

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN MEGHALAYA

**A TRIBAL STATE IN
NORTH EASTERN INDIA**

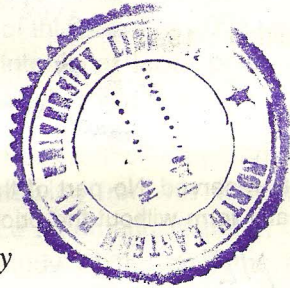


About the Author

J.M. Phira was educated at St. Edmund's College, Shillong and at the Earle Law College, Gauhati. He joined the Assam Civil Service in 1958 and then the Indian Administrative Service in 1963 and was allotted the Assam Cadre. He served the Assam Government in various capacities in the Districts of both the Assam Valley and the Barak Valley. He spent many years of service in Mizo Hills District now the State of Mizoram. He served Meghalaya since its inception in 1970 and for sometime worked as the Chief Secretary to the Government of Meghalaya. At present he is the Chairman of the Third Meghalaya Pay Commission. He retired from the Indian Administrative Service in 1993. He was one of the few Khasi Tribal Officers who laid the strong foundation of the Administration in Meghalaya during the formative years of the new State. He has written a number of Books on Administration of Meghalaya including a Book on the Autonomous District Councils of Meghalaya under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India. He has also written an important book in Khasi on the Customary Laws and Traditions of the Khasis.

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IN
MEGHALAYA
A TRIBAL STATE IN
NORTH EASTERN INDIA**



By

J. M. Phira

1996

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FOREWORD

The importance of study of public administration can hardly be overemphasised. With ever increasing emphasis on development and welfare, a proper understanding of the nuances of public administration in all its complex aspects is all the more essential today for any administrator to be successful.

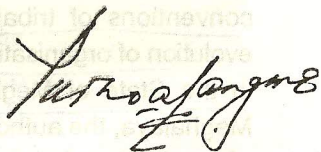
Public Administration in India has a special characteristic in that it should be geared to delivery of services to our pluralistic society in which national unity and integrity have to be maintained giving due attention to all dimensions of this pluralism. This would call for special insights into local laws, practices, traditions, customs and social milieu.

In this backdrop, the book authored by Shri J.M. Phira is a good effort. Drawing from his wide and varied first hand experience as an administrator, Shri Phira has attempted a study of the customs and conventions of tribal administration as well as the evolution of organisation and structure of administration in the State of Meghalaya. Tracing the genesis of Meghalaya, the author brings out that it has the record of coming into being as a State of the Union of India in 1972 through a disciplined, orderly and peaceful democratic movement.

The author also makes an attempt to diagnose the cause of the backwardness of the State and ascribes it to the lack of "basic skill, non availability of local labour, remoteness from market, hard living conditions and transport bottlenecks due to absence of rail links, waterways and air-links".

An interesting study that the author makes in the book pertains to the land administration in the State. It is a little known fact to the people outside Meghalaya that the concept of tribal land administration in the State was based on the age-old wisdom that land belongs to every member of the community. He further adds that in Meghalaya "land is held in trust by the community for use by its members as and when it is needed and according to actual need". So deep is that attachment and primordial affiliation of the people to the native land that even after reaching the pinnacle of succes in various walks of life, they always long to come back to their roots. Any move to dilute or amend the existing law prohibiting alienation of tribal lands will destroy the social defence mechanism with dangerous consequences, observes the author.

The book, besides making a study of public administration in Meghalaya, is a good compendium of important documents which will be useful to administrators, academics and scholars undertaking research of Meghalaya.



New Delhi
30th December, 1996

(P.A. Sangma)
Speaker Lok Sabha

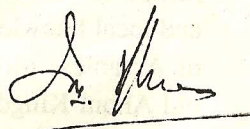
Preface

The controlling idea that made me write this Book was the need I felt during my years of work in the Government of Meghalaya for a ready source of information and record of events of past years of Public Administration in Meghalaya. This need was more pressing in crisis-situations when knowledge of successful and workable solutions of the past was a great reassurance that soothed the nerves and sustained my balance and composure. With all the shortcomings I am certain my successors in Meghalaya Administration will profit from the experience of the past and avoid the mistakes and pitfalls. When placed in a position of authority at any level of public service, decision-making is a very lonely process that is most unnerving. Precedents have a very important place, for continuity is a very important aspect in Public Administration. Lessons from the past plays a crucial role. Kingdoms and Empires have faded into the History of India but their administrative principles and practices, which had stood the test of time, lives on for their successors who replaced them to copy and use. The British East India Company Government in the formative years of the British Empire continued with the basic administrative practices of the decaying Mughul Empire till their own men, who were basically tradesmen, gathered experience and local knowledge. David Scott utilised the services of Assamese officials with judicial experience in the old Ahom Kingdom in the disposal of the backlog of Civil Suits in Gauhati. In Garo Hills the Zamindars of the plains appointed by the Mughuls to collect

revenue from the Garos were allowed to continue their work till their exactions from the Garos and the abuse of their position became unbearable, made the British to appoint their own official Collectors. In the Khasi Hills the British continued to treat the native Khasi States as their unit of administration. The groundwork for administration of Tribal Areas in North-Eastern India was already laid down in the Government of India Act 1935 till ultimately the Assam Excluded and Partially Excluded Tribal Areas of the Act found their new place in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India. For our present day purpose the smooth and orderly transition of Public Administration from that of undivided Assam to that of the Autonomous State of Meghalaya and then finally to the present administration in Meghalaya as a full State of the Union of India, I consider an event that is worth recording.

In my years of work for the Government of undivided Assam I have seen service in the Districts of Kamrup, Nowgong and Darrang in the Assam Valley and Cachar District in the Barak Valley. I spent a number of years in Mizo Hills District, now the State of Mizoram. The most rewarding experience was my work on famine relief for the Mizo people of South Mizo Hills during the years of the great Mautam Famine of 1959-60. It was an honour and a privilege that the call of duty came to serve my own people in Meghalaya from 1969 till the closing years of my service in 1993.

Lower Lachumiere,
Shillong,
31st October, 1996



J.M. Phira

CONTENTS

Page

Foreword	
Preface	
Chapter 1 Meghalaya	..... 1
Chapter 2 Public Administration in Meghalaya	..... 33
Chapter 3 District Administration	..... 50
Chapter 4 General Administration	..... 108
Chapter 5 Bureaucracy	..... 142
Chapter 6 Conclusions	..... 149
Appendix	
Appendix I : Notification of Government of India on the Appointed Day for the Autonomous State of Meghalaya.	.... 167
Appendix II : The Assam Reorganisation (Meghalaya) Act, 1969.	.... 169
Appendix III : Notification of Election Commission of India of Members of the Provisional Legislative Assembly of the Autonomous State of Meghalaya, 1970.	.... 200
Appendix IV : List of Assam Officers appointed to the Interim set-up and the Autonomous State of Meghalaya.	.... 202
Appendix V : Notification of Government of India of Appointed Day for the State of Meghalaya under the North-Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act, 1971.	.... 208
Appendix VI : Profile of Elections in Meghalaya; 1952 to 1967 : List of Members of Parliament of Meghalaya; 1952 to 1996.	.... 209
Appendix VII: Profile of State Governments in Meghalaya : 1970 to 1996	.... 213
Appendix VIII: Statement of Crime Statistics in Meghalaya : 1985 to 1994	.... 216
Appendix IX : Statement indicating Dates of creation of Districts, Sub-Divisions and Administrative Units in Meghalaya.	.... 218
Bibliography	.... 220

Conclusions

Meghalaya has just completed a quarter of a Century of its life. Any current study of its administration is too close to events for firm and abiding conclusions. But it is far better for a study to be done than not being done at all, for a record of events when they are fresh to the mind and of recent memory will have the merit of accuracy and authenticity. Objective judgement can best be left to future historians.

The Khasis and the Garos are not of common stock. They have their own language and culture with marked differences. But both the tribes have the same or almost similar matrilineal system which regulates inheritance, custodian of property, and even the reckoning of the line of succession to public office. The Khasi Hills and the Garo Hills, the traditional home and abode of the Khasis and the Garos are geographically contiguous. The two tribes have been in contact with each other from the earliest times. The West Khasi Hills District has a common border with the East Garo Hills District. Only after the creation of Meghalaya was a direct Road-link constructed between Shillong of Khasi Hills and Tura of Garo Hills, across rugged hilly terrain. The Road however is yet to be up-graded to a State-Highway, and a long way to go for it to become a National Highway. Regular travelling and Public transport continue to travel through the territory of Assam along the National Highway to go to Tura and other towns of Garo Hills from Shillong the State Capital, a distance of 323 kilometers upto Tura and 445 kilometers upto Baghmara the District Head-quarter of South Garo Hills District. In the West Khasi Hills District lives a part of the Khasi Tribe known as the

Lyngams or Dyko in Khasi Hills and as the Megams to the Garos. They have a close affinity to the Garos as their home is in the fringe areas of Khasi Hills and Garo Hills. It is easy to consider them as a link between the Khasis and the Garos. It is therefore quite natural that the Khasis and the Garos could work together in the common endeavour to create the Tribal State of Meghalaya.

The State of Meghalaya offers equal opportunity to the Khasis and Garos to develop and prosper. The policy adopted by the state government under the All Party Hills Leaders Conference that there should be a balanced approach in the development of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills and the Garo Hills regions of the State was scrupulously followed in the early years of the State. The other important policy was the reservation of posts in the state government in equal proportion for the Khasi and Jaintias and the Garos. This was necessary as the Garos has no representation in the government services at the level of the Directorates and the Secretariat. The main reason for this was that since most or all of the officials of the government were drawn in the first instance from the cadre of those already in service with the government of Assam, the majority of officials were Khasis and Jaintias with a very negligible per-centage of Garos. The reason for this was that in the composite state of Assam the Khasis and Jaintias readily entered the government service in the offices of the Assam Government as the Directorates and the Secretariat were located in Shillong the State Capital. Captain Sangma as the Chief Minister of the A.P.H.L.C. government had the vision and the mandate to initiate and implement these bed-rock policies, including the land-transfer policy for the preservation of tribal lands. These policies welded the major tribes of Meghalaya together and gives strength to the structure of Meghalaya as a State. Once these nuts and bolts of statehood are loosened the structure will weakened.

To ensure balance development and take the administration closer to the people living in the remote villages and the interior

areas of Meghalaya, new Districts were constituted by the bifurcation of the United Khasi and Jaintia Hills District and the Garo Hills District into seven new Districts. There are now three Districts in Khasi Hills namely, the East Khasi Hills District, the West Khasi Hills District and the Ri-Bhoi District. The Jaintia Hills District is the only District in Jaintia Hills. The Garo Hills has three Districts namely, the West Garo Hills District, The East Garo Hills District and the South Garo Hills District. The creation of these new Districts has removed the sense of isolation of the people living in these inaccessible areas of the State. They now no longer have to go far to voice their needs and grievances as the authorities of the Government are near them. The presence of District officials at various level in these Districts by itself is a civilising influence. The circulation of money in the new Districts brought about by the presence of the salaried class of government employees greatly improve and gave new life to the local economy. Communication lines, education, medical facilities and other basic requirements of the District are consequently upgraded. Further the creation of new Sub-divisions and administrative Units in these new Districts offers more scope and wider coverage for development efforts of the government. Strengthening of the administration at the regional level was done by the establishment of Regional Directorates at Tura in Garo Hills where senior officers of Additional Director and Joint Director status was posted for the Departments of Education, Public Works Department, Soil Conservation Department etc.

The Khasis had an early advantage over the Garos in terms of development. For over a century the exposuure of the Khasis to other cultures and outside influence, both Indian and European, was strong and sustained. Long before the British established their administration in Bengal the Khasis were already in close contact with Sylhet District in eastern Bengal. Regular trade and commercial dealings was transacted between the people of Surma

valley and the people of Khasi and Jaintia Hills. The Khasis had a number of villages in their possession in the plains. The Raja of Jaintia Hills ruled over territories spread over the Jaintia Hills and the plain areas of Sylhet. His Capital was Jaintiapur in Sylhet and his summer Capital was Nartiang in Jaintia Hills. There was a flourishing trade in limestone, iron and oranges etc for Khasi Hills. The return trade from Sylhet was foodgrains, dried fish and articles of common use which included clothes, salt and utensils. The British took over the administration of Sylhet District from the Mughuls in 1771 and immediately thereafter they had to deal with the incursions of the Khasis right upto the vicinity of Sylhet. The British were able to restrain the Khasis and the Deputy Commissioner of Sylhet regulated the trade with the Khasis and allowed them free intercourse and trading with the East India Company territories provided the Khasis conduct themselves peaceably towards the inhabitants of the plains. The Khasis were prohibited from owning any lands or possessions in the plains and a complete embargo was imposed on the supply of arms to the Khasis. All this made the frontier between Khasis and Jaintia Hills and the Sylhet District a very disturbed area. The British gradually restored peace through a series of strong and widespread military operations which involved expeditions right into the villages inside Khasi and Jaintia Hills. Once this was done the East India Company Government as early as 1813 permitted the Christian missionaries to civilise the tribes in the frontier regions.

William Carey, the head of the Baptist Mission in Serampore near Calcutta, deputed missionaries to work among the Khasis in these frontier areas frequented by the Khasis. The work of Krishna Chandra Pal, James Rae and Alexander B. Lish which covered the trading outpost of Pandua, Gauhati and Sohra (Cherrapunjee), Mawsmal and Mawmluh in Khasi Hills brought few Khasi converts to christianity. Efforts were made to translate the Gospels into Khasi from English using the Bengali script.

However significant progress was not achieved by this mission. Either due to discouragement or shortage of funds the mission was abandoned by the Serampore Baptists in 1838.

At the conclusion of the War, 1829 to 1835, between the British and the Confederation of Khasi Syiems led by Tirot Singh Syiem, the British established an Agency for Khasi Hills to which Jaintia Hills was added later when it was annexed by the British. Colonel F.G. Lister assumed charge as the Political Agent on 11th February 1835 at the Agency Headquarters at Sohra (Cherrapunjee). Sohra was already a British Sanatorium from the year 1829 under David Scott. There was a good number of British army personnel both sick and wounded staying and being taken care at Sohra. Among them was one Captain Lewin, who fell sick in Arrakan in Burma and was sent to Sohra to recoup his health. This Army officer was also a good Christian and appealed that Missionaries should be sent to work among the Khasis. The Welsh Presbyterian Mission accepted the mission to work among the Khasis, inspite of demands from other parts of the world. Thomas Jones, the first Welsh Missionary to Khasi Hills, left Liverpool by ship on the 25th November 1840 and arrived at Calcutta five months later. he arrived at Sohra only in June 1841, in the middle of the rainy season. His first report was that all his time was lost in drying clothes and protecting his personal effects from the rain. Further inconvenience was avoided when Captain Lewin invited Thomas Jones to stay in his house as a guest. Thus began the evangelical and educational work of the Welsh Missionaries in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills. The evangelical work met with a lot of hostility from the Khasis and the progress was discouraging in the early years. To overcome this difficulty Thomas Jones set about to educate the tribe first, and after education has spread the evangelical work can follow. Within a few months Thomas Jones mastered the Khasi language to the great surprise of the Khasis, when the experience was that other Europeans failed to

learn a single Khasi word after many years of stay in Sohra. To prepare for the establishment of schools Thomas Jones invited some Khasi youths to his house and taught them how to read and write. These in turn formed a pool of teachers to teach in the schools. For the school curriculum he himself prepared the first Book of Khasi Alphabets. He adopted the Sohra dialect of the Khasi language and its phonetics. Instead of the Bengali script used by the Baptist Missionaries earlier, he adopted the Roman script. This earned Thomas Jones the distinction as the father of the Khasi Alphabet and the one who laid the foundation of Khasi literature. The first school was opened at Mawsmái village followed by another one at Mawmluh village and the central school at Sohra. Khasi youths were appointed as teachers.

In the year 1843 Reverend and Mrs. William Lewis with Dr. Owen Richards arrived at Sohra to strengthen the Mission. Rev. Lewis and Mrs. Lewis took over the education work to enable Thomas Jones to devote fully to translation of the scriptures. Dr. Richards started the medical mission and gained the confidence of the people by his professional skills, however he was recalled only after six months stay to the disappointment of both Europeans and Khasis. William Lewis and his wife found it difficult to retain the Khasi boys in class-rooms and the rate of dropout was very high. Girls were prohibited by the parents from attending schools. In spite of inducement and incentives the progress of education was discouraging. The boys were ultimately attracted to education when their parents realised that knowing English, reading and writing opened the door to employment in the government. The girls however were drawn through sewing and knitting classes, to which there was no objection, and ultimately to the classrooms.

By the end of the year 1849 the evangelical work has produced 19 Khasi Christians. In 1850 a prominent convert was U Laithat, who worked as the interpreter (Dubasia) of Col. F.G.

Lister, the Political Agent at Sohra. U Laithat's native village was Shella and he was entrusted with the construction of the new school at Shella village. In this work he was assisted by Harry Inglis an official in the government and an associate of Laithat in the orange trade. The cost of construction was borne by them. In 1854 on the direction of Lord Dalhousie, the Governor General of India, a grant-in-aid of Rupees fifty per month was sanctioned by the government as financial assistance for the schools, without any conditions. In 1866 there were 65 schools with over 2000 students. The Central school at Nongsawlia, Sohra was converted into a Normal School under the charge of a Welsh Missionary for the training of teachers required for the increasing number of schools.

After the suppression of the Jaintia rebellion and the pacification of Jaintia Hills the British government in appreciation of the contribution made by the Christian Mission the grant-in-aid for the Mission schools was raised to Rupees Five Hundred per month. Only two conditions were imposed (a) that the Inspector of Schools of the government be given the power to inspect the schools and (b) that the report of the progress of the schools be submitted to the government once a year. The government will not interfere in the management of the schools or in the appointment of the teachers. Further the Mission authorities were given the power to appoint a Sub-inspector of schools who will be paid by the government. A Khasi christian Jarkha was appointed as the first Sub-inspector of schools. He had satisfactorily worked as the Postmaster of Sohra and was offered a promotion as Postmaster at Dacca, which he declined. He died in 1867 at Dacca while on tour to report to the Inspector of Schools at Dacca. He was replaced by another Khasi U Luh. Education has by then opened the door for Khasis to join government service in various capacities.

After the great earthquake that devastated the Khasi and Jaintia Hills in 1897 Khasi Christians were given employment by

the government in various capacities. The appointment of Babu Mohonroy, who was working as a Sub-inspector of police, as a Magistrate in the rank of Extra Assistant Commissioner was a significant recognition of the progress of the Khasis by the British. By this time Solomon Blah and Dohori Ropmay had graduated as the first graduates of Bachelor of Arts degree among the Khasis and Jaintias, from Calcutta University. They continued their study for the Master of Arts degree in Calcutta, but Simon Blah died during the stay and Dohori Ropmay returned home on his appointment as Extra Assistant Commissioner in place of Babu Mohonroy who had died in the meantime. A number of Khasis and Jaintias were also appointed as church workers and evangelists by the Welsh Mission. To meet the increasing demand of evangelists and pastors to minister to the increasing number of churches in the villages a school of Theology was opened at Nongsawlia at Sohra under the charge of Reverend John Roberts. A number of Khasis passed out from the School with a Diploma in Theology and were the first Khasi christians to be ordained as Pastors of the Welsh Mission in Khasi and Jaintia Hills. To meet the increasing needs of printed matters and with the encouragement of the government a printing press was established in Sohra by the Welsh Mission for the first time in Khasi and Jaintia Hills.

The first stage in the development and progress of the Khasis ended in the year 1864 when the Headquarters of the United Khasi and Jaintia Hills District was shifted from Sohra to Shillong. The Welsh Missionaries also gradually shifted their work to Shillong. The rigours of the pioneering work in difficult and unhealthy areas took a heavy toll of these early missionaries, many of them succumbed in harness. Thomas Jones after he went through a lot of personal tragedies died in Calcutta at a very young age of 38 years. With the shifting of the District Headquarters to Shillong the Welsh Mission also in a phase manner moved its main work to Shillong. While Shillong gained in

importance that of Sohra declined rapidly. It continued as a trading centre and transit point with the plains of Sylhet. Even though Sohra was an important stop of the road Shillong-Sohra-Thariaghat-Companyanj-Sylhet, the distance of about 8 miles of steep drop down the face of the slope to Thariaghat made the road unfit for wheeled traffic. With the increased importance of Shillong a direct route of Gauhati-Shillong-Sylhet was urgently required to connect Assam Valley and Surma Valley. The new road was ultimately constructed with the alignment bypassing Sohra at Umtyngar Village proceeding eastwards towards Laitlyngkot village then onwards to Pynursla village upto Dawki and Tamabil, the border villages, between the District of United Khasi and Jaintia Hills and the District of Sylhet, till the road reach all the way to Sylhet. With the main District headquarter-towns of Gauhati, Shillong and Sylhet linked by a good road Sohra lost its importance totally. A death-blow was dealt to Sohra by the partition of India and the creation of East Pakistan which closed the traditional trade of the Khasis with the plains of Sylhet. The Ropeway linking Mawmluh village, near Sohra, with the plains of Sylhet below, ferrying trade goods and coal of Sohra was finally closed.

The Government of India made a Proclamation by a notification of 7th February 1874 published in the Gazette of India that constituted Assam into a separate Chief Commissioner's Province. The Districts of Kamrup, Darrang, Nowgong, Sibsagar, Lakhimpur, Khasi and Jaintia Hills, Garo Hills, Naga Hills, Cachar and Goalpara, as also Sylhet District which was added later, were removed from the jurisdiction of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal and transferred to that of the new Chief Commissioner of Assam. Colonel R.H. Keatinge assumed charge as the first Chief Commissioner of Assam on 7th February 1874 with his headquarters at Gauhati. On 20th March 1874 he shifted the Capital of the Province of Assam from Gauhati to Shillong. The Khasis should consider the year 1874 as the landmark year in the

second phase of their progress and transition from a primitive stage to a modern society. Initially Shillong remained the Capital of Assam upto 1905 when in that year the Government of India, under Lord Curzon, partitioned Bengal and constituted a new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam with Dacca as the Capital and Shillong as the summer sanitarium. The establishment of the Assam Secretariat at Shillong had also to shift to Dacca. The actual shifting took sometime and while the process was under way, the officials moved to Dacca on tour with their assistants at great expense in time and money. This transition created a lot of turmoil and dislocation in the development of Shillong. The shifting was completed only in 1911 and Shillong was finally abandoned as the Capital. The partition of Bengal resulted in serious political agitations in Bengal and inflamed nationalistic passions. The Partition was annulled in 1912 and Assam was again restored as a separate Province under the Chief Commissioner with Shillong as the Capital. From then on Shillong continued as the Capital of the British Province of Assam till the independence of India in 1947. It also continued as the Capital of the State of Assam after independence and the State of Meghalaya after the reorganisation of Assam in 1970 till the present day.

To meet the requirements and needs of the Provincial Capital the infrastructure of Shillong were upgraded to a great extent. Private lands were acquired and Shillong was constituted into a Civil Station on 21st November 1878 under the Bengal Municipal Act 1876 with the Deputy Commissioner as the President, 12 ex-officio members and 7 members nominated by the Chief Commissioner. Shillong was formally declared a Municipality on 1st January 1911. Water supply, sanitation and conservancy services, lighting and drainage were provided. Early British records stated that "the Town of Shillong was laid out with great taste and judgement among the pine-woods at the foot of the Shillong Range which rises to a height of 6450 feet above the

sea. It is surrounded with rolling downs; and visitors enjoyed facilities for riding, horse-racing, driving, polo, golf and cricket which cannot usually be obtained in the Hill Stations elsewhere. The clumps of oak and pine trees, the hills broken up with deep gorges and smiling valleys was not unlike the scenery found in many parts of England."

The Welsh Missionaries made significant progress both in their evangelical and educational work among the Khasis by the year 1912. The Census of Assam in 1901 stated that the efforts of the Welsh Mission, who was the chief proselytizing agency in Assam, was extraordinarily successful amongst the Khasis with 17,125 person or 8.6 per cent of the total population of Khasi and Jaintia Hills returned themselves as Christians during the census. Out of a population of 13,000 in Shillong town 1,300 persons were presbyterians or ten per cent of the population. The Census Report commented that as there was no caste system or social prejudice among the Khasis to act as an obstacle to conversion, and as Hinduism has little influence of them, the Khasis readily accepted Christianity. The Welsh Missionaries attributed their success to the administrative and organisational structure of their Presbyterian Church. Church administration is a democratic organisation under the presbyterian system. Church government in the system is conducted by presbyters or elders elected by general members of the church through elections held regularly as prescribed by a written constitution. Teaching elders are ordained as Pastors to preach and perform the duties of christian ministers. Laymen members elected as Ruling elders are ordained to assist in the spiritual oversight and to share in the general government of the church. The system was propagated by John Calvin as one of the three varieties of Protestantism that emerged from the Reformation of the early Roman Catholic Church brought about by Martin Luther. The other two being the Anglican Church and the Baptist Church. The Welsh Mission of Khasi and Jaintia Hills are sometimes known as the Welsh Calvinistic Missionaries.

The Presbyterian Church in Khasi and Jaintia Hills was organised from the early stages in a manner where the Welsh Missionaries functioned as organisers and guides of the local congregation. As soon as theological education was imparted to the Khasis, those qualified were ordained as church leaders, christian ministers and pastors. Khasi Pastors were placed in independent charge of the increasing number of churches in various parts of Khasi and Jaintia Hills. Lay members of proven integrity and capability were elected as ruling elders to assist in the administration of the affairs of the church. At the apex of the church organisation was the Assembly, next below the Synod and followed by the Presbytery and the group of churches at the District and Sub-division level. Members were elected to church committees at every level to manage the day-to-day affairs of the church and delegates were also elected and nominated to represent the local churches to the next higher level in the hierarchy. By the time the church has reached maturity and foreign missionaries were no longer encouraged to work in India after the independence of the country, the administration of the Presbyterian Church in Khasi and Jaintia Hills was already in the hands of the Khasi leadership and the departure of the Welsh Missionaries presented no problems as the transition was smooth and well organised.

The refinement and civilisation of the Khasis both as an individual and a member of the society started with their gradual acceptance of the discipline and routine of regularly attending classes in schools daily and services in church every sunday. This was followed by the observance of the basic rules of hygiene, regular bath and cleanliness. Personal grooming, a presentable and pleasing personality in school and at church changed the appearance of the Khasis both in dress and conduct. Yet all these changes did not disturbed the traditional customs and usages of the Khasi-Christians in respect of kinship, marriage, inheritance and succession. Certain aspects of Khasi life where indigenous

religion of the Khasis has a role were frowned upon by the Missionaries as in the case of traditional religious dances and festivals, the cremation of the dead and other ceremonial practices. In such cases the Khasi-Christians gradually stopped their participation.

The work of the Welsh Missionaries in health-care and education was an outstanding achievement among the Khasis. Hygiene was one of the subjects taught in their schools at the middle and high school level apart from awareness of the environment. Advancement in education was such that Khasis found ready employment in the government from middle level positions as overseers, medical officers, sub-inspector of police and sub-inspector of schools etc. A number of them were appointed to the higher positions in the civil service. Many of them became trusted and respected colleagues of the superior British administrators in their work as magistrates and judicial officers. The record in the Gazetteer of Eastern Bengal and North East India stated that the Welsh Presbyterian Mission in Khasi and Jaintia Hills with 21 Missionaries employed in 1903 has succeeded in imparting the elements of instruction to a large proportion of the animistic population. There were 348 Primary schools, 8 Secondary Schools and one Special school in 1903-04. The number of pupils under instruction were 7,275. There were 2,395 female scholars. 3.4 per cent of the women were able to read and write as compared to 0.4 per cent in Assam as a whole. Out of every 1000 females 217 Khasi women can read and write. The first Khasi girl to pass the Matriculation Examination of the Calcutta University was Annamon. She got a scholarship of Rupees twenty five per month for further study at Bethune College in Calcutta, from where she passed the Intermediate examination in Arts and stood first from among the candidates of Assam. She won three merit scholarships. Enola Khain Phira, the maternal aunt of the author, was the first Khasi lady to graduate with the degree of

the Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Teaching from Calcutta University in 1918. From then onwards Khasi women made great strides in education. These early graduates were well qualified and had the confidence to take charge of the Mission Girls High School in Shillong, the cradle of girls education in Khasi and Jaintia Hills, from the Welsh Lady Missionaries. Among these lady-teachers mention may be made of Hilda Bhajur, Lariam Khongwir and Trophila Shullai. The pride of place was that of Miss. Mavis Dunn who graduated and obtained the degree of Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Teaching and Bachelor of Law, when in 1937 she became the first woman Minister in the Cabinet of the Government of Assam. Besides the women who studied in general stream of education a number of Khasi women qualified as Doctors. The earliest lady-doctors were Flora Mohon Roy, Sachin Ryntathieng and Eribon Passah. A number of them also qualified as trained nurses. The medical mission of the Welsh Missionaries started right from the early years of their work and was able to win over even the non-believers, but shortage of Doctors disrupted medical work. It was only in later years that good hospitals could be established in Jowai and Shillong.

In late 1913 Dr. Gordon Roberts arrived in Shillong. Dr. Roberts was a trained Chartered Accountant before he qualified as a Doctor. With his arrival the modern hospital project in Jaiaw, Shillong could be started. Doctor Roberts was a great organiser and hospital administrator that inspite of the distraction caused by the war-efforts of the local British administration during the First World War of 1914-19 the Hospital was completed in 1922 at a cost of Rupees Nine Lakhs. Sir. William Marris, the first Governor of Assam (1921-23), inaugurated the Hospital named as the "Welsh Mission Presbyterian Hospital". The Hospital quickly earned a very high reputation in a very short time not only in Assam but also outside Assam for high quality medical care. The name and fame of Dr. Roberts spread far and wide that the Hospital

became popularly known as 'Roberts Hospital' even today. From the early years Dr. Roberts utilised the services of Khasi Doctors and trained Khasi young men as laboratory technicians and X'ray operators. Dr. Drin Singh Hynniewta was a good Khasi doctor who assisted him in the work of the Hospital. Nursing service in the Hospital was organised by Miss. Margaret Buckley who arrived in Shillong in 1919. Miss. Buckley earned herself a name as the pioneer of nursing services in Khasi and Jaintia Hills and also in the whole of North East India. She trained young khasi girls in nursing and hospital care that within a short time the high standard of nursing in the Welsh Mission Hospital was known everywhere that all those in authority who came to inspect the Hospital gave high commendation on the efficiency and devotion of Khasi nurses. In course of time Khasi nurses went to serve in various places in Assam and all over India as Nursing Sisters and Matrons. The high quality of nursing was the mainstay of the Welsh Mission Hospital in Shillong. The excellent medical services of the Hospital was further improved with the arrival of Doctor R.A. Hughes, F.R.C.S. who worked in the Hospital till after the independence of India in 1947. Dr. Hughes became a renowned Surgeon and a household name in North East India. At a time when healthcare service was in a very primitive stage the Hospital was a landmark achievement of the Welsh Mission in Khasi and Jaintia Hills.

According to the Census Report 1901 the Roman Catholic Church started a Mission amongst the Khasis in 1891 and succeeded in making 551 converts. It appears that a group of German priests of the Society of Divine Saviour came to Shillong and proceeded to Sohra but finding the Welsh Mission already at work there, they moved down to Laitkynsew Village below Sohra. From there the Catholic Missionaries moved to Shillong. With the outbreak of the first World War in 1914 the German Missionaries were declared enemy aliens by the Government and

had to abandon their Mission. The Germans left and the Mission in Khasi Hills was left in the care of the Jesuit Fathers of Bengal. It was only in 1922 that the Salesians of Don Bosco came to take over the Catholic Mission in Shillong.

Earlier the Irish Christian Brothers had established the St. Edmund's School for boys in 1915 and the Loreto Nuns the Loretto School for girls in 1905. From then on other societies and orders of the Roman Catholic Church came to establish a number of educational, evangelical and medical institutions. In college education St. Edmund's College and St. Anthony's College for boys, and St. Mary's College for girls emerged as one of the best colleges in North East India and compared well in the quality of education imparted with the best colleges any where in India. The Roman Catholic Mission with its multinational human and material resources grew from strength to strength both in Khasi and Jaintia Hills and Garo Hills to become today the most dominant Christian congregation in Meghalaya.

In 1901 the American Baptist Mission had a centre at Tura in Garo Hills and other centres in Goalpara, Kamrup and Sibsagar Districts in Assam. The number of baptists in these Districts was 10,045, with the majority of them in Garo Hills and Goalpara Districts. The Gazetteer of Bengal and North East India recorded that education in Garo Hills was in a very backward condition, with the number of pupils under instruction in 1903-04 being 1,870. Primary education was largely in the hands of the American Baptist Mission made considerable progress in the past years. The Baptist Mission was granted financial assistance by the government to develop education among the Garos. Their emphasis however was mainly on christian scriptures and religious training with the result that secular education was ignored, even courses in history and geography were taught haphazardly by ill-equipped teachers. The Tura Station school trained Mission workers and Village schools teachers. The Village schools were also used as

village chapels, and sunday schools were attached to village churches to teach the scriptures. The Roman script was introduced sometime in 1901 for Garo language. Nothing was done to raise the standard of education beyond the primary stage. It was only in 1938 that an English high school was opened. It was only till after independence of India that a College came up in Tura. The emergence of the Autonomous District Council brought about a great change in the progress and development of Garo Hills under the leadership of Mody Marak and Captain Williamson Sangma. In the person of P.A.Sangma, the Honourable Speaker of the Lok Sabha and Salseng C. Marak, the Honourable Chief Minister of Meghalaya the Garos have a leadership with the qualities to lead them and shake off the age-old shackles of Poverty, Ignorance and Disease.

Notification

From the study of the Political and Administrative record of the Khasis, Jaintias and Garos from the commencement of the Twentieth Century in 1901 to the creation of Meghalaya in 1970 it was clear that the Khasis and Jaintias are by far well ahead in progress and development over the Garos. Thereafter the policies of Meghalaya of equal opportunity to all the tribes and of balanced development of all regions of the state appears to have borne fruits. The Garos are at the helm of the political affairs of Meghalaya from its inception. Garo young men and women have qualified as college and university teachers, as doctors and engineers. They have qualified as lawyers and other varied specialised disciplines like agriculture and veterinary. Till recently a Garo Judge sat in the Bench of the Gauhati High Court. Garos now have officers in the All India Services, the higher civil services in the state including police and other specialised services.

On the threshold of the Twentyfirst Century the Garos have a young and dynamic leadership eager to lead them to much greater achievements in years to come. On the other hand the Khasis are continuing with the old leadership. The long history

of political education of the Khasis both during the British Administration and independent India was marked by fractious politics in their political parties which prompted Keith Cantlie to observe in 1934 that "the Khasis tend to divide rather than to unite" in the conduct of their political affairs. The Twentyfirst century beckons and the time has come for the emergence of a dynamic Khasi leadership with a change in style in the management and conduct of public affairs in the interest of the State of Meghalaya and its Public Administration.
