

**KINSHIP & THE DYNAMICS OF INHERITANCE :  
A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY IN A MATRILINY**

By

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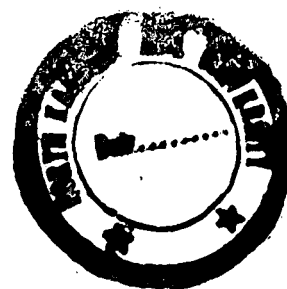
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## DECLARATION

The content embodied in this Dissertation is original and has not been submitted in part or full for any other diploma or degree of any University or Institution. The contents of this dissertation are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

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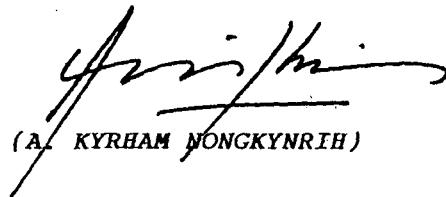
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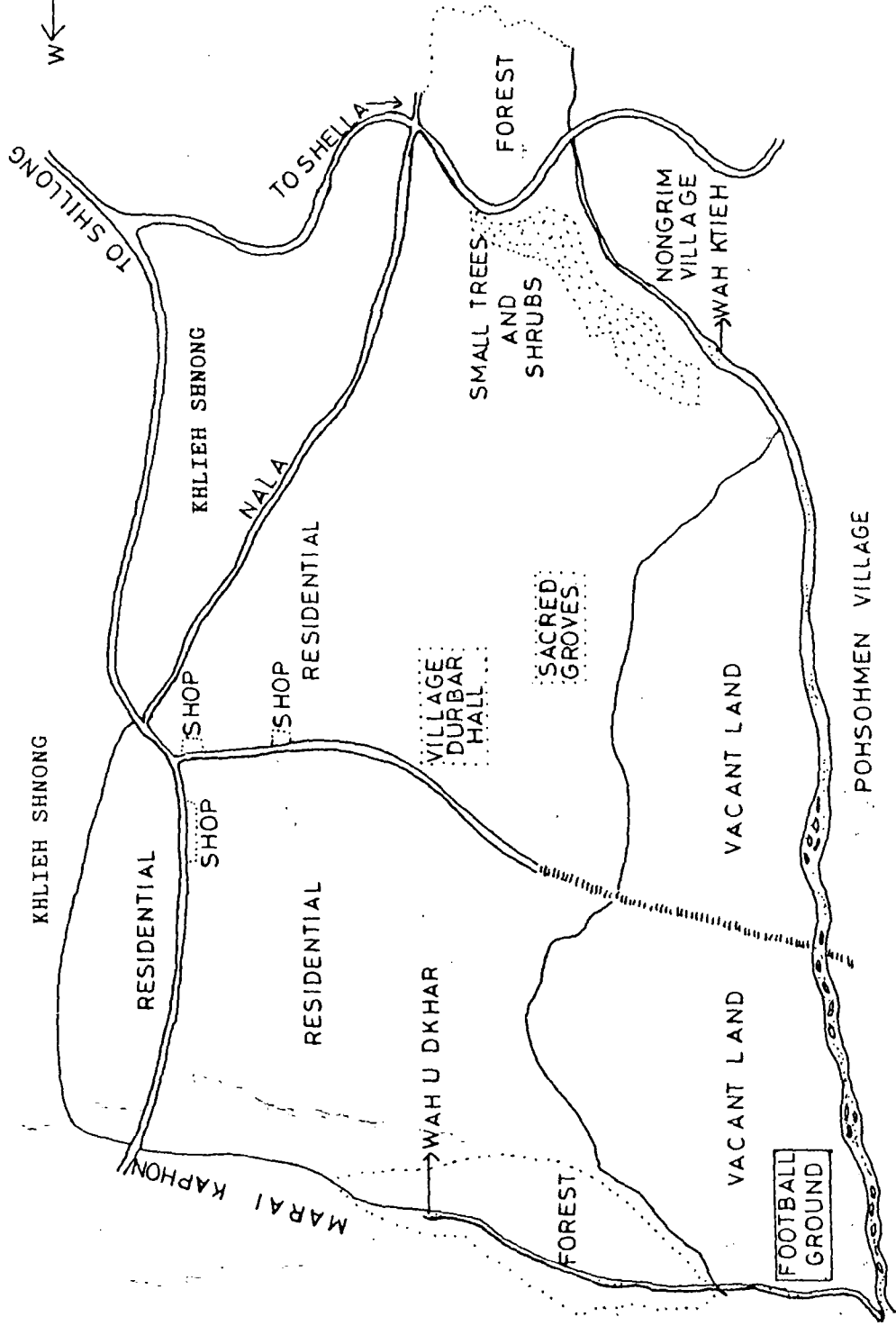
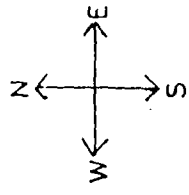


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## CONTENTS

			Page
	Acknowledgements	...	(i)
	Map	...	(iii)
CHAPTER I	INTRODUCTION	...	1 - 12
CHAPTER II	PDENGSHNONG: THE VILLAGE AND THE PEOPLE	...	13 - 28
CHAPTER III	KINSHIP AND MARRIAGE	...	29 - 51
CHAPTER IV	INHERITANCE OF PROPERTY	...	52 - 78
CHAPTER V	CONCLUSION	...	79 - 87
	APPENDICES	...	88 - 94
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	...	95 - 110

# MAP OF PDENGSHNONG



MAP NOT TO SCALE

Source: By the Author.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

## INTRODUCTION

### I

Interest in the ethnography of the Khasis appears to be more than two centuries old as is evident from the writings of the British colonial administrators after the establishment of the Diwani of Bengal in 1765. Since then isolated articles kept on appearing in various research journals. The first full volume monograph, however, appeared in 1906 under the title "The Khasis" written by Major P.R.T. Gurdon<sup>1</sup> an officer of the Imperial Army who was Deputy Commissioner, Eastern Bengal and Assam and Superintendent of Ethnography in Assam. After Gurdon's work several works started appearing on the Khasi which followed by and large the tone and the style of Gurdon. Another major work appeared in English language in 1961 in the form of comparison between the Khasi and their not-to-distant neighbour the Garos. The work was based upon an intensive field work in Anthropological tradition by its author Chie Nakane<sup>2</sup> (a Japanese Scholar) during 1955-1956. In between these two major works and subsequently thereafter several writings appeared in English and in the Khasi vernacular. The theoretical position taken in almost all the works (cited in

the bibliography at the end of this dissertation) remains the same i.e., the descent theory of kinship.

The significance attached to this theory, in our opinion, was great perhaps because of the structural peculiarities of the society which are very different from the structural organisation of most of the societies in the world. Thus, features matrilineal organisation of the society were always highlighted besides the physiognomic characteristics of the people who looked very different - physically as well as socially - from those who wrote about them.

## II

The descent theory has been used to explain the Khasi kinship structure as well as the rules of inheritance. Consequently explanations have been provided with respect to the notion of matrikin unity of siblings in the mother's group, the authority of brothers as well as mother's brother on their natal group, the notion of matrilineal residence. Detailed accounts are presented in respect of the transfer of property from mother to the youngest daughter. Scholars have debated over the rights of the youngest daughter in relation to the ancestral property. This debate centred around the nomenclature of youngest daughter's position

as that of an owner or that of a custodian. Kieth Cantlie, a British administrator, presented an outline of the Khasi customary laws and usages in his pioneering work "Notes on Khasi Law", published in 1934.<sup>3</sup> This slim volume has assumed the status of the only authentic reference work in civil courts today. Cantlie has taken the position that the youngest daughter is the custodian and not the owner of ancestral property. But then the implication of this position are left as a matter of detailed interpretation by the jurists and the lawyers engaged in the settlement of legal disputes.

The Khasi society has been viewed as consisting of several clans and the kinship studies available in English language have given an impression as if the structure of society could be viewed in terms of clan as a unit. Unfortunately the treatment given to various anthropological terms, viz., clan, matriarchal, matrilineal, descent, etc. was highly insufficient. Gurdon writes in his book on tribal organisation:

The Inhabitant of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills may be said to be divided into the following sections - Khasi, Synteng or Pnar, War, Bhoi, Lynggam.... These divisions are sub-divided into a number of septs, taking Mr. Risléy's definition of 'Sept' as being the largest exogamous division of the tribe it will, however, be more convenient to speak of these septs as 'clan', the word 'clan' having been used in other parts of this monograph and by other writers.<sup>4</sup>

In subsequent paragraphs as well we get more scatchy descriptions of the Khasi kinship. As if said in one breath he states,

The descendants of one ancestors of the clan, ka Iawbei Tynrai, are called Shi-Kur or one clan. We then come to the division of the kpoh or sub-clan, all the descendants of one great grandmother (Ka Iawbei Tymmen), being styled Shi kpoh. The neat division is the ying (Lit. House) or family.... The young grandmothers, her daughters and their children are said to belong to Shi ying, one house, the word ying in this instance possessing among the Khasis the same significance as the English word Family.<sup>5</sup>

Thus we see how quickly and how inappropriately several anthropological concepts have been used in the description. Let us not blame Gurdon for such a confused writing. He was neither a practising anthropologist nor sufficient advancements were made in anthropological understanding during his time. After all systematic comparative studies on various human societies started appearing only in the middle of the current century. Credit goes to Radcliffe Brown for compiling and editing a comparative treatise on several African matrilineal societies.<sup>6</sup> The Anthropological rigour in describing the Khasi kinship structure was visible for the first time in the work of Chie Nakane, which appeared in the sixth decade of the present century.

Nakane started her analysis with the study of Khasi

kinship terminology and tried to build up the network of kinship relations by enlarging the scope beyond the limits of descent group. She refrained from finding English equivalents of the vernacular kinship term and tried to understand them in the context of their social usage. In the first paragraph of her chapter on Khasi kinship structure she wrote, "The Khasi kinship terminology does not show the structural significance of the marriage roles except for the basic distinction between own matrilineal kin, Kur, and not matrilineal kin, Kha; this distinction serves to enforce the exogamous rule."<sup>7</sup> She then takes into account the importance of the group of 'bridegroom-givers' in relation to the group of the bride. The former group enters into the Kha relationship with the latter group with the birth of the first child. This also makes the husband-father, as we shall see subsequently in our own analysis, play an important contributory role in the economy of the group of the wife - mother.

She is quite realistic in her selection of the smallest analytical unit for the society when she writes,

The most important functional descent unit is called iing. The iing is the lowest order of clan segmentation, smaller than the kpoh - a kpoh may include two or more iing.... The Khasi consider this unit to be the most important social indepth for classification of individual. Marriages are arranged by individual iing, not by wider group of kinsmen. The iing is the structurally significant norm.<sup>8</sup>

## III

True to the empiricist tradition she based her analysis on the facts collected in the field and escaped such pitfalls of conjectures as well as unscientific explanations as were visible in the writings of the British administrators. It is unfortunate that her clarity does not seem to have been utilised by her successors in their writings. This may be perhaps due to the lack of field-based micro-level studies on the society as well as a concern with the micro-level generalisations on the Khasi community.

Literature published in the Khasi language describes extensively the organisation of the society and the set of norms laying down the prescription for interpersonal interaction in the society but then the purpose behind such writings is different from that of any anthropological work. Such writings are meant for the younger generation in the society and intend to inform them about the values to be cherished in order to establish a good order. On the one hand, the authors deal with the origin of the society while on the other hand, they exhort the people to emulate the ~~traditions of~~ high morality as practiced and laid down by the ancestors. In other words we could say that the purpose of such writings was largely to glorify the past and scorn at the present.

## IV

(In the current study which is purely descriptive and explanatory in nature we intend to understand the kinship structure of the Khasi society in general and inheritance of property in particular.) The purpose of the dissertation restricts the scope of the treatment to micro-level small sized sample. We chose a village, Pdengshnong, in Cherra Subdivision of the East Khasi Hills of Meghalaya. Under the given time constrain we decided to adopt the techniques of social survey instead of depending wholly on participants observation in anthropological tradition of field work. We had chosen a sample of 40 households randomly out of total number of 206 households. Further, techniques of schedule and indepth interviews were utilised in order to collect empirical data. Data were collected on various demographic aspects, kinship relations in terms of the ing (the currently accepted spelling of the word spelled earlier as ing); kpoh linkages of ing if the kpoh existed in the village; kur affiliations of each ing; etc. In addition to these structural aspects of kinship, data were also collected on the inheritance of ancestral property, accumulation of ancestral property, generation of self acquired property, the role of and the attitudes towards the members of a matrilineage and the husband/father in the matters relating to

both types of property etc. The issues were also examined in relation to the customary laws codified by the British administrators as well as the Khasi social leaders.

## V

Let us admit at the very outset that the motivation behind this work was not simply an intellectual curiosity just for the sake of knowledge but it was something more than that. At the back of our minds was a sense of helplessness in comprehending systematically the structure of society (which in our view is a prerequisite to the understanding of the process of transformation undergoing in the present day Khasi society) by going through the literatures based mainly on impressions (written by non-Khasis scholars) memory (written by various Khasi scholars with due regards to scholars in both categories).

On the basis of our wider reading on the subject and our general impressions gathered in everyday interaction. We were somehow not convinced that the society operates at the level of clans and thus we were not willing to accept clan either as the unit of kinship study or a property - holding corporate body. The Khasi scholars in the vernacular language had used the term kur which was erroneously translated into English as clan. We do not expect the social thinkers

in the society to be conversant with anthropological concepts and thus we do not blame them if they did not explain the contexts and different usages of the term kur in their language. After all, their target readership was their own people who knew very well the various contexts in which the single term kur was used. Responsibility for clarification lies with those who address themselves to a wider and mixed readership. Nakane did carry out that responsibility but for whatever reasons she failed to create a following. We decided to adopt the vernacular term in our writing without much care to give their exact English equivalence.

Emphasis on the principle of matrilineal descent practiced in the society seems to have overshadowed the importance of marriage as well as a father. Man has been described mainly as a brother to his sister and mother's brother to his sister's children. We were tempted to examine his affinal role as well. This role we wanted to examine particularly in the context of property in his wife's matrilineage. In the context of property we were concerned not only with the position of the youngest daughter but also with the position of the elder daughters.

One difficulty was encountered by us in regard to data collection and analysis. This was in identifying the basic unit of study in terms of the prevailing concepts

in sociological literature. We have referred earlier that we did not agree to the choice of the term clan in this regard. The choice of the vernacular term kur was also rejected as none of the usages suggested it as the unit at the operational level. Though this term is used extensively by the people in the context of property. The vernacular expression ing came closest though it had a dual meaning - indicating the house as well as the primary kins dwelling in that house. Ing could not be equated with the concept of family and its variants because the members living in a ing do not present a uniform model and consequently the same criticisms were applicable in this case also as they were applicable in the study of Kashmiri Pandits (Madan)<sup>9</sup> or Radhavanaj people (Shah).<sup>10</sup> Agreeing with Shah that, "... the household is one of the several dimensions of the family and should be viewed in relation to other dimension of family." We decided to view residential unit ing with its constituents members as a household.

In view of the above we organized the exercise of data collection through field work (spread over a period of three months during January-February and April 1990). The description and analytical treatment of the data are presented in the dissertation as follows:

Chapter II : Pdengshnong - The Village and the  
People.

Chapter III : Kinship and Marriage.

Chapter IV : Inheritance of Property.

Chapter V : Conclusion.

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CHAPTER II

PDENGSHNONG: THE VILLAGE AND THE PEOPLE

## PDENGSHNONG: THE VILLAGE AND THE PEOPLE

### I

The village Pdengshnong is located in the Cherra Subdivision of the East Khasi Hills district of Meghalaya. Its geographical location can better be described with reference to Cherrapunjee which lies 53 Kms south of Shillong (the state capital) and is situated at 25°17' N; 91°47' E. Placed 3,500 ft. above the mean sea level it has an annual average rainfall of 10,000 Cms. Soil erosion caused by this successive rainfall has made the soil unfit for cultivation. The hill-top and the higher reaches of the slopes consisting of rocks and rough soil appeared bald from a distance. One comes across high rocks on the one side and deep gorges on the other side of the road leading to Cherrapunjee. Water gushing down from the high-hill-tops into the deep gorges collects and transforms into perennial streams advancing towards the plains. It is in the deep gorges that one can see thick green vegetation. The temperature round the year shows seasonal variations which are normal to the region. Though the area lacks of agricultural potential but there are rich deposits of coal and limestone.

## II

After describing in brief the topographical location of the village, let us throw some light in this section on the nomenclature of the village. A perusal of the village names in this district of the state indicates a lack of any uniform pattern of naming. Villages may be named after the name of a particular person. For example, we have some villages name as Kynton U Mon which is after the name of a man named Mon. This style of naming is not very popular. There are other common ways in which villages are named, one of the ways is to name a village after the name of the clan to which the majority of the inhabitants belong. For example, we have villages name Nongkynrih, Kynton Massar, Nongkhyriem, Nongrum etc. Villages are named also on the basis the occurrence of some important events. These names helped perpetuate the memory of such events. Events may relate to a war, may relate to establishment of a covenant, holding of some important religious rites etc. For example, we have villages named as Pomsohmen and Mawsmi. We may mention another name here. There are several villages called by the name Nongrim. Such villages mark the arrival of a group of migrants into any unoccupied territory. Some of the migrants chose to stay back and establish a village which is named Nongrim and others move off in search of

other places. Thus Nongrim becomes the founding village in a particular locality. Another very common way is to name villages in terms of their geographical location and also in terms of the location of a particular village in relation to other neighbouring villages in a cluster. Khlieh Shnong means a village at the top in relation to other villages in a cluster. Pdengshnong means a village almost in the middle of a group of villages. Our village lies in the middle of a cluster of five villages.

### III

We have mentioned in the first section that the soil in Cherrapunjee is not conducive to agricultural-based economic activities. Pdengshnong situated within this region suffers from the same problem. Land in and around Pdengshnong and under the control of the village administration can be divided into two categories — land for residential purposes; and land under the forest cover. Patches of forest land in and around the village are divided by the village in two categories: (i) Law Adong (protected forest); (ii) Law Kyntang (sacred forest). Law Adong is managed and controlled by the village. Village administration (village dorbar) permits felling of trees only in case of natural calamities. It is the responsibility of the village dorbar to provide wood at its own initiative to help those people



whose houses are destroyed in cyclonic storm or by any such wrath of nature. The dorbar provides wood from law adong to non-Christian Khasi families in the event of death in such families to help them erect cremation platform.

Law Kyntang is under the control of Hima Sohra and is left under the care of the village dorbar. Such forests are considered ritually sacred and it is the responsibility of the village dorbar to see that no one could cut or steal the wood of the forest. However, the dorbar does not object to collection of dead wood which has fallen on the ground. People collect these as firewood.

Land not covered by forest is distributed by the village dorbar to the inhabitants for building houses. In the absence of any cadestral survey we could not ascertain the total area of such land. However, we were informed by the dorbar that approximately 20,000 sq.ft. of land was still lying vacant for the purpose. Earlier the dorbar was not very particular about the size of land allocated to the settlers but now it has decided not to allocate more than 2,500 sq.ft. of land to any new applicant in view of the duplation in the land reserve.

We would like to mention a curious aspect of this land distribution system. Theoretically the ownership of

land granted to individual (male or female) for building a house is retained by the dorbar. Then what is given to an individual only the right to use. But, this right to use on the one hand, is revokable, while on the other hand, is heritable by subsequent generations (this point will be further elaborated elsewhere in the text).

#### IV

Being the heaviest rainfall in the world the houses are so constructed as to protect the inhabitants against dampness and cold. One can see two styles of construction in the village. The common style is to build houses with thatched roofs drooping very low towards the ground from the sides. The walls could be heavy stones rising from the foundation extended to the top with wooden frame. These are single-room hutments which may be divided into compartments either with the help of cloth screens or chiselled bamboo-mat screens, or notionally with the arrangement of household goods. The roof generally appears triangular when view from the front. The other style followed by more well to do families is of houses with corrugated tin roof. The walls in this case may be of stones, hollow-cement blocks or fine bricks. The hollow blocks provide natural insulation inside the house from dampness and temperature fluctuations in the outside atmosphere. The low thatched roof being dis-

carded now in favour of high slanting tin roofs by those who can afford to bear the expenditure. The new type of roof makes water flow down from the sides and helps the surface dried up faster. This is in contrast to the earlier case where the thatched roof soaked with water would take a long time to dry in the absence of regular during monsoon.

## V

According to a census conducted by a village in 1987, there were 206 households with a total population of 1586 persons in Pdengshnong. If we take an average the population distribution would be 7-8 persons per household. Otherwise we could find the range from a maximum of 10 persons in a household to a minimum of 3 persons. (Table II:1).

Pdengshnong is neither a mono kur village nor any single kur could be identified as numerically dominant. The village population rather has members belonging to as many as 92 different kurs. However, 16 of these kurs claimed to be the original settlers in the village. The members of these kurs enjoy preference over subsequent settlers in matters of political administration of the village. Generally, the headman and executive members of the village dorbar belong to these founding kurs. The new settlers look upon these persons for help and advice. However, these 16

kurs do not dominate the village either ritually or economically. 27 kurs were represented in our sample of 40 households and 14 of these households hailed from the kurs of the original settlers representing 9 such clans. 21 of the kurs are represented in our sample by a single household each while the remaining 6 kurs are represented by more than one household each. Some of the kurs represented by single household in the sample are also the founding kurs of the village.

This was true by and large of the universe as well as it was evident in the census collected by us. We could say therefore that there is no definite correlation between the status of a kur being that of an original settler and its relative numerical majority vis-a-vis others. This would be clear when we discuss the residence pattern elsewhere.

## VII

All our respondents in the sample were Khasi in terms of their ethnic background. But they could be differentiated on the basis of religious affiliation: 32.5% (13 in number) belonged to the indigenous Khasi faith; 42.5% (17) Catholics; 22.5% (9) Presbyterian and one member of the Church of God. In other words, we could say that the two-thirds of our sample consisted of Christian and one-third of non-Christian (Table II:2).

The total number of persons living in the 40 households was 217 and belonged to various age groups. The 8.29% (18) of the population consisted of infants below five years of age while only 2.76% (6) were more than seventy years old. 29.03% (63) were between 5 to 15 years of age. If we look at it differently then 37.32% (81 persons) were upto a maximum of 15 years of age and this group was slightly more in number than that falling between 15 to 35 years of age (34.7% = 74). Another interesting feature is that majority of the respondents (76.49% = 116) belonged to 0 to 40 years age group as compared to 23.04% (50) falling between 40 to 75 years of age. In a nutshell we can say that more than 3/4th of the village population was fairly young in age (Table II:3).

In order to explain the educational background of the respondents we can begin first by dividing the population of 217 persons into those who are adults and had received or not received some formal education on the one hand, while those who were young or adults but were undergoing formal education on the other hand. Population seems to be divided almost equally with 118 persons (54.37%) coming in the former category and 96 persons (44.63%) coming in the latter category. If there was one person who had done medical graduation there were 31 persons (14.28%) who were illiterate and 8

persons (3.68%) were just literate. 16 persons (7.37%) had studied upto the primary level; 21 persons (9.68%) had studied upto middle level; 23 persons (10.60%) were matriculates. 14 persons (6.45%) had completed the education upto pre-university level while only 1 person was a graduate in arts subjects.

In the latter category 31 persons (14.28%) were studying in various classes at the primary level; 24 (11.06%) were studying at the middle level; 15(6.91%) were doing their matriculation. Two students were at pre-university level and one at the bachelor's degree level. 24(11.06%) were too young to begin their formal education in life.

### VIII

Out of 118 persons who had either completed their educational career or discontinued their studies at some stage or the other. Only 87 (73.73%) were engaged in economically gainful activities. Another 21 persons (females) were living upon husband for sustenance. 4 persons (all males) were leading retired life and 6 persons were unemployed. Of these 6 persons, 3 were males and 3 were females. The 3 females had discontinued their studies and were sitting at home waiting to get married. The 3 unemployed males were incapable of doing any work because two were in a very poor

state of health and one was blind — though all the three males were young in age.

As per the convention followed in sociological analysis the category of housewives is also included with other occupation therefore we would discuss the figure at 108. 21 females (19.45%) were housewives, 18 persons (16.66%) were engaged in white collar job while 37 persons (34.26%) were working as daily wage labourers, 7 persons (6.78%) were teaching in schools, 18 persons (16.66%) were engaged in business activities; and 5 persons (4.63%) were working as drivers of goods carrier. In addition to these, one person was working as domestic helper in somebody's house while one person was working as a physician in her own private clinic. (More elaborate discussion on these occupational categories will be found elsewhere.) (Table II:5).

After a discussion on the occupational level we would like to conclude our description of the village and the people living in the village by giving an idea about their household-wise income. 6 households (15.0%) had a monthly income of less than one thousand rupees, while in the case of one household the income was more than five thousand rupees per month. In the case of majority of households (15 = 38.0%) the monthly income ranged between one thousand and two thousand rupees income. There were 6 house-

holds each (15%) whose monthly income varied between two thousand to three thousand and three thousand to four thousand rupees respectively. There was a lone case where the monthly income was between four thousand five hundred and five thousand rupees. There were 4 households where members did not own anything but survive on monetary help send by their working children living outside the village (Table II:6). It is clear that we won't be wrong if we argued that majority of households in Pdengshnong lack economic prosperity. This is no wonder when we consider the fact that the topography of the village is not conducive to any occupational activity in the primary sector. The resident population, therefore, has either to sell its manpower as labourers in the market; or engage themselves in white collar jobs, petty business, etc. The various tables discussed above and now read together indicate that the (i) the low chronological age, and (ii) low levels of educational achievements have contributed significantly to the type of occupational activities in which they are engaged. Their occupations are such which do not enhance the economic prosperity but enable them to sustain them in some cases comfortably and in other cases not so very comfortably.

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Table II:1 - No. of persons living in a household

Sl. No.	No. of persons/ household	Frequency (No. of households)	Percentage
1.	1	2	5.0
2.	2	4	10.0
3.	3	6	15.0
4.	4	5	12.5
5.	5	4	10.0
6.	6	3	7.5
7.	7	8	20.5
8.	8	3	7.5
9.	9	1	2.5
10.	10	2	5.0
11.	11	2	5.0
12.	12	0	-
Total		40	100.0

Table II:2 - Religion of the respondents

Sl. No.	Religion	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Khasi (indigenous faith)	13	32.5
2.	Catholic	17	42.5
3.	Prebyterian	9	22.5
4.	Church of God	1	2.5
Total		40	100.0

Table II:3 - Age of the respondents

Sl. No.	Age (Yrs)	Frequency	Percentage
1.	0 - 5	18	8.295
2.	5 - 10	34	15.668
3.	10 - 15	29	13.364
4.	15 - 20	29	13.364
5.	20 - 25	18	8.294
6.	25 - 30	10	4.608
7.	30 - 35	17	7.834
8.	35 - 40	11	5.086
9.	40 - 50	8	3.686
10.	45 - 50	8	3.686
11.	50 - 55	6	2.764
12.	55 - 60	8	3.686
13.	60 - 65	9	4.147
14.	65 - 70	5	2.304
15.	70 - 75	4	1.843
16.	75 and above	2	0.921
17.	No response	1	0.460
Total		217	100.000

Table II:4 - Educational background of the respondents.

Sl. No.	Educational Status	Frequency		Total (Persons)	Percentage
		Male	Female		
1.	Illiterate	13	18	31	14.285
2.	Just literate	8	-	8	3.686
3.	Class I	1	1	2	7.373
4.	Class II	1	1	2	
5.	Class III	4	4	8	
6.	Class IV	1	3	4	
7.	Class V	2	1	3	9.677
8.	Class VI	5	7	11	
9.	Class VII	4	2	6	
10.	Class VIII	1	-	1	
11.	Class IX	1	2	3	10.599
12.	Class X	10	13	23	
13.	Pre-University	8	6	14	
14.	B.A.	1	-	1	
15.	Doctor	-	1	1	6.541
16.	Studying in Nursery	4	-	4	
17.	Studying in Class I	3	1	4	
18.	" " " II	5	1	6	
19.	" " " III	5	4	9	14.285
20.	" " " IV	3	5	8	
21.	" " " V	1	6	7	
22.	" " " VI	2	7	9	
23.	" " " VII	2	2	4	11.059
24.	" " " VIII	2	2	4	
25.	" " " IX	6	-	6	
26.	" " " X	8	-	8	

Table II:4 (Contd.)

Sl. No.	Educational Status	Frequency		Total (Persons)	Percentage
		Male	Female		
27.	Studying in P.U.	1	1	2	
28.	" " B.A.	-	1	1	
29.	Not studying	16	8	24	11.059
30.	No Reply	2	1	3	1.382
Total		105	72	217	99.999

- Note:**
- Information against serial Nos. 1-15 are of those who have not pursued their studies after the level indicated under educational status.
  - The respondents indicated from serial Nos. 1-15 (Total = 118) have been discussed in relation to the table on occupation.
  - The rest have been taken as a separate group in the text.

Table II:5 - Occupations of the respondents

S.No.	Occupations	Male	Female	Total	Percentage
1.	Housewife	-	21	21	19.45
2.	Service	15	03	18	16.66
3.	Labourer	25	12	37	34.26
4.	Teaching	1	6	7	6.48
5.	Business	7	11	18	16.66
6.	Driver	5	-	5	4.63
7.	Housemaid	-	1	1	0.93
8.	Medical Practitioner	-	1	1	0.93
Total		53	55	108	99.99

CHAPTER III

KINSHIP AND MARRIAGE

## KINSHIP AND MARRIAGE

### I

In the first chapter of this dissertation we have expressed our dissatisfaction with the use of the concept of clan as a unit for the study of Khasi kinship structure. We have also mentioned that the term clan has been used as an English equivalent of the term Kur. This translation throws insufficient light on the fuller meaning of the term kur as it would be evident in the following section of this chapter. Kur, in our opinion, has a function limited only to determine the membership or the non-membership of a person in a group at the larger collectivity level. It helps in maintaining the rules of incest at the time of marriage. Besides these it only serves to elicit relationships at the level of courtesies and etiquettes when two strangers meeting each other suddenly discover that they belonged to the same kur. It is in no case a corporate body.

The effective corporate group is referred to as ing. We have looked upon ing in terms of household and given our reasons in section IV of this chapter. It consists of a woman, her husband, and their children. It is not only a residence unit but a descent and property owning group.

It is linked on kinship basis with a number of other ing established by all the primary female sibling. The binding force lies in the fact that all these sisters though living independent households actually hailed from the same mother. If we go backward then they are all related to the daughters of their mother's sisters as well. Such a collectivity is referred by the members as kpoh. The anchor-sheet of each kpoh is the ing seng or ing khadduh (the ancestral house where the mother lives with the youngest daughter). The authority over the domestic as well as extra domestic affairs of the ing or the kpoh lies on the male siblings in the group.

For a Khasi it is not sufficient to express identity only in terms of the descent-group membership or kur affiliation. Tip kur tip kha is a common usage in Khasi language which means that a Khasi should not only know his kur affiliation but his relationship with the group of his father. It is the latter without whose help he would not have been born. Members of the father's group are referred as kha by a Khasi. Thus descent from mother alone is not sufficient and her alliance is also an important aspect of cognition in the Khasi mind. We have tried to deal with these aspects in subsequent sections.

## II

We can view the household as residential and domestic unit composed of persons living together and eating food cooked in a single kitchen. The Khasis referred to such a household as Ing. The term ing in Khasi language has a dual connotation and the meaning is intelligible in terms of the context in which the expression is used. In one sense it is used to denote the house in which a person lives. That is, it is in reference to the physical location of the place of dwelling. In the second sense it is identified with the mother, sister, or the wife depending upon the position of the ego referring to the ing in mutual conversation with others. Thus a question Phi dei na ka ing jong no? (whose ing do you belong to or come from?) would elicit a response in terms of the name of the person with whom ego lives and associates socially. Thus a brother living with his sister would refer to the household of which is a member in terms of the household which belongs to his sister; similarly a husband would be referred to as a person living in the household belonging to his wife. The meaning attached to the term ing in this sense has led the scholars on Khasi society to equate ing with 'family'. To illustrate our point we shall take the help of the primary data collected by us on the composition of ings in Pdengshnong. We

have, however, mentioned earlier that the population varies from one person to eleven persons in a single household in our sample (20 households = 50% of the sample) show a variation of person from four to seven per household). The analysis in terms of the number of generations living in each household indicates that 26 households (65%) contain members from two generations. 7 households (17.5%) are single generation and 7 households (17.5%) have members belonging three generations. Out of the 26 households (2 generation members), 25 households consists of two consecutive generations, while 1 household consists of ego's generation and the second descending generation after ego. In this lone household the inter-connecting generation is missing between members of the two generations living together. (Table III:1).

Let us now examine the relationships of persons living in the households. The household which contains members belonging to single generation have a woman living with her siblings (2 households), either a man or woman only (3 households), husband and wife (2 households). In the households consisting of members drawn from two generations, we have five different varieties. The majority of the household however consists of husband, wife and children (13 households) which conform to the geneological model

known as the elementary family. The remaining households have either one of the spouses and children (9 households), or husband - wife - children with wife's sister (1 household) or husband - wife - child (male or female) and child's spouse (2 households), husband and daughters' children (1 household). In the last case the wife belonging to husband generation and the daughters belong to the first descending generation are both dead while the husband's daughter was living separately after divorced. In this household therefore we have members belonging to first and third generation living together and members of second generation absent. In those household which have members from three generations living together we find either the husband and wife or one of the spouses living with daughters and daughter's children (5 households), or husband and wife with their children as well as both the parents or one of the parents of the wife's living together (2 households). [Table III:2(a) & (b)].

### III

The population of these 40 households hailed from 27 kurs of which 9 kurs claimed themselves as the founder-kurs of the village. (In all 16 kurs claimed such a status in the village). 18 households have no kinship linkages with each other as they all belong to distinct kurs which are in no way connected with each other. 6 households repre-

sent 3 kurs which are related to each other (as sister clans) by the rule of clan exogamy and have fictive kinship relations. The 19 households can be classified into 6 kurs. However, there is no kinship relation amongst these 6 kurs. It is interesting to observe that of the 40 households only 6 households (2 households each from 3 of the 27 kurs) have real kinship relationship within their respective kurs. In the case of one kur, one of the 2 households is occupied by an old woman while the other household is occupied by this woman's younger sister's daughter, daughter's husband and their children. In the case of the second kur one of the two households is occupied by a man, his wife and their children. This man is also the caretaker of the house which belongs to his mother's sister who now lives in Shillong and had inherited this as an ancestral house from the mother. The other household is occupied by that man's sister, her husband and children. In the case of the third kur two of the 4 households are related to each other. Here one household each is being occupied by sisters.

We have mentioned above that 9 kurs (represented by 14 households) have claimed themselves to be the founder kurs. This, however, does not mean that they were the original inhabitants of the village, rather they could be described as some of the earliest migrants to the village from

outside. 27 households (67.5%) could tell us the name of the place from where they had migrated. The remaining 13 households (32.5%) admitted that they were also the settlers from outside the village though they did not know the place they had come from. None of the household could tell us how many generations ago they had come and settled down in the village. 22 households out of 27 households (81%; 55% of the total) had come from the War areas. War areas are generally the lowland areas within the Hima Sohra (Cherra State) or the areas surrounding it. Of these, 14 households had come from the 12 neighbouring villages in the War area and which are referred together as Khatar Shnong (12 villages). These 12 villages are culturally homogeneous and can be viewed as a unit different from other parts of the War region. The remaining 5 households out of 27 households had come from various places located in the East Khasi Hills, the West Khasi Hills and the Jaintia Hills. (Table III:3).

#### IV

The above description clearly shows that we cannot talk of the composition of ing in terms of family. As a matter of fact only 13 households (32.5%) would fit into the category of elementary family consisting of husband, wife and children. While the rest of 27 households (67.5%) show a variety of formations ranging from a single member

or a three member household (all belonging to the same generation) to a multi-generational eight-member household (Table III:4). Moreover, but for only six households there is no kinship relationship between any other household. That is why we prefer to speak of ing in terms of household rather than family. Another significant observation can be made from the above discussion which relates to the area of network of kinship relations. We have pointed out above that barring the three sets of two households each, the other households have no kinship linkages with each other within the village. Whatever interaction is seen at that level it takes place only within the household or between a household and the kinsmen living outside the village. In the case of 23 households some of the children were already married at the time of field work. In 14 cases out of these 23 the elder daughters after marriage not only moved out of their mother's houses as per the custom but they even out of moved the village. In the rest of nine cases eight daughters (the youngest daughters) and one son after marriage stayed behind in the village and were living with their parents. In other cases (17 households = 42.5%) the children were not yet married and thus were living with parents. [Table III:5(a) & (b)].

The other type of relationship, equally significant

within the village, is the affinal relationship. The affinal relationship is established between two kur by way of marriage taking place between a male of one kur and a female of another kur. The society does not have any firm stand on the manner in which this alliance is established. A marriage may formally take place in the church (as in the case of Christians in the presence of a large gatherings of relatives and well-wishers), or it may take place in the house with the mutual consent of two families and ceremonised as per the rituals practiced by the non-convert Khasi. In both these forms the collectivity is actively involve at various levels. But then the society does not resent if a male and a female mutually decide to live together without the consent of or without consulting their respective family members. In either of these three manners the pattern of residence remains the same.

Whichever may be the manner of marrying, the society is very firm on the rule of incest. Marriage is prohibited between two persons belonging to the same clan (kur) or sister-clan (ting kur). Ego is prohibited to marry the children of ego's father's sibling, or ego's father's sibling, or the grand-children or ego's father's siblings. On the mother's side, ego is prohibited to marry mother's brother's wife's siblings; or any of the grand-children of mother's

brother. Besides this ego is also prohibited to marry the children of mother's sister. There is, however, no sanction against ego marrying the children of the mother's brother if the latter is dead. It is curious to note however that even in the absence of any sanction such marriages are generally avoided in the society. Our respondents told us that such marriage would create confusion between the relationship of descent and alliance. In short, two persons can intermarry without considerations of age and generation if they are not related in any way through kinship ties described above.

#### V

The pattern of residence in the Khasi society is uxori-local. By this we mean here that a man after marriage leaves his natal home to live with his wife. It is however not necessary that the man should necessarily go and live in the natal home of his wife. As per the common practice in the society it is usually in the case of the youngest daughter that the husband after marriage stays with the wife in the wife's natal home and the residence pattern here would be termed as matrilocal. In the case of the elder daughters it is rather expected that they find a new house for themselves after marriage. We do not think that this would coincide with neo-local residence. Though a new ing

has come into existence now yet the linkages remain very strong with the ancestral house occupied by their mothers and the youngest sisters. This ancestral house called the ing seng or ing khadduh where all the sisters and brothers have to collect regularly for the performance of rituals. This house, again, which provides shelter to all the members in the time of crisis and it is the house again where the bones of the sons or brothers have to be returned after death by their group of procreation. The mothers also in old age may choose to live with elder daughters if such a need arises but will never go and live with their married sons. In time of need and distress an elder daughter may even leave their own house and go with their husband and children to join her mother and younger sister in Ing seng or Ing khadduh rather than go to live with her husband's mother or sisters. However, one may find some exception to this rule. We have found in our village that in one case a man after marriage did not leave his mother's house and instead he brought his wife to live with them - the explanation given to us was that he was the only child of his parents and the responsibility of looking after his parents in their old age fell on him. But this situation did not negate the principle of descent; his child was incorporated into his wife's group according to the principle of matrilineal descent. In another case the youngest daughter after marriage

moved out of her mother's house to another city to live with the husband and one of the elder daughter who continued to stay in the village after marriage had to look after the old mother. The implication in such cases on inheritance of property will be discussed later.

## VI

At the time of our field work 37 females in the ego's generation were living in the 40 households and the rest were dead. Out of 37 females, 1 female had separated from her husband and was living with the elder daughter. Her elder daughter's household did not fall in our sample and therefore we shall discuss only the cases of 36 females. Out of these 36 females, 34 females were born in the village and 2 females had come to the village after marriage to stay with their husbands who were born in the village. In one case out of these two the husband being the only child of his parents brought his wife to his natal home. This is contrary to the norm of residence in this matrilineal society as the residence pattern was matrilocal. We were told by this person (his wife as well as both parents died before our field work) that society does permit such residence in exceptional circumstances as his. Being the only child it was his responsibility to look after his parents in their old age. His mother migrated to this village from

a very far off place, he however, did not remember any other details of the history of his family. He had no other kins in the village or in the nearby villages. Such a situation had left only two options open. Either his parent had adopted a female child at an early stage who would have grown up as their daughter and stayed with them till their last days; or alternatively the son could have stayed in with them after marriage. They had, it seems, chosen the second alternative. Coincidentally, our respondent here had also only one child and that too a son. But the son after marriage had set up a new household in Shillong as he was working as a civil contractor. In the second case the wife had migrated to the village after marriage to live with her husband who was working in a cement factory located near the village. Though the husband also belonged to this village, he had set up a new household. The remaining 34 females who hailed from the village did not move out after marriage.

In our our sample 19 husbands were born in the village while 21 came from outside. 11 of these were dead and 3 had separated from their wife at the time of our field work, therefore only 26 husbands were living with their wives. If we look at all the households in the sample we find that in 19 cases the husbands moved into the ancestral houses of their wives. While in one case the wife moved

into the ancestral house of her husband. This case has already been discussed above. In the other 20 cases the husband and the wife set up a new household in the village. The implication is that in 19 cases where the husbands had moved into the ancestral house of their wives they had married the youngest daughter. While the marriage with elder daughter resulted in the creation of new household.

## VII

The society does not seem to be very strict about the pattern of residence and accommodates deviation from the norm, this is quite evident when we examine the cases of married daughters in the second generation. We have the cases of 30 married daughters out of which 11 were the youngest daughters. Of these 11 youngest daughters 6 were staying with their mothers in the village, 1 was staying in a separate household and 4 had moved out of the village. These 4 had moved out because either they themselves or their husbands were working outside the village. The lone case is of the youngest daughter who was forced to stay in a separate house near her mother's house because of insufficient accommodation there. Her mother had a one room thatched hut which neither provided privacy nor enough accommodation to the married daughter. However, in this generation we found that all the sons after marriage moved out of their

natal homes to stay with their wife and the same was true in the ego's generation with ego's brother.

When we look at the manner of marrying we find that a formal consent of the society at large and manifested in the presence of relatives and friends from the sides of both the bride and the bridegroom was not essential. What mattered perhaps was the mutual consent of the man and the woman to live together as husband and wife. This was clearly evident in the ego's generation where in 32 cases out of 40 the marriage was with mutual consent only. Similarly in the case of the daughter's generation we found that out of 30 married daughters, 24 had married their husbands without any formal ceremony. One-third of these (i.e. 8 out of 24) were living with their mother. Such marriages in both the generations were found to be fairly stable. In each generation only 3 marriages broke down with the husband and wife deciding to live separately.

### VIII

What seemed to be more important in the society was the perpetuation of the future generations rather than the question of legitimacy of marriage or children as is commonly understood in the modern patrilineal context. The concern with reproduction is expressed both from the family of the

woman as well as the man. The relationships between the affines gets further strengthened after the birth of the first child. The most important relative amongst the affines is the mother of the husband. It is she who plays the vital role by giving her son to another lineage for its perpetuation. She is addressed by the children of her son as Meikha. She enjoys the privilege of being asked first to name the new born. She is the one who feeds the first morsel of solid food to the newborn. She is one who provides the cloth to her daughter-in-law with which the latter ties the baby to carry it at her back. She is the one who is revered and dreaded most by the children because she is considered to have tremendous supernatural power to bless or curse the children of her sons (referred by her as khun kha). Her blessings are also considered essential at the time of marriage of her khun kha. However, she does not interfere in the domestic affairs of the descent group to which her khun kha belong. In the absence of Mei kha these responsibilities fall on the sisters of the father.

## IX

In common anthropological parlance affines are defined as 'people married to our consanguine' (R. Fox, p. 35). But then it depends on the way in which the society defines the term in as much as even the term consanguine is also

socially defined. Further, there is no single definition of marriage which could be applied equally to practices in all the societies. It is clear from the above discussion that in Khasi society 'marriage' between a man and a woman may not be ceremoniously conducted. It seems to be sufficient and orderly that a man and a woman decide mutually to stay together and procreate — the implementation of such a decision is a sufficient ground for holding an alliance between the two groups to which the partners belong. The freedom, of course, is given within the limits of the rules of incest. What is interesting in the society here is that a group lends by 'marriage' the reproductive services of its male member to the female member of another group or to put it differently one may argue that the group of the female borrows only the reproductive services of a male from another group. Whichever way we look at it the fact remain that the male known as Shongkha to the consanguines of the female has no rights to interfere in other domestic and extra domestic affairs of his wife's group. Whatever authority that he has to exercise as a man, he does so as a brother or mother's brother in his natal group on his consanguines. It is his own group to which returns if the alliance is broken due to any discord or differences with his wife's or wife's group. However, in case he becomes a widower the choice is his to stay with whichever group he desires. But

in the event of his own death the claim over his bones as per the customs is of his natal group. His wife's group may cremate his body but his bones or in the absence of his bones cowries symbolically representing his bones have to be returned to his group. Otherwise his wife has to remain a widow for the rest of her life.

Table III:1 - Persons belonging to different generations living per household.

Sl. No.	Generations	Frequency (No. of households)	Percentage
1.	Single generation	7	17.5
2.	2 - generations	26	65.0
3.	3 - generations	7	17.5
Total		40	100.0

Table III:2(a) - Persons belonging to different generations in relation to the Ego.

Sl. No.	Generations	Frequency (No. of households)	Percentage
1.	Ego's	7	17.50
2.	Ego's and first descending	25	62.50
3.	Ego's and two descending	5	12.50
4.	Ego's minus first descending plus 3rd descending	1	2.50
5.	Ego's and one ascending and one descending	2	5.00
Total		40	100.00

Table III:3 - Place from where respondents or their ancestors had migrated.

Sl. No.	Place from where migrated	Frequency (No. of households)	Percentage
1.	Khatar Shnong (War)	14	35.0
2.	Laitkynsew (War)	3	7.5
3.	Mairang (West Khasi Hills)	1	2.5
4.	Sung (Jaintia Hills)	1	2.5
5.	Mawsahew (War)	1	2.5
6.	Wahkhen-Pynursla (War)	2	5.0
7.	Jaintia Hills	1	2.5
8.	Nongsteng (War)	1	2.5
9.	Khatsawphra (West Khasi Hills)	1	2.5
10.	Lumparing (Shillong)	1	2.5
11.	Ramdait (War)	1	2.5
12.	Not known	13	32.5
Total		40	100.0

Table III:4 - Composition of members per household.

Sl. No.	Members	Frequency (No. of households)	Percentage
1.	Ego (Male)	1	2.50
2.	Ego (Female)	2	5.00
3.	Ego & Wife	2	5.00
4.	Ego (Female) + Ego's Brother + Ego's Sister	2	5.00
5.	Ego + Wife + Children	13	32.50
6.	Ego (Male) or Ego (Female) + Children	9	22.50
7.	Ego + Wife + Children + Wife's sister	1	2.50
8.	Ego + Wife + Children + Wife's brother	2	5.00
9.	Ego & Daughter's children	1	2.50
10.	Ego + Wife + Daugher's children	2	5.00
11.	Ego (Male) or Ego (Female) + Daughters + Daughter's children	3	7.50
12.	Ego (Male) + Wife + Children + Wife's parent	2	5.00
Total		40	100.00

Table III:5(a) - Marital Status of Ego's Children.

Sl. No.	Marital Status	Frequency (No. of households)	Percentage
1.	Married	23	57.5
2.	Unmarried	17	42.5
		40	100.0

Table III:5(b) - Locations of Married Children

Sl. No.	Locations	Frequency (No. of households)	Percentage
1.	Move out of the village	14*	
2.	Staying in the village	9**	

\* All the married children were elder daughters.

\*\* 8 daughters and 1 son were staying with their parents. All the daughters were youngest amongst siblings.

CHAPTER IV

INHERITANCE OF PROPERTY

## INHERITANCE OF PROPERTY

### I

The Khasi matrilineal society follows the principle of female ultimogeniture in matters of inheritance. In other words, it is the youngest daughter called ka khadduh or in the event of her death the last surviving daughter (treated as the living youngest) has the right to inherit from her mother. Some clarification in this regard would be in order here. Customarily all the daughters but for the last one are expected to leave their natal home after marriage to set up an independent ing of their own. The youngest daughter of course continue to stay in the natal home and her husband after marriage moves in to live with her aged parents-in-law. This then brings two aspects into focus. Firstly, there is a constant splitting off of the lineage at each generation with the elder daughters after marriage moving away to set up new households. Secondly, in any lineage the continuity of the group is expressed in terms of a chain of mother-youngest daughter units. The youngest daughter who had stayed back with the mother after marriage (as explained above) would be looked after by her youngest daughter because her elder daughters would moved away.

In the previous chapter we had explained that the independent ing set up by the elder daughters in each generation express lineage solidarity at the time of collective rituals perform in Ing seng. All such scattered independent ings are referred together as kpoh. It is only when a kpoh becomes too large to manage and collect at the parental ing seng that a mutually agreed decision will be taken to delink some of the ing from the parental ing seng. Such ing could then set up their own ing seng and in course of time may even give rise to different kpohs. Such a process of delinking is referred as phiah kpoh. Over several generation such kpohs may come into existence at different geographical locations and the descendants may have no memory of the parental kpoh or the ancestral mother called ka Iawbei. What they remember is only their jaid or the descent name which helps them identify with similar jaid strangers as members of the same kur. But, membership of this nature does not have any bearing on inheritance of property.

## II

Before discussing the aspects of inheritance of property we would describe the various mechanisms by which property is generated. There are two concepts in the Khasi society which are of great relevance and importance in the

present discussion. These are called Nongtymmen, and ka kamai.

Nongtymmen relates to what is transferred over generations in a lineage. This has been viewed by the scholars on the Khasis as equivalent to ancestral property. Nongtymmen is inherited by ka khadduh and transferred by her to her youngest daughter and the process of transference continue over generations. It may consist of both the immovable assets and movable assets. This distinction in term of assets has been taken by us in the sense by which it is applied in the modern jurisprudence. In concrete terms it may consist of land, house, material goods in the house (e.g., furniture, cooking and eating utensils, implements, etc.), jewellery, traditional dance costumes and clothes, monetary cash, etc.

Ka kamai viewed as income consists of three types. The first type refers to ka Kamai Nongkhynraw. The characterizing feature of this type of income is that it is the income generated by male or female before their marriage or of those who remain unmarried for the whole of their life. The suffix Khynraw refers to unmarried persons in the society. The underlying presumption is that the income under this category is earned by a person purely through one's labour and thus the person has an absolute right over

such income and any property generated from it. In this sense it can be viewed as self-acquired property as against the nature of property under Nongtymmen. The only exception where a person's ing can stake its claim over the property acquired under Nongkhynraw is when the person had lived in the ing khadduh and died without making any will about the future status of the property. However, it is expected that such a person should voluntarily leave it for ing khadduh.

The second type is called ka kamai ing kur and is the income generated by a person while working on the land or by participating in the business owned by ing khadduh. One is not expected to spend such an income on oneself rather one is maintained by the ing and may be given some allowances in cash. Such allowances are given in return for the labour and services rendered by one for the benefits of one's mother's ing. In other words, it could be argued that it is the mother's group which has claimed over the manpower of the children and the latter are consequently treated as group resource. The allowances given to a person are treated by the person as ka kamai Nongkhynraw. A person may voluntarily give a part of income from kamai nongkhynraw to the mother's ing. Such a share would also be referred as ka kamai ing kur for the mother's ing.

The third type of income is called ka kamai ing khun. It is that earning which a person generates for the maintenance of the children. In literal terms it may mean 'the earnings for the home of the children' because the parents are supposed to work and earn for the prosperity of the children. In other words, it would mean that both the husband and the wife should be responsible for and concerned with the perpetuity and prosperity of the wife's group. It is different from kamai ing kur because it is used to fulfill one's obligations towards the ing of the wife rather than the ing of the mother or ka khadduh either of the spouse. It is different from kamai nongtymmen as well because neither the source of income nor any part of it has been inherited by the spouses. With these differences in mind it could be argued that any property generated with the help of ka kamai ing khun can be treated as self-acquired property. The husband and the wife may maintain their income and property separately and individually and each spouse enjoys the right to distribute amongst the children of both the sexes and also has the right to gift to any one not related through kinship. There is an exception though. When a man after marriage continues to work on the property of his mother then the earnings so generated would be termed as ka kamai ing kur. Any allowances in cash would be termed and used by him as his ka kamai ing khun.

A man after divorcing his wife can return to his mother's or youngest sister's house and can enjoy their privileges of his pre-marital status. He leaves behind, however, any income or property earned by him during his married life for the use of his wife and children. After his return he may work on the ancestral property and contribute to the income of his matri-lineage. Same is true in the case of a divorcee woman except that she can bring her children along to her mother's or youngest sister's house. She can do even after the death of her husband. But, she has to return the bones of her deceased husband to his mother's ing. In the event of the death of the wife the husband may return to his natal home alone.

### III ✓

The issue of property inheritance has to be discussed in the light of the distinction made above between the ancestral property and the self-acquired property. We have mentioned that it is the youngest daughter who inherits the ancestral property of her ing. It does not mean that the elder daughters have no share in it. At the time of marriage the elder daughters received gifts in cash as well as kind from both the parents which helped them set up a separate household with their husband. Whereas, the larger proportion

of the gift comes from the self-acquired properties of the parent some amount of it comes from the ancestral property which was inherited by the mother consequently whatever is left in the end after the marriage of all the elder daughters goes to the ka khadduh in the name of inheritance of property. Ka khadduh is expected to look after her aged parents for the rest of their lives. She can consume or use the inherited property for the maintenance of her own family and other dependents living with her but she cannot dispose it off at her own discretion. She is found by the advice of the male members of her natal group in the management of this property. It is the collective wisdom of these adult male members that helps her in the continuance of ancestral property.

On the other hand, distribution of property shares to the elder daughter does not mean that they have lost all further claims in their mother's house. What they lost perhaps is only any more claim in the ancestral property as a separate or additional share. Otherwise, they are always free to return with their children and in extreme emergencies with their husbands to their mother's or youngest sister's house. Thus they never lose their right to fall back on their ancestral house for maintenance and care in the hour of need. Same is true in the case of the brothers who can

continue to stay with the youngest sister if they remain bachelor or if they divorced their wives or become widowers. Under normal circumstances all the siblings assemble in ing khadduh to perform collective rituals. Thus we can see that ka khadduh enjoys the right to use and the right to maintenance over the ancestral property instead of the right to ownership. After all she inherits in order to perpetuate its existence as well as ensure the perpetuation of the lineage. She is obliged therefore to retain the ancestral property for the generations in posterity.

#### IV

We have mentioned earlier that most of our respondents had migrated to Pdengshnong either in the present generation or earlier. This indicates the fission of the domestic group of their mother as well as dispersal overspace of the elder daughters who set up independent households in far off territories. This dispersal causes a break with the ancestral household (ing seng) which otherwise expresses group solidarity and is charged with the performance of collective rituals. These new households located wide apart from each other have set up now their ing seng independent of the 'mother ing seng' and have thus completed the process of splitting off their lineage.

We enquired into the various property items they possessed. The items considered as property were defined so by them.

In Pdengshnong land was used generally for the purposes of building houses or shops. The dorbar shnong (village council) allotted land to individual applicants for these purposes with the condition that if the land was kept unused for a consecutive period of three years then it would be reclaimed by the dorbar.

In our sample all but one household owned independent houses to live in. The lone exception was in the case of a household where the husband was a small time contractor and the wife was working in the office of Cherra Subdivision. They were living in a rented house pending the allotment of official residence to the wife. Out of 39 cases (excluding the lone exception discussed above) 33 respondents owned one house each; 4 respondents owned 2 houses each; and, 2 respondents three houses each. In these 6 cases the surplus houses were given on rent and had become a source of regular income for these households. The dorbar shnong did not, however, allot land to these households for the construction of additional houses. Instead our respondents had purchased these houses from those residents of the village who had

migrated to other places in search of employment or for some other reasons. [Table IV:1(a)].

It should be pointed out here that the rules customarily followed by the dorbar shnong were silent on such sale transactions. Interestingly, the sale documents mentioning the sale of a house (ka ing) were signed in the presence of the village headman. It is therefore clear that the rules did not prevent the accumulation of surplus property by letting the houses build over the land given by the village (and supposedly under its control) to be used for profit making. It seems that the village could exercise its right to reclaim the land only in such cases where the land was kept idle without any building on it. We have the case of a house in the village which was lying vacant for almost a decade because its occupants had migrated elsewhere. The dorbar shnong had made no effort to reclaim this land even though the physical structure on it was unused for such a long time. It seems as if for all practical purposes the land once given by the dorbar shnong and put to use by the allottee (even if for a short time) was treated by the later as own property. However, it needs to emphasize that there was no practise of equitable distribution of land in term of area as well. We observe that the ground areas of the houses belonging to those houses who claim their ancestors

to be original settlers in the village was bigger in size than of those who had migrated later. We were explained that when a group of people migrated to a new sight which was sparsely populated the migrant population had a choice to acquire a bigger plot of land. That is why, those 16 kurs which had claimed themselves to be original settlers had acquired plots of land in commensurate with their capacity to use.

In 1960, the dorbar shnong had decided to reclaim portions of land from such household who had kept them vacant and in disuse. There was a protest from some of the owners against such a reclamation. They had argued that boundary walls were erected on the land it was in their possession for several generations. But, the dorbar shnong had countered their argument since there was not enough free land available to settle new migrants and since the land under possession of few was 'abnormally surplus' they had no moral right to retain it rather they should share it with others ultimately the decision of the dorbar prevail. Now of course land is available only near the sacred grooves (which are believed to be the dwelling places of the dead) and on a slope which due to looseness in soil suffers from erosion during the monsoon. In the absence of better alternatives people have started building houses on this patch of land as well.

Unlike other villages in Khasi Hills, Pdengshnong has grown purely as a residential village. We think that two factors were largely responsible for this. Firstly, nature of the soil was such that agricultural activities in or around the village were not possible. Secondly, there was an absence of coal and other minerals under the ground. Moreover, there was a restriction on the extraction of stones and soil for commercial purposes. A small amount was earmarked on the southern boundary of the village for digging of soil required in the construction of houses. However, the village was not averse to setting up of grocery and wine shops. Two of our respondents owned small grocery shops in the village.

13 of our respondents had property in land which they used for growing various kinds of agricultural and horticultural produce; betel leaves and betel nuts; shrubs for brooms; fire; etc. Land used for such purposes is classified in Khasi language as bri. 3 of the respondents possessed coal mines and 1 respondent owned a limestone quarry. Land for these three such purposes located away from the village and outside its jural control. [Table IV:1(b)].

#### V

So far we have discussed those types of property

which had income generating capacity. Let us now discuss other types of property which had use value, entertainment value, decorative value, etc. and which may serve as indicators of socio-economic status of the owners in the society. All the 40 households possessed cooking and eating utensils while only 31 households had furniture; and 29 households had bed-steads in their house. Out of 31 households with furniture, 16 households had dining tables and 3 households elaborate dinner-sets of expensive quality, 9 households had brassware in their houses which were used as decorations pieces. 6 households kept swords and 3 households kept battle shields as momentos in their houses. 4 households had silver ornaments and 19 households had gold ornaments (gold is valued more than silver in the society). Only 1 household had a complete set of traditional dance costume with jewellery while women in 28 households could afford to buy dhara to wear on special occasions (Dhara is a women's upper garment traditionally consisting of a single length of cloth mapped around the body and pin on the two shoulders. It is made from expensive silk from Assam and is worn on special ceremonial occasions. Its possession and use reflects the economic status of the wearer in the society).

2 households had sewing machine while 1 household had a typewriter; and another household had a jeep. Only

15 households had a television set each and 21 households had a radio set or a tape recorder or both. [Table IV:1(b)].

## VI

Whatever be the nature of the property and whatever be its socio-economic value it is divided in two categories by the respondents: The ancestral property, and the self-acquired property. There was, of course, no unanimity amongst our correspondents on the number of generations over which accumulated property gets transform into ancestral. The question assumes significance because of the concern in the society over perpetuity and preservation of ancestral property. Majority of the respondents (28 = 70%) said that the property accumulated over 'many' generations acquires the status of ancestral property while in the opinion of the rest it could be the property accumulated between more than two generations and upto four generations. [Table IV:2]. Response of the majority could be better followed if we remember that it was difficult for our respondents to recount their geneologies backwards beyond two to three generations. Given the fact that the majority of them were migrants to the village it was not surprising to realise that it was difficult for them to talk in details about their ancestry. To elicit more information we put the same question differen-

tly by asking them about the number of generations over which the self-acquired property generally could become ancestral. Majority of the respondents (21 = 52.25%) opined that it took 2-3 generations for the self-acquired property to get converted into ancestral property while in the opinion of 12 respondents (30%) the conversion process was spread over three generations. 4 respondents expressed their ignorance about the issue while 3 respondents did not respond to the question. [Table IV:3].

## VII

The ancestral property and the self-acquired property in actual practice have a dynamic interaction and are mutually reinforcing. The real ancestral aspect of property in terms of its continuation over several generations in a lineage can be found in the context of its passage from the youngest daughter in one generation to her youngest daughter in the next generation and so on. It is visible in concrete terms particularly in the form of land (used for cultivation or mining), house, jewellery made out of gold, silver, or precious stones. These are supposed to be kept distinct from other forms of property and are not supposed to be kept distinct from other forms of property and are not supposed to be disposed off or divided without the con-

sent of the male elders of the lineage. In other words, it means that the elder daughters were required to generate their resources and income (term as self-acquired property).

Contrary to the popular notions the husband as a father also contributes in the common fund of the household for the welfare of the children. This common fund then gets transferred to the children as inherited property. The husband's group has no claim over his earnings which are categorized as ka kamai ing khun.

### VIII

A person engages in economic activities (referred commonly as an occupation) for self-maintenance and as well as for the maintenance of the dependence. Any surplus generated through such occupational activity is used in acquiring such articles which are valued as property in the society. Such property is termed as self-acquired property.

In our sample of 40 households we had a total population of 108 persons which could be classified as the employed population. Their sex-wise distribution was 53 males and 55 females [Table IV:4(a)] and they were further classified into two generations: Parental generation (69 persons = 37 females and 32 males) and the generation of children

(39 persons = 21 males and 18 females). [Table IV:4(b)].

In the parental generation we had 36 mothers of whom 15 were living merely as housewives, 8 were daily wage labourers, and 1 was a housemaid working in someone else's house of the remaining 12 mothers, 1 was in a government job, 3 were teaching in school, and 8 were engaged in petty business.

In this generation 1 female (spinster sister of one of the mother's) was practising medicine in the village. It can be seen clearly that at least two-thirds of the mothers were either unemployed (housewives only) or were engaged in lowly paid jobs and thus needed the help of other members to run the house. These other members were found to be the husband or the wife's brother in the parental generation and the sons and daughters in the generation of the children.

In the category of fathers (whether divorcees or widowers but living with the children or as husbands living with wives and children), 9 were employed in government service, 10 were engaged as daily wage labourers, 6 were running petty business and 5 were working as drivers. Besides these, 4 were quite old to earn anything for the household. In this category also 15 persons (10 labourers and 5 drivers) out of 30 persons were engaged in low income occupation.

There were 2 mother's brothers in the parental generation living with their sisters and 1 of them was employed in

government service while the other one was working as daily wage labourer.

The situation was no better in the generation of the children. Out of 21 earning sons living with their mothers, 14 were working as daily wage labourers and 5 were employed in bureaucratic jobs. Of the remaining 2 sons, 1 was teaching in school and another was engaged in business activity. On the other side, 12 daughters were engaged in various economic activities and living with their mothers. 3 each were working as school teachers and business persons while 4 were engaged as daily wage labourers, and 2 were working in government offices. 3 working daughters were khadduh and after marriage were living their mothers in accordance with the matrilocal residence. In addition to these 12 daughters, there were another 6 daughters who were married but living with their mothers merely as housewives and were not contributing in any way to the income of mother's household. In the case of these 6 housewives only two were the khadduh while the other three in spite of being elder daughters had also brought their husbands to live with them in their mother's house. In the case of these 5 daughters taken together 3 husbands were working as labourers and 2 were working as drivers. The remaining case of 1 daughter was of a divorcee youngest daughter who was not also employed in any economic activity.

We can now discuss the generation of children in the context of the total number of adult children who were not engaged in the pursuit of education or any such activity which could have restrain them from getting involve in any economic activity. From our sample-households 12 sons had moved out with their wives to set up new household and they were, therefore, lost to their domestic group as earning members. The 21 sons whose occupational pattern has been discussed above were all unmarried and were still living actively as part of their mother's domestic group by contributing to the economy of the household of their mothers.

On the other hand there were 39 daughters who were adults and capable of generating income independently. Out of these, 9 were unmarried and living with their mothers. Of the 30 married daughters, 21 had moved out of their mothers' household and thus did not contribute towards the common fund of their mothers' household. Instead, they had set up their own households and had started generating what we have termed as the self-acquired property. We can however note some exception here in regard to pattern of residence. Neither or the elder daughters who moved out of their mothers' households after marriage nor all the youngest daughters (khadduh), had stayed back with the mothers after marriage. There were 19 elder daughters and 11 youngest daughters

who were married. Of the 19 elder daughters, 16 had moved out and 3 had stayed back. Out of these 3 elder daughters, 1 was a divorcee, the other 2 were staying with their husbands. Similarly of the 11 youngest daughters 5 had moved out and 6 had stayed back with their mothers, 3 of these youngest daughters were divorcees. Those youngest daughters who were staying away from the mothers after marriage had already left the house before marriage either on account of education or employment. Later, they married at their place of staying and did not return due to their own occupational commitments and those of their husbands. However, in all these cases we found that the parents were not very old and there were other daughters living with them to take care of them in case of need. In any case these youngest daughters did not sever their links with their mother or the domestic group either (we did not collect detail information on those married daughters who had moved out of their mother's households as they did not fall in our sample).

## IX

The purpose of our discussion in the preceding section was to explain the general economic condition of various households studied by us in the village. The low level of income in the case of males and females and the nature of

employment indicates the lack of dependence on agricultural land which is unlike other parts of the Khasi Hills district. We found that cultivable land was owned by only 12 households out of which women in 10 households had inherited from mothers - which mean that only in 2 cases our respondents could collect enough resources to buy land themselves. (These lands however, were situated outside and far away from the village). It is interesting to note that in 8 cases out of 10 the women were elder daughters. With regard to the elder daughters in our sample we have come across two types of cases: Those who had inherited parts of both the ancestral and self-acquired property; and those who had inherited only part of self-acquired property of their parents. On closer scrutiny it was found that the mothers of the daughters in the second type of cases did not possess enough ancestral property to divide among the elder daughters. In such cases where the mothers did not have sufficiently large number of material assets (movable/immovable) to give to their daughters at marriage they maintained bear minimum standard of norm-conformity by giving at least few household goods and few sets of dresses.

In the 40 households 25 elder daughters were married; 21 of these had set up independent household and the rest were living with their mothers because the youngest sister

were too small to help the parents. In majority of cases (10 = 45.45%) the elder daughters were given only the household goods by their mothers. These household goods consisted mainly of cooking and eating utensils which come in handy in the new household. The second major group consisted of those daughters (5 = 22.72%) who did not even get any utensils from their mother. All that they had carried with them were their clothes and some personal belongings. One such person remarked, "what could I expect my mother to give [at the time of my marriage] because she did not have enough for herself even." It was only in three cases that the daughters were given (as mentioned earlier in this section) parts of cultivable land in a distant place known as Khatar Shnong because these mothers had inherited large plots of land from their ancestors. In 2 cases some old ornaments and in 3 cases residential houses were given along with the household goods. Thus it is clear that the mothers do give something to their daughters at the time of marriage to help them set up new household. When the household goods (including the utensils) are given a clear distinction are made between those goods which were part of the ancestral property (referred to as ka Nongtymmen) and those which were bought by either or both the parents from their own earning. Even if the mother could not afford to give she

would give at least a small bag of raw rice to the daughter. If even that was difficult to give then the mother would give her blessings and best wishes for the prosperity of the married couple.

There was a near unanimity amongst the respondents that whatever the elder daughters had received at the time of marriage was all that what was given to them in terms of inheritance. They had no further claim on any other part of property in future. From then on they had to be on their own and had to strive to build up and accumulate whatever they could for the children.

Table IV:1(a) - Number of Houses owned as property.

Sl. No.	No. of houses	Frequency (No. of heads of households)
1.	One house	33
2.	Two houses	4
3.	Three houses	2
4.	No house	1
Total		40

Table IV:1(b) - Property (itemwise) owned by each household.

S.No.	Items	Frequency
1.	House	47
2.	Furniture	31
3.	Utensils	40
4.	Brassware	9
5.	Bedsteads	29
6.	Silver ornaments	4
7.	Gold ornaments	19
8.	Swords	6
9.	Shields	3
10.	Bri	12
11.	Coal mines	3
12.	Limestone quarry	1
13.	Traditional dance, costume & jewellery	1
14.	Shop	2
15.	Typewriter	1
16.	Car/Jeep	1
17.	Radio/Tape recorder	21
18.	Television	15
19.	Dinner set	3
20.	Dining table	16
21.	Dhara	28
22.	Sewing machine	2
23.	Land	1

Table IV:2 - Accumulation of Ancestral Property over generations.

Sl. No.	Number of generations	Frequency (No. of household)	Percentage
1.	More than 2	3	7.5
2.	More than 2-3	2	5.0
3.	3 generations	4	10.0
4.	More than 3	2	5.0
5.	4 Generations	1	2.5
6.	Many	28	70.0
Total		40	100.0

Table IV:3 - Number of Generations required to convert self-acquired property into ancestral property.

Sl. No.	Number of generations	Frequency No. of household)	Percentage
1.	2 - 3 generations	21	52.5
2.	3 generation	12	30.00
3.	Not known	4	10.00
4.	No response	3	7.5
Total		40	100.00

Table IV:4(a) - Occupation of the respondents sex-wise.

Sl. No.	Occupations	Frequency (Persons)		Total	Percentage
		Male	Female		
1.	Housewife	-	21	21	19.45
2.	Service	15	3	18	16.66
3.	Labourer	25	12	37	34.26
4.	Teaching	1	6	7	6.48
5.	Business	7	11	18	16.66
6.	Driver	5	-	5	4.63
7.	Housemaid	-	1	1	0.93
8.	Medical Practitioner-		1	1	0.93
Total		53	55	108	99.99
* Retired		4	-	4	
** Unemployed		3	3	6	
Grand Total				118	

\* One retired male was the Rangbah Shnong.

\*\* 2 males were sickly health-wise and 1 male had turned blind; 3 females were unmarried and were sitting at home after discontinuing their studies.

Table IV:4(b) - Occupation of the respondents in the parental generation and the generation of the children.

Sl. No.	Occupations	Frequency (Persons)						Total	Percentage
		Mothers	Fathers	Mother's brother	Mother's sister	Sons	Daughters		
1.	Housewife	15	-	-	-	-	6	21	19.45
2.	Service	1	9	1	-	5	2	18	16.66
3.	Labourer	8	10	1	-	14	4	37	34.26
4.	Teaching	3	-	-	-	1	3	7	6.48
5.	Business	8	6	-	-	1	3	18	16.66
6.	Driver	-	5	-	-	-	-	5	4.63
7.	Housemaid	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	0.93
8.	Medical Practitioner	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	0.93
Total		36	30	2	1	21	18	108	99.99

**CHAPTER V**

**CONCLUSION**

## CONCLUSION

In this chapter we would summarize and highlight the salient points discuss in detail in the previous chapter.

### I

Pdengshnong, the village we studied consists of people who had migrated at different times from various places, near and distant, and belong to 92 kurs. There was neither any domination of any particular kur in political economic or numerical terms; nor any stratification amongst them. Our sample of 40 households had representation from 27 kurs. Most of the kurs were found to have more than one household each. This clearly showed a lack of kinship network amongst the households within the village.

The population per household varied on an average between 7-8 persons which was in conformity with the average population per household at the state level. Looking at the age structure of the population we can reach the conclusion that the two-thirds of the population was below 40 years and therefore could be called young. Similarly, two-thirds of the population consisted of Christians in the village.

The level of education was rather low yet there were very few illiterates in the village. There was an almost equal number of persons who were undermatric and those who had studied upto graduation. If there is any indication towards a high rate of school dropouts it was equally true that no child was sitting idle at home. Those who had discontinued their studies at an early stage were engaged in occupational activity. This was true for members of both the sexes. Irrespective of the sex difference most of them were engaged in low income occupations. The various factors as discussed in the text (Chapter II) explain the low economic level of households.

## II

It has been pointed out above that most of the households in our sample were found to be unrelated in terms of kinship which means that their kinship network cuts across the village boundaries. It is perhaps due to the characteristic features of the rules of residence in Khasi society which makes all the male and female members but for the youngest daughter disperse away from the natal group after marriage. There is no restriction on ~~the~~ elder daughters to continue to stay with their mothers even after marriage. No doubt, for doing so they must have socially valid reasons

- either the youngest daughter was too young to look after the parents, or the youngest daughter had to move out for some reasons; or any other such convincing reasons. The elder daughters have a right to return with their children after a divorce with their husband or after the death of their husband. Of course, if any of the elder daughters remained a spinster she may continue to live with the mother and later with the youngest sister. Similarly, bachelor sons, divorced or widowed sons may also return to their mother - in the case of the latter two they do not bring the children with them. Same is true with mother's sisters and brothers if the mother happens to be the youngest in her group of siblings. In exceptional circumstances the society allows the married sons to stay with the parents. Consequently we come across a variety of domestic compositions in terms of the number of generations living together as well as the consanguines and affines living together. This makes it difficult to fit them into any of the family types. We therefore chose to take household as the unit of study. This household unit is called ing in the society.

Those siblings who disperse after marriage and set up independent ing in places far away from the village continue to maintain kinship links and express kin-group solidarity through the institution of kpoh and ing seng at the

operational level (the kur is a wider unit and kur identity is revoked for very limited purposes). Kpoh consists of all the ings set up by the married female children from the same mother. In general terms it includes also the ings set up by the succeeding generations of married female daughters as well. Each kpoh expresses unity of all its constituents ing through ing seng which is actually the ing of the mother. But in practice a tendency can be noticed of splitting of the original kpoh into smaller and localised kpoh with the establishment of separate ing seng as the focus of each parent kpoh. Society legitimize this particular and called it phiah kpoh. It is no wonder that with constant dispersal of members and the practice of phiah kpoh members of a particular generation find it difficult to trace their descent beyond 2-3 generations. It is then that the kur identity comes in handy and saves them from committing incest. Society is very particular about observing the rules of incest which prohibits marrying within the mother's group as well as some relatives in the group of the father.

Ban on the intra-kur marriages in the context of our village means that more number of households are available for establishing alliance relationship. That is why we found that marriages within the village were quite common. The position of affine in the Khasi society is also of great

significance. This is quite evident from the fact that husband's mother plays very important role after her son gets the first child. The bond between father's mother and son's children is very strong. The children shows greater respect to their father's mother than to their mother's mother in the sense that the children dare not take such liberties with the former as they might take with the latter. The former is considered to be domineering and the society believes that she is vested with additional powers of curse and blessing as compared to the latter.

### III

Inheritance of property can be viewed in terms of the nature of property which is transferred from one generation to another. The society makes a distinction between two types of property which is transmitted between two consecutive generations. The ancestral property and the self-acquired property. The former is understood in relation to the mother and the latter is understood in both the parents. Thus ancestral property is that which the mother had herself inherited while the self-acquired property is that which both the parents had created through their own efforts - singly or jointly. Whereas, the society puts certain restrictions on the manner in which the ancestral property could be transferred it gives greater freedom in

relation to the self-acquired property. The youngest daughter has a bigger claim over the ancestral property as compared to the elder daughters or the sons. The elder daughters at the time of their marriage are given smaller shares from the ancestral property and they loose all claims over the rest thereafter. But, they are more than compensated by giving them a right to be maintained by their youngest sister whenever they are in a crisis. We can say therefore that on the one hand, the elder daughters have an absolute right of ownership over their share of ancestral property and in addition to this they enjoy a further right to share the remaining part of ancestral property which is left by the mother in the ing khadduh. However, the only reservation is that they should be able to justify the exercise of this additional right which can only be done by proving their inability to sustain themselves and their children independently. The youngest daughter is always in an advantages position because she continues to stay in her mother's house with all the facilities thereby escaping the difficulty of setting up a new household. She can bring in her husband to live with her and make use of the ancestral property for the maintenance of her own family. She is not permitted to dispose of this property at her own discretion. It is here that her brother who does not inherit any part of this

property comes into the picture. They enjoy the right to maintenance like the elder sisters and the right to live in their mother's house if they remain a bachelor or decide to return alone after divorce or widowhood. Besides this they enjoy another right which is very important and exclusive to the male members of a group - that is, the right to manage the property and the right to be consulted before any decision to dispose of the property could be taken. It could be said then that the youngest daughter has only the right to use the property. These positions were clearly evident from our data when we examined the composition of households in our sample. However, some strains may be visible if the quantum of ancestral property may be very meagre or some other factors come into play. But then a discussion on the conflicts is beyond the purview of our work.

#### IV

An interesting interplay can be observed between the ancestral property and the self-acquired property at every generation regularly. The self-acquired property of both the parents in any generation become transmitted property for the children of both sexes in the subsequent generation. There is no restriction on the father to give his self-acquired property or income (ka kamai ing khun) to

his children and his natal home has no claim over it. There is no restriction on either of the parents to distribute their respective ka kamai ing khun amongst the male children as well. Moreover, the parents have full rights over their kamai nongkhynraw which they had earned before their marriage and by working on the ancestral properties of their respective mothers.

Ka kamai ing khun received by the female children acquires the status of nongtymmen (ancestral property) in the third generation from the parents. Thus there is a constant process of fission and fusion or distribution and accumulation of ancestral property at alternate generations. The point to be noted here is that the husband-father coming from another group contributes materially to the formation and accumulation of the ancestral property in his wife's lineage but has no say in its management. If he is denied the right of counsel on the ancestral property of his wife's group and in which he has played an active role then he is given this dominant position over the affairs of the ancestral property of his mother's group in which he may not have made any significant contribution after marriage.

#### V

After discussing the various issues involved in the question question of inheritance of property in relation

to the kinship structure of society we would still maintain that our work may have the same limitations which could apply to any micro level study which is descriptive and explanatory in nature. We therefore hesitate to make any claim about its generalization about the entire Khasi society which we think shows regional variation in various aspects. Moreover, we could not include the conflict cases in the application of the principle of inheritance because coincidentally they did not find expression in our sample for reasons beyond the control of the sampling techniques of randomness. Our reading on secondary literature describing the situation in other parts of Khasi Hills particularly where agricultural land has been a common asset of property indicated the presence of conflict in the inheritance of property. In our opinion a study of such cases would require full length independent enquiry which we propose to undertake in future.

**APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX I

### INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

#### KINSHIP AND THE DYNAMICS OF INHERITANCE: A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY IN A MATRILINY

1. Household census:

- a) Number of people in their household.
- b) Age.
- c) Sex.
- d) Relationship.
- e) Clan membership occupation.
- f) Education.
- g) Migration, years, where and when.
- h) Religion (Sect).
- i) Income.

2. In case of household belonging to a particular clan:

Whether they live in each other neighbourhood? If yes, are they member of some lineage or different lineage? If not, why? If they are member of the same lineage how and when they split? And why they do live in neighbourhood? If they were not members of same lineage then can they trace their linkages generalogical tree, backwards?

3. Get generalogical relationship detail in each household.

4. In case of shongkha in each household - clan membership (locality origin), what occupation before marriage, occupation now and occupational interest in wife familial

occupation (get full detail). How did they come in contact with the wife and where? Did his wife belong to Pdengshnong before marriage or they came together before marriage (get full detail migration), what plan does he have for the children and the wife - How effective is he in these decision or he is not about these issues at all?

5. Was his wife given anything from his mother majority, if not why and what do they feel about it in what do they expect from their mother and what do they propose to do about it.
6. What about knis and shongkhas - kynum where they love get married - clan, place etc. What is the actual contact (in terms of frequency and intensity) with shongkha, pyrsa kurim, daughter, nieces, their children etc. What is their actual and effective control over property?

In relation to above what is the proportionate control if the brothers in case of the khadduh has more than one brother i.e., whether any dispute may arise for extra-kinship reasons (may be in term of) personal preference or aversion of khadduh towards another brothers.

## Property & Inheritance

- (i) Whether elder do given part of ancestral or self acquired or both types of property? What is the method on which their types of property are divided? Whether once the elder after marriage is given such property loses all further or claim all?
- (a) Ancestral Property.
  - (b) Self acquired property.
- (ii) Difference between ancestral property and self acquired property. What constitute in the ancestral property and self acquired property? Probe in terms of actual of use and value? Item-wise in both the categories land, house, cloth, gold, silver, domestic etc.
- (iii) Whether there is any addition or accumulation in the ancestral property over generation and within one generation. What are the mechanisms of such accumulation?
- (iv) What is the mechanism by which both type of property kept special from each other, safe from intermixing.
- (v) How many generations would constitute, contribute ancestral property?

(vi) **Land**

Is land treated property only in surface or in term of produce of land or in term of mineral stock? Mineral wealth (coal mines) whether base on land or lease.

(vii) Difference between property acquired somebody before marriage of a male and after marriage.

(Kamai Nongkhynraw)

(viii) At what stage self acquired get connected in ancestral property if at all?

## APPENDIX II

## LIST OF 92 KURS IN PDENGSHNONG

Nongkynrih (*)	Riahtam
Syiemlieh	Hynniewta
Li-iam	Diengdoh(*)
Rajee	Kharngap Kynta(*)
Malngiang(*)	Wahlang
Dunai	Phanbuh
Bamon	Marbaniang
Shylla	Pahsyntiew
Nongtraw	Lyngdoh
Wanlah	Wansai
Lyngdoh Basan	Swer(*)
Bynnud	Thiang
Nongrum(*)	Rani
Khongsit(*)	Lyngskor(*)
Nongbri	Khongrymmai
Myrthong	Tham(*)
Dkhar	Kharmaw
Lynrah(*)	Lyndem
Khongphai	Tynsong
Lynnong	Umdor (*)
Ryngnga	Rymbai

Rynjah	Khain
Kharwanlang	Khonglam
Tding	Khar Phanbuh
Lyngwa	Khriam
Shabong	Dohling
Majaw	Syiem (Sohra)(*)
Suting	Khongstieh
Khongwir	Kharshiing
Khar Syntiew	Shrieh
Laloo	Khongwar
Giri	Thlashew
Kharakor	Don
Myrsing	Wanshan
Synrem	Basaiawmoit
Nonghuloo	Syiemiong
Nongkhlaw	Iangrai
Sohtun	Shongwan
Riang	Natep
Kharpuri	Khongngain
Kharnaior	Jirem
Tynsong	Boni
Donshiew	Sohkhia
Kharshandy	Pde
Thabah(*)	

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(\*) Claimed to be the original settlers.

## APPENDIX III

## LIST OF THE KURS IN THE 40 HOUSEHOLDS

Tding	Lynrah(*)
Diengdoh(*)	Khongsit
Syiemlieh	Nongkynrih(*)
Rajee	Malngiang(*)
Wahlang	Kharngap Kynta(*)
Phanbuh(*)	Bamon
Riahtam	Pah Syntiew
Nongtraw	Marbaniang(*)
Nongbri	Tham(*)
Kharmaw	Tynsong
Lynnong	Umdor
Kharwanlang	Syiem(*)
Majaw	Jirim
Bynnud	

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\*Founding clans of the village. (Out of a total of 16 clans 9 clans were represented in the sample). These 9 clans are represented by 14 households in the sample).

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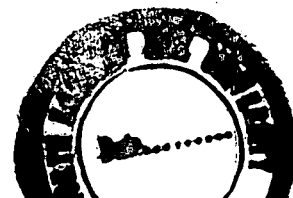
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