

The Khasi Megalith-III

The Feeding of the Dead Ceremonies (*Ai Bam*)

DAVID ROY

A year or two after the ceremony of the *mawbah-mawshyieng* described in the previous issue, 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 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*; holds it in his left hand and 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 then says:

Kane la ai bam bha ia phi u/ka Dieng.

Here now good food is given to you u/ka Dieng.

David Roy was the only son of Rai Bahadur Roy Singh (Rai Shabong). He was born at Laban, Shillong on 23rd December 1884. From a young age his father sent him for schooling at Doveton College, Calcutta and he completed his studies from Duff College, Calcutta. He served as a Magistrate in the Assam Civil Service and was posted in various places including the Naga Hills, Garo hills and the Lushai Hills. He took part in the Kuki Expedition in 1919. On his return to Shillong he served as Administrator of the Hima Myllem. He was a Sub-Divisional Officer at Jowai during the Silver Jubilee celebration of King George V in 1935. He was appointed as the Dewan of Hima Myllem and Hima Sohra during 1936-46 and through his efforts the affairs of these two Hima were set right and their economic positions revived. He was later conferred with the MBE (Member of the British Empire) by the British Government of the time.

After his retirement, Roy continued to assist the Hima Myllem and was closely associated with the Federation of Khasi States. He established the Pomlum High School at Pomlum and played a significant role in the formation of the Seng Syngkhong Jingtip of which he also served as President. He was a member of the Indian Science Congress and attended the meetings of the congress at Indore and its Silver Jubilee celebration at Calcutta in 1938 where he presented a paper entitled "Significance of Cowrie Shells in Khasi Ceremonies". He wrote extensively, particularly on Khasi customs, traditions and laws and his writings were published in various journals. He also collaborated extensively in the publication of Sir Keith Cantlie's Notes on Khasi Law and contributed some chapters of the book.

He passed away in Shillong on 13th February 1966.

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 sneng ryngkat phi u Kni u Kong.

As good food has been given to you u/ka Dieng give counsel thou maternal uncle, thou brother.

He puts the pieces away. They keep the *khwang*, the *dohpha*, 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 *mawaibam* 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, asks for water which he receives in his right hand and sprinkles the water over the egg. Then he puts the egg aside on the leaf for the time being, pinches a piece of each of the three loaves and cuts off pieces of the *dohpha*. He then sacrifices saying:

Kane kumba la ai bam bha ia phi u/ka Dieng.

Here as good feeding has been given for thee u/ka Dieng.

He puts the pieces away, 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 miat ia phi u/ka Dieng sneng ryngkat phi u Kni u Kong.

Thus as good feeding, good food has been given to you u/ka Dieng give counsel thou maternal uncle and brother.

He puts the offering away, 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 causest to be, thou who causest to grow.

He puts the pieces away, 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 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 is phi u/ka Dieng ioh phi ong tang u dkhot, 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*), pours out a libation on the leaf and says:

Kumba la ai bam bha ia phi u/ka Dieng ioh phi ong tang u kpu u dkhot 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, 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 together. 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 father's 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, but it lasts one day for *ai-bam* stones and no *jakhawnei* is served.

The Mawksing, Mawkhait or Mawja Ceremonies

Mawksing, *mawkhait* and *mawja* are different names for the same stones. These are five upright stones. The middle one is 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*. 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 make ready the gourd (*skaw*). 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 says:

Mynta ba ieng ka mawksing, ka mawmieng, u kawkohkait, ka mawkohja ia phi u/ka Dieng.

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

He puts the offering away and 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, 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, 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.

The *Mawbyinna* Ceremonies

The *mawbyinna* stones consist of five upright stones and one flat table stone, just like the *mawksing*. Any difference that may exist between the *mawksing* (*mawkait*, *mawja*) and the *mawbyinna* is uncertain but according to U Mohon Kharkongor, 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* if *mawlynti* had not been erected. The last known case – that of Ka Stem Mawri from about 1890 is supposed to demonstrate this. U Mohon Kharkongor was a witness to this ceremony.

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 dkhoh* or 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 mawkhyllong, ka mawnam, ka mawrong ia phi u/ka Dieng.

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

He puts the meat away, takes the last lot of *dohiong* saying:

Sneng ryngkat ka mei-kha, ka mei-pun ba la ieng ka mawbyinna, ka mawkhyllong 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 *mawkhyllong*, the *mawnam*, the *mawrong* for thee u/ka Dieng.

He puts the offering away, takes another heap of *dohiong* and says:

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

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

He then 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 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 (*dut*) 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 the *mawbyinna* stones are erected, they consecrate the remaining animals by throwing rice over them, 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 place there 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:

Kumba la ieng ka mawbyinna, ka mawkhyllon, ka mawrong ka mawnam.

As have stood up the *mawbyinna*, the *mawkhyllon*, the *mawrong*, the *mawnam*.

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 Cherrapunjee 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. J. P. Mills found in the forest in Upper Shillong one stone on which a figure had been carved. 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 30 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.

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*, 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 they take the bones to the maternal relatives of the deceased father. At this ceremony the relatives 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 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 line age 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 relatives without erecting the *mawlynti* stones. They only sacrifice the pigs and cattle, erect the *mawumkoi* stones, and 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 relatives 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.

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 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, *shiiing*, or for the clan (*shikur*) if the clan is small, but not for the major lineage (*kpoh*) of the clan. From these family *mawkynroh* stones the bones of family members are taken finally to the *mawniam* (*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 *mawniam*; they finish only with the *mawkynroh* which is erected for the family, house, *shi-iing*. They call these stone *mawphew*. The member of an *iing* may take the bones directly from the individual *mawkynroh* stone, which was put up at the time of cremation, to the *mawniam*, 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 *mawniam* 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 sisters 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 *mawniam* 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 gin ceremonial stone (*thep-mawbah*) as already described.

Bones can be taken directly 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 *kynroh 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* or 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* that does not have 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 *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.

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 ioh 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 khawrawai.
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 to uncle (maternal) and brother.

He throws again some of the rice down the step and with both hands together 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 causest to be who casusest 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 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 (*ksuid*) on the cowrie shell and the rice. He places them in the piece of white cloth, 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 are used when bones are not available. For instance when a person dies 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:

Phi wan phi u/ka Nar ban poi ha ka niam.
Come thou u/ka Nar* to reach unto the religion (rites and ceremonies)

**U/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 section 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 causest to be and thou who causest 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 niam*). 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 under shifting cultivation. The family (*shi-ing*) 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 although surrounded by other cultures 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-ing*, the family house. The ceremonies described in this article fortify this sense of unity.

Note: *This is the third and last part of his article.*