

The NEHU Journal

R KHONGSDIER
B T LANGSTIEH &
B M REDDY
K S NAGARAJA
KETSHUKIETUO
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ISABELLA LALL
S N SINGH
SUKALPA
BHATTACHARJEE

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The NEHU Journal

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All correspondence related to the journal may be addressed to the Editor, NEHU Publications, Bijni Complex, Shillong-793003 at tbsubba@sancharnet.in.

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Editorial

With January 2004 issue *The NEHU Journal* enters the second year of its publication. During 2003, the year of its birth, we at the editorial office were successful in obtaining the ISSN for the journal, getting the editorial board approved by the Governing Body of the University Publications, and starting the process of

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every manuscript received one citation reference. We the first referee had not been fair to an author, but from the next issue we intend to solicit book reviews, to at least two referees. Honestly, this might not always be possible, for we still need to solicit articles from friends and acquaintances, but we shall at least try and get back to the contributors for various clarifications, if and when necessary.

We begin this year with a regret about not being able to utilise the services of our very able copy editor, but are happy to announce that we have now an assistant editor who is on a full-time job related to the journal. With his editorial assistance, Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih, the Associate Editor, and I, hope to be able to pay some attention to the promotion of the journal both within and outside North-East India, which we realise is as important as raising its standard.

As we wish you all a very happy 2004, we would like to request you to kindly send your valuable articles, review essays, book reviews and academic papers for possible publication in the journal. We would also like to inform you that though we have revised our subscription rates, they are still much lower than the actual expenses involved in the publication. We shall be ever grateful if you consider patronising the journal not only by contributing to it academically but also financially by subscribing to it.

T B Subba
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Ethno-historic and Linguistic Background of Lyngngams and their Demographic Structure

B T LANGSTIEH & B M REDDY

This paper attempts to discuss the results based on detailed analysis of the ethno-historic information on family ancestry (genealogy), surnames, clan names, migration and other socio-cultural traits of Lyngngams, who live between the West Khasi Hills and South Garo Hills districts of Meghalaya (see Figure 1) and whose ethnic identity is a matter of much debate. This article also provides a critical analysis of the demographic data on their marriage patterns with special reference to the neighbouring Khasis and Garos, both of which are matrilineal but while the former speak a language of Mon-Khmer family the latter speak one of the Tibeto-Burman languages. *Lyngngams*, the subject of this article, are a group of shifting cultivators. Their total population is estimated to be about 6000 in Meghalaya (fieldwork data 1999-2000). Sandwiched between Khasis and Garos, the ethnic position of Lyngngams is disputed, and is claimed to be a sub-tribe of both the tribes. According to Gurdon (1907), Grierson (1928), Rodborne (1977), Barrett (1982), etc., Lyngngams were considered as one of the five Khasi sub-tribes or dialectical groups whereas Bhattacharjee (1978), Sangma (1981) and most Garos identify them as Megam, one of the twelve sub-tribes or dialectical groups of Garos.

Regarding their origin, some scholars believe that they might have been an independent group with a distinct origin of their own (Mathur 1979, Karotemprel 1985, Ahmed et al. 1997, Thapa et al. 1998). Others consider them as a hybrid group resulting from the admixture of the Khasi and Garo tribes (Playfair 1909, Ehrenfels

1955, Bareh 1967, Nongsiang 1994). On the other hand, analysis of their oldest folk narratives known as *Kon Bli* suggests that their ancestors were wanderers and warriors who came to Meghalaya and defended the land that they presently occupy. Most of the Lyngngams believe that they are the autochthons of the present habitat. The folk narrative just stated has nothing in common with the narratives of either Khasis or Garos, suggesting probably their independent origin. However, although many Lyngngam clan names are unique, there are certain clans that have affinity with both Khasi and Garo clans, suggesting their emergence from an admixture of both. Likewise, they have similar as well as distinctive socio-cultural features with neighbouring Khasis and Garos (Langstieh and Reddy 1999).

From the analysis of the results based on the exploratory fieldwork and published data on the Lyngngams, no clear answers emerge as to their origin and ethnic position. Their origin is shrouded in mystery and, given the type of available data, it is not possible to resolve the issue easily. Nevertheless, it is safe to assume that there has been gene flow from both the Khasi and Garo tribes and, at least linguistically, the Lyngngams appear closer to Khasis than Garos. Two closely related hypotheses seem plausible regarding their origin:

Hypothesis I

A small group of Lyngngam men wandered into their present habitat. They married women from the Khasi as well as Garo tribes living in the region, resulting in an admixed group.

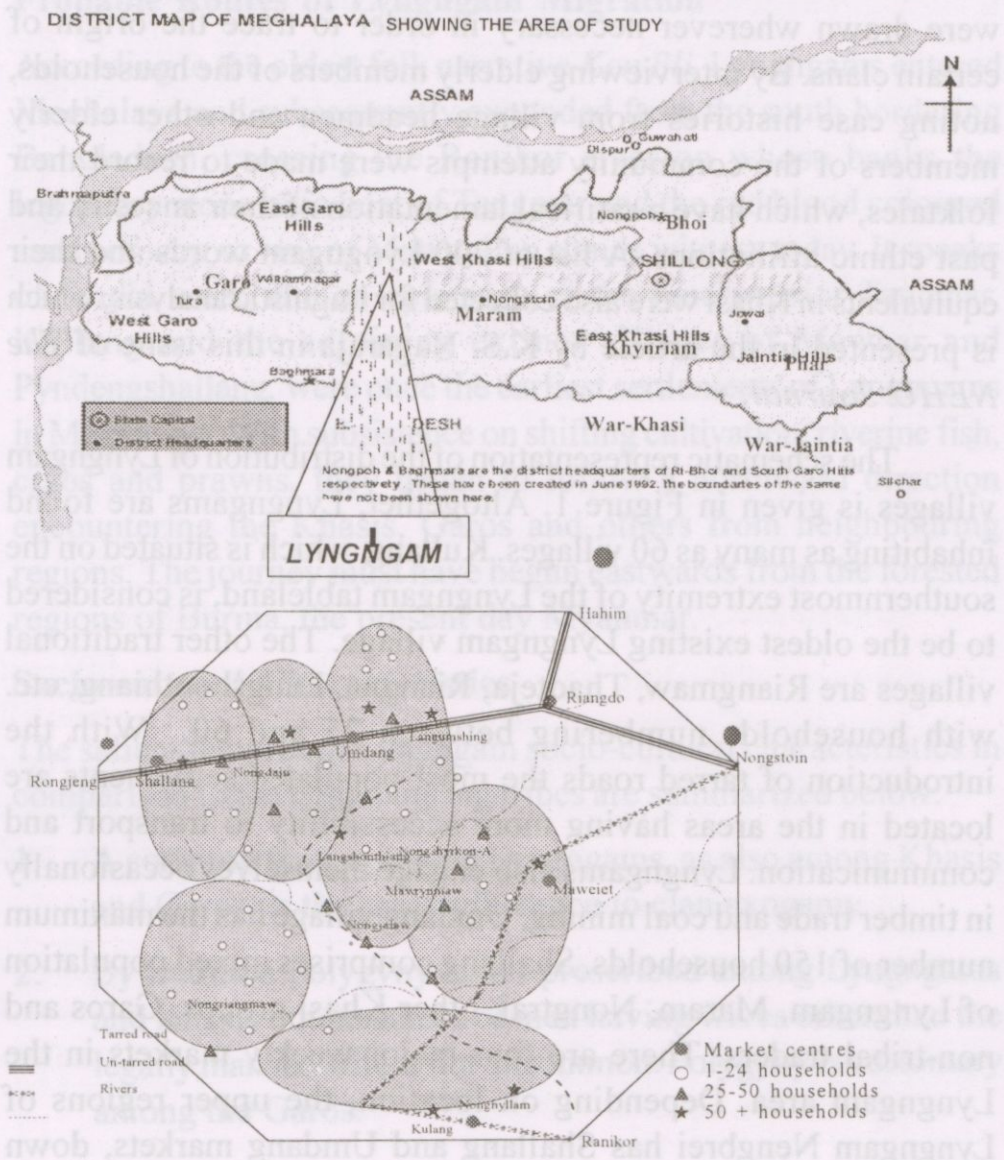
Hypothesis II

The Lyngngams could merely be a result of admixture between the neighbouring Khasi and Garo tribes, assuming distinct identity in course of time.

In either of the two possibilities, it is certain that the gene pool of the current Lyngngam population will have substantial

contributions of both the Khasi and Garo gene pools, although the relative degree of such contribution will differ. To what extent have the parental populations contributed to the genetic pool of the present-day Lyngngam population can, however, be understood only by having an in-depth study of ethno-historical and demographic information on them, along with data on molecular genetic markers, particularly through the construction of mtDNA and Y-chromosome specific haplotypes. In this paper an attempt

Figure 1. The Distribution of Lyngngam villages



has been made to trace the possible origins of the Lyngngams through ethno-historical, socio-cultural and demographic points of view, which include information on clan structure, marriage patterns, etc. with particular reference to the neighbouring Khasi and Garo tribes.

Materials and Methods

The entire Lyngngam area covering 53 of the 60 Lyngngam villages was surveyed and data on household census, marriage patterns and clan structure were collected. Besides, detailed genealogies were drawn wherever necessary in order to trace the origin of certain clans. By interviewing elderly members of the households, noting case histories from village headmen and other elderly members of the community attempts were made to record their folktales, which have a satirical lamentation of their ancestry and past ethnic affiliations. A list of 200 Lyngngam words and their equivalents in Khasi were also collected for linguistic analysis, which is presented in the article by K.S. Nagaraja in this issue of *The NEHU Journal*.

The schematic representation of the distribution of Lyngngam villages is given in Figure 1. Altogether, Lyngngams are found inhabiting as many as 60 villages. Kullang, which is situated on the southernmost extremity of the Lyngngam tableland, is considered to be the oldest existing Lyngngam village. The other traditional villages are Riangu, Thadteja, Riangu, Langshonthiang, etc. with households numbering between 25 and 60. With the introduction of tarred roads the most populated settlements are located in the areas having more accessibility to transport and communication. Lyngngams also engage themselves occasionally in timber trade and coal mining. Umdang village has the maximum number of 150 households. Shallang comprises mixed population of Lyngngam, Maram, Nongtra, other Khasi groups, Garos and non-tribal traders. There are four major weekly markets in the Lyngngam area. Depending on location, the upper regions of Lyngngam Nengbrei has Shallang and Umdang markets, down

south in the Lyngngam Rumbrei area near Nonghyllam is the Nongjri market and finally the Maweit market caters to the Lyngngam Pdeng region. The other major markets in the neighbouring regions are the Riango and Hahim markets in the north and Nongstoin the district headquarters of West Khasi Hills, which have developed into sub-urban centres. Besides acting as vehicles for social mobility, these markets are a lifeline for procuring the essential requirements of food, clothes, kerosene (used as fuel for burning the 'midnight lamp') and salt.

Probable Routes of Lyngngam Migration

According to the oldest folk narrative *Kon Bli*, Lyngngams entered Meghalaya and subsequently expanded from the south bordering Bangladesh, crossing the Ranikor river on whose banks the legendary stone relic boat of Tangmar and the red blood coloured sands of *yiap ra'rew* of Mawpyllun stands witness today. It speaks of feudal wars, and an epic saga of the lone warrior Tangmar. Kullang and the adjoining extinct villages of Mawhar and Pyndengshallang, were once the earliest settlements of Lyngngams in Meghalaya. With subsistence on shifting cultivation, riverine fish, crabs and prawns, they began to follow a northward direction encountering the Khasis, Garos and others from neighbouring regions. The journey must have begun eastwards from the forested regions of Burma, the present day Myanmar.

Socio-cultural Characteristics

The salient features of Lyngngam socio-cultural characteristics in comparison to the neighbouring tribes are summarized below:

1. A common feature among Lyngngams, as also among Khasis and Garos, is the strict adherence to clan exogamy.
2. By tradition polygyny is not prescribed among Lyngngams and Khasis but instances of men having wives other than the legally married wife is not uncommon. Polygyny is customary among the Garos.

3. Lyngngams, unlike Garos, practise maternal cross-cousin marriage very rarely and, if at all, only after the death of the maternal uncle.
4. Junior sororate marriage is not infrequent among Lyngngams, as among Garos and Khasis (Pakyntein 2000).
5. In general, selection of spouse is free for both man and woman among both Lyngngams and Khasis though arranged marriages are not uncommon among the latter.
6. A sort of dowry is distinctly in vogue among Lyngngams, but not among Khasis and Garos. The term *Seng Kdok* or *Bai Jai-bah* is payment made in cash to the bridegroom's parents by the bride's parents or her clan members as a symbol of compensation, which in literal translation means payment for the sling-cloth used for carrying little infants. However, this payment is returned in the event of divorce or death of the husband (Karotemprel 1985).
7. Residence after marriage is distinctly matrilocal among them, like Khasis and Garos.
8. Inheritance of property follows the female line.
9. *Rites de Passage* (i.e. birth, marriage and death rituals) is more or less similar with Seng Khasis and Songsorek Garos.
10. Disposal of the dead body is something that is clearly different from other Khasis and Garos. The corpse is kept on a tree till such period as all relatives are able to assemble with their contribution in kind for the funeral of the person. Once all the relatives are ready the dead body is brought down and cremated, which is followed by a grand feast.
11. As a remembrance of the departed soul, traditional Khasis erect a monolith, which is distinctly absent among Garos and Lyngngams. However, Garos erect carved wood or bamboo post known as *kima* in honour of the deceased.

12. Human sacrifice and head hunting were common among Garos but it was restricted to the Rashir clan of Lyngngams only.
13. Garos and Lyngngams have similar belief in eternal life that the departed soul rests somewhere in the Balpakram hills.
14. The traditional female dress of Lyngngams is popularly called *Pan Muliang*, a handloom woven cotton wrap-around cloth usually worn upto knee length and accompanied by a black upper garment called *phong muja*. The traditional Lyngngam costume differs from both the Garo and the Khasi ones. During our fieldwork, except by a few elderly people (age 80 years plus), wearing the traditional costume was not witnessed.

Lyngngam Clans and their Origin

There are innumerable folktales about the origin of each clan, and how each clan derived its name. Table 1 shows clan names, places of their origin, and their present locations. A total of 29 Lyngngam clan names were identified. Majority of them reflects Khasi affinity, and some are apparently of Garo origin.

Table 1: Lyngngam clan names, places of origin and locales.

<i>Clan name</i>	<i>Place of origin</i>	<i>Location</i>
Mawsor	Tyrsa	Nongstoin area, West Khasi Hills
Shyrkon / Nongsiang	Mawlibah	Nongstoin area, West Khasi Hills
Nongwar	Thang Iawnaw	No idea
Langrin	Umdohlun	Kynshi river, West Khasi Hills
Mawlong	Mairang Kynshi	West Khasi Hills

Nianglang	Nongtraï	West Khasi Hills
Sangriang	Nongphlang	West Khasi hills
Nongtngier / Marwein	Langrin	West Khasi Hills
Puwein	Rangblang	West Khasi Hills
Rongrin	Garo hills washed down by flood.	

From a detailed study of the origin of each clan with particular reference to the neighbouring Khasi and Garo tribes of Meghalaya the following picture emerges.

(Figure 2 on page 42)

It is plausible that two Lyngngam clans known as Shyrkon and Nongtngier are of Khasi origin. The members of the former are found in the Maweit region while the members of the latter are abundant in the Nongjri village, which is the southernmost tableland of Nonghyllam area. A number of such cases are also noted in certain pockets of Lyngngam area.

Table 2: Lyngngam Clans with possible Khasi or Garo Origin.

Lyngngam	Khasi	Lyngngam	Garo
1. Shyrkon ↔	Nongsiang	1. Nongmin ↔	Momin
2. Nongtngier ↔	Marwein	2. Rashir ↔	Ritchell (?)
3. Puin/Tympuin ↔	Puwein		
4. Nongsoit ↔	Nongsiej		
5. Sulemmar ↔	Sohlymmar		
6. Nonghynrum ↔	Nongrum		
7. Hahshah ↔	Rynjah (?)		
8. Nianglang ↔	Wahlang (?)		

Further, there are some Lyngngam clans that share similar names with Khasi or Garo clans but they may or may not be related. Notable examples are Mawlong, Nongbri, Diengngan, Langrin, Nianglang, Sangriang, Nongsiej, Puwein etc. among Khasis and Nongmin and Rashir among Garos. The presence of similar clan names suggests that they could be of Khasi or Garo origin but the degree of relatedness needs to be critically tested and verified. For example, the Nongbri clan, which is predominantly found in the adjoining southern parts of the Lyngngam area (NongKullang, Pormawdar, Thadteja and Amarsang) is very much Khasi in name, but it does not seem to have any relation with the Nongbri clan found abundantly in the Shillong plateau, Smit and Nongkrem. Two possibilities may be suggested here:

- (i) Independent existence or evolution of these clans with similar or same names (e.g., Nongbri, Mawlong, Dkhar)
- (ii) Common origin but due to frequent movement for shifting cultivation the members of the same clan got drifted away, resulting in the situation we have in Lyngngam area (e.g., Sangriang, Nianglang, and Sinchiang from Nongtraia area; Langrin and Nongsiej from Maram area of West Khasi Hills and Sohbar from the War region of southern East Khasi Hills).

Differing from earlier examples is the folk story of one of the most predominant Lyngngam clans known as Mawsor, which is believed to be of Khasi origin, as etymologically *Maw* means 'stone' in both Khyntiam and Lyngngam dialects and *Sor* is the Lyngngam word for *Sier*, which in Khyntiam dialect means 'deer'. As the story goes, once a pregnant Khasi woman of Wahlang clan, who was accompanying her husband on hunting trail in the forested Lyngngam area, delivered a baby girl on a big stone platform frequented by grazing deers. This little girl is believed to be the ancestress of the Mawsor clan.

Age-Sex Structure and Composition

From the complete enumeration of 1419 households of the 60

Lyngngam settlements in Meghalaya, the total population size was found to be 6172 souls. Age-sex composition of Lyngngam is depicted in the form of a population pyramid (Figure 3). The shape of the population pyramid with a broad base and gradual tapering towards the apex suggests that it is a growing population. While 43% of the population is below 15 years of age, 49% is found in the active reproductive age (15-49 years). The remaining 8% of the population is found to be in the age group of 50+ years. The empirical data among certain traditional Indian populations suggest that the effective population size amounts to about 24% of the total population (Reddy 1984). In the absence of data on the variance of family size, the effective population size (N_e) of the Lyngngam was estimated to be 1481, taken as 24% of the total population.

Figure 3 : Population Pyramid Depicting Age-Sex Composition of the Lyngngam

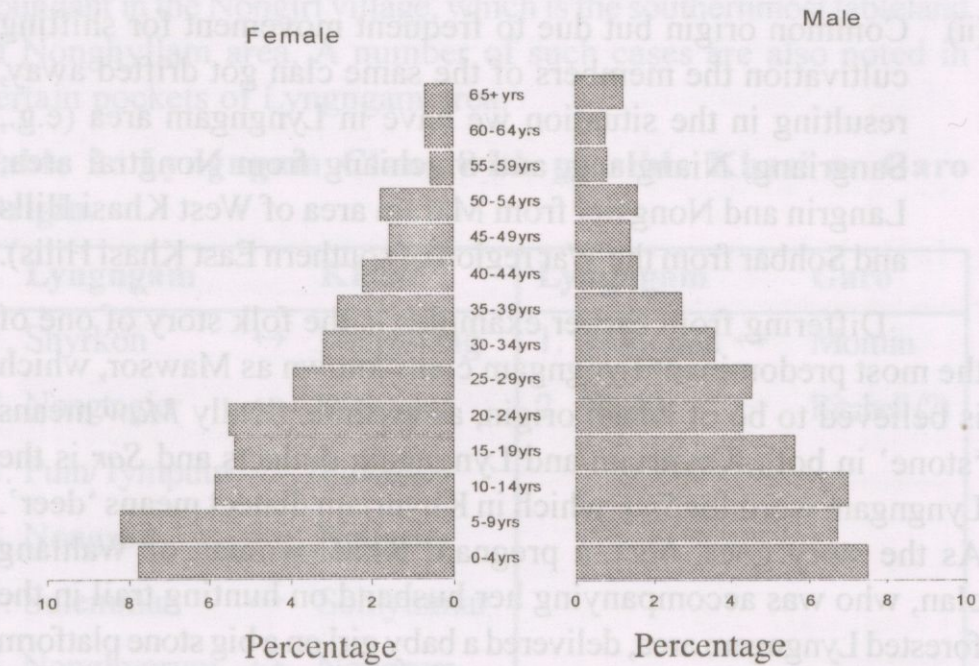


Table 3 presents sex ratio of Lyngngams at different age groups and in the total population. Overall, there is an excess of females over males (989 males per 1000 females) except in the 50+ years age group where males outnumber the females (1232/

1000). This may reflect greater female mortality after reaching 50 years. In general, women have to work harder in matrilineal society with early marriage followed by child bearing years under rough and rugged terrain of shifting cultivation. The earliest recorded age at marriage for female and male was 14 and 16 years, respectively. Being an agrarian society with the characteristics of having large family sizes and no population control, the average family size among Lyngngams was observed to be 5 – 6 children.

Table 3: Sex ratio at different age groups of Lyngngams.

Age group	Sex Ratio
0 — 14 years	972.61 males per 1000 females
15 — 49 years	967.28 males per 1000 females
50+ years	1232.14 males per 1000 females
Total	989.04 males per 1000 females

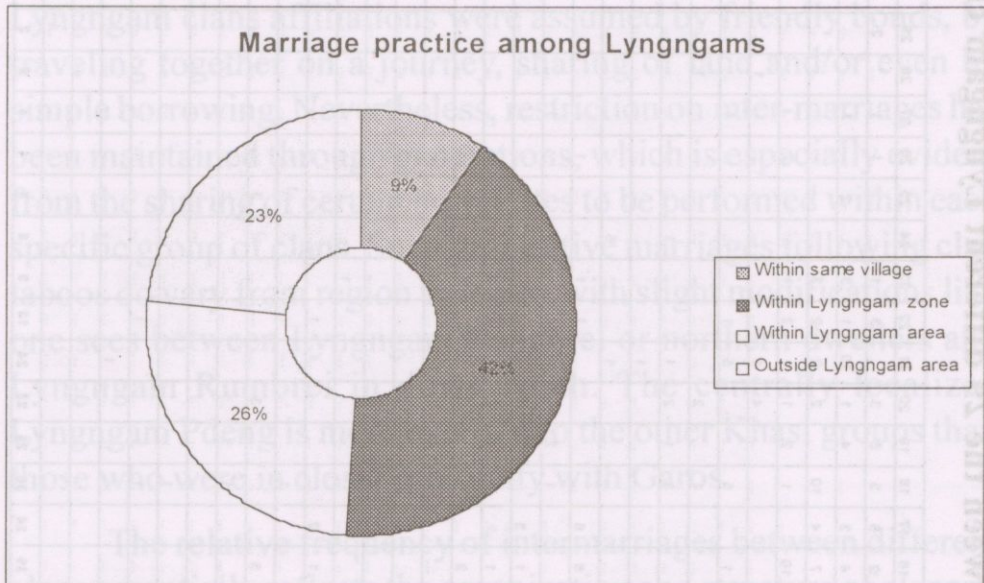
Marital Interaction

For studying the pattern of spouse selection among Lyngngams, the entire Lyngngam area was divided into 6 broad zones each comprising of 8-14 villages (Figure 1). Table 4 shows the frequency of marital interactions within village, within specified zone, within the Lyngngam area and outside the Lyngngam area. Despite the fact that in recent years the greater bulk of Lyngngam settlements have rapidly sprung up alongside areas accessible to transport, traditional families subsisting on shifting cultivation showed no different pattern in the marital exchanges between different villages. Over 50% of the marriages were contracted within the territorial boundaries of the specific zones within the broader Lyngngam area.

Table 4: Marital Interaction

	Zones	Within the Village	Within the Zone	Within the Area	Outside Lyngngam Area	Total
1.	Maweit (14 hamlets)	27 (11%)	52 (21%)	100 (40%)	70 (28%)	249
2.	Umdang (10 hamlets)	43 (11%)	105 (26%)	183 (46%)	68 (17%)	399
3.	Nongdaju (10 hamlets)	24 (10%)	42 (18%)	117 (49%)	56 (23%)	239
4.	Shallang (11 hamlets)	15 (5%)	93 (32%)	103 (35%)	81 (28%)	292
5.	Riangmaw (11 hamlets)	15 (10%)	53 (35%)	53 (36%)	29 (19%)	150
6.	Kullang (8 hamlets)	28 (10%)	69 (24%)	115 (41%)	71 (25%)	283

This pattern is uniform in all the 6 zones (Figure 4). About 26% of marital interaction in most cases were from nearby Lyngngam areas although from outside the specific zones. A moderate 23% of marriages occurred with spouses coming from non-Lyngngam areas, both from the Khasi and Garo Hills regions. These marriages from outside involved both Lyngngam and non-Lyngngam spouses, which occasionally included some non-tribal spouses. Given their marital network and the degree of marital interactions between different zones Lyngngams can be treated as a single breeding unit.

Figure 4: Pattern of Marital Interactions.

Marital Interaction between Clans

Data on the frequency of marriages between different Lyngngam clans and their lineages are given in the matrix below (Table 5). From the distribution of clan names and their predominance among villages, the most frequent and the lesser known clans can be inferred from the intermarriages occurring between them. The most predominant Lyngngam clan names are Rongrin, Mawsor, Puwein, Shyrkon, Hahshah, Nongbri and Diengngnan.

The practices of social taboo, which prohibit the selection of spouses within a clan is characteristic of this group, as is the case with most other tribal populations. Intermarriages within a specific group of clans are also strictly prohibited and considered a taboo. For example, clans which have been grouped under the respective categories of A, B, C,H, (Table 6) can marry only *between* the categories and not *within* them. Thus intermarriages between groups A and B or groups F and C, or any other, are permissible and recognized by society. This gives us enough reason to believe that the Lyngngam clans might have

Table 5 : Data matrix on the frequency of marriages between the 29 different Lyngngam clans.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	Total	
1 Rongrin	...	54	1	26	8	5	13	...	1	2	18	5	...	10	13	2	6	3	5	3	...	3	1	...	...	1	...	...	2	183	
2 Mawsoir	55	...	31	1	16	3	18	6	1	...	...	8	17	3	2	4	3	...	4	1	10	1	3	...	2	...	1	...	...	190	
3 Puwein	3	23	...	11	4	17	25	1	15	3	5	4	6	9	1	7	4	10	...	2	2	2	2	...	...	...	...	...	...	156	
4 Shykon	18	1	24	...	5	12	6	4	8	1	...	7	4	1	5	10	...	1	2	1	1	2	1	...	...	2	...	...	...	116	
5 Nongbri	2	12	3	9	...	7	...	6	26	11	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	4	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	83	
6 Riengshiang	8	6	13	16	13	...	...	8	2	1	3	2	1	...	...	1	...	5	...	...	5	1	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	86	
7 Mawlong	12	10	4	10	...	...	...	2	2	6	1	2	4	2	...	...	...	1	...	2	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	59	
8 Hahehah	...	8	1	10	19	11	8	...	12	34	...	4	1	2	...	...	...	3	1	2	1	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	118	
9 Diengngan	1	2	24	2	15	15	4	14	...	2	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	80
10 Nongngier	1	...	1	...	11	1	...	23	2	...	...	2	3	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	5	...	...	...	...	...	50	
11 Sinchiang	9	3	6	...	3	...	3	3	...	...	...	4	1	4	8	6	6	...	...	...	...	1	1	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	59
12 Dkhar	11	6	1	7	3	2	1	2	3	4	...	...	1	1	2	...	...	1	7	...	1	...	...	1	...	...	1	...	...	...	55
13 Langrin	...	4	4	5	...	...	3	...	...	3	1	...	...	1	...	1	3	...	2	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	27
14 Nongbak	9	2	6	1	...	1	2	3	1	...	...	...	1	...	...	1	...	1	2	2	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	33
15 Rashir	13	7	1	...	...	...	...	2	...	...	3	2	...	2	...	3	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	35
16 Ryntong	6	2	1	3	1	...	...	...	...	1	2	...	1	2	2	...	...	...	1	2	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	24
17 Amora	19	5	2	3	...	...	...	...	2	...	2	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	35
18 Sohbar	...	...	3	1	3	3	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	11
19 Sangriang	2	1	2	2	...	...	...	...	...	...	2	2	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	13
20 Daju	9	...	7	1	4	1	2	1	...	...	...	1	...	1	1	1	2	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	32
21 Nongmin	...	3	...	...	1	3	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	8
22 Niangiang	1	3	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	7	...	1	...	3	3	...	...	...	3	...	...	...	...	3	...	...	...	...	...	25
23 Mawbon	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1
24 Sulemmar	...	1	1	...	...	...	...	2	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	4
25 Sharbi	1	2	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	5
26 Nongwar	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	3
27 Snar	...	...	...	...	...	4	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	6
28 Nonghyrum	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	3
29 Nongsoit	2	...	...	...	...	...	...	2	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	4
Total	183	155	137	109	107	85	83	79	78	65	47	45	42	40	37	39	24	30	25	23	24	13	9	8	5	4	4	2	2	1504	

L Y N N G N G A M F E M A L E S

evolved from a common ancestor, unlike among Khyntiam Khasis whose clan affiliations are sanctioned by religion. In case of some Lyngngam clans affiliations were assumed by friendly bonds, by traveling together on a journey, sharing of land and/or even by simple borrowing. Nevertheless, restriction on inter-marriages has been maintained through generations, which is especially evident from the sharing of certain burial rites to be performed within each specific group of clans. Such prohibitive marriages following clan taboos do vary from region to region with slight modifications like one sees between Lyngngam Nengbrei or northern dwellers and Lyngngam Rumbrei in down south. The centrally localized Lyngngam Pdeng is more exposed to the other Khasi groups than those who were in closer proximity with Garos.

The relative frequency of intermarriages between different clans essentially reflects the organization and structure of clans as discussed above besides the geographical proximity among them. For example, the highest frequency of marital interactions among Lyngngams was observed between Rongrin and Mawsor clans in the northern uplands, Puwein and Shyrkon clans in the central plateau and Hahshah and Nongtngier clans in the Nonghyllam area of Lyngngam, primarily because of the geographic proximity between them. On the other hand, the lack of marital interaction and/or low frequency of marital contacts between Rongrin and Nongmin/Langrin or Rongrin and Hahshah, etc. is because they either belong to the same group of clans or are geographically placed quite apart. On the whole, it appears that there is no distinct polarization of Lyngngam clans based on marital interactions.

Table 6 : Lyngngam Surnames and Their Affinities with Khasi and Garo Clans

Groups	Lyngngam	Khasi	Garo
A	Daju	Dkhar	Mangsang
	*Mawsor	*Wahlang	Garai
	*Nongshyrkon	*Nongsiang	Songgre

	*Nongsoit	*Nongsiej	Swanggre
	Nonghynrum		
	Nongbak		
	Sohbar		
	Sohlymmar		
	Tyrsa		
B	*Rongrin	*Kharjarin	*Momin
	*Nongmin	*Langrin	Gabur
	Nongwar	Syiemlieh	Gare
	*Hahshah	*Rynjah	
	Riangtim		
	Puwein		
C	(Nongdaju Area)		
	Diengngan	Mawlong	Bordak
	Sharbri	Nongbri	Shira
	*Ryntong	*Myrthong	Marak
	*Nongtngier	*Marwein	
	Nongwar		
	Amora		
D	*Nianglang	*Wahlang	Mangsang
	Rynchiang		Swanggre
E	(Nonghyllam Area)		
	Diengngan	Lyngdoh	
	Rynchiang	Marhillong	
	Rashir	Dkhar	
	Nongbak	Mawlong	
	Puwein	Nongbri	
F	Riangshiang	Dkhar	
	Sangriang	Mawlong	
	*Ryntong	*Myrthong	
	Rashir		
G	Amora	Dkhar	

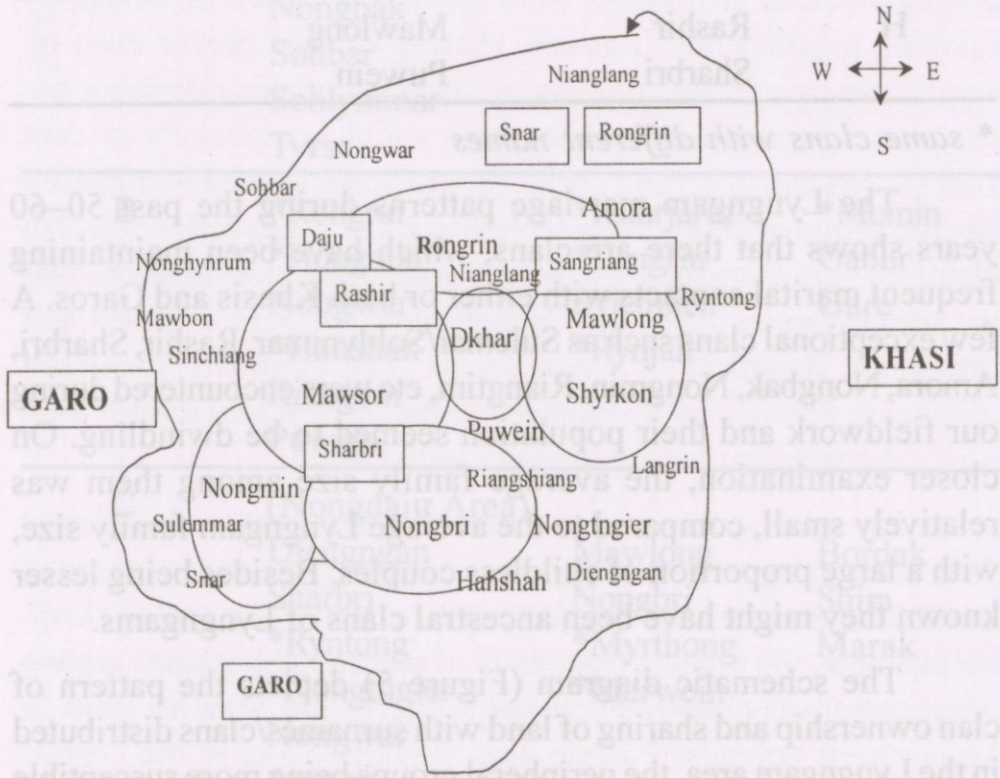
	*Nongtngier Nongwar	*Marwein
H	Rashir Sharbri	Mawlong Puwein

* *same clans with different names*

The Lyngngam marriage patterns during the past 50–60 years shows that there are clans, which have been maintaining frequent marital contacts with either or both Khasis and Garos. A few exceptional clans such as Sulemar/Sohlymmar, Rashir, Sharbri, Amora, Nongbak, Nongmin, Riangtim, etc were encountered during our fieldwork and their population seemed to be dwindling. On closer examination, the average family size among them was relatively small, compared to the average Lyngngam family size, with a large proportion of childless couples. Besides being lesser known they might have been ancestral clans of Lyngngams.

The schematic diagram (Figure 5) depicts the pattern of clan ownership and sharing of land with surnames/clans distributed in the Lyngngam area, the peripheral groups being more susceptible to greater interaction with neighbouring populations. The major landowning clans are enclosed within the circles whereas smaller groups consisting of probable recent migrants from both Khasi and Garo areas are listed as peripheral groups in the non-circled areas and most of them have no landownership. The size of the circled area indicates the area-wise distribution of the established landowning clans, while those in the boxes are clans who acquired land recently. Ownership of land by clan plays an important role in the mobility of spouses. It follows a typical pattern of asymmetric gene flow among the landholders with mainly men coming from adjoining areas. Lyngngam clans like Rongrin, Mawsor, Puwein, Shyrkon, Hahshah, Nongbri, Riangshiang, Mawlong, Diengngan, Nongtngier, Sinchiang and Dkhar marked in circled areas in Figure 5 show the highest frequency of marital interactions between different clans.

Figure 5: Schematic Representation of the Territorial Landownership of Different Lyngngam Clans.



- * Clans enclosed in circles are established landowners
- ** Clans enclosed in boxes are recent landowners
- *** Non-land owning clans are in the periphery, outside the circles/boxes

Admixture Patterns

With Lyngngams occupying the sandwiched region between Khasis and Garos substantial contribution of both these populations to the Lyngngam gene pool cannot be ruled out. Information collected from 1914 couples show that 78% marriages occurred within the Lyngngam population whereas in the remaining 22% one of the spouses came from outside the group (Table 7 and Figure 6). The non-Lyngngam men came from the neighbouring Khasi (7.84%), Garo (7.37%) and non-tribal populations (2%). As the Lyngngams follow matri-local system of residence after marriage, in most cases, it was non-Lyngngam men who came in. Children born out of

wedlock between a non-Lyngngam man and a Lyngngam woman would still be considered Lyngngam and, as it is customary, they belong to their mother's lineage. Likewise, in the few cases where Lyngngam men have married non-Lyngngam women, they are considered part of the non-Lyngngam populations.

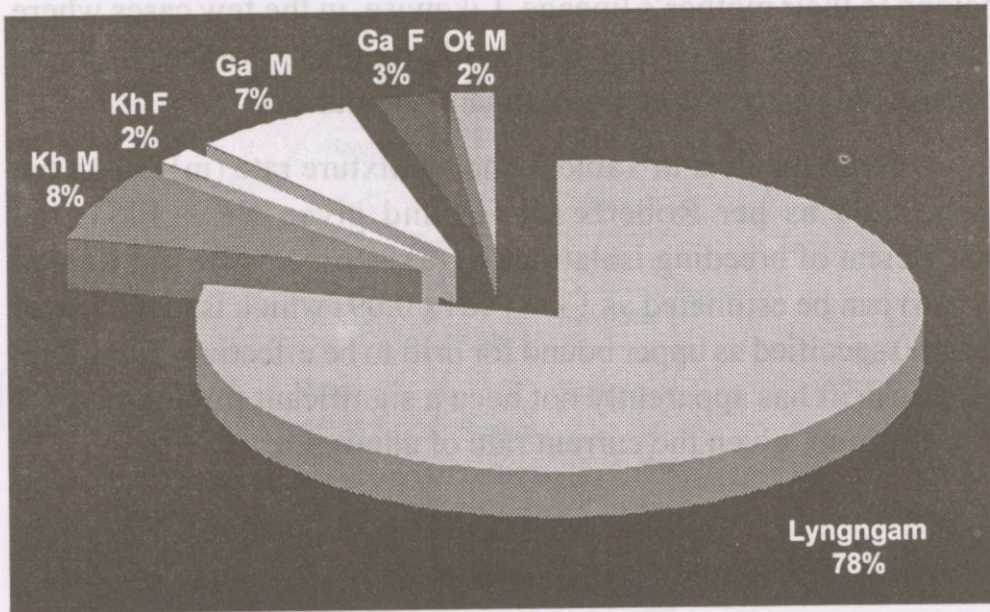
From the data in Table 7, the admixture rate (m) works out to be 0.09 as per Roberts (1956) and given $N_e = 1481$, the coefficient of breeding isolation (N_{em}) as per Lasker and Kaplan (1964) can be estimated as 133 (1481×0.09) which is much larger than 50 specified as upper bound for drift to be effective. Therefore, genetic drift has apparently not been a significant force in respect of this group, given the current rate of admixture.

Table 7: Marriage Interactions within Lyngngam and between Lyngngam and Neighbouring Populations

<i>Total no. of marriages</i>	<i>Lyngngam x Lyngngam</i>	<i>Khasi Men x Lyngngam Women</i>	<i>Garó Men x Lyngngam Women</i>	<i>Others *</i>
1914	1504 (79%)	150 (7.84%)	141 (7.37%)	35 (1.83%)
		Lyngngam x Khasi 29 (1.52%)	Lyngngam x Garó 55 (2.87%)	

* involves only males

Figure 6: Pie Diagram Depicting the Pattern of Lyngngam Marriages with Neighbouring Populations



Trends in Marriage Patterns

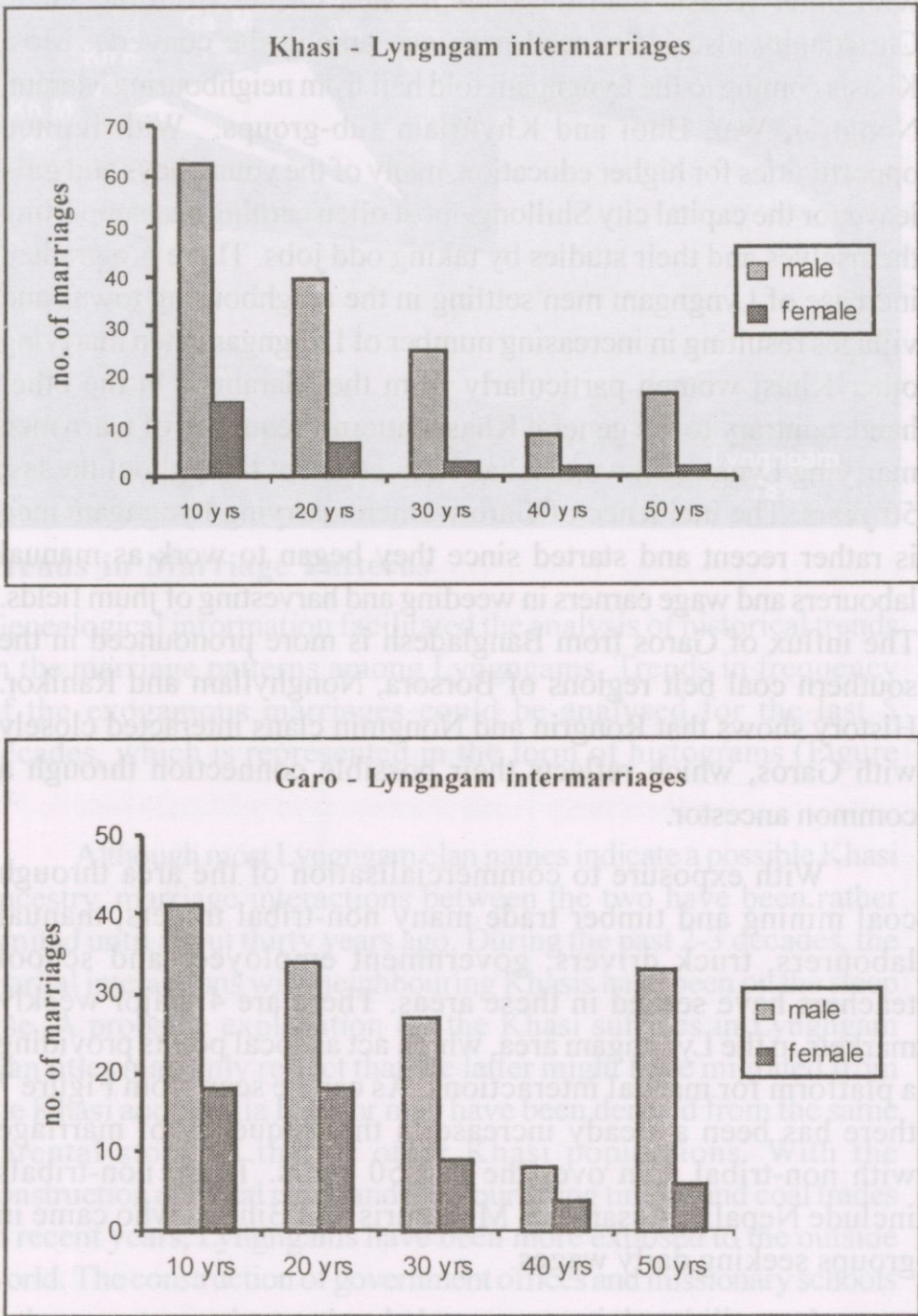
Genealogical information facilitated the analysis of historical trends in the marriage patterns among Lyngngams. Trends in frequency of the exogamous marriages could be analysed for the last 5 decades, which is represented in the form of histograms (Figure 7).

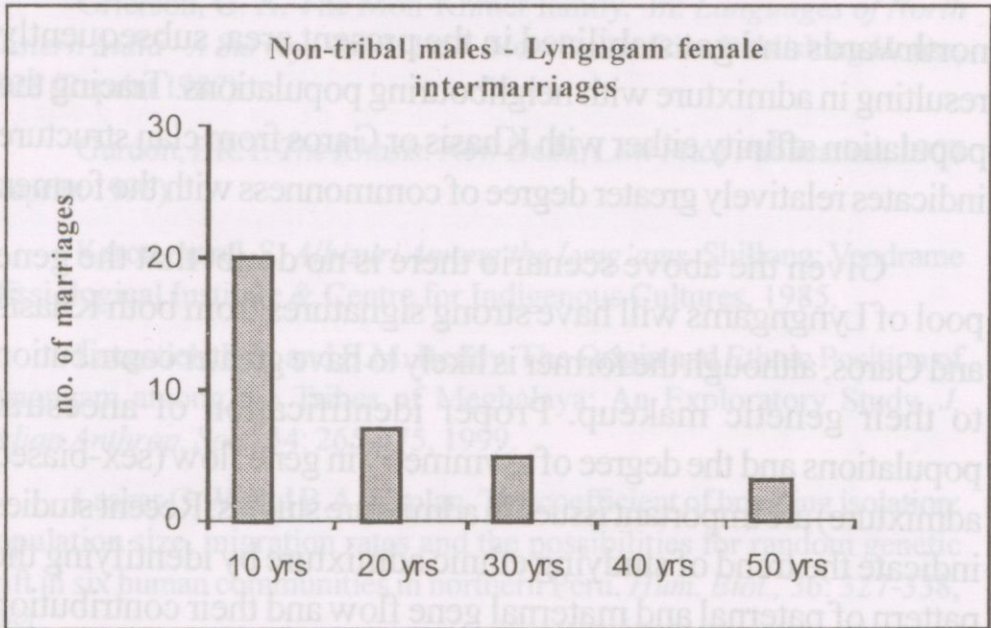
Although most Lyngngam clan names indicate a possible Khasi ancestry, marriage interactions between the two have been rather limited until about thirty years ago. During the past 2-3 decades, the marital interactions with neighbouring Khasis have been on the steep rise. A probable explanation for the Khasi suffixes in Lyngngam clan titles may only reflect that the latter might have migrated from the Khasi and Jaintia Hills or may have been derived from the same parental stock as that of other Khasi populations. With the construction of metal roads and the flourishing timber and coal trades in recent years, Lyngngams have been more exposed to the outside world. The construction of government offices and missionary schools in the remote rural areas has led to more social mobility and more

marital interactions with Khasi and non-tribal populations alike in recent years. The Lyngngam clans placed nearer to the roads and market centres have displayed more frequent marital interactions with other Khasis than the ones located farther from the same. Christianity also influenced marriage among the converts. Most Khasis coming to the Lyngngam fold hail from neighbouring Maram, Nongtraï, War, Bhoi and Khyndriam sub-groups. With limited opportunities for higher education, many of the young boys and girls leave for the capital city Shillong, most often earning and supporting themselves and their studies by taking odd jobs. There is a gradual increase of Lyngngam men settling in the neighbouring towns and villages resulting in increasing number of Lyngngam men marrying other Khasi women particularly from the Marams. On the other hand, contrary to the general Khasi pattern, frequency of Garo men marrying Lyngngam women has been constant throughout the last 50 years. The incidence of Garo women marrying Lyngngam men is rather recent and started since they began to work as manual labourers and wage earners in weeding and harvesting of jhum fields. The influx of Garos from Bangladesh is more pronounced in the southern coal belt regions of Borsora, Nonghyllam and Ranikor. History shows that Rongrin and Nongmin clans interacted closely with Garos, which reflects their possible connection through a common ancestor.

With exposure to commercialisation of the area through coal mining and timber trade many non-tribal traders, manual labourers, truck drivers, government employees and school teachers have settled in these areas. There are 4 major weekly markets in the Lyngngam area, which act as focal points providing a platform for marital interactions. As can be seen from Figure 7 there has been a steady increase in the frequency of marriage with non-tribal men over the last 50 years. These non-tribals include Nepalis, Assamese, Manipuris and Biharis who came in groups seeking daily wages.

Figure 7: Trends of Admixture of the Lyngngam with the Khasi, Garo and Other Populations.





Putative Parental Populations

From the ethno-historical, linguistic and demographic details discussed above, Lyngngams apparently exist as a population with a fairly distinct identity of its own. Although it is a small population with an effective size of only about 1400 individuals, given the permeable nature of its tribal boundary for marital interactions, the genetic drift would not have played any significant role after this population separated itself from its parental stock. The separation of its dialect from Khyngriam itself is estimated to be at around 1500 years before present. However, there is no doubt that Lyngngam language is more akin to the Khyngriam, which suggests that they might have emerged from the same stock of Austro-Asiatic speakers. Folktale narrative *Kon Bli* and ethno-historic information identifying their oldest inhabited area as Kullang suggests that they entered Meghalaya from the southernmost part of West Khasi Hills bordering South Garo Hills via a route trespassing present day Bangladesh, probably as a small group of male foragers. From this southern point they might have moved

northwards and got stabilised in the present area, subsequently resulting in admixture with neighbouring populations. Tracing the population affinity either with Khasis or Garos from clan structure indicates relatively greater degree of commonness with the former.

Given the above scenario there is no doubt that the gene pool of Lyngngams will have strong signatures from both Khasis and Garos, although the former is likely to have greater contribution to their genetic makeup. Proper identification of ancestral populations and the degree of asymmetry in gene flow (sex-biased admixture) are important issues in admixture studies. Recent studies indicate the trend of studying ethnic admixture by identifying the pattern of paternal and maternal gene flow and their contribution to the gene pool of an admixed group, which is made possible with the help of mtDNA (maternal) and Y-chromosome (paternal) specific DNA markers. The results based on molecular genetic markers, particularly the uni-parental mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) and non-recombinant Y chromosome (NRY) markers should reflect these expectations in a conclusive way.

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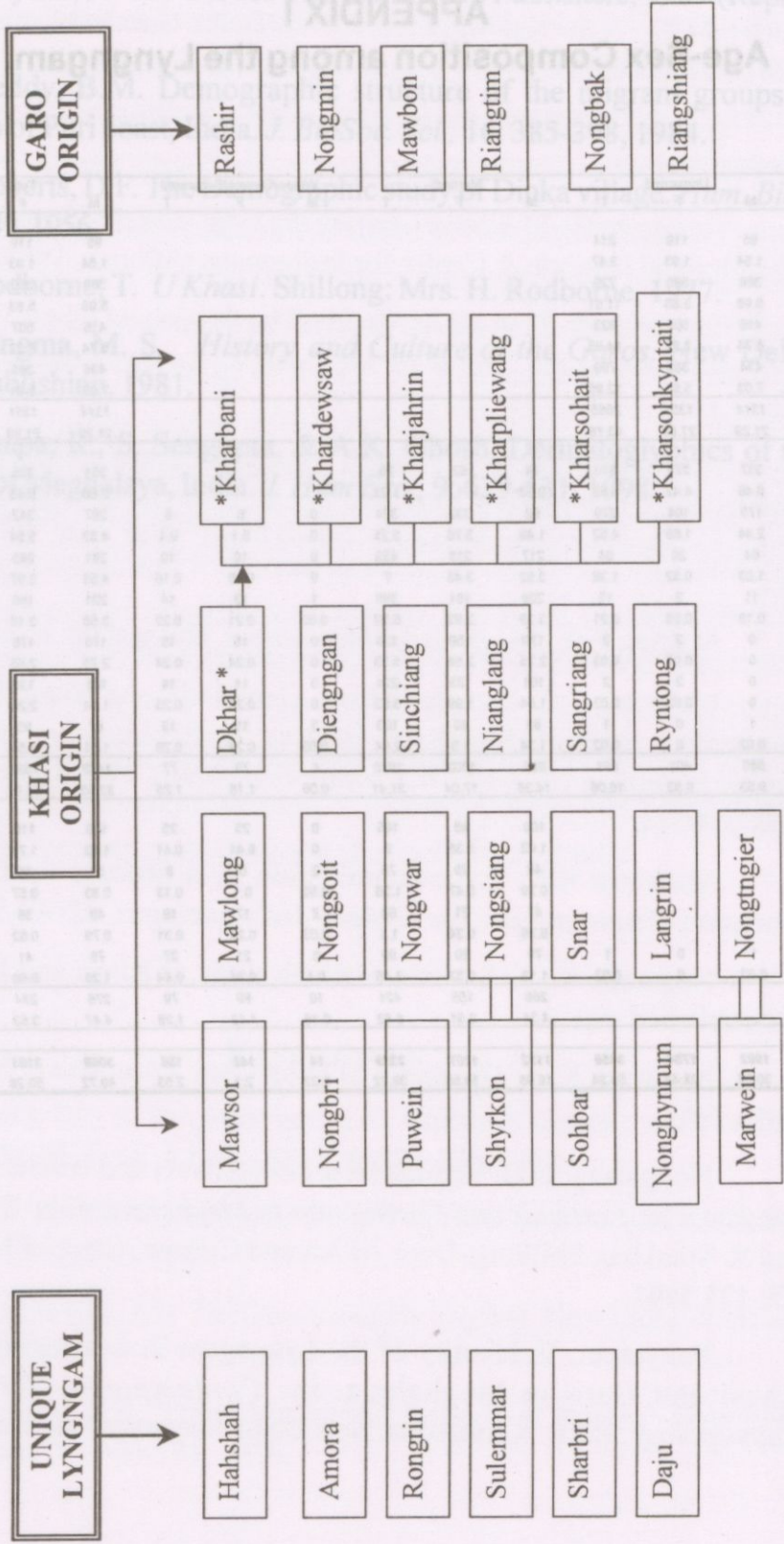
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APPENDIX I

Age-Sex Composition among the Lyngngam.

Age group	Unmarried			Married			Widow/Divorce/Separated			Total		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
>1yr	95	119	214							95	119	214
%	1.54	1.93	3.47							1.54	1.93	3.47
1-4yrs	369	360	729							369	360	729
%	5.98	5.83	11.81							5.98	5.83	11.81
5-9yrs	416	507	923							416	507	923
%	6.74	8.22	14.95							6.74	8.22	14.95
10-14yrs	434	365	799							434	365	799
%	7.03	5.91	12.95							7.03	5.91	12.95
0-14 yrs	1314	1351	2665							1314	1351	2665
%	21.29	21.89	43.18							21.29	21.89	43.18
15-19yrs	337	273	610	14	62	76				351	335	686
%	5.46	4.42	9.88	0.23	1	1.23				5.69	5.43	11.11
20-24yrs	175	104	279	92	232	324	0	6	6	267	342	609
%	2.84	1.69	4.52	1.49	3.76	5.25	0	0.1	0.1	4.33	5.54	9.87
25-29yrs	64	20	84	217	215	432	0	10	10	281	245	526
%	1.03	0.32	1.36	3.52	3.48	7	0	0.16	0.16	4.55	3.97	8.52
30-34yrs	11	2	13	209	181	390	1	13	14	221	196	417
%	0.18	0.03	0.21	3.39	2.93	6.32	0.02	0.21	0.23	3.58	3.18	6.76
35-39yrs	0	2	2	170	159	329	0	15	15	170	176	346
%	0	0.03	0.03	2.75	2.58	5.33	0	0.24	0.24	2.75	2.85	5.61
40-44yrs	0	2	2	101	123	224	0	14	14	101	139	240
%	0	0.03	0.03	1.64	1.99	3.63	0	0.23	0.23	1.64	2.25	3.89
45-49yrs	1	0	1	83	80	163	3	15	18	87	95	182
%	0.02	0	0.02	1.34	1.3	2.64	0.05	0.24	0.29	1.41	1.54	2.95
15-49 yrs.	588	403	991	886	1052	1938	4	73	77	1478	1528	3006
%	9.53	6.53	16.06	14.36	17.04	31.41	0.06	1.18	1.25	23.95	24.76	48.7
50-54yrs				100	85	185	0	25	25	100	110	210
%				1.62	1.38	3	0	0.41	0.41	1.62	1.78	3.4
55-59yrs				49	29	78	2	6	8	51	35	86
%				0.79	0.47	1.26	0.03	0.1	0.13	0.83	0.57	1.39
60-64yrs				47	21	68	2	17	19	49	38	87
%				0.76	0.34	1.1	0.03	0.28	0.31	0.79	0.62	1.41
65+yrs	1	0	1	70	20	90	6	21	27	78	41	119
%	0.02	0	0.02	1.13	0.32	1.46	0.1	0.34	0.44	1.26	0.66	1.93
50yrs +				266	155	421	10	69	79	276	224	500
%				4.31	2.51	6.82	0.16	1.12	1.28	4.47	3.63	8.1
Grand Total	1902	1754	3656	1152	1207	2359	14	142	156	3069	3103	6172
	30.82	28.42	59.24	18.66	19.56	38.22	0.23	2.3	2.53	49.72	50.28	

Figure 2: Schematic Diagram Showing the Lyngngam Clans with Probable Origin from the Khasi and Garo Tribes.



*Subgroups of Dkhar

Book Review

Elizabeth Dell (ed), *Burma: Frontier Photographs: 1918-1935*, James Henry Green Collection, Merrel Publishers Ltd, London, 2000.

The British presence in the Brahmaputra valley loomed large from 1825. This thinly populated, little exposed, and highly forested region was destined to be the pioneer tea plantation of the empire. The tea industry attracted numerous fortune seekers, influential industrialists and even some British bureaucrats preferred planting tea bushes to serving the empire. These potential tea-growing areas were also the play fields for the various tribes in search of slaves and trophies of human skulls. These tribal raids in the later British tea growing territories led to numerous pacification expeditions to the hills resulting in carving out of the various hill districts as loosely administered 'excluded areas'. That is how Garo Hills, Mikir Hills, Naga Hills and Lushai Hills districts were created in the province of Assam by the turn of the nineteenth century. Through the same process the northern triangle of Upper Burma, soon to be known as Kachin Hills, were carved out as a distinct administrative arrangement in 1895 in the northernmost part of the British Indian Empire. The book under review refers to the region, its resident Singphos of classical British ethnography (now Jingphaw) and their past heritage.

James Henry Green (1893-1975) was a soldier of the British Indian Empire in its waning period. He joined the Burma Rifles as its recruitment officer and worked up to 1935 in the 'Excluded Areas' Kachin Hills, northern Burma. He left Rangoon (now Yangon) in 1937 for Singapore to take up the post of military intelligence officer. After the fall of Singapore in 1942 during the World War II, he returned to London, where he remained for the next ten years in the British Foreign Office. He was a photographer

par excellence, who used classical ethnographic technique as a tool for military intelligence and recruitment. In course of his nearly twenty years of stay in the Kachin Hills, he took numerous photographs, collected ethnographic exhibits, and wrote his tour diaries containing priceless data on the lives of the people and events of the region. The James Henry Charitable Trust placed 1600 photographs, 200 textile exhibits and diaries with the Royal Pavilion, Library and Museum, Brighton, England for up keep and research. *The Burma: Frontier Photographs: 1918-1935* is based on photographs and accompanying texts, spread in five chapters and contributed by four scholars. These chapters are lavishly illustrated with appropriate photographs from Green's collection. The book contains 230 photographs of different sizes, a priceless collection of photographic album running into 90 pages. Biographic note on J H Green, bibliography and index at the end enhance the utility of the book for the readers.

Elizabeth Dell in her 'Introduction' to the book, titled "Mapping Burma: the James Henry Green Collection of Photographs", found that the photographs formed a part of a particular unequal transaction between peoples, and stand as a record of those transactions and points of contacts. They also have a life and meaning beyond intentions, skill, luck and vision of the photographer and as archival evidence they are witness to an era, events and institutions long gone by (p.9). As a recruiting officer with the Burma Rifles he travelled to remote northern hills previously unmapped by Europeans. His fascination with the people of the region aroused a life long interest culminating in a fellowship of the Royal Anthropological Institute in 1928, and a diploma in Anthropology from Cambridge University in 1934 on "The Tribes of Upper Burma North of 24 degree N and Their Classification". He studied the nuances of the customs, beliefs, languages and physical attributes that distinguished neighbouring groups and recorded these according to the anthropological practices prevalent in those days.

On the basis of Green's archives of notes, diaries, speeches, publications and photographs, the volume under review records his role as military intelligence officer and an amateur anthropologist, his observations on peoples and collection of artifacts—specially textiles. Green's photographs should be seen in the line of photography as a tool of descriptive ethnography and as a part of the colonial anthropological heritage since 1860s, which began with E T Dalton's *Descriptive Ethnography of Bengal*. This ethnographic collection of strong visual record of Kachin State also highlights the tension between the past and present of Kachin people engaged in negotiating the place of these records within the contemporary construction of their national identity. Burma proper was administered as a province of India and frontier areas were identified as 'excluded areas'. Even in 1935 the residents of this region had not heard of Burma or Burmans, leave alone of India. Green was aware that many of the ethnological problems were baffling, but thought that "a study of physical anthropology, technology and mythology will solve a good many of them" (p.15). Physical attributes were clearly of importance in recruiting 'types' for military as well as for racial classification of the people, a pet project of the colonial days. He advocated a general knowledge of the culture of people to be of greater importance to the administrators than that of the language.

The strongest part of Green's photographic collection is the portraiture, though there is little in his diaries or route notes that refers directly to the process of capturing images of people. The images of people show Green's interest in physical types, their costumes and their evolution. He was clearly a product of his time and of beliefs and motivations of the empire. His Anthropology, like his photography, was in harness to his official role in military surveillance and control. However, the images collected in the book can point to an understanding of modern construction of identity, nationhood and unity as they are analysed, incorporated, rejected or used as evidence in contemporary Burma. After all, Green's is

part of a tradition of ethnographical documentation through photography, which stretches back to mid nineteenth century. That was the time bulky camera was considered indispensable documentary tool for the benefit of colonial ethnography and useful to the administration.

It goes without saying that publication of the *Peoples of India* between 1868 and 1875 containing 500 photographs of racial, ethnic and caste types was part of an ideology to tabulate, synthesize and ultimately control the culture of India in the aftermath of the mutiny of 1857-58. In spite of the individual photographers' skill to overcome the limitations imposed by the cumbersome camera, the photographs were invariably unsatisfactory: "the people always seemed nervous, their expressions were invariably stupid or stolid and they posed very unwillingly". By 1920s the camera was improved to the extent that its intimidating size was reduced; its portability was increased and its intrusive features were minimized. But by then science of ethnography itself had changed and thus postures and intimacy of camera began to be questioned.

David Odo notes that Green's images attest to the unprecedented access he had to his subjects. Perhaps he was the first European to encounter many of the people he had photographed and studied. Through out the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries photography was largely considered a simple recording, truth revealing, mechanism. Photography played a major role in Salvage Ethnography of the period and much of Green's work can be located within this tradition. Heavily influenced by existing anthropological paradigm of race and evolutionism many of his images are of the homogenizing and dehumanizing 'physical type'. "This is evident from large number of images in which body functions as an object of study. His photograph of two Naga men is one the more extreme examples of this position (No. 0625). Two men are posed in naked and are shown in full length... it nevertheless reduces its human subjects to mere physical specimen...the men's facial expressions attest to their distress at the time they were photographed. They

are pictured without clothing. The subjects are located in 'nature', employing none of the signs such as material artifacts or built environments, typically used to provide information about cultural context. Rather, it is absence of clothing that here serves as cultural marker, for Nagas were stereotyped as 'lazy', preferring to go naked than weave cloth... We learn virtually nothing of the conditions of their lives from this photograph, rather it is informative of the photographer's intentions and ideology and unequal power relation that enabled Green to create it" (pp. 43-45).

For David Odo, Green's photography suffers from two qualities: dehumanising physical types and images of exceptional intimacy and sympathy. Through these photographs of physical typing not only could the subjects of dying races be studied, but they could also be preserved. For him authority also provided a way to salvage the subjects' culture, which was highly paternalistic. Green did not work within Malinowskian model: rather he favoured close-ups and portraits, posed his subjects and tended to eliminate context from his images. By 1920s, the view that photography afforded an objective window to reality that had largely been discredited. These changes contributed to a decline in the anthropological use of photography, as new anthropology was interested in culture, now constructed, and not as visible.

Mandy Sadan's two chapters on 'Contemporary Context' and 'Documentary Record of Contact' raise the issue of the relevance of colonial anthropology to ethnic groups and nationalities on the one hand, and negotiating a relationship with the animistic heritage by contemporary Christian nationalities such as Kachin, Naga and Mizo on the other. She began her research on a selection of Green's archives in Rangoon in 1996. Kachin State emerged as a political entity after the Burmese independence in 1948 and Kachin identity is itself largely political in origin. However, it was the British who initiated the process in 1895 through the Kachin Hill Regulation, an Act labeling hill tribal villages as 'Kachin' for the use of administration. It is also a fact that Kachin soldiers were mainly

drawn from Jingphaw (Singpho) community besides Lisu and others. In this way, the term 'Kachin' was artificially created, like the word 'Nagas' some two decades before that and an ethno-political composition of six parts such as Jingphaw, Lisu, Maru, Nung-Rawang, Zaiwa and Lacid was imposed on northern Burma.

The world of Green's photographs, taken 75 years back, is not only difficult, but also discomfiting and contemporary Christian Kachin nationalists would like to dissociate themselves from their animist past. For many Kachin Christians, their animist cultural context displayed through these photographs can be immensely disturbing. The Kachin theologians frequently cite the oppressive burden of animist rituals as the main reason for their rapid conversion to the Christianity. Against the Burmese attempt to make Buddhism the official State religion, Christianity was drafted as the symbol of Kachin nationalist resistance against the Rangoon regime. Kachin missionaries emphasised on the superiority of Christianity to animism. However, there is a deep-rooted insecurity about how the animist relates to the Christian present and whether such photographs should ever be considered more than simply a record of a degenerate culture. To advance the worth of Green's photographs exposes danger of undermining the foundations of unity expressed through the symbol of Christian faith. Modern Kachin nationalist discourse demands a level of 'standardization' of ethno-cultural uniformity and a level of quality in cultural practices and symbols free from potential ridicule from others. Odo rightly identifies ambivalent interpretations of Green's photographs of the animist past and its role for future (p. 61).

The commonest social and economic opportunities that existed for ambitious Kachin youth in recent years were to enter theological college to train as pastors or priests or to enter K (aching) I (ndependent) A (rmy) as officers. For these young and articulate leaders Kachin identity is a current obsession. In this context, Green's archive seems to offer little towards enabling evidence to them. There are very few Kachins who still believe in animism and

still fewer who practise it. Choosing this as an area of study is to illuminate a world that no longer exists, and few mourn its disappearance. It can also be a potential bone of contention between the past and the present. Green's collection presents a heritage, which is difficult to disown and embarrassing to own up by the contemporary Kachin people.

Green chose to remain a career soldier in preference to a career in anthropology. Green's work in Kachin hills was mainly oriented to military related survey or recruitment or to provide slave-release campaign of the civil administration. The British identified the pre-eminent Kachin socio-political structure as prop to their need in the form of Jingphaw hereditary chiefs - *Duwa*. However, it was not always clear whom to delegate local power as the *Duwa*, because of conflicting over-lap of institution of hereditary chiefs and hereditary headmen. The case of *Duwa Htingna Khuma* (p. 74) is an illustration. The British administration would opt for the enhancement of powers of those chiefs and headmen, who could demonstrate willingness to be co-operative. The District Commissioner would stand as *Duwa Kaba* (great /big chief) to the then Kachin power structure with Union Jack flying atop. Was it not reminiscent of the Red Indians terming the President of USA as the big father/ chief? Here also the administration gets embroiled in the chiefs' demands for communal dues from the Christian villages for animistic festivals as it happened in the Naga Hills District.

Impact of slave-release should have been one the most rewarding exercises for historians and anthropologists with a view to understand the modern Kachin social formations. But for obvious reasons, it is one of the most impenetrable areas of study (p.85) Green's photographs may be seen as one of the personal response to the British encounter to the Kachin primitive world. It was the pattern of Kachin relation building that enabled Green to be intimate and sympathetic to the people. As a result, he developed a uniquely rich heritage of records that is still relevant for a proper understanding

of the lives and vanishing world of the northern Burmese frontiers. A similar situation may be noted from Kachin's western neighbouring Naga Hills, where one finds M/S J H Hutton, J P Mills, Charles Pawse, and Furer Haimendorf empathising with the Naga cause. Green's collection presents a highly romanticising image of tribal life from a distant frontier in to a typical Kipilinsque style of paternalistic approach to simple societies. Inadvertently, the Empire through its omission and commission laid the foundation of nationality formation among the distinct ethnic groups such as Kachins, Nagas and Mizos. In the final analysis, Green clicked his camera for the cause of the Empire, but inadvertently, he contributed to the preservation of the Kachin heritage and priceless source of data for the 'science of man'.

Prof. A C Sinha,

Department of Sociology, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong.

Temsula Ao, *The Ao-Naga Oral Tradition*, Bhasha Publications, Baroda, 2003, 185 pp, Rs 125/-.

Temsula Ao's study is an attempt to understand the culture of the Ao tribe of Nagaland in North-East India through their oral tradition. The book is divided into eight chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the Ao civilization as oral tradition, textiles and artefacts. Chapter 2 discusses the indigenous Ao society. In Chapter 3 the "authentic" Ao belief system is presented. Chapter 4 forms the main part of the book and presents some Ao myths and tales. In Chapter 5 a large number of tales are given under various headings such as "Transformation tales", "Some animal tales", "Some tales of the Supernatural", "Some other tales", and "Some heroine-oriented tales". Chapter 6 provides some linguistic details on the

Ao language and a few paragraphs on Ao time reckoning, numbers and weights and measures. In the concluding chapter (Chapter 7) a few words are devoted to changes in contemporary Ao society.

The study is based on the author's personal knowledge and experience as an Ao, her frequent field trips to the Ao area and a writing-up phase at the University of Minnesota. It is a thorough and serious study of oral tradition of a small scale but dynamic culture. The book has an important documentary value as it gives a large number of Ao narratives. Being an Ao herself and a Professor of English at NEHU, the author deserves all praise for her sincere effort to gain insight into her own culture. Not being trained as an anthropologist the result of her work is a well-written historical document for which the Aos have to be grateful. It will be of interest to all those interested in Ao culture as well as to linguists and anthropologists.

My perspective in reviewing this work is that of an anthropologist. For me the importance of this work lies in bringing together cultural data and narratives of the Ao tribe by a native speaker. The collection of texts shows a high degree of variation, often subtle, which makes oral tradition so rich, so beautiful, and so relevant for both modern Aos with an interest in their own culture and contemporary anthropologists. The study is a rich source of data, but its analytical framework is weak. For example, the data on society, civilisation and belief system are presented without a connection with those of the stories. The structure of the book, by and large, follows that of the early scholar-administrators such as Hutton and Mills. A truly integrated analysis would have helped in mapping out the original Ao mentality.

In her attempt to grasp the totality of the Ao culture and to make it understandable to contemporary readership, the author imposes two sets of classifications on the data that seems to me arbitrary. The oral tradition is divided into Primary, Secondary and Tertiary. This division presented in the first chapter does not serve

any purpose, not even in the rest of this book. Another division relates to worship and sacrifice. These are classified as “regular” and “irregular”. This division also does not add to our understanding. The intention might have been to demonstrate historical developments or the dynamics of the Ao culture. On page 29 Ao society is called ‘loosely’ democratic in its structure. This is, however, contradicted by the description of the Village Council (*Putu Menden*) as being a legislative, executive and judiciary power all in one institution (p.34) as well as by the existence of patrons and slaves (p.59). The “highly egalitarian society” (p.29) is thus not so egalitarian having slaves and a strict hierarchy of three high and many lower ranking clans.

While a beginning of an integrated approach to culture and narratives is made on page 15ff about names and narratives, such an approach is missing in the presentation of all other myths, legends and tales. In most cases the author’s comments do not go beyond a kind of functionalistic comment: the myth is told to justify a particular practice or custom (for example on pages 54 and 56). This is rather surprising for the Select Bibliography mentions the works of Claude Levi-Strauss, Brenda Beck, Stuart Blackburn and A.K. Ramanujan who all have analysed oral traditions with a structural rather than a functional approach.

This is a pity for the author shows great sensitivity while commenting on some myths. Commenting on the belief system, for example, she remarks, “their belief about tiger-souls is more akin to the concept of a person having more than one soul” (p.66). Indeed, the Ao concept of personhood needs to be studied on the basis of their narratives. The Ao view on another important cultural aspect – mortality – lies between the lines of the narratives entitled “A girl who was Loved by a Tree-Spirit” (p.122) and “Revenge for a Father’s Death”(p.135).

This book lies at the junction of two traditions. The old tradition of scholar-administrators is followed in its structure and

descriptive nature. At the same time it falls under a recent tradition of anthropological activities by other than anthropologists. The author frankly states in the Acknowledgement (p.iii) that she is "yet only a tentative amateur". As such she displays an emotional involvement. Striving for objectivity she leans on her training and experience in literary criticism. The lack of anthropological knowledge, for instance, appears in the use of the term patriarchal instead of patrilineal; distinguishing clans as major and minor is not incorrect, but it is a more common anthropological convention to describe their ranking in terms of high/low social and/or ritual status; the observation that the family is the first social unit in any culture (p.43); the absence of information on dates and methods of data collection and the years in which the field trips were undertaken.

Notwithstanding these critical comments, I wish to recommend this book to all anthropologists. I sincerely hope that Professor Temsula Ao will continue her journeys into Ao culture while making them anthropologically stronger so that her desire to "understand the intricate interweaving of the oral tradition with the culture" can be truly fulfilled.

Dr. S.N. Singh is Reader, Department of English, NEHU, Shillong.

Prof. Jan Brouwer,
Department of Anthropology, NEHU, Shillong

Dr.B. M. Reddy is Professor, Anthropology & Human Genetics
Unit, Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata.

Contributors

Dr. Romendro Khongsdier is Reader, Department of Anthropology, NEHU, Shillong.

Mrs. Banrida Langstieh is Lecturer, Department of Anthropology, NEHU, Shillong.

Dr. K.S.Nagaraja is Reader, Department of Linguistics, Deccan College, Pune.

Ketshukietuo Dzuvichu is a research student at the Department of Anthropology, NEHU, Shillong.

Mrs. Isabella Lall is Selection Grade Lecturer at the Centre for Supporting Learning Systems, NEHU, Shillong.

Dr. S.N. Singh is Reader, Department of English, NEHU, Shillong.

Dr. Sukalpa Bhattacharjee is Lecturer, Department of English, NEHU, Shillong.

Dr.B. M. Reddy is Professor, Anthropology & Human Genetics Unit, Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata.

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