

The Megalithic Culture of the Khasis

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The Great Cist Ceremonies (*Thep Mawbah – Mawniam*)

The last stage in the journey of the dead involves conveying of the bones to the *mawbah* (big stone), otherwise called *mawniam* (stone of religious ceremony), and the placing of the bones within it (*thep*). This is their final resting place; it is the ossuary for the bones of all the members of all the lineages descended from a common ancestress. To perform this final ritual is the duty of the members of the matri-clan (*u kur u jaid*), but the descendants of male members of the clan (*u khun kha khun long*) have their share in the ceremonies. They all consult together and when they can afford the heavy expense, they fix a date for the rite. This may be years after the placing of the bones in the *mawkyntroh*.

When it is decided to perform the ceremony, stones must be collected for the sides of a rectangular mound called *kynton*. This is then given the

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After his retirement, Roy continued to assist the Hima Myllem and was closely associated with the Federation of Khasi States. He established the Pomlum High School at Pomlum and played a significant role in the formation of the Seng Syngkhong Jingtip of which he also served as President. He was a member of the Indian Science Congress and attended the meetings of the congress at Indore and its Silver Jubilee celebration at Calcutta in 1938 where he presented a paper entitled "Significance of Cowrie Shells in Khasi Ceremonies". He wrote extensively, particularly on Khasi customs, traditions and laws and his writings were published in various journals. He also collaborated extensively in the publication of Sir Keith Cantlie's Notes on Khasi Law and contributed some chapters of the book.

He passed away in Shillong on the 13th February 1966.

name of the eldest person whose bones are to be moved, and, as in previous sections, the fictitious name of *u/ka Dieng* will be used for this person in the formulae. Before the building of *kynton* is completed they look around for stones for *mawlynti* (stone of the way or path). These are three upright stones and one horizontal stone placed in front of the middle upright stone and supported by stones placed below it so that it lies a foot or above the ground. The table stone is called *mawkynthei* (female stone) and the middle upright stone is called *mawkni* (maternal uncle stone). The other stones have no names.

On the day the mound is completed, the stones of *mawlynti* are dragged there and erected near the mound to the sound of a drum. Most villagers help in this work; men make the mound and erect *mawlynti* and women help with the cooking and serving of *jakhawnei*. Immediately after the stones are put the lineage members provide a feast of Job's tears (the edible seeds of the cultivated *Coix lacrima*) boiled together with *nei* (Indian sesame). It is eaten in the open near *mawlynti* and *kynton* and all who have shared in the work partake. After the feast they all go to the family house where the relatives sacrifice a pig called *u niang kynton*, the pig of the mound, which should be a boar of good size. The pig is laid down outside near the house door. The sacrificer asks for rice, holds it in his right hand and says:

*Mynta haba la ieng ha kynton ha barut ia phi u/ka Dieng ba phin
rngih r ngon, ba la bei ba la thait ia phi u/ka Dieng ba la hap u 'niang
iong, U 'niang bah, u 'niang kynton.*

Now that the mound is set up for thee oh *u/ka Dieng* so that thou wilt feel satisfaction, that funds have been raised and expended for thee oh *ba phi u/ka Dieng*, for now has fallen unto you *u/ka Dieng* a dark pig, a great pig, the *niang kynton*, pig of the mound.

He dedicates (*dut*) the animal by throwing rice eleven times over it along the shoulders and its back, after which someone kills the pig by thrusting a wooden or bamboo pike behind its shoulder blade. Then the men of the village cut open the pig and remove the sacramental portions (*iashim dkhoh*). These are portions from the kidneys, rectus spinal, liver, heart and large intestines, which are called *dohiong*. With these portions the lower jaw is also taken.

They put *dohiong* portions on a wooden or iron spit and hold them over the fire until the meat is well roasted. Then they cut each of these five pieces of *dohiong* into three, making three piles of *dohiong*, each pile consisting of five pieces. They place them in a basin in *nongpei* (inside the

house in front of the hearth near the door). The sacrificer sits in *nongpei* facing the door, takes one pile of *dohiong* with his left hand and calls for water which he receives in his right hand, saying :

Kane ka um pungad ka ba la ieng u 'niang kynton.

Here is the refreshing water for which the pig of the mound has stood up (roused himself).

He then sprinkles the meat in his left hand with water. He asks for *skaw* or gourd in which is placed water and fermented rice and says:

Khmih ia phi u/ka Dieng ba la bei ba la thait ban poi phi u/ka Dieng ha ka ba la ieng u 'niang kynton ia phi u/ka Dieng.

Behold for thee u/ka Dieng that funds have been raised and expenditure met that thou u/ka Dieng will reach or attain unto the religion (or *niam*, ceremonies); that the pig of the mound has stood up for thee u/ka Dieng.

He places the meat on the floor and pours out a libation (*suid*) from *skaw* gourd. The sacrificer takes another pile of *dohiong* from the basin in his left hand, and says:

Kumba la bei kumba la thait ia phi u/ka Dieng ba la ieng ha kynton ba phin rngih ba phin rngon wat buh Khoh wat buh jaw.

As it has been raised and expended for thee u/ka Dieng that the kynton mound has been set up for thee to feel content and satisfaction, do not repine do not be regretful.

He places the meat on the floor and pours out a libation (*suid*) from *skaw* gourd. Then he takes the last heap of *dohiong* from the basin and holds it in his left hand, saying:

Kane mynta ba la ieng ka kynton ia phi u/ka Dieng ba phin poi ha ka mei pun, ha u Kni ha u Kong.

Now then that the kynton mound has stood up for thee u/ka Dieng so that thou wilt reach unto the mother that has given thee birth that has *kha ka mei* borne thee, unto the (maternal) uncle and unto the brother.

He places *dohiong* on the floor and pours out a libation on the meat. The sacrificer then takes the lower jaw and thrusts it between the thatch and the rafters above the doorway (*tynsat ha tyndai hapoh ing*).

After the sacrifice of the *niang kynton* pig, they beat the drums. The *khun-kha* (children of the male members of the lineage) come to take banners

from the lineage members as soon as the mound and the *mawlynti* stones are erected. Then the lineage members, beating drums, set out to take the bones from *mawkynroh*. They bring the bones to the courtyard in front of the house. There may be bones lying still in a *mawshiang* or small individual *mawkynroh*, which have not been transferred to the *big mawkynroh* as yet. Such bones are also brought to the courtyard. The wife or children of a lineage member had possibly cremated their husband or father and put the bones in a small *mawkynroh*. The relatives collect even these bones and bring them to the courtyard. The mother or any woman of the matri-lineage, who is not pregnant, receives the bones when they are taken out of the *big mawkynroh* in a piece of white cloth, and she places them on a mat spread in the courtyard. The bones brought from *mawshyang* or small *mawkynrohs* are placed among the bones taken from the *big mawkynroh*. The woman lifts the cloth with the bones every time she receives the bones from those who bring them. The rice-beer from the gourds of those who bring the bones from the small *mawkynrohs* is poured into the gourd of those who bring bones from the *big mawkynroh*. This gourd is set up with the bones on the mat. They tear up the cloths in which the bones were brought. Then they take all the bones inside the house and the women make a wailing sound while this is being done. All the bones are placed on the *shlan* mat which is brought from the courtyard and spread on a bed or any suitable place in the house near the hearth. The gourd is also brought from outside into the house and the sacrificer offers an oblation from it, saying:

Kumba la poi ing poi sem phi u/ka Dieng bad baroh shiphew (shiphew ne khadsan ne arphew kat kiba la lum shyang ryngkat) ngut bynriew, kumba la bei la thait ia phi u/ka Dieng bad baroh shiphew ngut bynriew ban ia poi u/ka Dieng ha ka niam ka rukom, ha u Kni u Kong. Kumba la bei la thait ia phi u/ka Dieng baroh shiphew ngut, wat buh Khoh wat buh jaw ba phin poi ha ka niam ryngkat u 'Ni u Kong bad mei-kha mei-pun.

As now thou u/ka Dieng have reached the house with all thou the ten (ten or fifteen or twenty as many as whose bones have been collected) human beings, as now funds have been raised and expended for thee u/ka Dieng and all the (ten) human beings so that thou mayest reach unto the religion (ceremonies and rites), unto the uncle (maternal) and the brother, as fund have been raised and expended for thee and all the (ten) do not repine, be not regretful so that thou mayest reach unto the religion (rites and ceremonies) together with the uncle (maternal) the brother and the mother who bears.

After that the sacrificer makes an oblation (*suid*) and pours out all the fermented rice mixed with water from the gourd into *nongpei*. Then they

burn some Job's tears in the fire in the hearth and as they burst they collect the Job's tears either from the heart or those which have leapt first out onto the floor around. They tie up nine of them together with a thread while others tie other nine grains with another string making two bundles. When that has been done they take the bones with a cloth and put them in a small basket woven like a *krong* (a Khasi coffin woven of split bamboo). The bundles of Job's tears are also put inside the basket on top of the bones and the basket is then placed on the mat of *shlan* reeds. Inside the basket are also put three pieces of *japung* reed, cut about the length of three fingers. They bring three loaves of rice or Job's tears cooked in water, boil an egg and prepare half-boiled rice. The sacrificer first asks for the gourd with rice-beer and also for *lakhar* leaf, fermented rice, powdered rice, rice, and a *dieng pyrshit* leaf. The sacrificer lays down the *lakhar* leaf, places the gourd upon the leaf, and takes up the fermented rice, egg, rice, half-boiled rice, *dieng pyrshit* leaf, and loaves, and places them in a basin in *nongpei*. The sacrificer pinches off a piece from each of the three loaves and says:

Kumba la bei la thait ia phi u/ka Dieng bad ki shiphew ngut, kane ba phin poi ma phi ha ka niam ha u 'Ni ha u Kong.

As funds have been raised and expended for thee u/ka Dieng and the (ten or whatever may be the number of dead) that thou mayest reach (attain) unto the religion (i.e., rites and ceremonies) unto the uncle (maternal) and brother.

He places all those parts which he pinched off on that *lakhar* leaf. Then he pinches off another piece of the three loaves and says:

Sneng ryngkat Kni, Kong, meikha, meipun ba phin leit ha ka niam.

Give counsel together thou the uncle (maternal), the brother, thou the Mother who giveth birth, who beareth, so that you may get into the religion (rites and ceremonies).

He places them on the leaf. Then he pinches off another piece of the three loaves and says:

Sneng ryngkat phi long kha man kha, kumba la bei kumba la thait ia phi u/ka Dieng shiphew ngut.

Give counsel together oh thou who causes to be who causest to grow, as funds have been raised and expended for thee u/ka Dieng and the ten (whatever the number may be).

He again places them on the leaf. He takes the cooked egg and holds it with his left hand, receives water in his right hand and pours water once over the

cooked egg, and peels off the shell onto the leaf where the materials are. He cuts off a bit of the small end of the egg and pours a libation on the cut portion, and he tosses it so that it falls once on the reverse and once on the obverse. He places this slice of the egg with the other articles. After this he pinches off another piece from each loaf, holds the pieces in his right hand together with those which he had pinched from the loaves before and says:

Kumba la bei la thait ia phi u/ka Dieng shiphew ngut, te mynta la hap ine I ja tyrsaw, te mynta ryngkat u Shynrong ryngkat u shyntaw.

As funds have been raised and expended for thee u/ka Dieng and the ten (or whatever the number may be), there has fallen this *ja tyrsaw* food, there now with the shell and the covering.

He then places all the materials on the *lakhar* leaf near the basin, pours a libation of fermented rice and water on the things on the *lakhar* leaf. He pours all the rice-beer from the gourd. Then they beat drums and the sacrificer asks for a cock and some rice, and he takes three sticks of the size of fingers both in thickness and in length, and says:

Ia phi u/ka Dieng shiphew ngut, kumba la bei ia phi u/ka Dieng shiphew ngut, kane la hap u syngkhong lam lynti, ban poi ma phi ha tynrai ka niam, ma phi u/ka Dieng shiphew ngut.

For thee u/ka Dieng and the ten, as funds have been raised for thee u/ka Dieng and the ten, here has fallen the *syngkhong lam lynti* (the supporter who leads the way) so that you may reach unto the root of the religion (ceremonies) thou u/ka Dieng and the ten.

Then he dedicates the cock by throwing rice over it eleven times. They do not tie the cock. The sacrificer cuts the neck of the cock and lets the blood drop on the sticks. He takes out the small intestines and the liver, and he roasts them in the fire. He cuts one bit from the small intestines and then one bit from the liver in turn. He does this fifteen times and he places the pieces in a basin, making three heaps of them. These pieces are called *dohiong*. While this is done they beat the drum, the sacrificer sings the cock, and cuts off the wings, the head, and the thighs. These are called *dohpha*. They are put apart carefully. Then the sacrificer takes one heap of *dohiong* in his left hand, asks for water, which he receives in his right hand and sprinkles *dohiong* with water. He then asks for *skaw* gourd, which he holds in his right hand, saying:

Ba la hap u syngkhong lam lynti ia phi u/ka Dieng shiphew ngut, ban poi ma the phi ha ka niam.

That *syngkhong lam lynti* (the supporter who leads the way) has fallen for thee u/ka Dieng and the (ten), so that you may reach unto religion (ceremonies).

He puts *dohiong* on the ground and pours a libation over it from the *skaw*. Then he takes another heap and says:

To sneng ryngkat, bthah ryngkat phi u Kni, u Kong, mei-kha mei-pun ia u/ka Dieng shiphew ngut.

Give counsel together give advice together thou uncle (maternal), thou mother who givest birth, who bearest, to u/ka Dieng and the (ten).

Thereupon he places *dohiong* on the ground and pours out a libation from *skaw* gourd. Then he takes the remaining heap of *dohiong* from the basin, saying:

To sneng ryngkat long kha man kha kumba la bei la thait la hap u syngkhong lam lynti.

Give counsel together thou who causest to be who causest to grow as funds have been raised and expended, has fallen the lynti (the supporter who leads the way).

He puts *dohiong* on the ground. Then he makes an oblation by pouring out all the contents from the gourd onto all *dohiong*, which he has now put all together on the ground.

After this the sacrificer asks for a cow and a bull. Taking rice from the house he dedicates (or consecrates) both animals at one and the same time by throwing rice over them eleven times. They do not tie up the animals, let them stand unbound, but they see to it that they do not escape. Any bull or cow will do but they must not be suffering from any sickness. After the dedication they strike the animals to death with sticks. They kill both animals at the same time. They cut them up and remove the sacramental portions (*shim dkhhot*), take a piece of the liver, the kidney, the hearth, the large intestines, and of the rectus spinal for *dohiong*: they also take portions of the small intestines, the stomach, the spleen, the spinal rectus muscle and the lungs for *khwang*. They take exactly the same portions from both animals. They also take portions for *dohpha* from the meat in the neck, the small intestines and the lungs. They keep also the lower jaws and the frontal bones with the horns of both the animals. They roast *dohiong* and when the pieces are cooked they cut each of them into three and put them in a basin. The sacrificer keeps the lower jaws, the frontal bones and *khwang* in *nongpei*

where he takes one heap of *dohiong* in his left hand, takes water in his right hand and sprinkles *dohiong* with the water. Then he asks for *skaw* gourd with rice-beer and says:

Kane ba la hap u masi ia phi u/ka Dieng shiphew ngut, ba la bei ba la thait ba phin poi ha ka niam ka rukom.

Here now that a bull has fallen unto thee u/ka Dieng, that funds have been raised and expended so that you may get unto the religion (ceremonies) and rites.

He puts *dohiong* on the floor and pours a libation. He then takes another heap of *dohiong*, saying:

To sneng lang phi u Kni u Kong, mei- kha mei-pun, ba poi u/ka Dieng shiphew ngut ha tynrai ka niam.

Give counsel thou uncle (maternal), brother, thou mother who giveth birth and who bearest so that u/ka Dieng and the (ten) may reach unto the root of the religion (unto the perfection of complete ceremonies).

He places the pieces of meat on the ground and pours out a libation, then he takes up the last heap of *dohiong*, saying:

Sneng ryngkat bthah ryngkat phi man kha long kha ban poi u/ka Dieng ryngkat ki shiphew ngut ha ka tynrai ka niam.

Give counsel together, give advice together, thou who causest to grow who causest to be, so that u/ka Dieng together with the (ten) may reach unto the perfection of complete ceremonies (*ha ka tynrai ka niam*).

He puts *dohiong* on the ground and pours out all the rice-beer from the gourd. Others remove *khwang* and the lower jaw from *nongpei* and put them safely away.

When this part of the ritual has been accomplished, they dance with the fly-flaps made of goat's hair (*shad symphiah*), beat drums and play the flute (*put shyngwiang*). This flute is made of bamboo and has seven finger holes. Two persons dance with the fly-flaps, three beat the drums, and two, three or four play the flutes. They dance all night till the dawn. The next morning, before anything else is done, the sacrificer takes rice (*u khav*) from the house in a basket, which is called *u khaw rawai*, and throws rice from inside the house to the courtyard. The sacrificer stands at the door, and, before throwing the rice, he says:

Une u khaw rawai la bei ia phi u/ka Dieng shiphew ngut, la hap une u khaw rawai.

Here is *u khaw rawai* expended for thee *u/ka Dieng* and the (ten), the *khaw rawai* has fallen.

He throws the rice to the courtyard, then he says:

Kane ba la bei ia phi u/ka Dieng shiphew ngut, sneng ryngkat phi u/ka U Kong, ka mei-kha mei-pun.

Here that is expended for thee *u/ka Dieng* and the (ten) give counsel together, thou uncle (maternal), the brother, the mother who giveth birth the mother who bearest.

He throws rice from the basket, takes the rice again and says:

Sneng ryngkat, phi long-kha man-kha ba la hap u khaw rawai ia phi u/ka Dieng 10 ngut.

Give advice together thou who causest to be who causest to grow that the *khaw rawai* has fallen for thee *u/ka Dieng* and the (ten).

Having said this the sacrificer throws the remaining rice from the basket to the courtyard. He takes every time as much rice as he can hold in the palms of both hands and then he throws it; in this way he uses about half a pound or one pound of rice in all.

The lower jaws, frontal bones, *khwang* and *dohpha* are taken to the newly made *mawlynti*. Only men go there; they take with them a gourd, three loaves, one boiled egg, rice-flour, half-cooked rice, fermented rice, *dieng pyrshit* tree leaf, rice, and a *lakhar* leaf. When they reach *mawlynti*, they spread the *lakhar* leaf on the *mawkynthei* stone (dolmen). They make the gourd stand on the *lakhar* leaf. The sacrificer pinches a piece off each of the loaves and cuts one portion from each piece of *dohpha*. Holding all these bits of the loaves and the *dohpha* in his right hand the sacrificer says:

Kane la hap u Mawlynti Mawsyngkien, la hap ka pha ka siang ia phi u/ka Dieng bad ryngkat ki shiphew ngut ba phin leit ha ka niam.

Here has fallen (i.e. been placed) the stone of the way, the stone of the path, the feeding and the spreading for thee *u/ka Dieng* and you the (ten) together so that you may go unto the religion (rites and ceremonies).

He places the food in his hand on the leaf. He again pinches off pieces of the loaves and cuts pieces of each portion of *dohpha* and holding them in his right hand says:

Kane ba la hap u Mawlynti u Maw-syngkien, ba la hap ha pha ka siang to sneng ryngkat phi u Kni u Kong, ka mei-kha mei-pun ia u/ka Dieng ryngkat

shiphew ngut.

Here now that the Mawlynti Mawsyngkhien has fallen, the feeding and the satisfying give counsel together thou uncle (maternal), brother, and thou mother who giveth birth, who bearest to u/ka Dieng together with the (ten).

He places the food on the leaf, which is laid upon the stone. Once again he pinches off the loaves, cuts pieces of *dohpha*, and holding them in his right hand says:

Kane ba la hap u Mawlynti u Maw-syngkien, ban sneng ryngkat phi long-kha man-kha ia u/ka Dieng ryngkat shiphew ngut.

Here now that the Mawlynti Mawsyngkien has fallen (i.e. been placed) that thou who causest to be and who causest to grow give counsel together with the (ten).

He puts the pieces upon the leaf, takes the boiled egg, pours water over it, peels off the shell, cuts off the small end of the egg, and pours a libation over this slice saying:

Phin liem shi kynti, phin lup shi kynti.

You will turn on the obverse once, you will turn on the reverse once.

He throws the slice of the egg so that it falls once on the obverse and once on the reverse on the leaf, after which he tosses it once more. He pinches off another piece from each of the three loaves and cuts again from each piece of *dohpha*. Taking all these bits in his right hand he says:

Kane ka khmih ioh phi ong tang u kpu, kane bad shynrong bad shyntiaw.

Here lest you say only the bread, but here it is with the shell and the cover.

He puts all these pieces on the leaf upon the *mawkynthei* (dolmen), pours a libation from *klong* (gourd) saying:

Kane khmih ioh phi ong tang u shynrong tang u shyntaw tang u kpu, kane ryngkat ka 'Iad hiar ka 'iad bang.

Here lo and behold lest you say only the shell, only the cover, only the bread, here together is the fermented rice-beer, the good beer.

He then pours all the contents of the gourd upon the articles of food. Both the lower jaws, frontal bones with horns and the *khwang* meat are tied to a stick right over the *mawkni* (the uncle stone), the tallest stone which stands in the middle. Then they return to the house where people are having a feast of rice. On their return from the *mawlynti* stones they beat the drums, play

the *shyngwiang* flutes (*put shyrwiang*) and dance the *symphiah* dance with the fly-flaps (*shad symphiah*) inside the house.

Then three more cattle are brought in (these may be all cows or all bulls or both bulls and cows). There should not be less than three animals as *mawlynti* stones, but there may be more of them. The lineage members sacrifice these animals just as they did the previous day. The three cattle are made to stand in the courtyard. They are not tied but prevented from escaping. Rice is brought in a basket and the sacrificer throws rice eleven times over the animals together. Then they beat them to death, after which the sacramental portions are removed from one of the animals killed - pieces from the liver, the heart, the kidney, the spinal rectus muscle and the large intestines from the *dohiong*. Then they cut a small portion of each of the *dohiong* and take the small intestines, the lungs, the stomach, spinal rectus and the spleen, which they call *khwang*. The *dohpha* consists of portions of the meat in the neck, the lungs and the small intestines. They also take the lower jaw and the frontal bones with horns. They do likewise with each of the cattle killed.

They take all the sacramental portions with the horns and the lower jaws inside the house and keep aside the *dohpha* in some place inside the house where no animal (dog, cat or rat) can reach it. They place the *khwang*, the lower jaws and the horns in the *nongpei* - the part of the house in front of the hearth. They roast well the pieces of *dohiong* over the fire on an iron or a wooden spit, cut them into three pieces each, forming thus three separate heaps which they place in a basin. Then the sacrificer calls for water and performs the sacrifice in the part of the house in front of the hearth near which the *khwang* and the horns have been kept. The sacrificer takes one heap of *dohiong* with his left hand, sprinkles it with water with his right hand, after which he asks for the *skaw* (gourd) which he takes in his right hand saying:

Kane kumba la bei ia phi u/ka Dieng ryngkat shiphew ngut, kumba la bei ia phi da ki pyrsa ki para ba phin poi ha ka niam ka rukom, kane bad u dkhot bad u khyllai.

Here now as funds have been raised and expended for thee u/ka Dieng together with the (ten), as funds have been raised and expended by the nephews, nieces, brothers and sisters, so that you may reach unto the religion (ceremonies) and rites. Here now with the pieces and fragments.

He places the pieces of meat on the floor, pours a libation from the *skaw*

which contains fermented rice mixed with water. The sacrificer then takes another heap of *dohiong* and offers it saying:

Kane ban sneng ryngkat phi u Kni u Kong, kane ba la bei ia phi u/ka Dieng ki shiphew ngut da ki pyrsa, ki para, ba phin poi ha ka niam.

Here give counsel together thou uncle (maternal), brother, here now that funds have been raised and expended for thee u/ka Dieng and the (ten) by nephews, nieces, brothers and sisters, so that you may reach unto the religion (rites and ceremonies).

He places the pieces of meat on the floor and pours a libation from the *skaw*. Then the sacrificer takes up the third heap saying:

Kane phin sneng ryngkat phi u long- kha u man-kha kumba la bei ki pyrsa ki para ia u/ka Dieng ryngkat ki shiphew ngut ba phin poi ha ka niam.

Here you will give counsel together thou who causest to be and who causest to grow as funds have been raised and expended by the nephews and nieces, the brothers and sisters for thee u/ka Dieng together with the (ten) so that you may reach unto the religion (rites and ceremonies).

He places the meat on the floor and pours a libation from the gourd.

As the sacrificer goes on with the ceremonies, not more than two persons play the drums. This is the play of the *ksing niam*, the drum of religion, i.e., the drum of ceremonies.

After the completion of these ceremonies which have been performed by the maternal kin who also bears the entire expenditure, they call for a pig (or a bull or a cow) from the father (or the house or family of the father) who comes to perform *phur mastieh*, which is the ceremony of bringing to the house of the children a pig (or a bull or a cow) with the banner and to the accompaniment of drums and dancing. The beating of the drums and the *shad mastieh* dance is done first at some distance from the house. The pig is brought into the courtyard up to the *kyndop* (portico) at the entrance of the house, where it is untied and is only held with the hands. Rice-beer or distilled liquor is also brought and those who bring it take the liquor inside the house. The sacrificer who pours out the libation says:

Kane la wan hap ka ummat ka umpung, ka 'iad rong na u kpa ia u/ka Dieng u/ka bad ki shiphew ngut ba phin ym buh- khoh buhjaw ba phin poi ha ka niam ha u Kni ha u Kong.

Here now the weeping the mourning and the liquor have happened (literally – fallen) from the father for thee Dieng and the (ten), so that you have no

regrets, feel no bitterness that you will reach unto the religion (rites and ceremonies) unto the maternal uncle the maternal brother.

The sacrificer then asks for rice in a basket and says:

Kane mynta la wan hap ka ummat ka umpung u dkhot u khyllai bad ka ksing na u kpa ia u/ka Dieng bad ki shiphew ngut.

Here has come to happen the weeping, the mourning, the pieces and fragments, and the drum from the father for u/ka bom Dieng and the (ten).

He dedicates the pig by throwing rice over it eleven times. Then they kill the pig and remove the portions for the *dohiong*, the *khwang*, and the *dohpha* from the same parts as in the case of the cattle. They keep the lower jaw, and if the sacrificial animal is a bull or a cow, the horns as well. While the sacramental portions are being removed, the sacrificer calls for the pig or the bull or the cow from the children of the maternal uncles and brothers (*khun-kha*). These bring the animal and the liquor to the *kyndop*, portico, the part of the house in front of the entrance door, under the eaves. They take the liquor inside the house, and the person who pours out the libation, says:

Kane la wan hap ka 'iad rong ka 'iad taw na ki khun-kha ia phi u/ka Dieng shiphew ngut ba phin poi na niam.

Here has fallen the liquor from the *khun-kha* (children of the birth, children given birth to by maternal brothers and uncles) for these u/ka Dieng and the (ten) so that you may reach unto the religion (rites and ceremonies).

Then the sacrificer says again:

Kane mynta la wan hap u 'niang iong u 'niang bah na ki khun-kha ia phi u/ka Dieng bad ki shiphew ngut.

Here now has come to fall the black pig the big pig from the *khun-kha* for thee u/ka Dieng and the (ten).

He dedicates the pig by throwing rice over it eleven times. They kill the pig and remove the portions for the *dohiong*, the *khwang* and the *dohpha*. They also take the lower jaw and in the case of a bull or a cow, the horns as well. In this manner they receive the offerings from all the *khun-kha*, beginning with the eldest *khun-kha* of u/ka Dieng and then the others in the order of age. They roast the *dohiong* on a spit over the fire, cut each portion into three pieces, and the ceremonies are then performed with the same

pronouncements and incantations as those accompanying the sacrifice of the cattle. This time all the portions of the *dohiong* from the animals brought by *kpa-kha* (the father who gives birth, that is the father and the house of the father) and the *khun-kha* are mixed together. The sacrificer takes one heap of *dohiong* in his left hand, sprinkles it with water with his right hand, asks for the gourd and says:

Kane kumba la bei ki pyrsa ki para ia phi u/ka Dieng ki shiphew ngut la wan hap ka ummat ka umpung, u dkhot u khyllai, ka ksing ka bom na u kpa ba phin poi ha thynrai ka niam.

Here as funds have been raised and expended by maternal nephews, nieces, brothers and sisters for thee u/ka Dieng and the (ten), has come to fall the weeping the mourning, the pieces and fragments, and the drum from the father so that you may reach unto the root of religion (the completion of perfect rites and ceremonies).

Then he takes up another heap of the *doh-iong* and says:

Kane ban sneng ryngkat phi u man-kha long-kha kumba la bei ia phi u/ka Dieng ki shiphew ngut ba phin poi ha ka niam.

Here to give counsel together by thou who causeth to grow who causeth to be, as it has been raised and expended for thee u/ka Dieng and the (ten) so that you may reach unto the religion (rites and ceremonies).

He places the pieces of meat on the ground and pours out a libation.

When all this has been done the persons who play the drums and the men dressed in their dancing dress now proceed from that place at a distance towards the house. First come the dancers of the father's family or even other people to dance in the courtyard. Those from the house lift up a small basket with the bones and hold it with their hands in the courtyard. They do not place it on the ground. Two of the dancers of the father's house come and pay their respect to the dead by bowing their heads and pointing their fly-flaps and swords forward to the ground in front of the bones. The beating of the drums and playing of the pipe (*tangmuri*) continue all this time but the other dancers stand up. The two dancers bow three times. When they have finished their act of obeisance, they join the other dancers and perform with them the *mastieh* dance in the courtyard where the basket with the bones is held. They dance just for a little time and move away, then come the dancers of the *khun-kha*. They also perform the same act of obeisance; two of the dancers come forward and bow and then they dance the *mastieh* dance. This is repeated until it has been done in turn by all the *khun-kha*, children of

brothers and maternal uncles, who have come to do the *phur* ceremony.

When this has been completed, there follows the sacrifice of a goat offered by the ancestral maternal house of the deceased. A he-goat, which must be white without any spot and which must have horns, is brought into the courtyard. The goat is set free as they never tie animals when delivering them to the sacrificer. The sacrificer says:

Kumba la bei ia u/ka dieng mynta la hap une u blang u kiup u knian.

As it has been raised and expended for u/ka Dieng now has fallen this he-goat, a jagged, a hairy goat.

The sacrificer mixes rice-flour with water, smears the goat on the neck with this paste and then ties a string of cane or split bamboo round his neck. Then a man beheads the goat.

Then is brought a white spotless he-goat from the family of the father. The sacrificer does the same as before and says:

Kumba la bei ia u/ka Dieng mynta la hap da une u blang na u kpa, kumba la phur kumba la lieng u kpa.

It has been raised and expended for u/ka Dieng now has fallen by this he-goat from the father as it has been honoured by the offering of ceremonial animal and dancing by the father.

The sacrificer smears the neck of the animal with rice-flour and then they tie it with a string of split bamboo or cane and behead it.

Then they perform the same ceremony with a spotlessly white he-goat from the children of the male lineage members, the *khun-kha* of the family of u/ka Dieng. The sacrificer says:

Kumba la bei ia u/ka Dieng mynta la wan hap une u blang u tyllai na ki khun-kha kumba la phur mastieh hap u blang.

As it has been raised and expended for u/ka Dieng now has come to fall this he-goat and the rope from the *khun-kha* as ceremonial offering and dancing has been done, the goat has fallen.

After all this has been done they place the bones in one bamboo basket made like a small Khasi coffin (*krong*) and cover it with the cloth called *khyrwang ryndia* (striped ends-silk wrapper). This is carried by men of u/ka Dieng's lineage, the uncle or brother, and never by women. They place inside this basket fried Job's tears or Indian corn, which have been tied in two bundles with strings, of nine grains in each bundle, and they place there

three reeds, each of the size of a finger. The *shlan* mat on which the bones were placed is also taken along. They take the bones and all these things to the mound – *kynton* – which they have prepared and which is twelve cubits square and three cubits and a span in height. On this *kynton* they make a small wooden enclosure of about a foot square within which they light a fire and there they burn the fried grains, the reeds and the *shlan* mat. When these things are burnt, they pass the bones over the fire (*syaw*) by swinging them three times over it in the piece of cloth in which they are tied. Thereupon they consecrate (*jer*) the bones with flour. The sacrificer takes flour in his right hand and says:

Kumba la bei ia phi u/ka Dieng ryngkat shiphew ngut kane la jer la thoh ia phi ban poi ha ka niam.

As it has been raised and expended for thee u/ka Dieng together with the (ten) here you are consecrated (*jer*) and given a sign (or mark) so that you may reach unto the religion (rites and ceremonies).

Then he sprinkles flour over the bones, which are placed on the ground. The bones are then wrapped up and are carried by a man from among the maternal relations of u/ka Dieng. They beat the drum and play the flute (*shyngwiang*) dance the *symphiah* dance at the *kynton* (mound) while the ceremonies are being performed. Near the *kynton*, at the *mawlynti* (stones of the way) the maternal relations sacrifice one she-goat. The sacrificer says:

Kumba la bei ia phi u/ka Dieng ryngkat ki shiphew ngut la hap u mawlynti, maw-syngkien, mynta kane la hap ka 'lang mawlynti.

As it has been raised and expended for thee u/ka Dieng together with the (ten) and the *mawlynti*, *mawsyngkien* has happened, and now here ka 'lang *mawlynti*, *maw-syngkien* she-goat has happened.

The sacrificer lets a small quantity of the blood drop on the *mawshynrang*, the male or erect stones, and on the *mawkynthei*, the flat stone. At this place, they also dance and play the flute (*shyngwiang*) and the drum.

At the *mawlynti* they put up all the flags of white cloth of the *khun-kha* (children of the male members of the matri-lineage) and of the *kpa-kha* (fathers of the family). Near the *mawlynti* they prepare the *umkoi*, a small hollow to contain water. Apart from the hollow the *umkoi* consists of three stones about a foot in height, the tallest one in the middle, with a *mawkynthei* (*maw-umkoi*) dolmen about six inches in diameter, and they dig in the ground a small hollow in front of the *mawkynthei*. They put up one

flag and set a branch of the *dieng pyrshit* tree in the hollow (*umkoi*). They pour water into the hollow. These *maw-umkoi* stones are put up while the bones are being passed over the fire on the *kynton* (*mound*). The sacrificer spreads a *lakhar* leaf, sets up the gourd which is filled with fermented rice, and places rice, flour and a *dieng pyrshit* leaf on the dolmen, the *lawkynthei* of the *mawumkoi*. The sacrificer takes a chicken, a cock or a hen, and performs the sacrifice saying:

Kumba la bei ia phi u/ka Dieng ryngkat ki shiphew ngut mynta la hap ka umkoi umshan ba phin poi ha ka niam.

As it has been raised and expended for thee u/ka Dieng together with the (ten) now the *umkoi umshan* has happened so that you may reach unto the religion (rites and ceremonies).

The sacrificer then cuts the neck of the fowl with a knife and lets the blood drop on the upright stones, called *mawshynrang*, and the flat stone, called *mawkynthei*, as well as on the branch of *dieng pyrshit* tree and the flag which have been planted in the *umkoi* hollow.

The carrier of the bones must not look back from the time he starts from the *umkoi*. In front of him walks a man who indicates the path by scattering *dieng pyrshit* leaves. Every time he crosses a stream he indicates the path by scattering rice and *dieng pyrshit* leaves on both sides of the stream. Some also tie a string across the stream. Finally they reach the place or village where the *mawniam* is. The members of other major lineages (*kpoh*) of the clan (*jaid*) of u/ka Dieng who live near the *mawniam* make their own *kynton* (*mound*) near the *mawniam* and the *kpep*. The *kpep* is a large circle of rough stones, some perhaps only a foot high, others up to about five feet, made near the *mawniam*. Like the *mawniam* the *kpep* is in permanent use, so there is only one *kpep* for a *mawniam*. Members of the clan who live near the *mawniam* erect *mawlynti* as do those living at a distance but these *mawlynti* are placed near the *kpep* and consist of only one upright male stone (*mawshynrang*) and one flat table stone (*mawkynthei* of female stone). Those living near the *mawniam* perform the same ceremonies as described above; they erect three *umkoi* stones and dig an *umkoi* hollow, plant a flag and a *dieng pyrshit* tree and sacrifice a cock. Good examples of *kpep* stones are to be found at Myllem village some miles from Shillong. When the bearer of the bones and those who accompany him arrive at the *kpep*, they take three firebrands lying ready within the *kpep*. The sacrificer pours a libation of liquor on five female cowrie shells

and on five betel leaves and on five pieces of betel-nut which he places on the betel leaves. Then he says:

Kumba la poi hapoh kpep te phi u/ka Dieng ryngkat shiphew ngut phin rung ha ka niam, une u kwai san kyntien bad u phati (tympew) san sla, u sbai san tylli.

As you have arrived at the *kpep* then thou u/ka Dieng together with the (ten) will enter into the *niam* (rites and ceremonies), here are five pieces of betel-nut, five betel leaves and five cowrie shells.

The people who accompany the carrier of the bones take the three firebrands and two of them go and cry out from a distance of some thirty or forty cubits away from the *mawniam*. Facing towards the west, they say:

To ale wan shim ka ding ka theh phi u/ka Dieng ryngkat shiphew ngut be phi la poi ha ka niam.

Come and take the fire thou u/ka Dieng and the (ten) now that you have reached unto the religion (rites and ceremonies).

From there they come to the *mawniam* and they place the bones inside it, opening the ossuary by removing the *mawkhang* (entrance stone) and closing it again. Nothing is said while they are opening or closing the stone cist. After the bones have been placed inside, a ceremony is performed in front of the *mawniam*. In this ceremony there is one sacrificer from the maternal relations (*liang kur*) and one from those connected by marriage (*liang kha*); each of them spreads a leaf and places a gourd on the leaf. Each of them also places three loaves, the lower jaw, the horns, the *khwang* (raw meat), the half-cooked rice, the flour and a leaf of the *pyrshit* tree. The sacrificer takes the cooked egg in his left hand and pours water on it with his right hand, then he places it on the leaf. He takes a pinch of each of the three loaves. Meanwhile another person cuts the *dohpha* (cooked meat), which the sacrificer takes and holding it in his right hand says:

Kumba la poi ha ka niam phi u/ka Dieng ryngkat shiphew ngut te mynta wat buh khoh wat buh jaw shuh ia kiba ha ing kiba ha sem kumba phi la poi ha ka niam.

As now you have reached unto the religion (rites and ceremonies) thou u/ka Dieng and the (ten) now have no regret feel no bitterness against the members of the family, the members of the house, as now you have reached unto the religion (rites and ceremonies).

Then he places it on the leaf, takes a pinch from the loaves, and sacrifices saying:

Kumba la poi ha ka niam phi u/ka Dieng ryngkat shiphew ngut ban sneng ryngkat phi u Kni u Kong kumba la poi ha ka niam.

As you have reached unto the religion (rites and ceremonies) thou u/ka Dieng and the (ten) to give counsel together you the maternal uncle, brother, as you have reached unto the religion (rites and ceremonies).

The sacrificer puts the offering away, takes a pinch of the loaves again and sacrifices saying:

Kumba la poi ha ka niam phi u/ka Dieng ryngkat shiphew ngut ban sneng ryngkat phi long-kha man-kha kumba la poi ha ka niam.

As you have reached unto the religion (rites and ceremonies) thou u/ka Dieng together with the (ten) to give counsel together thou who causest to be and who causest to grow as you have reached unto the *niam* (religious rites and ceremonies).

He then puts the offering away. Thus the sacrificer of the maternal relations (*ki kur*) begins, and the sacrificer of those connected by marriage (*ki kha*) follows immediately. Then the sacrificers take the eggs, remove the shell and each of them cuts off the narrow end of his egg. Giving the rest to the people, he keeps only the cut off end. Tossing it he makes it fall once with the obverse up and once with the reverse up. Then the sacrificers pinch off pieces from the loaves again. The people present cut the *dopha*. Then they perform the sacrifice, take up all the loaves, the flour, the half-cooked rice and everything, and say:

Kane ioh phi ong tang u kpu, tang u dkhot, hynrei kane ryngkat sa ka shynrong ka shyntaw kumba la poi phi u/ka Dieng ryngkat shiphew ngut ha ka niam.

Here lest you say only the loaves and only the pieces, but here together with the shell and the cover as thou u/ka Dieng together with the (ten) have reached unto the religion (rites and ceremonies).

The sacrificers then put the offering away and pouring a libation of liquor from the gourd on the leaves they say:

Kane ka 'iad hiar ka 'iad bang kumba la poi ma phi u/ka Dieng ryngkat shiphew ngut ha ka niam.

Here the fermented rice water, the sweet liquor, as thou u/ka Dieng with the (ten) have reached unto the religion (rites and ceremonies).

Thus the ceremonies are all completed and the people return to the house. Next day they make an account of the expenses, called *khein sbai*, using

for counting cowrie shells, the old form of money. When they have finished counting, the father, not the uncle, gives advice (*sneng*) and asks:

Phi ki khun kumba phi la bei ia u/ka Dieng baroh shiphew ngut phi shim ram ne phi ioh na ei?

You the children as you have raised funds and expended for u/ka Dieng and all the (ten), did you borrow or where did you get?

The children reply saying:

Ka la jong hi kumba la buh maphi u kpa.

It is our own, as it has been left by you the father.

They must reply in this manner even though they have borrowed it or taken on loan.

Of the ceremonies connected with the transfer of the bones from the *mawkyntroh* to the *mawniam*, those performed by the lineage members (*ki kur*) are summed up by saying “*ki thangiap*”, those performed by affinal relatives (*ki khun kha*) are summed up by saying “*ki phur*”.