

The Enchanting Life and  
Culture of the  
**JAINTIAS**  
of Meghalaya



NE  
301-451095-  
ENC 4164

# The Enchanting Life and Culture of the **JAINTIAS** of MEGHALAYA



Directorate of Information and Public Relations  
Meghalaya

Gen

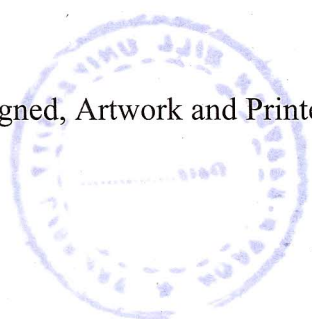
First Published in: December, 2005

Copyright ©: The Directorate of Information and Public Relations,  
Govt. of Meghalaya, Shillong

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, without the written permission of the Publisher

Published by: **The Directorate of Information and Public Relations,  
Govt. of Meghalaya, Shillong-793001**  
Phone: (0364) 222-4957, 222-4617  
Website: www.megipr.nic.in

Designed, Artwork and Printed by: Adland Publicity Pvt. Ltd.  
11C, Monalisa, 17, Camac Street  
Kolkata-700017, India  
Phone: 033-22476693 / 22400180  
Fax: 033-22478746  
E-mail: adland@vsnl.net



LC  
NF  
301.45197  
RMC

Photographs: Ahmed Hossain  
"Rookwood Cottage"  
M. G. Road, Shillong-793001

Text, Script and Information: S. Q. Sumer  
S. S. Laloo

Cover Photographs:  
Front Cover: A Jaintia Girl in traditional costume  
Back Cover: Behdeifkhlam Festival of the Jaintias

Price: Rs. 250.00

NEW LIBRARY  
Acc 1. 214453 ✓  
Acc 2. 101  
Date 6/7/06  
Class  
Sub  
Enter: 12/8/06  
Transcribed by

F 233  
241



Dr. D.D.Lapang  
Chief Minister  
Government of Meghalaya  
Main Secretariat Building  
Shillong - 793001

### **MESSAGE**

*I am extremely pleased to learn that the Directorate of Information and Public Relations, Government of Meghalaya is publishing a Monograph entitled "Enchanting Life and Culture of the Jaintias of Meghalaya". The book seeks to bring the Jaintias, the tribal inhabitants of the Eastern part of Meghalaya Plateau, closer to the people of the world. It intends to offer an insider's view on the life of the Jaintias, their customs, beliefs, festivals, occupations, games and even their dreams.*

*I am sure that reading the Monograph will be an enjoyable experience and the readers will get an insight into the reality of the Jaintia community.*

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of stylized, overlapping loops and horizontal strokes, representing the name Dr. D.D. Lapang.

(Dr. D.D. Lapang)

Dated Shillong,  
the 6th April, 2005



Sayeedullah Nongrum  
Minister  
I/c Information & Public Relations  
Government of Meghalaya

## MESSAGE

*Dear Reader*

*I hope that you may have read our previous books on the ethnic Khasi and Garo communities of the state of Meghalaya in which we portrayed the uniqueness of these tribes. This book is the third in the series and depicts the Jaintia community of Meghalaya.*

*The book takes an insider's view of the Jaintias, the community that occupies the land area known as the Jaintia Hills in the eastern part of Meghalaya. We have attempted to touch upon all facets of the Jaintias lifestyles, occupations, social and family patterns, religion and rituals, myths and folklore, the tapestry of culture, games and sports, special talents and their uniqueness as people. Containing all these in a single book is not an easy task, but we have tried to reveal features that would contribute to the reader's understanding of the Jaintia community.*

*We are grateful to all those who have contributed so much to bringing out this book. We are indebted towards the scholars for creating this knowledge base. For fine execution of this book, our obligation goes to writers, editors, designers, printers and all those staffs, who were behind the screen, work dedicatedly for this cause.*

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sayeedullah Nongrum', with a horizontal line underneath.

Shillong,  
21-10-2005

(Sayeedullah Nongrum)

## **MESSAGE**

*After Meghalaya – Land and People, Meghalaya – Flora and Fauna, Meghalaya – Places of Interest, The Cultural Pride of Meghalaya – Dances and Festivals, Dwellers of The High Hills – The Khasis of Meghalaya and The Pristine Culture and Society of the Garos of Meghalaya, another Pictorial Monograph, The Enchanting Life and Culture of the Jaintias of Meghalaya is all set to provide readers with an exclusive and fairly deep insight into the Jaintias, one of the major tribes of Meghalaya.*

*This volume paints a clear and lucid picture of The Jaintias, their genesis, legacy, flora and fauna, arts, tradition and customary practices and places of interest. This Monograph will be very helpful for those who seek information on the different facets of this ethnic tribe of Meghalaya.*

*I hope this endeavour of the Directorate of Information and Public Relations, Meghalaya will be useful to interested readers and research scholars.*



*(H. Marwein)  
Commissioner & Secretary,  
Information & Public Relations Department  
Meghalaya*

*Shillong,  
11th November, 2005*



## *From The Publisher's Desk*

What lies in the thick wooded hills of Meghalaya has been a subject of great intrigue. Its green valleys, cascading waterfalls, murmuring brooks and labyrinth caves have evoked the spirit of adventure in one and sundry. These facets coupled with the distinctiveness of the people dwelling in these hills complete the colourful canvas that is Meghalaya.

The third of the people series, *The Enchanting Life and Culture of the Jaintias of Meghalaya* portrays the glorious history of the Jaintias, while highlighting the tradition and culture of the people. Richly endowed by nature, Jaintia Hills District boasts of numerous spectacular sites made more interesting with majestic megaliths scattered throughout the District, particularly at Nartiang.

Like the Khasis and Garos, the Jaintias too have a rich tradition of dances and festivals. Soaking in the sights and sounds of their festivities such as the Behdeiñkhlam is an experience of a life time. Therefore, this Monograph paints a vivid picture of the Jaintia people who continue to thrive amidst the forces of change.

I hope that this effort, on our part, will be appreciated by the perceptive readers.



(Aldous Mawlong)

Director

Information and Public Relations  
Meghalaya

Dated Shillong,  
the 10th November, 2005

# Contents

Page Nos.

THE GENESIS OF THE JAINTIAS	13 - 16
LORE	16 - 19
HOW <i>KARI KHADAR DOLLOI</i> BECAME A JAINTIA KINGDOM	20 - 30
LOCATION	30
CLIMATE	31
OCCUPATION	31 - 33
VEGETABLES	33
INDUSTRY	33
CANE AND BAMBOO WORKS	33 - 35
FOREST	35 - 36
WILDLIFE	36 - 38
REPTILES	38
BIRDS	38
FOOD	38 - 39
TRADITIONAL CUISINE	39 - 40
TRADITIONAL ART OF FOOD PRESERVATION	40 - 42
MEGALITHIC CULTURE OF THE JAINTIAS	42 - 45
SCULPTURE	45 - 49
WOOD CARVING	49
ENGRAVING ON METAL	49 - 50
<i>KITHAW CHONGGLIAH</i> OR THE RESTING PLACE	50
STONE BRIDGES	50 - 53
MARRIAGE	53 - 56
LAND TENURE SYSTEM	56 - 58
TRADITIONAL SPORTS AND GAMES OF THE JAINTIAS	58 - 63
TRADITIONAL COSTUMES	63 - 64
TRADITIONAL ORNAMENTS	64
TRADITIONAL MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS	64 - 65
TRADITIONAL WEAPONS	65 - 66
INHERITANCE	66
FOLK DANCES AND FESTIVALS	66 - 76
RELIGION	76
WATERFALLS	77 - 79
CAVES	79 - 81
HILLS	81
RIVERS	81 - 82
LAKES	82
FACT FILE OF JAINTIA HILLS	84

