



MAXFORD DYNAMIC SERIES OF TRIBAL STUDIES

The Tribes of MEGHALAYA

Dr. M.C. Arunkumar
Dr. Shukhdeba Sharma Hanjabam
Pebam Nganthoiba Mangang
Jennifer Kipgen
Pukhrambam Kiranbala

The Tribes of MEGHALAYA

Meghalaya tribes have lots to tell which the readers will find in this book. The most noteworthy feature of tribes of Meghalaya is their parental lineage. The tribes at Meghalaya follow matrilineal lineage whereby a property's inheritance is traced through the women. In some cases, the children keep the surname of their mother. Though the women section of the tribes at Meghalaya take the responsibility of the household work, men are responsible for the mental and material life of his family. The property gets transferred to the women in the house.

Garos are primarily located in the Garo hills of Meghalaya and the Khasis are scattered all across the state and are known by different names in different places. Mainly the pure Khasis can be sited at the Khasi hills. The Meghalaya tribes follow Christianity mainly. Their main occupation is cultivation as the state has a vast land for cultivation. Water resources are more than enough as the state receives large amount of rainfall every year.

Editors:



Dr. M.C. Arunkumar is not only known of his critical observation of the North East Societies but also of his creative works expressing his ideas of the people of this region. During his long career of anthropologist in Manipur University, he carried out many projects ranging from tribal studies to social problems relating with political culture and HIV/AIDS. His political plays are staged at state and national festivals by different theater groups. His doctoral work on Women's Crime in Manipur opens a new insight to the women's studies in the region. He is teaching Social Anthropology at present. To his credit, there are a number of academic papers as well as popular articles, number of books.



Dr. Shukhdeba Sharma Hanjabam is currently working as Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work, at Indira Gandhi National Tribal University, Regional Campus, Manipur. His PhD is from ICSSR Doctoral Fellow, the School of Social Work, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai.



Pebam Nganthoiba Mangang is a resident of Imphal West District, Manipur. He is a Research Scholar at the School of Social Work, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. He works on Conflict and Health as an ICSSR doctoral fellow. His Master of Social Work is from Pune University with specialisation in Community Development.



Jennifer Kipgen, Manipur, is associated with the School of Social Work, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. She is also associated with Kirolinska Institute, Sweden as a Doctoral exchange fellow on public health. She has completed her Master of Social Work from Pune University with specialization in Community Development.



Pukhrambam Kiranbala, M A in Anthropology with specialization in Physical Anthropology from North Eastern Hill University, Shillong, has also done B. Ed. Presently She is associated with the Department of Anthropology, Manipur University.

VOLUME IV
THE TRIBES OF MEGHALAYA



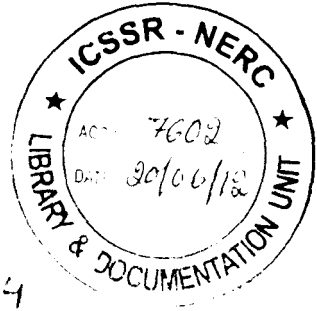
Editors

Dr. M.C. Arunkumar
Dr. Shukhdeba Sharma Hanjabam
Pebam Nganthoiba Mangang
Jennifer Kipgen
Pukhrambam Kiranbala



MAXFORD BOOKS

New Delhi-110 002



305.8954164
ARU.4

The Tribes of Meghalaya

© Editors

First Edition 2012
ISBN 978-81-8116-155-0 (7 Vols.set)

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted, in any form or by means, electronic, mechanical, photo copying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Published by:
MAX FORD BOOKS

Sales Office: 4264/3, IInd Floor, Ansari Road, Daryaganj,
New Delhi - 110 002

Ph.: 011-65156284

Regd. Office: 95, Medha Apartments, Mayur Vihar, Phase-I
Delhi - 110091

Ph.: 011-22743537

E-mail : maxfordbooks@gmail.com

Website : www.maxfordbooks.com

Printed at: **Harmain Offset Press, Delhi**

C O N T E N T S

Volume IV [The Tribes of Meghalaya]

104. Introduction	919
105. Traditional Crafts and Culture	941
106. Festivals and Dances	964
107. Achiks	987
108. Garos	990
109. Hynniewtrep	1016
110. Jaintia	1022
111. Khasis	1048
112. War	1134
References	1143

Volume V [The Tribes of Mizoram]

113. Introduction	1145
114. Festivals	1158
115. Arts & Crafts	1175
116. Mizo Life	1201
117. Social Status of Mizo	1228
118. Chakma	1264
119. Hmar	1299
120. Lakher or Mara	1322
121. Lushai/Lusei	1332
122. Pawi	1351
123. Siyin/Sizang	1353
References	1363

Volume VI [The Tribes of Nagaland]

124. Introduction	1365
125. Festivals	1385
126. Art and Craft	1392
127. Angami	1409

128. Ao	1418
129. Chakhesang	1429
130. Chang	1434
131. Khiamniungan	1440
132. Konyak	1443
133. Lotha	1451
134. Nocte	1460
135. Phom	1475
136. Pochury	1480
137. Rengma	1489
138. Sangtam	1497
139. Sema/Sumi	1507
140. Tangsa	1515
141. Tutsa	1521
142. Wancho	1527
143. Yimchunger	1569
144. Zeliang	1574
References	1581

Volume VII [The Tribes of Sikkim and Tripura]

Section A

145. Introduction	1585
146. Bhutia	1615
147. Gurang	1623
148. Lepchas	1625
149. Limbu	1648
150. Magar	1673
151. Subba	1691
152. Tamang	1693

Section B

153. Introduction	1707
154. Dance And Festivals	1724
155. The Tribal Societies of Tripura	1748
156. Bhil	1759
157. Chaimal	1761
158. Chakma	1763
159. Garo	1772
160. Hrangkhawl	1773
161. Halam	1774

162. Jamatia	1781
163. Lepcha	1797
164. Mog	1801
165. Murasing	1805
166. Noatia	1807
167. Riang/reang	1810
168. The kuki people of tripura	1823
169. Tripuri	1825
170. Tippera	1833
References	1835
Index	1837

Volume I [The Tribes of Arunachal Pradesh]

1. Introduction	1
2. History of the Tribals	20
3. Festivals and Crafts	50
4. Tribal Tours	89
5. Abor	95
6. Adi	102
7. Aka	126
8. Apatani	135
9. Buguns or Khowas	149
10. Chugpa	152
11. Deori	153
12. Galo	158
13. Hill Miri	165
14. Idu Mishmi	169
15. Khamba	178
16. Khamti	181
17. Lishipa	187
18. Lisu people	188
19. Memba	198
20. Miji	203
21. Miju Mishmi	206
22. Minyong	210
23. Mishmi	214
24. Monpa	220
25. Muklom	230
26. Nishing	234

27. Nga people	240
28. Nyishi	242
29. Nocte	247
30. Padam	255
31. Sherdukpen	259
32. Singpho	263
33. Tagins	271
34. Tai-Phake	273
35. Takpa	287
36. Tangsa	288
37. Tani	293
38. Tutsa	294
39. Wanchos	297
40. Yobin	305
41. Zekhring	310
References	311

Volume II [The Tribes of Assam]

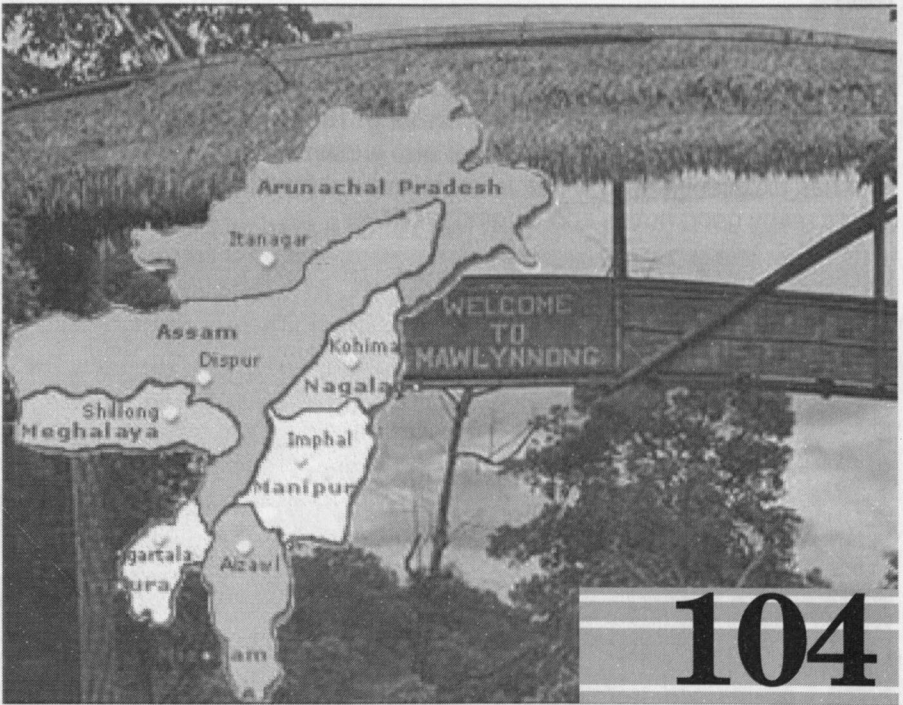
42. Introduction	313
43. Bodo	335
44. Deori	359
45. Dimasa	373
46. Dubla	387
47. Karbi	388
48. Khamyang	485
49. Khelma	487
50. Lalung	489
51. Mikir	497
52. Mishing	504
53. Rabha	517
54. Sonowal Kacharis	560
55. Tea-tribes	566
References	569

Volume III [The Tribes of Manipur]

56. Introduction	571
57. Aimol	592
58. Anal	599
59. Baite	604
60. Biate	607

61. Chiru	617
62. Chonghang	619
63. Chothe	622
64. Doungei	624
65. Gangte	626
66. Guite	636
67. Haokip	638
68. Hauzel	644
69. Hmar	645
70. Kabui	659
71. Katcha	668
72. Khelma / Sakachep	677
73. Kipgen	679
74. Koireng	680
75. Kolhen	690
76. Kom	691
77. Lamkang	706
78. Lhungdim	707
79. Liangmai	708
80. Lupho/Mirem	710
81. Lushai	721
82. Lupheng	723
83. Maring	728
84. Mate	734
85. Moyon Monshangs/Monsang	736
86. Mao	739
87. Maram	743
88. Moyon	754
89. Paite	757
90. Poumai	766
91. Purum	779
92. Rongmei	780
93. Simte	788
94. Sithou	792
95. Tangkhul	794
96. Tarao	816
97. Thadou	817
98. The Kuki People of the Chittagong Hill Tracts	860

99. The Lunkims, Changsans, Lenthangs, Thangeos, Lhangums and Lhanghals	861
100. Touthang	863
101. Vaiphei	865
102. Zeliangrong	892
103. Zou	900
References	917



INTRODUCTION

Meghalaya is a small state in north-eastern India. The word "*Meghalaya*" literally means "The Abode of Clouds" in Sanskrit and other Indic languages. Meghalaya is a hilly strip in the eastern part of the country about 300 km long (east-west) and 100 km wide, with a total area of about 8,700 sq mi (22,720 km²).

The population numbered 2,175,000 in 2000. The state is bounded on the north by Assam and by Bangladesh on the south. The capital is Shillong also known as the *Scotland of the East*, which has a population of 260,000.

About one third of the state is forested. The Meghalaya subtropical forests ecoregion encompasses the state; its mountain forests are distinct from the lowland tropical forests to the north and south. The forests of Meghalaya are notable for their biodiversity of mammals, birds, and plants.

Meghalaya, a hilly strip in eastern India, covers a total area of just 22,429 km². It was originally part of Assam, but on 21 January 1972, the districts of Khasi, Garo and Jaintia hills became the new state of Meghalaya. Meghalaya is predominantly an agrarian economy. The important crops of the state are potato, rice, maize, pineapple, banana etc.

The service sector comprises of Real estate and Insurance companies. Meghalaya's gross state domestic product for 2004 is estimated at \$1.6

billion in current prices. Shillong the capital of the state is a popular hill station. There are several falls in and around Shillong. The Shillong peak is highest in the state and is good for trekking. It is also known as the 'abode of the gods' and has excellent views. If one is not in a mood for camping, the state also offers many good hotels and lodging facilities.



Fig. 104.1: The Living-Root Bridge at Riawi Village

Meghalaya is the abode of a number of tribal communities who have settled down in large numbers. As per the observation of eminent anthropologists, each and every member of these tribes of Meghalaya state have rightly contributed in creating the cultural heritage of the whole of the state so ennobled and enriched.

Meghalaya tribes can mainly be classified into three groups - Garos, Khasis and Pnars or Jaintias. Garos are believed to be the descendants of Tibeto-Burmar race who came down all the way from Tibet to the north eastern states while the Khasis and Pnars or Jaintias are the descendants of Proto Austroloid Monkhmer race.

The major concentration of these tribes of Meghalaya state is found in places like Khasi and Jaintia hills. All of these tribes of Meghalaya state claim to be the descendants of the 'Ki Hynniew Trep' or in general, called as Khasi-Pnars or Khasis. These tribes of Meghalaya jointly have the same way of life and customs. The tribal people of Meghalaya are categorised in two major groups namely the Garos and Hynniewtrep.

They are known to be the inhabitants of East Meghalaya and include the tribal groups namely Bhoi, Khasi and War who are part of the Proto Austroloid Monkhmer race. Both the female and male members of these tribes of Meghalaya state have their own tradition of dresses and apparels.

These tribes of Meghalaya state have a customary dress by the name 'Jymphong', which they normally wear at the time of festivals or in any other ceremonial occasions. These male dresses comprises of long sleeveless coat without any collar, fastened by 'thongs' in the front.

Apart from this Jymphong, these tribes of Meghalaya also are fond of Dhoti along with a decorative waistband. Women clothes of these tribes of Meghalaya are intricate with numerous pieces of clothes, which givethe body a 'cylindrical look'. These tribes of Meghalaya have a treasure of some mouthwatering food.

Fish, rice, mutton are hot favorites to almost all the tribes of Meghalaya state. At the times of social fests, rice beer is a necessity. Just like many other tribal communities of Indian subcontinent, these tribes of Meghalaya too follow the norms of matrilineal society.

The lineage and the inheritance drew from the clans of the mother. In some of the tribes of Meghalaya, the youngest daughter has been entitled to take over the inherited property. Following the tradition of other tribal communities, these tribes of Meghalaya too have developed orientation towards religion and also other spiritual beliefs also.

Hinduism, Buddhism are being followed by these tribes of Meghalaya. The chief religion of these tribes of Meghalaya is Christianity. Certain popular myths are also popular amongst these tribes of Meghalaya which give indication of their ancient beliefs.

According to these tribes of Meghalaya, before the arrival of Christianity, they have got faith in 'The Creator' - U Blei Nongthaw'. Besides, there are numerous deities of water, of mountains and also of other natural objects under this supreme deity who are worshipped by the tribal people of Meghalaya.

Marriage has been regarded to be one of the institutions in the entire community of the tribes of Meghalaya. Certain norms and rituals are rightly being followed by all these tribes of Meghalaya. Marriage within a tribe is banned and has also been considered to be inviolable.

At the time of wedding also these tribes of Meghalaya, have a custom of exchanging rings or betel-nut bags between the bride and the bridegroom. In the Christian families, however, marriage is merely a social bond. The Garos are the part of the Bodo family, who belong to the Tibeto-Burman race. This tribal community is hailed from Tibet and inhabit in the Achik-land.

The Garos are basically the inhabitants of Garo Hills, in Bangladesh and Assam. The Garo tribal community occupies a major part of tribal communities of Meghalaya. Ethnicity of dresses makes them distinguishable. Generally the women of this community wear clothes around their waist and vest or blouse to cover the upper part of the body.

Men wear turban with their traditional dresses. During their festive occasions, men and women of this community wear a typical headgear decked with beads, feathers of hornbill and they also prefer to wear bangles around their wrist. The food habit of the Garo people is simple.

Rice is their staple food and they prefer to take rice with capsicum, onion and salt. Meat is eaten by almost all people of this group and liquor is consumed during festive occasions. Garos have matriarchal social structure and marriage in the same clan is considered as punishable offense.

While Garos can be located in the Garo hills of Meghalaya, the Khasis are scattered all across the state and are known by different names. Mainly the pure Khasis can be sited at the Khasi hills, the Pnars or Jaintias can be located on Jaintia hills. Apart from these, there are many other tribes in Meghalaya.

They are Bhois in the north of Meghalaya, Khyrnriams in the central and Wars in the southern region. They are all a sub tribes of Khasis and live a lifestyle similar to that of the Khasis. The most noteworthy feature of tribes of Meghalaya is their parental lineage. The tribes at Meghalaya follow matrilineal lineage whereby a property's inheritance is traced through the women.

In some cases, the children keep the surname of their mother. Though the women section of the tribes at Meghalaya take the responsibility of the household work, men are responsible for the mental and material life of his family. The property gets transferred to the women in the house. Moreover, women of the different tribes at Meghalaya are free to earn their livelihood.

There is only one restriction i.e., one cannot marry in the same clan and the marriage should get the approval of the family members. The Meghalaya tribes mainly follow Christianity. Their main occupation is cultivation as the state has a vast land for cultivation. Water resources are more than enough as the state receives large amount of rainfall every year.

HISTORY

Meghalaya was formed by carving out the two districts of the state of Assam: the United Khasi Hills and Jaintia Hills, and the Garo Hills on 21 January 1972. Prior to attaining full statehood, Meghalaya was given a semi-autonomous status in 1970.

The Khasi, Garo, and Jaintia tribes each had their own kingdoms, until they came under the British administration in the 19th century. Later, the

British incorporated Meghalaya into Assam in 1835. The region enjoyed semi-independent status by virtue of a treaty relationship with the British Crown.

When Bengal was partitioned on 16 October 1905 by Lord Curzon, Meghalaya became a part of the new province of 'Eastern Bengal and Assam'. However, when the partition was reversed in 1912, Meghalaya became a part of the province of Assam. On 3 January 1921 in pursuance of Section 52A of the Government of India Act of 1919, the Governor-General-in-Council declared the areas now in Meghalaya, other than the Khasi States, as "backward tracts".

Subsequently however, the Government of India Act of 1935 regrouped the backward tracts into two categories, namely, "excluded" and "partially excluded" areas in place of backward tracts. At the time of Independence of the country in 1947, the present day Meghalaya constituted two districts of Assam and enjoyed limited autonomy within the state of Assam.

The Assam Reorganisation (Meghalaya) Act, 1969 accorded an autonomous status to the state of Meghalaya. The Act came into effect on 2 April 1970, and an Autonomous State of Meghalaya was created within the State of Assam. The Autonomous state had a Legislature in accordance with the Sixth schedule to the Constitution. The Legislature had 37 members.

In 1971, the Parliament passed the North-Eastern Areas (Reorganization) Act, 1971, which conferred full statehood on the Autonomous State of Meghalaya. Meghalaya attained statehood on 21 January 1972, with a Legislative Assembly of its own.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Tribal people make up the majority of Meghalaya's population. The Khasis are the largest group, followed by the Garos. These were among those known to the British as "hill tribes". Other groups include the Jaintias, the Koch and the Hajong, Dimasa, Hmar, Kuki, Lakhar, Mikir, Rabha and the Nepali.

Meghalaya is one of three states in India to have a Christian majority with 70.3% of the population practicing Christianity; the other two (Nagaland and Mizoram) are also in the north-east of India. Hinduism is the next sizeable faith in the region with 13.3% of the population practicing it.

A sizeable minority, 11.5% of the population, follow traditional animist religions (classified as other on the census). Muslims make up 4.3% of the population. In 1991 when Christians made up 65% of the population of Meghalaya the 1.1 million (11 lakh) Christians made it the state in North-east India with the most Christians. At that point more Christians lived in Meghalaya than there were people in Mizoram.

As per the census of India 2001, the sex ratio in the state was 975 females per thousand males which was far higher than the national average of 933. It has grown steadily from a 1981 level of 954. Traditionally the sex ratio in the rural areas has been higher than that in the urban areas. However, as per the census figures for 2001, the urban sex ratio of 985 was higher than the rural sex ratio of 972. This has often been attributed to the belief that, unlike most other parts of India, there is no special preference for male children in Meghalaya.



Fig. 104.2: Khasi women running businesses

LANGUAGES

The principal languages in Meghalaya are Khasi and Garo with English as the official language of the State. Khasi is one of the chief languages of Meghalaya. Khasi, which is also spelled Khasia, Khassee, Cossyah and Kyi, is a branch of the Mon-Khmer family of the Austroasiatic stock; and is spoken by about 900,000 people residing in Meghalaya.

Many words in the Khasi language are supposed to have been borrowed from Indo-Aryan languages such as Bengali and Assamese. Moreover, the Khasi language had no script of its own in its onset. The Khasi language is believed to be one of the very few surviving dialects of the Mon-khmer family of languages in India today.

Garo language has a close affinity with the Bodo language. Garo, spoken by the majority of the population, is spoken in many dialects such as Abeng or Ambeng, Atong, Akawe (or Awe), Matchi Dual, Chibok, Chisak Megam or

Lyngngam, Ruga, Gara-Ganching and Matabeng. Another language of Meghalaya is the language spoken by the people of the Jaintia hills. This language, as matter of fact, is a variation of the standard Khasi language. The Jaintia language is spoken, along with the Khasi language, by the tribal groups, viz. Khyntiam, Bhoi, Pnar and War.

CULTURE AND SOCIETY

The main tribes in Meghalaya are the Jaintias, the Khasis and the Garos. One of the unique features of the State is that a majority of the tribal population in Meghalaya follows a matrilineal system where lineage and inheritance are traced through women.

The Khasi and Jaintia tribesmen follow the traditional matrilineal norm, wherein the "Kha Khadduh" (or the youngest daughter) inherits all the property and acts as the caretaker of aged parents and any unmarried siblings.

However, the male line, particularly the mother's brother, may indirectly control the ancestral property since he may be involved in important decisions relating to property including its sale and disposal. In the Garo lineage system, the youngest daughter inherits the family property by default; unless another daughter is so named by the parents.

She then becomes designated as 'nokna' meaning 'for the house or home'. In case there are no daughters, then a chosen daughter-in-law (bohari) or an adopted child (deragata) comes to stay in the house as well as inherits the property.

The tribal people of Meghalaya are therefore a part of what may be the world's largest surviving matrilineal culture. According to India's National Family Health Survey, Meghalaya is the state where parents have shown the least interest to have a male child—73% less than the national average.

Spirituality

According to legend, from the 13th century, a Shivalinga (called "Hatakeswarat") has existed in the Jaintia Hills under the reign of Rane Singa. Several members of the Jaintia tribe even participate in the Hindu festival of Shivratri (*Night of Lord Shiva*).

The ancient Meghalayans mixed their spiritual beliefs of Animism and ancestor-worship with Hinduism. In caves, the images of Shiva and Durga are visible.

GEOGRAPHY

The State of Meghalaya is also known as the "Meghalaya Plateau". It consists mainly of archean rock formations. These rock formations contain

rich deposits of valuable minerals like coal, limestone, uranium and sillimanite. Meghalaya has many rivers. Most of these are rainfed and are therefore seasonal.

The important rivers in the Garo Hills Region are Daring, Sanda, Bandra, Bhogai, Dareng, Simsang, Nitai and the Bhupai. In the central and eastern section of the plateau, the important rivers are Umkhri, Digaru, Umiam, Kynchiang (Jadukata), Mawpa, Umiew or Barapani, Myngot and Myntdu. In the southern Khasi Hills Region, these rivers have created deep gorges and several beautiful waterfalls.

The elevation of the plateau ranges between 150 m to 1961 m. The central part of the plateau comprising the Khasi Hills has the highest elevations, followed by the eastern section comprising the Jaintia Hills Region.

The highest point in Meghalaya is Shillong Peak, which is also a prominent IAF station in the Khasi Hills overlooking the city of Shillong. It has an altitude of 1961 m. The Garo Hills Region in the western section of the plateau is nearly plain. The highest point in the Garo hills is the Nokrek Peak with an altitude of 1515 m.

Districts

Meghalaya currently has 7 districts. These are: East Garo Hills, East Khasi Hills, Jaintia Hills, Ri-Bhoi, South Garo Hills, West Garo Hills and the West Khasi Hills.

The East Garo Hills district was formed in 1976 and has a population of 247,555 as per the 2001 census. It covers an area of 2603 square kilometres. The District Headquarters are located at Williamnagar, earlier known as Simsangiri. Nongalbibra, a town in this district has a large number of coal mines. The coals are transported to Goalpara and Jogighopa via NH62.

The East Khasi Hills district was carved out of the Khasi Hills on 28 October 1976. The district has covers an area of 2,748 square kilometres and has a population of 660,923 as per the 2001 census. The headquarters of East Khasi Hills are located in Shillong.

The Jaintia Hills district was created on 22 February 1972. It has a total geographical area of 3819 square kilometres and a population of 295,692 as per the 2001 census. The district headquarters are located at Jowai. Jaintia Hills district is the largest producer of coal in the state. Coal mines can be seen all over the district.

The Ri-Bhoi district was formed by further division of East Khasi Hills district on 4 June 1992. It has an area of 2448 square kilometres. The total population of the district was 192,795 as per the 2001 census. The district headquarters are located at Nongpoh. It has a hilly terrain and a large part

of the area is covered with forests. The Ri-Bhoi district is famous for its pineapples and is the largest producer of pineapples in the state.

The South Garo Hills district came into existence on 18 June 1992 after the division of the West Garo Hills district. The total geographical area of the district is 1850 square kilometres. As per the 2001 census the district has a population of 99,100. The district headquarters are located at Baghmara.

The West Garo Hills district lies in the western part of the state and covers a geographical area of 3714 square kilometres. The population of the district is 515,813 as per the 2001 census. The district headquarters are located at Tura.

The West Khasi Hills district is the largest district in the state with a geographical area of 5247 square kilometres. The district was carved out of Khasi Hills District on 28 October 1976. The district headquarters are located at Nongstoin.

Climature

With average annual rainfall as high as 1200 cm in some areas, Meghalaya is the wettest place on earth. The western part of the plateau, comprising the Garo Hills Region with lower elevations, experiences high temperatures for most of the year. The Shillong area, with the highest elevations, experiences generally low temperatures. The maximum temperature in this region rarely goes beyond 28 degrees, whereas winters temperatures of sub-zero degrees are common.



Fig. 104.3: Ornaments

The town of Cherrapunji in the Khasi Hills south of capital Shillong holds the world record for most rain in a calendar month, while the village of Mawsynram, near the town of Cherrapunji, holds the distinction of seeing the heaviest yearly rains. The best time to visit Meghalaya is during the months of March to July. The British and Assam Tea Estate owners would shift here during the summer months to escape the heat of the Indian Plains.

ECONOMY

Meghalaya is predominantly an agrarian economy. Agriculture and allied activities engage nearly two-thirds of the total work force in Meghalaya. However, the contribution of this sector to the State's NSDP is only about one-third. Agriculture in the state is characterized by low productivity and unsustainable farm practices, giving rise to a high incidence of rural poverty.

As a result, despite the large percentage of population engaged in agriculture, the state is still dependent upon imports from other states for most food items such as meat, eggs, food grains etc. Infrastructural constraints have also prevented the economy of the state from growing at a pace commensurate with that of the rest of the country.

Meghalaya is considered to have a rich base of natural resources. These include minerals such as coal, limestone, sillimanite, Kaolin and granite among others. Meghalaya also has a large forest cover, rich biodiversity and numerous water bodies. The low level of industrialization and the relatively poor infrastructure base in the state acts as an impediment to the exploitation of these natural resources in the interest of the state's economy.

However, in recent years two large cement manufacturing plants with production capacity more than 900 MTD have come up in Jantia Hills district and several more are in pipeline to utilise the rich deposit of very high quality limestone available in this district.

Meghalaya also has much natural beauty and the State government has been trying to exploit this for promoting tourism in the State. However, infrastructural constraints and security concerns have hampered the growth of tourism in the state.

Macro-economic trends

This is a chart of trends in the gross state domestic product of Meghalaya at market prices estimated by *Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation* with figures in millions of Indian Rupees. Meghalaya's gross state domestic product for 2004 is estimated at \$1.6 billion in current prices.

Incidence of poverty

Planning Commission, the apex planning body under the Government of India, has estimated the percentage of population below poverty line in

Meghalaya at nearly one-third the total population of the state in 2000. The incidence of poverty in rural areas at about 55% is almost double the percentage of poverty in the urban areas.

Agriculture

Nearly 10% of the total geographical area of Meghalaya is under cultivation. Agriculture in the state is characterized by limited use of modern techniques and low productivity. As a result, despite the vast majority of the population engaged in agriculture, the contribution of agricultural production to the state's GDP is low and most of the population engaged in agriculture remains poor.

A substantial portion of the cultivated area is under the traditional shifting agriculture known locally as "Jhum" cultivation. Food grains are the most important crop in Meghalaya. These are grown in over 1,330 km², nearly 60% of the state's cultivated area.

The production of food grains is over 230 thousand tonnes. Rice is the dominant food grain crop accounting for over 80% of the food grain production in the state. Other important food grain crops are maize, wheat and a few other cereals and pulses.

Oilseeds such as rape and mustard, linseed, soybean, castor and sesame are grown on nearly 100 km². Rape and mustard are the most important oilseeds accounting for well over two-thirds of the oilseed production of nearly 6.5 thousand tonnes.

Fibre crops such as cotton, jute and Mesta had traditionally been among the only cash crops in Meghalaya, grown almost exclusively in Garo Hills. These have been losing popularity in recent years as indicated by their declining yield and area under cultivation.

Climatic conditions in Meghalaya also permit a large variety of horticulture crops including fruits, vegetables, flowers, spices and medicinal plants. These are considered to be higher value crops but traditional values and food security concerns have prevented farmers at large from embracing these crops.

The important fruits currently grown in the state include citrus fruits, pineapple, papaya, banana etc. The mandarin orange grown in Meghalaya is considered to be of very high quality. In addition to this, a large variety of vegetables are grown in the state including cauliflower, cabbage and radish.

Areca nut plantations can be seen all over the state, especially around the road from Guwahati to Shillong. Other plantation crops like tea, coffee and cashew have been introduced lately and are becoming popular. A large variety of spices, flowers, medicinal plants and mushrooms are also grown in the State.

Transportation

The partition of the country has created severe infrastructure constraints for the Northeastern region, with merely 2% of the perimeter of the region adjoining the rest of the country. A narrow strip of land, often called the Siliguri Corridor, or the Chicken's Neck connects the region with the State of West Bengal. Meghalaya is a land locked state with a large number of small settlements in remote areas.

Road is the only means of transport within the state. While the capital Shillong is relatively well connected, road connectivity in most other parts of the state is relatively poor. A significant portion of the roads in the state are still un-metalled. Most of the arrivals into the Meghalaya take place through Guwahati in neighboring Assam, which is nearly 103 km away.

Assam has a major railhead as well as an airport with regular train and air services to the rest of the country. The State still has a large number of old timber bridges. Meghalaya does not have any railhead. It has a small airport at Umroi, about 40 km from Shillong on the Guwahati-Shillong highway. The small size of the airport does not allow the operations of large aircraft and only small aircraft operate from Kolkata and Agartala, the capital of the neighboring state of Tripura.

Flora and fauna

As per the State of Forest Report 2003, published by the Forest Survey of India, Meghalaya has a forest cover of 9,496 km², which is 42.34% of the total geographical area of the state. The Meghalayan subtropical forests have been considered among the richest botanical habitats of Asia.

These forests receive abundant rainfall and support a vast variety of floral and faunal biodiversity. A small portion of the forest area in Meghalaya is under what is known as "sacred groves". These are small pockets of ancient forest that have been preserved by the communities for hundreds of years due to religious and cultural beliefs.

These forests are reserved for religious rituals and generally remain protected from any exploitation. These sacred groves harbour many rare plant and animal species. The Nokrek biosphere reserve in the West Garo Hills and the Balaphakram National Park in the South Garo Hills are considered to be the most biodiversity rich sites in the Meghalaya.

In addition, Meghalaya has three Wildlife Sanctuaries. These are the Nongkhylllem Wildlife Sanctuary, the Siju Sanctuary and the Bhagmara Sanctuary, which is also the home of the insect eating pitcher plant *Nepenthes khasiana*. Due to the diverse climatic and topographic conditions, Meghalayan forests support a vast floral diversity, including a large variety of Parasites and Epiphytes, Succulent plants and Shrubs.

Two of the most important tree varieties include: *Shorea robusta* (sal tree) and *Tectona grandis* (teak). Meghalaya is also the home to a large variety of fruits, vegetables, spices and medicinal plants. Meghalayan is also famous for its large variety of orchids – nearly 325 of them. Of these the largest variety is found in Mawsmái, Mawmluh and Sohrarim forests in the Khasi hills.

Meghalaya also has a large variety of mammals, birds, reptiles and insects. The important mammal species include elephants, bear, civets, mongooses, weasels, rodents, gaur, wild buffalo, deer, wild boar and a number of primates. Meghalaya also has a large variety of bats. The limestone caves in Meghalaya, such as the Siju cave are home to some of the rarest bat species.

The prominent bird species in Meghalaya include the Magpie-Robin, the Red-vented Bulbul, the Hill Myna is usually found in pairs or in flocks in the hill forests of Meghalaya, the Large Pied Hornbill and the Great Indian, which is the largest bird in Meghalaya. Other birds include the Peacock Pheasant, the Large Indian Parakeet, the Common Green Pigeon and the Blue Jay.

Meghalaya is also home to over 250 species of butterflies, nearly a quarter of all the species found in India. The common reptile varieties in Meghalaya are lizards, crocodiles and tortoises. Meghalaya also has a number of snakes including the python, the Copperhead, the Green Tree Racer, the Indian Cobra the King Cobra, the Coral Snake and Vipers.



Fig. 104.4: The festivals and dances of the tribes

EDUCATION

There are lots of good schools and colleges in Shillong. As part of developmental program in north eastern states, ministry of human resource development opened the seventh Indian Institute of Management in Shillong which is named as Rajiv Gandhi Indian Institute of Management.

This institute started admissions from the academic year 2008. Recently National Institute of Fashion Technology Shillong and NEIGRIHMS opened in Shillong. Shillong is fast turning up as the center of learning in the North Eastern region. Apart from Shillong, Good school and colleges are available in Jowai and Tura.

TOURISM

Earlier, foreign tourists required special permits to enter the areas that now constitute the state of Meghalaya. However, the restrictions were removed in 1955. Meghalaya is considered to be one of the most picturesque states in the country. It has enough tourism content to attract tourists of many different interests.

Tourism Content

Meghalaya has some of the thickest surviving forests in the country and therefore constitutes one of the most important ecotourism circuits in the country today. The Meghalayan subtropical forests support a vast variety of flora and fauna. Meghalaya has 2 National Parks and 3 Wildlife Sanctuaries.

Meghalaya also offers many adventure tourism opportunities in the form of mountaineering, rock climbing, trekking and hiking, water sports etc. The state offers several trekking routes some of which also afford an opportunity to encounter some rare animals such as the slow loris, assorted deer and bear.

The Umiam Lake has a water sports complex with facilities such as rowboats, paddleboats, sailing boats, cruise-boats, water-scooters and speedboats. Meghalaya has an estimated 500 natural limestone and sandstone caves spread over the entire state including most of the longest and deepest caves in the sub-continent.

Krem Liat Prah is the longest cave and Synrang Pamiang is the deepest cave, both located in the Jaintia Hills. Cavers from United Kingdom, Germany, Austria, Ireland and the US have been visiting Meghalaya for over a decade exploring these caves. Not many of these have however been developed or promoted adequately for major tourist destinations.

Important Tourist Spots

Cherrapunjee is one of the most popular tourist spots in North East of India. It lies to the south of the capital Shillong. The town is very well known

and needs little publicity. A rather scenic, 50 kilometer long road, connects Cherrapunjee with Shillong.

The popular waterfalls in the state are the Elephant Falls, Shadthum Falls, Weinia falls, Bishop Falls, Nohkalikai Falls, Langshiang falls and Sweet Falls. The hot springs at Jakrem near Mawsynram are believed to have curative and medicinal properties. Meghalaya also has many natural and manmade lakes. The Umiam Lake (popularly known as Bara Pani meaning Big water) on the Guwahati-Shillong road is a major tourism attraction for tourist.

Meghalaya has several parks; Thangkharang Park, the Eco-park, the Botanical Garden and Lady Hydari Park to name a few. Dawki, which is located at about 96 Kilometres from Shillong is the gateway to Bangladesh and affords a scenic view of some of the tallest mountain ranges in Meghalaya and the Bangladesh border lands.

Problems and constraints

The state has a relatively poor road and communication network specially NH 62. While some of the major circuits such as Shillong-Jowai, Shillong-Tura and Shillong-Sohra are well developed; the internal road networks are rather poor and inadequately maintained.

There are few markets outside the state capital Shillong. Banking facilities are also limited and only a few establishments in the state accept credit cards. The Garo Hills region which has some of the most important tourist spots is not well connected with the rest of the state.

Tourism in the North East in general has also suffered on account of years of insurgency and the resulting security concerns. Many governments had in the past issued advisories against traveling to the Northeast of India, worsening the security perception.

It may however be mentioned that Meghalaya is perhaps the least affected by insurgency in the Northeast region. The current ground scenario for Shillong is one in which tourists are welcome to come and enjoy the beauty of Meghalaya.

Government and Politics

Like most other states in India, Meghalaya has a unicameral legislature. The Meghalaya Legislative Assembly has 60 members at present. Meghalaya has two representatives in the Lok Sabha, the lower house of the Parliament of India; one each from Shillong and Tura. It also has one representative in the Rajya Sabha, the upper house of the Parliament.

The ceremonial head of the State is the Governor appointed by the Government of India. However, the real executive powers are held by the

Chief Minister. Meghalaya does not have a high court of its own. The Gauhati High Court has jurisdiction in Meghalaya. A Circuit Bench of the Guwahati High Court has been functioning at Shillong since 1974.

Autonomous District Councils

In order to provide local self governance machinery to the rural population of the country, provisions were made in the Constitution of India and accordingly the Panchayati Raj institutions were set up.

However, on account of the distinct customs and traditions prevailing in erstwhile state of Assam (of which Meghalaya and most of the Northeast was a part), it was felt necessary to have a separate political and administrative structure in Assam. Moreover, some of the tribal communities in the region also had their own traditional political systems and it was felt that Panchayati Raj institutions may come into conflict with these traditional systems.



Fig. 104.5: The Nongkrem Dance

To provide a simple and inexpensive form of local self governance to the tribal population, the Sixth Schedule was appended to the Constitution on the recommendations of a sub committee formed under the leadership of Gopinath Bordoloi.

The Sixth Schedule provided for the constitution of Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) in certain rural areas of the Northeast including some areas that now fall in Meghalaya.

The Sixth Schedule carries detailed provisions for the constitution and management of Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) and laid down the powers of the ADCs. At present Meghalaya has three ADCs, viz., Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council, Garo Hills Autonomous District Council and the Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council.

Traditional political institutions

All the three major ethnic tribal groups, namely, the Khasis, Jaintias and the Garos also have their own traditional political institutions that have existed for hundreds of years. These political institutions were fairly well developed and functioned at various tiers, such as the village level, clan level and state level.

In the traditional political system of the Khasis each clan had its own council known as the "Durbar Kur", which was presided over by the clan headman. The council or the Durbar managed the internal affairs of the clan. Similarly, every village had a local assembly known as the Durbar Shnong, i.e. village Durbar or council, which was presided over by the village headman.

These councils or Durbars played an administrative role in issues of common interest, such as sanitation, water supply, health, roads, education and conflict resolution. However, the inter-village issues were dealt with through a political unit comprising adjacent Khasi Villages.

This political unit was known as the raid. The raid had its own council the Raid Durbar, which was presided over by the elected headman known as Basans, Lyngdohs or Sirdars. Above the Raid was a the supreme political authority known as the Syiemship. The Syiemship was the congregation of several raids and was headed an elected chief known as the "Syiem" (or the king).

The Syiem ruled the Khasi state through the State Assembly, known as the Durbar Hima. Most of the elections were through adult male suffrage. The Jaintias also had a three tier political system somewhat similar to the Khasis. The supreme political authority was the Syiem.

The second tier of this structure was the congregation of Jaintia villages known as Raids. These were headed by "Dolois", who were responsible for performing the executive, magisterial, religious and ceremonial functions at the Raid level. At the lowest level were the village headmen.

Each administrative tier had its own councils or durbars. Most elections were through adult male suffrage. In the traditional political system of the Garos a group of Garo villages comprised the A'king. The A'king functioned under the supervision of the Nokmas, which was perhaps the only political and administrative authority in the political institution of the Garos.

The Nokma performed both judicial and legislative functions. The Nokmas also congregated to address inter-A'king issues. There were no well-organized councils or durbars among the Garos. Frankenstein Momin, Billy Kid Sangma and Adolf Lu Hitler Marak were three men among dozens of others with equally colorful names who competed for legislative seats in Meghalaya, a remote northeast Indian state, on 3 March 2008. There were about 60 seats up for grabs, 331 candidates vying, and no shortage of unusual names it was reported on 25 February 2008. Hitler, Frankenstein battle for votes in India.

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

The District Council constituted village courts or district council courts for trial of suits and cases between the parties of all of whom belong to the Scheduled Tribe within the Autonomous district. Village Courts do not try cases arising out of the special laws or cases relating to the offences of serious in nature (punishable with death, life imprisonment, etc.) However, the Governor may extend the jurisdiction of village court to decide such cases.

The Rules requires the village Court to try all cases and suits in accordance with the customary laws and practices. These village courts are supposed to be non-professional bodies and decide cases in an informal atmosphere without any procedural technicalities and formalities.

Applicability of General Laws

Meghalaya is the land where the customary laws and practices prevail. The cases are usually taken into the village headmen or village courts which disposed off all the local cases and settles minor disputes within its jurisdiction.

The aggrieved parties are at liberty to appeal to the Deputy Commissioner's Court against any decisions. Most of the statutory instruments are regulated by the Rules or Orders issued under Rule 15 of the Assam Autonomous District (Constitution of District Councils) Rules, 1951.

Subject to the certain exceptions and subject to the provisions of the rules, the procedure of district council court of all grades –

- (a) Shall, in criminal cases, be "in the spirit of the code of criminal procedure", so far as it is applicable to the circumstances of the district (Rule-44 (1), and
- (b) Shall, in Civil cases, be guided by the spirit but not bound by the letter" of the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, in all matters not covered by recognized customary laws and usage of the District (Rule-48).



Fig. 104.6: Wangala Dance, Meghalaya

The Tribal areas of the Khasi & Jaintia and Garo Hills, etc. were governed separately from the other areas, during the British Rule. These areas are being administered under the Scheduled district Act, 1874, making special provisions for their administration and governance.

When the Government of India Act, 1935 came into force, these tribal areas were continued to govern under the new terminology of "Excluded

and partially excluded areas". In matters of procedure to be followed in the trial of suits and cases in the district council courts, Para 5 (3) of the Sixth Schedule provided that "Code of Civil Procedure, 1903, and Code of Criminal procedure, 1898, shall not apply to trial of any suit, cases or offences in an Autonomous District".

The traditional institutions of the Khasi & Jaintia and Garo communities still continues to exist and run their own affairs without any difficulties in the midst of modern Rules, Regulations and Laws. The Sixth Schedule was incorporated in the Constitution of India to grant certain autonomy to these traditional indigenous institutions of the Khasi & Jaintia and the Garo people.



Fig. 104.7: Women in Meghalaya

The indigenous traditional institutions of the Khasi & Jaintia and the Garo communities in the different forms of Syiemships, Dolloiships, Wadadarships, Lyngdohships and the A. king Nokmaships existed from the time immemorial and continued to survive till date due to its democratic in actions and decisions which is far better than the Panchayati Raj system of other states.

The age old indigenous traditional institutions which were firmly established on democratic systems need now be strengthened and revived by returning to them the rights to decide their own destiny especially in the present day complex situations. These traditional institutions of Syiems, Dollois, Lyngdohs,

Wadadars and A. king Nokmas should be involved at the grass root level in formulation of schemes, plans and programmes as well as any developmental schemes, and seek their participation.

The involvement of traditional institutions and their co-operation can be obtained, if the Government at the State/Central is sincere to bring the village administration and their involvement to decide their own-welfare and future. The involvement, strengthening and decentralization of power with the indigenous traditional institutions may not be at the liking by the present politicians, and administrators but the only way to save the present situations is involvement of these traditional institutional heads.

The Panchayati Raj system found in the plain areas of towns and cities as found in other states is not desirable for the people of Meghalaya as there are already existed and deep rooted traditional institutions. The tendency of the administration to do away with the traditional institutions, as they think that these institutions are hindrance to their liking, instead attempts should be made to strengthen, develop and improve upon by making the traditional institutions more workable, coordinating body and responsible within their own respective areas or jurisdiction.

The local cases of civil and criminal can be dealt better, if the heads of traditional institutions are involved and are taken into confidence in curtailing them. The selection of traditional heads should be given free hand without any political interference in the hands of the people.

The services of the heads of the traditional institutions can best be utilised, if the State Government nominates at least 5 members in the Autonomous District Council as members. While trying to formulate the policy of decentralization of power as envisaged by the Government of India through Panchayati Raj system with a view to involve the people at the grass root level in the developmental process, the financial powers and planning be entrusted to these traditional institutions.

The traditional institutions of Syiems, Dollois, and the A. king Nokmas be delegated with economic power to enable them to participate in the planning process and implementation of developmental programmes through different Government agencies as per the provisions of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India of Para 3 & 4, if the Government is to work for the betterment and their economic and social upliftment, the community leaders, heads of traditional institutions need to be involved.

The traditional institutions and their head still exists amongst the community who needs revitalizing and necessary Legislation or Amendments to the existing Rules, Regulations and Provisions of Constitution of India and get the community participation in saving the country's economy, administration and future of the people of the State.

The grass root planning development and implementation of various programmes and projects carried out for the welfare of the people need their co-operation and help. But, these can be best achieved only if the administration takes these institutions into confidence.

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

Khasi and Jaintia:

1. Beslie: Bamboo Flute.
2. Tangmuri: Clarinet
3. Duitara: Musical instrument like guitar with muga strings
4. Ksing/Nakra: Drums used in different occasions.
5. Dymphong: Flat bamboo instrument
6. Maryngod:
7. Marngthing:
8. Padiah: Small drum to be beaten with fine sticks.
9. Singthap: Side drum beaten with stick one side and hand on the other side
10. Tanglod: Bamboo Flute
11. Ksing Kynthei: Drum used for female dancers only. One side is applied wax.
12. Shaw Shaw: Cymbals
13. Sharati: Flute used during death ceremony.
14. Sitar : Sitar

Garos:

1. Dama: Long drum
2. Natic: Small drum accompaniment
3. Nagra: Big round drum used by sticks.
4. Kram: Head man's drum.
5. Dimchang/Kimjim: Flat bamboo instrument
6. Bangsi/Ile'p/Okra: Kinds of flutes.
7. Ollongma/Imbinggi: Kinds of Flutes.
8. Dakok: Longest Flute.
9. Adil/Singga: Buffaloe Horn.
10. Chengchap: Cymbals
11. Chigring: Bamboo stump with strings
12. Serenda: Violin type of instrument
13. Gongmina: Jew's harp