

INTRODUCTION

The study of political systems in the developing countries represents a new and growing interest in social sciences. Politics has emerged as one of the dominant themes of the new nations, and the increasing politicisation of the individual and his group in these societies is a fact of immense socio-political significance. The need for penetrating explorations in the areas of political system, leadership and the development process, is thus imperative. As almost all planned development takes place to a large extent within the politico-economic framework, social scientists, planners, and the development workers, cannot ignore the study of the political system and the leadership component of change.

A strong desire to break away from tradition and move speedily towards modernity, is noticed in most of the developing countries. Even if this is the case today, however many of these countries continue to have a nostalgia for some aspects of their own traditions. In many instances, the vision of such traditions is a blurred one. Traditional leadership and the new patterns of political organisations in these countries are still the forces to reckon with. Although there is unmistakable evidence of a trend towards the emergence of new patterns of leadership in most of the developing countries, a considerable gap persists between their emerging or modernising elite and traditional leadership.

Keeping the above broad dimensions in view, we make an attempt in this study to examine the effects of the emerging political system on traditional leadership in Jaintia Hills of Meghalaya. Before arriving at those substantial 'effects' of the modern political systems on the traditional institutions and leadership, we first try to trace the evolution and emergence of the traditional institutions and leadership in Jaintia Hills and describe the structure, roles and functions played by the traditional leaders of the society in their relationship with the people. Moreover, our intention is also to focus on the system of political administration carried out by the traditional institutions and leaders in the past including their powers, functions and role in traditional administration in the past and up to the time when the new system under the District Council was introduced in the area as per the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India. However, in between this period, there existed the colonial rule, which was actually responsible in imposing a number of changes on the traditional institutions and the holders of the traditional offices like the Syiem, Doloi, Pator and village headman. An effort is therefore made in the study to examine and analyse the changes brought about by the new political systems both under the colonial administration and the District Council and the effects of the same on traditional leadership. Lastly, a critical

assessment to highlight the tradition - modernity dichotomy is also discussed to operationalise the roles and role sets associated in terms of position, status and functions of the traditional and the emerging leadership. During the long period of the history of the Jaintia people and their traditional political institutions, the changes that had taken place from time to time on account of the emerging political systems, affected immensely both the structure and organisation of traditional leadership and the whole system of administration.

The subject of leadership has been studied extensively by political scientists, sociologists, social anthropologists, psychologists and social workers.¹ In recent years, the phenomenon of leadership and organisation has increasingly challenged theorists, researchers and practitioners.² Evidence of this has been an ever increasing literature from many disciplines and approaches.

The earlier theories of leadership may be classified into two broad categories: the first based on 'heredity' and the other on 'traits'. Of late, the modern theory is situational and an extension of it is known as situational-cum-

1. Sahay, B.N. Dynamics of Leadership, Bookhive, New Delhi, 1969, p. 1.

2. Singh, Avtar. Leadership Patterns and Village Structure, Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi 1973, p.1.

personality theory.³ The inadequacies of the 'trait approach' led the social scientists to search for other variables. The emphasis then, swung away from the leaders as an entity complete in itself, and leadership came to be viewed as a function of the situation. Soon it was realised that no conception of leadership would be complete unless it considered the structure of the group in which the interactions among the members had taken place. Leadership was viewed essentially as a set of functions performed by one or many members of a group under various conditions. In fact, group members were considered a major variable in leadership research.⁴

Hans Nagpaul⁵ in one of his papers on leadership presents a brief historical review of the leadership concept and observes that during the past three decades, social scientists for the theoretical formulations of the leadership concept had been shifting from one aspect to the other. It is also found that early leadership researches focussed on the leader himself to the virtual exclusion of other variables. This gradually took the form of a theory known as the 'great man theory' of leadership which assumed that leadership could be explained by isolating psychological and

3. Sahay, B.N. Op.cit., p. 2.

4. Vidyarthi, L.P. and Sahay, K.N. The Dynamics of Tribal Leadership in Bihar, Kitab Mahal, Allahabad 1976, p. 7.

5. Nagpaul, Hans. "Leadership: A Frame of Reference" in Leadership in India (Ed.) Vidyarthi, L.P., Asia Publishing House, Bombay 1967, pp. 58-60.

physical characters or traits, presumed to differentiate the leader from other members of his group. Here, some sought unitary leadership traits capable of characterising leaders whenever found; others looked for a constellation of traits constituting general leadership. However, studies guided by this assumption failed to establish the existence of universal leadership traits and no such general list has ever been successfully derived.⁶

The studies on tribal leadership conducted in other parts of India,⁷ have shown that leadership in general is characterised with certain basic features common to all types of societies. However even those tribes which have been living in a closer social affinity with the non-tribals, certain distinctiveness in view of cultural distinction could be noticed in the context of the tribals. Therefore, such studies suggested that in view of cultural differences, leadership studies among the tribals need to be viewed on a markedly different level necessitating somewhat different

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6. Vidyarthi, L.P. and Sahay, K.N. The Dynamics of Tribal Leadership in Bihar, Kitap Mahal, Allahabad 1976, pp.6-7.
 7. Numerous studies on 'Leadership' among other tribes of India have appeared. References may be mentioned to - Vidyarthi, L.P. (Ed.) Leadership in India, Asia Publishing House, Bombay 1967; Emerging Pattern of Rural Leadership in Southern Asia, Government of India, National Institute of Community Development (NICD), Hyderabad, 1965; Sahay, B.N. Dynamics of Leadership, Bookhive, New Delhi 1968; Vidyarthi, L.P. and Sahay, K.N. Op.cit. Sirsicar, V.M. The Rural Elite in a Developing Society, Orient Longman Ltd., 1970; Park, L. and Tinker, I. (Ed.) Leadership and Political Institution in India, OUP, Madras 1959, and many others.

methodological approach to the problem.⁸ Such a need arises because of certain distinctive socio-cultural milieu prevailing among the tribals. It is therefore felt that:

"The first differences that need to be pointed out is the comparatively greater tradition - orientation among the tribals and their conservatism than the non-tribals. This makes them cling to their traditional pattern of leadership more rigidly, leaving little scope for quick and radical changes. Secondly, the tribes have been traditionally living in relative seclusion and isolation from the main stream of the Indian society. As a result, most of the events of political significance which occur... do not reach them and hence they remain uninfluenced. All these have significant bearing on their political consciousness and the pattern of their leadership.... Thirdly, a tribe has its own political system and it confines to form a political unit in itself having its own institutional leaders, headmen and authorities."⁹

In the case of Jaintia Hills, it is true that the traditional leaders of the society have been tradition - oriented; they tend to be rural, oriented to local customs and in some Elakas or provinces to the indigenous religion and opposed to change as a threat to these values and the offices held by them. It is also true that the people have been traditionally living in relative seclusion and isolation from the main stream of the Indian society. Within the jurisdiction of their own area, the Jaintias had their own traditional

8. Vidyarthi, L.P. and Sahay, K.N. The Dynamics of Tribal Leadership in Bihar, Op.cit., p. 3.

9. Ibid.

political system under the leadership of headmen and other authorities above them. In actual practice, leadership and leadership role could be found to exist at the grass root level right from the family and clan level through the institution of the mother's brother or uncle. Above the family and clan we have the Dolois at the Elaka or provincial level and the Syiem or King at the State level until the office of the Syiem lapsed in 1835.

Another important feature in the case of Jaintia Hills is the emergence of modern leadership who tend to be from the urban areas; they are well educated, westernised and committed to economic, social and political change and modernisation. The emergence of such modernising leaders could be traced from the time of the advent of British administration after the annexation of Jaintia Hills in 1835 and this continued after India's independence till today. If the two types of leaders are compared, we find a wide gap exists between the traditional and modernising leaders, who very often differ in educational background, orientation towards change, and in their respective linkages to the mass of the population outside their own area. This has created a sea-change in outlook and leadership role between the two types of leaders in the area under study.

11. Vidyarathi, L.P. *The Tribal Culture of India*, Concept Publishing House, New Delhi 1977, p. 233.

12. Nagpal, Hans. "Leadership: A Frame of Reference", in *Leadership in India*, L.P. Vidyarathi (Ed.) Asia Publishing House, London 1967, p. 60.

Defining the terms 'Leaders' and 'Leadership'

Many writers have defined the terms 'leader' and 'leadership' in different ways and have given different opinions as regard to the understanding of these terms. Thus Hollander opines that:

"In general, leader denotes an individual ... deriving status from followers who may accord or withdraw it, in an essentially free interchange within a group context. Group consent is therefore a central feature in the leader-follower relationships."¹⁰

Others define the term leader to mean that,

"Leaders are inseparable from any political network. They have the same importance, purpose and place as the head has in the case of a human body. A political network without a leader is like a rudderless ship. The leaders provide the means to attain the objectives of a political network."¹¹

With regard to leadership roles, Hans Nagpaul opines that,

"The person who plays a role or function in a situation within the context of the culture to attain a specified goal or goals is perceived as the leader by the members of his group and is given prestige, authority and status which he would not have as a member of the group."¹²

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10. Hollander, E.P. Leaders, Groups and Influence, Oxford University Press 1964, p. 16.
 11. Vidyarthi, L.P. The Tribal Culture of India, Concept Publishing Co., Delhi 1977, p. 233.
 12. Nagpaul, Hans. "Leadership: A Frame of Reference", in Leadership in India, L.P. Vidyarthi (Ed.) Asia Publishing House, London 1967, p. 60.

He further went on to say that,

"Leadership could be explained by isolating psychological and physical characteristics or traits, presumed to differentiate the leader from other members of his group."¹³

Still, another writer is of the opinion that, "Leadership is a social function, involving more of socialisation, training, opportunities and participation."¹⁴

Traditional leaders may be understood according to Vidyarthi and Rai as:

"Those who have been operating in the traditional social structure, standing for the old traditional values and institutions and satisfying various traditional needs of the tradition-oriented tribal society.... All these leaders operate within the traditional social structure and satisfying the religious ... or secular needs which are traditionally created and are of traditional importance."¹⁵

An United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) paper defines a leader as a person who holds a position of prestige, power, authority, or any sort of influence in initiating, directing, organising or controlling the behaviour of members of a community and leads them

13. Nagpaul, Hans. Op.cit., p. 58.

14. Sirsicar, V.M. The Rural Elite in a Developing Society, Orient Longman Ltd., 1970, p. 61.

15. Vidyarthi and Rai. Op.cit., p. 233.

towards some culturally defined or other goals.¹⁶ Gusfield's concept of leadership also comes close to it who conceives it as a social status within an organised group, manifest in office.¹⁷ Park and Tinker view leadership as a "situation-process in which a person (or persons) because of his actual or supposed ability to solve problems in the field of current group interest, is followed by others in the group and influences their behaviour."¹⁸ A closer look at these definitions makes us to draw a few significant but general points which have been kept in mind while studying leadership pattern. Firstly, a leader should always be understood in terms of the type of his followers and his nature of interactions with them. Secondly, leadership in itself, is a general term and we must give it a wider connotation to include leadership in the religious, economic, social and other such spheres of human activities as well.¹⁹

Phillip Selznick is of the opinion that leadership is not equivalent to office-holding or high prestige or authority or decision-making. He further says that it is not helpful to

16. UNESCO. As quoted in Emerging Patterns of Rural Leadership in Southern Asia, Op.cit., pp. 42-46.

17. Gusfield, Joseph R. "Functional Areas of Leadership in Social Movements", in Leadership in India, Op.cit., p. 67.

18. Park, L. and Tinker, I. Quoted in Vidyarthi, L.P. and Sahay, K.N. Op.cit., p. 4.

19. Vidyarthi, L.P. and Sahay, K.N. Op.cit., p. 5.

identify leadership with whatever is done by people in high position. So Selznick prefers to make a distinction between routine and 'critical decision-making'.²⁰ However, Leela Dube considers decision-making as an essential feature of leadership and a reliable index of leadership. But she adds that while all decision-makers are not leaders, all the leaders certainly are decision-makers.²¹

Traditional leadership in Jaintia Hills, fulfills some of the definitions given above. Most of the traditional leaders in Jaintia Hills derived their sanction from their hereditary status and position. A traditional leader in the area under study is, therefore, always drawn from the royal, priestly and members of the original clan or clans (Kurs). In the past, the royal family came out with the miraculous birth of that family from the mermaid, Ka Li Dakha. The Langdoh or priest comes from the priestly clan or clans. The other traditional leaders like Doloi and Pator are strictly confined only to those members of the original clans elected by the adult male members of the Elaka. Unlike the Doloi and

20. Selznick, Phillip. Leadership in Administration: A Sociological Interpretation, A Harper International Edition, quoted in Vidhyarthi, L.P. and Sahay, K.N. Op.cit., p. 5.

21. Dube, Leela. "Studies in Leadership in Village India and some techniques in the study of rural Leadership: An Anthropological Approach", in Emerging Pattern of Rural Leadership in Southern Asia, Op.cit., p. 194.

Pator, the village headman is elected from amongst the members of any clans in the village. However, since the original or founding clans are always in a majority, the villagers more often than not favour the candidate who belongs to such clans.

Ability to obtain obedience rests upon the sanctions, direct or indirect, which the authority-holder can apply to the people. Such sanctions may be categorised as —moral, ritual and legal. Classification of persons holding authority may be done according to whether they control moral, ritual or legal sanctions, or in some cases a combination of these. Thus, a person holding moral authority acts as a spokesman for tradition and public opinion. A ritual authority is an agent for supernatural forces and religious matters; his pronouncements are believed to be derived from supernaturally supported traditions. A legal authority is the one empowered to apply force or to control the use of force in certain cases, in case his orders in some spheres are not obeyed, or certain rules are not followed by the people living within the jurisdiction of his area of administration.

All the above types of traditional leaders may be identified in Jaintia Hills in the form of the Syiem, Doloi, Pator and village Headman. The Syiem and the Doloi combine in themselves moral, ritual and legal authorities. In case

of the Doloi, in some Elakas he combines in himself moral, ritual and legal authorities, while in other Elakas they are in-charge only of moral and legal authorities. For example, in Nongtalang Elaka, the Doloi has no religious functions. Such religious functions are performed by the Langdoh or priest who is essentially a religious head. However, "at present, in some Elakas, the Doloi, in line with the scheme of centralised authority, is also acting as a religious head while observing certain festivals."²² Moreover, this religious role of a Doloi also depends on certain particular occasion. For instance:

"If the Doloi happens to be a Christian or simply refuses to perform religious rites, the people would elect a Doloi Niam (a Doloi for religious purposes) for a particular occasion. For sometime, Behdienkhlam festival of the Jaintias was carried on by a Doloi Niam, instead of a Doloi of the Elaka, who for some reasons did not participate in the festival."²³

The position of the Langdoh has changed from what it used to be before the coming of the British. Thus we find that,

22. Pakem, B. "Meghalaya: Some Aspects of Political Development", in North-East India: A Sociological Study, (Ed.) S.M. Dubey, Concept Publishing Company, Delhi 1978, p. 234.

23. Ibid.

"The Langdoh was essentially a religious head. Nevertheless, the Langdoh also performed certain political functions. If for some reasons, the people of the Elaka were no longer satisfied with their elected Doloi, they might appeal to the Langdoh to redress their grievances; and the latter might go even to the extent of removing the Doloi from his office."²⁴

More changes were noticed in the position and status of the Langdoh after the British took over the administration of the area. Under the British rule, the office of Langdoh lost its political power and significance and confined only to religious matters.²⁵

The office of Syiem came into existence at a much later stage as a natural course of polity formation among the Jaintias. Although this office existed at such a late stage, yet it occupied the apex position and status in the administrative hierarchy and leadership till its abolition in 1835 by the British. The actual personal power and control of the Syiem or Raja prevailed only over the conquered territories in the northern and southern plains of the Jaintia kingdom. With the evolution of this office, the whole of Jaintia Hills was centrally administered under one authority with the assistance of other leaders and institutions at the lower levels of administration.

24. Pakem, B. Op.cit., p. 234.

25. Ibid.

With the evolution of the institution of kingship in Jaintia Hills, a three-tier system of administration was firmly established in the area. At the top of the hierarchy there was the Syiem or Raja (till 1835), in the middle or zonal level, there were and are still the Dolois or provincial governors for each Elaka, and at the lowest rung of the ladder of administration, there was and is still a Waheh Chnong or village headman in every village. Occasionally, an extra tier between the province and the village was instituted when the former was too large. Such an extra tier was placed and is still under a Pator or lieutenant governor. This continued until the coming of the British in the eighteenth century.

Traditional leadership in the area under study functions at all the levels of administration described above. However, all the traditional leaders, be a Syiem or Doloi or Pator or village headman, cannot decide things concerning their respective State or Elaka or village all by themselves alone. They are assisted by their respective durbars or councils in running the administration and their actions has to be approved by these durbars. Such durbars therefore wielded much power and authority. It is also in these durbars and through them that the adult male members came to express their opinions regarding the general welfare of the society. These



local institutions, therefore play an important role in administration and leadership.

Turning to our own country, India, we found that the traditional concept of society stratifies the country into closed groups with well-defined, though circumscribed, roles and relationships. Thus historically, the authority structure had largely been ascriptive and feudal. Authority was vested in persons belonging to certain privileged strata of society. Leaders were invariably drawn from among the higher caste groups and in most of the cases, leadership was an aspect of the hereditary and family functions. The lower strata of castes and families were totally excluded from occupying positions of political, economic and cultural superiority. Thus according to the traditional concept of society, leadership patterns were usually rigid and strictly ascriptive.²⁶ In the case of Jaintia Hills, though the society is by tradition a casteless and classless, but the traditional pattern of authority and leadership structure is almost the same ascriptive one found elsewhere in India. Thus, traditional leadership is vested in persons belonging to certain original clan or clans (Kurs) and other non-original clans are deprived of this privilege. The original clans or founding clans are

26. Rangnath. The Changing Pattern of Rural Leadership in Uttar Pradesh, Sindhu Publications Limited, New Delhi 1974, p. 152.

regarded as such because they were considered to be the first or earliest settlers in a particular Raid or Elaka. Since it were they who possibly first occupied and cleared the forests for settlement, they also became the proprietor of the land and were entitled with permanent ownership of the land. Thus "the principle of treating founder-members as owners of landed property and secondly the principle of right of land-ownership for the rulers who constituted political power and for the people who symbolised political authority"²⁷ came into existence. On this basis, it was therefore opined that:

"Socially, the Jaintia society was divided into three classes - the political class, the rulers, with the right of ownership of land; the sons of the soil with the right to political office; and the outsiders or later-comers with the right of use and of occupancy of land within the adopted Raid as well as the right of political participation without the right to political office.... The first two classes belonged to the original clans or settlers called Ki Kmai Kur or Ki Tre Raid and the outsiders were called Ki Khian Kur or Ki Palat Raid. The first class constituted the rulers, the second class constituted the people, and the third was a body of commoners."²⁸

Against this background, the original or founding clans became not only the proprietor of the land occupied by them, but also became the legitimate ruling clans within their

27. Pakem, B. "A Theoretical Approach to the Study of State and Polity Formation in Meghalaya during the Pre-Colonial Period with special reference to Jaintia State and Biata Chieftaincy" (Seminar Paper 1985).

28. Ibid.

jurisdiction. They extended their protection to late-comers who joined within their fold. Moreover, exclusive right and privileges were granted to them for setting up of candidates for the offices of Doloi and Pator. A Doloi and Pator are elected by all the adult male members of the Elaka or province from amongst the adult male members of the original clans or Kmai Kur. For example, in the Jowai Elaka, the Doloi was nominated by the Soo Kpoh (the four clans, considered as the original or founding clans of the Elaka) and elected by all the adult male members of the Elaka. In Sumer, the Pator was nominated by the Ynniaw Kur (seven clans) and elected by all the adult male members of the Sumer Patorship of the Raliang Elaka.²⁹ In the Nongtalang Elaka, the Doloi is nominated by the Lâ Poh (three clans) of Nongtalang, Lamin and Nongbareh villages and elected by all adult males of the Elaka. This clearly indicates that no candidate could aspire for the elective post of a Doloi or Pator unless he belongs to the original clans and/or the general population who are considered as outsiders or commoners in the Elaka have no right to contest or setting up of candidates to the said offices. Further, even from among the original clans, the

29. Pakem, B. "State Formation in Pre-Colonial Jaintia", The North-Eastern Hill University Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities (hereafter NEHU Journal), Vol. II, No. 3, July-Sept. 1984 (Ed.) Bhattacharjee, J.B. The NEHU Publications, Shillong, p. 53.

31. Viayarathi, L.P. and Sahay, K.N. Op.cit., p. 8.

candidate or candidates for the elective post of Doloi or Pator were recruited mostly on ascriptive criteria rather than on grounds of achievement.³⁰ However, as far as election of a candidate is concerned, it can be said to be based on achievement-orientation.

Objectives of the Study

Though 'leadership' is an universal phenomenon, its pattern may vary from society to society. The same is the case with the tribals. This fact cannot have any other explanation than that the nature and type of leadership is largely determined by the nature and type of socio-cultural systems in that society.³¹ Keeping this background in mind, and other considerations too, it is thus imperative for us to study the pattern of traditional leadership in a tribal area such as Jaintia Hills on the basis of the socio-cultural context. Due to the inadequacy of literature on the traditional type of tribal leadership of this particular tribal society, hence, we feel that a study of the traditional pattern of tribal leadership on a local basis is of prime importance. Whatever materials we find so far on the subject of leadership in Jaintia Hills, are in the shape of articles and sketchy

30. Pakem, B. "The Changing Power Structure of the Political Institution of Jaintia Chieftainship", The Journal of the North-East India Council for Social Science Research, Vol. I, No. I, April 1977, p. 2.

31. Vidyarthi, L.P. and Sahay, K.N. Op.cit., p. 8.

32. Vidyarthi, L.P. and Sahay, K.N. Op.cit., p. 9.

accounts on tribal rebellions, tribal heroes or tribal leadership as such. A detailed analytical and broad based study from a tribal dominated district like Jaintia Hills of Meghalaya is thus emergently called for. At the same time, we cannot lose sight of the fact that Jaintia Hills (of the present day) or the old Sutnga or Jaintia kingdom had been thoroughly exposed to the various agencies of modernity like education, Christianity, modern administrative systems and the like. As a result, traditional pattern of leadership is fast declining and being gradually replaced by emergent ones. This is also true in the case of other tribal societies in India, and in view of this situation, we tend to agree with Vidyarthi and Sahay's opinion of having to face not only with the question of 'now or never' in regard to traditional tribal leadership, but also fascinated by their changing pattern because of academic or applied considerations.³² This gives rise to the special significance of studying the transitional patterns of leadership, the impact of modern administrative and elected representative system and modernisation itself. Secondly, with the annexation of Jaintia Hills by the British in 1835, they introduced an altogether completely new system of administration in the area. Different administrative measures were brought and imposed on the traditional institutions which had tremendous effects on traditional leadership in

32. Vidyarthi, L.P. and Sahay, K.N. Op.cit., p. 9.

Jaintia Hills. Thirdly, a new system of administration emerged on the scene after independence due to the creation of District Council under the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India. The colonial administration and the District Council were responsible in giving rise to the emergence of the modern type of leadership in the area under study. This has also resulted in the emergence of a new trend, that is, the trend of tradition-modernity dichotomy. Due emphasis and importance is given to the study of this whole process of development. In view of these considerations, the main objectives of the present study are given as below:

- i) To trace the different stages of the evolution of the offices of traditional institutions and leadership.
- ii) To study the pattern of traditional leadership in the socio-cultural context.
- iii) To study the transitional pattern of leadership.
- iv) To identify the cultural and political orientation of leadership pattern within the system as played by both the traditional and modern leaders.
- v) To delineate the structural determinants of leadership and the political system as exists in the area under study.

- vi) To examine the operation of ascription and achievement principles under the traditional and emerging political systems.
- vii) To study the effects of modern political system on traditional leadership.
- viii) To examine the issue of tradition - modernity dichotomy.

Methodology

As said before, there have been very little works on tribal leadership in Meghalaya in general and the Jaintias in particular. Thus, it is no surprise that there is no full length book or other similar academic treatment on the study of leadership among the Jaintias. As such, the materials available generally in the professional journals, books and other published materials, and unpublished Seminar papers were collected and duly analysed. Even those few works which were done, are not directly concerned with traditional leadership and the impact of the modern political system as such. Moreover, such works are widely scattered and it required a considerable amount of library work to collect relevant data either on the theoretical aspects of leadership, leadership among the tribals in other parts of India or similar studies among the African tribes, from various monographs, handbooks, Gazetteers, Government reports (especially those reports prepared by the colonial administrators serving in the area

under study) and other important correspondences. While the monographs, handbooks, Census Reports, etc., are available in the libraries of the various institutions, for Government reports and important correspondences, National and State Government Archives and National libraries had to be consulted at Calcutta, Delhi, Guwahati and Shillong. For the completion of the Chapters relating to the post-independence period, reports and official publications of the then United Khasi-Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council, the present Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council, and the Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council were consulted.

However, these sources are not adequate enough for our purpose of study. Thus, we decided to collect primary data from the traditional political functionaries such as the Dolois, Village Headmen and other 'knowledgeable' persons like Village Secretaries and Chairmen. Participant-observation and non-structured interviews are considered to be the valuable methods for the purpose and these have been actually undertaken with a view to uncovering the dynamics of traditional leadership, the rationale, authority, functions and relationship of the traditional leaders with the common people. The respondents were asked to express their views and assessment towards the prevalent system of elected representation, the qualities of the new leadership, their political consciousness and the effects of the new system of adminis-

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tration, that is, the District Council, on the traditional pattern. The Dolois and Village Headmen were solicited to express themselves on the new arrangement of appointment and removal from the office under the various Acts passed from time to time by the District Council, their powers and functions and their relationship with the District Council. We also selected Nongtalang village as a case study for the purpose of analytical assessment of village administration and leadership at the grass root level. The officials of this village were extensively interviewed in the light of the above pertinent issues.

In the course of the field enquiry, interview and observation methods were used for the collection of relevant data aimed at knowing the political organisation of the villages, typology of leaders, leaders-followers relationships, comparative attitude of the traditional leaders and people towards traditional and emergent patterns of leadership and so on.

1. Paker, B. "Sources of the Early History of the Jaintias", in Sources of the History of India, Vol. II, (Ed.) S.P. Sen, Institute of Historical Studies, Calcutta 1979, p. 181. In the same publication, see also Bhattacharjee, J.B. "Sources of the History of the Khasis and Jaintias"; Barsh, H. "Sources of the History of the Khasis and Jaintias", Rymbai, H.P. "History of the Khasis and Jaintias in the Pre-British Period."

2. Barsh, H. The History and Culture of the Khasi People, Shillong 1967, pp. 4-5.

CONCLUSION

The people of Jaintia Hills had a long history of which a good part of its earlier stages is shrouded in mystery due to the lack of written or recorded history of the ancient past. However, certain portions of this past history are still in store in the myths, legends and folktales of the people. Coming to the written history of the people, this was partly recorded in the Chronicles or Buranjis of Assam. Further, a more elaborate part was written by the British officials, ethnographers and historians after they have come into contact with the people of the area.

The pre-British history of the Jaintias may be broadly based on literary, archaeological and other allied sources. The literary sources consist of both internal and external accounts. The internal accounts can be traced mainly through the Paroms (literally, stories) in which the story of the origin of the Sutnga kings can be found.¹ The other literary sources that can be found in the country are the various scripts used by the Jaintia kings in dealings with their neighbouring countries.² Likewise, other literary accounts

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1. Pakem, B. "Sources of the Early History of the Jaintias", in Sources of the History of India, Vol. II, (Ed.) S.P. Sen, Institute of Historical Studies, Calcutta 1979, p. 181. In the same publication, see also Bhattacharjee, J.B. "Sources of the History of the Khasis and Jaintias"; Bareh, H. "Sources of the History of the Khasis and Jaintias", Rymbai, R.T. "History of the Khasis and Jaintias in the Pre-British Period."
 2. Bareh, H. The History and Culture of the Khasi People, Shillong 1967, pp. 4-5.

can also be found from external sources, as for example, the classical accounts of the Greeks and Romans, the Burmese and Chinese accounts, the Puranic and Tantric literature, the different Buranjis of Assam and the British Records.³

It is only with the coming of the British that we get a relatively accurate accounts of the history of the Jaintias. But somehow these accounts did not give much information as to the origin, migration and the condition of the country before the British came into contact with the Jaintias. With few exceptions,⁴ most of these British reports contained information only after the year 1774 A.D., when the officials of the East India Company came into contact with the Jaintias from the hills through the First Anglo-Jaintia war of 1774 A.D. Subsequently, more information were made available since 1835 A.D., the year in which Jaintia Hills was annexed by the British.

Like in the case of the history of the origin of the Jaintia people, so also the history of their migration is shrouded in mystery. This has sometimes led to a controversy

3. Pakem, B. Op.cit.

4. One of the sources of migration of the Jaintia people could be found in the history of the origin of different clans. Gordon's book The Khasis deserves special mention here where he made use of such source while trying to trace the history of the origin of one clan, that is, the Laloo-Diengdoh-Lamin clan. Gordon's contemporaries did not pay attention to such important source of history. This part of history is becoming more popular now among the local scholars.

as to the actual route of migration. All sorts of derivations, speculations, assumptions, legends and stories have been suggested. However, many scholars opined that the Jaintias came from the East. There can be no two opinions on this. We also agree with the view that "when the Jaintias entered the present hills, they came in batches and were variously known by different names of these different batches such as the Amwis, Changpungs, Jowais, Nartiangs, Raliangs, Sutngas, and many others."⁵

The Jaintia society being a matrilineal one, the role and status of women both in the family and the society at large, is quite different from that of other societies which do not follow the same system. Women of the Jaintia society occupy a higher distinct status with certain restrictions especially in political affairs. As far as political activities are concerned, women are devoid of them traditionally. It is also true traditionally, that in political matters a woman does not have any place and she is not allowed to participate in political decision-making process. But there are stories and legends prevailing in the Jaintia society which mentioned about the existence of women rulers. Specific instance in this case may be referred to Ka Syiem Latympang who

5. Pakem, B. "The Changing Power Structure of the Political Institution of Jaintia Chieftainship", NEICSSR Journal, Op.cit., p. 1.

established her own kingdom and ruled over her people. She was quite powerful and wise too.⁶ Thus, although political affairs were dominated by men, the society had occasionally produced such able rulers among women too.

Leadership and leadership role in the Jaintia society was found to exist even outside the administrative sphere. The principle of right of landownership granted to the original clans also symbolised power and authority. For instance, permanent and wet-rice cultivation was more prominent among the original clans and/or the ruling clans. This was possible due to certain privileges enjoyed only by the members of these privileged clans and the holders of the offices of traditional institutions. Thus, Rek lands or Service lands, the choicest plots for cultivation and religious or Puja lands were settled perpetually with the leading families serving the Raid or Elaka in different capacities. The common people were permitted to cultivate freely the community or Raid lands which were in fact wastelands in the Raid. But ownership reverted to the Raid when a person ceased cultivating it. People from outside the Raid should get Doloi's previous permission before using any wasteland.⁷ Jhum or shifting cultivation is also found to

6. Lyngdoh, U Homiwell. Ki Syiem Khasi Bad Synteng (In Khasi), Shillong 1952, pp. 12-15.

7. Pakem, B. "State Formation in Pre-Colonial Jaintia", NEHU Journal, Op.cit., p. 58.

be more prominent among the common people of the Elaka. Even when the District Council came into existence, Rek lands and Puja lands are made revenue free and meant specifically to be held and cultivated by a Chief or Headman as remuneration for his service in lieu of salary. The yield or income from Puja lands is utilised for meeting expenses connected with religious performances according to customs of each Elaka. However, the Act of 1975 passed by the Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council, forfeited the right to cultivate and enjoy these lands by a Chief or Headman who has been suspended or removed from office.

In terms of leadership in trade and commerce, a distinct feature is noticeable. The leading or original clans which also enjoyed political authority were found to have more access to trade even outside the territorial jurisdiction of the kingdom with bigger traders due to their wider connection with the outside world. Generally, local trade was more or less confined to common people. Holders of the offices of traditional institutions like Dan (collector) were also responsible in collecting tolls from the markets, the total collection of the same they shared with other officials of the Elaka. Traditionally, leadership role in the Jaintia society could therefore be explained and noticed not only in terms of administrative role and functions only but even outside its purview.

The Jaintia people were the first few migrants to have come and occupied their present habitat. During their migratory period, the Jaintias came in different groups or batches. Each of these batches had their own leader or Chief (U Langdoh) who also played the role of a religious leader.

With the increase in area and population, sacred administration also increased. As a result, the priest handed over those functions which are purely administrative in nature to a secular Chief, U Doloi. The settled life of the people gave rise to the increase in the number of Elakas. In the process a general desire arose among the people and their Dolois to form a loose federation. The idea was to create a centralised administration under one central authority. This desire was accomplished with the miraculous birth of the royal family. It also led to the origin of Ki Syiem Blai (the Divine Kings) which brought all the Jaintias under one central authority.⁸

With the evolution of the institution of kingship, a three-tier system of administration was firmly established in Jaintia Hills. At the top of the hierarchy there was the Syiem or Raja in the middle or zonal level, there were Dolois or provincial governors for each Raid or Elaka, and at the lowest rung of the ladder of administration, there was a

8. Pakem, B. "The Changing Power Structure of the Political Institution of Jaintia Chieftainship", NEICSSR Journal, Op. cit., p. 1.

Waheh Chnong or village headman in every village. Occasionally, an extra tier between the province and the village was instituted when the former was too large. Such an extra tier was placed under a Pator or lieutenant governor. This system continued until the coming of the British in the eighteenth century. The British created another office, that is, the office of Sirdar.

The smallest social unit in Jaintia Hills is the family where leadership fell on the seniormost male member called U Knyi, literally a maternal uncle of the family or clan. U Knyi could be an infant of one day old in case where adult male members were either killed in fighting against the enemies or when an older person had an unclean record. In case where there was no male relative at all, the family and clan concerned resorted even to hire or purchase a maternal uncle. In secular functions, the uncle of the family is called U Knyi and for religious functions he is called U Langdoh or priest. To differentiate him from the priest of the larger area, he is sometimes called U Ksoh Blai, literally one who holds God.⁹

At the village level, the office of U Waheh Chnong or village Headman exists. Elected by the adult male members of

9. Pakem, B. "State Formation in Pre-Colonial Jaintia", NEHU Journal, Op.cit., p. 50.

the village, a village headman, unlike that of the Doloi need not necessarily belong to the original or founding clans only. All clans in the village have equal right and privilege to set up a candidate for the office of headman. However, since the original or founding clans are always in a majority, the villagers often favour the candidate who belongs to such clans. Democratic process is therefore found to be structurally and operationally working at the village level in the Jaintia society. But, even here women are excluded from taking part in the election and decision-making process.

Traditional leadership functions at the village level through the institution of village headman. The headman plays the role of a spokesman of the village both in its internal and external administration and relationship. He represents the village in the whole Elaka Durbar and speaks for and on its behalf as its head. Even at this lowest rung of the ladder of administration and leadership, a village headman cannot decide things concerning the village affairs all by himself. A village durbar or council assists him in running the administration. Such democracy is without any party alignment. In the decision-making process, the headman is therefore bound to consult the village durbar before taking final decision on any matter affecting the village and the people. Both the headman and the durbar therefore play an important role in village administration and leadership. Op.cit., p. 2.

Traditional polity and institutions did not remain only at the village level. Above the village, other political institutions also existed at the Elaka or Raid level, each under the administration of Doloi. A Doloi was and is still the Chief of the Elaka or Province, which was formed by combining a group of villages or Raids. A Doloi is usually elected from among the adult male members of the original or founding clan or clans of the Elaka. Further, even from among these clans, the candidate or candidates for the elective post of a Doloi were recruited mostly on ascriptive criteria rather than on grounds of achievements.¹⁰ So also leadership pattern at this stage is determined on ascriptive criteria rather than on achievement-orientation basis.

Traditionally, only the original clans or Kmai Kurs within their respective Raids or Elakas could produce leaders and whose members could aspire for any political office of significance. However, a recent phenomenon has developed among the Jaintias, though in a very mild form, where the demand was made by some non-original clans in few Elakas for granting equal right and opportunity in the case of setting up of candidates to the office of Doloi and Pator. The non-original clans tried to bring in the modern concept of democratisation of election where all clans should have the right

10. Pakem, B. NEICSSR Journal, Op.cit., p. 2.

to set up their candidates to these offices. There were cases no doubt where members among these clans were elected either as Doloi or Pator. But that was only a temporary arrangement. In most cases such attempts proved to be a failure as they have no sanction of the traditional custom and usages of the land. The procedure always reverted back to the traditional system of election. The society as a whole has not as yet accepted such demand of bringing in a drastic change in the traditional customary practices. The legitimisation of political power and authority being limited and concentrated only to the members of the original clans, gave rise to the question as to how democratic is the traditional system. In this respect we agree with the view that, "structurally, the Jaintia State was regarded as a democratic one but operationally the structure was more responsive than democratic. The role of the original clans made it so."¹¹

✓ Once a Doloi is elected, he normally holds the office for life, unless he is asked to resign due to misbehaviour or should he arouse sufficient hostility to the people of the Elaka. This power remained with the people for sometime even after the British Political Agent was appointed to look after the administration of the area. The Doloi has therefore to run the administration according to the popular opinion of

11. Pakem, B. NEHU Journal, Op.cit., p. 58.

his Elaka. All actions of the Doloi pertaining to the Elaka have to be approved by the Elaka Durbar. Thus, in the pre-British period, power belonged not only to the Dolois but also shared by the citizens of the Elaka. The people appointed their Dolois to supervise the administration and not to suppress or oppress them.

After the office of Doloi came into existence, he provided leadership at the next higher hierarchy of the structural traditional political system in Jaintia Hills. A Doloi became a central authority over a number of villages and Raids within the Elaka. In order to enable him to perform and provide leadership role within the Elaka, he has been empowered with executive, political, judicial and religious functions. In the past, Dolois also performed military functions. A Doloi is assisted by the Durbar Elaka or Durbar Raid in running the administration of the Elaka. Therefore, a Doloi has to act or decide the matters concerning the Elaka in consultation and with the approval of this Durbar.

The Dolois wielded much power over their respective Elakas. The administration of the hills section of the Jaintia kingdom was left entirely in the hands and supervision of the Dolois. They could allow the Syiem to handle only matters of common interests like defence, communications and foreign affairs and that too in a very limited way. The Dolois and

their people from the hills could even take a decision to do away with a Syiem if he so incurred displeasure or acted in a ruthless manner against them. As the Dolois were the de facto heads of the hills administration of the Jaintia kingdom, much depend on them to shoulder the responsibilities in providing leadership and to help preserve, protect and defend the traditions, customs and general welfare of the people.

When the number of Elakas increased, there was a feeling among the Jaintias to establish unity among themselves. In the process a group of Elakas came together to form a loose confederation for the purpose of inter-Elaka relations, defence and foreign affairs. But the question arose on who could be the leader of the confederation. Such question arose because the office of U Syiem or Raja, was initially taken by the society to be a despised one. No one would like to shoulder the responsibility on account of certain duties which placed a person holding the office at an odd position and status. In the deliberations that followed, the Sutnga Elaka was chosen to shoulder this responsibility due to certain considerations that went in its favour.¹²

Due to these certain strict conditions laid down by the society, it may so happen that no one from within the

12. Pakem, B. NEHU Journal, Op.cit., p. 54.

society would be willing to take up the office of U Syiem. Hence, there must be a way out by which such a leader be found either by forcing somebody to take up the job, or to create a miraculous origin myth to convince the people that the Divine had also a hand in the selection of Syiem or Raja. The Jaintias in their wisdom choose the later course of action as the former idea might not enforce discipline in the society as U Syiem would then appear merely as a petty servant of the State. Thus we have two categories of Syiem in Jaintia Hills; Ki Syiem Blai (Divine Kings) and Ki Syiem Mynroo (the slave kings).¹³

The office of Syiem came into existence at the last stage of polity formation among the Jaintias. Although this office existed at such a late stage, yet it occupied the apex position and status in the administrative hierarchy and leadership till its abolition in the year 1835 by the British. With the evolution of this office, traditional leadership had reached its full circle when the whole of Jaintia Hills was centrally administered under one authority with the assistance of other leaders at the lower levels. However, the Jaintia Syiem's or Raja's actual personal power and control prevailed only over the conquered territories in the northern and southern plains of the Kingdom. Over the areas in the

13. Pakem, B. NEHU Journal, Op.cit.

in the plains, the Syiem or Raja was an absolute dictator, the supreme administrative head and the fountain head of justice. He also owned all the land in the plain areas.¹⁴ On this account, the de facto power and functions of the Jaintia Syiem or Raja could be said to have existed only over his ryots in the plains.

A new era of administration emerged in the history of Jaintia Hills after its annexation by the British. The year 1765 was an important milestone in the history of Anglo-Jaintia relation. But practically speaking, the East India Company was not much interested to get involved in the affairs of Khasi-Jaintia Hills following the acquisition of Sylhet district. The Khasi and Jaintia Chiefs were left undisturbed for sometime. Another unique milestone in the early history of Anglo-Jaintia relationship took place in the year 1774 between the months of February to June.¹⁵ During this year, an expedition by the East India Company's troops over the southern territory of Chatra Singh, the Jaintia king, took place under the command of Captain Ellerker. Apparently, that brief period proved to be a major deciding step for a closer contact between the two. The initial years of the contact between the Jaintia people and the British were therefore an

14. Pakem, B. NEICSSR Journal, Op.cit., p. 1.

15. Firminger, W.K. (Ed.) Sylhet District Records, Vol. I. No. 13, Shillong 1913.

unhappy ones. Many raids, internecine wars, and skirmishes took place, time and again at different period of time. Other unfortunate incidents during the period from 1821-1832 culminated in the annexation of Jaintia Hills in 1835. What followed subsequently was a long history of British interaction and the extension of total involvement in the administration of the area till the eve of independence.

Though the office of the Jaintia Syiem was abolished, the other offices of Doloi, Pator and village Headman were retained by the British and allowed to continue as autonomous heads of their Elakas and villages respectively. The entire administration of the hill areas of Jaintia Hills was left in the hands of these traditional authorities. Subsequently, however, the British changed their non-interference policy to that of total interference in the administration of the area. It was after such decisions were taken that the British made their presence really felt. Immediately measures were taken to limit, curtail and even strip off many of the powers and functions of the traditional authorities.

With regards to the office of Doloi, drastic changes were made in the tenure of office. From a life time tenure, the British reduced it to three years only under the conditions that the Dolois conducted their duties efficiently. At the end of the tenure, the same Doloi may of course be re-elected by

17. Ibid., p. 68.

18. Ibid., p. 73.

the people. Further, the Doloi's election has to be approved and confirmed by the Principal Assistant Commissioner. The changes introduced by the British were no doubt severly criticised by the Dolois.¹⁶

In the pre-British period, the Dolois were obliged to remain in attendance for about six months in a year, on the Jaintia Raja at Jaintiapur. Pators were appointed by the people to look after the administration during their absence. But the British did not allow the Dolois to leave the station without the permission of the Principal Assistant Commissioner, otherwise a locum tenens will be elected and allowed to function with full power of a Doloi.¹⁷

Over and above those changes, the British passed an order to the effect that "no person should be eligible to the offices of Doloi and Sirdar who is unable to read and write both Bengali and Khasi languages."¹⁸ This will help the District officer, according to the British plan, to communicate and deal directly with the Chiefs without any interpreter. Secondly, the idea was that if the Chiefs had possessed even the elementary knowledge, they would have known the hopelessness of armed opposition to the Government. To impose more

16. Allen, W.J. Report on the Administration of the Cossyah and Jynteah Hill Territory, 1858, Calcutta 1975 (Reprint), pp. 69-70.

17. Ibid., p. 68.

18. Ibid., p. 73.

stringent control over the Dolois' power and functions, the British Government based some flimsy grounds either asked the Dolois to tender or reject their resignation. On similar grounds, the Dolois were either fined or dismissed from office.¹⁹ With the imposition of house tax in Jaintia Hills, the traditional Chiefs were reduced to that of "Commission agents" of the British Government. They were therefore made to help raised the income and revenue of the alien government by extracting the same from their own people. Of course, the Chiefs received a commission of 20 per cent on their total collections.²⁰

The other area of change made by the Colonial rulers was in imposing restrictions on civil and criminal powers of the Chiefs. For instance, in 1841, the Political Agent limited the Chiefs' jurisdiction in civil suits to the value of Rs.50 (Rupees Fifty) and prohibited them from trying all criminal cases which they, their relatives and dependants, and other Chiefs were in any way concerned. The power of the Chiefs to adjudicate cases of serious and heinous nature were completely taken away and the same were entrusted in the hands of the British officials stationed in the area. To this effect, the

19. See the Annual Reports on the Administration of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills for the years 1906-1915.

20. Allen, W.J. Op.cit., p. 72. Op.cit., p. 2.

traditional Chiefs were reduced to mere assessors or jurymen and can decide the least of the cases.²¹

Against this background, it was very clear that the British administration had definitely upset the traditional political system operating in the area under study. The British had become the absolute masters with no other authority to limit their power over the Jaintias. Thus under the alien government the democratic process that existed in Jaintia Hills in whatever dimension began to erode.²² This changing effect was not however felt by the people as they were ruled by their own Chiefs who belonged to their own society.

After the country's independence, the Constituent Assembly which fashioned the Constitution of free India appointed a Sub-Committee for the North-East Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded Areas. This Sub-Committee was to enquire into the social customs, traditional institutions and other indigenous forms of government and suggest measures to help the people concerned preserve, protect and promote their development in accordance with their own culture and genius. The Sub-Committee under the Chairmanship of Gopinath Bardoloi recommended the introduction of the District and Regional Councils under the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution. The

21. Allen, W.J. Op.cit., p. 72.

22. Pakem, B. NEICSSR Journal, Op.cit., p. 2.

Sub-Committee felt that such a Council was an appropriate constitutional body to safeguard the tribal interests and protect them, their lands, forests, culture, customs, traditional institutions etc. The District Council under the Sixth Schedule was therefore empowered to make laws, among other things, with respect to land, management of forests, primary school education, establishment of village or town councils, administration of justice, inheritance of property, marriage, divorce, social customs as well as appointment or succession of Chiefs or Headmen.

In 1952, when the District Council was introduced in the area, it brought into existence a new type of political system which replaced the British administration. With it, a new era of administration emerged among the people who had hitherto been administered by their traditional Chiefs. Most of the powers and functions of these Chiefs were either taken away or curtailed by the District Council and they were also put under its complete control and supervision. The traditional Chiefs as leaders of their people are now treated by the District Council as its subordinate officials. This had happened because of certain provisions contained in the Sixth Schedule. For example, under paragraph 3(i)(g) of the Sixth Schedule, the District Council was empowered to regulate the "appointment or succession of Chiefs and Headmen". Therefore,

the appointment or succession of Chiefs and Headmen to be valid, it has to be approved by the Executive Committee of the District Council.

The United Khasi-Jaintia Hills Autonomous District (Appointment and Succession of Chief and Headman) Act, 1959, (hereafter referred to as the Principal Act) made provisions not only for the appointment or succession of Chiefs and Headmen, but also their removal and suspension by the Executive Committee of the District Council if in its opinion the Chiefs and Headmen violate the terms and conditions of their appointment. Two fundamental changes from the traditional customary practices were introduced by the same Act which relate to the appointment of Deputy Chief (Section 10) and an Acting Chief (Section 11). However, the Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council passed an amendment Act in 1973 deleting Section 10 of the Principal Act as it caused deviation from the traditional customary practices. But at the same time, the same District Council retained Section 11 of the Principal Act. Many Acting Chiefs were therefore appointed as per the provision of this Act. This tantamounts to complete deviation from the traditional customary practices of the people. Traditionally, once a Chief is appointed, he holds his office for life unless removed for very strong reasons like moral turpitude or commission of heinous crimes. The same section of the Act, empowered the Executive Committee of the District Council to

appoint "any person" from any clan to act as an Acting Chief and exercise all powers and functions of the Chief. This again shows a complete deviation from tradition and against the norms of the society.

The Jaintia Hills Autonomous District (Appointment and Succession of Chiefs and Headmen) (Second Amendment) Act, 1975, inserted a new Section (Section 10) in the Principal Act forfeiting the right to cultivate and enjoy Service and Puja lands by a Chief or Headman who has been suspended or removed from office. By doing so, the District Council is trying to appropriate lands which according to tradition, such lands will be reverted back only to the Chief's clans. Reason being that these lands had been specifically meant for the upkeep of the Chief and to meet expenses incurred in religious performances. But the District Council claims the right over such lands whenever the Chief is suspended or removed. Thus, instead of acting as an institution to help preserve, protect and defend the traditions and customs of the people, the District Council acts otherwise.

The various Acts enforced by the District Council under the Sixth Schedule from time to time, brought radical changes in the pattern and procedure of election and appointment or succession of Chiefs and Headmen in the area under study. Under these Acts, the position and status of Chiefs was reduced to that of stipendiary officials. Moreover,

under the new constitutional set up, the Chiefs are pushed behind the line of leadership. Leadership no longer remains in the hands of the traditional Chiefs. Their place is now taken by the elected representatives and the emerging elite of the society. This created a new type of leadership role. But since the traditional Chiefs continued to function, their relationship with the new political system, that is, the District Council, was all along under strains. As of now, a new trend has emerged, that is, the tradition-modernity dichotomy.

The educated or intellectual elite in the Jaintia society emanated due to the progress of education under the leadership of the Christian Missionaries in the 1840's during the British administration. These emerging elite, such as it was, almost took to western ways of living, ideas and ideals with some enthusiasm. They formed a class of their own with the help of their professions and majority of them are urban-based.

It were these emerging elite of the society who took the initiative in trying to protect, preserve and promote the rights, traditional customs and culture of their people while the leaders from the neighbouring plains were all the time trying their best to assimilate them with their culture. These elite sought to protect their people through constitutional means. One of the constitutional means was introduced in 1952 in the form of the

District Council under the Sixth Schedule. However, the District Council gave rise to the emergence of representative leadership among the elite groups of the society based on achievement-orientation. Such elite were responsible in restructuring the traditional institutions in the western model or concept of parliamentary or representative modern nation-state. In other words, these intellectual elite sought to make a political community out of the traditional society.

The after-effect of this whole process of development in the transitional period, leads to the emerging trend of the tradition-modernity dichotomy. On one hand, we find the continuity of the tradition-oriented ascriptive leadership under the traditional Chiefs, and on the other, the emerging elite have taken up the leadership role with the help of modern democratic institutions. The society and its traditional political system has therefore been broken up into these two broad dimensions. This process led to the changing pattern in leadership and leadership role.

The emerging elite replaced the traditional Chiefs in leadership and leadership role in the transitional period of the Jaintia society. There is therefore a sea-change from ascriptive to achievement-oriented leadership. In this respect, there is bound to emanate in the transitional society

a power balance between the two types of leaders. In this case, the power balance had shifted in favour of the new educated elite and elected representatives due to the impact of modern institutions. We therefore find that the traditional leaders are giving way to the emerging modern elite. While the role of ascriptive leaders like the Dolois, Pators and village Headmen has been diminished by the District Council, that of modern leaders has increased partly due to their achievement-orientation in various fields and partly due to the advantage they have over the Chiefs through the modern democratic set up of parliamentary representative institutions.

The emergence of the new political system and the elite class in the Jaintia society during the period of Colonial administration and after India's independence, led to the process of disintegration of the traditional institutions. This also gave rise to the transformation and changing pattern of leadership and leadership role — from individual to collective, from the hereditary to elective and from ascriptive to achievement-oriented. With this, leadership roles have been fully transformed in the Jaintia society in the transitional period.

This study makes a humble attempt to analytically describe and explain the effects of the emerging political systems on traditional leadership in Jaintia Hills. On the basis of historical perspective, we try to build up systematically the whole process of the evolution and the different stages of the development of the traditional institutions. These institutions did not evolve all of a sudden but gradually in different periods of time. This gradual process of their evolution and development was due to certain circumstances and depended upon the need felt by the society. As this need did not remain static but changed from time to time, so adjustment has to be made accordingly to suit the situation. The Jaintia society which has a long history, is bound to face all sorts of knotty problems on various issues as it grows and develops. In order to overcome these problems, the society has to devise ways and means to govern itself and maintain unity and cohesion all along between the leaders and the led. Different layers and hierarchies of leaders and leadership role developed due to the increasing rise of population and size of the area as the people were leading a more settled life. Different hierarchies has also to be created due to the increase in the number of functions to be performed. The same political system has to be restructured time and again to fulfill the needs of its people.

During the long process of the evolution and development of the traditional institutions, leadership pattern has evolved in different stages. Traditional leadership in the Jaintia society can be said to have its roots firmly established right from the family level. The same is to be found at the clan and groups of clans level; from there it developed further into the village and provincial or Elaka level and finally reached the highest hierarchy at the broadest level of the State.

We also make an attempt in this study to analyse the traditional leadership pattern at every stage of the hierarchy stated above, starting from the family level which we consider to be the smallest social unit in the Jaintia society. As the society grows, leadership also became more complex at the different layers. Powers and functions were distributed among the different tiers of administration. In the process, the simple administration that existed at the family and village levels became more and more complex and inter-related as it expanded upward. The same process continued to exist at a much higher level of administration.

The influence and impact of the neighbouring people in the plains and their polity as well as the colonial administration on the Jaintia traditional polity is also extensively covered in the study. This study probes further into the

effects of the colonial administration in particular as this forms a major contributing factor in the administrative history of Jaintia Hills. The distinguishing feature in the case of Jaintia Hills is its long history of contact with the more advanced communities and cultures outside its own which are totally foreign — socially, culturally and politically. Secondly, its contact with the colonial administration, qualified by its longer duration, had made such an impact on the prevailing traditional institutions to a great extent. This confluence of others cultures, both socially and politically on the same society and its institutions made things more complicated. The exposure of the Jaintia society to these diversified streams and directions brought immense effects on the traditional leadership of the society. Relevant chapters have been provided in the study to probe deeper into the entire history of the changing processes which had played a major role in the Jaintia society in its relation with the forces that had come from outside.

After India's independence another era of administration emerged in the area under study. This was marked by the introduction of the District Council under the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India. This period has also far reaching impact on traditional leadership in Jaintia Hills. We examine these factors threadbare in Chapter IV. To understand the crux of this issue, that is, the effects of the new

political system on traditional ones, different Acts passed from time to time by the District Council, besides the general impact of the same, are critically examined to bring into light the changes brought about. How far such Acts were responsible in deviating from the traditional system and practices relating to various aspects of traditional leadership is empirically highlighted.

(1) The colonial administration as well as the District Council are responsible in the creation of a new type of relationship between the traditional leaders and the emerging elite of the society. This trend gives rise to a pertinent issue — the problem of tradition — modernity dichotomy. We have analysed this problem with a critical mind to show the changing phase that has taken due to the presence of this dichotomy between the traditional leaders, under the leadership of the traditional Chiefs and the modern leaders, led by the elected representatives to various modern democratic institutions.

On the whole, the study tries to answer the multifacet pertinent questions on the issue of traditional and modern leadership which had worked and is still working in the Jaintia society. This study is the first of its kind because no such rigorous attempts were made before. It is true that few research articles were written and published before, but

(vi) the treatment of the subject is too scanty and limited. We therefore try to probe beyond of what was done before by expanding our universe and delve deeper to reach into wider and concrete conclusions.

(vii) The findings of this study are very clear. In short, we found that -

- (i) there is a continuity of the traditional leadership even amidst the changes, though the power and functions of the traditional leaders are very much reduced to a great extent;
- (ii) the colonial administration and the District Council under the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution were responsible in introducing new political systems in the area under study;
- (iii) the new political systems have had far-reaching effects on the traditional political institutions leading to erosion of whatever democratic system prevailing among the people;
- (iv) the British administration and the District Council were responsible in the emergence of the new political elite in the society;
- (v) leadership passed into the hands of the emerging political elite under the new political systems;

- (vi) power balance shifted in favour of the emerging political elite: by drawing their strength from the new political institutions. The traditional leaders and the institutions were pushed behind the line of leadership and leadership role.
- (vii) Tradition-modernity dichotomy has emerged in the transitional period of the Jaintia society.

Although the present study tries to answer many important issues, it has no doubt, its own limitations and constraints. Many other areas of enquiry are still left to be covered. They are, we feel, beyond the purview of our present study. Therefore, we would like to mention a few more important areas of enquiry which need to be seriously taken for further research. In brief, these issues are like — British Areas and Political leadership; the role of intellectuals in the political development of the State of Meghalaya; the role of Political Elite ; traditional institutions, District Council and State Government relationship, and others, require further research in the future.
