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*W. S. G.*

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# The Megalithic Culture of the Khasis

By DAVID ROY

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## Introduction

Upright stones, large and small, and horizontal table stones are to be seen all over the Khasi Hills, but full and precise information about them has never been recorded and is hard to obtain. I set myself the task of identifying the various kinds of stones and learning about the ceremonies connected with them from those persons who had knowledge of them. It has been necessary to describe the cremation and the gathering of the *shyiang* (bones) and their placing under a *mawshyiang* (stone for the bones). The first cist called *mawkynroh* or *mawphew* is near the house of the deceased and for his or her bones

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Note. — The following article, written by a distinguished member of the Khasi community, describes aspects of the megalithic ritual of the Khasis which are rapidly falling into disuse. Even twenty-five years ago, when in the company of DAVID ROY I took some of the photographs reproduced on the plates, most of the younger Khasis knew little of the significance of the many megalithic monuments scattered over the hills round Shillong, and it is indeed fortunate that the author, whose memory goes back well over half a century, has undertaken to record an authoritative account of the traditional view of Khasi megalithic ritual. In preparing the manuscript for the press I have changed as little of the original wording as possible, and it is inevitable that some of the passages do not answer all the questions a social anthropologist would like to ask. But as an account of megalithic ritual seen through Khasi eyes, the article is invaluable.

C. VON FÜRER-HAIMENDORF.

alone. Later the bones are transferred to a second and larger *mawkynroh* where the bones of other members of the minimal matri-lineage are also placed. The third *mawshyieng* is called *mawbah* (big stone) or *mawniam* (stone of the religion or, more accurately, of religious ceremonial) and it is the final resting place of the bones of all the members of the clan. The other kinds of stones are also connected with the mortuary ritual though they are not repositories of bones. The *mawbyinna* (stones to mark and remember) are erected last of all, not less than a year and often much later after the bones were placed in the *mawbah* cist. The last *mawbyinna* known to me to have been erected were those for KA STEM MAWRI of Laitkor near Shillong about the year 1890. When I was writing this paper in the nineteen thirties I was greatly helped by U BARI NONGKHLAW of Umphyrnai village who described to me various rites and ceremonies and by U MOHON KHARKONGOR of Laitkor who told me especially about ceremonies at the erection of three *mawbyinna*. Both of them saw the erection of the *mawbyinna* stones for KA STEM MAWRI. I have been indeed fortunate in being able to record the ceremonial words for *mawbyinna*. In this paper the *mawbyinna* are treated as part of the full ritual without further mention being made of the present cessation of their erection, which may be revived by any Khasi family. What has been said about *mawbyinna* applies also to *mawksing* (also called *mawkait* and *mawja*). These stones are not distinguishable in appearance from *mawbyinna* and the term *mawbyinna* is often loosely used for them, but in the opinion of U MOHON KHARKONGOR the final stones are called *mawksing* when *mawlynti* (stones of the road, described in section 4) have been erected; when *mawlynti* have not been erected the final stones are called *mawbyinna*.

I owe my thanks to U KHLAIN KHARKONGOR of Madan Riting for his tireless companionship in visits to memorials and receptacles of bones. I am indebted to J. P. MILLS for help and suggestions and for several photographs. R. R. MARETT, Rector of Exeter College, Oxford, gave me sympathy and encouragement in my inquiries. The publication of this paper more than twenty years after it has been written has come too late, alas, for my younger son to see his wish fulfilled, as he died in London in 1954; but it may arouse the attention of those of my fellow Khasis who may have little or no knowledge of the words used at the ceremonies. The lack of this knowledge has caused misconceptions of the Khasi attitude to life. I also hope that students of the megalithic culture of Europe and elsewhere may be interested to know what is said during ceremonies in a part of the world where the erection of stones is still a custom.

### 1. The Khasi Family

In relation to the Khasi funeral ceremonies the most important social unit is the *iing*, the minimal matrilineage; the same term – *iing* – means also “family” and “house”.

The Khasis are organized into matrilineal descent groups of different genealogical depth. The largest of these groups, the clan (*jaid*), is exogamous; its members trace their descent from a common ancestress. The clan usually

consists of several *kpoh* or major lineages and each *kpoh* is composed of several *iing*, minimal lineages of about three generations' depth, the head of the *iing* being usually a grandmother.

Property passes from mother to daughters, the youngest daughter receiving a larger share of it as she is the ritual head of the family ; the actual management of the property is in the hands of her maternal uncle or eldest brother. The office of the chief, however, is inherited not through the youngest, but through the eldest daughter.

The husband stays with his wife's family and he works on their fields ; if he is the eldest brother in his own family, he manages the property and business of his younger sister, but never that of his wife.

Some married couples later settle in a house of their own and pool their resources, yet they remain members of different *iing* and clans, and the rôles they have in the mortuary ritual depend on this membership.

The kin of each individual is divided into three groups : all members of a clan call each other *kur* ; the children of male members of the clan are called *khun-kha* ; and relatives through men who married women of the clan are called *ki kha ki man*.

The ceremonies connected with the disposal of the dead are mainly the concern of the *iing*. The bones are first transferred from the individual cist to the family ossuary and later they are brought into the *mawniam*, the ossuary of the whole clan. Though the *mawniam* is common to all the *kpoh* which form the clan and the bones of all their members are at last deposited in it, this ceremony need not be necessarily performed by the whole clan. There is a Khasi phrase *ban da kloï u kur u jaid* – when *u kur u jaid* (clan) are ready, i. e. ready to perform the ceremonies. This means “when the members of the *iing* are ready” it does not mean when all the members of the clan are ready.

## 2. Cremation and Placing of the Bones in an Individual Stone Cist (Called *Mawkynroh* or *Mawphew*)

Khasi funeral ceremonies show the firmness of their belief in the connection between the living and the dead in a family and the influence of the dead on those they left behind.

As soon as life is extinct the body is washed by male relatives or friends. It is dressed in ordinary clothes and laid on a bed, on which is put a raw egg in a dish, plantains and other fruits, Job's tears (edible seeds of *Coix lacrima*) or maize, and also betel-nut. All these things are taken to the place of cremation, which is a fixed place near the village. The cremation usually takes place on the second or third day after death. A level platform is prepared, logs are laid on it, and on them is placed a coffin of planks, which is open both at the top and at the bottom. Then a fire is lighted near the pyre to provide burning brands. The mourners bring the body and place it in the coffin ; firewood is put into the coffin and burning brands are then pushed under it, first by the maternal relatives or the sons, and then by friends and helpers. Then the raw

egg from the bed is thrown against the pyre and the other offerings of food are poured from the dish onto the side of the pyre. Relatives and friends drop betel-nut on the pyre as they leave the place of cremation.

Normally the cremation ceremony is performed by the clansmen of the deceased. However, a married man may be cremated by his children, or even by the widow, if she does not contemplate remarriage ; a wife who died without issue may be cremated by her husband.

As soon as the body has been completely consumed, water is poured on the fire to quench the embers. The bones are then collected by a man and received by a woman, who holds out a white cloth which must not touch the ground. When the cremation ceremony is performed by the clansmen of the deceased, the bones are then collected by his mother's brother, brother or sister's son and received by his mother's sister, sister, or the sister's daughter. When a man is cremated by his children, the bones are collected by his son (or, if he has no son, by his wife's brother or one of her other relatives) and are received by the widow, provided that she does not contemplate remarriage. If she intends to remarry, her daughter, or even her son, receives the bones. Should a widow who has received the bones decide to remarry she must hand them over to the deceased's clansmen before doing so.

Normally a childless widow who intends to remarry does not perform the cremation of her husband. But if there are no maternal relations capable or willing to undertake the task, she may arrange for the cremation of the body in an informal way unaccompanied by any ritual. But the bones should in any case be collected from the cremation place by the man's maternal relatives.

If a widow does not contemplate remarriage, she may cremate her husband and may either take the bones and keep them in a *mawkyuroh* until they are later handed over to the deceased's maternal relatives after the performance of the ceremonies described in section 8, or she may perform the ceremonies described in section 8 before the cremation ; in that case the bones are collected by her and handed over to the maternal relatives of the husband immediately after the cremation, on the way to the house of these relatives.

A husband normally does not conduct the cremation of his wife ; this is the task of her children and clansmen. A wife who died without issue, however, may be cremated by her husband, even though he will not collect the bones ; these are collected and taken by her relatives immediately after the cremation.

The man whose formal duty it is to gather the bones makes three trips in which he collects three or four of the small fragments from the middle of the body of the deceased man or woman and places them in the cloth, which is held by the woman who receives the bones. Other male helpers will then assist and sift the ashes till every remaining fragment of bone has been placed in the cloth. During this stage no ceremonial words are uttered.

The ashes of the pyre are then put into a heap and the woman who received the bones in a white cloth places it with its contents on top of the heap.

Thereupon follows a sanctification ceremony (*jer*), which any knowledgeable man irrespective of clan-membership may conduct. The performer mixes

rice, flour and water and takes a leaf of the *dieng pyrshit* tree, and before putting these items on top of the bones on the pile he says :

*Ko ba duh me ka rymieng, me u Dieng  
wat buh khoh wat buh jaw. Sneng lang  
me u Kni me u Kong, wat buh khoh  
wat buh jaw. Sneng ryngkat me u long  
kha me u man kha, wat buh khoh wat  
buh jaw.*

O thou who hast lost thy stature, thou u Dieng \* have no regrets, feel no bitterness. Give counsel together thou maternal uncle (*u kni*), thou maternal brother (*u kong*), have no regrets, feel no bitterness. Give counsel together thou *u long kha* (who causet to be), thou *u man kha* (who causet to grow) i. e. deceased relations of u Dieng's father's clan (paternal), have no regrets, feel no bitterness.

\* *Dieng* is the name of an imaginary deceased used in formulae throughout this paper. *U Dieng* is a man and *ka Dieng* a woman. In practice the actual name is used.

The sacrificer then places the rice-flour paste and a leaf of the *dieng pyrshit* tree on the bones. The ceremony is the same whether the deceased is a man or a woman.

The cloth containing the bones is then lifted from the ashes and wrapped in another cloth, which is tied to the body of the person who carries the bundle. This person may be of either sex, but must either belong to the deceased's matri-clan or be one of the deceased's descendants. The carrier then sets out for the stone cist where the bones are to be deposited and must never look back on the way from the cremation place till the destination is reached. In front of the carrier walks a man, who may be of any clan, scattering at intervals along the path grains of rice and *dieng pyrshit* leaves. If a stream has to be crossed the leader scatters rice and *dieng pyrshit* leaves on the brink and immediately wading across scatters them on the other bank. Some also tie a thread from one side of the stream to the other. They proceed in this way until finally the cist which is called either *mawkynroh* or *mawphew* is reached.

Relations begin to erect the *mawkynroh* (*mawphew*) cist either in their own garden or on a hillock on the outskirts of their village as soon as the torch of fire is applied to the cremation pyre. This cist is a slab of stone about a foot square placed on the ground and enclosed by other slabs on three sides. A cover stone and stones to close the open side and flat stones to pile round are put ready at hand. As soon as these preparations are completed the builders fetch from the house of the deceased three loaves made of rice-flour and water, which the womenfolk baked as soon as the body left the house for cremation, a cooked egg, a gourd of rice-beer, some water and a *lakhar* leaf, some rice, rice-flour, fermented rice and half-cooked rice, and they bring all these things to the newly built *mawkynroh* cist. There the sacrificer, who may be of any clan, spreads the *lakhar* leaf on the ground and sets up the gourd and lays all the offerings of food and drink, the bread, the rice-flour, the rice, the fermented rice, the egg, with one leaf of *dieng pyrshit* tree on the *lakhar* leaf. He then speaks as follows :

*Kane, phi u Dieng phi dang sah ha  
lum ha wah, phi ka Ramew maw, ka  
Ramew nar, phin ai um ai dieng, phi*

Here you u Dieng, you are (*sah* lit. remain) on the hill and the valley, you the Ramew \* (earth's bowels) of stone, the Ramew

*ka Synshar maw phin ai um ai dieng  
katba dang sah shi taiew ar taiew, shi  
bnai ar bnai.*

(earth's bowels) of iron, you will supply water and wood. You *ka Synshar* (power) over the stone you will supply water, you will supply wood as long as (the bones) remain here whether it will be a week or two weeks, a month or two months.

\* The above invocation is the only one in which other spirits than those of dead relatives are mentioned. *Ka Ramew* is the power controlling the interior parts of the earth and *ka Synshar* means a ruling spirit or power.

When the sacrificer has ceased speaking, the offerings are removed and can be kept or thrown away – they are no longer of any importance. They now wait for the arrival of the bones.

When reaching the place the carrier unfastens the cloth in which the bones are wrapped. The bones are placed inside the cist *mawkynroh* (*mawphew*) either by the carrier himself or by any man but never by a woman. There is nothing said or any ceremony performed when the bones are being placed in this cist. The cist is then closed with the *mawkhang* (door-stone). As soon as the stone is closed the sacrificer takes again a *lakhar* leaf, three loaves, a cooked egg, some rice, powdered rice, fermented rice and half-cooked rice, all of which have been brought again from the house of the deceased. He spreads the *lakhar* leaf on which he places the gourd of fermented rice, the loaves and all the other offerings together with a leaf of the *dieng pyrshit* tree. He then says :

*Me u Dieng, me uba duh ka rynieng  
me uba duh ka rta jong me, wat bukhkoh  
wat buh-jaw ia ka ing ka sem. Sneng  
lang me u Kni me u Kong wat bukhkoh  
buh-jaw. Sneng ryngkat me u Long-kha  
man-kha, wat bukhkoh wat buh-jaw.*

Thou, u Dieng, thou who hast lost thy stature, who hast lost thy age, have no regrets, feel no bitterness against thy house and family. Together favour him with thy kindly counsel thou maternal uncle, thou brother, have no regrets, feel no bitterness. Together favour him with thy kindly counsel, thou who causest to be, thou who causest to grow, have no regrets, feel no bitterness.

The mourners then depart.

This concludes the first stage of the ceremonies. The bones remain there in the *mawkynroh* until the parents or the maternal relations have collected sufficient funds and are ready to perform the subsequent rites.

### 3. Collection of the Bones from the Individual Cists (The *Kynrong Shyieng* Ceremonies)

No divination by egg-breaking is undertaken to determine when the *mawkynroh* of individuals should be opened and the bones collected into one cist. Whenever they can afford to pay for the ceremony, the parents or the lineage members and the children of the brothers and maternal uncles (who are known as *khun-kha khun-long*) agree on a date. They begin with the *mawkynroh* of the eldest of those whose bones are to be collected. A sacrificer

carrying a gourd containing fermented rice mixed with water goes with the party to the *mawkynroh*. Anyone may open the *mawkynroh* and any male member of the matri-lineage of the deceased may take out the bones. These are received by a female member of the lineage in a white cloth, which she holds clear of the ground. She wraps the cloth securely round them and waits there while the sacrificer makes an oblation with the rice-beer from the gourd on the opened *mawkynroh* with the following words :

*Kane mo ia phi u/ka Dieng ban  
kyntiew ing kyntiew sem.*

Here now for you u/ka Dieng to bring thee up into the house, to bring thee up into the dwelling place.

The bones are then carried to the house where in the courtyard the party awaits the arrival of the bones from all the other *mawkynrohs*, where the same ceremony was performed.

On this occasion the bones of those who have died in the house of their wives and have been cremated by their children are taken over from the children by the deceased's lineage members who meet them on the way from the house of the deceased's maternal relations, where the bones are being collected. This entails special ceremonies which are described in section 8.

A mat has been spread in the courtyard of the house to which the bones from the various *mawkynrohs* are to be brought. The bones of u/ka Dieng, who is the eldest of the deceased, are received first. The maternal kinswoman, who carried the bones of u/ka Dieng, holds the bones on the mat ; she undoes the cloth and onto these bones of u/ka Dieng parties who have already arrived and others as they arrive heap the bones brought from the various *mawkynrohs* of other deceased relations ; and when all have been collected, the woman carries all the bones in the cloth inside the house where she places them in the cloth on a bed, on which a *shlan* mat (*shylliah shlan*, a mat made of *shlan* reeds) is spread. The sacrificer then makes oblations (*suid*) with rice-beer on the floor in the *nongpei* (open space in the Khasi house in front of the hearth) and says :

*Kane la kyntiew ing kyntiew sem ia phi  
u/ka Dieng.*

Here now u/ka Dieng, thou hast been brought up into the house, thou hast been brought up into the dwelling place.

The sacrificer pours out a small quantity of rice-beer once more as oblation, saying :

*Hei wat buh khoh wat buh jaw, to sneng  
ryngkat phi u Kni phi u Kong.*

Hei, do not repine do not be filled with regret. Give counsel thou maternal uncle, thou brother.

Again he pours an oblation saying :

*sneng ryngkat phi u man kha long kha.*

Give counsel, thou who causest to be, thou who causest to grow.

Thus it is three times that the sacrificer pours out libations.

Only the name of u/ka Dieng, the seniormost of those whose bones have been collected, is mentioned, though the bones of other deceased lineage members have been brought.

This ceremony of taking the bones from the *mawkyroh* stones and bringing them to the house can be performed any time of the day or even at night, but on the completion of these ceremonies of gathering the bones home no other ceremonies are performed that night.

The next morning the relations of those whose bones have been collected sacrifice a bull or a cow. The animal must be healthy, but it need not be of any special colour or marked in any particular way. They bring the animal to the courtyard near the front door of the house ; they do not tie it up, men just keep it from escaping. The sacrificer speaks as follows :

*Mynta la kyntiew ing la kyntiew sem  
ia phi u/ka Dieng bad ryngkat ia phi  
ki 6-100 ngut.*

Now this has been brought up into the house, has been brought up into the dwelling place, thou u/ka Dieng and ye (so many, say 6 or 100) persons.

The total number of persons whose bones have been collected is given, but only u/ka Dieng, the senior, is named.

The sacrificer then scatters rice over the animal eleven times, counting one, two, three up to eleven. He then gives orders to strike the beast with sticks. The animal is not killed by stabbing, cutting, or by shooting, but is clubbed to death with sticks by the villagers.

When the animal is thus killed the men of the village cut it open and remove the sacramental portions (*iashim dkhot*). These are two portions from the liver, two from the heart, three from the rectus spinal, two from the large intestines, two from the kidneys, two from the lungs, two from the small intestines, one from the stomach, one from the spleen, and one from the meat of the neck, making eighteen in all. The sacred portions are separated into three heaps of ten, five and three portions. It does not matter how the pieces are grouped, care being taken only that all the portions from one part of the animal are not placed in the same heap. Some clans take as many as 24 pieces increasing the number of pieces from those parts of the animal mentioned above. Some clans, on the other hand, take only eight pieces, but these must include portions from the liver, rectus spinal, heart, large intestines and kidneys ; whatever the variation, these five pieces are essential and are called *dohiong*. One portion from the neck, one from the small intestines, and one from the lungs are called *dohpha*. The other remaining pieces, ordinarily ten, are called *khwang*. Along with the above, the frontal bone and the lower jaw are taken. All these are carried inside the house and the five pieces of *dohiong* are roasted on spits over the fire. The *dohpha* is cooked, the *khwang* is not cooked. Each of the five pieces of roasted *dohiong* is cut into three, and so three piles of *dohiong* are made, each pile composed of the five different kinds. The frontal bone and the lower jaw and the *khwang* are put in the *nongpei* (inside the house near the front door). Then the sacrificer sits down near the door, facing outside and asks for water. Holding the five pieces of one pile of

*dohiong* in his left hand and receiving water into the hollow of his right hand he says :

*Kane ka um pyngad, ka um pyngjang  
ba la kyntiew ing ia phi, u/ka Dieng,  
phin rngih phin rngon ba la hap u  
dkhot u khyllai.*

Here is refreshing water, invigorating water, for thou, u/ka Dieng, which has been brought into the house, thou wilt be content, thou wilt be satisfied now that pieces (*dkhot*) and sacramental portions (literally : kidneys) have fallen.

Having said the formula the sacrificer sprinkles with the water in his right hand the pieces of *dohiong* in his left hand. He is then given the *skaw* (gourd) containing water and fermented rice into his right hand ; still holding the *dohiong* in his left hand, he gets up and goes to the bed on which the bones are. Placing the *dohiong* near the bones he says :

*Kane mynta la kyntiew iing ia phi,  
u/ka Dieng, ryngkhat ki 6-100 ngut  
(khllem ong kyrteng) ba la pang nud ki  
pyrsa ki para, ba la hap une u dkhot  
u khyllai.*

Now u/ka Dieng thou hast been brought into the house with so many (giving the number of persons whose bones are brought, without mentioning names), that nephews, nieces, brothers and sisters have felt bereaved, that pieces and sacramental portions have fallen (meaning "prepared for sacrifice").

He pours liquor from the hole at the end of the narrow neck of the gourd over the *dohiong*. He then goes to the *madan rympei* (open space in front of the hearth) and picking up another group of *dohiong* he says again :

*Mynta la kyntiew ia phi, u/ka Dieng,  
to sneng ryngkhat phi u Kni phi u Kong  
ryngkhat ki 6/100 ngut.*

Now that thou, u/ka Dieng hast been brought into the house give counsel together thou maternal uncle, thou brother, together with the 6/100 (giving the exact number of the dead without names).

He then lays the *dohiong* on the floor and pours an oblation over them. Taking the remaining *dohiong* from the dish he says :

*Sneng ryngkat, phi long kha man kha  
ba la hap u dkhot la hap u khyllai.*

Give counsel together thou who causest to be, thou who causest to grow, now that the pieces of meat and sacramental portions have fallen.

These pieces too he places on the floor and pours a libation over them.

When this ritual is completed, the *khwang*, the frontal bone and the lower jaw are taken from near the door and placed together with the *dohpha* inside the house.

On the same day on which the bull or cow is killed and the sacramental portions are offered (*noh dkhot*), a new *mawkynroh* (cist) is built either in the garden or in the open outside but not far from the house. As soon as the *mawkynroh* is ready, the mother or the sister or sister's daughter carries the bones in the cloth in which they were wrapped to the *mawkynroh*. There a male relation, a maternal uncle, brother or sister's son, takes the bones and deposits them inside the *mawkynroh*; he then tears the cloth in which they were wrapped up into two strips which he places on the *mawkynroh*.

When the bones are taken out of the house, the lower jaw, the frontal bone with the horns, the *khwang*, the *dohpha*, the gourd, a *lakhar* leaf, three *japha* loaves, fermented rice, a hard boiled egg, a bamboo stem filled with water, a *dieng pyrshit* tree, half-cooked rice, and rice-flour are also brought along to the *mawkynroh*. First of all the bones are placed inside the cist, then the cist is closed with the *mawkhang* (entrance stone) against which three big stones are put.

The sacrificer pours water over the egg from the bamboo stem. He takes a pinch of each of the three loaves, cuts three pieces, one from each of the three portions of the *dohpha*, holds them in his hand and says :

*Kane la kyntiew ing ia phi u/ka Dieng  
tang ba phin dang sah hi mynta ha lum  
ha wah, tang ba la hap u dkhoh u  
khyllai ia phi, ryngkat phi ki 6/100  
ngut (khlem ong kyrteng).*

Here now thou u/ka Dieng hast been brought unto the house though wilt still remain on the hill and in the vale though pieces and sacramental portions have fallen unto you together with the (mentioning the number without the names.)

The sacrificer then puts the sacramental offerings on the *lakhar* leaf near the gourd.

The sacrificer again takes pinches of the loaves and cuts off the three portions of the *dohpha*, saying :

*Sneng ryngkat phi u Kni, phi u Kong,  
ba la kyntiew ing ia phi u/ka Dieng  
ryngkat ki 6/100 ngut.*

Give counsel together thou maternal uncle, thou brother now that thou u/ka Dieng hast been brought unto the house with the (6/100 or any number).

The sacrificer puts the offerings on the leaf near the gourd.

The sacrificer pinches off and cuts again of the loaves and the *dohpha* and says :

*Sneng ryngkat phi u long kha man kha  
ba la hap u dkhoh la hap u khyllai.*

Give counsel together thou who causest to be, who causest to grow, that the pieces and sacramental portions (fragments) have fallen.

The sacrificer places the offerings on the leaf near the gourd.

The sacrificer takes the hard-boiled egg over which he has sprinkled water as described. He peels off the shell and cuts off a slice of the smaller end, giving the rest of the egg to the people around him. He takes up the gourd and makes an oblation (*suid*) pouring out *iyndem* (fermented rice mixed with water) from the gourd over the slice cut from the egg saying :

*Phi u/ka Dieng ryngkat phi ki 6/100  
ngut lada phi buh khoh lup san kynti,  
lada phim but khoh liem shi kynti lup  
shi kynti.*

Thou u/ka Dieng together thou the 6/100 (whatever the actual number) if you repine and have regrets, appear on the reverse five times, if you have no regret appear on the obverse once and on the reverse once.

Then he throws the slice of the egg onto the *lakhar* leaf. If it falls showing once the reverse and once the obverse side, he pronounces that everything is favourable and puts away the slice of egg ; if it does not fall thus, further ceremonies not described here have to be performed until he at length declares the auspices to be good.

After this the sacrificer again takes pinches from the three loaves and cuts again pieces from the three portions of the *dohpha*, and he takes up all the fermented rice, the half-cooked rice, the shell of the egg, and the other articles of food and he says :

*Kane la kyntiew ing ia phi u/ka Dieng  
ryngkat ki 6/100 ngut. Kane la hap  
bad jaot, bad dkhoh bad khyllai bad  
shynrong bad shyntaw.*

Here thou u/ka Dieng hast been brought unto the house together with the 6/100, here have fallen (i. e. have been offered) the uncooked rice the pieces and sacramental portions and the shell and covering.

He places all these things on the ground near the stone (not on top of it) saying at the same time :

*Ioh phi ong tang u shynrong u shyntaw,  
kane bad ka iad hiar ka iad bang.*

Lest you say only the shell, the covering, here is also the fermented liquor the invigorating liquor.

And he pours out an oblation (*suid*) on the *lakhar* leaf which has been spread near the gourd. The meat offerings, the gourd, the water, the bread, and all the articles of food are poured in offering (*noh*) at the entrance of the cist.

This completes the second stage of the journey of the dead towards the final resting place.

Stones are sometimes heaped on top of the cover stone of the *mawkynroh*. In the Cherra area *mawkynroh* stones are often shaped with a chisel, the cover stone being square or rounded. Three closing stones are placed on the entrance side though this is not always the case when the *mawkynroh* is made for a single individual as described in section 2.

#### 4. The Great Cist Ceremonies (*Thep Mawbah - Mawniam*)

The last stage in the journey of the dead is the conveying of the bones to the *mawbah* (big stone), otherwise called the *mawniam* (stone of religious ceremony), and the placing of the bones within it (*thep*). This is their final resting place; it is the ossuary for the bones of all the members of all the lineages descended from a common ancestress. To perform this final ritual is the duty of the members of the matri-clan (*u kur u jaid*), but the descendants of male members of the clan (*u khun kha khun long*) have their share in the ceremonies. They all consult together and when they can afford the heavy expense they fix a date for the rite. This may be years after the placing of the bones in the *mawkynroh*.

When it is decided to perform the ceremony, stones must be collected for the sides of a rectangular mound called *kynton*. This *kynton* is then given the name of the eldest person whose bones are to be moved, and as in previous sections, the fictitious name of u/ka Dieng will be used for this person in the formulae. Before the building of the *kynton* is completed they look around for stones for the *mawlynti* (stones of the way or path). These are three upright stones and one horizontal table stone placed flat in front of the middle upright stone and it is supported by stones placed below it so that it lies a foot or more

above the ground ; the table stone is called *mawkynthei* (female stone), the middle upright stone is called *mawkni* (maternal uncle stone), the other stones have no names.

On the day the mound is being completed, the stones of the *mawlynti* are dragged there and erected near the mound to the sound of a drum. Most villagers help in this work, men make the mound and erect the *mawlynti* and women help with the cooking and serving of the *jakhawnei*. Immediately after the stones have been put up, the lineage members provide a feast of Job's tears (the edible seeds of the cultivated *Coix lacrima*) boiled together with *nei* (Indian sesame). It is eaten in the open near the *mawlynti* and *kynton* and all partake who have shared in the work.

After the feast they all go to the family house where the relatives offer in sacrifice a pig, called *u 'niang kynton*, the pig of the mound, which should be a boar of good size. The pig is laid down outside near the house door. The sacrificer asks for rice ; he holds the rice in his right hand and says :

*Mynta haba la ieng ka kynton ka  
barut ia phi u/ka Dieng ba phin rngih  
ba phin rngon, ba la bei ba la thait ia  
phi u/ka Dieng ba la hap u 'niang iong,  
u 'niang bah, u 'niang kynton.*

Now that the mound is set up for thee oh u/ka Dieng so that thou wilt feel content feel satisfaction, that funds have been raised and expended for thee oh u/ka Dieng, for now has fallen unto you u/ka Dieng a dark pig, a great pig, the *'niang kynton*, pig of the mound.

He dedicates (*dūt*) the animal by throwing rice eleven times over it along the shoulders and its back, after which anyone of the people kills the pig by thrusting a wooden or bamboo pike behind its shoulder blade. Then the men of the village cut open the pig and remove the sacramental portions (*iashim dkhot*). These are portions from the kidneys, rectus spinal, liver, heart and large intestines, which are called the *dohiong* ; with these portions the lower jaw is also taken.

They put the *dohiong* portions on a wooden or iron spit and hold them over the fire until the meat is well roasted. Then they cut each of these five pieces of *dohiong* into three, making three piles of *dohiong*, each pile consisting of five pieces ; they place them in a basin in the *nongpei* (inside the house in front of the hearth near the door). The sacrificer sits down in the *nongpei* facing the door, he takes one pile of *dohiong* with his left hand and calls for water which he receives in his right hand, saying :

*Kane ka um pyngad ka ba la ieng u  
'niang kynton.*

Here is the refreshing water for which the pig of the mound has stood up (roused himself.)

He then sprinkles the meat in his left hand with water. He asks for the *skaw* gourd in which is placed water and fermented rice and says :

*Khmih ia phi u/ka Dieng ba la bei ba  
la thait ban poi phi u/ka Dieng ha ka  
niam, ba la ieng u 'niang kynton ia  
phi u/ka Dieng.*

Behold for thee u/ka Dieng that funds have been raised and expenditure met that thou u/ka Dieng will reach or attain unto the religion (or ceremonies), that the pig of the mound has stood up for thee u/ka Dieng.

He places the meat on the floor and pours out a libation (*suïd*) from the *skaw* gourd. The sacrificer takes another pile of the *dohiong* from the basin in his left hand, and says :

*Kumba la bei kumba la thait ia phi  
u/ka Dieng ba la ieng ka kynton ba  
phin rngih ba phin rngon wat buh  
khoh wat buh jaw.*

As it has been raised and expended for thee u/ka Dieng that the *kynton* mound has been set up for thee to feel content and satisfaction, do not repine do not be regretful.

He places the meat on the floor and pours out an oblation (*suïd*) from the *skaw* gourd. Then he takes the last heap of the *dohiong* from the basin and holds it in his left hand, saying :

*Kane mynta ba la ieng ka kynton ia  
phi u/ka Dieng ba phin poi ha ka mei  
kha ka mei pun, ha u Kni ha u Kong.*

Now then that the *kynton* mound has stood up for thee u/ka Dieng so that thou wilt reach unto the mother that has given thee birth that has borne thee, unto the (maternal) uncle and unto the brother.

He places the *dohiong* on the floor and pours out a libation on the meat. The sacrificer then takes the lower jaw and trusts it between the thatch and the rafters above the doorway (*tynsat ha tyndai hapoh ing*).

After the sacrifice of the 'niang *kynton* pig, they beat the drums. The *khun-kha* (children of the male members of the lineage) come to take banners from the lineage members as soon as the mound and the *mawlynti* stones are erected.

Then the lineage members, beating drums, set out to take the bones from the *mawkynroh*. They bring the bones to the courtyard in front of the house. There may be bones lying still in a *mawshieng* or small individual *mawkynroh*, which have not been transferred to the big *mawkynroh* as yet. Such bones are also brought to the courtyard. Perhaps the wife or children of a lineage member had cremated their husband or father and put the bones in a small *mawkynroh* as is described below in section 8. The relatives collect these bones also and bring them to the courtyard. The mother or any woman of the matri-lineage, who is not pregnant, receives the bones when they are taken out of the big *mawkynroh* in a piece of white cloth, and she places them on a mat spread in the courtyard. The bones brought from the *mawshieng* or small *mawkynrohs* are poured among the bones taken from the big *mawkynroh*. The woman lifts the cloth with the bones every time she receives the bones from those who bring them. The rice-beer from the gourds of those who bring the bones from the small *mawkynrohs* is poured into the gourd of those who bring bones from the big *mawkynroh*. This gourd is set up with the bones on the mat. They tear up the cloths in which the bones were brought. Then they take all the bones inside the house and the women make a wailing sound while this is being done. All the bones are placed on the *shlan* mat which is brought from the courtyard and spread on a bed or any suitable place in the house near the hearth. The gourd is also brought from outside into the house and the sacrificer offers an oblation from it, saying first :

*Kumba la poi ing poi sem phi u/ka Dieng bad baroh shiphew (shiphew ne khadsan ne arphew kat kiba la lum shyieng ryngkat) ngut bynriew, kumba la bei la thait ia phi u/ka Dieng bad baroh shiphew ngut bynriew ban ia poi ha ka niam ka rukom, ha u Kni u Kong. Kumba la bei la thait ia phi u/ka Dieng baroh shiphew ngut, wat buh khoh wat buh jaw ba phin poi ha ka niam ryngkat u 'Ni u Kong bad mei-kha mei-pun.*

As now thou u/ka Dieng have reached the house with all thou the ten (ten or fifteen or twenty as many as whose bones have been collected) human beings, as now funds have been raised and expended for thee u/ka Dieng and all the (ten) human beings so that thou mayest reach unto the religion (ceremonies and rites), unto the uncle (maternal) and the brother, as funds have been raised and expended for thee u/ka Dieng and all the (ten) do not repine, be not regretful so that thou mayest reach unto the religion (rites and ceremonies) together with the uncle (maternal) the brother and the mother who gives birth and the mother who bears.

After that the sacrificer makes an oblation (*suid*) and pours out all the fermented rice mixed with water from the gourd into the *nongpei*. Then they burn some Job's tears in the fire in the hearth and as they burst they collect the Job's tears either from the hearth or those which have leapt first out onto the floor around ; they tie up nine of them together with a thread while others tie other nine grains with another string, making thus two bundles. When that has been done they take the bones with a cloth and put them in a small basket woven like a *krong* (a Khasi coffin woven of split bamboo). The bundles of Job's tears are also put inside the basket on top of the bones and the basket is then placed on the mat of *shlan* reeds. Inside the basket are put also three pieces of *japung* reed, cut about the length of three fingers. They bring three loaves of rice or Job's tears cooked in water, they boil an egg and prepare half-boiled rice. The sacrificer first asks for the gourd with rice-beer and also for the *lakhar* leaf, fermented rice, powdered rice, rice, and a *dieng pyrshit* leaf. The sacrificer lays down the *lakhar* leaf, he places the gourd upon the leaf ; he then takes up the fermented rice, the egg, the rice, the half-boiled rice, the *dieng pyrshit* leaf, and the loaves, and he places them in a basin in the *nongpei*. The sacrificer pinches off a piece from each of the three loaves and says :

*Kumba la bei la thait ia phi u/ka Dieng bad ki shiphew ngut, kane ba phin poi ma phi ha ka niam ha u 'Ni ha u Kong.*

As funds have been raised and expended for thee u/ka Dieng and the (ten or whatever may be the number of dead) that thou mayest reach (attain) unto the religion (i. e. rites and ceremonies) unto the uncle (maternal) and brother.

He places all those parts which he has pinched off on that *lakhar* leaf. Then he pinches off another piece of the three loaves and says :

*Sneng ryngkat Kni, Kong, meikha, meipun ba phin leit ha ka niam.*

Give counsel together thou the uncle (maternal), the brother, thou the mother who giveth birth, who beareth, so that you may get into the religion (rites and ceremonies).

He places them on the leaf. Then he pinches off another piece of the three loaves and says :

*Sneng ryngkat phi long kha man kha,  
kumba la bei kumba la thait ia phi  
u/ka Dieng shiphew ngut.*

Give counsel together oh thou who causes to be who causest to grow, as funds have been raised and expended for thee u/ka Dieng and the ten (whatever the number may be).

He again places them on the leaf. He takes the cooked egg and holds it with his left hand, he receives water in his right hand and he pours water once over the cooked egg, and peels off the shell onto the leaf where the materials are. He cuts off a bit of the small end of the egg and he pours a libation (*suid*) on the cut portion, and he tosses it so that it falls once on the reverse and once on the obverse. He places this slice of the egg with the other articles. After this he pinches off another piece from each loaf, he holds the pieces in his right hand together with those which he had pinched from the loaves before and he says :

*Kumba la bei la thait ia phi u/ka  
Dieng shiphew ngut, te mynta la hap  
ine i ja tyrsaw, te mynta ryngkat u  
shynrong ryngkat u shyntaw.*

As funds have been raised and expended for thee u/ka Dieng and the ten (or whatever the number may be), there has fallen this *ja tyrsaw* food, there now with the shell and the covering.

He then places all the materials on the *lakhar* leaf near the basin. He pours a libation (*suid*) of fermented rice and water on the things on the *lakhar* leaf. He pours all the rice-beer from the gourd.

Then they beat drums and the sacrificer asks for a cock and some rice, and he takes three sticks of the size of fingers both in thickness and in length, and he says :

*Ia phi u/ka Dieng shiphew ngut, kumba  
la bei ia phi u/ka Dieng shiphew ngut,  
kane la hap u syngkhong lam lynti, ban  
poi ma phi ha tynrai ka niam, ma phi  
u/ka Dieng shiphew ngut.*

For thee u/ka Dieng and the ten, as funds have been raised for thee u/ka Dieng and the ten, here has fallen the *syngkhong lam lynti* (the supporter who leads the way) so that you may reach unto the root of the religion (ceremonies) thou u/ka Dieng and the ten.

Then he dedicates (*dūt*) the cock by throwing rice over it eleven times. They do not tie the cock. The sacrificer cuts the neck of the cock and lets the blood drop on the sticks. He takes out the small intestines and the liver, and he roasts them in the fire. He cuts one bit from the small intestines and then one bit from the liver in turn ; he does this fifteen times and he places the pieces in a basin, making three heaps of them. These pieces are called *dohiong*. While this is being done they beat the drum ; the sacrificer sings the cock, he cuts off the wings, the head, and the thighs. These are called *dohpha*; they are put apart carefully. Then the sacrificer takes one heap of *dohiong* in his left hand, he asks for water which he receives into his right hand and he sprinkles the *dohiong* with the water. He then asks for the *skaw* gourd, which he holds in his right hand, saying :

*Ba la hap u syngkhong lam lynti ia phi  
u/ka Dieng shiphew ngut, ban poi ma  
phi ha ka niam.*

That the *syngkhong lam lynti* (the supporter who leads the way) has fallen for thee u/ka Dieng and the (ten), so that you may reach unto the religion (ceremonies).

He puts the *dohiong* on the ground and pours a libation (*suid*) over it from the *skaw*. Then he takes again another heap and says :

*To sneng ryngkat, bthah ryngkat pni  
u Kni, u Kong, mei-kha mei-pun ia  
u/ka Dieng shiphew ngut.*

Give counsel together give advice together  
thou uncle (maternal), thou brother, thou  
mother who givest birth, who bearest, to  
u/ka Dieng and the (ten).

Thereupon he places the *dohiong* on the ground and pours out a libation (*suid*) from the *skaw* gourd. Then he takes the remaining heap of *dohiong* from the basin, saying :

*To sneng ryngkat long kha man kha  
kumba la bei la thait la hap u syngkhong  
lam lynti.*

Give counsel together thou who causest to be  
who causest to grow as funds have been  
raised and expended, has fallen the *syngkhong*  
*lam lynti* (the supporter who leads the way).

He puts the *dohiong* on the ground. Then he makes an oblation (*suid*) by pouring out all the contents from the *skaw* gourd onto all the *dohiong* which he has now put all together on the ground.

After this the sacrificer asks for a cow and a bull. Taking rice from the house he dedicates (or consecrates) (*dūt*) both animals at one and the same time by throwing rice over them eleven times. They do not tie up the animals, they let them stand unbound, but they see to it that they do not escape. Any bull or cow will do but they must not be suffering from any sickness ; they need not be spotless ones. After the dedication they strike the animals to death with sticks. They kill both animals at the same time. They cut them up and remove the sacramental portions (*shim dkhot*) : they take a piece of the liver, the kidney, the heart, the large intestines, and of the rectus spinal for the *dohiong* : they take also portions of the small intestines, the stomach, the spleen, the spinal rectus muscle and the lungs, for the *khwang*. They take exactly the same portions from both animals. They take also portions for the *dohpha* from the meat in the neck, the small intestines and the lungs. They keep also the lower jaws and the frontal bones with the horns of both animals. They roast the *dohiong* and when the pieces are well done they cut each of them into three and put them in a basin. The sacrificer keeps the lower jaws, the frontal bones and the *khwang* in the *nongpei* ; there in the *nongpei* he takes one heap of the *dohiong* in his left hand, he takes water in his right hand and sprinkles the *dohiong* with the water ; then he asks for the *skaw* gourd with rice-beer and he says :

*Kane ba la hap u masi ia phi u/ka  
Dieng shiphew ngut, ba la bei ba la  
thait ba phin poi ha ka niam ka rukom.*

Here now that a bull has fallen unto thee  
u/ka Dieng, that funds have been raised and  
expended so that you may get unto the  
religion (ceremonies) and rites.

He puts the *dohiong* on the floor and pours a libation (*suid*). He then takes another heap of *dohiong*, saying :

*To sneng lang phi u Kni u Kong, mei-  
kha mei-pun, ba poi u/ka Dieng shiphew  
ngut ha tynrai ka niam.*

Give counsel thou uncle (maternal), brother,  
thou mother who giveth birth and who  
bearest so that u/ka Dieng and the (ten) may  
reach unto the root of the religion (unto the  
perfection of complete ceremonies).

He places the pieces of meat on the ground and pours out a libation ; then he takes up the last heap of *dohiong*, saying :

*Sneng ryngkat bthah ryngkat phi man  
kha long kha ban poi u/ka Dieng ryngkat  
ki shiphew ngut ha ka tynrai ka niam.*

Give counsel together, give advice together, thou who causest to grow who causest to be, so that u/ka Dieng together with the (ten) may reach unto the perfection of complete ceremonies (*ha ka tynrai ka niam*).

He puts the *dohiong* on the ground and pours out all the rice-beer from the *skaw* gourd. They remove the *khwang* and the lower jaw from the *nongpei* and put them safely away.

When this part of the ritual has been accomplished, they dance with the fly-flaps made of goat's hair (*shad symphiah*), beat drums and play the flute (*put shyngwiang*). This flute is made of bamboo and has seven finger-holes. Two persons dance with the fly-flaps, three beat the drums, and two, three or four play the flutes ; they dance thus all night till the dawn.

The next morning, before anything else is done, the sacrificer takes rice (*u khaw*) from the house in a basket, which is called *u khaw rawai*. This is a dedication by throwing rice from inside the house to the courtyard. The sacrificer stands at the door and, before throwing the rice, he says :

*Une u khaw rawai la bei ia phi u/ka  
Dieng shiphew ngut, la hap une u  
khaw rawai.*

Here is *u khaw rawai* expended for thee u/ka Dieng and the (ten), the *khaw rawai* has fallen.

He throws the rice to the courtyard, then he says :

*Kane ba la bei ia phi u/ka Dieng  
shiphew ngut, sneng ryngkat phi u Kni  
u Kong, ka mei-kha mei-pun.*

Here that is expended for thee u/ka Dieng and the (ten) give counsel together, thou uncle (maternal), the brother, the mother who giveth birth the mother who bearest.

He throws again rice from the basket ; he takes the rice again and says :

*Sneng ryngkat, phi long-kha man-kha  
ba la hap u khaw rawai ia phi u/ka  
Dieng 10 ngut.*

Give advice together thou who causest to be who causest to grow that the *khaw rawai* has fallen for thee u/ka Dieng and the (ten).

Having said this the sacrificer throws the remaining rice from the basket to the courtyard. He takes every time as much rice as he can hold in the palms of both hands and then he throws it ; in this way he uses about half a pound or one pound of rice in all.

The lower jaws, the frontal bones, the *khwang* and the *dohpha* which have been kept from the cow and bull sacrifice are taken to the newly made *mawlynti*. Only men go there ; they take with them also a gourd, three loaves, one boiled egg, rice-flour, half-cooked rice, fermented rice, *dieng pyrshit* tree leaf, rice, and a *lakhar* leaf. When they reach the *mawlynti* stones, they spread the *lakhar* leaf on the *mawkynthei* stone (dolmen). They make the gourd stand on the *lakhar* leaf. The sacrificer pinches a piece off each of the loaves and he cuts one portion from each piece of the *dohpha* ; holding all these bits of the loaves and of the *dohpha* in his right hand the sacrificer says :

*Kane la hap u Mawlynti Mawsyngkien, la hap ka pha ka siang ia phi u/ka Dieng bad ryngkat ki shiphew ngut ba phin leit ha ka niam.*

Here has fallen (i. e. been placed) the stone of the way, the stone of the path, has fallen (i. e. been placed) the feeding and the spreading for thee u/ka Dieng and you the (ten) together so that you may go unto the religion (rites and ceremonies).

He places the food in his hand on the leaf. He again pinches off pieces of the loaves and cuts pieces of each portion of the *dohpha* and holding them in his right hand he says :

*Kane ba la hap u Mawlynti u Mawsyngkien, ba la hap ka pha ka siang to sneng ryngkat phi u Kni u Kong, ka mei-kha mei-pun ia u/ka Dieng ryngkat shiphew ngut.*

Here now that the *Mawlynti Mawsyngkien* has fallen, the feeding and the satisfying give counsel together thou uncle (maternal), brother, and thou mother who giveth birth, who bearest to u/ka Dieng together with the (ten).

He places the food on the leaf which is laid upon the stone. Once again he pinches of the loaves, cuts pieces of the *dohpha*, and holding them in his right hand he says :

*Kane ba la hap u Mawlynti u Mawsyngkien, ban sneng ryngkat phi long-kha man-kha ia u/ka Dieng ryngkat shiphew ngut.*

Here now that the *Mawlynti Mawsyngkien* has fallen (i. e. been placed) that thou who causest to be and who causest to grow give counsel together with the (ten).

He puts the pieces upon the leaf. He takes the boiled egg, pours water over it, he peels off the shell, cuts off the small end of the egg, and he pours a libation over this slice saying :

*Phin liem shi kynti, phin lup shi kynti.*

You will turn on the obverse once, you will turn on the reverse once.

He throws the slice of the egg so that it falls once on the obverse and once on the reverse on the leaf, after which he tosses it once more. He pinches off another piece from each of the three loaves and cuts once again from each piece of the *dohpha*; taking all these bits in his right hand he says :

*Kane ka khmih ioh phi ong tang u kpu, kane bad shyntaw bad shyntaw.*

Here lest you say only the bread, but here it is with the shell and the cover.

He puts all these pieces also on the leaf upon the *mawkynthei* (dolmen). He pours a libation (*suid*) from the *klong* (gourd) saying :

*Kane khmih ioh phi ong tang u shyntaw tang u kpu, kane ryngkat ka 'Iad hiar ka 'iad bang.*

Here lo and behold lest you say only the shell only the cover only the bread, here together is the fermented rice-beer, the good beer.

He then pours all the contents of the gourd upon the articles of food. Both the lower jaws, the frontal bones with horns and the *khwang* meat are tied to a stick right over the *mawkni* (the uncle stone), the tallest stone which stands in the middle. Then they return to the house where the people are having a feast of rice.

On their return from the *mawlynti* stones they beat the drums, play the *shyngwiang* flutes (*put shyngwiang*) and dance the *symphiah* dance with the fly-flaps (*shad symphiah*) inside the house.

Then three more cattle are brought in (these may be all cows or all bulls or both bulls and cows), there should not be less than three animals as *mawlynti* stones have been erected, but there may be more of them. The lineage members sacrifice these animals just as they did the previous day. The three cattle are made to stand in the courtyard; they are not tied but only prevented from escaping. Rice is brought in a basket and the sacrificer throws rice eleven times over all the animals together. Then they beat them to death, after which the sacramental portions are removed from one of the animals killed: pieces from the liver, the heart, the kidney, the spinal rectus muscle and the large intestines form the *dohiong*; then they cut a small portion of each of the *dohiong* and they take also the small intestines, the lungs, the stomach, spinal rectus and the spleen; these pieces they call the *khwang*; the *dohpha* consists of the portions of the meat in the neck, the lungs and the small intestines. They take also the lower jaw and the frontal bones with horns. They do likewise with each of the cattle killed.

They take all the sacramental portions with the horns and the lower jaws inside the house. They keep aside the *dohpha* in some place inside the house where no animal (dog, cat or rat) can reach it. They place the *khwang*, the lower jaws and the horns in the *nongpei*, the part of the house in front of the hearth. They roast well the pieces of *dohiong* over the fire on an iron or a wooden spit; then they cut these portions of *dohiong* into three pieces each, forming thus three separate heaps which they place in a basin. Then the sacrificer calls for water and performs the sacrifice in the part of the house in front of the hearth near which the *khwang* and the horns have been kept. The sacrificer takes one heap of *dohiong* with his left hand, he sprinkles it with water with his right hand, after which he asks for the *skaw* (gourd) which he takes in his right hand saying:

*Kane kumba la bei ia phi u/ka Dieng  
ryngkat shiphew ngut, kumba la bei ia  
phi da ki pyrsa ki para ba phin poi ha  
ka niam ka rukom, kane bad u dkhoh  
bad u khyllai.*

Here now as funds have been raised and expended for thee u/ka Dieng together with the (ten), as funds have been raised and expended by the nephews, nieces, brothers and sisters, so that you may reach unto the religion (ceremonies) and rites, here now with the pieces and fragments.

He places the pieces of meat on the floor, pours a libation (*suid*) from the *skaw* (gourd) which contains fermented rice mixed with water. The sacrificer then takes another heap of *dohiong* and offers it in sacrifice saying:

*Kane ban sneng ryngkat phi u Kni u  
Kong, kane ba la bei ia phi u/ka Dieng  
ki shiphew ngut da ki pyrsa, ki para,  
ba phin poi ha ka niam.*

Here give counsel together thou uncle (maternal), brother, here now that funds have been raised and expended for thee u/ka Dieng and the (ten) by nephews, nieces, brothers and sisters, so that you may reach unto the religion (rites and ceremonies).

He places the pieces of meat on the floor and pours a libation (*suid*) from the *skaw* (gourd). Then the sacrificer takes up the third heap saying :

*Kane phin sneng ryngkat phi u long-kha u man-kha kumba la bei ki pyrsa ki para ia u/ka Dieng ryngkat ki shiphew ngut ba phin poi ha ka niam.*

Here you will give counsel together thou who causest to be and who causest to grow as funds have been raised and expended by the nephews and nieces, the brothers and sisters for thee u/ka Dieng together with the (ten) so that you may reach unto the religion (rites and ceremonies).

He places the meat on the floor and pours a libation (*suid*) from the *skaw* (gourd).

As the sacrificer goes on with the ceremonies, two persons, not more than two, play the drums. This is the play of the *ksing niam*, the drum of religion, i. e. the drum of ceremonies.

After the completion of these ceremonies which have been performed by the maternal kin who also bore the entire expenditure, they call for a pig (or a bull or a cow) from the father (or the house or family of the father) who comes to perform *phur mastieh*, which is the ceremony of bringing to the house of the children a pig (or a bull or a cow) with the banner and to the accompaniment of drums and dancing. The beating of the drums and the *shad mastieh* dance is done first at a distance from the house. The pig is brought into the courtyard up to the *kyndop* (portico) at the entrance of the house, where it is untied and is only held with the hands. Rice-beer or distilled liquor is also brought and those who bring it take the liquor inside the house ; the sacrificer who pours out the libation says :

*Kane la wan hap ka ummat ka umpung, ka 'iad rong na u kpa ia u/ka Dieng bad ki shiphew ngut ba phin ym buh-khoh buhjaw ba phin poi ha ka niam ha u Kni ha u Kong.*

Here now the weeping the mourning and the liquor have happened (literally – fallen) from the father for thee u/ka Dieng and the (ten), so that you have no regrets, feel no bitterness that you will reach unto the religion (rites and ceremonies) unto the maternal uncle the maternal brother.

The sacrificer then asks for rice in a basket and he says :

*Kane mynta la wan hap ka ummat ka umpung u dkhot u khyllai bad ka ksing ka bom na u kpa ia u/ka Dieng bad ki shiphew ngut.*

Here has come to happen the weeping, the mourning, the pieces and fragments, and the drum from the father for u/ka Dieng and the (ten).

He dedicates the pig by throwing rice over it eleven times. Then they kill the pig and remove the portions for the *dohiong*, the *khwang*, and the *dohpha* from the same parts as in the case of the cattle. They keep also the lower jaw, and if the sacrificial animal is a bull or a cow, then the horns as well.

While the sacramental portions are being removed, the sacrificer calls for the pig or the bull or the cow from the children of the maternal uncles and brothers (*khun-kha*). These bring the animal and the liquor to the *kyndop*, portico, the part of the house in front of the entrance door, under the eaves.

They take the liquor inside the house, and the person who pours out the libation, says :

*Kane la wan hap ka 'iad rong ka 'iad taw na ki khun-kha ia phi u/ka Dieng shiphew ngut ba phin poi na niam.*

Here has fallen the liquor from the *khun-kha* (children of the birth, children given birth to by maternal brothers and uncles) for thee u/ka Dieng and the (ten) so that you may reach unto the religion (rites and ceremonies).

Then the sacrificer says again :

*Kane mynta la wan hap u 'niang iong u 'niang bah na ki khun-kha ia phi u/ka Dieng bad ki shiphew ngut.*

Here now has come to fall the black pig the big pig from the *khun-kha* for thee u/ka Dieng and the (ten).

He dedicates (*dūt*) the pig by throwing rice over it eleven times. They kill the pig and then they remove the portions for the *dohiong*, the *khwang* and the *dohpha*. They take also the lower jaw and in the case of a bull or a cow, the horns as well. In this manner they receive the offerings from all the *khun-kha*, beginning with the eldest *khun-kha* of u/ka Dieng and then the others in the order of age.

They roast the *dohiong* on a spit over the fire ; they cut each portion into three pieces, and the ceremonies are then performed with the same pronouncements and incantations as those accompanying the sacrifice of the cattle. This time all the portions of the *dohiong* from the animals brought by the *kpa-kha* (the father who gives birth, that is the father and the house of the father) and the *khun-kha* are mixed together. The sacrificer takes one heap of the *dohiong* in his left hand, sprinkles it with water with his right hand, then he asks for the *skaw* (gourd) and says :

*Kane kumba la bei ki pyrsa ki para ia phi u/ka Dieng ki shiphew ngut la wan hap ka ummat ka umpung, u dkhot u khyllai, ka ksing ka bom na u kpa ba phin poi ha tynrai ka niam.*

Here as funds have been raised and expended by maternal nephews, nieces, brothers and sisters for thee u/ka Dieng and the (ten), has come to fall the weeping the mourning, the pieces and fragments, and the drum from the father so that you may reach unto the root of religion (the completion of perfect rites and ceremonies).

Then he takes up another heap of the *dohiong* and says :

*Kane ban sneng ryngkat phi u Kni u Kong, ka mei-kha ka mei-pun, ba la bei ia phi u/ka Dieng ki shiphew ngut da ki pyrsa ki para ba phin poi ha ka niam.*

Here to give counsel together thou maternal uncle, the brother, the mother (i. e. maternal ancestress) who givest birth the mother who bearest, that it has been raised and expended for thee u/ka Dieng and the (ten) by the maternal nephews and nieces, and brothers and sisters, so that you may reach unto the religion (rites and ceremonies).

He places the portions on the ground and pours out a libation (*suid*). Then he takes up another heap of *dohiong* and says :

*Kane ban sneng ryngkat phi u man-kha long-kha kumba la bei ia phi u/ka*

Here to give counsel together by thou who causest to grow who causest to be, as it has



Top : A group of cists (*mawkynroh*) each containing the bones of one family. (Photo : C. von Fürer-Haimendorf)

Bottom : Sacred enclosure (*kpep*) erected near the *mawniam*. (Photo : J. P. Mills)



- a) Cist (*mawniam*) serving as the final resting place of the bones of all the members of a clan. (Photo : C. von Fürer-Haimendorf)
- b) Menhirs and flat stone (*mawlynti*) erected near the path along which the bones are carried to the *mawniam* (Photo : J. P. Mills)
- c) Memorial stones (*mawbynnah*) erected a year or more after the final disposal of bones. The rounded tops of the stones are unusual. (Photo : C. von Fürer-Haimendorf)



*Dieng ki shiphew ngut ba phin poi ha ka niam.*

been raised and expended for thee u/ka Dieng and the (ten) so that you may reach unto the religion (rites and ceremonies).

He places the pieces of meat on the ground and pours out a libation (*suid*).

When all this has been done the persons who play the drums and the men dressed in their dancing dress now proceed from that place at a distance towards the house. First come the dancers of the father's family or even other people to dance in the courtyard. Those from the house lift up the small basket with the bones and hold it up with their hands in the courtyard ; they do not place it on the ground. Two of the dancers of the father's house come and pay their respect to the dead by bowing their heads and pointing their fly-flaps and swords forward to the ground in front of the bones. The beating of the drums and playing of the pipe (*tangmuri*) continue all this time but the other dancers stand by. The two dancers bow three times. When they have finished their act of obeisance, they join the other dancers and perform with them the *mastieh* dance in the courtyard where the basket with the bones is held. They dance just for a little time and move away, and then come the dancers of the *khun-kha*. They also perform the same act of obeisance ; two of the dancers come forward and bow and then they dance the *mastieh* dance. This is repeated until it has been done in turn by all the *khun-kha*, children of brothers and maternal uncles, who have come to do the *phur* ceremony.

When this has been completed, there follows the sacrifice of a goat, offered by the ancestral maternal house of the deceased. A he-goat, which must be white without any spot and which must have horns, is brought into the courtyard. The goat is set free as they never tie animals when delivering them to the sacrificer. The sacrificer says :

*Kumba la bei ia u/ka Dieng mynta la hap une u blang u kiup u knian.*

As it has been raised and expended for u/ka Dieng now has fallen this he-goat, a jagged, a hairy goat.

The sacrificer mixes rice-flour with water, he besmears the goat on the neck with this paste and then he ties a string of cane or split bamboo round his neck. Then a man beheads the goat.

Then is brought a white spotless he-goat from the family of the father who have come to perform *phur* (do honour by offering ceremonial animals and dancing) to u/ka Dieng. The sacrificer does the same as before and he says :

*Kumba la bei ia u/ka Dieng mynta la hap da une u blang na u kpa, kumba la phur kumba la lieng u kpa.*

It has been raised and expended for u/ka Dieng now has fallen by this he-goat from the father as it has been honoured by the offering of ceremonial animal and dancing by the father.

The sacrificer besmears the neck of the animal with rice-flour and then they tie it with a string of split bamboo or cane and behead it.

Then they perform the same ceremony with a spotlessly white he-goat from the children of the male lineage members, the *khun-kha* of the family of u/ka Dieng. The sacrificer says :

*Kumba la bei ia u/ka Dieng mynta la wan hap une u blang u tyllai na ki khun-kha kumba la phur mastieh hap u blang.*

As it has been raised and expended for u/ka Dieng now has come to fall this he-goat and the rope from the *khun-kha* as ceremonial offering and dancing has been done, the goat has fallen.

After all this has been done they place the bones in one bamboo basket made like a small Khasi coffin (*krong*) and cover it with the cloth called 'khyrwang ryndia' (striped *endi*-silk wrapper). This is carried by men of u/ka Dieng's lineage, the uncle or brother, it is never carried by woman. They place inside this basket fried Job's tears or Indian corn, which have been tied in two bundles with strings, of nine grains in each bundle, and they place there also the three reeds, each of the size of a finger. The *shlan* mat on which the bones were placed is also taken along. They take the bones and all these things to the mound – *kynton* – which they have prepared and which is twelve cubits square and three cubits and a span in height. On this *kynton* they make a small wooden enclosure of about a foot square, within which they light a fire and there they burn the fried grains, the reeds and the *shlan* mat. When these things are burnt, they pass the bones over the fire (*syaw*) by swinging them three times over it in the piece of cloth in which they are tied; thereupon they consecrate (*jer*) the bones with flour. The sacrificer takes flour in his right hand and says:

*Kumba la bei ia phi u/ka Dieng ryngkat shiphew ngut kane la jer la thoh ia phi ban poi ha ka niam.*

As it has been raised and expended for thee u/ka Dieng together with the (ten) here you are consecrated (*jer*) and given a sign (or mark) so that you may reach unto the religion (rites and ceremonies).

Then he sprinkles flour over the bones which are placed on the ground, then the bones are wrapped up and are carried by a man from among the maternal relations of u/ka Dieng. They beat the drum and play the flute (*shyngwiang*) and they dance the *symphiah* dance at the *kynton* (mound) while the ceremonies are being performed. Near the *kynton*, at the *mawlynti* (stones of the way) the maternal relations sacrifice one she-goat. The sacrificer says:

*Kumba la bei ia phi u/ka Dieng ryngkat ki shiphew ngut la hap u mawlynti, maw-syngkien, mynta kane la hap ka 'lang mawlynti.*

As it has been raised and expended for thee u/ka Dieng together with the (ten) and the *mawlynti*, *mawsyngkien* has happened, and now here *ka 'lang mawlynti*, *maw-syngkien* she-goat has happened.

The sacrificer lets a small quantity of the blood drop on the *mawshynrang*, the male or erect stones, and on the *mawkynthei*, the flat stone. At this place they also dance and play the flute (*shyngwiang*) and the drum.

At the *mawlynti* they put up all the flags of white cloth of the *khun-kha* (children of the male members of the matri-lineage) and of the *kpa-kha* (fathers of the family). Near the *mawlynti* they prepare the *umkoi*, a small hollow to contain water. Apart from the hollow the *umkoi* consists of three stones about a foot in height, the tallest one in the middle, with a *mawkynthei* (*maw-umkoi*)

dolmen about six inches in diameter, and they dig in the ground a small hollow in front of the *mawkynthei*. They put up one flag and set a branch of the *dieng pyrshit* tree in the hollow (*umkoi*). They pour water into the hollow. These *maw-umkoi* stones are put up while the bones are being passed over the fire on the *kynton* (mound). The sacrificer spreads a *lakhav* leaf, he sets up the gourd which is filled with fermented rice, and he places rice and flour and a *dieng pyrshit* leaf on the dolmen, the *mawkynthei* of the *mawumkoi*. The sacrificer takes a chicken, a cock or a hen, and he performs the sacrifice saying :

*Kumba la bei ia phi u/ka Dieng ryngkat  
shiphew ngut mynta la hap ka umkoi  
umshan ba phin poi ha ka niam.*

As it has been raised and expended for thee u/ka Dieng together with the (ten) now the *umkoi umshan* has happened so that you may reach unto the religion (rites and ceremonies).

The sacrificer then cuts the neck of the fowl with a knife, and lets the blood drop on the upright stones, the *mawshynrang*, and the flat stone, the *mawkynthei*, as well as on the branch of the *dieng pyrshit* tree and the flag which have been planted in the *umkoi* hollow.

Let us suppose that the *mawniam* of the clan is at the large village of Myllem, a few miles from Shillong. The carrier of the bones, a male maternal relative, takes them in a cloth to Myllem. Those who accompany him carry the *dohpha* (cooked meat), the *khwang* (raw meat), the lower jaws, the horns, the *pulum* (loaves), the cooked egg, fermented rice, half-cooked rice (*ja-ot*), flour, and unboiled rice from the maternal ancestral house of the deceased and also cowrie shells and the *dieng pyrshit* tree.

The carrier of the bones must not look back from the time he starts from the *umkoi*. In front of him walks a man who indicates the path by scattering *dieng pyrshit* leaves. Every time he crosses a stream he indicates the path by scattering rice and *dieng pyrshit* leaves on both sides of the stream. Some also tie a string across the stream. Finally they reach the place or village where the *mawniam* may be. The members of other major lineages (*kpoh*) of the clan (*jaid*) of u/ka Dieng who live near the *mawniam* make their own *kynton* (mound) near the *mawniam* and the *kpep*.

The *kpep* is a large circle of rough stones, some perhaps only a foot high, others up to a man's height, made near the *mawniam*. Like the *mawniam* the *kpep* is in permanent use, so there is only one *kpep* for a *mawniam*. Members of the clan who live near the *mawniam* erect *mawlynti* as do those living at a distance but these *mawlynti* are placed near the *kpep* and consist of only one upright male stone (*mawshynrang*) and one flat table stone (*mawkynthei* or female stone). Those living near the *mawniam* perform the same ceremonies as described above; they erect three *umkoi* stones and dig an *umkoi* hollow, plant a flag and a *dieng pyrshit* tree and sacrifice a cock. Good examples of *kpep* stones are to be found at Myllem village some miles from Shillong.

When the bearer of the bones and those who accompany him arrive at the *kpep*, they take three firebrands lying ready within the *kpep*. The sacrificer pours a libation of liquor on five female cowrie shells and on five pan leaves and on five pieces of betel-nut which he places on the pan leaves. He says :

*Kumba la poi hapoh kpep te phi u/ka Dieng ryngkat shiphew ngut phin rung ha ka niam, une u kwai san kyntien bad u phati (tymfew) san sla, u sbai san tylli.*

As you have arrived at the *kpep* then thou u/ka Dieng together with the (ten) wilt enter into the *niam* (rites and ceremonies), here are five pieces of betel-nut, five pan leaves and five cowrie shells.

The people who accompany the carrier of the bones take the three firebrands and two of them go and cry out from a distance of some thirty or forty cubits away from the *mawniam*; they face towards the west, saying :

*To ale wan shim ka ding ka theh phi u/ka Dieng ryngkat shiphew ngut ba phi la poi ha ka niam.*

Come and take the fire thou u/ka Dieng and the (ten) now that you have reached unto the religion (rites and ceremonies).

From there they come to the *mawniam* and they place the bones inside it, opening the ossuary by removing the *mawkhang* (entrance stone) and closing it again. Nothing is said while they are opening or closing the stone cist.

After the bones have been placed inside, a ceremony is performed in front of the *mawniam*. In this ceremony there is one sacrificer from the maternal relations (*liang kur*) and one from those connected by marriage (*liang kha*); each of them spreads a leaf and places a gourd on his leaf. Each of them places thus also three loaves, the lower jaw, the horns, the *khwang* (raw meat), the half cooked rice, the flour and a leaf of the *pyrshit* tree. The sacrificer takes the cooked egg in his left hand and pours water on it with his right hand, then he places it on the leaf. He takes a pinch of each of the three loaves. Meanwhile another person cuts the *dopha* (cooked meat), then the sacrificer takes from the *dopha* and holding it in his right hand he says :

*Kumba la poi ha ka niam phi u/ka Dieng ryngkat shiphew ngut te mynta wat buh khoh wat buh jaw shuh ia kiba ha ing kiba ha sem kumba phi la poi ha ka niam.*

As now you have reached unto the religion (rites and ceremonies) thou u/ka Dieng and the (ten) now have no regret feel no bitterness against the members of the family, the members of the house, as now you have reached unto the religion (rites and ceremonies).

Then he places it on the leaf, takes a pinch from the loaves, and sacrifices saying :

*Kumba la poi ha ka niam phi u/ka Dieng ryngkat shiphew ngut ban sneng ryngkat phi u Kni u Kong kumba la poi ha ka niam.*

As you have reached unto the religion (rites and ceremonies) thou u/ka Dieng and the (ten) to give counsel together you the maternal uncle, brother, as you have reached unto the religion (rites and ceremonies).

The sacrificer puts the offering away; then again he takes a pinch of the loaves and sacrifices saying :

*Kumba la poi ha ka niam phi u/ka Dieng ryngkat shiphew ngut ban sneng ryngkat phi long-kha man-kha kumba la poi ha ka niam.*

As you have reached unto the religion (rites and ceremonies) thou u/ka Dieng together with the (ten) to give counsel together thou who causest to be and who causest to grow as you have reached unto the *niam* (religion - rites and ceremonies).

He then puts the offering away. Thus the sacrificer of the maternal relations (*ki kur*) begins, and the sacrificer of those connected by marriage (*ki kha*) follows immediately. Then the sacrificers take the eggs ; they remove the shell and each of them cuts off the narrow end of his egg. Giving the rest to the people, he keeps only the cut off end. Tossing it he makes it fall once with the obverse up and once with the reverse up. Then the sacrificers pinch off pieces from the loaves again. The people present cut the *dopha*. Now the sacrificers perform the sacrifice ; they take up all the loaves, the flour, the half-cooked rice and everything, and they say :

*Kane ioh phi ong tang u kpu, tang u dkhoh, hynrei kane ryngkat sa ka shynrong ka shyntaw kumba la poi phi u/ka Dieng ryngkat shiphew ngut ha ka niam.*

Here lest you say only the loaves and only the pieces, but here together with the shell and the cover as thou u/ka Dieng together with the (ten) have reached unto the religion (rites and ceremonies).

The sacrificers then put the offerings away and pouring a libation of liquor from the gourd on the leaves they say :

*Kane ka 'iad hiar ka 'iad bang kumba la poi ma phi u/ka Dieng ryngkat shiphew ngut ha ka niam.*

Here the fermented rice water, the sweet liquor, as thou u/ka Dieng with the (ten) have reached unto the religion (rites and ceremonies).

Thus the ceremonies are all completed and the people return to the house.

Next day they make an account of the expenses, "*khein sbai*" – using for counting cowrie shells, the old form of money. When they have finished accounting, the father, not the uncle, gives advice (*sneng*) and asks :

*Phi ki khun kumba phi la bei ia u/ka Dieng baroh shiphew ngut phi shim ram ne phi ioh na ei?*

You the children as you have raised funds and expended for u/ka Dieng and all the (ten), did you borrow or where did you get ?

The children reply saying :

*Ka la jong hi kumba la buh ma phi u kpa.*

It is our own as it has been left by you the father.

They must reply in this manner even though they have borrowed it or taken on loan.

Of the ceremonies connected with the transfer of the bones from the *mawkyntroh* to the *mawniam*, those performed by the lineage members (*ki kur*) are summed up by saying "*ki thangiap*"; those performed by affinal relatives (*ki khun kha*) are summed up by saying "*ki phur*".

##### 5. The Feeding of the Dead Ceremonies (*Ai-Bam*)

A year or two after the ceremony of *thep mawbah-mawshyieng* described in the previous section, but not before the lapse of one year, the members of the lineage (*ki kur*) or the children of the male members of the lineage (*ki khun kha*) perform at a time when they can afford it, the ceremony of feeding the dead.

Only one bull or one cow is sacrificed. The sacrificer consecrates it (*u dut ia u masi*) and after killing it in the usual way they remove portions for

the *dohiong*, the *dohpha* and the *khwang*, and also the lower jaw and the horns. The sacrificer takes up one heap consisting of each kind of the *dohiong*; he holds it in his left hand and he pours a libation (*suid*) from the gourd (*skaw*) which he holds in his right hand; this is done in the *nongpei* which is the front part of the house. The sacrificer says:

*Kane la ai bam bha ia phi u/ka* Here now good food is given to you u/ka  
*Dieng.* Dieng.

He puts the meat away and he repeats the sacrifice with another heap of *dohiong*, saying:

*Kumba la ai bam bha ia phi u/ka Dieng* As good food has been given to you u/ka  
*sneng ryngkat phi u Kni u Kong.* Dieng give counsel thou maternal uncle,  
thou brother.

He puts away the pieces of *dohiong* and taking up more pieces he sacrifices again, saying:

*Kumba la ai bam bha ia phi u/ka* As good food has been given to you u/ka  
*Dieng nseng ryngkat phi long-kha man-* Dieng give counsel together thou who  
*kha.* causest to grow and who causest to be  
(relatives by marriage through males).

He puts the pieces away. They keep the *khwang*, the *dopha*, the lower jaw and the horns until the next day.

The next morning they bake three loaves, boil one egg, and they take also half-boiled rice, flour, *dieng pyrshit* leaf, *lakhar* leaf, fermented rice and a gourd. Then they erect three upright stones and one flat stone on the path or at any suitable place. These are only small stones as big as the *maw umkoi* stones and they are called the *mawai bam* stones. When the stones have been put up, they spread a *lakhar* leaf over the flat stone (*mawkynthei*). They make the gourd stand on the leaf, on which they place also the three loaves, the half-cooked rice, the *dieng pyrshit* leaf, the flour, the unboiled rice, the fermented rice, the lower jaw, the horns, and the *khwang*. The sacrificer holds the cooked egg in his left hand, he asks for water which he receives in his right hand and he sprinkles the water over the egg. Then he puts the egg aside on the leaf for the time being. He pinches a piece of each of the three loaves and he cuts off pieces of the *dohpha*; he then sacrifices saying:

*Kane kumba la ai bam bha ia phi u/ka* Here as good feeding has been given for thee  
*Dieng.* u/ka Dieng.

He puts the pieces away. He again pinches off pieces from the loaves and cuts a bit of the *dohpha* and he sacrifices, saying:

*Kumta kumba la ai bam bha ai bam* Thus as good feeding, good food has been  
*miat ia phi u/ka Dieng sneng ryngkat* given to you u/ka Dieng give counsel thou  
*phi u Kni u Kong.* maternal uncle and brother.

He puts the offering away. He again takes pieces of the loaves and of the *dohpha*, and he says:

*Kumba la ai bam bha bam miat ia phi  
u/ka Dieng sneng ryngkat phi long-kha  
man-kha.*

As good feeding, good food has been given to you u/ka Dieng give counsel together thou who causet to be, thou who causet to grow.

He puts the pieces away. He peels off the shell of the egg, cuts a bit from the smaller end of the egg, and he throws this piece up, so that it falls once on the reverse and once on the obverse. He then takes a pinch of the loaves, cuts of the *dohpha*, and he takes up all the half-cooked rice, the bread, the flour and the shell of the egg, and he sacrifices saying :

*Kumba la ai bam bha ia phi u/ka  
Dieng ioh phi ong tang u dkhoh, hynrei  
bad u shynrong bad u shyntaw.*

As good feeding has been given to you u/ka Dieng lest you say only the fragments and pieces, but also with the shell and the cover.

He places them over the flat stone (*mawkynthei*). He pours out a libation on the leaf and says :

*Kumb ala ai bam bha ia phi u/ka Dieng  
ioh phi ong tang u kpu u dkhoh hynrei  
bad ka 'iad hiar ka 'iad bang.*

As good feeding has been given for thee u/ka Dieng lest you say only the loaves, only the fragments and pieces, but also with the fermented spirit, the sweet liquor.

They tie the horns and the lower jaw to a stick, they hang the *khwang* also on that stick, which is then put up at the back of the central (uncle) stone.

This feeding ceremony (*ai-bam*) can be performed by the children of u/ka Dieng or the members of his matri-lineage. They do this as often as they can afford it.

When they perform *ai-bam* for the father, uncle or brother, they sacrifice a bull ; for mother, father's mother (*meikha*), or sister they give a cow.

They give *ai-bam* for one individual at a time, not for all the dead. (U MOHON KHARKONGOR, however, says that there are some who give *ai-bam* for the mother and, because they have not the means to do this for the other deceased separately, they call the names of the children together with that of the mother.)

The formulae are the same as given above whether the *ai-bam* is given for the father, mother, father's mother or maternal uncle, brother or sister. They do not perform this ceremony for father's brother or father's sister.

A feast is given to the people who make the *ai-bam* stones, just as it is given to the people who make *mawksing* stones (see section 6), but it lasts one day only for *ai-bam* stones and no *jakhawnei* is served.

## 6. The *Mawksing*, *Mawkhait* or *Mawja* Ceremonies

*Mawksing*, *mawkhait* and *mawja* are different names for the same stones. These are five upright stones, the centre one called *mawkni* (uncle stone) and the two on each side are called *mawbud* (accompanying stones). The lineage members (*ki kur*) erect them near a road or path or at any suitable place. They do this a year or two after the bones have been placed in the *mawniam* and after they have performed the *ai-bam* ceremony.

While erecting them they beat a drum. Afterwards they all go to the family house, the men dancing all the way to the beating of the drum. They

do not wear any special dancing dress. On entering the house they continue the dance and they go on drumming and dancing for three days and three nights. They give liquor, rice and meat during this period to the people who have helped in erecting the stones and on the second day they give *jakhawnei* just as it is described in chapter 4. On the second day they sacrifice a bull or a cow. The sacrificer consecrates it by throwing rice over it, in front of the house in the courtyard. After killing the animal they prepare the *dohiong*, *dohpha* and *khwang*, they take also the horns and the lower jaw and they make ready the gourd (*skaw*), all as has been described in section 4. The sacrificer performs the ceremony inside the house. There are three heaps of *dohiong*, each containing pieces of the five kinds of interior organs of the animal; the sacrificer takes up one heap as in the *ai-bam* and he says:

*Mynta ba la ieng ka mawksing, ka mawmieng, u mawkohkait, ka mawkohja ia phi u/ka Dieng.*

Now that the *mawksing*, *mawmieng*, *mawkohkait*, *mawkohja* stones have stood up for thee u/ka Dieng.

He puts the offering away. He takes another heap saying:

*Sneng ryngkat ka mei-kha ka mei-pun ba la ieng ka mawksing ka mawmieng, ka mawkohkait, ka mawkohja ia phi u/ka Dieng.*

Give counsel together thou mother who givest birth, thou mother who bearest, that the *mawksing*, *mawmieng*, *mawkohkait*, *mawkohja* have stood up for thee u/ka Dieng.

He puts the meat away. He takes the last portion of *dohiong* and says:

*Kumba la ieng ka mawksing, ka mawmieng, u mawkohkait, u mawkohja ia phi u/ka Dieng sneng ryngkat phi man-kha long-kha.*

As the *mawksing*, *mawmieng*, *mawkohkait*, *mawkohja* have stood up for thee u/ka Dieng give counsel together thou who causest to grow who causest to be.

Next morning they cook three loaves and one egg and they go to the stones, taking with them the *dohpha*, the *khwang*, the half-cooked rice, the three loaves, the cooked egg, flour, unboiled rice, a *lakhar* leaf, fermented rice, the lower jaw, the horns and a *dieng pyrshit* leaf. They perform the same sacrifice as they do for the *ai-bam* ceremony, except that the sacrificer says:

*Kumba la ieng ka mawksing, ka mawmieng.*

As the *mawksing*, the *mawmieng* stones have stood.

Other pronouncements are the same as in the *ai-bam* ceremonies.

When all this has been done, the horns, the lower jaw, and the *khwang* are tied to a stick which is put up at the back of the *mawkni*, the uncle stone.

Each set of *mawksing* is erected for one person only. While erecting the stones they do not mention the names of other departed relatives.

## 7. The *Mawbyinna* Ceremonies

The *mawbyinna* stones consist of five upright stones and one flat table stone, just like the *mawksing* described in the preceding chapter. Any difference that may exist between the *mawksing* (*mawkait*, *mawja*) and the *mawbyinna* is uncertain but in the view of U MOHON KHARKONGOR, as mentioned in the

introduction, the stones erected some years after the bones have been placed in the *mawniam* are called *mawksing*, if *mawlynti* had been erected when the bones were taken to the *mawniam*, but they are called *mawbyinna* when *mawlynti* had not been erected. The last known case – that of KA STEM MAWRI from about 1890, mentioned in the introduction – is supposed to demonstrate this. U MOHON saw the ceremonies.

The stones are dragged by a large number of men ; two men beat drums ; another man holding a fly-flap (*sympiah*) sits on the stone which is being dragged, facing those who drag it ; he waves the fly-flap chanting :

*How pynbeit u 'rilud, how pynbeit u  
'riphiang. Pynbeit kawei, ryntih kawei.*

How! straighten the young cane, how!  
straighten the strong cane. Straighten as  
one, unite as one.

He waves the fly-flap forward to the crowd who are dragging the stone with ropes of cane. They reply: *Hoi! Hah!* This riding on the stone and chanting is not done when erecting *mawlynti*, and it is said that it was not done for *mawksing* either.

Every night, as long as the dragging of the stones goes on, one head of cattle is sacrificed in the house. It may be either a bull or a cow, whichever is available, but not more than one animal at a time. Each time they do *shim dkhhot* – remove the sacramental portions. Every day when the bull or cow is killed, the sacrificer places the *khwang*, the horns, the lower jaw and the *skaw* gourd in the *nongpei* part of the house. He performs the sacrifice with the *dohiong* as in the *ai-bam* ceremonies, saying :

*Mynta la ieng ka mawbyinna, ka maw-  
khyllon, ka mawnam, ka mawrong ia  
phi u/ka Dieng.*

Now has stood up the *mawbyinna*, the  
*mawkhyllon* the *maw-nam*, the *mawrong* for  
thee u/ka Dieng.

He puts the meat away. He takes another heap of *dohiong* and says :

*Sneng ryngkat ka mei-kha, ka mei-pun  
ba la ieng ka mawbyinna, ka maw-  
khyllon, ka mawnam, ka mawrong ia  
phi u/ka Dieng.*

Give counsel thou mother who givest birth,  
thou mother who bearest, that have stood  
the *mawbyinna*, the *mawkhyllon*, the *mawnam*,  
the *mawrong* for thee u/ka Dieng.

He puts the offering away. Then he takes the last lot of *dohiong*, saying :

*Kumba la ieng ka mawbyinna, ka  
mawkhyllon, ka mawnam ka mawrong  
ia phi u/ka Dieng, sneng ryngkat, phi  
man-kha long-kha.*

As have stood up the *mawbyinna*, the  
*mawkhyllon*, the *mawnam*, the *mawrong* for  
thee u/ka Dieng, give counsel thou who  
caustest to grow who caustest to be.

He puts the meat away.

It takes two or three days to finish dragging these stones as they are big ones. The stones – as they arrive – are kept on the ground until all have been brought, when all the five stones are erected on the same day. When this task has been completed, the relatives feed the men with *jakhawnei* on the place where the stones stand. Only men drag the stones. After they have had the feast of *jakhawnei*, the men stand up and proceed to dance the *shad wait* dance to the house to the beating of a drum. The men dance without special dancing

dress. They enter the house while beating the drum and the men dance with the fly-flaps inside the house. On this day they kill all the remaining bulls and cows.

Every day, while the dragging continues, the sacrificer consecrates (*dūt*) the bull or the cow by throwing rice over it in front of the house in the courtyard and the animal is then killed. He performs a ceremony with the *dohiong*, but the lower jaw, the horns, the *dohpha* and the *khwang* are kept in the house. On the day when the *mawbyinna* stones are erected, they consecrate the remaining animals by throwing rice over them and they kill them and keep the *dohiong*, *dohpha*, *khwang*, the horns and the lower jaws from all the bulls and cows killed on this last day.

Early next day they cook three loaves and one egg and they go to the stones and sacrifice by placing (*pha*) the *dohpha*, the *khwang*, the *ja-ot* (half-cooked rice), the three loaves, the cooked egg, flour, uncooked rice, fermented rice, and the lower jaws and the horns of all the bulls and cows killed from the commencement of the *mawbyinna* ceremony, and they place there also a *dieng pyrshit* leaf.

The performance of the sacrifice is exactly the same as that in the *ai-bam* ceremonies, except that the sacrificer says :

<i>Kumba la ieng ka mawbyinna, ka mawkhyllon, ka mawrong ka mawnam.</i>	As have stood up the <i>mawbyinna</i> , the <i>mawkhyllon</i> , the <i>mawrong</i> , the <i>mawnam</i> .
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The other pronouncements are the same as in the *ai-bam* ritual.

At last all the horns, lower jaws and the *khwang* are tied to a stick which is erected at the back of the *mawkni* (uncle stone).

✓ In the Cherra area *mawbyinna* stones are often shaped with chisels and have a rounded top ; some have a circular stone placed on top of the central upright stone. A few stones with ornamental tops are at Nongkrem. Mr. MILLS found in the forest in Upper Shillong one stone on which a figure had been carved. (See also p. 155 of Colonel GURDON's 'The Khasis'.) Sometimes there are more than five upright stones, for example at Laitkor near Shillong there are nine of them. The stones for Ka Kampatwat in remote Sutnga are said to have been originally about thirty in number.

The height of the central upright stone of the *mawbyinna* may range from about the height of a man up to, occasionally, twelve feet ; usually it is between three to four feet. The next stones on either side are shorter, often about six inches to a foot shorter. The outermost stones are the smallest. This applies to *mawksing* also. The *mawlynti* are usually smaller but not always. ✓ The *mawumkoi* and *mawaibam* are smaller but they may be several feet high. *Kpep* stones vary from a foot above the ground to several feet. For the very large public memorial stones see section 9.

### 8. Ceremonies Performed for a Husband or a Father

A childless wife may cremate her husband but she cannot remarry until she has handed over his bones to his maternal relatives. She usually hands them over in the night of the cremation without putting them in a *mawkynroh*

herself. When the widow and children cremate their husband and father, they keep his bones in a separate *mawkynroh*, not in the *mawkynroh* of their lineage. When the maternal relatives of the father perform the *kynrong-shyieng* or *thep-mawbah* as described in sections 3 and 4, the widow or the children hand over the bones to them. The children take out the bones from the *mawphew* or *mawkynroh* in which they were deposited after the cremation. When the cist is opened, the bones are received either by the daughters, or in their absence by the sons, or even by the wife if she does not contemplate remarriage. The sacrificer says :

*Kane mo ia phi u Dieng ban kyntiew  
iing, kyntiew sem.*

Here now for thee u Dieng to take unto the house into the dwelling place.

They take the bones to the house of the wife or of the children where they perform the ceremonies in the courtyard and inside the house ; after the completion of the ceremonies, which have been described among the ceremonies to be performed by lineage members (*ki kur*), they take the bones to the maternal relatives of the deceased father.

At this ceremony the relations from the father's side, the *kpa-kha*, and the children of male members of the widow's lineage, the *khun-kha*, can come and do the *phur*, that is dancing and sacrificing animals.

The *mawlynti* (stones of the way) are erected by the children, however, without a *kynton* (mound), but the *mawumkoi* stones are put up near those *mawlynti* stones.

They carry the bones in the basket made like a Khasi coffin, in which are placed also the two bundles of fried Job's tears or of Indian corn, each of the bundles containing nine grains, and also the three reeds as described in the ceremonies performed by the lineage members in the *thep-mawbah* ceremony.

The bones are passed over the fire on the way near the *mawumkoi* and *mawlynti* stones, where they burn the fried grains, the reeds and the *shlan* mat.

The children who have not got the means hand over the bones to their father's relations without erecting the *mawlynti* stones. They only sacrifice the pigs and cattle, they erect the *mawumkoi* stones, and they pass the bones over the fire on the way ; there, not far from the fire, they then hand over the bones to the members of the father's lineage.

The wife or the children may go and hand over the bones of their husband and father to his lineage members even before those relations perform the *kynrong-shyieng* or *thep-mawbah* ceremony. The relations do not take the bones into their house but place them directly in the *mawphew* or small *mawkynroh* stone prepared for the bones just as they do with the bones collected after cremation, or even without preparing the *mawphew*, they put the bones in the big *mawkynroh* if there is one in which the bones of some of their deceased relations have been placed. At this time they perform only the ceremonies with the bread, egg, rice, *dieng pyrshit* leaves, fermented rice, and the gourd from which they pour libations, in the same way as when bones are brought after cremation to be placed in the small *mawkynroh* stone.

### 9. Special Features

There are cases described below, in which the erection of certain stones, or the placing of the bones in certain cists, may be dispensed with ; in certain cases the depositing of the bones in the family cist is not permitted.

The *mawkynroh* stone cist, which is built for depositing the bones collected at the cremation of an individual, is called *mawphew* by some, to differentiate it from the other *mawkynroh*, which is the repository of bones of several lineage members.

This big *mawkynroh* in which the bones of several deceased persons have been placed, is used only for the members of one minimal lineage, house, *shi-iing*, or for the clan (*shi kur*) if the clan is small, but not for the major lineage (*kphoh*) of the clan. From these family *mawkynroh* stones the bones of family members are taken finally to the *mawniyam* (*mawbah*) which is the last resting place of the bones of all the members of the clan (*kur*).

There are some clans which have no *mawniyam* ; they finish only with the *mawkynroh* which is erected for the family, house, *shi-iing*. They call these stones *mawphew*.

The members of an *iing* may take the bones directly from the individual *mawkynroh* stone, which was put up at the time of cremation, to the *mawniyam*, ceremonial stone, without placing them first into a family *mawkynroh*, when there are no other bones remaining in the family *mawkynroh*.

After cremation bones can be brought directly from the cremation ground to the big *mawkynroh*, without making first the small individual *mawkynroh*, and without bringing the bones inside the house.

When the bones of a mother or grandmother have been placed in the small *mawkynroh* after her cremation, the bones of those who die after her, of her sons or daughters or of her younger sister, are placed in the cist of the mother or grandmother. When the relatives are ready, they bring all the bones to the house, performing the ceremonies of *thangiap* (ceremonies for the dead) and then take the bones to the *mawniyam* with the ritual described above.

When the elder sister dies before her younger sister, the bones of the younger sister may be placed in the *mawkynroh* of the elder sister. But the bones of a mother or grandmother, who dies after her daughter, are placed in a *mawkynroh* made separately for her. Similarly the bones of younger brothers or nephews may be placed in the small *mawkynroh* of their uncle or elder brother, but the bones of their female maternal relations cannot be put there. They do not place the bones of the elder brother in the small *mawkynroh* of the younger brother, and that of the younger sister in that of the elder sister.

There are cases in which ceremonies are completed simultaneously, that is, while the dead body is still in the house. They remove sacrificial portions (*dkhot*) of meat from pigs, bulls, cows etc. as has been described for those ceremonies. They take the body for cremation after the performance of the ritual with these portions of meat (*ai dkhot*). After the body has been cremated the bones are collected and taken straight to the *mawniyam*, ceremonial stone.

The bones are then passed over the fire (*syaw*) in the *kpep bah*, big sacred enclosure, and the *niam* ceremonies are performed as when placing the bones in the big ceremonial stone (*thep-mawbah*) as already described.

Bones can be taken direct to the *mawniam* from the small *mawkynroh* without removing the bones to the other *mawkynroh*. The transfer of the bones into the *mawkynroh* in the *kynrong shyieng* ceremony is done only when many have died and the family is not "ready to go", that is to take the bones to the ceremonial stone, the great *mawniam* or *mawbah* of the clan.

A family may perform the ceremony of taking the bones to the *mawniam* although the *khun-kha* (children of male lineage members) do not come to do *phur* (give bulls or cows or pigs and perform dances) either because they are poor or for some other reason. The *khun-kha* may have committed some *sang*, act of sacrilege.

The members of the minimal lineage (*shi-iing*) can take the bones to the *mawniam* without waiting for other members of the *kpoh*. They have a right to open the *mawniam* and deposit bones, acting as a single house.

Any *iing* who has not the means to erect stones may perform the ceremonies and place the stones in the *mawniam*. The members of the family pass the bones over the fire in the *kpep* as described above. But children pass the bones of their father over the fire (*syaw ding*) on the wayside.

Members of the clan, men or women, who have committed incest by having sexual intercourse with a person of the same clan, the most grievous sin among the Khasis, have their bones left in the first small *mawkynroh* (*mawphew*). As they have committed a *sang* – an act against which there is a taboo – they are excommunicated from the family *mawniam*.

Bones of twins are placed in the *mawniam* like those of ordinary persons.

## 10. Ceremonies Connected with the Mortuary Rituals

*Ka Sam Pungrei*. – When the bones are brought to the house, the next morning – if there are persons who are not married, either men or women – they cook rice and when it is cooked they cover it on top with a leaf. They sacrifice, one holding a cock and another a hen, and they both say together :

*Kumba yn neh yn skhem ka Iawbei  
Pungrei, U Thawlang Pungrei.*

So will continue, will remain firm the  
ancestress Pungrei, the ancestor Pungrei.

Then they kill the fowls.

At the time when the bones are taken to the *mawniam*, any elderly person says, while pouring a libation from the gourd in the hearth :

*Hei io phi ong duh ka niam ka rukom,  
ine la ioh ka synjat ka lator na ka jaid.*

Hei lest you say that the religion, (rites and  
ceremonies) is lost, here is received the sign  
and token from the clan.

He pours out a libation of fermented rice mixed with water only once from the gourd.

They perform this when the bones are taken to the courtyard.

*Khawrawai.* – After sacrificing the bull and the cow at night, the owners of the house give the rice called *khawrawai* to the sacrificer next morning. The sacrificer receives the rice by placing both hands together, and he says :

*Kumba la bei ia phi u/ka Dieng shiphew  
ngut la hap u khaw-rawai.*

As funds have been raised and expended for thee u/ka Dieng the *khawrawai* has fallen (taken place).

He throws it down the step into the part of the house near the entrance door (*kyndur*) from the somewhat higher floor of the house in front of the hearth (*nongpei*). He repeats the same and says :

*Kumba la bei ia phi u/ka Dieng shiphew  
ngut la hap u rawai, sneng ryngkat phi  
u Kni u Kong.*

As funds have been raised and expended for thee u/ka Dieng and the (ten), the *rawai* has fallen (taken place), give counsel together thou uncle (maternal), brother.

He throws again some of the rice down the step. He again takes up rice by placing together both hands and says :

*Kumba la bei ia phi u/ka Dieng une  
u rawai u rawiang, sneng ryngkat phi  
long-kha man-kha.*

As funds have been raised and expended for thee u/ka Dieng here is *rawai*, *rawiang*, give counsel together thou who causet to be who causet to grow.

And he throws the rice again to the ground.

✓ *U lor u kap.* – *U lor u kap* means those who are still born and cannot be distinguished as male or female. Rice-beer is placed in a gourd and the sacrificer takes one female cowrie shell, the gourd, rice, *dieng pyrshit* leaf, and a piece of cloth to the courtyard before the bones are taken inside the house. While the bones are still in the courtyard, he holds the cowrie shell and the rice in his left hand, and says :

*Phin wan phi i lor i kap ban poi ha ka  
niam.*

Now come ye who are still born to reach unto the religion (rites and ceremonies).

He pours libation (*suid*) on the cowrie shell and the rice. He places them in the piece of white cloth, he ties them up and places them together with the bones in the courtyard. They perform this when all the bones have been brought but before the bones are taken inside the house.

✓ Cowrie shells. – When bones are not available, for instance when the person died in a foreign land or in a distant place, or the body was lost in a river or eaten up by wild beasts, they perform the ceremonies with female cowrie shells, using up to five shells instead of bones. The same ceremonies are performed as in the case of *u lor u khap*.

The sacrificer says :

*Phin wan phi u/ka Nar ban poi ha ka  
niam.*

Come thou u/ka Nar \* to reach unto the religion (rites and ceremonies).

\* *U Nar* or *ka Nar* is the name of a person, man or woman, who died in a distant land ; in actual ceremony the real name of the individual is used.

The sacrificer pours a libation holding together the cowrie shell and the rice as in the case of *u lor u kap*, and he brings them tied up in a piece of white cloth to the bones in the courtyard. They perform this ceremony when all the bones have been brought into the courtyard but before taking them inside the house.

Either this ceremony may be done first, or that of *u lor u kap*.

### Summary

The words used in the ceremonies are addressed to the spirits of the dead, being requests not to repine or have regret or anxiety. They have been given in Khasi and English in the sections above, but a typical sample is given here in English, from a ceremony performed for one person only, male or female, for whom the fictitious name *u/ka Dieng* is used.

"Thou who hast lost thy stature, thou *u Dieng*, do not repine, do not be regretful. Give counsel together give advice together thou (maternal) uncle, thou brother, thou mother who bearest, who gavest birth to *u Dieng*. Come thou (maternal) uncle, thou brother, give counsel together. Do not repine do not be regretful. Come thou who causeth to be and thou who causeth to grow (i.e. male progenitors), give counsel together. Do not repine do not be regretful."

These words are said at the ceremonies for the bones of *u Dieng* and the mention of the maternal relatives and the mother is not surprising. But it is to be noted that the male progenitors who in the matrilineal system are not of the clan of *u Dieng*, are also addressed. This proves that the Khasi believes in a connection not only with the mother and maternal relatives but with the father and his relatives as well.

The reverence for those to whom the Khasi is connected by blood and by marriage is shown in the act of obeisance in the *mastieh* dance. The intention is to give a last resting place to the bones where the spirit may be in peace, in the *mawbah* (*mawniam*) of the clan or in the *mawkynroh* if the family is an isolated one.

There is a belief in the connection between the dead and the living. There is also belief in the influence of the dead on the living. No words are addressed to a good spirit or god or to an evil spirit (*ksuid*). It can be asked: Why then are there sacrifices? Writers on religion and anthropologists do not agree on the meaning of sacrifices except that they are a form of communion with the spirit addressed. Nothing is known of the origin of these ceremonies among the Khasis or of the ideas of persons of ancient times who performed them.

The Khasi law of inheritance is connected with these ceremonies. The one who looks after the mother is the youngest daughter. She takes the family house after her mother's death and is the keeper of the religion (*ka bat ia ka niyam*). Her share of the land is generally greater than that given to her elder sisters because she has to bear the main part of the expense in taking the bones to the *mawniam*. But whether the law of inheritance or the ceremonies of disposal of the bones are prior in time is unknown. The youngest daughter

should be guided by the maternal uncle (*u kni*) in the management of the family land. In the ceremonies the spirits of maternal uncles are always invoked. Family ties are most important in the Khasi social structure and these ceremonies strengthen them. Economically the close-knit family is suited to the management of large tracts of hill land much of which is owned by families and is under shifting cultivation. The family (*shi-iing*) is not allowed to become too large and unwieldy as separation takes place at any rate after four generations.

That the Khasis have stood together as a race though surrounded by other cultures which have battered against their hill sides may be due to their sense of unity with their relatives "*shi kur shi jaid*", as they say. The centre of their society is the *shi-iing*, the family house. The ceremonies described in this paper fortify this sense of unity.

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