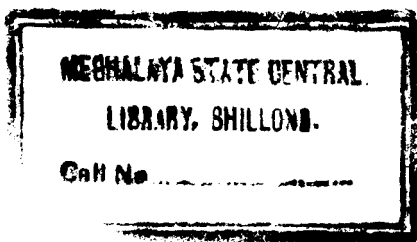


REFERENCE
Not to be Lent out

THE LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE OF MEGHALAYA



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Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla

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Published by the Registrar, Indian Institute of Advanced Study,
Rashtrapati Nivas, Simla 171005 and printed at Sanjay Composers
& Printers, Uphaar Cinema Building, Green Park Extension,
New Delhi 110016

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Garó Literature

I. LINGUISTIC TRAITS

Garó belongs to the Bodo group of the Tibeto-Burman family (type Sino-Tibetan) of languages. Bodo is one of the most widespread groups of languages scattered in the various parts of North-Eastern India. It was believed that the Bodos, at one time, formed the most predominant section in the population of the region, having established powerful kingdoms. In course of time, they gave way to other races and languages. Besides Garó, the other groups of the Bodos are Dimasa, Koch, Mech, Rabha, Lalung, Chutiya, Hajong, Hojai and others. They are distributed as follows :

1. Meches and Rabhas mainly inhabit the Goalpara district and western Assam;
2. Koches are confined to the northern banks of the Brahmaputra as far as the Darrang district on the east;
3. Lalungs are found in the districts of Kamrup, Nowgong and Mikir Hills Districts in Assam; they are sparsely distributed also in the northern parts of Meghalaya.

4. Hajongs or Aijongs are on the southern fringes of Meghalaya;
5. Kacharis in the districts of Darrang and Goalpara as well as the adjacent plains on the north bank;
6. Deoris in Lakhimpur district;
7. Dimasas in North Cachar Hills and the adjoining tract;
8. Hojais in the districts of Nowgong and North Cachar Hills.

Riang and Tripura in Tripura form the most southward extension of the Bodos. The Bodos are also found in the northern parts of Bengal, Mymensingh and Chittagong tracts in Bangladesh.

Among them, it has been noted, that Kachari and Rabha are more mutually inter-linked, the latter having been described as the most archaic and the purest form in the Bodo language, although in 1911, it was noticed to be rapidly dying out. Its speakers now are bilingual, speaking their mother tongue side by side with Assamese. On the other hand, Dimasa, Hojai and Chutiya, spoken more eastwardly, are more conterminous. Several speakers of these speeches, however, are bilingual using both their mother tongues and Assamese or Bengali towards Bengal and Bangladesh. Garo, on the other hand, still keeps its identity and so is Dimasa although there have been certain cases of mutual assimilations with the languages in their close neighbourhood.

The tradition which recounts the migration of the Bodos is interesting. It says that they came down the Himalayas into the Assam valley. The Garos in the Kamrup district in Assam point to the bank of the Dibang river and its valley in the Lohit District in Arunachal and the north-eastern extremity of Assam as the route they came through, who thence spread westward in a wave to western Assam. They again spread to inhabit the Garo Hills in western Meghalaya. The Chutiyas probably were the next batch who followed them into Lakhimpur district and the neighbouring areas where they established a kingdom. The Koches, the Meches, the Kacharis and the Bara Kacharis on the other hand, claim that their forefathers migrated

down the Himalayas into Assam. So it is believed that while Garo, Chutiya, Hojai, Dimasa and Deori stemmed from the eastern wave who came by a circuitous route *via* the bank of Dibang; Koch, Mech and others emerged from the western wave of migration *via* the Teesta river valley.

We have examined the position of Garo in the background of Bodo as a member of that group. It is necessary to find out the important dialects of Garo spoken in Meghalaya. Besides the Garos in Meghalaya, we find them scattered in the various places in Assam and Bangladesh. There are many Garo villages in Goalpara and Kamrup districts, Sarupathar in the Mikir Hills district, and Sadiya in Lakhimpur district of Assam besides those who stay at Mymensingh, Tripura and Dimapur in Nagaland. The important dialects of the Garo Hills district of Meghalaya are :

1. Ambeng spoken in the western part of the district including Tura, the district headquarters;
2. Atong spoken in the lower Simsang valley on its southern part;
3. Awe spoken in the north-eastern fringes and lower hills of the district extending into the Garo settlements in the district of Goalpara and Kamrup of Assam;
4. Matchi spoken in the Central Highlands, on the upper reaches of Simsang river;
5. Chibok spoken in the Upper Bhugi valley;
6. Ruga spoken in the Lower Bhugi valley;
7. Dual spoken in the middle and upper reaches of Simsang;
8. Chisak which occupies contiguous position from Matchi and Dual spoken in the south;
9. Gara-Ganching spoken in the mid-south-eastern portion west of Atong; and
10. Kotchu spoken in the mid-eastern part.

Besides, there is Megam known as Lyngngam in Khasi spoken on the north-eastern fringes of the district and stretching eastward into western Khasi Hills. It is neither

Garo nor Khasi in origin although it has been considerably influenced by both. There is a group known as Digil (its Khasi equivalent, I think, is Diko). It uses its own dialect. Besides, a Koch dialect, is spoken in the south-eastern part of the Garo Hills district. Each of the groups speaking its dialect, has a tradition and folklore of its own which recounts the exploits and deeds of their brave forefathers.

We have seen the cognate relations borne by Garo to its counter-parts, *viz.*, Mech, Rabha, Kachari, Koch, Hajong, Dalu and Lalung as classed within the Tibeto-Burman family. More recently Singpho and Konyak, subject to a further rectification, have been added to this class which becomes known as Baric. Garos claim kinship with most of the above mentioned groups of people who had been separated from them during their migration into Assam from the Himalayas. The people who had established powerful kingdoms in the past, were the Chutiyas, the Kacharies and the Koches. Bodo is an important language which is still spoken in Meghalaya also. Another important Bodo language is Dimasa spoken mainly in the North Cachar Hills in Assam.

It is possible that Atong and Koch belong to the same group, or that Atong, while maintaining its ethnological identity, has largely been influenced by Koch in its vocabulary. Ruga, on the other hand, is believed to have been influenced more by Garo than by Koch to a certain degree. There is a good deal of linguistic variance between the central, eastern and western dialects of the district. Although Ambeng occupies a central position, Awe was chosen as a medium of instruction having been adapted to writing before the shifting of a normal school from Damra in Goalpara District to Tura during the later part of the last century. Chisak and Dual are more intelligible among themselves than between any one of them, say Ambeng. But Ambeng has also undergone considerable dialectic variance.

The dialects on the whole are mutually intelligible among themselves although there are more dialectic variations between the Atong, Koch, and Kachari. A' *chik* is the general name applied to the groups of Garos who speak these dialects both in Meghalaya and outside the State.

II. HISTORICAL ANTECEDENT

The potentiality of Garo was noticed by the English officials long before the Garo Hills District was constituted in 1866. They were impressed by its vocabulary and syntax. As early as 1849, W. Robinson mentioned Garo in an article entitled "Notes on the language spoken by various tribes inhabiting the Assam valley and its confines" as published in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. XVIII, 1849. It was an introduction to the studies on Garo, the importance of which as one of the Bodo group of languages became more noticeable after the Garo Hills District was formed in 1866. It will be remembered that prior to that date, the Garos had resisted the advent of the British for almost a century and it was, therefore, essential for them to understand about the people and learn their language for their administration. There was great need for grammars and similar books on this language. W. J. Williamson, the first Deputy Commissioner of Garo Hills Districts, realizing this need, wrote an article on "A vocabulary of the Garo and Koch dialects" as hitherto published in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. XXXVIII, 1869. By that time, a greater portion of the Garo Hills had been carved into a district with its headquarters at Tura. The story of the beginning and expansion of the administration had been told in other books. Simultaneously, the American Baptist Mission had made its first contact with the Garos.

The first baptism of the Garos occurred in 1863 resulting from the contact made with missionaries in the plains. Conversion of other Garos took place with the establishment of churches in Garo villages located in the Goalpara plains of Assam.

The first pioneers to examine the need for opening a mission in the Garo Hills were Dr Stoddard, Revs. Comfort and Bronson. When the scheme was accepted, Rev. E.G. Phillips, then briefing in a neighbouring Baptist Mission, went to take up his residence at Tura, in 1876 with his family. After a short while, he was joined by Rev. M.C. Mason with his family.

The introduction of the British administration, followed by the advent of the American Baptist Mission, brought about a social change of far-reaching consequence. The first converts were Omed and Ramkhe, inmates from the same house, who were baptised in 1863 at Gauhati. More converts were won over and the Garo village schools were set up by the Mission in the Garo settlements situated in the Goalpara district. Later on, a normal school was established which further led to the growth of the alphabet.

T. J. Keith was one of the first missionaries who established contacts with the Garos in the plains and did an outstanding preliminary work in the development of the language. His works on the language entitled *Dictionary of the Garo Language—Garo and Bengali—English* (Jalpaiguri, 1873) and *An Outline Grammar of Garo Language* (Sibsagar, 1874) were considered as authoritative contributions till the beginning of this century. They were spade-works which considerably assisted in the development of the written characters in Garo. The language was put down to writing in the Bengali alphabet. The translation of the Gospels was taken up, followed by the publication of the Gospel of St. Matthew. This Gospel published in 1875 and a primer by T.J. Stoddard were first books to appear in print. The records show that the second edition of the primer of Stoddard appeared in 1887, but a copy of its first edition is not obtainable. If, on the other hand, we consider the Gospel of St. Matthew to be the first book, as it came out in print in 1875, it may be taken for granted, that to date, Garo literature has covered a hundred years of its growth.

The Awe dialect, in course of time, became the medium of instruction. It has sufficient power of modification and adaptation, the more so because, we understand, it has in circulation, important loan-words from the Ambeng dialect.

The missionaries took up the project with the active association of the local collaborators in the field. The missionaries were fortunate enough to have the cooperation of Ramkhe and Omed, who were not only the first converts but also the first Garo literates. The tradition has it that they read at a school in Goalpara which was opened in 1848

and had picked up English some time before their conversion which occurred in 1863. It is also known that Ramkhe assisted the missionaries in establishing for the first time Garo village schools and later on became Headmaster of the Normal School, first located at Damra in the Goalpara plains but later shifted to Tura after E. G. Phillips took up his residence there. The school provided instructions in the subjects of curricular and co-curricular development and played a vital role in the dissemination of education.

Ramkhe, known as M. Ramkhe Momin, had to his credit, other contributions to literature.

With his active cooperation, the mission now made considerable progress in the field. Fortunately the administration, at the initial stage, had already extended full support to the missionaries, and advanced other kinds of help in the furtherance of their projects. In acknowledging their contributions, the Government entrusted to the Mission, in course of time, the manipulation of education and placed adequate financial assistance at the disposal of the Mission authorities to enable them run not only the newly established schools but also develop the newly created alphabet.

III. STAGES OF GROWTH (SUMMARIZATION)

First Stage

The first stage was concerned with a series of Bible translations. In 1875 appeared the Gospel of St. Matthew in print, the first book in the language. It was shortly followed by the four Gospels published in 1876. Other additions were made. And with the persistent efforts of the missionaries and their collaborators, the New Testament was published in 1894. The long years of labour culminated in the publication of the Old Testament in 1924. Besides the Bible, there were other Christian treatises and hymns which came from the missionaries and their Garo collaborators. First school books, grammars and lexicons were their other notable contributions. A bulk of the Christian hymns and treatises were translations. The seeds from the Bible were trans-

planted at an early stage into this new nursery.

E. G. Phillips was the father and architect of this infant literature. He wrote and prepared the first school text-books comprising readers, arithmetic, hygiene and morals; he compiled and edited works on grammar and had several other contributions in Bible translation and gospel literature. The most important collaborators were M. Ramkhe Momin, Rupsing Sangma and Rev. Bangal Singh Momin who wrote other books which rank as the earliest contributions from the local writers within twenty-five years of the birth of this literature. Towards the last decade of the last century, the American Baptist Mission, found it difficult to continue the Bengali alphabet and finally decided to switch over to the Roman alphabet. Romanization of the important publications was undertaken in right earnest. Besides, the Mission envisaged the production of more literature to fit into the school curriculum. The new publications since then were published in the Roman characters.

Second stage

Garo literature came to be composed from 1900 onwards. During the first decade of this century, the Mission conducted transliteration of the existing publications into the Roman alphabet. The American Baptist Missionary Union was also active in seeing through the production of many more literary works. Attention was paid to the revision of the Bible translation as also fresh translations of other versions of the Bible not translated by then. More was done in regard to the school books. In course of time more and more of the local writers came forward, whose contributions were mainly in education. The local writers were D. S. Nengminza, Wilson K. Marak, Jobang D. Marak Samson Sangma, H. W. Marak, Mrs Phoebe, W. Momin, and Mrs Bimolin C. Momin. The missionaries such as Miss C. A. Wright, Miss L. M. Holbrook, and Miss H. L. Wetherbee also wrote school books while Miss Hazel Moris, James Wood, and F. W. Harding continued to make contributions to the Christian literature.

Third Stage

The modern literature on cultural milieu dating back from 1927 has several indigenous themes. Such literature has been largely reconstructed on the basis of folk-tales, oral ballads, musical incantations, chants and ethical adages which are still in circulation. The folk-lore of the Garos has immense significance on the character of the race, the wonderful achievements of their forefathers and their immortal feats as they emerged from the moral background. And yet with these great things performed their simple traits of character and other formative habits of truthfulness, honesty and directness were never lost sight of. No doubt these traits have become largely distorted in the process of the socio-political upheaval we see today. Nevertheless these folk-tales form the landmarks of a cultural orientation both in prose and poetry. Jobang D. Marak, Samson R. Sangma, Dewan Singh Rongmuthu and other writers had a great share in the regeneration of the folk literature. At the same time seeds were also sown by other writers for the growth of novel, drama and other forms of literature.

IV. FIRST STAGE (1875-1900)

T. J. Keith had acquired a good knowledge of Garo from his contacts with Garos in the plains. A dictionary and a grammar published in 1873-74 were the pioneering works which opened the field to further contributions from the future writers. Keith did something else to promote other publications in this language. The missionaries made use of the Bengali alphabet which continued to be in use at schools and churches for little more than thirty years. The missionaries later on switched over to the Roman alphabet owing to the inconvenience faced in continuing the Bengali alphabet. The records indicate that the Gospel of St. Matthew was one of the first books published in Garo. Then followed a catechism and four Gospels were published in 1876, the works of T. J. Keith and his Garo Pandits or collaborators. The latter should have been Ramkhe,

Omed and Thangkhan Sangma who came first in the picture.

These publications, in the Bengali alphabet, were used in the early village churches. T. J. Keith, by virtue of these contributions, howsoever these might appear, became the father of Garo written word. E. G. Phillips, on coming into the field, continued Keith's noble task of building up this literature. The early missionaries were determined to continue translating the Bible with a view to propagating Christianity. There was need to prepare the primers and school lessons. For these reasons, cultural orientation in letters was so insignificant at the beginning.

The retrospective publications in respect of the Bible during the first quarter were the following:—

1. *Acts of Apostles*, 1890 by M. C. Mason.
2. *Mandoli Palokni Kitab*, 1891 (a Pastor's handbook).
3. *Matthew* (1893).
4. *First Catecheism* (perhaps a reprint), 1893.
5. *Genesis with explanatory notes*, 1893.
6. *Taromko Skichengami* (relating to religious instructions), 1893.

A landmark in the first quarter of its growth was the completion of the translation of the New Testament. It was published in 1897. It was preceded by a hymn book entitled *Achikni Ringani* containing 161 pages in its published form. In these were enshrined the new lights, concepts and values of Christian teachings. All these were in the Bengali alphabet. A pamphlet entitled *Mission Kama Mik-songata* by Rev. Thangkhan Sangma was published in 1895. A Christian treatise entitled *Sangba Jisu Kritoni Gimin Bi Sarangna Katarang* containing 110 pages was published during the same decade. I could not find out the author's name. However it appears that the Bible Society, other literary societies and institutions were quick in assisting publication of these books.

We have now to examine the contemporary growth of literature in respect of text-books, journalism and grammars. Stoddard's primer had thitherto been in use for the

beginners. In course of time the need for more school books was felt.

We find mention of the following school books—

Title	Date of publication	Extent
1. <i>Te'gachu Mina</i>	1878	16 pages
2. <i>Te'gachu Mina Skang Sochenga</i>	1878	16 pages
3. <i>Skang Skiani Bakani</i> (Part I)	1892	28 pages
4. <i>Skang Skiani Baksa</i> (Part I)	1900	18 pages

The Mission in alignment with the administrative policy and with the financial assistance from the administration, had opened up the first schools which in the beginning could not meet a favourable response owing to the vigorous opposition, as the local people apprehended the reverse results from the imparting of education as it was likely to break the impact of the traditions of their village life. However with the increase in Christian conversion the opposition dwindled in course of time. The first missionaries were aware of the need of good school books which, to their minds, should be suitable for the growth of education, among the Garos.

The other first school books in the series included the following :

1. *Primary Arithmetic in Garo* by E. G. Phillips, 1890
2. *Garo mental Arithmetic*, 1890, containing 90 pages.
3. *Grammar Part III* by the Missionaries of the American Baptist Mission Union (serialized as the third edition), 1892.
4. *The Way to Health*, 1896.
5. *Primary Arithmetic in Garo* by E. G. Phillips, 1897.
6. *Toromko Shkang Skiiasi Kitap Sa*, 1896.
7. *Toromko Shkang Skiiani Kitap gni*
8. *Garo Primer* (4th edition) Part I, 1900.
9. *A'chik Grammar* by E. G. Phillips, 1900.
10. *Introduction to Bengali for Garo pupils* by Rupsing Sangma, 1900.

11. *Garo Mental Arithmetic* by Mrs E. G. Phillips, 58 pages.

During the first stage of the growth of this literature, we find certain contributions in respect of grammars and dictionaries, school books, translations from the Bible and hymnals as had hitherto been prepared, printed and circulated among the people by the Mission and the churches. E. G. Phillips, did a great deal of spade work; he had published immense literature for the Garos and thus paved the way for the future workers in this field, while Keith gave this language an alphabet. The new alphabet aroused the people's interest in reading and writing. As a result more and more students came out to prosecute study for higher classes. The Government had placed large funds with the Mission for the manipulation of education in the Garo Hills, part of which was set aside for the publication of books.

Most of the first school books had an attractive get-up provided with appropriate illustrations. Phillips assisted by his wife and other local collaborators, improved upon the designs from time to time, to make them more appealing to the school pupils under instructions.

A grammar entitled *Grammar Part III* by the missionaries as a third edition, came out in 1892. Besides the readers prescribed in the curriculum, there were efforts made to produce arithmetical lessons such as *Practical Arithmetic in Garo* which appeared in two editions in 1890 and 1897, the work of E. G. Phillips; while the *Mental Arithmetic*, the work of Mrs E. G. Phillips was edited in 1890 and 1899, in separate editions. The Mission had produced important books for the use of schools for several years which have been revised from time to time. Besides Phillips and Mason, the local collaborators and writers had a share in the production of lexicons and grammars. Among them, M. Ramkhe Momin did a laborious work in compiling an exhaustive *Bengali-Garo Dictionary* containing 384 pages. It appeared in 1887 giving a pride of place to the Garos; as it remains the bulkiest volume of all the books so far published on the subject. It was widely used during those days when Bengali was used as the medium

in the schools. Rupsing Sangma similarly produced a sort of lexicon entitled *An Introduction to Bengali* for Garo pupils in 1900; it was one of the last books to be written in the Bengali characters. In the same year came out the *A'chick Grammar* by E. G. Phillips. Almost all of these publications were brought out in Bengali alphabet. The switch-over to the Roman alphabet was later contemplated owing to certain difficulties to continue with the Bengali alphabet.

As I can make out, certain archaic spellings used in the old publications presented a difficulty in correctly reading the titles as well as contents. There were certain deficiencies in technical terms and vocabularies which necessitated the missionaries to make them up by entries of loan-words from the neighbouring languages. The present experience of some linguists, so far as I can deduce, shows that such deficiencies could have been adequately met, in certain respects, by indigenous terms which have not been explored by the missionaries and the early philologists sufficiently. These difficulties have been expressed also in the adaptations of arithmetic lessons owing to certain deficiencies. They ought to have made much more effort to re-discover such technical words for the benefit of students and general readers.

Romanization and Transliteration

Circumstances made it necessary to switch over to the Roman alphabet and the missionaries decided upon romanizing the then existing publications in the two decades (1890-1910). The task had entailed extra-responsibility but it proved worthwhile in the long run. The fact that Bengali gave way to Roman characters was due to certain reasons such as difficulties faced by the pupils in schools in learning three languages at a time, lack of printing facilities and other connected technical problems. So in line with the need for a simple orthography, the Mission took to itself the romanization of all the publications as had seen the light. Its results were good as it brought about a more favourable response from the people and led to a further increase in literacy. The earliest publication in the

Roman alphabet was *Anchihgni Kam* by E. G. Phillips in 1902, and *Primer I (Skang Skiani Baksu)*, 1892, third edition.

Another early publication in the Roman alphabet, entitled *Ka 'tongni Janera* (Mirror of the Heart), was published in 1896 with thirtyeight illustrations compiled by M. G. Momin. A few others included the book of *Genesis*, *Nama Katarango sea... Japang Kata* (inductive course for gospel history) and a trilingual catechism—a reprint of English and Hindustani with the addition of Garo by Rev. Bangal Singh A. Momin in 1899. The missionaries were not alone, being assisted by Rev. M. Ramkhe, Thangkhan Sangma, Modhunath G. Momin in the early phase of Bible translation. A number of persons were connected with the translation of hymns. To mention them, they were Umor Singh, Ramkhe, Rangku, Gongaram, Latoka, Thangkhan, Ponchonon, Bangal Singh, Naran, Toman, Cheman, Bahiram Momin, Rupsing Sangma, Don Sing, Gelo, Tangchang, Sajan Sangma, Modhunath Momin, W. Dring, Jaman, Bahhiram Momin, Dohorot Momin besides missionaries such as E. G. Phillips, M. C. Mason, and C. Bond. But Ramkhe and Phillips had translated a larger portion of published hymn books. A hymn book (second edition) in the Roman alphabet came out in print in 1900.

A landmark in the transliteration was also the romanization of the New Testament, *Niam Kitab*, containing 464 pages, as published in 1912. It was, however, preceded by the romanized Four Gospels of 218 pages which came out in 1904. The rest of the New Testament (in the Roman alphabet), in continuation of the Gospels, as published in 1912, contained 219 to 414 pages. Bengali as the additional medium was dropped out and Garo pupils were facilitated in receiving instructions direct in their mother tongue. The use of Bengali, however, was important because it helped to incorporate entries and loan-words from Bengali, and later on Assamese and Sanskrit to make up for certain inadequacies in the Garo written vocabulary.

V. SECOND STAGE (1900-1940)

This stage was marked by an increase in text-books, accomplishment in the Bible translation and increase in the study of language.

Grammars provide the basic need for the growth of the language. Almost all the previous grammars, as had been published, incorporated entries from Bengali and the use of the latter had been necessary during the first stage of its growth. The missionaries had become more and more acquainted with the language, usage and other characteristics and sought to depict them consistently and systematically. The need of grammars was obvious with the increase in the use of English. The Government had too encouraged the publication of more dictionaries and grammars. A dictionary and grammar by T. J. Keith, we have mentioned, came out in the 'seventies. We have also referred to a *Bengali-Garo Dictionary* of M. Ramkhe, published in 1884. Rupsing Sangma followed in by producing a lexicon entitled *An Introduction to Bengali for Garo Pupils* which appeared in 1900 in the Bengali characters.

The switching over to the Roman alphabet necessitated the building up of lexical studies side by side with English. E. G. Phillips and M. C. Mason were the chief figures who engaged themselves in this task. The former's work entitled *A'chick Grammar* came out in 1900. He followed it up by the publication *An Outline Grammar of the Garo Language* in 1904. Both books are still regarded as the best on the subject. The wider use of English was recognised by M. C. Mason whose work entitled *Introduction to English for School Pupils* was published by the Baptist Missionary Union which replaced Rupsing Sangma's *Introduction to Bengali for School Pupils*. Mason's *English-Garo Dictionary* came out in 1905. Three of them printed at the Government Press, Shillong were designed to provide instructions to Garos for learning of English although they might have been lacking certain equivalent words in Garo. Phillip's *A'chick Grammar* came out in a second edition. Its third edition appeared in 1972, which was published by the Tura Book Room.

During this period a few more Christian treatises came out. In 1924 was published the Bible, but prior to that date, some selected Garo excerpts from the old Testament had also been published. Until 1940, the themes were obtained from *Sengba* (the peep of the day) which had its fourth edition in 1919 (published by Christian Literature Society for India), *Graded Bible Lessons* (1927), *Immanuel* (1929), *Gisik Ratani* (1932), *Kandikigipa Nama Kata Biaranga* (stories derived from the gospels), 1933, Bible stories for children, *An'chichi Bregimin* by Miss L. M. Holbrook (1936), *Sunday School Course* (1935), *Mandoli Mamong Aro Bipekrang Maikai Nangrimgri Kanichi Madoliko Bilakatrotoani onggens* by F. W. Harding in 1937, *Ibri Mandering* (1938) by Miss L. M. Holbrook and others. They centred on religious themes and expressions with the intention of building up the day-to-day Christian concepts of the people.

There was considerable progress in Bible translation. The retrospective excerpts from the Old Testament in Garo rendering were *Exodus* (1918), *Chronicles* (1921), *Kings* (1921), *Ezra*, *Nehemiah*, *Esther*, *Job* (1921), *Deuteronomi and Samuel* (I and II) in 1923. These publications in parts of the Bible led ultimately to the publication of the entire Old Testament in 1924 and thus the work was completed. The Old Testament (*Sastro Git Chamni Bak II*) of 803 pages was published in 1924 leading to the publication of the Bible in one volume in 1934 acknowledged to be the second edition of this holy Scripture. The Bible has been a source for creative literature as authors had sought from its light the carving of models both in prose and poetry. The Bible and the other models of English literature exercised such influences in the early stage of the literature in modern Meghalaya. However not much substantial became inborn in other respects as it seemed that the Missionary Society with a batch of the local Garo collaborators were exerting all their energy towards the publication of the Bible during the second decade of our century. An important treatise entitled *Mandoli Ong'chenga Ba Watatarangni Kamrangko Skiani* concerning the growth of the first church, containing 208 pages was brought out by M. C. Mason in 1912 and was a good contribution to the study of a Bible. The

Dictionary of Ramkhe and the Bible had hitherto been the most voluminous of works in the first series of this literature.

The Baptist hymn book became enlarged in the subsequent edition. Translators added to an edition of a hymnal in 1931, were Emerson Momin, Nordorson Sangma, Kundura Momin, H. W. Momin, Jonsingh Marak, Ramjeng Momin, J. N. Areng, A Macdonald besides Miss A. V. Blakely, A. F. Morrill, F. W. Harding, G. C. Crozier, Mrs M. C. Mason. All these works sowed the seeds of new spiritual concepts which had struck new roots in the soil.

There had been several editions of the hymn book. In 1949 the hymnal underwent the 15th edition. Also the song books with solfa notations had appeared from time to time. One of them was *A'chikni Ringariang Aro Olakiani Kitap* which totalled 451 hymns and was retitled *Ring'Ani Kitabni Sulrang* in a following edition, which came out in 1966. There was a separate issue of *A'chik Bi 'Sarangni Ringaniriang*, an anthology of songs with solfa notes for the use of children.

A new series of school books appeared in a larger number. The *Chanani Kitap Bak II*, Rev. Phillips' work published in 1908 underwent its next edition in 1916. In 1908 came out the editions of *Gisiko Chanani Kitap* in two parts, Bak I and Bak II. The earlier editions of these two books was published in 1904 for Bak I and 1906 for Bak II. The works gave a model of school readers and arithmetical lessons in currency and were revised from time to time. The other additions were *Skichengani Kitap Primary* by the missionaries of the American Baptist Mission Union, 1915, *Skichen Bak II* by M. C. Mason, 1920, and the *Garo school reader* by members of the Mission in 1922. To these, may be added the publication of Toding Marak in 1913, entitled *Maharani Victoriani Kata* which was a leaf from history relating to the reformative tendency of the British empire. This portrayed characteristics then current which, however, have become largely obsolete today. A. Macdonald, a Khasi stationed in the Garo Hills, as Deputy Inspector of Schools, wrote a *Teachers' Manual* in Garo published in 1916. It was

designed to provide instructions in different subjects. It contained 112 pages. A similar treatise entitled *Bisarnako Skie Jarisoami* (90 pages) was also about providing instruction to training of children. It was published in 1916.

We have seen that the missionary educationists shared with their local counterparts in the development of this literature. The Missionary Society was thus instrumental in the addition of such primers and readers designed for the use in schools. They included the *Wetherbee Readers* (I and II) published in 1932 by the Women's American Baptist Foreign Missionary Society of which H. L. Wetherbee and C. A. Wright were the compilers. The school book series also included, among others, *Rikki Tikki* (Mangoes), *Aro Gopin Galporang Suurini Rani* (Queen of the Snow) in 1920, *Katongni Janera* (Looking Glass), *Sonuni Chongipa Bari* (A Small Garden) by Miss C. A. Wright, 1932, *Dakanangijagipa Do'gep* (Ugly Duckling) 1929, *Chongipa Milgipa Gangu* (A Small Fat Boy), *Ton-betgipa Jellabi*, which served as model primers for school beginners and although they were in good rendering, they contained no indigenous stuff.¹ Mention may be made of Miss L. M. Holbrook's *An'chichi Breginin* which came out in 1936, and *Aesopni Golporang*, an adaptation from the Aesop's fables, although it contained only a small selection. Readers in circulation were *Poraiani Kitap* (Parts I, II, III and IV)² and *Skichen-gani Kitap* or Primers I and II. The most important publication of this period, perhaps, was *Itihasni Katarang* which contained lessons from the great characters and personages which Miss C. A. Wright edited in association with Modhunath G. Momin; Jakme D. Shira, Solomon Raja, Do'bipa contributed to it but a bulk came from the pen of Miss Holbrook and Mrs Aron N. Sangma.³ It was

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1. They were the works of the Women's American Baptist Foreign Missionary Society. Some were the illustrated animal fables reprinted in the 'fifties and 'sixties being adaptatious from the previous works of the 'thirties.
 2. The Nos. II and III came out in the revised editions in 1958 and 1961 respectively. The reprint of No. IV came out in 1959. They were published by the Christian Literature Society.
 3. The lessons were adapted from Gautama, Asoka, Mughal kings,

published in 1934. A *Garo School Reader* by the members of the Mission was published in 1922 and its second edition in 1927. So also Miss C. A. Wright's *Sonuni Chonggipa Bari* (primer) was published in 1932. A reader, *Schoolo Poraini* (reader) by M. C. Mason was published in 1920. Another reader, *Poraini Gitam* appeared in 1930.

VI. THIRD STAGE—1940 AND ONWARD

The missionaries occupy a predominant position in the early stage of the growth of this literature. Missionary contributions, however, started dwindling as from 1950. Still in the forties came out the publications such as *Kristoni Sonani Niam* (The Golden Rules) by Miss L. M. Holbrook. The publications which followed were *Baptist Manual* in Garo by F. W. Harding, *Paulni Janggitangan* (Life of St. Paul), *Nambatgipa Sunday Schoolrang* by Miss H. Morris (1957), *An 'chigni Bible* by James Wood, etc.

Before closing with the Christian literature, we have also to examine similar other works of other Garo writers in this respect. Most of these contributions came from Wilson K. Marak. One of his illustrious works was the translation of the *Pilgrim's Progress* (published around the 'forties). He had translated *Sadhu Sundar Singh* from an original work and presented a story of a Greek captive boy who became Christian through strong convictions in a series entitled *Ka' donge Baltigipag* (1966). His original work titled *Jisu Resapilgen* came out in 1972 which offers notes on the eschatological theme and the power of resurrection.

The text-books contained the seeds of poetry and prose, essays, morals, compositions, sketches and extended also to the related topics of history, geography, hygiene and others. This in turn led to the subsequent growth of cultural orientation, sublimation of the traditions and other themes of cultural heritage.

Greek philosophers and wise men, discoverers, world conquerors, freedom fighters and great women. The English equivalent of its title is World History.

The literature as had grown in the 'forties and onward may better be serialized according to the subjects in which special emphasis is necessary. The Garo educationists felt the need for imparting instructions in their own medium, which would have bearing especially on the village schools, not to speak of the elite alone. Education was designed so that it could perform its functions more significantly on the imparting of instructions, as also meeting the basic socio-economic needs, and providing training in fields like citizenship and leadership. There had been difference of approach between teachers, government workers and politicians in making such contributions. More had to be done to meet the inadequacies in these fields of literature, especially concerning the development in education. D. S. Nengminza and H. W. Marak made some laudable contributions in this respect. Nengminza was much concerned about this literature, and wrote the following :

1. *The School Dictionary* (1944).¹
2. *Second book of English Grammar and Translation*, 1972.
3. *A Primer of English Translation*.²
4. *Hindustanchi Nengrae Agangrikani Chol*, 1973.
5. *English-Garo Dictionary*.
6. *Boys' own translation, Garo to English*.
7. *Second Book of English Grammar and Translation*, etc.

R. G. Momin similarly had his contributions in a book entitled *English Grammar and Composition* in Garo (first published about 1940 with the third edition in 1968). The other works in the study of language are N. M. Marak's *English-Garo-Hindustani Kusiko Altuai Agangrikani*, which saw the light in 1927,³ Kenneth Momin's *A'chik Composition Designed to Help Students for Learning Grammar*. The

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1. Uptil 1972, it was running a sixth edition.
 2. Its fourth edition came out in 1971.
 3. A title *Assamiya Kusiko Nengrae Skiani* (to learn Assamese of 84 pages) by D. N. Majumdar and King O. Sangma was published in 1958 by the Lawyer's Book Stall, Gauhati.

bulk of similar works—models for lexicons—are from H. W. Marak as appears from the list of the following publications:—

1. *Gital English Composition*;
2. *Hindi Gachal*;
3. *Garo-English-Assamese Dictionary*;
4. *Assamese for Garos*;
5. *Garo Primer*.

A series of helpbooks for teachers were in the making. Wilson K. Marak, who had long been connected with the growth of education, wrote a scout aid book entitled *Wolf-cub-ko-skiani-Dewal* published in 1942, and a book concerning physical training and activities was published in 1957. Besides a *Primary Scholo Skiani Kata* as also Notes on Teaching Primary Schools (*Primary Schools Skiani Kata*) by Jobang D. Marak, the first Catholic educationist and a *Garo Primary Skulo Skiani Bewalrang Da Niamrang*, a helpbook for primary school teachers by Karnesh R. Marak also appeared in print.

Different subject-matter in respect of education have been dealt with, appropriately but not so exhaustively. The following were the main publications:—

Serial No.	Author	Subject
1.	D. S. Nengminza	Arithmetic entitled <i>Chananiko Skichengani</i> first lessons to count, 1967.
2.	D. S. Nengminza	<i>Primary Arithmetic Bak I</i> (113 pages).
3.	D. S. Nengminza	<i>Primary Arithmetic Bak II</i> , 1972.
4.	S. Basu	<i>Arithmetic Primer in Garo</i> , parts I and II.
5.	H. W. Marak	<i>Garo Arithmetic</i> .
6.	H. W. Marak	<i>Metric Weights and Measures</i> .

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| 7. | H. W. Marak | <i>Gital Tangka-paisa.</i> |
| 8. | Samson Sangma | <i>Garo Geography</i> of Assam, Meghalaya, India, which underwent various editions, first published in 1934 as <i>Garo geography of Assam and India.</i> |
| 9. | Jobang D. Marak | <i>Garo History Part I</i> ¹ which in 1937 edition contained 117 pages. |
| 10. | Miss C. A. Wright | <i>Nature study</i> with reference to biology, animals, birds, insects, crops, geography, 1934, reprint and revision 1952 and 1966. |
| 11. | Miss A. V.
Blakely Matron | Hygiene — <i>Angni Dongchakipa Nok</i> (The Wonderful House I Live In), 1936, 30 pages. |
| 12. | Mrs. Phoebe Momin | <i>Cookery Bak Part II</i> , 1932 as part of domestic science, 74 pages. ² |

A. Macdonald besides a *Teachers Manual*, wrote also a *Garo Geography* which probably was the first of its kind.

The Garo History (Part I) by Jobang D. Marak in 1930, although an outline, contained the seed for the future growth of history.

To the above may be added the publications in geometry and adult education. A book on the latter subject was an adaptation of *A'chik Dalgimin Manderangna Skiani Kitab* by Levison Sangma published in 1957. On Garo folk-lore, the first compilation by Jobang D. Marak and Samson came out in print in 1927. Mrs Bimolin C. Momin wrote a book on such tales—but her compilation was only an adaptation from a few Greek mythological stories, Arabian Nights and Cinderella—which came out in a book entitled *Mingsinggipa Golporang*, published quite recently and has 193 pages. She had no grasp of indigenous subject-matter. An anthology under the aegis of the Women's Baptist

1. He also wrote a book entitled *Katongni Janera*, A Mirror of the Heart.
 2. I understand this book is being revised.

Missionary Society which came out earlier, similarly had no indigenous material and cultural traits. This anthology entitled *Golporang A'chik Bisarangna* contained tales for children, all adaptations from the foreign countries in which the Aesop's fables, Hans Anderson, fairy stories, Treasure Chest found a place. A few were adapted from the Ramayana. Modhunath G. Momin compiled some of them which in a revised edition came out in 1952. A modern theme is obtained from *Jawaharlal Nehru (Bisarangri Ripeng)* by Mrs H. B. Sangma, which gives a glimpse of such of his works as are readable for the children.

These contributions considerably stabilised the growth of education. There had been no secondary school, institution until the 'forties, yet those books provided constructive lessons through the initiative of the Missionary Union and that of the local educationists themselves. Many of the books were adequately illustrated with beautiful jackets and attractive cover designs. The Garos have produced educators and social workers who have given incentives for providing good books in inculcating formative habits and behaviour patterns, disciplinary norms and thirst for wisdom. These books had large circulation. We have now to see to the growth of poetry, prose, drama and novel and examine the perspectives and scope which will further lead to more developments.

For a long time past, most of the creations in prose were adaptations from the other literatures. They have been mentioned earlier such as Miss Holbrook's *Aesopi golporang*, *Golporang A'chik Bisaranga*, Mrs Bimolin C. Momin, *Mingsinggipa Golporang* and a few others contained in the syllabus of school books. Wilson in envisaging the need of more publications, had the adaptations from renowned classics such as the *Arabian Nights* (published in 1970), *Tales from Shakespeare* (1971), *Burning of Rome*, published in 1966 and others. One of the most important contributions in this respect is *Ka-Donggipa Matgrik*, an adaptation of Benhur, by Kenneth Momin which contains about 300 pages. As the case was with the other modern Indian literatures, English literature and the western classics had greatly influenced the growth of the early

literature of the Garos and other tribes too. Until Independence or so, seedlings into this nursery were transplanted from the outside literature in both poetry and prose. These infused life into the first series of writings. They carved out numerous models into the system of writings.

VII. CULTURAL LANDMARKS

But more recently, the indigenous tales echoed and told through the ages have become equally significant, invoking, stirring, and providing a constant source of power to poetry, drama and novel. The earliest work was *Garo Folk-lore Part I* by Jobang D. Marak and Samson R. Sangma with only 20 lessons, published in 1927. They bore enchanting thrills and significant moral lessons, from which the Garo folklorists derive incentives to work upon a system of orientation by breaking away from the tradition followed by the missionaries. The writers sought new lights, concepts and vistas from the vast store of folk-tales which are still in circulation. "Although positivist, some of the Garo tales are sentimental. In their folklore emerge different ballads, epics and wise sayings which recount many of the wonders in their past. Love stories are innumerable which speak of love's effects as inspiring, healing and harmonizing. Love is the architect of human virtue, the moulder of the qualities of head and heart. The wonder is about its mysticism. Some tales are elegiac, others are jest and comedy but all leave an impact of moral lessons. They attribute a living philosophy to the myriad images of nature."¹

In the folk-tales are enshrined the activities, adventures and achievements of their forefathers. They preserve the life of their ancient heroes, their style of living, chivalry and their combat with the forces of nature. Garo knights had gigantic frame of mind and unconquerable spirit; they lifted up a full-grown tiger, tore apart a living python,

1. Bareh, *Meghalaya*, pp. 50-51.

wrecked a lion in the ground, husked paddy at the rock and spat at the tigress' roar. In some of the tales from Meghalaya, we find achievements and conquests wrought by means of tactful strategy and service of intelligence than of the human prowess. According to Dewan Singh Rongmuthu, "the Garos possess extensive traditional accounts, mythology, fables and other forms of oral literature."¹ He observed the processes, tragedies and beauties of nature that form the motifs of innumerable stories. Garo nature myths seek to explain different phenomenon and bear a marked resemblance to the fables of Greece and Rome.

The stories centre round the arts and human skills, feats and acts of bravery, ancient kings and kingdoms, conquerors and State builders, migrations and movement of the race, magic and magico-religious practice, deities, fiends, fairies, nymphs and spirits, upright and moral life and battle against the evil forces.

The *A'chik Golporang* or real stories as told by the Garos by Samson R. Sangma was another publication with that theme. It is sketchy as it contains only 63 pages but it is reckoned to be a good spade work. Publications carrying more elaborate treatment followed. There are *Golporangs* in two volumes in which Dhoronsing K. Sangma has sought to collate and glean the different tales as are still told, total to more than 300 pages. A fifth edition of the *A'chik Golporang Part I* was issued in 1970,² whereas Part II of this title came out in the fourth edition in the same year. Another great contribution is *Apasong Agana (A'chik Kattu Giticham)* by Dewan Singh Rongmuthu with its English equivalent *Our Forefathers Spoke*, a volume of 330 pages with 84 chapters. The totality and unity of the entire race—comprising different groups, Akawe, Abhong, Atong, Chisak, Kotchu, Me'gam, Digil and others—speaks in it in the most eloquent terms without losing the dim and obscure past, and yet giving the glimpses of men moving out to fulfil their duties, obligations, struggle and aspirations in

1. *Folk Tales of the Garos*, p. 1.

2. The first series of *A'chik Golporang* came out in 1939.

dynamic scale so much so that the unity accomplished could not be wrecked down, nor the splendour that was their land. Besides, he has to his credit the *A'chik Golporang*, not the inconsequent narrative. A detailed work on folklore in English is obtained also from Dewan Singh Rongmuthu, *Folk-tales of the Garos* (Department of Publications, University of Gauhati) published in 1960, which provides a mass of the indigenous Garo Tales and which is acknowledged to be the most valuable work on the Garos, totalling about 400 pages. Its ethnic conspectus, its traditional traits, cultural aspects, originality and individuality, and independent character sparkle with the radiance of those ancient jewels of creativity and imbibe a rich philosophical concept, mythological and legendary significance, social background and the cultural heritage which give it a distinctive beauty.

Drama is gradually evolving. The Garos have staged a few playlets from time to time. The one I saw once at Gauhati, staged by the students, centred round the first of the Christian conversions, featured with its naive characteristics, simple dialogues—typical gestures of an extempore nature—although much less audible, and focussed on a series of the first social contacts opened to the modern age. Drama, as an intrinsic characteristic of literature, obtains itself from the works of a few playwrights.

Prof. Kenneth Momin was one of the pioneers through his work *Nokdang (Dakmesokani)* which came to light in 1969. It is brief and focusses attention on the social processes working on and the form of social reconstruction obtained from the role of ideal families. A drama *Kamni Bite* by Arjison G. Momin may be classed as a modern type of social drama in which five characters are represented, two males and three females. It enshrines with its beauty through the interludes and naive dialogues. The *Khalsin Aro Sonatchi* (part I and II) is regarded as a more elaborate work by Redin Momin centring round Khalsin the hero and Sonatchi the heroine which exudes from love pursuits and adventure among them, interspersing with the thrills of travel, climax of love and the pathetic pangs of separation which finally culminate into the

lasting joy of marital union presented in a Bengali style.

Works to fit in with traditional, modern, ultra-modern and historical themes are scanty but what little has been done in drama, shows that the path is being trodden to evolve the more and more works to fit in with both the modern social and the traditional background.

Some of the wise sayings are in circulation. Samson Sangma's *A'chik Poraiani* (1970) contains moral lessons and ethical values current in the tradition and society. The work seeks to keep them intact, not to be lost away in the new social upsurges. It has 119 pages.

A typical novel, although an adaptation from Bengali, is *Sonabal Mechik* by Samson R. Sangma, 265 pages published in 1968. The characters are in Garo names.

There have been more contributions in poetry. Several persons wrote verses and rhymes but only a few of them possessed the true calibre to carve out models in composition. Most of these compositions have appeared in a journal entitled *A'chik Kurang*, in which poets and bards communicated their ethoes and sentiments. The *A'chik Kurang* had, therefore, provided models of writing and composition and has been a source of power and inspiration. *A'chik Kurang* was what the *Spectator* had been to the contemporary age in Britain. *A'chik Kurang* with its equivalent in English "the Voice of the A'chiks" has since its inception, pursued its real objective. The earliest hymns and translations were precursor of the birth of modern poetry. In several of these works we find considerable influence of English and western poetry but there are compositions to fit in with their traditional system of chants and expressions as the people were in possession of their own indigenous oral poetry. Some of the *gits* (traditional verses) are recited, hummed and sung at the festivals to the accompaniment of music from the gongs and drums, the pipes and trumpets. The bulk of the compositions, as appeared in the issues of the above journal, seem to have been made with the help of the western metre and usage. But some compositions are reminiscent of the achievements of their forefathers.

Among the several poets, mention may be made of

Tuniram R. Marak, Kosan G. Momin, Gelo Sangma, Prof. H. D. Momin: others who had minor contributions are B. S. Bangshall, Tuisbard Sangma, Roseman N. Sangma, Rev. Rodonath Momin, Llewellyn R. Marak, Mrs Phoebe W. Momin, Renald Brown S. Momin, Michael Keane W. Momin, Mrs Brucelline G. Momin, Poensingh S. Rongmuthu, Arthur K. Sangma, Arjison Momin, Malasing Marak, Methoral G. Momin, Mrs F. K. Marak, K. M. Momin, Mrs H. B. Sangma, S. S. Marak, N. R. Sangma, Rev. Gilber Marak, Direckson K. Marak, Policarp Momin, O. S. Momin, W. N. Sangma, Semington K. Marak, Donal N. Sangma, Meelijin R. Marak, S. S. Marak, Jarongpang Rongmuthu, Mrs Jonmoni D. Shira, Karnesh R. Marak, Koplane G. Momin, Harendra W. Marak, M. Rangmiti and Emelyne R. Marak.

There were anthologies which contain excerpts from the *A'chik Kurang* as selections designed to meet the needs of school community and the literates as well. The earliest anthology seemed to be *A'chik Sulni Git* 1941, which serves as hymns and sacred songs compiled by Kheong A. Sangma from Ranighat, Hahim, Kamrup in Assam. The verses recaptured the religious concepts and meditations on Christian light and only a few ethos fell in with the traditional pattern. The contributions were by Rev. Rikman Sangma, Reechem I. Sangma, Rango Singh, R. Marak, N. A. Sangma, Regan B. Marak, Tochang Pundit, Gabindra R. Marak, Utingsing J. Sangma, K. O. Sangma, Romang D. Sangma and Nomalsing A. Sangma. The renowned musicologists and composers are Mitaram Momin, Purno Sangma, Atting Sangma, Rev. Tillok Chon Momin, Palicarp Momin, Denison Momin, Tuniram Marak, Baldwin Momin, Rev. Rodhonath Momin, Sengin Sangma, Jackson Momin, Reidson, Millick K. Marak, Santoha Momin, Sorongsing D. Shira, Suchindra Marak, and Mrs J. S. Momin. In respect of the traditional poetry, the Garo metre appears to have been derived from the indigenous art of drumming and beating upon the bell-metal gongs which conform to the various phases of dance at the Wangala, the triumphant harvest festival, and as performed at the other ceremonies. These arts in turn gave to poetry a scope for forming a

shape and accent in a measure. I have no idea whether the Christmas gits sung, hummed and recited during the free style dance held at the Christmas season, for a fortnight long, extending into the New Year week, and performed as jubilantly as Wangala, are governed by the traditional system of metre but most of the songs and melodies used at this season are derived from their original tunes and composition. A bulk of these Christmas gits appears in an anthology entitled *A'chick Songkritan. Krismas Aro Gopin Gitrang* compiled by Rev. Tilokchand Momin, Nishangram which has been provided with the tonic solfa notes as intended for singing and dancing during the X'mas season; the gits appear to have been rationalized to fit in with the traditional expression of jubilation for the simple rural folk. The dance is by forming a ring in which dancers clasp each other's hands and hopping on against the background of music and songs. It is designed to revive the lost heart in the joy of rebirth. Some of the compositions have no bearing on the festival alone. However, there are eulogies on the landscape and the simplicity of life reflecting in it. A song on "Meghalaya" is:

*My land, abode of the clouds
Full of charming hills and crescenting heights,
of sublime scene around, that is called Meghalaya.
Call on your gods and goddesses
With offering of rice and millet,
On the cold breeze up the hill
And around the winding streams.
Pour on your tithes with sacred leaves,
And fruits, roots and yams
With fishes and meat
That is my country.*

Similarly Sudhindra called his land:

*My Garó land, My mother land
where forefathers died :land of the clouds.
Those villages up the hills
And those scattered near the river banks
My soul finds such rapture.*

Seogkimin poetry rang (selected poems) compiled by D. S. Nengminza (with its third edition in 1966), offers diverse scope of treatment although in the form of naive verses, but all are not nursery rhymes. The theme and key-note centres round the sublimation of aspirations, experience, adventure, joy and sorrow, old recollections, and nature. Some represent ethos such as one's birthplace, Garo country and forefathers, wise sayings and traditional concepts, on those noble themes, shed their radiance and meaningful contents in their own fashion.¹

Another anthology *Chasong Gital A'chik poetry rang* appeared in 1970 compiled by Prof. Kenneth Momin and edited and published by the Garo Literature Society. Love and nature lyrics of simple characteristics form a bulk of the compositions and although influenced by western literature, the compositions seek to lay stress on the indigenous symbols and motifs. Two of its poems appear to have been obscure and cryptic from the comprehension of a lay man not acquainted with the background in which the composition was brought out on the most indigenous theme. Jorangpang Rongmuthu and Monengsing R. Sangma successfully carve out new models to influence traditional themes with colloquial expressions in two poems entitled "Saljong Tasin' Me'chik" and "Goerani Skialo Man-Chengna" which appear to lay a background to the religious thinking of the Garos about their gods and their incarnations in the garb of sublimation. The other poems impart incentives to noble aspirations and glorious victories over one's struggle by dint of persistent labours.

Among others, mention may be made of *Chimonggimin* (1971) compiled by E. R. Marak. It is a collection of poems as hitherto appeared in the old journals.

H. W. Marak did tremendous work to build up these in-

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1. The titles in English equivalents cover the following:
Forefathers, wise saying, When, My birth-place, God is good, Fruits of labour, Stars, Lullaby, Garo Land, Butterfly, Rainy season, Mourning over one husband's demise, Rose, Sorrow, Voice of the Garos. In remembrance of a dead friend, Black bird in a jungle, King of birds, I'll remember you, Necklace of life, A drop of water, Haggar.

digenous themes. He compiled many poems into a book entitled *Kurungma* (Poems Old and New) but an epic "Dikki and Sonabal" is his masterpiece based on a well-known love story and abounds in the lessons of aspirations and struggle, defeat and achievements of the ancient folk, enriched by thrills and climaxes. The work retains its very musical character and identity.

These have emerged as original compositions, yet with these, a bulk of adaptations is in the making. Wilson K. Marak translated some poems and stories from Rabindra Nath Tagore under the aegis of the Assam Academy for Cultural Relations which was brought out in a booklet of 100 pages. H. W. Marak produced *Gitanjali*, as adaptation from the original Bengali which speaks of the over-all presence and power of God and which combines several theological aspects from the religious teachings. The Assam Publication Board published it in 1966 and it contains 75 pages. The most remarkable achievement of H. W. Marak was his translation of *Omar Khayam* into Garo with illustrations. Some other languages are lacking this translation in which love pours out with noblest sentiments, of course barring some of the excesses which are carried out in its name.

Tuniram Marak was one of the best known poets, who died during the 'forties. He received his education first at Goalpara where he became proficient in Bengali. He was a teacher at Nishangram. His poem "Haggar", an adaptation of the story from the Bible reproduced in a Garo form, is regarded as a masterpiece. His other remarkable composition was "Do'kua" (King of the birds). His poems provide inspiration also for retrieving an idealistic patriotism to lift up one's land as the people have become servile to many evil influences.

Kosan G. Momin poured out religious speculations on God from the Christian rather than Garo point of view. His work is an appreciation of the vast nature which ever glows in its radiance, beauty and elegance and in which his creations seem to have derived strength from both the Garo and Western perceptions. He was a teacher at Nishangram. Gelo Sangma composed poems in appreciation

of nature. The most learned was Denison Momin, son of Jobang D. Marak, a noted educationist. He was a brilliant student and did his M.A. and later became Professor of English in the Cotton College, Gauhati during the 'forties. He wrote both prose and poetry, which have their themes on the paramount need of social upliftment as appeared from his articles published through the different issues of *A'chik Kurang*. The editor of the *A'chik Kurang* now is Kenneth Momin, Principal, Tura Government College.

D. S. Nengminza has to his credit several publications in text-books, readers, grammar and language. Wilson K. Marak has other contributions. H. W. Marak has several publications comprising in addition to the above subjects those on administration, customary laws and practice. As far as I know, he was one of the builders of the Tura College and has opened a Junilla Book Centre with a view to expediting publications and spreading literature among his countrymen.

VIII. JOURNALISM

Journalism has been in existence in Garo for over more than 75 years. Of the journals and newspapers in circulation the first was *A'chikni Ripeng* started in 1880 which still survives. The earliest educators contributed several articles to this Christian monthly which is at present being edited by Rev. D. K. Sangma. The *A'chik Kurang* (Voice of the Garo), a social and educational quarterly has been in circulation for many years. Its potentiality as a source of power and inspiration to several models of literary creations has been pinpointed. Another social quarterly *Nok Dangni Ripneng* edited by B. K. Sangma has been in circulation. A political weekly *A'chik Sangbad* is being ably edited by N. Marak. A monthly of the Catholic Mission *Seng'ba* has been in circulation for many years. And then there is a monthly *Do'amek* published under the aegis of the District Information Relations Officer, Tura.

With the contributions of the elite, mentioned earlier, Garo language has reached yet another landmark, and it

has now been recognized for the graduate level in the University. The Garos, as appeared from their publications, have accepted both the universal current and their own traditions in their literary creations.

IX. PRESS AND BOOK CLUBS

In the decades gone by the Garos had become conscious of certain drawbacks with regard to the circulation of their literature. Some authors could not get encouragement owing to the financial and other difficulties. The printing of books used to be delayed, as previously it was catered by presses from outside. To meet this difficulty, the Garo educationists had taken steps to provide various centres for the printing, publication and circulation of literature. The important presses as existing now are the Don Bosco Press, Naryan Press, and the District Council Press. The latter has replaced the erstwhile Thompson Press at Tura. The most important book publishing and distributing centres are Miranda Library, Tura Book Room, Junilla Book Depot, Garo Book Emporium and Gheypa Bookland.

There had been other agencies concerned with the production of literature. The erstwhile Baptist Missionary Union, the Baptist Missionary Society and the Women's Baptist Missionary Society had been instrumental in the publication of books relating both to the scriptures and schools. The Women's Baptist Mission Society had been active until quite recently in this field and performed laudable service to produce good school books. The British and Foreign Bible Society, now the Bible Society of India, also assisted in the publication of scriptures both in the original and revised editions. Besides other bodies such as Christian Literature Society for India had brought out a series of school books and Christian religious subjects. A meagre assistance was received from the Scripture Gift Society in the publication of a title *Salanti Jonggi Tangani* (Daily Life). Now the Tura Book Room has replaced the Mission bodies in the publication and circulation of books of varied subject-matter. The Garo Literature Society has been doing

its bit to promote books for higher studies of both cultural and educational values relevant in the context of the present times. The Miranda Library is another publishing agency, established in 1936, in the name of the daughter of the founder. It has published immense literature, a number of various books, in the past decades. There is then the Junilla Book Depot founded by H. W. Marak (about 1946-47) which has also published a number of books. Garo Hills Book Emporium has a stock of good number of books, some important books being its own publications.

Besides the above publishing bodies and book rooms, recently Tura Book Club was formed under the aegis of the Tura Book Room. It was sponsored to encourage the reading habit. As of 1973, the Club had 1,500 members for whom five books were published and one copy of each book was delivered to each of its members. The subscription fee fixed was Rs 7.00 for the first book series and Rs 8.00 for the second book series. Four books in the series were translated. Pinsomat Momin, Wilson K. Marak and Rev. Gilbert Marak were the translators of these books. One more edition in the series was an original work by Pinsonath Momin. As this Book Room functions under the aegis of a Baptist Christian Convention, it is natural that the series have bearing on Christian religious themes rather than focussing social and cultural matters.

X. CONCLUSION

Garo Literature has covered 100 years of its growth in which the missionaries and the first educationists were its founding fathers. It had been deriving strength from the hard work done by the American Baptist Mission in which E. G. Phillips stands out eminently. The Missionaries were motivated in developing this literature in order to enable the first converts to read and write in their own language. It was also essential that the Bible reached their converts. Christianity and literature, under the influence of the missionaries, were so much linked up in its early stage. Besides, primers and readers were prepared and produced by the

missionaries for the dissemination of education. The great disadvantage was that the missionaries ignored the indigenous ethical values, cultural traits and arts. Yet the missionaries' service in introducing literature and education is being recalled with a great sense of appreciation. It is true that, with the negation of warfare and clannish feuds which featured in the pages of the old history, the door had been opened wide for the growth of education and literature. So a new leaf has been turned in the Garo history.

The earliest protagonist, from among the local writers, was Ramkhe. He noticed the philological importance in literature. He was one of the local collaborators in the translation of the Bible and hymns and the arrangement of orthography. His close association with the missionaries and dedication to work made him the first noted literateur and educationist, first among the Garos.

We have to take note of the service of educationists in the field of literature. They tried by various means to enrich literature of which one of them was by causing adaptations of the classical stories from the English and Indian literature. Besides, they also created grammars and model lexicons for the benefit of students in schools. Arithmetical and metrical lessons also received their attention. In this task both men and women were engaged in building up the literature as should be befitting to the school curriculum.

The true literature should also have roots in the soil. The oral and traditional literature shows itself in character and numbers of ballads, incantations, fables, prayers, aphorisms, stories and folk-tales in which Garo is rich and the traditions handed down from father to son. Various forms of art and music are interlinked. Social usage, behaviour patterns and ethical lessons are the other values. The literature takes its growth first in the preservation and interpretation of the exhaustive folk-tales which abound in the language. In this way culture, heroism and mythology in various aspects, emerge into these writings in their most original and perhaps less sophisticated form. They even afford glimpses into the political, historical and an-

thropological conceptions centring on the philosophy of the folk-tales. More than that, poets and bards notice the immense potentiality in their indigenous folk literature, from which they draw inspiration for literary transcreations. This makes possible the working out of a cultural orientation which has started to express itself even before the Independence. We have mentioned that some of the books were of cultural and educational importance and efforts are being continued to develop this indigenous material in the literature.

Irrespective of this development, there is still a large inadequacy in text-books for educational purpose and other kind of literary books in Meghalaya. There is need for suitable books on educational orientation and reconstruction, social change and cultural heritage. Literature can do a great service in preparing the field for social reconstruction; and more, to provide incentives for nation building. The literature in Meghalaya requires that these deficiencies be removed.