

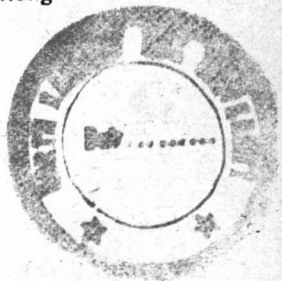
Impact of the West on the Khasis and Jaintias

(*A Survey of Political, Economic and Social Changes*)

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PREFACE

The "Impact of the West" on the hill tribes of north-east India and in its wake the "upward movement" of the societies hitherto regarded as 'peripheral' to the larger Indian milieu is a fascinating study. In fact it may be said that without a thorough investigation into the various facets of that movement, the modern history of this region of India is bound to remain unintelligible. A great mass of Indian population in the hills which was for countless ages in primitive state of civilisation was suddenly on the move and in the last couple of centuries had made tremendous progress. Apart from its purely utilitarian aspects, the study perhaps has a moral to tell. It may be pointed out here the term 'West' has been used to imply the British since it is they who were chiefly responsible for the introduction of the western value system and institutions. This book is about the western impact on one of the major tribes of this region—the Khasis and Jaintias or pners as they prefer to designate themselves—which had the longest exposure to the western influences as it was the first to come under the British rule.

Hitherto the history of the profound transformations of the tribes during the British rule received only perfunctory attention of the scholars and writers. Most of the early writers who were mostly British officials concentrated, for example, either on their quaint customs and practices or the political relations of the Government with the tribes. At best, there were some anthropological treatises. But historical works detailing the various aspects of the changes in the life of the tribes written objectively were rare. Even the Khasis and Jaintias who had contact with the British from a very early date of the British expansion have a share of this general neglect. Some of the earliest writings, most of which were of anthropological nature lie buried in the learned journals and are beyond the reach of the general readers. It is no wonder that the officially inspired works as those of Alexander

Mackenzie's "History of the Relations of the Government with the Hill Tribes of North-East Frontier of Bengal" in which the Khasis and Syntengs received some notices or P.R.T. Gurdon's "The Khasis" are treated almost as the classics on the subject. Great as their works are, they do not answer the rigid demands of modern historical requirements. They were made to the orders of the government to serve limited purpose—the functional needs of its administration. Clearly, independent and indepth studies are necessary about the historical development in the hill areas—including the economic and social—which received so far attention only in their appendices or footnotes. In recent time, some works have been brought out by the Indian scholars on the political history of this region: such as Dr. R.M. Lahiri's "Annexation of Assam", Dr. H.K. Barpujari's "Problems of the Hill Tribes: North-East India." and Dr. N.K. Barooah's "David Scott in North-East India." But Dr. Lahiri and Barooah have mentioned only one or two important incidents of early relations with the government. Dr. Barpujari who has traced the events for a longer period has also concentrated on only the principal episodes. Fragmentary and sketchy as their accounts are, there is also a glaring omission in their narration of the political history of the north-east India including the Khasis and Syntengs. An entire period of nearly sixty years from 1765 to 1824 from the acquisition of the Dewani of Bengal by the East India Company to the outbreak of the Anglo-Burmese war has been almost left out from the purview of their works. This period is however, highly significant in the relation between the Government and the tribe. According to this writer it is difficult to assess correctly the different motivations for the British intervention and annexation of the Khasi and Jaintia hills and even certain later developments in these hills without a reference to and investigation in this period. The political history being their chief interest, these eminent scholars have not gone into the economic and social developments in the hills. Dr. Bareh, a Khasi scholar, has made some attempts to cover these grounds. But in his endeavour to offer the entire history of his people in his book "The History and Culture of the Khasi People" in a single volume of four hundred and seventy-two

pages from the pre-historic times to the contemporary period, it is doubtful he has succeeded in doing justice to his subject. Moreover, he seems not to have consulted the available source material carefully. An intensive study in the modern history of the Khasis and Syntengs is, therefore, a desideratum.

The object of this book is to present an exhaustive account of the British policy towards the Khasis and Jaintais and the political, economic and social changes that had taken place in their society as a result from the earliest, time of their contacts in 1765 to the year in 1874 when the government transferred the metropolis of not only Assam but also virtually of the whole of north east india to Shillong in the heart of the Khasi-Jaintia hills. The justification of the sub-title will be found in the three major aspects of changes treated in this work. The early period of the British relations with the tribe for century and odd years has been selected for investigation as it may be called the formative epoch of the modern Khasi-Jaintia society. In the endeavour to offer a more intensive and comprehensive study, the different aspects of the British policy and its execution, and the response of the tribe in different phases of the developments have been examined in details. There such broad phases have been noticed: the era of non-intervention in the hills (1765-1824) followed by intervention and annexation of the Khasi and Jaintia hills, early system of administration and violent Khasi reactions (1824-1863); and finally the determination of the government not to leave the tribe in its "Old State", and a vigorous policy to introduce "organic changes" and the consequences (1863-1874) therefrom. The motivation behind the introduction of the changes and their character have also been carefully examined including the pace of progress recorded by the tribe. These events have been described in seven chapters including an introductory one (Chapter I). Chapterwise, the division was as follows: In Chapter two, the early relations of the Company on the Sylhet frontier of Bengal with the tribe have been discussed. Chapter three, captioned "Intervention and Aftermath" is devoted to the delineation of the circumstances that culminated in the annexation of the Khasi and Jaintia hills and their resistance. The fourth and the fifth chapters deal with the administrative developments and

the governments' relation with the Khasi states respectively. While the sixth chapter describes the economic changes, chapter seven includes an account of the social policy of the government and its impact on the tribe, besides an epilogue.

The materials used in the compilation of this book are principally the archival records—those of the Assam Secretariat Records Office, the National and West Bengal Archives. Among the non-official accounts consulted, mention may be made in particular of the Missionary accounts of the Serampore Baptists, Serampore, the proceedings of the American Baptists Gauhati and the account of the Welsh Presbyterian Methodist Mission. Some relevant materials for this book have also been drawn from the Assamese, Bengali and Khasi sources. It is needless to mention that the extant secondary sources have been also consulted. The book includes two maps and some appendices. One of the maps, a rare material—by Lieutenant Fisher—printed in 1828 throws valuable light on the political condition of the Khasi Hills in particular has been utilised as one of the sources for the purpose. The bibliography appended to the book will speak in more details about the source materials of the book.

The present work was submitted as my dissertation to the Gauhati University and it was approved by it for the award of a Ph.D. degree. It has since been slightly revised to incorporate information which could not be included earlier for various reasons beyond my control. Hence it may be considered as a little improvement on the original. The thesis was examined by some of the eminent Indian scholars such as Dr. Asian Das Gupta, head of the department of history Santiniketan University, Dr. P.L. Mehra, head of the department of History, Chandigarh University, and Dr. H. K. Barpujari, formerly head of the department of History and U.G.C. Professor Gauhati University who was also my guide. The examiners have highly commended the thesis for the award of the Ph.D. degree. I take this opportunity to offer my thanks to them, especially to Dr. Barpujari, my guide, who has laid me under a great debt. My thanks are also due to Dr. Imdad Hussain, Reader of History and Dean of Students Welfare, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong who had gone

through the type-scripts of some of the chapters of the thesis before submission to the University, to Mr. Kynpham Singh M.Sc., the Khasi scholar who had ungrudgingly extended assistance to me by offering some materials at his disposal. I like to offer my thanks also to two other Khasi scholars Mr. G. Shullai B.A, and Prof. Miss T, Rynjah of the Sankar Dev College, Shillong for their valued assistance to me on occasions. I thank also the publisher and the press for bringing out the book expeditiously.

P. N. DUTTA

CONTENTS

PREFACE

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1

- SECTION I : THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE 1
- II : SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS—THE RELIGION—KA NIAM 5
- III : ECONOMIC CONDITION—AGRI—CULTURE—ARTS AND MAINUFACTURES—TRADE AND COMMERCE 10
- IV : POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS—SYNTENG OR JAINTIA KINGDOM—THE KHASI HILLS : OBSCURITY OF POLITICAL CONDITION—ADMINISTRATION 15

CHAPTER II

EARLY RELATIONS (1765-1842) 28

- SECTION I : EAST INDIA COMPANY AND THE 7AINTIAS—ELLIKER'S EXPEDITION, 1774—REDUCTION OF JANTIA, 1774-1824 29
- II : EAST INDIA COMPANY AND THE KHASIS, 1765-1799—COLLECTORATE OF JOHN WILLES—CONSEQUENCES OF KHASI ROUT : EXTINCTION OF A SYIEMSHIP—MEASURES TO PREVENT FUTURE DISTURBANCE 34
- III : NONINTERFERENCE, A FAILURE (1799-1824)—REGULATION I, 1799 AND ITS TACIT VIOLATION—RENEWED THREAT OF KHASI DISTURBANCES 43

CHAPTER III

INTERVENTION AND AFTERMATH 57
(1824-1863)

SECTION I : BRITISH INTERVENTION IN 57
THE KHASI HILLS—UPRISING
AND SUPPRESSION—AFTERMATH OF
THE UPRISING: TREATMENT OF THE
CHIEFS—POLITICAL AGENCY AND
SANITARIUM

II : ANNEXATION OF THE 78
JAINTIA KINGDOM, 1835

III : JAINTIA REBELLIONS (1860-63)— 87
THE FIRST REBELLION, 1860—THE SECOND
REBELLION, 1862—SUPPRESSION OF THE
REBELLION

CHAPTER IV

ADMINISTRATIVE DEVELOPMENTS 102
(1835-1874)

SECTION I : ADMINISTRATIVE 103
MEASURES: EARLY PHASE
THE KHASI HILLS—JAINTIA HILLS

II : ADMINISTRATIVE MEASURES: 106
LATERPHASE

(i) JAINTIA SETTLEMENT AND AFTER
REDISTRIBUTION OF POWERS; (ii)
REVENUE MEASURES; (iii) LANGUAGE
AND EMPLOYMENT; (iv) CIVIL STA-
TION AND SANITARIUM; (v) MILITARY
ROADS; (vi) SHILLONG: CAPITAL OF
ASSAM

CHAPTER V

THE KHASI STATES 131

SECTION I : DECLINE OF CHIEFSHIPS 133
AND DURBARS

(i) JUDICIAL POWERS CURTAILED;

(ii) CONTROL OVER SUBCESSION; (iii) EKRARNAMAHS AND SUNNUDS—IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS; (iv) MODEL AGREEMENT OF 1867; (v) THE KHASI CHIEFS—FUNCTIONARIES OF GOVERNMENT; (vi) DENIGRATION OF THE DURBARS.

II : SECESSIONIST MOVEMENT 149

CHAPTER VI

MATERIAL PROGRESS 157

SECTION I : AGRICULTURE AND FORESTS 158

II : MINERALS AND MANUFACTURES—LIME STONE—COAL—INDIGENOUS CRAFTS: IRON COSSEAH 163

III : TRADE, COMMERCE AND TRANSPORT 168

IV : WAGES, RENT AND PRICES 172

CHAPTER VII

SOCIETY IN TRANSITION 183

SECTION I : ADVENT OF THE MISSIONARIES (1813-1860)—SERAMPORE BAPTISTS—WELSH PRESBYTERIAN MISSION—SOCIAL REFORMS 183

II : PROGRESS OF EDUCATION AND EVANGELIZATION (1860-1874)-LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE—EVANGELIZATION 190

III : EMERGING SOCIETY 199

GLOSSARY 217

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

INDEX 230

Maps I : FISHER'S MAP OF THE KHASIS
STATES

II : KHASI-JAINTIA STATES
BY W.W. HUNTER

ABBREVIATIONS USED

Foreign Political Consultations	FPC
Foreign Secret Consultations	PSC
Bengal Revenue Consultations	BRC
Bengal Political Consultations	BPC
Bengal Judicial Consultations (Criminal)	BJC (cr)
Letters from Court of Directors	CD
Bengal Judicial (Political) Proceedings . . .	BJP
Bengal General (Miscellaneous) Proceedings	BGP
Assam Secretariat Records	ASR
Sylhet District Records	SDR
Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal	JASB

INTRODUCTION

SECTION I : THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE

The picturesque land, the Khasi and Jaintia (or Synteng) hills, (presently constituent districts of Meghalaya State) lies between $24^{\circ}58'$ and $26^{\circ}7'$ N, and $90^{\circ}45'$ and $92^{\circ}51'$ E. The two mountains are in the central section of the Assam range which runs parallel to the fertile rice fields of the Surma and Brahmaputra Valleys. In area, they together occupy barely 6,157 square miles of earth's space.¹ Of the two mountain ranges, the Khasi Hills is larger, almost double the extent of the Jaintia Hills. In 1868 it was estimated that the former was about 4,400 sq. miles, while the latter was barely 2,100 sq. miles.² They are bounded on the north by Kamrup and Nowgong districts of Assam respectively. On the south, they are flanked by Sylhet district of Bengal. In the east and west, they are bounded however by deep forests, those of the North Cachar and Garo Hills respectively. The Khasi and Jaintia Hills with their high ranges are so situated as to constitute a natural divide, a *Barail* or a great dyke between the Brahmaputra and Surma Valleys forbidding communications between them.

In physical configuration, there is no marked difference between the Khasi and Jaintia hills. Both rise gently from the

banks of the Brahmaputra in undulating waves of ranges reaching higher altitude as they march from north to the south until the plains of Sylhet. In natural formation, the southern parts of Kamrup district are almost indistinguishable from the northern slopes of the Khasi hills; even Gauhati, the chief town of the district is on one of its spurs.

The northern regions of the Khasi hills being of lower height constituted in the past natural points of descent from the hills. These points of descent of the mountaineers at the foot of the Khasi hills were called the the *Duars* and *Dashas*³ which being fertile tracts grew up into settlements of cultivators. The Jaintia hills which descend even more gently into the plains of Nowgong district have no such *Duars* and *Dashas*. The lower ranges of the Khasi and Jaintia hills bear resemblance to the plains of Assam, warm and insalubrious. This portion of the hills is called *Bhoi* area, a Khasi term which had not been properly defined. At the centre of the country are the higher ranges, some of them such as the Shillong peak (6,450 feet) are reckoned as the highest between the Japvo range of the Naga hills in the east and the Garo hills in the west.

The awe-inspiring heights of the ranges were regarded by the hillmen as the abode of Gods and were often worshipped till the modern times.⁴ The southern ranges which overlook the plains of Sylhet called by the Khasis *War*⁵ area are extremely precipitous. It was the central uplands and the southern ranges which were the heartland of the Khasis and Syntengs. It was here that bulk of the tribe inhabited, leaving the northern or so-called *Bhoi* area near the plains of Assam to be settled mainly by the Meekirs and other hill tribals, with only a sprinkling of the Khasi-Jaintias.

In the south-western part of the Khasi hills, there is a group of ranges designated by the Khasis as Nongstoin, Langrin, Maharam hills and so on. In the plains of Sylhet however, they are called collectively Laur hills and the adjacent plains of Sylhet too were designated as Laur Pargana. In the pre British period, the Laur Pargana obtained some historical importance. It was at one time the seat of a Hindu Kingdom until it was subverted by the Mughals. Its great importance to the Mughals who ruled in Sylhet was as a bastion of defence of

the plains against Khasi raids.⁶ Because of its inaccessibility, the Khasi hills had scarcely been intruded by any invader in the past.

In contrast, the Jaintia Hills, the habitat of the Jaintias, being of lower heights was more exposed to foreign invasions, especially from Assam from which direction the mountain is very easily accessible. However, the Jaintia Hills in comparison with its Khasi neighbour in the west are endowed with some rich valleys. The latter is more rocky, especially its central and southern regions. From the climatic and from the point of view of natural resources, the Khasi and Jaintia Hills are indeed fascinating lands. The rainfall is abundant; Cherrapunji in the Khasi Hills was estimated at one time to have the highest rainfall in the world. These hill ranges, especially of the Khasi Hills have a bracing and cool climate. Indeed, excepting the malarious tracts of the *Bhoi* area on the northern part of the Khasi Hills, the country as a whole has a very salubrious climate. The Englishmen from the earliest time of their contact had been fascinated by the climate of these hills. In 1778, Lindsay, a Collector of Sylhet, was so captivated by the cool and salubrious climate of the Khasi hills that he described it as "one of the regions of paradise."⁷ The Khasis and Jaintias are extremely fond of their hills. But unlike the Nagas, they preferred to build their villages called *Punjis* at the slopes of the hills instead of the spurs.⁸

The People

The Khasis and Syntengs are a Paleo-Mongoloid people who were said to be one of the earliest waves of the Mongolian invaders. They speak an Austric tongue, Mon Khmer which they were believed to have adopted in course of their wanderings long before they settled in their present habitat.⁹ Although there are numerous variations in their social and cultural traits, these were largely owing to "ecological and politico-historical differences among them."¹⁰ Of them, the Jaintias or Syntengs were probably the older branch of the tribe. Significantly it preferred to call itself "*Pnar*" or original people. The name "Synteng", was given to them by the Khasis. When they conquered the Jaintia Kingdom of Sylhet, the Syntengs adopted for themselves their other designation "the Jaintias." The

foreigners called the Khasis and Syntengs or Jaintias by various other appellations. However, since both the branches of tribe sprang from the same racial stock, it was often the practice under British rule to designate the entire tribe by a single name, the Khasi.¹¹

It may be presumed that they were settled in their present homeland which they call *Ka Ri Khasi Ka Ri Synteng* (land of Khasis and Syntengs) for centuries.

✓ Though they lived generally in isolation in their mountain country, it should not be thought that they were entirely immune from influences from abroad. In fact there was considerable transformation in the racial characteristics of the tribe itself due to contact with the people of the hills and the plains. Besides the five¹² traditional sub-divisions of the Khasi-Syntengs into which the tribe was divided by them, a few groups of mixed tribesmen came into existence among them owing to their contact with the plainsmen. One of these groups found in considerable numbers in the plains of Sylhet were called "*Bengallee Cosseahs*" by the British authorities. This "mixed race" arose as a result of their settlement in the plains, frequent intercourse and intermarriage with the Bengalis.¹³ The Syntengs who settled in the plains, the Capital Town of the Jaintiapur and embraced Sanskritic culture were on the other hand designated as "*Suhtnga Samaj*"¹⁴ (Lit: Suhtnga Society), because they originally migrated from the large village of Suhtnga of the Jaintia Hills. Francis Hamilton had also observed the assimilation of the Khasi Chiefs holding *Duars* in Kamrup in the Assamese society.¹⁵

Thus a good deal of assimilation was proceeding among the Khasis and Jaintias into the Sanskritic societies of the plains before the advent of the British on the scene.

*** The Monkhmer language of the tribe had many local variations and was spoken in different dialects. They had however no script of their own. As the tribe was almost in the non-literate stage of culture, those dialects were not reduced to writing before. However these dialects were not immune from influence from neighbouring Sanskritic languages, especially Bengali. While communicating with the world outside their own, for example, with the Mughals and the Ahoms, the Khasis and Jaintias used chiefly the foreign languages.

especially the Bengali. In the kingdom of Jaintia, Bengali was indeed the official language of the state.

SECTION II : SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

The most remarkable social institution of the Khasis and Syntengs was the system of matriarchy or matrilinealism. Except among the Garos, it did not obtain among any other races and hill tribals of North East India. Even among the Garos, the system was less rigid.¹⁷ In this respect, the Khasi-Jaintia institution may be regarded as unique.

There are evidences that matriarchy which is a more rigid form of matrilinealism prevailed among the Khasis and Syntengs at one time, leading to the tradition that a "Woman's Kingdom" existed among them.¹⁸ However matriarchy disappeared among them and it was muted into its milder form i.e. matrilinealism before the advent of the British. Matrilinealism which survived was translated chiefly in the system of inheritance and succession of the chiefs to the states. A characteristic feature of the Khasi-Synteng matrilinealism was the succession of the youngest daughter, called *Ka Khudduh* to the property of the family. Other sisters might be allotted a share of the common inheritance, but the largest portion invariably fell to the youngest. The brothers were excluded from all shares¹⁹ of the property in almost throughout the Khasi and Jaintia hills. Among the Syntengs who took pride in retaining the older system in purity, the custom of succession was even more strict than among the Khasis. The institution of *Ka Khudduh* and female succession was not only an ancient one but was also regarded with some veneration. The youngest daughter was vested with the "custody" of the main family possessions and as such was expected to observe the traditional family rites and ceremonies, any violation of which might entail social disapprobation.

While matrilinealism in inheritance prevailed in stricter form in the interior of the hills, especially in the uplands, the rigours of the custom were however not observed in the outlying villages of the *War* area of the Khasi hills near Sylhet district. In the practices of these villages of the *War* area, such as Shella and other villages, a degree of patrilinealism had crept

in their society, apparently owing to constant contact with the patriarchal societies of the plains.²¹

In the Khasi-Jaintia society, the marriage was an important event in life, not only because it was a sacrament but also due to the changes it brought about in the residence pattern of the husband. The marriage was strictly exogamous. There was no greater sin for a Khasi and Jaintia than to marry within one's clan. After marriage was solemnised came the real change in the life. Unlike the patrilineal society, it was the custom among the Khasis that the husband must live with his wife in his mother-in-law's house. However, after children were born, the couple might shift to a residence of their own. The Jaintia custom in this respect was even more inflexible; since a Jaintia could never break his relation with his clan, he was required to live with his mother even after marriage. He visited his wife only after nightfall. A Jaintia husband had to maintain a duco-local residence. Gurdon said that the Jaintias preserved "more closely the customs of the matriarchate than the Khasis." Although cases of fidelity to marriage were not rare, ties regarding it were not strong, divorces among them being very common. Children were not, however, affected by the divorces, because they belonged to their mother and the clan. Children might not even know the names of their father, but they remained extremely devoted to their mother.²² The view of Gurdon that polygamy did not exist among the Khasis and Syntengs is however questionable. A close investigation had revealed the existence of a form of polygamy called polygyny²³ among certain sections of the people.

The predominance of women in certain spheres of life and the respect and honour in which they were held were undoubtedly the hallmarks of Khasi and Synteng society. But these did not imply that the males had no role to play in the family and social life. The most respected member in the Khasi-Jaintia society next only to the Mother was the *Mama* or maternal uncle (*U Kni*) who had special authority in the conduct and management of his sister's family.

Though the father of the family occupied a place next in importance to the maternal uncle, he had also important duties to perform. In fact, he was "the executive head of the new home." Another remarkable feature of the Khasi-Synteng

society was its extreme clanishness. In fact it may be said that their entire society was a conglomeration of clans which they called *Kurs* or *Jaid*s. Besides the original totemistic clans, there were some called *Dkhar* or *Dykhar* which literally meant foreigners.²⁵ It is not improbable that the members of these clans sprang from mothers who were foreigners carried off to the hills for the perpetuation of the race. Though the mothers were reckoned as the founders of the clans, their heads were always male members, the seniormost maternal uncles.²⁶

The Religion

The traditional Khasis and Syntengs regarded a body of customs and practices in the worship of Gods as their religion which they termed as *Ka Niam*, founders of which were said to be the "Uncles and elders of the tribes."²⁷ However, it appears that the entire tribe was not the follower of the ancient religion or *Ka Niam*. From the early times, sections of this people and their chiefs claimed themselves to be adherents of the sanskritic religion of the plains. Towards the close of the eighteenth century, when the British East India Company's officials came into contact with the Khasis on the Sylhet Frontier, they seemed to have been taken aback by the claims of the so-called "Bengalee Cosseahs" as well as of the hill chiefs that they were Hindus. Lindsay, the Collector of Sylhet, however treated these claims with some scepticism. He observed: "The Cosseahs call themselves Gentoos, but they eat and drink every thing presented to them, and excepting that they burn their dead, their manners do not bear the smallest affinity to the Gentoos of Bengal."²⁸ However it was not only some of the Khasis of the eighteenth century, but even some modern Khasis also persisted in claiming themselves to be Hindus.²⁹ In view of the persistence of pretensions of some Khasis to Hinduism and continued adherence to the traditional religion by others, the question of the Khasi religion merits closer examination.

Ka Niam

It will be appropriate to begin with the traditional religion called *Ka Niam*, instead of Hinduism for the latter might have been diffused among the tribe later on.

A common feature of the traditional religion was a universal belief of the Khasis and Syntengs in a supreme God, the creator who was designated by the Khasis as *U Blei Nongthaw* (U Blai in Synteng dialect). He was an invisible Being to be worshipped not by means of sacrifices but by simple prayer. Although the Khasis and Syntengs had the conception of a heaven, they had no idea of a hell. They had however clear conception of sin which they called "*Pap*" and belief in the transmigration of souls, which might have been borrowed by them from the Hindus.³⁰

Below the amorphous God, *U Blei*, there reigned however numerous ancestors who were regarded as divinities and equally numerous lesser deities and natural forces who were also worshipped. Among these myriads of deities, worship of ancestors occupied an important place in their religion. They believed that the deceased ancestors might be of assistance in this material world if propitiated and might cause suffering if displeased for any reason. They were therefore propitiated by the offerings of food periodically, especially in time of trouble. Some of the striking memorial stones called *Mawbynna* found everywhere in these hills were erected to honour the ancestors. Veneration for the ancestors went so far that they were almost deified. Gurdon thought that the "Khasi Gods of today are merely the spirits of glorified ancestors transfigured."³¹

(Side by side, worship of natural forces was also prevalent. Almost all the rivers and mountain peaks were regarded as sacred abode of the gods. The most revered river in the Khasi hills was the Kenchiong (known as Jadukata and Punatit in Sylhet) to which annually goats were sacrificed. In the Jaintia hills the most sacred river was the Kopili to which human sacrifices were even offered. The higher peaks of the mountains such as the Shillong and Diengiell of the Khasi Hills were especially worshipped. During the worship of the god of Shillong hill, performed annually at Nongkrem, elaborate sacrifices and festivals were held. It was almost a national festival of the Khasis comparable in importance only to the *Behdienkhlam* festival of Jowai in the Jaintia Hills. The nature Gods and Goddesses were believed to possess the power of life and death over mankind, subject only to the control of *U Blei*.³²

Rituals and sacrifices constituted, it has been noted, the most important part of the worship of these lesser deities. But there was also more ghastly aspect of the traditional religion, its practice of human sacrifice. In the Khasi hills, a snake God called U Thlen was worshipped by human blood. Though it was unknown in the Jaintia hills, the practice of human sacrifice was however prevalent there also. It has been already mentioned that the river Goddess Kopili was worshipped by sacrifice of human beings.

But it was carried further in the plains territory. In Jaintiapur, the Goddess *Kali* was worshipped also by human sacrifice, a Synteng custom the Raja of Jaintia introduced in the worship of even Hindu deities in his state.³⁴

Another important feature of the traditional religion was the worship of Hindu deities often side by side with their tribal counterparts. The Hindu deities who were worshipped were given Khasi and Synteng honorefics. Thus the Hindu God of artisans, *Biswakarma* was called *U Biskorom* and Siva, *Mahadev Khlow*; and Hindu Goddesses Lakshmi, Durga and Chandi were also given Khasi-Synteng honorefics, *Ka Laksmi*, *Ka Parvati* and *Ka Ran Shandi* respectively³⁵. Thus a good deal of Syncretism in their religions was taking place, whose base was 'animism' but its upper layer was the Sanskritic religion.

It must not be thought that Hinduism contented itself in being diffused among the animistic people of the Khasi and Jaintia hills indirectly. There is unmistakable evidence that Hinduism was making converts among the hillmen. The Hindu influence was comparatively more marked among the Syntengs than the Khasis, probably due to the fact that the former had more intimate contact with the plains.

The Raja of Jaintia and the members of his family were converted to Hinduism and they formed a distinct community in the capital of the Kingdom, called "*Suhtnga Samaj*."³⁶ In the Jaintia hills itself, Hinduism was making deep inroads. In 1828 the British authorities observed that "within the last half a century the Brahmanical doctrines have made such progress that most of the leading men (of the Syntengs) have adopted them and have been classed by their spiritual instructors in the Khetri or Military tribe."³⁷ It was added further that their

principal deity was “*Jayanti Iswara*” (or *Goddess Kali*) but “many worshipped the whole Hindoo Pantheon” and at the same time “molify the revengeful spirits by human sacrifices.”³⁸ In the Jaintia hills, Nartiang was the principal centre of Hindu worship. The Synteng people of Nartiang are still the adherents of Hinduism. Though it had fewer converts in the Khasi hills, there were chiefs in this district also, for example, the Raja of Cherrapunji who declared their religion to be Hinduism to the British Government³⁹ in 1868. From this review of the Khasi-Synteng religion, it is apparent that the tribe was gradually being assimilated in the cultural fold of the Sanskritic civilisation on the eve of the advent of the British into these hills. The Sanskritic influence varied however from district to district in accordance with the degree of intercourse between the hills and the plains.

SECTION III : ECONOMIC CONDITION

Owing to the paucity of contemporary sources of information, it is not easy to gather an accurate picture of the economic condition and institutions of the Khasis and Syntengs before their contact with the Company’s Government. However certain broad features of their economy stood out preeminently throwing light on their means of livelihood and general condition.

By far the most important occupation of the tribe, like other primitive races of North East India was of course, agriculture. Rice, the staple food of this people was cultivated, probably more widely in Jaintia than in the Khasi Hills. Whether any other agricultural crops were also grown cannot be ascertained definitely. Contemporary evidence sheds little light on whether the traditional Khasis and Syntengs cultivated millet and maize. In the Jaintia Hills where the people seemed to have been more enterprising, a quantity of yam and cotton was however grown.⁴⁰ The mode of cultivation of rice and the other crops was however traditional. In the uplands of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, *jhuming* was the only practice adopted in the cultivation.⁴¹ Though the plough was totally unknown in Khasi Hills, it was used to an extent by the Syntengs who had more plain lands than the Khasis and who had more intimate intercourse with the plainsmen.

It was suggested that cultivation by plough and bullocks might have been introduced in the Jaintia hills under Hindu influence.⁴² Because of their advance in agriculture, the Jaintias were almost self-sufficient with their staple food. But the Khasis despite abundance of land were dependent on the plains for their bare sustenance. John Willes, a Collector of Sylhet observed that even if they acquired fertile lands in the plains, they did not cultivate them. He wrote: "A Cosseah never cultivates the soil; he employs Bengallee *ryots*; he comes down at the time of harvest and carries off the produce⁴³ (to the hills)."

More primitive as the Khasi agriculture was, there were however rich horticultural products for which the Khasi hills were famous, besides forest produces such as timber and lac. In the mountains adjoining Sylhet district, there was an abundance of such horticultural products as oranges, bay leaves or tejpatri, arecanut and betel vines or *paun*. Lindsay said that "in the fruit season an inexhaustible quantity of the finest oranges grew spontaneously in the mountains."⁴⁴ Lindsay's references to the growth of oranges "spontaneously" suggests that probably large scale gardening and farming of this crop had not then begun, owing perhaps to its limited market at that time. For such additional effort was probably not called for in these circumstances.

Since the population of these hills was extremely small,⁴⁵ there was no great pressure on land. Moreover, the system of land ownership which was communal was such that a willing cultivator was not short of land. For according to custom of the country, he could cultivate as much land of the community as he could. The lands were broadly divided into two classes: (i) those which belonged to the state called *Ri Raid*; and (ii) those which belonged to the clan or individual, the *Ri Kynti*. Every hillman had the right to cultivate as much of the public land (*Ri Raid*) as he managed to do. Similarly every member of the clan had a right to a share of the clan land (*Ri Kynti*) over which the state had no control. A remarkable feature of the hill polity was that the chief had no right to claim any land revenue from his people.⁴⁶ Despite the abundance of land and absence of any form of feudal ownership, the tradi-

ditional Khasis and Syntengs were found eager for fertile lands in the plains at the foot of their hills and even making raids.⁴⁷

This was not surprising when it is remembered that there was an acute dearth of labour in the hills owing to scanty population and their mode of cultivation was primitive. Hence in the midst of plenty, there was scarcity of the essential food, the rice for people.

Arts & Manufactures

Like agriculture, arts and manufactures also did not make much headway among the tribe. The Syntengs who were comparatively more advanced than the Khasis in agriculture led in this field as well, especially in weaving yarns. The spinning of *eri* silk and weaving of cloth was a fairly considerable industry in the Jaintia hills. Weaving was unknown in the Khasi hills. The Khasis imported their requirements of silk cloth either from Assam or the Jaintia hills.⁴⁸

But the Khasi Hills was not without its compensation. It had vast deposits of minerals, the iron ores and lime stones whose fame and market, especially of the latter spread to Mughal Bengal. Of these minerals, iron was worked by the Khasis themselves. Lindsay remarked in 1778: "The mountain (Khasi) produced . . . iron of very superior quality and description from the hills in lumps of adhesive sand and being put in forge produces excellent malleable iron . . . superior to any made in Europe by charcoal"

According to him, considerable quantities of copper bars were also brought by the Khasis to the markets of Sylhet for disposal.⁴⁹

But the mineral of the Khasi hills over which Lindsay went into raptures was the lime stone, then known widely to the Mughals by the term "chunam". According to him, all along the Sylhet Frontier, the mountain possessed inexhaustible source of the finest lime." Lindsay observed that it was "the only great staple and steady article of commerce" and Calcutta was supplied from there.⁵⁰ But the trade and manufacture of lime was in the hands of the foreigners. Prior to the appearance of the company's merchants, the lime trade of the Khasi hills was a monopoly of the Mughals and after the acquisition of the Dewani of Bengal in 1765, the East India Com-

pany acquired its monopoly from the Nawab of Bengal⁵² and retained it until it was thrown open to all competitors, whether Europeans or Armenians, at a later date. In the whole process from working the quarries of the lime stones to the manufacture as lime and in its trade, the Khasi chiefs did not take any part probably because of the dearth of labour. Since they refrained from participating in any processes of the lime trade, the foreigners used to take leases of the lime stone hills from them and employed the labourers from the plains to work the quarries.

The independent chiefs in whose territory the quarries happened to lie received only an annual rent and occasional presents from the lease holders.⁵³ With the establishment of company's administration at Sylhet, the trade in lime was expanded to meet the needs of the Government in Calcutta. In 1772, Thackeray, the first collector of Sylhet reported that a hundred and twenty thousand maunds of lime were sent down annually from Sylhet. In Thackeray's time, only the lime quarries of Laur hills were exploited.⁵⁴ But the lime stone deposits of the Laur hills were only a fraction of the vast quantity of this mineral found in the Khasi hills. Moreover, lime was also found in the Jaintia hills. Meanwhile the immense potentiality of the lime stone quarries of the Khasi hills and lucrativeness of the trade in this article drew foreigners in considerable numbers in Sylhet Frontier.⁵⁵

Trade and Commerce

Trade among themselves and with the foreigners, the *Dkhars*, was an essential part of the economy of the tribe. In fact, it was vital to their livelihood. The reasons are not far to seek.

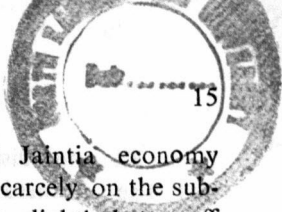
Two principal items of daily necessities, rice and salt, of the tribe were scarce in the hills, the former because it was not produced in adequate quantity in the hills and the latter was not produced at all and hence the tribe was entirely dependent on the trade with the plains from where alone the supplies of those articles could be obtained. The forest products had only local markets and hence very insignificant value in the hills but in the plains, they had demands.

Establishment of a market for exchanges of articles was felt. therefore ery necessary. The chiefs of the hill stached great importance to the establishment of a market; an amount of religious importance was even invested in certain larger markets for example, the *Iewduh* or the eight-day bazar of Shillong.⁵⁶ The Khasi and Synteng chiefs vied with one another in opening markets in their states.⁵⁷ While the bazars in the hills were important to the economy of the people, an added eagerness was shown by them in the establishment of markets at the foot hills in the plains. These markets were called "*hats*", to which hill products were transported in baskets slung on human backs. So great an importance was added to the trade and commerce with the plains that even the Khasi chiefs engaged themselves in it.

A.B. Lish observed that Khasi "Merchant kings", used to take up their residence in the villages near the frontier of Sylhet to take full advantage of trade with the plains. In view of the importance of trade⁵⁸ with the people of neighbouring countries, the chiefs sought concessions for opening of markets in the former's jurisdictions, sometimes acknowledging political supremacy of the foreign sovereigns. Such were the cases of chiefs or the Rajas of Jaintia and Khyrim, the largest of the Khasi States⁵⁹. The principle *hats* in the plains of Sylhet to which the Khasis and Syntengs resorted for trade were Pandua, Punatit in the Laur Pargana and Jaintiapur. In the eighteenth century, Pándua at the foot of the Khasi Hills was fast growing into a market for trade with the Khasis and even the company's authorities regarded it as an "object worth the attention".⁶⁰ On the Assam side of the Khasi-Jaintia hills, the traditional markets for trade with the hillmen were Burdwar, Rani and Sonapura⁶¹.

At those hats and bazars, a brisk barter trade used to be carried on between the plains and hills. Currency was not totally unknown. On the Sylhet frontier, *Cowri* was used as currency and employed as a medium of exchange. The Khasi chiefs did not mint coins.

But the Raja of Jaintia issued some debased money called *Kattra taka* (Sword rupees) which was however in very limited circulation. The bulk of the trade was therefore carried on by barter⁶².



xxx The foregoing narrative of the Khasi Jaintia economy revealed that it was in the simplest stage, scarcely on the subsistence level. The Jaintias were probably slightly better off not only because of their comparatively advanced agriculture, but also due to the fact that their chiefs called *Dolois* derived some material benefits from the plains. But the Khasis had fewer opportunities of such gains. Hence the Khasi Chiefs were known to have made frequent raids in the plains, which might be attributed to the dire penury of the tribe.

SECTION IV : POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

Compared with their performance in the economic field the Khasis and Syntengs, like the Cacharis made considerable advance, however, in forging political institutions and organisations which had some unique features. They showed a good deal of resilience in an adverse environment such as the mountain and a rare assimilative capacity when confronted with the people of the plains. The traditional polity of the tribe designated by them as "*Hima*" had near parallel in the that "*Polis*" of the ancient of Greeks except that the former unlike, the latter was based solely on kinship.

A Khasi-Syngteng State or *Hiam*^m was remarkable for its hierarchy of village officials to govern the tiny hill polity and for its series of assemblies of people from the village at the bottom to the State level at the apex.⁶³ These assemblies gave some states the appearance of oligarchies and in others (e.g. the Langrin state) the semblance of direct democracy.⁶⁴ The emphasis in the organisation of the State was not the chief's authority but on the liberties and democratic rights of the subjects, asserted though in a crude manner as was common with many rude tribes of the North East Frontier. As against this achievement, the failure of the Khasis and Syntengs who were in all essentials of their culture and race the same people must be pointed out. They had never succeeded in attaining national solidarity under one chief. "There is no record or tradition", says Gait, "that the Khasis and Syntengs ever owed allegiance to a single prince." The tendency of the tribe was to split up into numerous petty communities under its own head.⁶⁵ Even if it was true, the Syntengs in contrast to their

Khasi Kinsmen displayed a higher degree of skill and ingenuity. They attained greater amount of political cohesion among their various clans which composed the tribe and in addition they extended their sway over some plains tracts, which were welded into the hills to form a large state which became known as the kingdom of Jaintia.

Not unnaturally, the Syntengs received more notices in the contemporary chronicles such as those of the Ahoms than the Khasis.

Jaintia Kingdom

Success attained by the Syntengs in forging political cohesion among them and later in carving out a kingdom comprising the hills and plains merits narration because it has subsequent bearing on their relation with the Company's Government.

From the fragments of their legends and traditions, it appears that they, like other hill tribes at the earliest time lived in what is now called Synteng or Jaintia hills in separate groups of settlements, each under its chief, independent of one another. The chieftain of a group was known by the designation of Dolois. At this stage of their culture, long before their contact with the company, the Synteng hills was ruled by twelve *Dolois* or chiefs and this state of things was embodied in their traditions, *Ri Khadar Dolois*⁶⁶ (land of twelve chiefs). Then in a turn of events which are only vaguely known, the twelve Synteng chiefs decided to confederate their tiny hill demesne under a paramount ruler called *Syiem*, probably to get rid of internecine wars among the tribe. The *Dolois* who was elected to the honour was the chief of Suhtnga, one of the important *Doloiships* of the hills.⁶⁷

The confederation of chiefs under a single ruler may be regarded as almost a revolution in ancient politics of the Jaintias. The chief designated as "*Syiem*" was not, however, endowed with any superior authority over the *Dolois* by tradition. He was only the nominal head of the tribe. The unification of the Synteng hills under a paramount chief was probably followed by their greatest national enterprise—the conquest of the petty Hindu Kingdom of Sylhet called Jaintia. This was their first plains territory which extended the Synteng rule from the southern foot of their mountain habitat to the

north bank of the Surma.⁶⁸ Further expansion was probably stopped by the Mughal rulers of Sylhet. But with the decline of the Mughals in the eighteenth century, the Syiem of the Syntengs, designated in the plains as Raja appropriated a Mughal territory on the south bank of the Surma also called seven reaches or Satbak.⁶⁹ After the conquest of Jaintia, the entire Kingdom which included both hills and adjacent plains of Sylhet came to be designated by the common appellation, the kingdom of Jaintia. The Raja of Jaintia shifted his capital from the hills to Jaintiapur, a town barely fifteen miles from Sylhet, the Mughal Foujdar's headquarter. Later the Raja with the help of his mountain chiefs occupied also a large plains tract on his frontier with Assam. The tracts comprised Gobha, Nelli and Kholā.

But the Ahoms who ruled Assam then set a limit to further Synteng expansion in the North of their hills. An Ahom sovereign even reduced the Raja of Jaintia in the eighteenth century and compelled him to acknowledge his supremacy.⁷⁰ Though the Syntengs shook off the Ahom suzerainty, the latter continued to pretend to a shadowy overlordship over the kingdom of Jaintia till the Anglo-Burmese war (1824-26).

Thus the Synteng or Jaintia Kingdom comprised three distinct provinces : First, the plains territories in Sylhet which itself consisted of Jaintia proper and the seven reaches, regarded as the richest possession of the Raja, considering its fertile valleys; second, the Synteng or Jaintia hills, the habitat of the tribe and the nucleus of the Kingdom; and third, the plains territories bordering on Assam which extended from the northern foot of the hills to the river Kollong, an affluent of the Brahmaputra.

The administration of this far-flung territories was carried on according to the traditions of the several localities. In the Jaintia plains of Sylhet, the Raja was almost a despot. But he could not over ride the wishes of the queen mother and the chiefs of the district. The Raja was obliged to consult the chief people of the hills, the *Dolois* in the appointments and their confirmations.

Though the Raja became a convert to Hinduism, in succession he followed the Khasi custom of matrilinealism; he was always succeeded by sister's son, called "Koonwairee" by a

Cossyah husband," chosen from certain noble families in the hills by a general assembly of the chief people.⁷¹ The plains tracts in Assam (Gobha, Nelli and Khola) were under the charge of one of the most powerful *Dolois*, viz that of Nartiang.⁷² The administration of the hills was however under the control of its several *Dolois*, the Raja having only a nominal control over them. They did not pay any revenue or tribute to the king. Only offering made by the *Dolois* was a goat from every village during annual religious festivals at Jaintiapur. It was regarded as a token of their allegiance to the Raja. Besides the lands owned by the Raja and the members of his family in the hills were tilled for them by the people of the *Doloiships*.⁷³

The *Dolois* however served the Rajas as their ambassadors in foreign courts and on occasions of external danger to the state, they led their hosts to the aid of the Raja.⁷⁴ The *Dolois* were indeed the Chief nobles of the Kingdom.

The internal Government of a *Doloiship* was carried on customary democratic lines. The *Dolois* were elected from particular clans by the entire male population of their respective regions of authority and removed by them whenever they thought fit. The *Doloi* was assisted by officials called *Pattor*, who was the village headman and the *Lungdeo*, the village priest, who were also elected. Besides these two functionaries who assisted the *Doloi*, there were some other minor village officials, some of whom served as *peons* or *peadahs* (*Basahun* and *Majee*) and others acted as village criers and drummers (*Sungut*, *Chooteah* and *Dhoolia*). These minor officials were appointed by the *Doloi* in consultation with the *Pattor* and *Lungdeo*. Taken as a body, they formed the *Durbars* of the state under the *Doloi* who presided over it as its judge. In addition to his duties as judge, the *Doloi* acted as chief priest in public festivals and pujas of his little demesne.⁷⁵ As the administrative, judicial and sacerdotal head of his state, the *Doloi* was therefore a considerable figure in the traditional society of the Syntengs.

The Khasi Hills : Obscurity of Political Condition

In comparison with Jaintia, obscurity surrounded the political condition of the Khasi hills on the eve of the contact with the British.

The causes of the comparative obscurity of those hills may be attributed to the fact that the Khasis were not welded into a nation under a paramount ruler. The contemporary chronicles of the neighbouring plains countries made only a little or casual reference to the chiefs of the Khasi hills. An Ahom chronicle made only a passing reference to Khyrim or Khairam, regarded as the most powerful Khasi state and a few other petty chieftains who held some passtracts in Kamrup as appendages from the Ahom rulers of the Brahmaputra Valley.⁷⁶

The Khasi tradition regarding the political condition of their country before the advent of the British is also vague. A tradition states that it was the land of "Laiphew" chiefs, Ka Ri Laiphew Syiem.⁷⁷ But the difficulty has arisen as to the exact meaning of the Khasi term. "Laiphew." Its meaning was taken at one time to be the number, thirty. But it is contended of late that "Laiphew" was used in the general sense of "many", not any specific figure.⁷⁸ It was argued that the later connotation of the word had greater provenance than the former. The eighteenth century British officials had indeed believed that the Khasi hills was ruled by numerous independent chiefs. Lindsay, a Collector of Sylhet wrote in 1787:

"Every chief of a village styles himself Rajah (Syiem) and has an independent Government within his boundary."⁷⁹ John Willes, Lindsay's successor, writing in the same vein observed: "From Pandua to Laur there were at least a hundred little independent chiefs."⁸⁰ If there were a hundred chiefs from Landua to Laur alone on the borders of Sylhet, there might have been at least a few more of them in the interior of the hills and in the north, of whom the Collectors of Sylhet had no knowledge at all. However, it is not unlikely that they had mistaken every village headman to be Raja or Syiem and exaggerated the number of Khasi chiefs.

The first British official who gave a more precise information on the Khasi States before the hostilities with the Government broke out in 1829 was Lieutenant Fisher. In 1827 in course of the survey of the northern boundary of Sylhet with the territory of the independent chiefs,⁸¹ he sketched a political map also which delineated the contemporary Khasi States with their "boundaries" with the information available to him. Fisher's "Cartographic Sketch of the Cossya independent

States" published in 1830, though not satisfactory in all respects may be regarded as the first definitive information about the political condition in the Khasi hills then existed.⁸²

Surprisingly enough, Fisher had shown only eighteen states with their boundaries in his map.⁸³ They are given below with modern names and their spelling within brackets :

1. Parapoonjee (Barapoonjee)
2. Soora (Sobhar ?)
3. Moosmye (Mawsmy)
4. Chirra-Surareem (Cherrapunji)
5. KYRIM-Moleem (Khyrim)
6. Sheyla (Shella)
7. Chumut Mullye (Malai-Sohmat)
8. MAHRAM and DWARA NUTAOMEN (Maram and Duara)
9. Moeyang-Noongohungwye (Mawiong)
10. NUSPUNG-Lawkla (Nongspung)
11. NUSTUNG (Nongstoin)
12. RAMRYE (Rambrai)
13. OSIMLEE (Nongkhlaw)
14. Motelleeung-Matakar
15. Mo or Muriow (Myraw)
16. Syung-Maflong (Sohiang-Mawflong)
17. Jyrang-Rannegoan (Jirang-Ranee-Nongwah)
18. Beyltolla (Beltola)

It is apparent from the boundary of a Khasi State as in Fisher's map that some of them had no separate political existence, e.g., Mawflong, Sohiong, Khyrim and Myllem (Moleem), Mahram and Duara, Jeerung and Ranee. Every group of two of these villages formed parts of the single state at this time. After the British occupation of the Khasi Hills, they were recognised as separate states by the Government as is evident from Allen's list of twenty-five Khasi states noted down in his report of 1858.⁸⁴ The case of Mawflong and Sohiong is however different. These villages were indeed subordinate to the chief of Nongkhlaw,⁸⁵ wrongly called by the British officials Osimlee, a corruption of the Khasi word, "*Siemle*" (Dhola or white Syiem).

It must not be supposed that Fisher had presented an exhaustive list of the Khasi states. It appears that he had no

knowledge of some of the tiny Khasi states who maintained their separate existence in the deep interior of the country. It would not be surprising if he could not obtain information of all the Khasi states in view of the fact that as late as the middle of the nineteenth century, Allen was astonished at the ignorance of the officials about the interior of these hills.⁸⁶ Fisher's map, for example, does not contain the names of such well-known Khasi states of the later days as Bhowal, Langrin, Mawsenram and Nobosopho mentioned by Allen as chiefships recognised by the Government.⁸⁷

Were they too insignificant to receive his attention? Or had the British Government given them recognition as separate states for good reason at a later date? If the Khasi tradition is to be believed, a number of *Syiemships* viz , Munai, Mullaing and Nongpoh were abolished by the Government and their chiefs were reduced to mere *Sirdars* as punishment for recalcitrance after the uprising of 1829.⁸⁸ Moreover, it is not unlikely that there were some more states (e.g. Nurtung) of which even tradition had no knowledge.⁸⁹ The irresistible conclusion is that there were numerous states in the hills before the establishment of British supremacy; the chiefs of some bore the titles of *Lyngdohs* and others those of *Syiems* or *Rajas*.⁹⁰ Fisher had shown only the principal states and *Syiemships*.

Administration

A Khasi state was a mere federation of villages under a chief styled *Syiem*⁹¹ or *Raja* or *Lyngdoh*. There is evidence to show that at an earlier stage, the chief of such a federation was the Priest or *Lyngdoh*.⁹² Later a separate clan was recognised as ruling clan and it was from such clans the *Syiems* were chosen customarily. The *Syiemships* were recognised as the highest class of states.

In fact some of them were regarded as of divine origin. In some of the states, there were even two *Syiem* clans called *Dhola Raja (Syiemlie)* or white *Syiems* and *Kala Raja (Syiemiong)* or Black *Syiem*, from whom the chiefs were nominated by a Council of heads of clans. The customary line of succession of a *Syiem* or *Raja* was uniform in all cases except *Khyrim* where a *Syiem* priestess nominated the heir. In other states, a *Syiem* was succeeded by his brother, and cousins often

ranked with brothers or were preferred to grand nephews, A fact which was of universal application was that heirship lay through the female side in keeping with the matrilinealism among the tribe.⁹³

Although the *Syiemship* was hereditary in some clans under certain restrictions, the office itself was elective. But the electors of the *Syiems* were not the entire people of the state (except in Langrin). They were elected by a small committee of chiefs and elders who constituted for the purpose the traditional electoral *Durbars* of the States. The oligarchy of the chiefs who nominated the *Syiems* derived their authority from the fact that they were the earliest citizen settlers of the states and hence inherited a superior privilege over others.⁹⁴ In some states the *Durbars* were regarded as institutions of Divine origin.

The *Syiems* governed their states with the assistance of their *Durbars* which were distinct from electoral *Durbars*. They were composed of officials called *Myntries* and *Lyngskors* i.e. viceroys. Besides, there were the village headman and elders who had rights to be heard by the chiefs. The *Durbar Syiem* or executive council of the states met in frequent sessions to conduct the business of the state. According to custom, the *Syiems* could not perform any act of importance without first consulting and obtaining the approval of the *Durbars*. One of the chief functions of the *Syiems* was to act as judges with their *Durbars* serving as a jury. Among the other important duties of the *Syiems* were the establishment of markets in the states, leading the militia in wars and officiating as priests in public festivals and ceremonies. The revenues of the *Syiems* were mainly derived from the tolls in the markets and fines realised from the criminals convicted by the *Durbars*, a share of which however went to his *Myntries*. The people did not pay any direct tax to them except a free offering called *Pynshuk*. The *Syiems* were allotted of course a portion of the public land (*Ri Raid*) for their maintenance. A Khasi *Syiem* was generally a very impecunious ruler.⁹⁵ It is difficult to classify a Khasi *Hima* or state as a pure democracy, oligarchy or a monarchy or even a republic. It contained the elements of all to a certain degree. It has been aptly described as a "mixed Government."⁹⁶

The relations among these numerous chieftains themselves and with their plains neighbours were anything but cordial in the pre-colonial period. The violent clashes among the chiefs were of frequent occurrence before the advent of the British in these hills.⁹⁷ These intertribal conflicts did not preclude them from making occasional raids on the fertile valleys of Kamrup and Sylhet. The Khasi aggressions on the plains of Kamrup increased in the declining days of Ahom rule especially after 1794.⁹⁸ In order to prevent their recurrence, the Ahom Government ceded certain pass tracts called *Nauduars* and *Dashas* at the foot of their hills on the nominal acknowledgement of their suzerainty and certain other services rendered to them.⁹⁹ It appears that in the relaxed days of the Mughal rule in Sylhet, the Khasis had also made encroachments and appropriated a number of *Parganas*.¹⁰⁰ The defence of the British Territory against the raids of these mountaineers was one of the intricate problems which the new rulers of the West inherited from the Mughals and Ahoms as they stepped into their place.

References

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2. BGP; 27 Aug. 1868; No. 59.
3. Robinson, W. *A Descriptive Account of Assam* ; p. 283.
4. Gurdon, P.R.T ; *The Khasis* ; pp. 114-116.
5. According to the Khasi and Jaintia tradition, the country is divided into three regions, viz. *Bhoi*, *Lum* i.e. hill upland and *war*. Gurdon. P.R.T ; op. cit : pp. 1-2.
6. *Imperial Gazetteer of India* ; op. cit ; pp. 196, 420.
7. Lindsay, L; *Lives of Lindsays* ; Vol, III; pp. 163-176.
8. Gurdon, P.R.T ; op. cit; pp. 33-34.
9. Chatterjee, S; *Kiratajanakriti* ; pp. 33, 34 Also Gait. E;A; *A History of Assam* ; p. 329.
10. Nakane, C ; *The Garo and Khasi*; p. 95.
11. About the origin of the various names of the Khasis and Syntengs see, Lyngdoh, H. Dr. ; *Ka Niam Khasi* : p. iii; Bhuyan, S.L. *Jayantia*

- Buranji* ; p. X ; Gurdon for example designated both the Khasis and Syntengs by one appellation, the Khasis.
12. The five sub-tribes are : Khasi proper, *pnars*, *Bhois*, *War*, and *Lynngams* ; see Gurdon, P.R.T; op. cit ; p. 62.
 13. On the origin of the "Bengallee Cosseahs" see SDR, Vol.II, Lindsay to Shore; 14 December 1787; No. 303; Ibid, Vol. III.
 14. Ali, M.S.; *The History of Jaintia*; p. 72.
 15. Hamilton, F; *An Account of Assam*; pp. 30-31.
 16. Grierson, G.A; *Linguistic Survey of India*, Vol. I. p. 37; Also, Hamilton, W; *Gentiah; East India Gazetteer*; pp. 571-572 ;
 17. Nakane, C; *Garo and Khasi*; p. 117.
 18. About the probability of existence of matriarchy in extreme form and legend of woman's kingdom, see Herbert. D; *Report on succession of Syiemships in the Khasi States*; Appd. pp. 67-94; Also Ali, M.S.; *The History of Jaintia*; p. 6.
 19. Gurdon, P.R.T. op. cit., pp. 76-83.
 20. Ibid; p. 83.
 21. Rymbai, T.U. and others; *Report of the Land Reforms Commission for Khasi Hills*, p. 38; Kantlie, K; *Notes on Khasi Law*, p. 10; Gurdon, P.R.T; op. cit; p. 85.
 22. Gurdon, P.R.T; op. cit; pp. 76-85.
 23. Nakane, Garo and Khasi, p. 135.
 24. Gurdon, P.R.T; op. cit. p. 79.
 25. Ibid; pp. 63-66; *Dkhar* and its Synteng variation, *Dykhar*, is the term for the foreigners.
 26. Ibid; p. 74.
 27. Kymboi, T.R. and others, *Report of the Land Reforms Commission for Khasi Hills*; p. 38.
 28. Firminger, A; SDR; Vol; Lindsay to Shore; 14 December, 1787; No. 303.
 29. Macdonald Kongor's statement in the memorandum to the Indian Statutory Commission, 1929 that the Khasis are "primitive Hindus" see *U. Nongpynim, Nawieng*, 19:8; Also Diengdoh. H.R; A letter to Editor, Bengalee, Calcutta, republished. in *Khasi Mynta*, Risaw; 1902.
 30. Gurdon, P.R.T; op. cit; pp. 105-119.
 31. Ibid.
 32. Ibid.
 33. Ibid.
 34. Ibid; pp. 98-104.
 35. Lyngdoh H. Dr; *Ka Niam Khasi*; pp. 27-90.
 36. Ali, M.S; *The History of Jaintia*; p. 72.

37. Hamilton, W; *Gentiah India East Gazettee*; Vol. I; pp. 571-572.
38. Ibid.
39. BJP; 15 Aug. 1868 No. 12; Ram Singh to Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, 23 July, 1868.
40. Gurdon, P.R.T; op. cit; pp. 26-27.
41. Ibid; pp. 39-41.
42. Nakane, C; *Garo and Khasi*; p. 95-96.
43. Firminger, A; SDR; Vol. III; Willes to Cornwallis; 15 Sept. 1789; No. 172.
44. For the Khasi hills products, see Mills, A.J.M; *Report on the Khasi and Jaintia Hills*; p. 27; Lindsav. L; *Lives of Lindsays*; Vol. III; *Anecdotes of an Indian Life*; p. 174.
45. The earliest estimate of Synteng population was offered by D. Scott (20,00) and of the Khasi by Robinson (82.000). Though these estimates were approximate and liable to error, the impression left was that the population was small. For Scott see Pemberton, R.B; *Report on the Eastern Frontier of British India*; p. 226; Robinson, W; *The Khasia hills*; Calcutta Review; Vol. VIII, 1883.
46. Gurdon, P.R.T; op. cit; pp. 87-89; Allen. W.J; *Report on the Administration of the Cossyah and Jynteah Hill Territory*; p. 73.
47. Raids in Sylhet and in Kamrup Duars and Dashas in the eighteenth century are attributed chiefly to Khasi hunger for land in the fertile plains; see L, Devi; *Ahom-Tribal Relations*; p. 270.
48. Gurdon P.R.T; op. cit; pp. 59-60.
49. Lindsay, L; *Lives of Lindsays*, Vol III; *Anecdotes of an Indian life*: p. 174.
50. Ibid.
51. BJC; 5 June, 1823, No. 42: Moore to Bayley, 12 Decem. 1823, Encl. Willes's remarks 1788.
52. Sinha, N.K: *History of Bengal*; pp. 31, 33 and 39.
53. BJC; 5 June, 1823, No. 42: Moore to Bayley, 12 December, 1823.
54. Bradley-Birt, F.B: *Sylhet Thackeray*: pp. 136, 146.
55. On the influx of Europeans and others in the lime trade later on see, Firminger, A: SDR Vol. 1: p. 27: Lindsay to Shakespéare : 26 June, 1779: No. 93.
56. Lyngdoh, H. Dr.: *Ka Niam Khasi*: p. 88: one of the fervent prayers in the Nongkrem festival in the Khasi Hills is that their markets be protected. The prayer in Khasi runs "Ba long Ka iew ba long Ka hat."
57. Gurdon, P.R.T; *The Khasis* p. 67.
58. Lish, A.B: *Calcutta Christian observer* : Vol. III, 1838: pp. 133-134.
59. Bhuyan, S.K: *Jayantia Buranji* p. 150: Also Devi. L: *Ahom-Tribal Relations*: pp. 28-29.

60. Hamilton, F: *An Account of Assam*: p. 30. For Pandua's importance as a market etc. see Firminger, A.; SDR: Vol. I; Lindsay to Shakespeare, 26 June, 1789; No. 93.
61. Hamilton, F: op. cit, p, 30.
62. Robinson, W: *A Descriptive Account of Assam*: p. 250, Lindsay L; *Lives of Lindsays* ; Vol. III, pp. 174-176.
63. Lyngdoh, H. Dr ; *Ki Syiem Khasi bad Synteng: Jinglamphrang*: pp. 1-VII; Gurdon, P.R.T. op. cit; pp. 69-71.
64. Ibid; Gurdon, P.R.T; op. cit; pp. 69-70.
65. Gait, E.A; *A History of Assam*; P. 312.
66. About the Synteng tradition, see, Rymbai, T.R; *Report of the Land Reforms Commission for Khasi hills*; p. 10; Twelve Doloiship were : Suhtnga, Nartiong, Jowai, Nongjingi, Lakadong, Shangpung, Ralliing Mynso, Natalang, Rymbai, Nongbah, and Norphu; Ali, S.M. *The History of Jaintia*; p. 1.
67. Ibid, p. 9; Bhuyan, S.K; *Jayantia Buranji*; pp. 1-10.
68. Gait. E.A; *A History of Assam*; pp. 3, 13.
69. BJC; 25 Septem, 1823; No. 28; Moore to Bayley, 1 Septm; 1823; No. 24.
70. Bhuyan, S.K. Ed; *Jayantia Buranji*; pp. 127-135.
71. Pemberton, R.B; *Report on the Eastern Frontier of British India*, p. 228.
72. Ibid.
73. BJC; 31 Aug., 1860; No. 30; Rowlatt to Jenkins, 22 May, 1803; Mills. A.J.M; *Report on the Khasi and Jaintia hills*; p. 8.
74. Bhuyan, S.K. Ed; *Jayantia Buranji*; 135.
75. BJC; 31 Aug. 1860; No. 30; Rowlatt to Jenkins, 22 May, 1860.
76. Bhuyan, S.K; op. cit: pp. 139-147.
77. Costa, S.C; *Ka Riti Jong Ka Ri Laiphew Syiem*; P.V; Also, Lahiri, R.M; *Annexation of Assam*; pp. 72-100.
78. Rymbai, T and others; *Report of the Land Reforms Commission for Khasi Hills*; pp. 10-13.
79. Firminger, A; SDR; Vol. I; Lindsay to Shore, 14 Decem, 1787; No. 303.
80. BIC; 20 May, 1823; No. 63; Moore to Bayley, 12 Decem, 1823, Encl., Remarks of Willes with Chapman's Comments.
81. BJC; Resolution, 15 March, 1827; No. 21.
82. See Fisher's map the map was drawn in the Surveyor General's office in July, 1830.
83. Ibid.
84. Allen, W.J; *Report on the Administration of the Coasyyh and Jynteal Territory*; pp. 26-29.

85. Sohiong which included Mawflong in the map was under the jurisdiction of Nongkhlaw Syiemship; see Herbert, D; *Report on succession to Siemships in the Khasi States*; p. 15.
86. Allen, W. J; op. cit; p. 26.
87. Ibid; p. 28.
88. Rymbai, T; op. cit; pp. 10-13.
89. Pemberton, R.B; *Report on the Eastern Frontier of British India*; pp. 247-248.
90. In the pre-British Khasi hills, *Sirdarship* as a State was unknown. The title *Sirdar* is alien to Khasi polity.
91. Gurdon, P.R.T; *The Khasis*; pp. 66-74.
92. Before Nongkhlaw was constituted as a Syiemship, everyone of its constituent villages had a *Syngdoh* chief, see Herbert, D; op. cit; p. 15.
93. Gurdon, P.R.T; op. cit; pp. 66-74.
94. Ibid.
95. Ibid.
96. For the remarks of Rev. Lewis; see Mills, A.J.M; *Report on the Khasi and Jaintia Hills*; pp. 7-8.
97. Lish, A.B; *A brief Account of the Khasees: Calcutta Christian Observer*; p. 131.
98. Pemberton, R B; op. cit; p. 231.
99. Ibid; p. 235.
100. Firminger, A; SDR; Vol. II; Willes to Cornwallis, 25 Decem., 1989; No. III.