother is not the dominant head of the family. It is the father who is the head only of his nuclear family while the maternal uncle is the head of all the families of his sisters i.e. his nephews and nieces. Children take into account their father's counsel. The maxim expressing the gratitude of the children "U Kpa uba lah uba lai ba ai ia ka long rymnieng" signifies that it is an able father who gives us life and stature. Gurdon rightly observes:

"Father is the executive head of the new-home. It is he who faces the danger of the jungles and risks his life for his wife and children. It is the father who bears the heat and burden of the day. The maternal uncle only comes when it is a question of life and death. The Khasi father is revered not only when living but also after death as U Thawlang and special ceremonies are performed to propitiate his shade".<sup>1</sup>

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\*There is a popular Khasi saying: Kynih Ka Iar Kynthei te la jot ka Iing. Just as the hen never crows so also the woman cannot dominate.

1. P.R.T. Gurdon - The Khasis, 1975, Cosmo Publication, Delhi pp. 78-79.

His mother Ka Meikha, during her life-time and after her death is shown reverence by Ki Khun Kha (father's children) and special homage is given by them to their Meikha on her death. A new born baby is first taken to Ka Meikha's house for her blessings.

As regards ~~the kinship system of the~~ Khasi it can be said that it is different from other Indian societies. The Khasi system of kinship is based on \*Ka Tip Kur Ka Tip Kha. It is a clan exogamy. Members who belong to father's side are respected whether young or old as they are Ki Nongai Nongsei Rynieng (the giver of life and stature), the maternal uncles, as they are Ki Nongbtin lynti, Ki Nongduai phirat bad ki Nongsaid-Nongthew (the communicators the diviners, and the pleaders) of life and death in the field of rites and ritual.

Marriage among the Khasis has both the religious and social aspects. The Khasi practices the Matrilocal system that means the male has to come and stay in his wife's place. The process of selection of spouses comes from the male's side first. Acknowledgement of marriage comes only after seeing that the match involves no Sang (taboo) according to the time honoured custom of the land.

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\*Refer to p. 32.

Monogamous, <sup>marriage</sup> is the chief rule in Khasi Hills, though remarriage and divorce is allowed. Adultery (Klim-Kyrtep) is not allowed for both the sexes. Adultery by the woman especially is viewed very seriously by both the clans of the couple. The husband is at liberty to inflict any sort of punishment even to the extent of killing her at the spot if she is caught in the act. But when the fact is subsequently discovered, the relatives of the husband along with elders of the village will compel him to leave her, and children of the woman who has committed adultery cannot pay any homage to Ka Meikha\* cannot be included in the clan cromlech.

No man is allowed to take a woman from his clan as his wife. Such a thing is regarded as the worst social crime. It is also an incest taboo to marry the near relatives of the father's clan or of whom the father calls by the term brothers, sisters, mother, mother-in-laws. The husband of the deceased elder sister can marry the younger sister after performing some ritual. But to marry the wife's elder sister of the younger brother-in-law even after the wife's/husband's death is a taboo. A man cannot marry his mother's brother's daughter as long as his

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\*Mother's father.

maternal uncle is alive, but he can do so after his uncle's death. If he does <sup>so</sup> while uncle is still alive either he or his uncle will die (siat u Kliang) is a belief. The sons of the maternal uncles cannot marry his father's sister's daughters because the Khasi believe that once rice is given it can never be returned or taken back again in Khasi custom; when the father's brother's children are parallel cousins (Shipara kha), the relationship is just like that of real brothers and sisters of the same parents. So they cannot marry.

Of the same above mentioned prohibitions if not adhered to can be rectified by asking forgiveness from U Blei through rituals and ritual ceremonies for purification. In other cases, permanent ostracism from the society and clan is the prescribed action. In ancient days if any couple were guilty of incest taboo (Ka shong sang) this could result in the killing the couple or at least their being chased out from the society. He or she who commits incest taboo whether openly or secretly may get the punishment from U Blei in the form of a stroke from thunder and lightning (Pom Pyrthat) and by being consumed by wild animals (Bam u Khla) such as tigers or by meeting any sort of unnatural death (Iap Kynsha - Thala). I would like to

refer here to a study called "Taboo"<sup>2</sup> in traditional Khasi society by Sujata Miri and Promila Myrchiang. The authors have differentiated Ka shong sang (Incest taboo) which is unforgivable even by God to other kinds of prohibitions called "ymbit" which include prohibitions regarding not getting fire food from sacred forest, not using nails for building houses etc. Their researched is mainly concerned to show that other than "Ka Shong Sang" "the offender can always remedy the situation by performing the required ritual or by asking for forgiveness from God. But the violation of Ka Shong Sang of Type A necessarily entails banishment and complete rejection of the culprit as a respectable member of the community."<sup>3</sup>

The Khasi system of inheritance is based on certain cultural norms and values, that is on the principle of matrilineal system as has been mentioned earlier (Chapter I). After the death of the mother, the youngest daughter (Ka Khatduh) gets the lion's share and is the custodian of the inherited properties. Earlier if Ka Khatduh gets married to a \*non-Khasi or to a Christian she lost her right over property. "However, today, Ka Sang connected

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2. The Journal of the North-East India Council for Social Science Research Vol. II No. 1, April, 1978, B.T. Hostel, Shillong 793 003, Meghalaya.

3. Ibid., p.3.

\*In case if she follows his custom.

with this is overlooked for social and legal purposes. Although the performance of the traditional religious rites and practices is still prohibited".<sup>4</sup> Also if she does not stay or look after her parents and leaves the family for good then also she is not entitled to get any property. The basic idea behind this system was that the property of the family should remain in tact with their mother's *leniai* group.

The present situation generally, the social and religious functions of traditional Khasi society cannot be so neatly differentiated. The same function which is held for ritualistic purpose is also meant for social gathering. Thus, the traditional Khasi religious functions can also be treated as social functions. For an example the Pomblang Nongkrem or Shad Nongkrem (Goat killing ceremony or Nongkrem dance) is both ritualistic as well as social.

The principle of Khasi religion lies on Ban kamai ia ka Hok ( to earn righteousness in this world), Ban Tip-Kur Tip-Kha and Ban tipbriew-tipblei that means to know man to know God. In his tip-Blei (knowledge of God) he projects a universal spiritual validity in all faith, that

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4. Ibid., p. 5.

is, in the Man to God, relationship in religion and the sharing of that validity. And at the same time the other side of 'Tip Briew' (knowledge of man) the fact stands out that there is no accepted universal validity in the path of religion in the relationship of 'Man to Man'. Here the needs, the surroundings the way of life differ from being to being from religion to religion. Here is not the question of sharing the validity but of understanding the validity of the relationship of 'Man to Man'. As it is well said by Thomas Carlyle, "In every sense, a man's religion is the chief fact with regard to him." So if Khasi religion is taken away from him or destroyed what else is left of the Khasi in him? Mr C. Lyngdoh, a District Judge, in one of his judicial pronouncements wrote:

"Now a Khasi is a Khasi because of his religion (Niam) more than anything else. This is a great fact. To understand him therefore, one has to go deep down into the over-root of his religion. It is religion in the sense of his 'Niam', which regulates all his thoughts and activities. Forget his religion and you will never understand a Khasi".<sup>5</sup>

Hence a person could be a Khasi either by birth or by adopting the Khasi way of life by participating in the

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5. C. Lyngdoh. The Rudiments of the Khasi Law of Inheritance. Excerpts from Ka Syngkhong Jingtip (The Khasi Cultural Journal) 1938.

traditional beliefs and customs of the groups. Socialisation and identification of oneself within the group through active participation in the life-style is recognised as the more important consideration for becoming a Khasi. And it was indeed because of such general principle that even Mr. Wilson Reade and S.D. Nichols Roy who are Anglo Europeans have been recognised by the Court of Law as members of the Khasi society.<sup>6</sup> \*Mr. Wilson Reade's nomination papers for the general State Election as the nominee of the Eastern India Tribal Union was rejected by the Returning Officer, C.S. Booth, on the ground that the candidate, whose father was a European, was an Anglo Indian and was not a member of the Scheduled Tribe, so he was not eligible to contest for the reserved seat for the members of the tribe. But Wilson Reade claimed that anyone born of a Khasi woman, according to Khasi custom is a member of the Khasi society. He claimed a very significant position among the Khasi as he was also the founder members of the then political organisation known as the "Khasi National Durbar", the Treasurer of the District Tribal Union. He had previously contested for parliament and State Assembly seats, as

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6. P.R.G. Mathur, Khasi of Meghalaya: Study in Tribalism and Region. 1979, New Delhi.

Appendix B Case 1 and Case 3.

\*Case 1: Wilson Reade appellant versus C.S. Booth, Aroon Alley and Jormanic Syiem respondents.

member of the Scheduled Tribe. He therefore, sought election from the seat reserved for the members of the Khasi Tribe.

The \*Court of Law observed that a person's membership of the Khasi society should be decided "not by only the purity of blood, by his own conduct in following the customs and the way of life of the tribe; the way in which he was treated by the community and the practice amongst the tribal people in the matter of dealing with the persons whose mother a Khasi and father European".<sup>7</sup> Rivers in his book Social Organisation defined Tribe as "a social group of a simple kind, the members of which speak a common dialect, have a single government, and act together for such common purpose as welfare..."<sup>8</sup> In the light of the above definition the Court found that Wilson Reade had been living in the social group called the Khasi, speaks the same dialect which he called his mother tongue, married

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\*The Court further observed that if purity of blood was the only criterion to judge whether the appellant was a member of the Khasi society, then it would be impossible to find out even a dozen people who really acquired racial purity in that restricted sense. Besides, in olden times the Khasi brought slave girls from the plains and married them and their progeny were recognised as members of the Khasi clans.

Please refer p.2 of this chapter.

7. Ibid., p.167.

8. Ibid., p. 170.

a Khasi, his children too were married to Khasis, participated and identified himself with the tribe in various social and political activities for its welfare and upliftment.

It may be noted here that the appellant's nomination papers had been rejected on the basis of the objection raised by Aroon Alley, one of the respondents, Aroon himself had contended that he was a Khasi because his mother was a Khasi although his father was a Muslim from the plains. By the same logic the Court held that there was no ground to discriminate between Aroon Alley and Wilson Reade, both were born of Khasi mothers and non-Khasi fathers. As a matter of fact both of them were members of the Khasi society.

It is interesting to refer to another case\* in this connection, that of A.S. Khongphai petitioner versus Stanley D.D. Nichols Roy respondent. Both of them filed their nomination papers from the Cerrapunjee Constituency reserved for Scheduled Tribes for the Assembly by-election in March 1963. The petitioner objected to the nomination of the respondent Nichols Roy on the ground that his mother

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\*Case II: A.S. Khongphai, Petitioner versus Stanley D.D. Nichols Roy, Respondent.

was an American lady and as such he was not entitled to seek election from the Constituency reserved for the Scheduled Tribe. The Returning Officer rejected the petitioner's contention, overruled the objection and accepted the candidature of Stanley Nichols Roy for election. The petitioner prayed that the election of the defendant be declared void. The petition was dismissed by the District Session Judge who constituted a none man Election Tribunal. The petition then appealed to the High Court on the ground that Stanley N. Roy was not a Khasi. He said that according to Khasi customary law every Khasi must have a Jaid (clan). The Khasi society being matrilineal every member of the clan should necessarily spring from a Khasi women. The descendant of Khasi must be reckoned through his mother's jaid, but not that of the father.

R. S. Lyngdoh and Hamlet Bareh, both Khasi Christians, were two of those who gave evidence for Stanley Nichols Roy. Lyngdoh deposed that there are people of the "war locality who are Khasi but have no Jaid". Rev. Nichols Roy, the father of the respondent belonged to the War Khasi and War people had no jaid.<sup>9</sup> Though Hamlet Bareh agreed

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9. Ibid., p.

that 'there could not be a Khasi without a Jaid', he added that in recent times the matter of taking "Jaid has become a matter of choice, i.e. one can have the Jaid of the father or of the mother or he may not have any Jaid at all."<sup>10</sup> A few witnesses from the side of the respondent contended that Jaid Dkhar are regarded as Khasi although their ancestresses were non-Khasi women. From the above statements the Court observed that the primary ancestors of a Jaid need not always be a Khasi woman. The contention that every Khasi must take the Jaid of his mother cannot be accepted, because the woman brought from the plains had long been assimilated and absorbed into the Khasi society and in actual practice their descendants were considered Khasis. Also, the ancestress of the Dkhar clans are non-Khasi women.

In the above contest an important piece of evidence was given by Evanton Reade,<sup>11</sup> who said that he knew and met Nichols Roy in U.S.A. as students. He said that the respondent conducted, represented and associated himself with the Khasi students at California. They spoke Khasi language among themselves while they were there. The Court gave full weight to evidence and recognised Stanley Nichols Roy as

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10. Ibid., p.

11. Ibid., p. 176

a member of the Khasi society who was entitled to seek election as a representative of the Khasi Scheduled Tribe. The Court also ruled that in order to be a member of the Khasi fraternity it was not absolutely necessary that a person should be a Khasi by blood. A person's conduct in following the customs and the way of life of the Khasis and the manner in which he was regarded in the society were equally important. This, for deciding the question whether an individual belongs to the Khasi society or not, for the purpose of special representation, it is not simply the purity of blood which will be the main criterion but all the surrounding situations will have to be taken into account, so the court ruled.

The Court's ruling in the favour of Mr. Reade and Mr. Nichols Roy makes the identity question too general in the sense that anyone if he is in a prominent position economically and politically can claim acceptance of the Khasi identity, by claiming readiness to participate in all spheres of the life of the Khasi identity. The feeling of the court expressed on its part the absence of any knowledge of Khasi customary law. Take the case of Mr. W. Reade. As a Khasi he should definitely be committed to the matrilineal system of the Society. Now though he claims

himself to be a Khasi yet he embraces the title of Reade.\* The Khasis as everybody knows always take the clan name of their mother. If we take the case of S.D. Nichols Roy, we find that his mother is a European. He however, claimed to have Khasi descendants through his father's line. This is not accepted according to Khasi law. As pointed out earlier a Khasi society is matrilineal society and not a patrilineal one. So a non-Khasi lady who marries a Khasi has to be sanctified through religious rituals first to become a Khasi otherwise there is no place for her and her offsprings as they cannot claim themselves to be the members of the group.

Here I see a misunderstanding of the Khasi customary law on the part of Hamlet Bareh. Hamlet Bareh claimed that it is a matter of choice for the children to claim their identity either from mother's or father's side. This is not a correct statement.\*\* \*\*\*Taking of father's Kur name according to the Khasi custom is against the system of Ka Khein Kur - Ka Khein Kha of the Khasis. The system of

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\*His father being a European called Reade whom it is interesting to note he has never seen - refer P.R.G. Mathur, Khasi of Meghalaya, p. 166.

\*\*His brother who was a Bareh after his father's Kur (clan) but after his marriage to a Bareh woman changed back his clan name to his mother's Kur i.e. Dkhar clan.

\*\*\*None of the cases mentioned above performed the necessary rituals as desired by religion and customs. See p.60 of the Condition (iv).

Ka Khein Kur - Ka Khein Kha to a Khasi is that it is a taboo for a man to marry a member of his own clan. So if the offspring takes the Kur name of father a time may come that after two or three generations, their offspring may happen to marry their own (mothers) clan the greatest incest taboo (shongsang) which can be committed according to Khasi custom.

R. S. Lyngdoh's statement that a War Khasi has no Jaid may be is due to the identification of the word Jaid with caste. The term however should be taken as equivalent of clan-Kur in the Khasi context. There is no caste system amongst the War Khasi. But every Khasi must have a Kur. Hence his claim that War Khasis have no jaid cannot be accepted because all belonging to a Kur must have a Jaid.

So also, all agree that the ancestress of the Kur Dkhar are non-Khasi women. But according to the custom these non-Khasi women and their offsprings become Khasi only after fulfilling the fourth criteria mentioned on page 60 of this Chapter. As for example, recently a new Dkhar Kur has been introduced in Khasi society.<sup>12</sup> On 19.11.1978, Chipel Topden from Sikkim who had married a

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12. 'Sneng Khasi' Vol. 2, No.5, 1979.

Khasi, Wallamphang Khar Sawian, according to Khasi custom, had asked for (Pan Hukum) the following agreement (myniur) from Ka Blei Nongbuh-Nongthaw through Ka Shat Ka Khein (rituals) that she and her offsprings will take the Kur name as Ka Kur-Kharsapa. After the agreement of Ka Blei Nongbuh Nongthaw an announcement was made that everybody will know that this Kur Kharsapa is now one among the Khasi Kur. And her son is named (ier la thoh) according to Khasi custom U Kyrshan Lang Khar-Sapa. Her offspring and later generation will inherit this Kur name.

A common language known as Khasi (along with its dialects) gives a solid feeling of identity to the modern Khasi. Khasi is one of the dominant languages in North-East India. According to linguists such as Logan,<sup>13</sup> Kuhn,<sup>14</sup> Pater Schmidt,<sup>15</sup> G.A. Grierson<sup>16</sup> and others, Khasi is an offshoot of the Monkhmer language which belongs to an Austro-Asiatic stock. J.R. Logan (1850-57) discovered an intimate relation between Khasi and the Mon-Khmer-Palaung

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13. Logan: "Papers on the Ethnology of the Indo-Pacific Islands", Journal of the Indian Archepalego (Singapore, 1850-1857).
  14. E. Kuhn: Beitrage Zur Sprachen-Kunde Histerindiene (1889).
  15. P.R.T. Gurdon: The Khasis (1975) Cosmo Publications, Delhi.
  16. G.A. Grierson: Linguistic Survey of India (Calcutta 1904) Vol. 2.

dialects which prevails in Burma, and Indo-China. This group he feels is connected with the larger family which consists of Santhal, Munda and Kuki. (In particular he was able by comparing vocabularies to discover the nearest kinsmen of the Khasis is the Palaung, a tribe, inhabiting one of the Shan States). However, Logan felt that the Khasi and other Mon Khmer tribes greatly differed in physical characteristics from the Munda. He speaks of Khasi as "a solitary remembrance that the Mon-Cambodian linguistic formation once extended much further towards North-West than now."<sup>17</sup>

Prof. Ernst Kuhn during 1883 to 1889 made discoveries on the connection between Mon-Khmer of Indo-China (including Khasi of Assam (now Meghalaya) and Munda of Central India but also with the Non-Cowry of the Nicobar and the Sakai-Semang Orang of Malacca. He observes that both "for its vocabulary and structure of sentences, Khasi is strictly connected with the Palaung Wa dialects... spoken by the tribes that live along the Central and Upper reaches of the Mekong river." The close sisters of Khasi appear to have been the Mon and Palaung-Riang-Wa dialects of Burma. It is clear that from the first, Khasi is

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17. Ka Synkhong Jingtup (The Khasi Cultural Journal) Vol.1, February, 1958, No.1, p.52. Bareh, H. The History and Culture of the Khasi People, Calcutta-4, 1967, pp.19-20.

described as a sub-group of the Mon-Khmer and Palaung dialects. But there exist also some important phonetics between Khasi and Vietnamese.\*

Dr. Grierson has divided<sup>18</sup> the Mon-Khmer language into five groups.

- 1) Languages in the Lower and Middle Mekong.
- 2) Mon or Talaing in Pegu, Annamese and other Minor dialects, Stieng and Bahnar in Vietnam.
- 3) Khmer and other allied dialects in Cambodia.
- 4) Palaung to the North-East of Mandalay and also Wa which prevails in Chindwin and Mekong sides including Lamet, Kmu and Riang.
- 5) Khasi and its dialects - Pnar (Synteng) of Jaintia Hills, War dialect of the South, Lynggam of the far North-Western frontiers of the country and Khasi proper which is represented by the Cherra form of speech.

Pater Schmidt who is the real authority on the subject draws a more concrete picture of the Khasi language in its relation to various Mon-Khmer languages including the Nicobarese and the native dialects of the Malay Peninsula. He has found a number of related languages in one

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\*Khasi has also shown a few words relations with Vanchoo (Wangchoo), a tribe in the Tirap Frontier Division.  
 18. G. A. Grierson: Linguistic Survey of India, Vol. II, p.1.  
 H. Bareh, The History and Culture of the Khasi People, p.21.

particular zone of the globe which extends from India to New Zealand and from Madagascar far to the Hawaiian Isles and he includes all these dialects into what he calls the Austriac family. The Austriac family again is divided into two groups, the Austro-Asiatic and the Austronesian. The Austro-Asiatic, in more elaborate explanation<sup>19</sup> includes a variety of dialects namely (1) Mon-Khmer, (2) Palaung-Wa, (3) Semang-Sakai, (4) Khasi, (5) Nicobarese, (6) Munda, (7) Annamite-Muong, and (8) Cham.

The position of the Mon-Auam languages to which Khasi is intimately connected may further be located as follows — A section commonly known as the Mon language which belongs to the ancient kingdom of Comboja Annamese (of modern Vietnam) is another principal language spoken in Cochin-China, Vietnam proper and Tonkung. Under the above main sections, there are many sub-groups consisting of Palaung-Riang-Wa dialects of Upper Burma, Kuoi-Samre of Thailand, Lamet-Khmu of Thailand, Bahnar-Nanang, Rade-Jarai-Cham-Khasi group of Laos, Cambodia and Indo China.<sup>20</sup>

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19. Kroeber and others: *Anthropology Today*, p. 281.  
Bareh: *The History and Culture of the Khasi people*, p. 20.

20. H. Bareh: *The History and Culture of the Khasi People*, p. 20-21.

According to 1971 Census the number of native speakers inclusive of those who speak the Standard Dialects\* or the many local variants, was over four lakhs. The choice of Sohra dialect as the Standard dialect was, because, before the British came to the Khasi Hills, Cherrapunji had been an important centre for trade in lime, coal, iron and other important products of the hills for which the demand in the plains was considerable. And when the British occupied the Khasi Hills in 1830s it was in Cherrapunjee that they established their headquarters. It was there that the Christian missionaries who came along opened the first school. When the Serampore Baptist Mission discontinued their work, it was succeeded by the Presbyterian mission from Wales which began their work in Cherrapunjee in 1841 under the leadership of Rev. Thomas Jones who came to be known as the father of the Khasi literature. It was he who introduced the Khasi alphabets by adopting the Roman script. He had taken the Sohra (Cherrapunjee) dialect as the medium of instruction for the Khasi and Jaintia Hills.

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\*The Standard Dialects is the dialect spoken in Cherrapunjee which is known as Ka Ktien Sohra. This dialect has been in use in educational institutions and for official purposes for close on 150 years.

CHAPTER - IV

AGENTS AND FORCES IN THE EMERGENCE OF REVIVALISM

AGENTS AND FORCES IN THE EMERGENCE OF REVIVALISM

In the Introduction, I had hinted that Revivalism occurred in the Khasi Hills as a reaction to the acculturation pressure exercised by the foreign missionaries. The Seng Khasi Organisation had come into existence as the result of the collective effort of men who needed to formally organise themselves "to save Khasi culture". Before I go on to list the various elders who were the pioneers of this organisation, let me give a brief history of the proselytisation work which was being undertaken by the missionaries. Shortly after the defeat of the Khasi-Anglo war (1829) the Christian missionaries belonging to the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist church, began to preach the Gospel in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills. By the year 1891 Christianity was firmly established in Khasi & Jaintia Hills. And the first Christian Church in Shillong was built. Majority of the earlier converts are thus Welsh Calvinistic Methodist, the rest quite a sufficient number, were won over by the Roman Catholic Church which came to Khasi Hills in 1890 and starting work first at Laitkynsew village. Undoubtedly, influenced by the intercourse with

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the Khasi Hills and Jaintia

and the Sylheties (Bengalees) of the South. The Khasi successfully resisted political penetration from the outside for centuries. This resulted in their also successful preservation of their religious culture. Their rituals definitely could have borrowed certain elaborations from their Hindu and Muslim neighbours. The point I wish to emphasise is that these phenomena did not demand a change in the fundamental beliefs and practices of the Khasi people. The situation changed radically with the advent of Christianity.

In the Khasi context it will be difficult to pinpoint a prophet who discussed a 'new code' or "heard the voice of God". However, there are a line of Khasi thinkers and leaders whose mission in life was to work towards a reawakening of respect and regard for their own culture after the advent of the British. The following is an attempt at listing some of the important leaders.

One such leader was \*U Rabon Singh Kharsuka (? - 1910). He was converted to Christianity at his early life and was selected as Clergy (Tymmen Basan) in the Mawkher District in the year 1883. After going deep into Christianity he realised that this religion could not give

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Basan Singh Kharsuka. A Collection of Writings  
 1910. ... p. xxv, 1979.

him peace and self-satisfaction. He was deeply hurt by the disparaging and demeaning tones of the missionaries towards the Khasi culture and religious belief and traditions. He could not tolerate against the baseless restrictions imposed by the Christian missions on the traditional festivals and customs practised by the Khasi. He abandoned his proselytisation work and devoted himself to studying and understanding his own heritage.

As early as 1891-92, his articles on <sup>1</sup>the divination system and the egg's rituals had appeared in U Nong-kit Khubor (The Messenger, the first monthly newspaper). In 1893, in the same newspaper he wrote about <sup>2</sup>Ki Jingkyn-diah Sang (don't break taboos) in Khasi society which man has to avoid in order to protect the members of the clan from feeling of insecurity or danger to themselves. Generally, violation brings ill-luck, bad health, for individual and family, harm to crops and even death. And it is by sharing all their hopes and fears by what Radcliffe Brown calls 'a common concern in events or eventualities that human beings feel linked together in a permanent society'. These writings were centred round cultural re-orientation. The search to preserve the indigeneous thought of the Khasi.

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1. Khasi: 1891-92. U Nong-kit Khubor - the first monthly newspaper of 1891-92.  
2. Ibid. 1893.

Rabon Singh also brought out three books, <sup>3</sup>"Ka Kitab Jingphawar" (1898), <sup>4</sup>"Ka Jingiathuh Khana Puriskam" (1900), <sup>5</sup>"Ka Kitab Niam Khein Ki Khasi" (1911). The first and the third book was about Khasi religion and rituals, being mainly descriptive in character. The first contains fragmentary short stories and animal fables, maxims and religious practices. In the same book, Rabon Singh set down formulae for religious practices, perpetuating incantations, prayers and invocations in the indigenous \*Cherra form. In the Khasi Hills, ritual performances is different from place to place. But his more elaborate work on religion and rituals is contained in "Ka Niam Khein Ki Khasi" which enjoins the divination methods as a key to converse with U Blei (sacred). He went deeper to the origin of the religion which was based on the covenant. In the book he briefly talked about the concept of U Blei (sacred) and their interplay in man's everyday life. He described the various rites and rituals of the Khasi such as Kara Kni Blei (worship to sacred); Al Bam Ia ki Kpa Tymer (Respects and reverence to the ancestors); Kaba Buh DKhot (Placing the Entrails); Kaba Buh Phan Buh Kyrapad

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3. Kharsuka Rabon Sing. Ka Kitab Jingphawar, 1898.

4. Kharsuka Rabon Sing. Ka Jingiathuhkhana Puriskam, 1900.

5. Kharsuka Rabon Sing. Ka Kitab Niam Khein Ki Khasi, 1911.

6. Cherra form may be here ritual practices in the Cherra-  
Hills (1898).

(the testimony that man begs something special for his welfare from U Blei). He explained clearly about the science of augury that is the study of the signs and symbols indicated in the various ritual performances, which is the only communication link between the Khasi and the sacred (U Blei).

Another contemporary of Rabon Singh was U Hormurai Diengdoh. He too like U Rabon Singh after spending fifteen years of his life as a true Christian, found that most of the things written in the Bible "were not reasonable". So he abandoned his proselytisation work and like a prodigal son went back to his own traditional religion. In 1895, he edited the first Khasi monthly, U Khasi Mynta (The Khasi Today) which contained lively articles on Khasi Religion.

In U Khasi Mynta, a Khasi journal (January), 1909, there is an article by him <sup>6</sup> 'Ka Jingngeit bad ka Jingbymngeit jong nga ia ka Bible bad ka Niam Kristan ba mane lai blei' (The belief and the Disbelief of Mine against the Bible and the trinity doctrine of the Christian religion). He points out here how he was blindly converted to Christianity just because he was afraid during his childhood days of that burning hell (ding dujok) whereas according to

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6. Diengdoh, Hormurai. U Khasi Mynta, Khasi Mynta, 1909.

the missionaries all the worldly men ('riewpyrthei) that is non-christians will be punished forever. Again in the same Journal (Nov., 1950), he worked out the weaknesses of many Christian doctrines such as

- 1) The trinity doctrine.
  - 2) That Bible is the word of God.
  - 3) That Adam and Eve are our grandparents.
  - 4) That Abraham, David, Lot, Noah, Jakob, Joseph and others are saints ('riewkhuid) "while our dear grandparents are the evil spirits".
  - 5) That there is hell (ding duiok) to burn man for ever.
  - 6) That all sinners are equal in the eyes of God.
  - 7) That notorious persons like David, Lot, the thief who was cruxified along with Jesus, Mary Macdaline and others just because they repented or were sorry for their deeds will be forgiven and get salvation for ever.
- (The preaching of such doctrine Hormurai Diengdoh feared that it would encourage Khasis to practise a loose morality with the aid of easy repentance, as promised by the new religion).
- 8) The doctrine of predestination in the Bible.
  - 9) That even God (i.e. Jesus Christ) can be tempted by the devil.

Another prominent Khasi leader who cherished the vision of the glorious Khasi race was U Jeebon Roy (1838-1903). He was the leading spirit behind the formation of Seng Khasi. A believer in his people's traditional faith and a great Indian patriot, he translated the Hitupodesa into Khasi language and published books on Lord Buddha, Chaitanaya, and the Ramayana. He also wrote books on Khasi Religion. In 1897, <sup>7</sup>"Ka Niam Jong Ki Khasi" (The Religion of the Khasi) a book on the religious rites and ceremonies of the Khasi was published. In the preface of the book he wrote in Khasi,

"The people will completely forget their religion and culture with the coming of the Christian Mission; the Roman Catholic Mission, the Unitarian Mission, the Bhramo Mission; the poor religion of the Khasis without any written record will pass into oblivion and we will one day forget it completely".<sup>8</sup>

He pleaded for holding high the values, concepts and maxims which the old religion offered against the challenges and inflows of the new teachings. Emphasis is laid in his writing on topics such as Kinship system, monolithic erections, sacrifices and ceremonies relating to marriage, divorce,

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7. Roy, Jeebon. My Life, pp. 111-112, 1897.

8. My Life, pp. 111-112, 1897.

birth, naming, funeral, etc. The last chapter contains wise sayings and proverbs which aim at promoting good manners.

In 1900, he brought out another book <sup>9</sup>"Ka Kitab ba Natai pynshyrna shanhang uwei U Blei", (a book about one God). In this book he wrote about the universality of God in Khasi religion and the basic features of other religions of the world. It is a powerful exposition of Khasi monotheism in which he pleaded for the divine omnipotence of God, the Supreme Being with which the original creed of the Khasi lays so much stress, and the sanctity of the covenant on which the old religion stands. He emphasized that the Khasi knows and understands God from the depth of his soul, so there was no need for another race to introduce God to him. A people's own God is good enough for them. He expressed that God resides in the sincerity of a man's worship and not in the god of a particular church or Ummah, nor in the pretentious claims of hysterical apostles and prophets for their particular brand of gods. He says that when a Khasi prays and offers his obeisance to Him, he approaches Him of his own without the need of an intercessor.

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9. Book of the Khasi People and the Khasi Religion of Uwei

Why should a Khasi demean himself by disowning his own God and accepting strange gods? He said that those who search for God in other gods than their own are like the 'mad woman' of a Khasi story whose baby clings to her breast and yet she goes searching for it everywhere, "where is my child? Where is my child?" His message applies to a wider public. Like Mahatma Gandhi, he felt conversion from one God to another to be an unnecessary and insincere device.

He was the founder and the first editor of 'U Nongphira' (The Watch Man), a monthly Khasi newspaper which was started in 1903. The journal contained important news columns and original Khasi ideologies. It has gone into circulation for about fifteen years until it was perhaps banned by government during the first world war.

After his death, the editorship was assigned to his son, U Sibcharan Roy (1862-1952). U Sibcharan Roy focussed in his editorials on the close proximity between the Khasi religion with the Hindu religion and inspired the Khasi with the spirit of rationalism. In his papers <sup>10</sup>"U Nongphira" (The Watch Man) (1903), and <sup>11</sup>"U Nongnyim" (The Deliverer, 1930), he dealt with the various rites and customs, which

he felt were misinterpreted and misrepresented by the missionaries and by foreign authors. In 1903, he brought out his book, <sup>12</sup>"Ka Jingia Kyrsiew", a comparative study of, among other things, the teaching of the Khasis and the Hindu Shastras. In 1911, he gave a lecture on Khasi Religion as organised by the Seng Khasi, where he explained the role of Kur and Kha in Khasi society. In the same year, he brought out <sup>13</sup>"Ka Jingpyni ka Kmie bad ki Khun", a discourse between a mother and her children on the fallacious dogmas of various religions and the truth on which one's own religion is founded. In 1914, a collection of his lectures on Khasi religion were published. In 1920, his <sup>14</sup>"Ka Kot Tqokit Tir-Tir" was published, containing an analysis and interpretation of Khasi religious thought and practices. These writings culminated in his <sup>15</sup>"Ka Niam Ki Khasi, Ka Niam Tip-Blei Tip-Briew" (1911). He was aware of the rich cultural tradition of his country. His translations of the Bhagavad Gita, and Chanakya Niti Dharpna are his greatest contributions to Khasi literature.

This deep understanding of religion as such can best be illustrated by referring to a correspondence between

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12. Ka Jingia Kyrsiew, 1903.

13. Ka Jingpyni ka Kmie bad ki Khun, 1911.

14. Ka Kot Tqokit Tir-Tir, 1920.

15. Ka Niam Ki Khasi, Ka Niam Tip-Blei Tip-Briew, 1911.

Rev. Robert Evans (1915) and him: "... you have for years shown great enmity towards Christianity and Christians, but of late you have actually won the notoriety of being the arch enemy in this country... The missionaries are the "servants of the living God... Neither is there salvation in any other (religion) ... there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."

His reply: "As a friend I advise you to fear God the Creator and the Lord, Love Him, and follow the truth. This alone will save you and not otherwise. Then you will know how to guide other sinners the knowledge of God and Truth. I will pray to God for you in case you try best to love God and trust in Him alone".

He died in 1952 and Miss Margaret Barr wrote of him "A landmark in the history of the Khasi people has been removed with the passing of Sib Charan Roy of Shillong, whose work for the Khasis should be far more widely known than it is".

Flournoie was not a member of the Sans Khasi organisation but he was the strongest defender of the Khasi faith.

Another prominent Khasi leader who wanted to retain his own culture and religious outlook was U Radhon Singh Berry (1854-1904). He was a converted Christian but later on reverted back to his own traditional faith. He was the author of <sup>16</sup>"Ka Jingsneng Tymmen", a Khasi moral code. He wrote hymns for the Seng Khasi and the Unitarians. His <sup>17</sup>"Ka Niam Wei Blei" is the original scripture of the Khasi Unitarians; however, he never dissociated himself from Seng Khasi, for he regarded the Khasi Unitarian as the same as Khasi religion without its rites and rituals.

The first Chairman of the Seng Khasi was U Rash Mohon Roy Nongrum (? - 1962) must also be mentioned at this juncture. Retaliating the attacks of the Christians on the Khasi culture and religious belief, Rash Mohon Roy in 1907 said the following on conversion: "It has bred confusion among us Khasis. It has destroyed one's self-respect, it has destroyed the good and sane moral teachings of the Khasi; it has eroded the pure religious beliefs of the Khasis, it has dismembered one's body, hands, feet and body separated, so that they can no longer be put together". Of the Missionaries, he said: "They are leaders of temptation to lead us astray from Truth to Self-destruction. We

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<sup>16</sup>. Berry, U. Radhon, History of the Khasis, p. 110.

<sup>17</sup>. Berry, U. Radhon, History of the Khasis, p. 110.

must not desert Truth. Do not believe that strangers who are here today gone tomorrow will come and preach without self-gain".

In 1921, the Seng Khasi School was started upto 5th Class and Rash Mohon Roy was incharge of it. Books written by Khasi authors like U Jeebon Roy and Radhon Singh Berry and others were introduced to the pupils. From the start the school faced much difficulties in finance. Grants-in-aid were distributed to nearly three hundred mission schools in 1924 but not to the Seng Khasi as Rash Mohon Roy refused to include in the curriculum Christian religious books.

When the Inspector of Schools withheld recommendation of the School as a Primary School only due to the above reason, Rash Mohon Roy in protest distributed a printed circular all over the Khasi Hills and beyond. One of these circulars reached the hands of Mahatma Gandhi who published the following article in <sup>18</sup>"Harijan" of 9th March, 1940:

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18. Mahatma Gandhi, Harijan, 9 March, 1940.

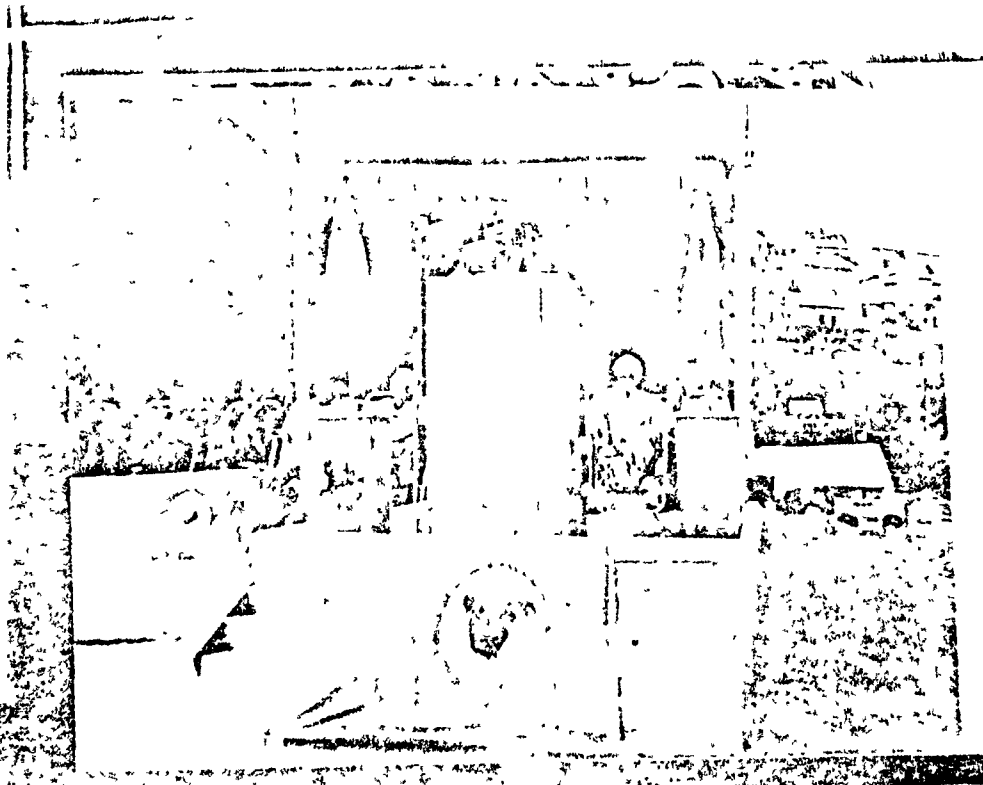
"The Secretary of the Jeng Khasi Free Morning School, Mawkhar, Shillong, has sent a circular letter to those who are concerned in matters of education and has forwarded me also a copy. I extract the following from it."

"The British Government gave education grants to the Christian Missionaries for spreading education among the people of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills District. The missionaries printed textbooks for schools according to their liking and choice, viz. History of Jesus, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and so forth. They translated the Bible into the Khasi language and made it a textbook for schools. You will find the inspecting staff of the schools of this District consist entirely of Christians. Fortunately, for the Khasis, some pure Khasi gentlemen of hallowed memory took the initiative of providing national education for the Khasi children and started the Jeng Khasi Free Morning School as early as 1921, with a view to preserving Khasi national culture. They wrote books containing ideas and ideals of ancient Khasi culture and religion. Ever since its starting the school has been doing its humble service in the line of education. It is a free school and entertains children of all poorer classes. The Deputy Inspector of Schools, Khasi and Jaintia Hills, desired us to follow the curriculum prescribed by his department. I agreed to accept the curriculum provided that those books written or compiled by the missionaries should not be included in the curriculum of the Jeng Khasi School. The Deputy Inspector of School did not recommend this school for a grant from the Government on the plea that the curriculum was not followed in the school. The books written by the late Babu Jankhen Roy, Extra Assistant Commissioner, late Radhok Singh Berry and U Sibcharan Roy are being taught in the Jeng Khasi School. It is a matter of great regret that the Deputy Inspector of Schools compels this school to follow the curriculum prescribed by the Government. It is a pity that the school is not allowed to follow its own curriculum. It is a pity that the school is not allowed to follow its own curriculum."

"If what is stated here is true, it enforces the argument often advanced by me that Christian Missionary effort has been favoured by the ruling power. But I advertise the circular not for the sake of emphasising my argument. I do so in order to ventilate the grievance of the Secretary of the School. Surely, he has every right to object to teaching proselytising literature prepared by the missionaries. It should be remembered that the school has been in receipt of a grant from the government. It is not clear why the question of the missionary books has now cropped up. It is hoped that the school will not be deprived of the grant of the Secretary's very reasonable objection".

19 "U Khasi Hyndai" (1959) (The Khasi in the Olden Days) is yet another writing of U R.M. Roy. The work intersperses with ethical and mythological dictums, proverbs, fables and other cultural characteristics features. The work has certain sociological and political significance but not on an elaborate scale.

The strong association of the Khasi revival with some nationalist minds like U Tirot Singh Syiem, and others who wanted to free the country from the hand of the foreigners, further shaped and intensified the ideological direction of Khasi reformism. The reformists have group-resisted the foreign rule, their motive being nationalism. A major feature of the Khasi revivalism was the influence of reformers like G. C. J. J., Raja Ram Mohon Roy and other



0.1 Sengkhasi Sengkutshem

23rd Nov 1985

The Jeng Khasi Organisation in Shillong (Refer Photographs I & II) is today gathering momentum and prestige with its recognition by foreign, like minded bodies. The two prominent leaders who deserved special mention here are Mr. Hipshon Roy and Mr. H.O. Mawrie. They have enrolled the Jeng Khasi as the member of the I.A.R.F. (Refer Appendix A). Further, I have attached also in the appendix some source of communication between the Secretary of the Jeng Khasi, Mr. Hipshon Roy and the organisers of the I.A.R.F. to throw light on the newly acquired international exposure.

In the Khasi Hills it is interesting to note that both sections of people Christians as well as non-Christians, seem to neglect their own culture, tradition and religion. For the sake of revivalism members of the Jeng Khasi started organising occasional meets called 'Jeng Kyrsiew' in every nook and corner of Khasi and Jaintia Hills and even outside the two districts such as in Phullani, Mokokchung and Karbi Anglong districts of Assam.

The primary aim of the Jeng Kyrsiew is not to convert people but to make them alert about their own culture. Let me illustrate this with reference to a talk given by Mr. J. M. Mawrie at the Jeng Kyrsiew, Fynursla



"All that glitters is not gold and everybody's mother is not my mother. For the sake of glitter and beauty I will never exchange my mother with anyone else's nor cling to somebody's mother as mine. To me my mother is the most beloved one. She is the golden chain of my heart. And to me all others are like glittering chains which fade away after use."

A survey of the geographical areas where Seng Ky siew meetings have started to take place, have made it possible for me to produce the Map (No. IV).

The enclosed chart lists of Table I shows the extent of Seng Kyrsiew revivalism in 8 Community Development Blocks in Khasi Hills. I have highlighted the Seng Kyrsiew meets in five villages only falling under one or two of these Community Development Blocks. The chart but also contains information about other villages where Seng Kyrsiew revivalism meet, information such as population figures, number of households, distances, mode of transport, meeting, attendance are shown in the chart table.

Table I: Extent of Seng Kyrsiew Revivalism in 8 Community Development Blocks in Lichhalaya.

Community Development Villages	POPULATION			HOUSEHOLD			Distance in Km	Date	Meetings (approx. weekly)	
	Total	N.K.	C.H.	Total	N.K.	C.H.				Others
a Pynursla	1599	1045 65.35%	448 28.01%	301	183	86	32	50	3-3-85	3,000
Laitlyng-kot	1057	499 46.84%	562 53.16%	208	98	110	-	29	27-1-85	1,000
Langkyrdem	1422	640 45.00%	782 55.00%	272	124	148	-	47	12-3-83	1,500
Nohwet	1173	420 35.81%	753 64.19%	280	99	181	-	80	8-2-85	700
Mairang	4633	1616 34.88%	2925 63.13%	872	297	550	25	44	March 1	43,000
Mongdom	640	506 79.06%	134 20.94%	105	80	25	-	63	26-2-84	4,000
Nonthliaw	818	158 19.31%	660 80.69%	151	*	*	*	36	3-4-85	375
Madan Pynther	263	262 99.6%	-	40	39	-	1	48	Feb. 85	600
Nonp-stoin	3880	573 14.79%	3233 83.32%	894	*	*	*	96	18-4-80	5,000



1 (Contd.)

Village	Name of Villages	POPULATION				HOUSEHOLD			Distance in Kam	Date	Meeting Attendance (approximate)			
		Total	N. K.	C. H.	Others	Total	N. K.	C. H.				Others		
Mawphlang	1562	353	22.59%	1198	76.71%	11	0.70%	311	71	229	2	25	13-1-85	300
Mawnpap	1784	638	35.76%	1142	64.02%	4	0.22%	310	123	186	1	20	31-3-85	300
Morbisu	1344	897	66.74%	447	33.02%	-	-	211	149	62	-	17	March 1985	300
Yonkione	1237	966	72.25%	363	27.15%	8	0.6%	275	197	77	1	31	17-3-85	300
Mawlynpwitr	473	406	85.84%	57	12.05%	10	2.11%	159	*	*	*	76	Feb. 1985	300

Key: N.K. = Niam Khasi  
C.H. = Christian

\*Some villages and towns where Seng Kyrsiew was held but no data on Christian and non-Christian population and households mentionable on the chart as the sources are not yet ready from the office.  
And two more villages are mentioning here where Seng Kyrsiew were held at Johnson (Cherrapunjee block) on 30.1.1986. (See Photo VI where B.D. Pugh gave a speech at the meeting) and at Mawhati on 20.4.1986.  
\*\*People come on foot, travel on buses, jeeps, private cars, trucks to attend the meetings.

The first Seng Kyrsiew organised by the Seng Khasi was at Pynursla in the year 1979 and again on 3-3-85. Its distance from Shillong is 50 kilometres. The total number of population is 1,599, male 746, female 853. The total number of household 301. The total percentage of Niam Khasi population is 65.35% and Christian population is 28.01%.

The journey was started from Shillong at seven o'clock in the morning and reached the destination at 9.00 a.m. Participants attended the meeting are not only from Shillong and neighbouring areas of Shillong town but from Cherrapunjee, Laityra, Sohbar, Mawphlang, Marbisu, Mawngap and other neighbouring areas. Together there were five buses, three jeeps and four cars from Shillong. And from other places they came by bazar busses, jeeps and nearby villages came on foot. The total number of participants are round about three thousand. The meeting started at 11.00 a.m. and was over by 4.00 p.m. There were six speakers namely, Mr. Kipshon Roy, Mr. Radon Khongstir, Mr. Naham Singh, Mr. Stone Mongrum, Mr. R.T. Rymbai and Mr. H.O. Mawrie.

In this meeting the General Secretary at that time

was Mr. H.O. Mawrie.

and the other members tried to explain the objectives of the meeting and threw light on Khasi culture, values, attitudes, traditions, customs and religion. They advise the people not to allow foreign culture, attitudes and religion to destroy their own.

Mairang was the homestead of U Tirot Singh Syiem where another Seng Kyrsiew was held. It represented the true spirit of those Khasis who wanted to preserve and maintain their own customary law. But in spite of this in recent years changes have taken place. Most of the people got converted to Christianity. The total population in the village is 4633, male 2306, and female 2327 and the Christian population is 2925 (63.13%) while Khasi population is only 1616 (35.11%) and others 92 (1.99%).

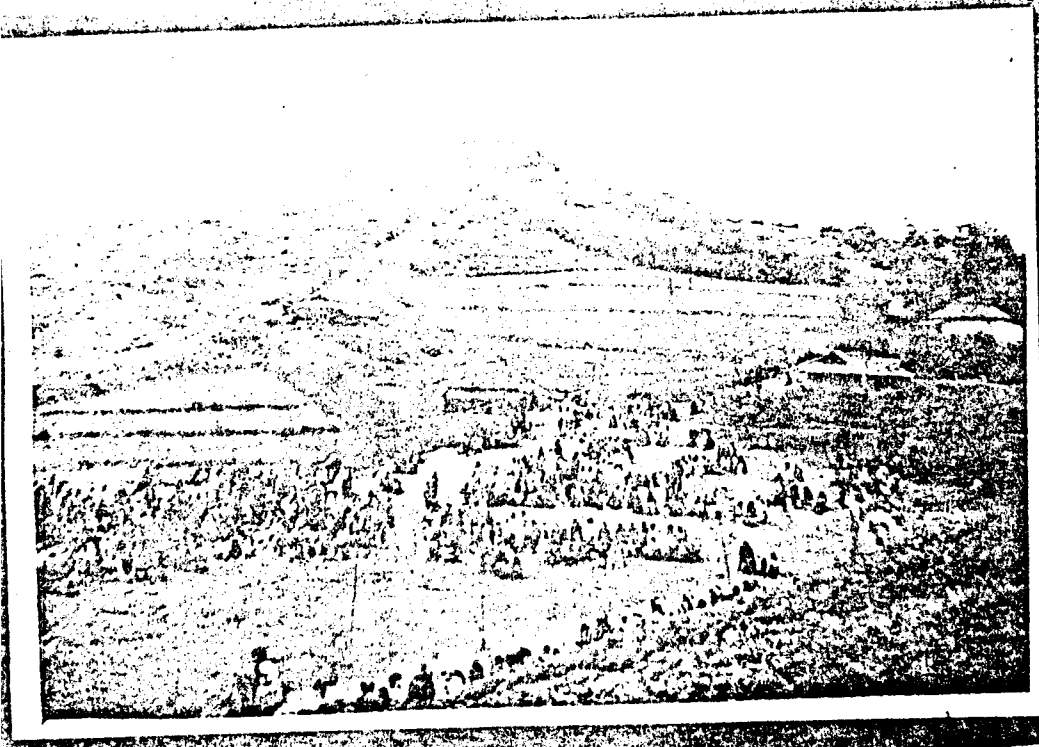
So some elderly men like Sirdar of Pyndem Umiong, Mr. Odel Lyngkhoi invited the Seng Khasi to held Seng Kyrsiew there. Seng Kyrsiew was held there in December 1983. The actual organisers of this meeting were from eleven houses only. But the meeting run successfully. People from all over Khasi and Jaintia Hills went to the meeting to inspire the villagers. There were twelve buses, five cars and four jeeps only from Shillong and Jowai.

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trucks, jeeps and some on foot. The total population was about three thousands approximately.

The meeting was not held in the Centre of the village but about two kilometres away. When the researcher asked for the reason of not holding the meeting in the village proper, the sirdar explained that the place where the meeting was held was the place where Tirot Singh Syiem and his men were in hiding and where they held meetings to fight the Britishers. He wanted to remind the Khasi youth of U Tirot Singh and his brave men so that they will with pride wish to revive once again their own religion and culture.

The next meeting was held at Nongdom. Nongdom village which is under Mairang block of West Khasi Hills district. Its total population is 640, male 345, and female 295. Out of total number of household 105, 80 are Niam Khasi household and only 25 are Christian household. It is interesting to note here and out of these 25 households, 20 houses already return back to Niam Khasi and five more households are prepared to return back (information was given in the meeting). The meeting was held in December 1988 and was presided by the sirdar. The President of the Khasi National Council, who was once



No. III  
Seng kyrsiew meets at Nongdom

members requested the Seng Khasi to give them inspiration by organising a sort of get-together among para kur - para kha, the members ones who still practice their own culture and religion and the one still follow the precept of kur and kha. So on 18 April 1983, a cultural dance was organised. It was held in Madan Tieh Jyrsieh. It was so great a success that the dance-field could not accommodate the crowd which extended upto the market place. The roads were blocked by the crowd and it was very exciting to see the police department were busy arranging the vehicles and the crowd. The observers were not only the original Khasi but the Christian too came flowing on to the field. From Shillong itself twelve buses, two cars and two jeeps. It was a market day on that particular day, so people came from far and near by bazar buses, jeeps and the nearby villagers came on foot. The total population attended the dance was about five thousands. The total number of dancers both male and female were 79. The Secretary of this organisation is Mr. Francis Nongrum.

Another village where Seng Kyrsiew was held on 20.1.1985 was Jaldong village. This village is situated in the valley of the Jaldong river from Jaldong and it falls

religions. Some active members of the village organised this meeting as they were scared that the Catholic mission under the leadership of Rev. Fr. Sngi Lyngdoh would succeed in converting the simple villagers to his own faith by misinterpreting their ancient beliefs. Father Sngi tried to convert the Khasis to Christianity by explaining that the religion he taught i.e. Catholic is not a new religion, but the same 'pure Khasi religion but in full growth'.\* He uses Niam Khasi names everywhere in his speech, in his sermon, and in his local newspaper 'Ka Sur Shipara' like 'Ya ier ka thoh', 'ka suit ka shor', instead of the word baptisma: 'ka phur ka siang' for the word burial (trep); 'ki khun u hynniew trep' (sons and daughters of the seven huts) instead of the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve; 'Sohblei' for Catholic priests; 'Iingsad' for Catholic church; 'leit bam kwai ha tynzkong U Blei' (taking betel nut in the house of God) instead of going to heaven and so on and so forth. And during the baptisma instead of blessing only with the holy water and giving sacraments he uses 'u miar' (rice powder), 'u klon: u skav' (gourd), prah (winnowing basket), which as per tradition only the one who follow the Niam Khasi can use.\*\*

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Moreover, he has introduced a name of sacredness which is used by the people to get certain returns for casting or chasing out the devils (Luid) and (Ka-bol-Luid) (when any person happens to meet with any sort of accidents or unnatural death).

This new techniques of conversion applied by Rev. Fr. Sngi makes people to think that his Catholicism\* is the same Miam Khasi but in a more simple style which will suit everybody in the modern way of life.

So, on the 20.1.85, the Chairman, Mr. Kodlin Lyngskor opened his speech by throwing on the objectives of this Seng Kyrsew held in this village. He said this is not a new religious organisation, but is only a get-together where we can meet, and introduce ourselves with one another, to know between us who is Kur and who is Kha, who are relatives and who are friends. That, one is to understand, love, adore, and embrace what is our own and not to be tempted by any foreign cultures and beliefs. But to be proud of one's own heritage.

And the Secretary of this Seng Kyrsew at Nowlong is Mr. J. Dider what is of interesting here is that he was

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once a Catholic and a very active member of the church. But now he said he realises that no religion can give salvation nor guarantee full security about his future life except man himself. At last he said 'as a Khasi I must be proud to be a Khasi once again.'

Everywhere, in towns and villages of Khasi Hills, Seng Khasi Organisation is started forming to strengthen the mother Seng at Nawkhar, Shillong. And Seng Kyrsiew is held continuously in different parts of Khasi and Jaintia Hills.

I am taken only three towns in Shillong City to study where Seng Kyrsiew has taken place those are Lumsophoh, Mawlai (total population 20,405)\* and Madanrting (total population 6165) as samples.

It was on 27 November, 1981, that Seng Khasi Organisation was started at Lumsophoh Lumparing, Shillong. And on 27 December, 1981, the Seng Khasi flag was raised at 11.00 a.m. at the house of the General Secretary at the house. The total number of households at Lumsophoh was 1000 and the original number of members was 70. The general secretary reported how they become alert

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and started to form this organisation in order to unite their own people who still follow the precept of Kur and Khu and who still adhere to their own Niam Khasi as they found that Presbyterian Christian started to work very hard to capture people as majority of them in this particular locality are those who still embrace Niam Khasi. The converted Khasi held jingiaseng ialap (get-together) at least twice a week from 6.00 p.m. to 9.00 p.m. and in their services with their preaching they criticised Niam Khasi. So the youth of Lumsophoh under the leadership of Mr. Keswell Marbaniang the Lyngdoh of Khyrim Syiemship form this organisation to try their level best to defend and rebound back the attack of Christians about their belief and culture.

So on 8th January 1984, Seng Kyrswew was held at Lumsophoh. After the general report given by the general secretary other speakers are Mr. Keswell Marbaniang, Mr. Konstant Roy, Mr. Lakhon Shullai, the President of Sein Raj - Shillong and Mr. H.O. Mawrie.

Mr. Keswell Marbaniang expressed how the proselytisers scoff and scorn against Khasi belief and practices. And how these people were breaking the taboos and destroying the belief of the Khasi by cutting trees from the

The next speaker is Mr. Konstant Roy the present general secretary (1986). He started his speech by saying that:

"We the Khasis were and still are the slaves of the English people. The missionaries were our teachers and only those who were converted had the privilege of schooling at that time. He said even Dr. Romiwell Lyngdoh for getting a seat for his studies had to get converted to Christianity. The motive of these foreigners were to root out our culture, religion, belief so to say our way of life. 65 years their influenced in Mizoram was enough to root out their belief and religion of their tribe. But 84 years before our great men had seen the danger that we are going to meet the same like our neighbouring tribes the Mizos and the Nagas."

Mr. Lakhon Shullai in his speech attempted a philosophical analysis of Khasi and Christian religions. Then he further explained about the Christian belief of original sin (ka pop tynrai) that we the foolish converted Khasi believed on that which was not concerned with us but that goes with the Jew's belief. To a Khasi innocent children are not sinners. He said even our great great ancestors are good people ('riewhloi).

He concludes his speech that "we Niam Khasi never talk much about sin (ka pop) and the sinners (nonmat) like the Christian preachers do, but we always talk about righteousness and how to earn this righteousness and to adore

In the previous chapter, I have explained about Seng Khasi Organisation and the work done by it. But there is another revivalist group which is known as "Ka Seng Ki Nongshat-Nongkhein." The flag of this Seng is flown high while Mr. Hipshon Roy Kharshiing, the secretary of Seng Khasi at that time inaugurated this Seng (organisation on the 3-4-83 at Madanrynting, Shillong. And it was on the 28th October, 1983. Mr. En Nongrum, the Secretary of the Seng is given Ka Suit-Ka Shor\*\* by the name of U Hynniew Trep-Hynniew Skum. The symbol (nishan) of this Seng is the Khasi axe. The emblem of the flag is with lightgreen background and the colour of a silver axe is in the middle of the flag. This Seng stress on rites and rituals. It is through rites and rituals that a group of persons flock together and share their belonging and represent the whole culture of the society in miniature. What is religious ritual to Durkheim is an expression on the unity of society and that its function is to 're-create' the society or the social order by reaffirming and strengthening the sentiments on which the social solidarity and therefore the social order itself depend. So this Seng stresses that if one wants to revive one's belief and culture one is to

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\*The Organisation of the Seng is of the type of ...  
 \*\*A kind of ...  
 + See Photo ...





examples of the present cases can be cited here who return back to Niam Khasi and be the active member of Seng Khasi are Mr. H.O. Mavrie (see photo No.VI), who was previously a pastor, Mr. B.D. Pugh, a pastor (see photo No.VII), Mr. D. Shangpliang pro-pastor, Mr. Atiar Singh Syiem a clergy, Mr. P.J. Lyngdoh who was once the Secretary of Church of God, Mr. J. Dkhar one of the prominent members of Catholic mission and many others. In 1983, under the leadership of B. Blah seven families declared themselves in Seng Khasi that they had reverted back to Niam Khasi.

When I interviewed some of the members of Ka Seng ki Nongshat (the diviners) I discover that the majority of interested participants were Christian Khasi. For those who practice the Niam Khasi have their own uncles and male members at home who take care for their own family clans. But for these Kylla Niam (converted Christian) there is no one who knows the rituals. When they are in distress, accidents or meet with unnatural death, their pastors, clergies and priests are helpless and they in secret run for help to the diviners. Mr. En Hnongrum, one of the prominent diviners tells that the names of those converted Christians who are in for their rituals are recorded to return back to Niam Khasi. The diviners are very willing to accept the converted Christians who are in for their rituals.

a fresh list of names which he has collected to be published in the next issue.

Recently on the 20th April, 1986, this organisation held Seng Kyrsiew at Mawhati in the Bhoi area of North Khasi Hills. And under the leadership of Mr. En Nongrum the general secretary of this Seng, many of the converted Christians from this village came and confessed in the public meeting that they were no more Christians, that they will be proud to be called Khasi and will follow once again their own Niam Khasi. \* Their names and photos are taken by the Secretary of this Seng to be published in his next issue.

As Seng Khasi Organisation has published books, pamphlets, journals in Khasi religion, culture and heritage so Ka Seng Ki Nongshat Nongkhein Jon U Hynniew Trep-Hynniew Skum too started to publish pamphlets in Khasi like 'Ka Seng Ki Nongshat Nongkhein Ri Khasi Puar 1983', 'Ka Inlang Sahlang 1984' etc. etc.

Senkhihlang is another revivalist organisation which is known as United Endeavour Society. This Seng has joined hands with the Indian Tribal Cultural Forum. The Indian

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\*See Niam Khasi: Appendix 1.

Tribal Cultural Forum, hereinafter referred to as the "forum", is purely a socio-religio-cultural voluntary welfare organisation, for the advancement of the tribals and their traditional belief, social organisation, education, and any other object of general public utility.

The Aims and Objectives of the "Forum"<sup>20</sup>

- i) to set up a Forum for the Tribals of the North Eastern Region for the furtherance of the cause of the traditional indigenous culture and beliefs of the tribal communities of that region in particular and of the rest of the India in general, through seminars discussions, literature, education and any other project of public utility.
- ii) to assist the existing traditional institutions or any other institution set up by the people of the region in the region, for the furtherance of the Aims and Objectives of the Forum and to assist any person or group of persons in the establishment of such socio-religio-cultural institution or institutions where such organisation have not yet been founded.
- iii) to improve the channels of communication of the people in the different States and Union Territories of the North Eastern region amongst themselves and with the

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20. Constitution of the National Commission of Cultural Tribes

- rest of the tribe, to discuss and publication of books and journals and such other media.
- iv) to undertake research works or encourage research works amongst the members of the tribal community, in particular to those who still cherish the beauty and sanctity of their tradition culture and beliefs, and to others in general.
  - v) to open literary centre and library at the place where the registered office of the Forum is located for the purpose of publicity and research; and to assist other organisation or organisations recognised by the Managing Committee of the Forum as socio-religio-cultural organisation in the establishment of such new projects or strengthening existing projects.
  - vi) to send observers or participants/delegates to national and if possible to international seminars, conferences or training programmes.
  - vii) to publish books, periodicals and other literature to enable the public to understand the Aims and Objectives of the Forum and know the tribal people of the region.
  - viii) to assist and co-operate with such organisations having such or similar Aims and Objectives and individual authors/ artists/ scholars for the publication

- ix) to establish or assist in the establishment of schools, and colleges, hostels and other institutions for the welfare of the community and for the advancement of their arts and culture.
- x) to receive grants, fees, subscription, donations and gifts from individuals, organisations government and semi-government bodies.
- xi) to create funds as scholarship for the needy students of the community to pursue their studies or research works.
- xii) to acquire, receive, hold both movable and immovable properties as required by the Forum, for the furtherance of its Objectives.\*

The Members of the First Ad-hoc Managing Committee of Indian Tribal Cultural Forum 1973, Mr. Hipshon Roy as President.

\*Members of the First Ad-hoc Managing Committee of Indian Tribal Cultural Forum 1970.

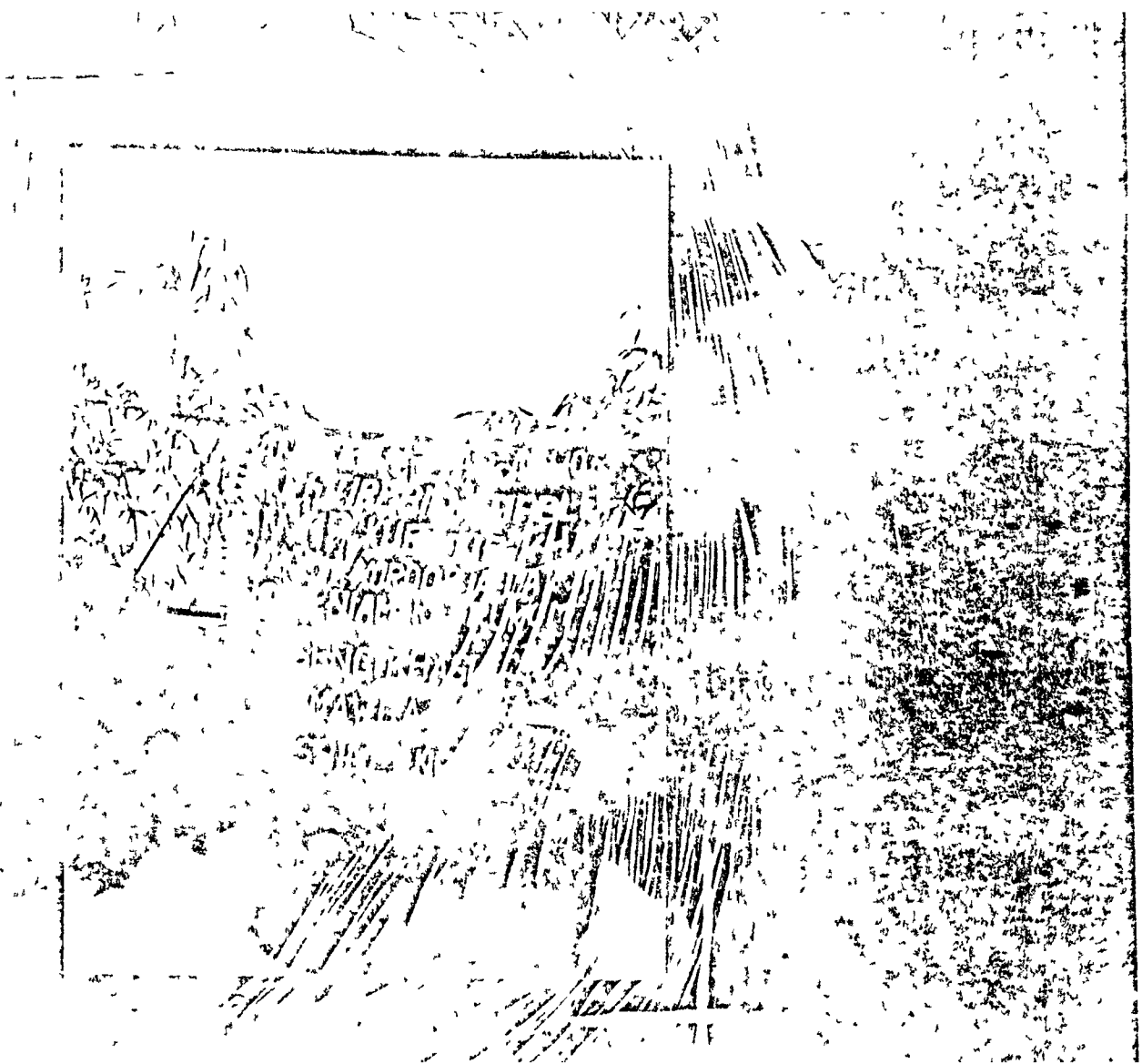
Name	Designation	Age	Occupation	Address
U Hipshon Roy	President	65	Retired IFAS	Shillong
Prof K.Meijiang	Secretary	41	Teaching	Imphal
Sri Lakshon Shillai	Member	72	Business	Shillong
Sri Krishna K	Member	49	Social Worker	Gauhati

Besides these organisations, another Seng has come up in 1984 which is known as Seng Kyrsiewlang organised by the youth under the leadership of Mr. Khlur Singh the secretary and other active members are Mr. Robin Kurbah, Mr. Donsap Khongtim, Dipshon Nongbri, Pyndaplang Khongwir and others. These youths every Sunday evening get together and visit different parts of Shillong to discuss about the ways and means to preserve their culture and tradition and to warn them against proselytisation. I have also collected some photographs of the various Seng Kyrsiew meeting meets which I have attached.

No. VIII

Deng Kirsland meets at Mawla

15<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 1983



CHAPTER - V

REGIONALISM AND REVIVALISM

## REGIONALISM AND REVIVALISM

Regionalism has become an issue today and a problem in our country. It is an issue that cannot be ignored and a problem that requires a definite solution. The term 'Regionalism' has very wide scope and may be referred to as the set of sentiments which people have towards their region, their community or their tribe to which they belong. It implies the awareness, on the part of a particular group, of its distinctiveness in respect of race, language or culture. It also implies the concern of the group to jealously protect and preserve its identity. All this is embedded in human nature itself so that we may say that Regionalism is as old as human history. Further, it is an aspect of man's political existence noticeable in any part of the world. It exists wherever divisions exist.

A region has location; it has its areas; and it has its limit. It is conceptually a short hand way of describing the variable characters of an area dissected deliberately from the extensive land mass. Thus, the broadest possible definition of the region given by Bell (1971:5)<sup>1</sup> "as an area of readily identifiable location which is distinct from the rest of the world."

distinctive from other areas and which extends as far as that distinction extends". A region is identified as such on the basis of some chosen criteria, such a regionalization should have utility as well as validity. Among the significant factors on which a region is identified mentioned may be made of physiography, ethnicity, social, political and economic systems, language, religion, degree of mobility, urbanization, cultural-historical evolution and many more. International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences define <sup>2</sup>"A region is a homogeneous area with physical and cultural characteristic distinct from those of neighbouring areas. As part of a national domain a region is sufficiently unified to have a consciousness of its customs and ideals and thus possess a sense of identity distinct from the rest of the country. The term "regionalism" properly represents the regional idea in action as ideology, as a social movement, or as the theoretical basis for regional planning, it is also applied to the scientific task of delimiting and analysing regions as entities lacking formal boundaries Paul Vidal de-la Blache (1903) stated <sup>3</sup>"A region is a reservoir of energy whose origin lies in nature but whose development depend upon man".

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2. David L. S. Editor - International Encyclopedia of Social Science. Vol. 13 & 14. The Macmillan Company and the Free Press, New York 1972, pp. 377-78.

3. ibid...

The experts divide the world as per their speciality and the demands made on them. Thus, we have climatic regions, resource regions, cultural, religions and linguistic region as well as geo-political regions. Accordingly, a number of approaches may be identified for studying the region.

Like in other parts of India, one here cries of rising regional forces in North East India. There are forces who have suddenly felt the need to stress their distinctiveness from other Indians, not precisely because they see the glory of their own past history and tradition, but because they feel that once they stress their regional identity on a collective basis, the profits they will get for themselves, if they are leaders of groups, and their followers will be noteworthy.

This rising regionalism in Meghalaya needs to be understood by me as it is often confused with Khasi revivalism which is the topic of my dissertation. However, before I show the difference, I would like to give a brief historical account of the rise of regional forces in Meghalaya.

According to political scientists in India during the Pre-British period though States were based on ethnic

identity, there was no tribal consciousness as such. In those days many of the groups were not limited by any common political organisation. But during the British period ethnic identity grew up among many of major tribal communities of North East India. There were violent uprising by some ethnic groups for their freedom from British rule which may be called ethnic struggles for freedom. However, it is very important to note here that these ethnic movements cannot be taken as indicators of ethnic solidarity brought about by British tribal policy. Even during the process of British occupation of the areas of North East India resistance was offered by different ethnic groups such as in 1835 by the Akas and the Daflas; in 1839 by the Khamtis; Angamis between 1836 and 1851; in 1832 by the Lalungs. The Mizos in 1888 (Chakravarty 1964); the Garos in 1872 (Kar 1973: 40). In 1927, when David Scott started to construct a road from the plains to the interior areas of the Khasi Hills, the Khasis severely opposed the British under the leadership of U Tirot Sing, Syiem of Nongkhlaw.

In the context of regionalism and communalism that appears to grip India today, some of the culture heroes of the Khasi like U Tirot Sing Syiem who fought against the English because he did not want the British to rule his people

to be under the supremacy of the English. He wanted freedom and full democracy in his Kingdom. He disliked foreign interference and he was a man of word. Hamlet Bareh in his review about the life and career of U Tirot Sing wrote, "Tirot Sing accomplished things because he counted himself first to be the real Khasi and his own position as the powerful Nongkhlaw King was a secondary thing."<sup>4</sup> So from this point of view Tirot Sing was not only a regional figure but a national symbol.

Immediately after the British rule or just before it, the manifestation of ethnic identity took political colour and some new organisation emerged with political aims. And after independence political movements by ethnic groups continued and are still continuing. In the cultural sphere there has been assertions of identity by emphasizing differences with great tradition of India and in the political sphere demand for separate administrative units.

- Regionalism is a political reality in North-East India today:

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4. Souvenir Celebration of 150th Death Anniversary of U Tirot Sing sponsored by The Khasi Cultural Society, Meghalaya, Shillong, 1984, p. 16.

"Regionalism in this part of the country has also different shades and of diverse backgrounds depending on what the groups based on politico-ethnic, community, linguistic, cultural aspirations etc. wanted to achieve in the end. The means to achieve the ends also differ to a great extent from one group to another and from one state to another. This makes regionalism as a movement in North-East India more complex and diversified. One side of the picture represents ethnic and tribal groups with an extremist approach in order to achieve their goals, while on the other side, there were those moderates who have chosen the constitutional path. Meghalaya is a clear example of the latter approach. This sort of approach undertaken by the people of Meghalaya in general and the leaders of regional political parties in particular, is not, as a matter of fact new to them and without a base structure but was rather deeply inherent in the traditional political system of the people since time immemorial."<sup>5</sup>

In the Khasi-Jaintia Hills, political regionalism as a demand for regional autonomy in the form of the creation of a separate Hill State started even before India's Independence. Thus, during that period 'Khasi' members of the Assam Provincial Legislature as well as political leaders made proposal and formulated some schemes to establish a National Autonomous Government with the hope that a provision to that effect might be made in the future constitution of India. Some negotiations were on this occasion

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5. L. S. Cassah. National Seminar on Regionalism with special reference to North-East India. (2-5 September, 1985).

carried on with the leaders of the Hill tribes in Assam as well as other tribals in the plains to fight for a separate Tribal Hill State under the constitution but this proposal was not implemented. In 1945-46, leaders of the Khasi Native States met and resolved to create a Khasi State Federation whose main task was to regulate the administrative affairs of the Khasi States in relation to the Dominion Government of India... The federation had then been functioning in the light of the powers interpreted in the Instrument of Accession and Annexed Agreement entered into by the Khasi Hills and the Dominion. The party supporting the federation was called the Khasi State People's Union.<sup>6</sup>

During the same year 1946, a Khasi-Jaintia Political Association was set up at Shillong. In its memorial in March 1946, to the Secretary of State for India and the Cabinet Mission, through the Secretary to His Excellency the Governor of Assam and the Deputy Commissioner of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, demanded for a federation of the Khasi areas within a 'Sovereign Assam', with adequate 'Cultural and Political Autonomy'.<sup>7</sup> MacDonald Kharkongor, an elite leader of Khasi Hills and a leading congressman

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6. H. Barih, The History and Culture of the Khasi People, 1967, pp. 23-24.

7. See S. K. Choudhury, 1947 Politics in North-East India, Orient Longman, Calcutta, 1973, pp. 67-68.

at that time, after he failed to get a congress ticket in order to contest for the Assam Provincial Legislature Assembly's election because of back door manoeuvre, left the Congress and founded a new political party -- the Hills Union. This party also demanded for the creation of a separate Hill State outside of Assam. On the same line Rev. J.J. M. Nichols Roy, a minister in the Government of Assam, submitted a memorandum opposing the idea of a crown colony as well as of total integration of Khasi-Jaintia Hills with Assam. He stressed the need for preserving Khasi customs and traditions and proposed a Khasi-Jaintia Federated State.<sup>8</sup>

The attempt to declare Assamese as the State language of Assam in 1952 further strengthened the movement for a separate Hill State. The leadership of the movement was taken over by the East India Tribal Union (EITU). Captain W.A. Sangma called for a meeting of the leaders of the tribal areas to discuss matters of common interest at Tura in December 1952. The meeting resolved to form the Assam Hill Tribal Union, but in October 1953, it changed its name to EITU. The main programme of the EITU was the formation of the Hill State for all the tribal areas of Assam.<sup>9</sup> The

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8. *Ibid.*, p.68.

9. V.V.Rao, B.Pahem & N.Hazarika. *A Century and Politics in North-East India (1871-1981)* Vol. II, S.Chand & Co., New Delhi, 1981, pp. 100-101.

movement for a separate Hill State under the banner of the EITU gained momentum and got the support of the people as was clearly demonstrated in the polls of 1957. On the insistence of Nehru three of the prominent leaders of EITU joined the Chaliha Ministry. But in protest against the language issue in 1960, the ministers from this party resigned and the party also soon disappeared.

The reaction to the decision of the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee to declare Assamese as the State language of Assam on 22 April, 1960, led to the creation of the All Party Hill Leaders Conference (APHLC). With the emergence of the APHLC in 1960, the struggle for a separate Hill State assumed a new dimension. The political goal, however, remained the same, that is, achievement of a full state on the principle of full regional autonomy. But the demand for a "separate state" declared the party, is simply meant the demand for "Autonomy" for the Hills people. The APHLC also manifested itself as an integrating force by demanding separate state within the framework of the Indian Federal Structure.<sup>10</sup>

The demand for a separate Hill State took quite a long time and lead to the creation of a separate schedule

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10. D.D. Puch, APHLC: Before and After Defection, Jiribong, 1977, pp. 1-2.

in the Constitution of India, the Sixth Schedule, which led to the establishment of District Councils in 1952.

It is to be noted that Meghalaya was first created only as an autonomous State on April 2, 1970. An Autonomous State is constitutionally not a full-fledged one, but a state within the state of Assam. Though the Assam Re-organisation (Meghalaya) Act, 1969, provided for setting up of a separate Legislative Assembly and a Council of Ministers, the constitution of the same judicial powers hitherto exercised by the Village Courts, the District Councils and the Deputy Commissioner, yet certain subjects were concurrent with Assam and few other imported subjects could not be exercised by the Autonomous State in its full power. In the Legislative Assembly of not less than 35 and not more than 55 members, the Governor of Assam had been empowered to nominate not more than 3 persons to represent minority interests. There are other provisions included in the Act by which the Autonomous State has no power to exercise or share the same with the State of Assam.

The Act had not therefore met with the full aspirations of the people as the Assam Government has been placed in a position to exert higher power for which none could

question over the subjects assigned to it. The Assam Government too had full jurisdiction over a number of important subjects.<sup>11</sup>

The acceptance and non-acceptance of the Autonomous State by the regional political parties in Meghalaya has put to test the real attitude behind the policies and approaches of the parties. The APHLC which spearheaded the Hill State Movement decided to accept the offer of the Central Government of such a State. To the APHLC 'the demand for a "Separate State" simply meet the demand for "Autonomy" for the Hills People'.<sup>12</sup> The acceptance of the Autonomous State by the party has brought an unhappy and tensed political atmosphere. Moreover, such a decision taken by the APHLC has evoked a mixed response among the other leaders in the party itself and some of them expressed their reservation in the creation of an Autonomous State. Thus, the move radical/militant and basically more regional-minded leaders came out of the party under the leadership of Mr. Hoping Stone Lyngdoh, who became later the founder president of the party, to form a new political party - the Hill State People's Democratic Party (HSPDP) in 1968.

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11. E. Barah, Meghalaya, Shillong, 1974, pp. 175-176.  
12. D.C. Buh, CHAIRS, p. 1.

Subsequently, many changes took place during the period from 1968 to 1970. With the creation of the HSPDP as a new regional political party in the State, regionalism as a movement in Meghalaya, became more lively. The APHLC now had to face a stiff challenge from another regional party, a situation of which was absent prior to 1968. Moreover, it may be observed that while the late Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, inaugurated the newly created Autonomous State of Meghalaya at Garrison Ground, Shillong, the streets of Shillong were filled with the supporters of the HSPDP carrying black flags as a mark of protest and to express their displeasure, dissatisfaction and rejection of the Autonomous State and also to press their demand for an immediate fulfilment of the long drawn demand of the people for the full-fledged State. They were not going to accept anything less than a full-fledged State.

The APHLC's decision of acceptance of the Autonomous State of Meghalaya may be to seize the immediate opportunity available before it or as conveniently state it was done 'on a trial basis', but this would not help the people in the long run to safeguard or protect their identity, culture, language and tradition. Analysing the situation critically, it was imperatively clear that it was some kind of a hasty decision or as one of the HSPDP prominent leaders wrote:

"When the autonomous State of Meghalaya was created for the hill people, the APHLC saw it as a chance to get away from the domination of All Assam Congress and thereby, accepted it and even cooperated with the Indian National Congress. The APHLC regarded the creation of the autonomous State as an achievement. Hence, they were not so much allergic to the National political party just then".<sup>13</sup>

The APHLC claimed itself 'a regional party with a national outlook'.<sup>14</sup> Perhaps this 'national outlook' of the party prompted it for the time being to leave aside its 'regional outlook' for the sake of political convenience and to share the Gaddi with the National political party. It may also be deduced that 'if APHLC is a regional party with national outlook, then certainly the dominant national party in Meghalaya is the branch of a national party with a definite outlook'.<sup>15</sup>

The symptoms of this sort of 'adjustment' were not far to seek because they raised their heads soon after the full-fledged state of Meghalaya was created in 1972. Thus while both the APHLC and the HSPDP pondered about the relevancy of political regionalism, majority of the APHLC

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13. B.Pakem, Indian Nationalism and the Regional Political Parties of Meghalaya, Seminar on 'National and Regionalism in North-East India', Dibrugarh University, November 20-30, 1982.
  14. B.Dutta (ed.) Electoral Politics in Meghalaya, North-East India Council for Social Science Research (NEICSSR, Shillong) 1978, p.20.
  15. P.S.Dutta, Assembly Elections in Meghalaya 1978 and 1983 (In search of a Trend), Seminar Paper on 'Electoral Politics in North-East India' 14-15 Dec. 1983, Shillong.

went ahead to absorb non-tribal elements within the party with its English section in Shillong town where non-tribals were accommodated, while only its small section continued to project its tribal identity at least towards the tribal electorate. True the non-tribal elements will in no way make the APHLC a national political party but a regional political party with a national outlook.<sup>16</sup> The process was complete in 1976 when a major faction of the former joined the latter.

The HSPDP leadership maintains that such stance taken by the APHLC, has lost its relevance and failed to represent the tribal people of the State and their interest. It is said that the APHLC started co-operation with the Congress immediately after the formation of the Autonomous State which was opposed by the HSPDP.<sup>17</sup>

"To the HSPDP, Congress whether at the central or state level, is a national political party and therefore, preferred to have their own separate State where they would like to run it in their own way without any interference from the national political party or parties. There is no such 'national outlook' in the HSPDP as differentiated from the 'regional outlook'. As

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16. B. Pakem, op.cit.

17. Soumen Sen, Regionalism in North-East and the Regional Parties in Meghalaya, Seminar Paper on 'State Autonomy, Regionalism and National Building', Gandhian Institute of Studies, July 22-24, 1964, Shillong.

Indian citizens, the members of the HSPDP are always raising the slogan of the preservation and protection of their tribal identity, culture, language and traditions. One may achieve the political goal of a full-fledged State but the regional aspirations for tribal identity, culture, language and traditions persist. In such a situation, the relevancy of a regional political party continues."<sup>18</sup>

Since 1976 many Governments were formed in Meghalaya by different political parties. On many occasions a single party could not form a government due to the lack of majority. This gave way to different political parties forming coalition governments. These coalition Governments were seen to have been formed either by the regional parties in the State on one or two of these parties joined hands with the Congress (I). This trend gives one an impression that whether in the regional party or in the Congress it is a competition for sharing power among the sections of the new elite that had emerged through the politics of regionalism. And all the regional parties have shown much eagerness to share power with the Congress. Probably this is convenient because it is the party in power at the Centre.<sup>19</sup>

Though the two main regional parties in Meghalaya the APHLC and the HSPDP — have strained their relations

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18. B. Pakem, op.cit.

19. Soumen Sen, op.cit.

for the last few years, yet because of the onslaught and political hegemony of the Congress (I) in the recent years, the old ties between the two parties began to show signs of understanding and make good their relations once again. Recent political development in the State saw these two parties uniting together to fight against a common foe. Thus during the last parliamentary elections to the Lok Sabha held on the 28th December, 1984, a new political party was formed by the Union of the APHLC and the HSPDP. The outcome of the Union was the formation of the Hill People Union (HPU).<sup>20</sup>

The HPU declared that it is 'deeply concerned with the fact that under the regime of the Congress (I) ruling party, the style of functioning in recent years has been to concentrate real authority and power at the Centre...' Reacting to this, the HPU 'pledge to serve the people of the State in protecting their rights and also to safeguard their interests. Its aims and objects are:

- (a) to safeguard and preserve the identity of the tribal people and to protect their interests, especially in respect of land, their democratic institutions, language, customs and culture;

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20. L.S. Gassah. Regionalism and the HSPDP in Meghalaya: Some basic Issues. UCC- EHU Sponsored National Seminar on 2-5 September, 1987.

(b) to promote the economy of the tribal people in particular and the State in general.<sup>21</sup>

Under the banner of the HPU, they set up candidates to both the parliamentary constituencies of Shillong and Tura. But as ill luck would have it, both the HPU candidates were defeated. With the defeat of its candidates the union between the APHLC and the HSPDP showed slight sign of reservation to the whole idea of forming a common platform and the situation is still very fluid.

It is interesting to note that in terms of Social composition and the interests articulated, there is no major difference between the congress party in the State and the regional parties. The only difference between them is that the congress party has other units in the rest of India whereas the regional parties do not. And the leadership of the Congress Party in the State seeks to have endorsement for their regional policies from the central organ of the party, while the regional parties can decide its policy independently of any endorsement from a national central committee. From the policies and programmes of the regional parties and the congress party, it is difficult

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21. Hill People Union, United APHLC-HSPDP Election Manifesto, 1984.

to say where regionalism ends and national perspective begins. It is no accident therefore that the ruling party in the State has been the Congress for long and the membership of the regional party and congress party has been interchangeable with respect to the emerging middle class in the State. It may be noted that they are not founded on any clear cut political ideology which is relevant to the country as a whole or even to the North-East as a regional unit.

"The regional parties in Meghalaya may be characterised as purely state parties like the AIADMK or the Telegu Desam. So these regional political parties are the political front for the protection and consolidation of the interests of the emergent middle class and of their patrons".<sup>22</sup>

The introduction of modern education by the Christian missionaries, produced the new class of educated and westernised group. Among the Khasis modern education and western values, important as they might be, do not fully explain the social and political developments in the state during the latter part of the 19th and 20th centuries. The western ideas of this group were conditioned in two ways -

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22. M. Bhaskaran Nair. The Emerging Middle Class, Regional Parties and Regionalism in Meghalaya. A national seminar 2-7 Dec 1985, 1985.

by the thought patterns which they had inherited and by the social circumstances in which they lived. In other words, they experienced a crisis of identity similar to the one that was experienced by the educated intelligentsia in the rest of the country particularly from Rammohan Roy to Jawaharlal Nehru. In his autobiography, J. Nehru characterised himself in the following words:

"I have become a queer mixture of the East and the West, out of place everywhere, at home nowhere. Perhaps my thoughts and approach to life are more akin to what is called Western than Eastern, but India clings to me as she does to all her children, in innumerable ways... I cannot get rid of that past inheritance or my recent acquisitions... I am a stranger and an alien in the West. I cannot be of it. But in my own country also sometimes, I have an exile's feeling".<sup>23</sup>

The same dilemma was being experienced by the educated elite in the Khasi society.

Added to this a peculiarity of the Khasi elite was that most of them had been converted to a religion brought to them by Western agencies. Having once embraced Christianity and having rejected the Niam Khasi, the religion of their forefathers the only thing that they could stress

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23. Jawaharlal Nehru, An Autobiography, 1947, p.596.

about themselves was their regional identity. Hence most of them only talked (some still do) about their ethnic, linguistic and cultural differences from other 'outsider' Indians. Of course culture for them had become a loose word, minus religion and other particularly Khasi ways of life.

Nevertheless I must say in fairness that the educated elites still had some sense of pride in the traditional political and social culture to enable them to overcome this crisis of identity and particularly to devise ways and means to control the effects of Western ideas. In other words, although the educated elite was exposed to western values, they were not able to transcend their cultural moorings. Thus, they began to assert the tribal identity by emphasising the uniqueness of their traditional culture and values. The efforts found their organised expression like the Khasi-Jaintia National Guild in 1818, the Khasi-National Durbar in 1923, the Khasi-Jaintia Political Association in 1945, the East Indian Tribal Union, the Garo National Conference and the subsequently political organisations and parties. A perusal of the aims and objectives of these organisations corroborates the above mentioned contention. For instance, the aims of the Khasi

National Durbar (1923) was to safeguard the interests of the Khasis, protect and preserve their well-established customs and conventions and finally improve the economic conditions of the Khasis.<sup>24</sup>

The question of safeguarding their regional identity was partially solved. The motivations as social scientists point out are political or economical. Once enough concessions in both directions were made the regional forces would abate. Still in spite of this we hear talk of reviving Khasi culture. More importantly it is the Khasi youth who feel the need for revival. But here again there is difference of opinion. With such a big proportion of Christians what of the past is to be revived? The following pages consist of a brief statement of this problem and a discussion with Khasi youth in this connection.

In the olden days Khasi society was well organised. All people followed the same system of social and moral codes. The young educated Christians look to their own culture with a lack of pride, sometimes with almost a sense of dislike and yet they do not find themselves comfortable in the changing Indian scene. They think that those who are still practising their religion i.e. Niam Khasi are an inferior lot.

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24. V.V. Rao & B. Pakem. Government and Politics in North-East India (Mishalaya), p. 188.

But today, Christian and non-Christian youths are both having the opportunity of education. The pure Khasi youths now realised the mistakes of their own people. They are taking full advantage of modern education, at the same time, they are anxious to revive their cultural tradition. They dislike anyone who looks down on Khasi culture. Instead they feel pity for those who imitate and follow foreign culture and belief. And it is in this approach of mutual superiority of one group over the other within the same community that is one of the root causes of discomfort among the Khasi people today. However, my understanding of the present situation clearly shows that most of the educated Khasi youths are very conscious of their own identity. The best available means to this end has been to identify themselves through culture. The Khasi Students' Association together with the help of the Institute of Art and Culture, Government of Meghalaya, organised a 'cultural blow up' held at St. Anthony's College, Shillong, on 2,3,4 September, 1982. Dr. B. Pakem, Education Minister, inaugurated the function.\* The youths of all colleges work hard to join hands in order to revive their own culture and traditions. They organised debates, seminar, discussion on

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\*See Appendix C.

different topics regarding culture, heritage, customs, traditions, festivals, old values etc.etc. Students, teachers as well as some elderly persons took part in the discussion.(See photos Nos.XI and XII). The very word itself 'Khasi Cultural Blow-Up!' signifies the enthusiasm of the youths to revive the old values of culture and their mode of life. Regarding this talk of reviving their old culture, I can safely divide the different Khasi youths in three different categories: Group (A) stresses the importance of Khasi religion. In an interview they stressed that the solidarity and identity of any group of human beings lies in the identification of their culture and religion. (See photos Nos.XIII and XIV). If a man throws away his own religion and clings to other alien religion he will make light of everything of his own and slowly he will forget and lose his originality. Mr. Nongbri a commerce student of Shillong College says that true revivalism without religion is not really revivalism. He pointed out why Khasi society these days is in faction. The emergence of different Christian denominations have led to a situation where the same Khasis are throwing mud on another Khasis, their beliefs and customs. He said religion is the main cause that will split the unity of the Khasi. Unless and until we revive or go back to our own religion there will be no sense of belongingness in the



Photo No. XI  
Office Bearers K.S.U.





Student  
Leaders  
Group 'A'

20. XIII



community and slowly the strings that bind us as a whole will be broken and gradually will disappear. So if we can stick to our own religion, automatically we can preserve and be proud of our own culture, traditions and heritage. In this way, religion has always played a vital role in identifying members of any particular group.

Mr. Khongwir too, a B.A. student of Synod College pointed out the crisis that we are facing today is the identification crisis. He said today if we wanted to identify ourselves as a Khasi, it is very easy, we can get one scheduled tribe certificate. Certificate nowadays can be bought and sold and many titles are coming up such as Das-Laloo, Tamang-Lyndem, Dkhar-Phukon, Sen-Shadap, Dey-Sawian, Pariat-Ghafoor and so on and so forth.

He said that most of the Khasi today are not interested in culture or anything but they are interested in their individual benefits such as getting scholarship, seats for education, eligibility to purchase land, to run business, free from income tax etc. He stressed that the main reason of this is that we feel more westernised, modernised and well educated. We have lost interest in what was our own such as rituals, religion, habits, customs, dress and also language. So if we want to revive, we must revive first

our religion. If a man loves his religion, sticks to his faith, it will be difficult to take away his belief, his culture, his originality and his identification.

The Group (B) takes the idea of revivalism is only limited to culture, traditions and festivals but without Khasi religion. To them the Khasi identity is more important. And to show their identification, they believe that every Khasi should participate in cultural functions, dance festivals, speak their own language, dress like a Khasi and follow the custom and the precept of Kur and Kha. As for example, Mr. Ramsiej, an M. Phil. student of NEHU, Department of Philosophy, states that though he is a converted Khasi but still he identifies himself as a Khasi as he still follows the precept of Kur and Kha, and talks in Khasi language. He felt that embracing of a foreign religion has nothing to do with Khasi custom and tradition. He is proud to be a Christian Khasi than to be a Khasi-Khasi (non-Christian) but without knowing nor performing Khasi rites and rituals.

Another youth, Mr. Lyngdoh said that though we belong to many Christian denominations but being Catholic or Presbyterian has to do nothing with our Khasi culture, community or religion. To call us for example, there were

no more original religion in Mizoram and Nagaland, but still these tribes can identify themselves everywhere they go from their folk songs and dance, dress, language and the way of living. So, it will do no harm to his being a Khasi, whether he is a Christian, a muslim, a hindu or a pure Khasi if he feels proud of his own culture, participates in dance festivals such as 'Shad Suk Mynsiem'\*. We should have the feeling that not only the Khasi-Khasi should participate in the dance but all Khasi - Khyntiam, Pnar, Bhoi, War of different religious beliefs should start participate with full spirit.

Group (C) acknowledged that the identity crisis is due to the negligence of our own religion, as religion goes hand in hand with culture. But they themselves are born Christians and cannot go back to Khasi religion as it will now be more complicated to them (to follow either). AS for example, Mr. C. Lyngdoh, confessed that he was proud of his own culture, tradition and religion but as he was a born Christian, he is brought up in such an environment that he is an alien to his own religion. Though he feels 100% a Khasi but still sometimes a feeling of something lacking confronts him.

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\*is a Khasi cultural dance participates once in a year.

Another youngman (20 years) Mr. Dohtdong is a converted Christian along with his mother when he was a boy. He said that he feels pride in his own culture and heritage. He and his mother left their own religion and embraced Christianity as they were left when he was a child without uncles or elderly male or female members (sah khynnah) in their family to guide them in ritual function. Accordingly, being aware of his identity as a Khasi he would revive Khasi custom without religion.

Group (A) sees the necessity of common religion for the unity of the Khasi. Group C also realised the importance of religion in constituting the identity of the race but they felt helpless in changing once again their faith from Christianity to Niam Khasi. Group B would like to give importance to religious functions and festivals but only as cultural activities.

My thesis considers the concept of 'revivalism' in connection with the Khasi as 'the tendency or desire to revive former ways, customs, institutions etc' (see Chapter I). Revivalism is the only expression of the Khasi pride in his past and this cannot be without his religion, his culture, his attitudes, his customs etc. The most important factor in the revival of the Khasi identity is the religion.

If one is rejecting Khasi religion that means one is indirectly rejecting the Khasi way of life. One cannot understand a mountain, a river, a building, a forest, a syiemship, a clanship in fact anything Khasi as all these link with religion.

R.T. Rymbai speaking on Babu Jeebon Roy and Khasi Culture (1984) regards Khasi culture as:

"a way of life of the people, a way which is handed down from generation to generation through the precepts of their religion coming out of the mouths of those who had earlier seen the light of the sun and the moon. The customs, practices, and usages of the people which direct, guide and govern their thoughts, deeds and behaviour and cover the whole spectrum of their life and living have their roots in those precepts. Hence the reverential awe with which they regard them as sacred and sanctified. We see this in their conduct in the family or in the society, at work or at play in their own traditional games and sports; in the tracing of their descent from the first ancestress and the hallowed continuing of the lineage through her; we see it in the system of land tenure, of inheritance, of marriage and divorce; in the organisation of their democratic institutions and the governance of a state or administration of a village; in the councils of peace or war; and in such other matters as touch and affect their lives in their personal capacity or as members of the family, society or state to which they belong. Of course we do not point a finger at the failings of individuals failing from the norm. These are always there because of the frailties of human nature. We judge the culture of a race, tribe or nation not by the conduct of an individual but by the model of the society".<sup>35</sup>

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25. R.T. Rymbai, Babu Jeebon Roy and Khasi Culture 1984. Jeebon Roy Memorial Welfare Institute, and printed by the Khasi Press, Shillong, pp. 4-6.

For H.O. Mawrie,

"Every race or people has a culture of whatever form it might be. Culture forms the very character of the race and it is through it that the race expresses itself. If the race has its soul then culture is its body. Culture is basically the product of the past; it is the one we have inherited from our forefathers, and which has become our heritage and which has flowed down from one generation into another and down into us to make us what we are. It is the one in which we grow and we breathe and from it we draw our life, principles and life governing ideas and through it we identify and maintain ourselves as a race. We are its products and the blood of our forefathers is right here inside us to become our Heritage to build us and to steer us as a race. We are what we are because of our Past and we can never leave it behind. On the rock of our Heritage we are to build ourselves and if we are to remove it we are to do so with an insight into all profundities and with an awareness of the demands of our age. Culture is not a cloak or a robe that one can put on and off as one wishes. It is not the one that can be imposed from without, nor a thing that can be bought or borrowed, it is the thing that grows from within to form the character of the race.

The culture of a race is not just skin-deep but it lies deeper than we realise and much deeper than we can explain. As an example: it is only a Naga and he alone that can feel 'Naga' think 'Naga' and be 'Naga' and it is quite an impossible thing for a Khasi to feel Naga, think Naga and be 'Naga' nor it is possible for a Khasi or a Naga to feel English, think English and be English and so on and so forth. Culture is one's birth right and therefore we cannot exchange it for another. Gone are the days when we are made to think that we can take over other people's cultures and that we can throw away our cultures as easily as we can take off our cloak or robe.

He said that the world itself has now come to realise that things are not as easy as that and that if any race should throw away its culture it would destroy part of itself to become morally, socially and psychologically disillusioned and disintegrated. Imitators are there in every race but they are not the one to decide the destiny of the race; they are there to remind us that, as Rabindranath Tagore says, "Imitators are but rag-pickers in other people's dustbins" to make themselves the mockery of the Race or Nation".<sup>26</sup>

Sujata Miri<sup>27</sup> in An Introduction to the Study of Tribal Religions expressed that Khasi religion played a central role in the Khasi society. And its characteristic of religious meaning that it necessarily binds together in one whole, of course in an inevitably oblique and complex manner, man, nature and the transcendent world. Her plea is that instead of looking at Khasi religion (or any religion) as a collection of more or less disconnected activities with more or less disparate areas of human life, we should consider it as a system of meanings with its centre of U Blei. This concept as it were, breathes life into the entire range of activities. She further adds that it is the pervasive membership of U Blei in this society that makes the most crucial difference in their phenomenology.

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26. H.O. Mawrie. The Eastern Concept vis-a-vis The Western Concept of Culture 1985 - Published by P.L. Khongwir, Mawlai, Shillong, pp.1-3.

27. H.O. Mawrie, The Khasi Milieu. Also An Introduction to the Study of Tribal Religions by Sujata Miri, New Delhi, 1981, pp.21-22.

CHAPTER - VI

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

The preceding five chapters have been concerned with showing the Khasi Society undergoing change which I have described as revivalism. Though there are many factors which are responsible for this kind of change, the main factor that I have emphasized since I think it is the most important one is, the threat of acculturation facing the Khasis due to very rapid Christianization. The emergence of thoughts as expressed by student leaders belonging to Group B (refer p. 152 ) can be well understood if we keep the fact of Christianization in mind. Having been converted to a different religion this group is wanting to somehow uphold the Khasi identity along with Khasi culture but without Khasi religion. As I have concluded in Chapter V, the religion of the people constitute the way of life of the people and unless this is accepted by the younger generation of the Khasis I do not see how revivalism will be successful in its task of preserving Khasi culture. Religion of the ancient Khasis contains all that was meaningful and valuable for them. The tradition which is called Khasi today is thus inextricably bound up in Niam Khasi. I am of the opinion that without a full realisation of this fact and without a serious study of Khasi religion by one and all Khasis revivalism amongst the Khasis will remain confused and misdirected.

Before ending my dissertation — I wish to make two points regarding revivalism: (a) that revivalism is not anti-nationalism, and (b) that revivalism is not anti-progress and development.

In my previous chapters, I tried to show that revivalism amongst the Khasis resulted mainly from the threat of acculturation. With the coming of the British along with Christian Missionaries changes in traditional form of life such as in religion, culture, marriage, kinship etc. had taken place. The community thoroughly shaken off was deeply divided and the only common feature left amongst them were the ties of blood and ethnicity. The common goal where they would unite was in their political struggles through regionalism (refer chapter V). However, regional consciousness is perpetuated to achieve a political end, and once the end is achieved it dies out.

Revivalism can be exploited by certain sections of the Khasis resistants to convert nationalism into communalism. That is why social scientists fear that instead of integrating and strengthening the nation, revivalism promotes racial and linguistic rivalries. At present the conscious section of Khasi youths and some politicians confine themselves to political parties and their vote

catching compulsion seems to inhibit them from entering into a debate on serious religious and social issues. Regional consciousness may narrow down, or split up when political loyalties are betrayed. As for example, different political parties during the election take the name of different regional parties just for the sake of vote catching and all the regional parties always throwing mud over one another and especially at the National Party (Congress I). But once elections are over most of these leaders who won with the tickets of regional parties from their respective constituencies are ready at any time to change or merge their parties into any majority group, even if that be a national party whom they hated most before the election.

Let me take the example of youth leaders who enter the games of politics and are the most ardent exponents of regionalism. They form a regional party have their own candidate for contesting in the election, their election's speeches are dedicated to the pursued of very noble ideals like the welfare of their community and launch scathing attack on the failure of National Political Parties to do anything for the region exploiting the regional sentiments they never forget to promise the public that once they are

elected they will chase away the 'foreigners' - dkhar (Khyllah jait). In one of the meetings held in connection with the Parliament election held at Mawlai Datbaki before the election, Mr. Robert Kharshing once a prominent President of Khasi Student Union said that he appreciated the people of this locality because the area is inhabited by the Khasi community only. There was not even a single shop run by the Khyllah Jait. But to compare with Laitumkhras area he said most of the Khyllah Jait dominated the shops and all the strategic areas were occupied by them. So, he said if their party comes into strength the first thing they will do will be that they will chase away the foreigners from Shillong. Laitumkhras will become a totally Khasi locality. All the shops will be run by the Khasi people. There will be no unemployment for the Khasi and Jaintia in their own lands as job reservation will be done for them. Durbar Shnong (Village Council) and Durbar Hima (State Council under the chairmanship of U Syiem) will be once again revived. Slogans, pamphlets, posters are put in public places everywhere in Shillong "Pynieng bad Pynim Biang in ki Durbar Hima" (Raise and Revive once again the Kingdom Council) claiming that the headman and the Syiem will once again come in power can be read everywhere.

Through regionalism the maximum they seem to be doing is in the form of a Union which would protect ethnic identity for the benefit of job reservation and threaten outsiders. Deeper issues such as the standard of education in the state, understanding of their cultural identity in all its historical settings does not concern their goals at all. Khasi Student Unions protest has upto date never been for educational purposes. The Khasi identity has only been referred to for differentiating their Unions from other tribal unions in order to receive benefit from administration etc. in comparison with other Unions. Ethnic identity seems to be the only hall-mark for being a Khasi. The cultural identity is pushed into the background. The children (for example) even today has no typical Khasi appearance. To take in a narrow sense a tribal (Khasi) is a tribal, lives anywhere, believe in any religion, thinks like an Anglo-Indian but has of course, a tribal certificate.

Whereas in contrast revivalism is not talking of one group as opposed to the other group but is conceived with the great past of one's own group. In this connection the greatness of other groups or neighbours are taken into consideration. Major features of Khasi revivalism are linked up with the influence of great thinkers like Mahatma

Gandhi, Raja Ram Mohon Roy and other national leaders. Take for example, Tirot Sing Syiem who was not only a regional figure but a nationalist figure. He fought against the Britishers to free his own people from their yoke. Again if we take Babu Jeebon Roy he too was a national figure who wanted to preserve Khasi identity, culture, religion etc. He was not anti-Indian but anti-foreigner. He translated the Hitupodesa into Khasi language and published books on Lord Buddha, Chaitanya and the Ramayana.

Revivalism reflects itself through social awareness. Social awareness includes different aspects of life including the economic aspect as a natural corollary of society's self sufficiency. This social self-sufficiency demands of the society's rapid economic development too; because without ensuring some self supporting standard revivalism has no value and it cannot exist for long. However, it can be considered as a motivating factor in economic development. Development is the higher consumption of commodities with better qualities of life. The Cocoyoc Declaration 1974<sup>1</sup> highlighted development "not of things, but of man". Schumacher points out that "development does not start with

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1. Cocoyoc Declaration, UNEP/UNCTAD, 1974.

goods; it starts with people and their education, organisation and discipline. Without these three, all resources remain latent, untapped, potential".<sup>2</sup>

The most important factor in any analysis of tribal regionalism are under development of tribal economy and scarcity of resources. This leads to the result of uneven growth and raises the problems of tribal and regional identity in the limelight. Any development plan, to be successful, has to take into account the incentive factor of development in quickening the process of economic growth. Secondly, it has to take into account the responsive factor of development by involving people's participation not only in implementing but also in formulating the various development projects.

Development is to bring help to those who need it most, each 'region' or 'district' within the country needs its own development. This is what is meant by a 'regional' approach. Development cannot be imitative of the West. Nor can it advocate for whole-sale modernization or westernization of indigenous social institutions. It has to identify the constraints, to differentiate vital traditions

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2. E.F. Schumacher. *Small is Beautiful: A Study of Economics as if people mattered*. London, 1988.

from outworn ones, and to formulate strategies which can coordinate people's aspirations with the compulsions of science and technology. When a country develops endogenously, its way of life should be based on respect for its traditional values, for the authenticity of its culture and for its creative aptitudes of its people.

The Cocoyoc Declaration made the following propositions: Our chief problem consists in reformulating the objectives of development. Development should not be aimed at the production of material goods but at the improvement of the human condition. Man has basic needs: food, shelter, clothing, health, and education services. Any growth process which does not lead to the satisfaction of these needs — or, what is worse, compromises their satisfaction is only a parody of the idea of development.<sup>3</sup>

This brings us to the Gandhian principle that technological development must be matched or balanced with appropriate human, organisational and cultural development.<sup>4</sup>

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3. Cocoyoc Declaration, 1974.

4. J.D. Sethi, Gandhi Today with a foreword by Jayaprakash Narayan. Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1978.

"Let there be no mistake about my conception of Swaraj. It is complete independence of alien control and complete economic independence. So at one end you have political independence, at the other the economic. It has two other ends. One of them is moral and social, the corresponding end is Dharma, i.e. religion in the highest sense of the term. Let us call this the square of Swaraj, which will be out of the shape if any of its angles is untrue."<sup>5</sup>

In fact science and technology should also acquire endogenous character "based on a knowledge of local condition and thus respecting the national identity".<sup>6</sup>

All three basic needs, small and intermediate technology and decentralized decision making - are the core components in Gandhian model of development,<sup>7</sup> which was formulated about half a century back but was conveniently forgotten in the emotion of industrialization in the Post Independence India.

Modernization indicates swift widespread change and transformation of societies and the broad lines of the process are industrialization, urbanization, literacy and mass

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5. Edited J.C. Biswas. Gandhi Theory and Practice, Social Impact and Contemporary Relevance. Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, 1969.
  6. UNESCO Document, 104. Ex/51, Paras 29-30.
  7. Gandhi, M. Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Publication. Ahmedabad: Navjivan Press, 1946.

communication. Broad trends indicative of modernity could be spelt out as follows: (1) People's commitments and associations change from the local to the 'universal; (2) individual as a unit of society begins to play a more important role as against group; (3) association depending upon accident of birth is replaced by association of choice; (4) in place of fatalistic beliefs, there comes a sense of mastery over environment; (5) individual and group identities are not ascribed but chosen and achieved; (6) individual's work is less influenced by his family, residence and community; (7) National and scientific attitudes replace emotions and non-rational approaches; (8) there is a change in social life in that authority is not necessarily associated with seniority or sex; youth and women acquire a new place and identity; (9) Government, far from being a manifestation of power, come to be regarded as instrument of society with more popular participation, element of consent and accountability. A modern society, is differentiated, pluralistic, and is broadly participatory and democratic.<sup>8</sup>

Students of modernization have constructed models of societal behaviour under broad heads of tradition and

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8. Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Herber Rudolph. The Modernity of Tradition. University of Chicago Press, 1967, p.3.

modernity, the one being opposed to the other. A traditional society depends more on ascription than achievement, particularistic and diffuse in its orientation, more effective than rational and less differentiated and mobile in its structure and movement. It is predominantly agricultural and rural; a vast number of its people are illiterate and less susceptible to change.

But the dichotomy between tradition and modernity has limited validity and applicability. Tradition and modernity are to be viewed as a continuum rather than two extremes and exclusive poles. A traditional society may have aspects of modernity and even the most modern society may have traits of traditionality.

Models of tradition and modernity are certainly helpful in our attempt to identify the predominant character of society. They greatly facilitate perception, analysis and comparison. But no traditional society remains unchanged and even the most modern societies continue to live with many traditional elements. As for instance at the time of social functions western societies too have the fanfare of traditional customs like marriage rituals. They continue to observe ancient festivals even when in theory they have rejected the sacred implications of them. Thanks to

secularization. There is, in fact, an intricate mosaic of co-existence of traditional and modernity and societies display a variety of combinations. At any rate, while societies can be identified as predominantly modern or traditional, elements of modernity and tradition co-mingle in almost all societies.

The process of modernization may take various paths. Some traditions persist, some undergo change and some of them, indeed, may help in the very process of modernization. Modernization as a social process is a continuum that carries forward the past traditions and brings about a new pattern, a fresh combination. Since there never is a complete divorce between tradition and modernity, transition to modernity has often been effected through the use of traditional idiom, symbol and behaviour. Tradition may thus become an instrument through which an appeal for modernization may be made. Tradition may, therefore, serve the purpose of acting as a hand-maid for a new birth. Which tradition, to what extent and when, would permit of change, is perhaps the most intricate and baffling question of human history possibilities of change and transformation of societies remain hidden as latent potentialities till they are evoked and tapped by some one. In short, the movement of modernization is often the modernization of tradition.

Perhaps it is one of the reasons of Gandhi's wide appeal, national stature and general acceptability, Gandhi symbolised India in transition, the India that found herself and the India that welcomed modernism. Some of the deepest and most significant founts of tradition were tapped to support and legitimate the newest needs of national awakening and exertion.<sup>9</sup>

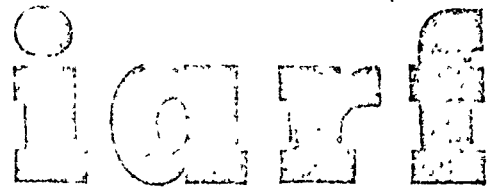
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9. Gandhi. Theory and Practice Social Impact and Contemporary Relevance. 1969; pp. 151-155.

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APPENDICES  
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APPENDIX - A(1)  
INTERNATIONAL  
ASSOCIATION  
FOR RELIGIOUS  
FREEDOM

171



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✓ Seng Khasi, Shillong, India  
Ittoen, Kyoto, Japan  
Unitarian Universalist Church of the Philippines

1  
15 February 1984

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COMMITTEES

...

Dear friends,

after your group has been associated with IARF for a number of years, and based on our recent increased and mutually rewarding interaction, we would like to invite you to become a "full" member group of our International Association for Religious Freedom.

To this end, may I ask you to send us a letter, signed by your President or Secretary or Board, applying for (full) member group status in IARF. We should receive this letter in Frankfurt preferably no later than June 1st.

At the first IARF Council meeting in Tokyo, held prior to the Congress, your group will be admitted, and during the following IARF General Assembly, you will be able to have (one) voting delegate, as determined by the Council.

This General Assembly will take place 31 July 1984 in Tokyo.

Looking forward to a fruitful cooperation I remain,

*Lucie Meijer*

Lucie Meijer



APPENDIX - A(11)  
RISSHŌ KŌSEI-KAI

A BUDDHIST LAY ASSOCIATION

11-1, Wada 2-chome,  
Suginami-ku, Tokyo  
166 Japan  
Telephone: (383) 1111  
RISSHOKOSEIKAI Tokyo

172

Tokyo, 4 April, 1984  
YK/mg

Mr. U. Hipshon Roy  
General Secretary  
Senr Khasi, Shillong  
Riatsamthiah  
Shillong 793 001  
I N D I A

Dear Mr. Roy,

On behalf of Rev. Gehrman, General Secretary of I.A.R.F., I am pleased to inform you that you have been selected to be on the panel of Working Group IV of the I.A.R.F. Japan Congress.

This working group will discuss the theme "Challenge of Current Problems." Each working group will deal with three issues for three days, that is, one issue per day. Three panelists will present each issue, making a total of nine panelists for three issues. For further details, please refer to the "Organization Guidelines for the Congress and Working Groups" dated November 22, 1983 sent to you by separate mail.

You are kindly invited to make a presentation for the second issue of Working Group IV, titled "Modernization (as inter-action of East/West)". All panelists are required to write a position paper of approximately 1,500 words for better clarity. The deadline for this position paper is May 15th.

I would appreciate it very much if you could accept our request and cooperate for the success of the I.A.R.F. Japan Congress.

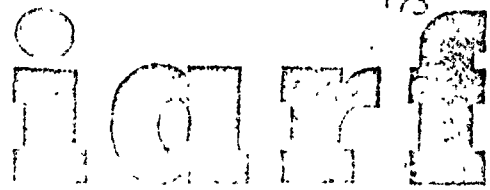
I send you my best wishes, and look forward to your early reply.

Yours sincerely,

*Y. Katsuyama*

Rev. Yasuo Katsuyama  
Secretary  
I.A.R.F. Japan Congress

INTERNATIONAL  
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IARF CONGRESS JAPAN 1984  
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13 June 1984

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Rev. Robert Hemstreet  
USA

Margaret Hewitt  
Canada

Rev. Peter Godfrey  
Great Britain

Dr. Hugo Possavain  
East Germany

Alvin Kienewalter  
FR Germany

Dear friends,

We are happy to inform you that we have opened the possibility for participants from India and Bangladesh to be also sponsored to attend one of the IARF Pre-Congress retreats.

You have been chosen to participate in our IARF Religious Experience Retreat:

..... *Shintoism* .....

This means, that after arrival with the group flight from Calcutta (Sunday, 22 July) you will proceed to the Group Pilgrimage Hall and leave for the retreat on Monday morning. On 26 July you will again check into the Group Pilgrimage Hall after returning from the Retreat.

Details about the Retreat program and the IARF member group are enclosed.

Some of you have not yet returned the sponsorship application form (at the end of our letter advising you about the sponsorship). Where this applies we are enclosing again the slip and ask you to return it to us by return mail.

Our best regards.

Sincerely yours,

*Irrtrud Schmalenbach*  
Irrtrud Schmalenbach

PS: As at previous Congresses we would like to receive from you a passport type photo for display purposes. Please bring it with you to Tokyo.

APPENDIX - A(iv)

DECLARATION OUTCOME

20

NE-INDIA

16th-17th December 1981

JILCHAR

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Page: 68

"At present, here in North East India we are facing certain unavoidable problems, such as: (a) from political side disturbances in Manipur, Mizoram and in Assam on foreigner's issue which in Meghalaya the same issue occurred in 1979. These political troubles affect very much on the going work of the church in its mission and Evangelization."

"(b) From the religious resurgence of Tribal religions among the Khasis has even spread to other tribal areas in North East Region. In one of the Khasi Magazines 'A Non-Christian Magazine' it is said that the leaders of Khasi religions have had meetings with the Kocharis in North Cachar Hills to discuss about ways and means to preserve their culture and traditions of their primitive religions and to convince the non-Christians not to accept Christianity, as it is a foreign religion. Delegates from the Khasi religion attended the International Conference on world religions held in Holland last July. In their recent publication on the report of the above conference, it is said that the representatives from Khasis have admitted that their people who had come and preached the Gospel in Khasi and Jaintia Hills, hundred and fifty years ago was a big blunder, that they had misled the Khasi people to neglect their traditional and cultural way of life."



## JINGNPYNBNA

HEI HO! HEI HO! HEI HO!

Ka Seng Khasi, Mawlai

Ka Seng Khasi, Mawlai

Ka pynbna paidbah bad ka khot sngewbha ia phi ki khun u  
lynniew Trep Hynniew Skum na kylleng ka ri Khasi - Pnar ban ia  
wan sha ka Sengkyrsiew ha Mawlai ha :—

Tarik-- 15 tarik Kyllalyngkot (January), 1984.

Jaka— Madan heb, Mawlai Phudmawri.

Por— 11 baje mynstep.

Kan don ka jingken na ki Rang Kynsai ka Ri, ka duwai ka  
obirat na ki Riewtymnen bad ka Shad ka kmen na ki samla Mawlai.

Kin don ruh ki dukan die ja bad sha ba la pynbeit Kyrpang da ka  
Seng Khasi Mawlai ban pynsuk ia kito kiba wan na jngai.

Iawan iawan baroh da iawer lem ia la ki para lok para jor,  
ca kam la ka jong ho !

Khublei Shibun eh.

Tarik— 19/12/83

*W. H. Pyrbot*  
General Secretary,  
Seng Khasi Mawlai.

# JINGPYNBNA



Nongdom

## Seng Khasi Nongdom

Ha une u bnai February, 26 tarik 1984 kan don ka jingialang paidbah SENGKYRSIEW ha Madan Bynther naduh ka por 11 baje mynsngi.

Ha kane ka jingiakynduh u Kur u Kha kan don ruh ka jingkren na ki ryngbah Seng Khasi na Shillong bad na kiwei ki thain jong ka ri.

Kane ka jingialang ka long ka jingiakynduh para Khasi Khara ha kaba ngin ioh ka jingiakynduh ia ithuh kur ithuh kha bad ka jingiasyllok markylliang ia kiei kiei la ki jong kumba la buh u Ni u Kong.

Ngi kyrpad ba ba phin ia poi bad ia wer ia ki lok ki jor ban ia poi paidbah, ka dei ka kam la la jong hi-ka jong phi ka jong nga ba ngin nang ban buh dor bad ieit ia kiei kiei la ki jong bad ban shemphang bad buro n ruh ia kiwei pat.

Khublei

*R. Bhatiar Singh Syiem*  
President,

*A.S. Kharsyntiew*  
Secretary,

8-2-84

# SENG KHASI: NONGSPUNG

## JINGPYNBNA

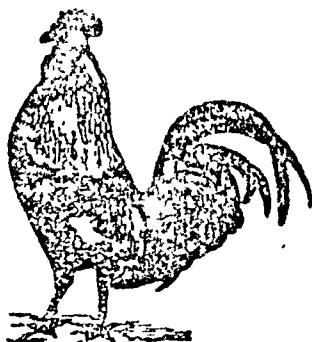
Ngi sngewkmen ban ioh kane ka lad ban ynbna ha phi ki para kur ki para kha baroh kylleng ka Ri ba ha uñe u bñai ka ha 22 tarik Iaiong (April) 1984 kaba hap ha ka sngi robibar ngi la lah ban pynbeit ban long ka Seng Kyršiew ha la pynbeit da ka Seng naduh ka por 12 baje mynsngi.

Ngi khmih lynti ban ioh lad ban pbiang sngewbha iaphi baroh ki kur ki kha ha kane 22 tarik April ban ioh jingiasyllok mar-kylliang ia la ka riti ki dustur, ia la ka Niam ka Rukom. Ki ryngbah na ka Seng Khasi (Seng Kmie) ruh kin ia don lang ha kane ka jingialang Seng Kyršiew ban ia phylliew jingmut ia kiei kiei la ki jong ba la ka nongrim Khasi u Khun Khasi Khara.

Sngewbha ban ia poi ban iawer, ka kam la jong hi ho.

*Date d Nongspung*  
10th. April '84

U Doling Kharsyntiew  
U Bok Syiemlich  
U Hipshon Roy Kharshing



## KA WYRTA KA WYRTA

Ka don ka jingialang Dorbar Niamtre ha ka shnong Ummulong Jaintia Hills District ha ka 11-3-1984, ha ka por 11.00 A.M. baje mynstep ba la pynbeit da ka Sein Raj Shillong ryngkat bad ki Rangbah na Ummulong.

Kumta ka Niamtre Committee Sein Raj ka khot Sngewbha ia phi baroh ki khun ki ksiew U Hynniew Trep U Hynniew Skum na kylleng ka Ri Khasi bad Jaintia ba phin iawan khnang khnang sha kane ka jingialang Ka jingwan jongphi ka pyni ba ngi dang bat bad icit ia la ka jong Ka Niam Ka Rukom Ka Riti Ka Dustur kaba la pynkhamti da U Ni U kong jong ngi naduh mynbyndai.

Kin don ruh ki Rangbah Nongkren ba kysai na ka Seng Khasi bad Sein Raj Shillong/Jowai/Khliehtyrshi. Ummulong Kin don ruh ki Jingrwai ban rwai da ki khynnah samla jongngi ryngkat bad ka jingainguh aidem ia la U Nongbuh U nongthaw ha ka tei ka sngi 11-3-1984.

Ia—wan Ia—wan baroh da sawer lem ia la ki lok ki jor Kynthei bad Shynrang Rangbah bad Khynnah. Ka Kam la—jong Ho.

Chi—hajar—ngooh.

*U Nainshon Rai Shullai*  
Secretary  
NIAMTRE COMMITTEE SEIN RAJ.  
Shillong

## Ka Jingpynshai.

Ha ka 20 tarik. Ia long. 1986. ki katto katne ki Rangbah jong ka shnong Mawhati (Ri bhoi) ki la khot ia ka seng Nongshat - Nongkhein, ban leit pynshai, pynsgewthuh bad kysiew lem ia kito ki parakur parakha kiba shong sha kito ki thain, ki Rangbah jong ka Seng Nongshat - Nongkhein kila leit kawei ka Rus bad kawei ka jeep, ki katto katne ki sanla jong ka Seng khasi Mawlai bad ka Seng khasi Nongthymmai Madanrting ruh kila ia don lang ha katei ka sngi haka ba ki Rangbah jong ka Seng Nongshat - Nongkhein kum u Rangbah En. Nongrum, Rangbah Phran khar Kylliang bad kiwei kiwei de, kila ai ki jingkren kiba la pynkyndit shisha ia u paid nongsngap uba la don palat ia ka shihajar khlieh briew ei ei bad kynthei bad shynrang, bad kaba kham phylla ka long bala don bun ruh kiba la wan phai noh bad kida iehnoh ia kiwei pat ki niam haki ba ki la don baroh shi katta ki jingim jong ki, KI LA WAN PHAI NOH SHI LA KA JONG KA NIAM TYNRAI. ki da ai ruh da ki kynja jingthoh kiba skhem sha ka Seng Nongshat Nongkhein. Lum kane ka jait jingtrei ka Seng Nongshat - Nongkhein ka la ia kynduh ia kiba bun ki briew balynti ha syngkien kiba shong la jan ha baroh kawei ka Ri khasi - Pnar. la don ka jingia kren na kiba bun ki briew, khristan bad bynlong khristan ruh kumjuh ba dei ban don noh kawei kajaka ban joh ia syllok. pynshai bad pynsgewthuh lem hapdeng iwei ia iwei pat. Te kumta ka Seng Nongshat - Nongkhein nalar ka shgi ka ia, bai Petrol, bailiet baiwan sa ban don bar tei shuh shuh sa kata ka jaka bad ing Seng, kala long kabeh bad pyr-khat, ka Seng kala poi ha ka jingeh bynrei ynda haba kala pyrkhath sani bha kala shim ia ka lynti ba ngim dei ban im tang ha iwei i jaka i barit ban iehnoh pat ia kiwei ki bapli kiba bun kiba don ha baroh kawei kane ka Ri khasi - Pnar kiba sakma shane bad shatai bad kiba shah khar ei ha kine bac ha kitai haduh ba i kumba ka jaitbynriew Khasi- Pnar jongngi kan sa jih noh bac duh noh namar mynta don bun kiba la ia long para bangeit noh ne ia dei kha de man bad ki ba bun kiwei pat ki jaitbynriew, kane ka long kawei ka lynti ba ka jaitbynriew kan jah noh bad dei na kane ka daw ba ka Seng ka shim ia kane ka nongrim ba ngim dei ban sngewdkoh, sngew-pher, sngewpait sngewpra. bynrei kawei ka jaitbynriew ngi dei ban lum ban lang bad ban pyntylli kawei ban im ba jaitbynrie ban neh la i riti, kumta da ka jingtrei shitom bad pyrkhath sani bha mynta kala te ia ka ing Seng bad ka kyrpad lem ia phi ki kur ki kha de kiba dang sngew ba ph dei ki khasi sngewbha iarap ia ngi khnang ba ka jaitbynriew jongngi ban neh hah i riti.

### Khublei.

Kiba burom ia phi baroh.

Rgh. En. Nongrum.

Rgh. Jarnar khongsti.

Rgh. Wes kharakot.

**KA SEMINAR KABA IADEI BAD KA IMLANG  
KA SAHLANG (SOCIAL)**

KA LONG BRIEW KA MANBRIEW (CULTURAL)  
KA JINGNANG KA JINGSTAD :  
JONG U KHASI

**'NA KA BYNTA KA RI BAD KA JAITBYNRIEW'**

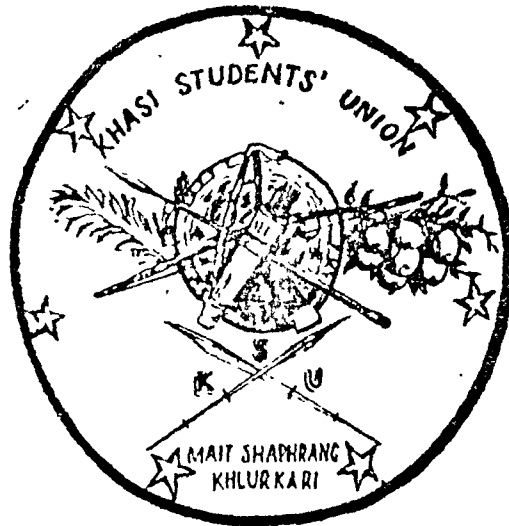
Ka Tarik: - 11 bad 12 tarik u Naitar— August, 1981

Ka Jaka: - Ha State Central Library - Shillong

La pynbeit da JONG KHASI STUDENTS' UNION - SHILLONG

# KHASI CULTURAL BLOW—UP !!

.....BAN TIP BAN IEID BAN NANG IA LA KA JONG !!



Jaka : Ha St. Anthony's College Grounds

Tarik : 2, 3, 4 tarik u Nailur (Sept.) 1982

Nongpmaid : 'Ka Khasi Students' Union bad  
Ka Institute of Art and Culture

—Govt. of Meghalaya

Patron : D. B. Pakein, Education Minister, Meghalaya

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