

MEGHALAYA

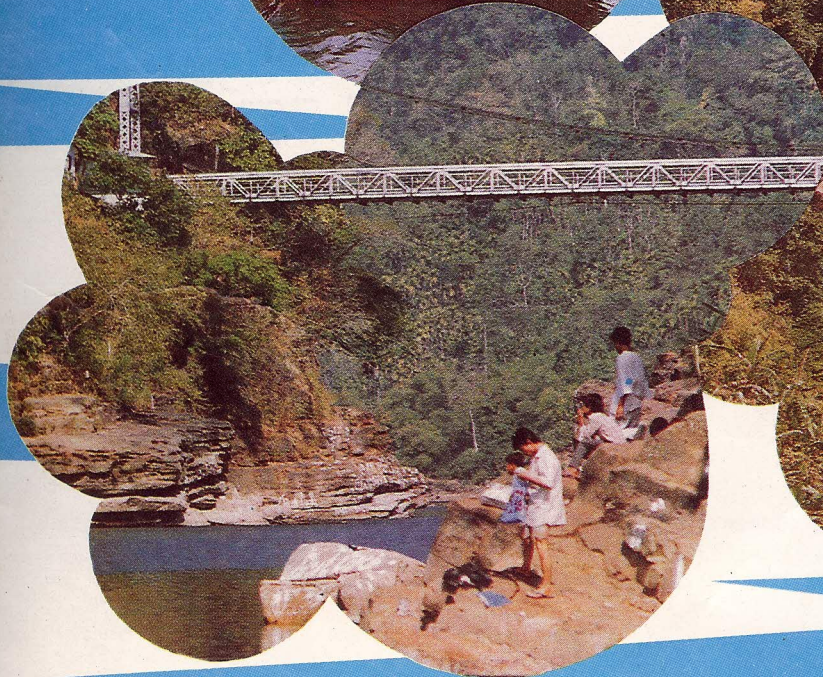
PLACES OF INTEREST

THE DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION & PUBLIC RELATIONS MEGHALAYA



MEGHALAYA

PLACES OF INTEREST



Open

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Back Cover : KHOH RAMHAH FALLS
MONOLITHS AT NONGTALANG

From the desk of Peter James Bazeley, IAS
Principal Director, Information & Public Relations,
Meghalaya.

P R E F A C E


Meghalaya—the *abode of clouds* with its picturesque landscape of lush green rolling downs and breathtaking gorges, chequered by glassy cascades and meandering highways, in the midst of endless emerald sylvan beauty bedecked with romantically red rhododendrons, crowned by majestic mountain peaks and a bracingly salubrious climate—has rightly been christened as the *Scotland of the East*. Such is the attraction of bounteous nature that one falls in love with Meghalayan environs at first sight. None can refrain from regarding it as an *exceedingly beautiful patch of the vast sub-continent*. Unlike many other places where man's effort has resulted in creating exquisitely beautiful settings, the Meghalayan panorama has, *every bit*, been carved out by the hands of Nature and none can do better than the Creator Himself. The urge to chronicle some such *Places of Interest* is a natural corollary to our ongoing efforts to pictorially profile the State.

The third volume of our *pictorial monograph series on Meghalaya* is, as such, dedicated to its *Places of Interest*, with the avid expectation that it will generate a greater desire to *know more* of them and learn at first hand of the rich traditions and folklore which crowns each of these places.

Places-of-interest which stud planet Earth adding to its magnificence and glory are fast falling prey to the cruel and destructive hands of human avarice and contemptuous greed, the world over, and more so in the developing and the under-developed world. *Alas, in Meghalaya too, the position is similarly not far behind!*

We go to print with the fond hope that this pictorially documented profile of our *places of interest* will generate *better awareness* and *the will to preserve and protect* them as the priceless natural heritage of the people. If we succeed in putting into motion a general trend of such thinking among our people, and, excite into action their desire to protect such natural heritage from further ingress, this volume would have achieved its mission.

Dated, Shillong
the 3rd April, 1992


(Peter James Bazeley)

PUBLISHERS NOTE

The first two volumes of the pictorial monograph series on Meghalaya sub-titled as *Land & People* and as *Flora & Fauna* have already been released for the benefit of readers. In the continued endeavour to chronicle the colorful profile of the State in all its variety, the third volume of the series which covers its places of interest has been assembled. The third volume which has been sub-titled *Places of Interest* now goes to print.

Neither the pictorial monograph series nor this volume is intended to serve the purpose of a comprehensive or an authoritative treatise of the State, or of its places of interest, or of the tradition, culture and folklore connected with such places of interest. These endeavours are directed towards creating a general awareness amongst the people of our vast country and beyond of the captivatingly interesting variety of places of interest in the hills and dales of Meghalaya.

The Publisher is deeply indebted to all Researchers, Scholars, Authors, Institutions and Organisations whose works have inspired and enabled the compilation of the contents of this Volume. The Publisher places on record profound gratitude and indebtedness for the tireless efforts of all such Researchers, Scholars, Authors, Institutions and Organisations.

The Publisher is also grateful to Adland Puplicity Private Limited of Calcutta for having very proficiently designed and printed these first three volumes of the series.

This volume goes to press with the hope that the series continue to pictorially monograph the State and bring out its other distinctive features in the succeeding volumes of the series, which shall follow.

The Publisher looks forward to the comments and suggestions of *Readers* to further improve the remaining volumes of the series.

Dated, Shillong
the 3rd April, 1992.

THE PUBLISHER.

MEGHALAYA — AN OVERVIEW

The word *Meghalaya* conjures up thoughts of high hills crested with clouds. Emergence of *Meghalaya* as an Autonomous State on 2nd April, 1970, and as a full-fledged State on 21st January, 1972 marked the beginning of a new era in the geo-political history of North Eastern India. It also marked the triumph of peaceful democratic negotiations, mutual understanding and victory over violence and intrigue.

Meghalaya is a Sanskrit term, meaning *abode of clouds*, ascribed to the Khasi-Garo Plateau by internationally famed linguist and *Scholar Extraordinary*, Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, Professor Emeritus, Calcutta University.

In the course of his initial field work in these hills during 1926, Dr. Chatterjee noticed excessive clouds hanging over the region, making it one of the rainiest areas in the world. The idea took deeper root during his subsequent visits to this area, over the period 1928 to 1932 and he christened the plateau as *Meghalaya*. A doctoral thesis was subsequently submitted by Dr. Chatterjee to Paris University on *The Geographical Analysis of Meghalaya*. At a much later date, Dr. Chatterjee popularised the name *Meghalaya* through his contribution to the Chapter on *Physiography* for the Gazetteer of India, Volume-1, 1965. His observations attracted the attention of the Union Home Ministry, when it was looking for a name for a new State comprising of Khasi, Jaintia and Garo Hills, which was then being processed for creation. The name *Meghalaya* received unanimous acceptance.

The State of *Meghalaya* is situated on the north-east of India, more or less in between 90° and 92° 45' meridians of longitude and 25° 15' and 26° parallels of latitude. It extends for about 300 kilometres in length and about 100

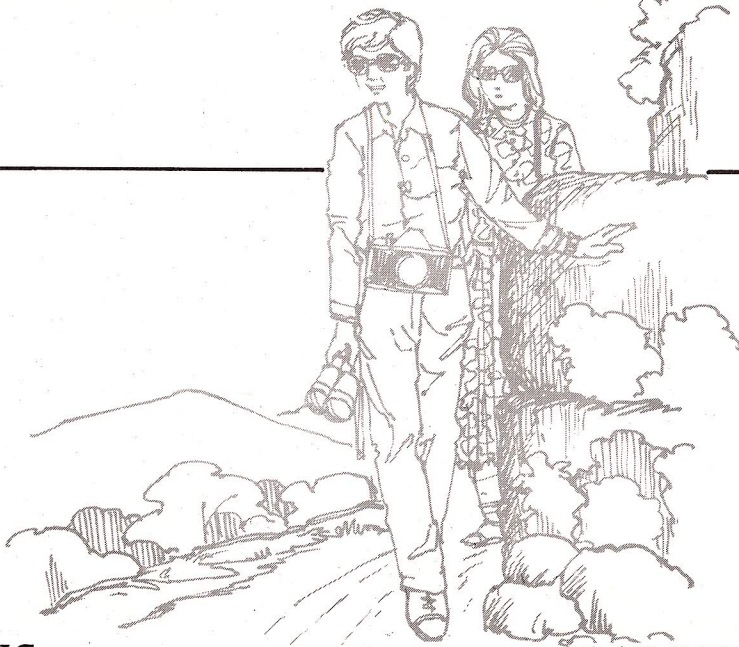
kilometres in breadth. It is bounded on the north by Goalpara, Kamrup and Nowgong districts, on the east by the Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills districts, all of Assam, and on the south and west by Bangladesh.

Meghalaya is subject to the vagaries of the monsoon. The climate varies with altitude. The climate of Khasi and Jaintia Hills is uniquely pleasant and bracing. It is neither too warm in summer nor too cold in winter, but over the plains of the Garo-Hills, the climate is warm and humid, except in winter.

The *Meghalayan* sky seldom remains free of clouds. Its southern region is the rainiest area on Earth. Rainfall in this region varies from seven to thirteen thousand millimetres, annually. The average annual rainfall is about 2600 mm over western *Meghalaya*, between 2500-3000 mm over northern *Meghalaya* and about 4000 mm over south-eastern *Meghalaya*. There is great variation of rainfall over central and southern *Meghalaya*. At *Sohra* (Cherrapunjee), the average annual rainfall is as high as 12000 millimetres, but Shillong located at a distance of about fifty kilometres from *Sohra* receives an average of 2200 mm of rainfall annually. *Jowai* in the east receives an average annual rainfall of about 3000 mm., while *Mawphlang* on the central plateau receives about 3300 mm.

Meghalaya is the homeland mainly of the Khasis, the Jaintias and the Garos. The Garos have their homeland in western *Meghalaya*, the Khasis have theirs in central *Meghalaya*, while the Jaintias have theirs in eastern *Meghalaya*.

The Khasis, the Jaintias and the Garos have a matrilineal society. Descent is traced through the *Mother*, but the *Meghalayan-Man* plays an important role in the material and mental life of



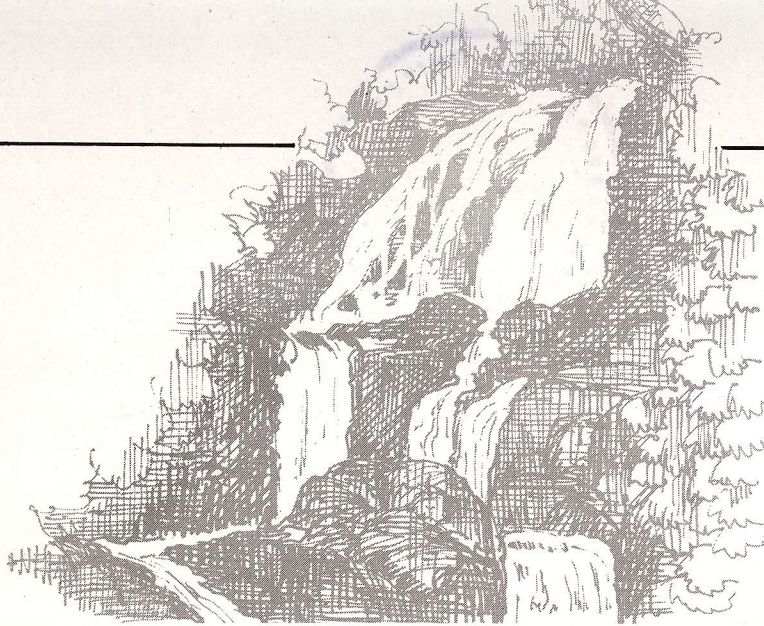
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 Don Bosco Square
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 Governor's Summer Residence
 Seng Khasi Hall

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Jakrem
Mawthadrasan

