

IN MEMORY
OF MY BELOVED FATHER
LATE U.S. NONGRUM WHO
DIED ON 10.10.93 AND
WHO HAD ALWAYS IN-
SPIRED ME TILL HIS
LAST BREATH

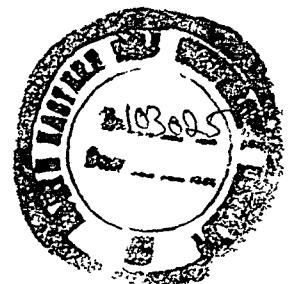
THE MARNGAR OF THE BHOI AREA : AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDY

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DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED IN PART FULFILMENT ON THE REQUIREMENTS
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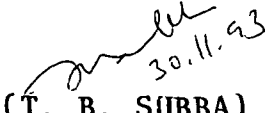
CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled "THE MARNGAR OF THE BHOI AREA: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDY" prepared by CLARA LYNGWA was done under my supervision.

This thesis or a part thereof has not been submitted to this University or any other University earlier for any other degree or award of any prize.

SHILLONG

THE 30TH NOVEMBER 1993


30.11.93
(T. B. SUBBA)
Supervisor


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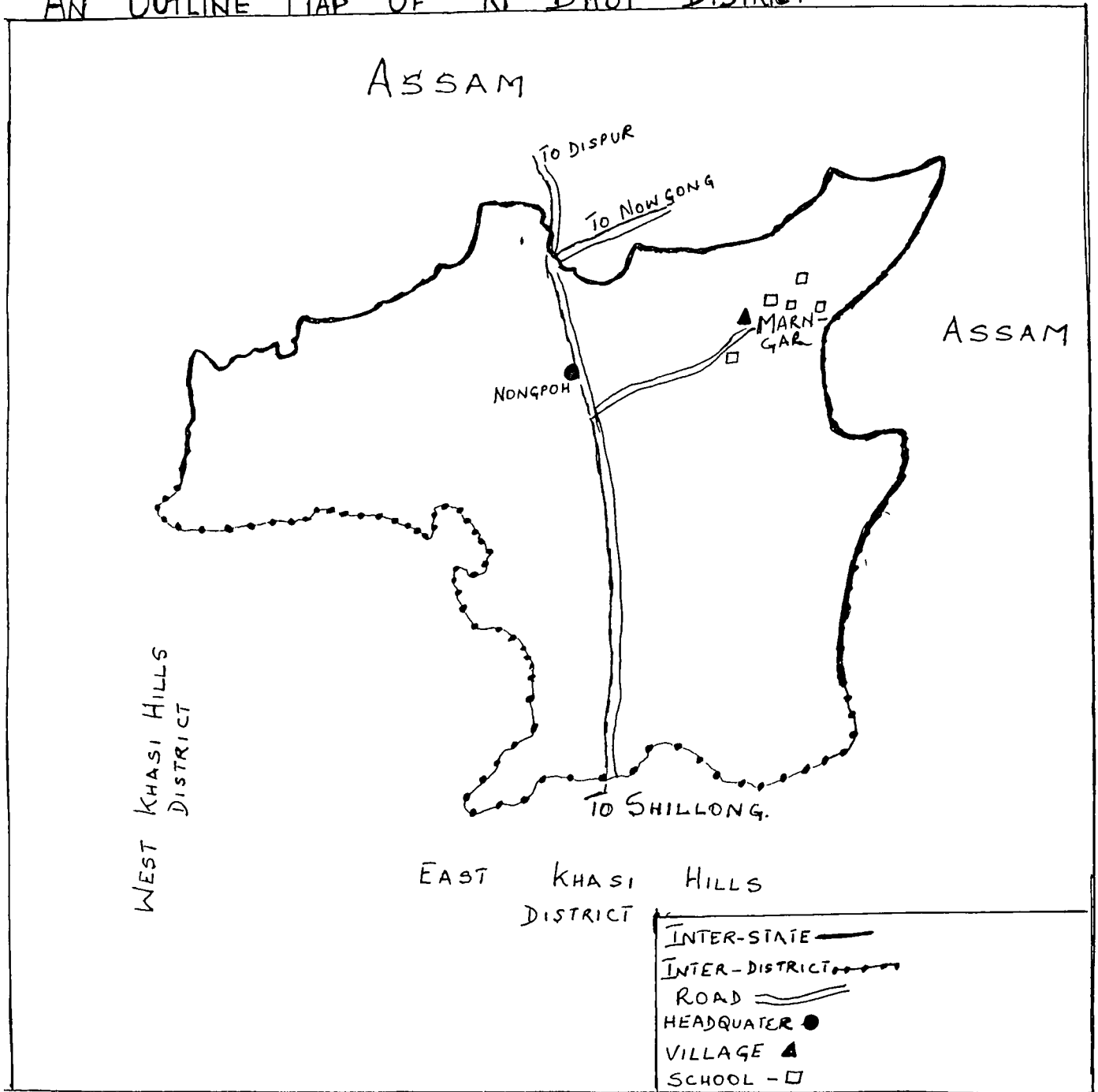
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AN OUTLINE MAP OF RI BHOI DISTRICT



CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The State of Meghalaya came into being on the 21st January 1972. It lies between 25°47' and 26°10' North Latitude and 89°45' and 92°47' East Longitude. Its approximate area is 22,429 square kilometres. It is bounded by Assam on the north, east and the north west; while Bangladesh is on the south and south west. This state is divided into seven administrative districts. The Ri Bhoi District, under which the Marngar village falls, was created in July 1992.

In this state we find three dominant tribal groups - the Khasi, the Pnar, and the Garo or Achik. The Khasi and the Pnars believe that they belong to the Hynniew Trep Hynniew Skum, meaning 'Seven Huts' and were separated from their heavenly abode of Khyndai Trep Khyndai Skum, meaning 'Nine Huts' at a certain point of time in the past. The Khasis are believed to be the remnants of the Monkhmer tribes of South East Asia. The Garos, on the other hand, are believed to have come from Tibet. But all these three hill

tribes are matrilineal in character.

These tribes are also known sometimes by different names at different places. Such names are either confined to a particular Syiemship or a particular geographical region. Based on the geographical divisions the Khasis are classified roughly under the following groups:

- 1) War - The Wars are those residing along the Southern slopes of Khasi and Jaintia Hills bordering Bangladesh.
- 2) Khynriam - Originally, the word referred to the people living within the Khyrim Syiemship, but this name has not been universally recognised as such. The Wars call the Khynriams as Nongphlang.
- 3) Bhoi - The inhabitants of the northern slope of the Khasi Hills are known as the Bhoi.
- 4) Lyngngam and Dyko - They live in areas bordering the Garo Hills and in the western part of West Khasi Hills. The Garos call them Megam.
- 5) Pnar - They are the people who live in the Central Upland region of the Jaintia Hills and are sometimes called Syntengs.

6) Hadem or Bietc - They are found mostly in the eastern part of the Jaintia Hills.

Amongst the Garos also we find a number of sub-tribes. The most prominent of them are Abeng, Awe or Akawas, Kothu, Atiagra, Matabeng, Chisak, Matchi or Dual, Megam, Atong and Gara Gamching.

Besides the Khasis and Garos, there are people from other regions of the country residing in this state. The flow of the outsiders to this state is mainly due to economic reasons. According to 1981 Census, they consisted of the Bengalis (1.2 lakhs), Nepalis (0.61 lakhs), Assamese (0.25 lakhs) and other peoples (0.29 lakhs).

1. The Problem

Marngar is the name of a village located in the Ri Bhoi District of Meghalaya. It is about 55 kilometres away from Shillong and lies in the northern part of Meghalaya. The people living there are also called Marngar after the name of the village. They are recognised as one of the Khasi sub-tribes called the Bhoi. There are 15 clans in this village consisting of about 1800 households. They had originally migrated

from different parts of the north eastern region as well as the present state of Meghalaya. For instance, the Syiem clan came from Gobha, which is situated in Nowgong District (erstwhile Jaintiapur), the Lyngdoh clan is from Thamsing Pargan, which is situated in Jirang (Ri Bhoi District); and so on.

There are 7 villages which are included in one Raid or Administrative Unit of the Ri Bhoi District. These are as follows:

1. Mawtnum
2. Marngar
3. Umjarasi
4. Mawphru
5. Umbuda
6. Portion of Nongkhrah, and
7. Iew Mawlong.

Earlier they used to speak in their own languages. But now the younger generations, Marngars, specially the male members, mostly speak in the Khasi language. They have not only adapted to the Khasi language but also the Khasi culture and society to a considerable extent.

Their ways of dressing were also different in the beginning. Some of them wore a clothe known as Mikhli which they wrapped around the body from the armpit to the ankle. They also wore a clothe known as Nara which they tied on the waist and another cloth which they tied below the shoulder. Besides this, they wore a white cloth covering their shoulders. Traditionally, blue coloured Mikhli was popular.

Earrings were mostly worn only by the old women and these were known as Dhomoitsali Luti which was made of dry wood. Bangles or Kharu and a ring were also worn by old women. These can perhaps be considered as markers of their traditional identity.

Traditionally, males used to wear a loin cloth locally known as Langtuh Gamsha and Palong Gamsha. They even wore a turban or Kharsola and a shirt. Sometimes, they even wore a Dhoti or Jainboh. Occasionally, males used to wear earrings too which were locally known as Khuria. All this shows the dominance of Assamese culture in earlier times.

Traditionally, for dying cloth they used laha or lac for red and blue colours they used a dye

extracted from Ka Mustih tree.

This study is intended to be descriptive as no one has hitherto done any ethnographic study on the Marngars. The study of the Marngars is important not only from the historical point of view but also because of its present dynamics. Here is one historically alien community that has not only accepted the Khasi land and social system to a large extent but has also retained its traditions. The ambivalence in the cultural and linguistic identity of this community is also necessary to be explored.

2. Suvey of Literature

P.R.T. Gurdon (1907) describes about the tatoo which the Bhois practise. He writes that the only people in the hills who tatoo are certain tribes of the Bhoi area which are originally Mikirs. The female tatoo on their forehead when they attain the age of puberty. A straight vertical line is drawn from the parting of the hair down the forenead and nose. He further states that they have a flabby looking yellow skin of the Mikirs.

H. Bareh (1967) writes on various subjects

like culture, politics and history of the Khasis. It is truly a pioneering work which provides exhaustive information on the tribe. Emphasis in this work is on the evolution of the Khasi society, i.e., the matrilineal form of social organisation, its megalithic and religious aspects reviewed in the light of their history and the nature of their civil institutions, but this book makes no special mention of the Marngars in particular.

N. Natarajan (1977) has written on the influence of the missionaries on the Khasis of Meghalaya. Her discussion begins around the early nineteenth century when Missiology first came to the hills and extends into the recent times. Relevant topics like pre-missionary Khasi society and the Khasi religion (niam) has also been described. The study also presents an analytical and descriptive picture of contemporary Khasi society. But, like the work of Bareh, she has not dealt with the Marngars of the Bhois in general.

J.N. Choudhury (1978) has attempted a critical appraisal of the Khasi matriliney, the still unresolved question of their migration, religion, and eschatology, the institution of inheritance and land ownership,

and their political history in the light of new facts on archaeology, anthropology, comparative religion and history but he too has ignored the Marngars.

K. Vincent's Socio-economic Study of Bhoilymbong (1978) is a holistic study on this area, which falls in the Ri Bhoi District only. However, this book also presents no clue to the Marngar society.

P.R. Mathur's (1979) concern is with the political and religious activities of the Khasis. His material was obtained from his research among the Khasis of Meghalaya carried out between 1967 and 1969. But he too has not written anything on the people in question.

D.T. Laloo (1982) has provided an explanation to their various ceremonies of the Sajer Raid Lyngdoh including the Lukhmi festival of this raid. But the Marngars are left untouched.

S.K. Chattopadhyay (1985) has edited a book on the tribal institutions of Meghalaya. The discussion is divided into three parts. Part I deals with the indigenous institutions of the Khasis and the Jaintias. Part II deals with the indigenous institutions of

the Garos and Part III deals with the indigenous institutions of the State as a whole. But in none of the parts are the Marngars discussed even in passing.

The Law Research Institute did a field study in the Bhoi area in 1990. Four villages in Bhoi area near Naya Bungalow (Umsning) namely, Umran Niang Byrnet, Nongkya, Umsaitsning, and Nongjri were studied. The study shows the absence of jhum cultivation and the presence of the Nepalis there. But nowhere has there been any mention of the Marngar village and people.

M.P. Rani Lyngdoh (1991) has worked on the Khasi festivals in historical perspectives and focussed on the social relevance and historical contents of these festivals, which had been lying dormant for so long. It is during the observation of the various festivals that the people propitiate God, their creator, for his blessings and kindness throughout the year, so that they have a prosperous harvest, good health, general prosperity and that they could live happily throughout the year. The festivals play a very important part in the life of the Khasis, as each festival has certain meaning to them. Besides, providing entertainment, the festivals act as an

integrative force, hold the community together and strengthen their identity. The festivals have also preserved the distinctive traits of the culture and tradition of the people.

According to her, the word Lukhmi which is also the festival of the Marngars, might have originated from the word Lu khi which means rice in the dialect of the Marngar in the Bhoi area. However, this word could have been a corrupt word of Laxmi, the goddess of wealth, worshipped by the Hindus in the neighbouring areas.

It is clear from above that the published literature on the state of Meghalaya or on the Khasis has not mentioned anything on this community which has been in existence there for over a hundred years or so. It, however, remains to be ascertained if they have been mentioned under a different name. It was reported to me that a journalist had once worked on the handloom of these people (Marngar) but no evidence could be found of this. Even the two works done on the Bhoi area itself, one by K. Vincent (1977) and another by D.T. Laloo (1977), who have written in English and Khasi languages respectively, have not

mentioned anything about the Marngars.

3. Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is to prepare an inventory of the Marngars. In particular, this study seeks to delve into their migrational history and the continuity and changes in their economy, beliefs and values, and social institutions over a period of hundred years or so of their living in this area.

4. Methods

The list of households in the village was collected first from the Syiem of Marngar. Census of 300 households was taken with the help of the list given by the Syiem. Then 100 elderly people of the village under study were interviewed by picking every third household head, with the help of an interview guide. Non-participant observation was also used as a technique of data collection.

As for secondary data, materials were collected from the North-Eastern Hill University, Anthropological Survey of India, State Central Library and from various governmental and non-governmental organisations as well as some knowledgeable people and officers of

the Bhoi area and Shillong.

The 300 households were collected from 7 hamlets or kyntoit with about 16.6% from each hamlet. This has been done on the basis of random sampling.

5. Plan of the Study

Chapter I deals with survey of literature, objectives, methods, and plan of the study.

Chapter II describes the location, history, and the people of the village.

Chapter III focusses on their traditional economy, beliefs and values and social institutions (family, kinship and marriage).

Chapter IV brings out the changes that have taken place in their economy, beliefs and values, and social institutions.

Chapter V is the concluding chapter where the processes of continuity and change are discussed and the reason for the same are provided.

CHAPTER II

THE VILLAGE

LOCATION

The Marngar village lies on the north of Meghalaya, in the Ri Bhoi District. The village is bounded on the north by Umden, on the south by Sohlait, on the east by Umsawnongbri, and on the west by Mawtnum.

At the entrance of the village there is one gate which is locally known as Ka Khyrdop. It is said that this gate was built in order to guard the village from diseases or calamities that might occur. Every year the villagers make a sacrifice of U Huleng (black monkey) at the gate. After the sacrifice is over, they bury the body of U Huleng under the gate whereas the head of it is left above the ground. After that, they go to each and every house and mock-beat the house so that the disease or illness that might occur in the village would not occur.

cont This village covers a vast area. It has six hamlets or Kyntoit. These are as follows:

1. Purangang

2. Borgang
3. Atgang
4. Sarikusi
5. Borchatchari, and
6. Lalungpam.

With the coming of Hindu and Christian missionaries, schools have been established. The District Council and Sankardev Mission established their schools in the same year, i.e., in 1959, while the Christian Missionary school was set up in 1975.

Monoliths can be seen in every nook and corner of the village. Some of these monoliths are erected for the purpose of holding Durbar Shnong or Local Assembly. Others are erected to commemorate the dead persons, which erected by the rich people only. Such monoliths also made it possible for the people to use them as a resting place. Still other monoliths, which are in the central part of the village, are erected for the elders of the village to sit whenever there is any festival or any ceremony performed by the villagers.

The village is administered by the Syiem or



the Chief who is helped by his Myntri or minister. All the rules and regulations are enforced by the minister or Ki Myntri with the approval of U Syiem or the Chief.

The village is about 7 kilometres away from the main town of the Bhoi area, i.e., Nongpoh. It is well known for paddy and other crops like vegetables, bananas and broom stick which are grown there.

The village has a number of establishments belonging to the Department of Soil Conservation, Department of Sericulture, Department of Industry and the Department of Health.

there are four schools in the village, two of which are primary schools, one middle school, and the fourth one is a high school. The two primary schools are St. Jitas and the District Council Lower Primary school. Sankardev school is a middle school and St. Alfred is the high school.

HISTORY OF THE VILLAGE

Members of the clan called Binong are known to be the first settlers in the village. This clan is also known as Ket after its founder. According

to a legend, this clan originated from the elder sister of Ket who had established a clan after migrating to Marngar. The word 'Binong' itself means the first settler. They did not have a chief so they went in search for U Syiem and found one in Gobja, the location of which is already mentioned.

The Damlong clan is believed to have originated from the younger sister of Ket. It is said that the younger sister gave birth to a child in Amlongjan (Raid Amlong, Khyrim Syiemship, in Ri Bhoi District). That is why the child born was named Damlong, which is considered as a corruption of the word Amlongjan. Therefore, the descendants of the younger sister of the Ket came to be known as the Damlong clan. The word 'Damlong' also means 'flood' and in the Marngar language, flood is called Amlongjan.

As time passed on they found that the village was not suitable for cultivation, so they migrated to Kyrdem which falls under the Ri Bhoi district itself. But they could not stay even there and migrated to Libri which was later known as Marngar. This may be taken to indicate that they were shifting cultivators.

The members of this clan found that it was not possible to do religious activities and to run the administration all by themselves. So the Chief or u Syiem searched for someone to help him. It was proposed that the Lyngdoh clan should be made to perform the scarifying duties to the goddess known as Ka Blei Lyngdoh. The Syiem went to Keling (Meghalaya) to bring a Lyngdoh for conducting the rites and rituals for this goddess. It is reported that the Lyngdoh also performed as a Myntri or minister of the chief. And a Lyngdoh could even become a chief if there was no one from the Syiem clan.

The chief or u Syiem also invited a member of the Baro clan of Nalsi village to come and settle in Marngar. (The Nalsi village is situated in Umden within the Ri-Bhoi district). The reason for inviting him was that the Syiem needed the Baro because his people did not know how to perform the rites and rituals regarding what is known as the Domahi or Bihu. The Chief further elected from among the members of the Baro clan one Barka meaning a postman. Thus the Baro retained their traditional title as Baro, which must have been a corrupt word from Bodo.

At the very beginning, there were three prime-val sisters who had come to settle in Marngar. Two of them had fled away to Iew Mawlong and Umden in the Ri Bhoi district itself, the third stayed back in Marngar and served as a maid servant of the Chief of Marngar. Later she got married to the Chief's son. It was after that that the Chief gave hear a new clan, i.e., Majhong.

The members of the Shilling clan came from Ranee Gudam which is in Diporbil, Assam. The cause of their migration to Marngar was the breaking out of a war between the War and the Jaintia. Simultaneously, a great earthquake occurred and all the people had to flee away. Houses were destroyed and soon the people migrated to different parts of Assam and at last reached Marngar. They started the journey from Ranee Gudam (Assam) to Keling (Meghalaya) then to Mawphrew of the Bhoi area and to Nulianpam of the same area near Marngar and reached Marngar after a very tiresome journey. In Keling, the Shillings met the members of the Marek (Marak of the Garos) and then proceeded together to Mawphrew but the Mareks ended their journey at Mawphrew. During their journey

they met members of the Sohkhwai and the Hokhai clans at Nulianpam and stayed there for some time. After a year or more the children of the Marek clan met the members of the Shilling clan and requested them to give some land. The Shillings agreed to that request. From the Shilling clan emerged a diviner and mediator who could perform the various rites and rituals for the deities that had been brought from Raneé Gudam. Then after some years, they again migrated to other places and met the members of Binong clan at Lalungkusi hamlet (Marngar).

After many years, these people were given the authority as the Pator, i.e., a minister while the Sohkhwai held the post of Karkun, i.e., a diviner. The members of both the Shilling and Sohkhwai clans went to the Chief to ask for some land on behalf of the Marek clan but the Chief refused. Thus the Marek clan has given a plot of land by the Shilling clan and the former promised to help the latter in any trouble. The Shilling clan agreed to their proposal and gave them a plains area, i.e., Wahdor Bhoi and even gave them a statue of god, i.e., Juphan Khaji so that they could worship him.

Then came the members of the Makdoh or Nonda clan, who had come with a hope that they would get some land from the Shilling clan. As they did not get any land from the Chief, the Shillings again gave a part of their land to the Nonda/Makdoh clan and that area was known as Majhor Bhoi and a statue of god, i.e., Juphan Pateng was also given. All these things were given to the Makdoh or Nonda clan as the latter had promised to help them in times of need. It appears that upto now these two clans, i.e., the Makdoh and the Marek have not broken their promises made by their ancestors and ancestress. Among the gods which the Shillings gave to the other clans, Juphan Bah the eldest of all gods, is still retained with them.

The members of the Makdoh/Nonda clan appear to be originally Khasis. The ancestor and ancestress of this clan were known as Ka San Makdoh and U Hurimon Ingti. The word Nonda is derived from the word Mynda who was one of the maternal uncles of the Nonda clan. According to some sources their ancestral place was in Jaintiapur, which indicate that some of the Marngars are of Pnar origin. After a long time they settled

down in Kyrdem (Ri Bhoi district). One legend says that there were three brothers and sisters in which San, the youngest sister, was loved by all of them and she never did any kind of work. One day, after they had finished their work, they started propitiating their gods by sacrificing a pig. The dinner was ready and everybody started spreading leaves so that they could have a good meal. But unfortunately, it so happened that no leaf was laid for the youngest daughter. Thus she was very much disappointed, her elder sister pleaded her forgiveness but she decided to leave. After two weeks' journey she reached Mawrong in Bhoi area. For twenty years she lived there but she was not satisfied till her marriage with U Hurimon Ingti after which she and her family members came and settled in Purangang hamlet (Marngar).

The original place of the Sohkhwai clan was a village called Sohkhwai in Meghalaya. According to a legend, this clan had only two sisters. They were orphans and they wandered from one place to another until they reached Marngar and settled there.

The Diri or Giri clan is believed to have emerged from the only daughter of the Syiem clan.

In their language they are called Diri but to some of the villagers they are Giri. This clan was, according to a legend, formed with the consent of the Syiem clan which gave a stone to the former for performing a sacrifice known as Bura Halur.

The members of the Bomba clan came from Odalguri in Assam. According to them, they came along with the members of the Damlong clan. Thus there is a friendly relation between these two clans. They are known as Har Giati - Kas Giati which means that they are ready to help each other in times of sorrow or joy.

The Pator clan is also known to have emerged from the Lyngdoh clan. Its members were the original inhabitants of Thamsing Patgan village in the Ri Bhoi district.

PEOPLE

In the past, the Marngars had migrated from different places and belonged to different communities like the Bodo, the Khasi, the Garo, the Mikir, and so on. But in the course of time they came to be identified as one of the sub-groups of the Khasi, viz., the Bhoi.

The population distribution of the 14 clans in this village is given below.

Table 1 - Population Distribution According to Clan.

Clan	% of Males	% of Females	Total Numbers	Total P. C.
Barka/Baro	2.4	3.2	73	6.1
Bomba	1.4	0.8	27	2.3
Binong	8.8	10.0	226	18.8
Damlong	7.1	6.2	161	13.4
Diri (Giri)	0.8	1.2	25	2.1
Lyngdoh	3.9	3.8	92	7.6
Marwet	3.6	4.9	103	8.5
Majhong	3.3	4.8	98	8.2
Marek	-	0.2	2	0.2
Vonda (Vakdoh)	2.1	1.6	44	3.7
Pator	0.6	0.9	18	1.5
Shilling	2.1	1.8	47	3.9
Sohkhwai	9.0	7.2	195	17.2
Syiem	4.1	3.7	94	7.8
Total	49.6	50.4	1205	100.0

Source: Field work.

From the above table it is seen that the Binong clan has the highest percentage of population i.e., 18.8 followed by Sohkhwai (16.2) and the Damlong clan (13.4). The remaining clans have less than 10% only.

The table also shows that the percentage of females is higher than that of the males. Regarding male-female ratio, the Barka, Dirí, Lyngdoh, Marwet, Majhong, Marek and the Pator clans have a higher percentage of females than that of the males.

In Table II below, age-group classification of the Marngars is given.

Table II - Age group classification of the Marngars.

Clan Names	0-15	16-30	31-45	46-60	61 +
Baro (Barka)	3.2	3.0	1.0	0.3	0.1
Binong	4.5	2.3	1.4	1.0	0.5
Bomba	1.0	0.4	0.2	0.1	0.1
Damlong	4.0	2.6	1.0	0.6	0.4
Diri	0.7	0.5	0.1	0.1	-
Lyngdoh	5.7	4.5	2.6	1.2	0.5
Marek	-	0.1	-	-	-
Majhong	6.7	3.6	1.9	1.5	0.5
Marwet	2.1	2.1	0.6	0.9	0.1
Nonda/Makdoh	-	0.2	0.1	0.1	-
Pator	0.4	0.4	-	0.1	0.1
Shilling	1.0	0.8	0.6	0.2	-
Sohkhwai	4.9	2.1	2.1	1.2	1.0
Syiem	8.5	6.6	1.6	1.5	0.6

Source: Field work.

From the above table it is seen that there is a high percentage of children between the age group of 0-15 years among the Syiem clan (8.5), whereas the Pator clan has only 0.4% in this age group. In the age group of 16 to 30 years, the Syiem has the highest percentage (6.6) followed by the Lyngdoh clan (4.5), Majhong (3.6) and the Marek has the lowest percentage (0.1). The age-group between 31 to 45 years shows that the Lyngdoh has the highest percentage (2.6), while the Marek and the Pator clans are absent in this age group. The table also reveals that the Syiem and Majhong clans have equal percentage (1.5) in the age group of 46-60 years which is the highest, whereas there is none in the age group from the Marek clan. Further, we can also see that the Lyngdoh and the Sohkhwai clans have an equal percentage in the age group of 46-60 years.

According to the age group of 61 and above, the Sohkhwai clan has the high percentage (1.0), the lowest percentage is found among the Baro or Barka, bomba, Marwet and Pator which have an equal percentage of (0.1) in this age group. There were none in this age group from the Diri, Marwet, Nonda or Makdoh and Shilling clans.

Educationally, only 3.1% of the people of this village have college education. Most children of the village cannot study beyond the local schools. For college education they have to go to Nongpoh or Shillong, which is not possible for every villager there. However, Table III shows that the illiterates constitute only 34.3 percentage.

Table III - Education in Marngar.

Educational categories	Frequency	Percentage
Illiterate	625	34.3
Primary Education	350	19.2
Secondary	354	19.4
College	57	3.1
Total	1825	100.00

Source: Field work.

Amongst the Marngars, both rich and poor eagerly want their children to be educated. Night schools have also been set up for the villagers. Such schools are primarily for those poor people who cannot afford to send their children to any school as they have to work as wage labourers during the day time.

Education is the most important contribution of the Christian as well as the non-Christian mis-

sionaries to the Marngars. With the opening up of schools some of them have become school teachers. Other occupations have also sprung up due to education. Majority of the people are now able to read and write and know other languages too. Further it is seen that the government has also come forward to help such schools set up by the various missionaries.

The Marngar house has the shape of an inverted 'U'. The houses are mostly (75.0%) thatched with the help of straw and wild grass though about a quarter of the houses were roofed with corrugated and galvanized iron sheets.

Each house has three rooms which include two bedrooms and a kitchen. The floor is daubed with a certain type of red mud. Construction of houses, harvesting of paddy and other such activities are performed together by the residents of the village. A person who refuses to participate in such activities may be fined by the village council and he may even be thrown out of the village.

Most of the villagers are cultivators, followed by government servants, businessmen, and so on. The table below shows the distribution of occupations in Marngar.

Table IV - Occupational distribution of the Marngars.

Clan	Cultiva- tors & Wage labour- ers	Khadi Villa- ge Indus- try	Office goers	Carpen- ters	Teacher	Busi- ness	Priests
Binong	8.6	0.1	1.3	-	0.2	0.5	0.2
Bomba	1.0	-	0.2	-	-	-	-
Baro	4.3	-	0.1	-	-	0.1	-
Damlong	7.2	0.2	0.6	0.1	-	-	-
Lyngdoh	13.5	-	1.2	-	0.1	0.7	-
Syiem	14.5	-	1.4	-	0.5	0.4	-
Sohkhwai	14.1	-	1.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Shilling	1.6	-	0.1	-	-	0.1	-
Makdoh	1.9	-	0.1	-	-	-	-
Marwet	6.0	-	0.2	-	-	-	-
Marek	0.1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Majhong	13.2	0.2	0.9	-	0.2	0.4	-
Pator	0.6	-	0.2	0.1	-	-	-
Giri	0.8	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	728	5	55	3	10	20	3

Source: Field work

14.5% of the Syiem clan members are cultivators and wage labourers. As most of them have paddy fields of their own they are engaged mostly in their own field though some of them work as wage labourers also. Both males and females are engaged as wage labourers. The females earn Rs. 30/- and the males Rs. 40/- per

day. The Sohkhwai clan comes next in this category. We also find that the Marek clan has the lowest percentage.

In the next category, i.e., office workers, we find that the Syiem clan has the highest percentage (1.4) followed by the Binongs. Further, there is absence of this category of people among the Dirí and Marek clans.

In the category of business, we find both men and women engaged in it. But we find that majority of those doing business belong to the Lyngdoh clan.

We also find that the Binong clan has the largest number of priests followed by the Sohkhwai clan. This particular profession is carried out only by these two clans.

CHAPTER III

TRADITIONAL MARNGAR SOCIETY

The village of Marngar came into existence due to migrants from Assam and other parts of the state itself. The migrants from within the state follow a matrilineal system while those who came from outside the state follow the patrilineal system. Thus we find two sets of people having opposite systems of descent living together.

The traditional economy, beliefs and values and social institution of the Marngar is discussed in this chapter.

TRADITIONAL ECONOMY

The characteristic of their traditional economy was barter system. For example, a basketful of dry fish was exchanged with a basketful of cotton. The amount as well as values of the goods were taken into consideration in such exchanges. This system of exchange was practised by the Marngars, with the people of Assam on Jakiroad and Sunapur market. The present market place in Iew-Mawlong at Nongpoh was used as a market place by the Marngars even in those

The soil remained productive only for two to three years. Only paddy was grown for the first few years but after a lapse of three years or more Dieng Ryndia (mulberry tree) and cotton plant were also grown. Cultivation of rice and other cereal crops were also practised later on.

It is reported that the food eaten by them earlier was locally known as Phan Khlaw or Soh Kyrsew, which meant a tuber or wild potato, which they collected from the forest.

Irrigation in the lower elevations was done mainly with the help of bamboo pipes or dug out canals.

Utensils used by them were mostly made of bamboo. We still see hollow and dried gourds used as water jars. For fetching and storing water they used a long bamboo vessel known as Ktang Um. For plates, they used leaves of bananas and of other trees.

TRADITIONAL BELIEFS AND VALUES

The traditional religion of the Marngar is known as Animism. It was a polytheistic religion in which they worshipped many gods and goddesses such as, Jomai Pyrthat, Ghoron Gohai, Bijli Gohai, Jongon Mura, etc.

Jomai Pyrthat is a lightning god which they worshipped when lightning struck. They made a sacrifice to propitiate this god. The owner of land or property where lightning had struck had to rear a pig for five years and after that they had to make a sacrifice.

Ghoroh Gohai is the goddess of the family. Sacrifice of a hen was made once in a year to propitiate this goddess so that they could live a prosperous life.

Bijli Gohai is a clan deity of the Lyngdoh. This deity was first worshipped by the five lineages of the Lyngdoh clan. All the members of this clan used to assemble once in a year at their ancestral place called Ka Iing Heh to propitiate their god called Bijli Gohai.

Jongon Mura is a god of the Baro clan. They made the offering every year during the month of March for their deceased ancestors or ancestress.

According to them, if any one lived a pious life on this earth one would go to heaven. But if one led a bad life, that would naturally lead one to hell or Jomoh. They even believed that the death of any person was due to some reason. Further, if

one did not finish one's rites and rituals during his life time or if one breached a taboo, this would also lead to one's death or the person would go to Jomoh. They also believed that if the fire did not burn the dead body properly, they tried to find out the reason by examining the entrails of a cock. If the eyes of the dead person burst at the time of cremation, they believed that the person was jealous.

There were many priests in Marngar. Some of them were invited for worshipping the village deities while others were called for performing the rites of the clan deities. There was at least one such priest from each clan. Such persons were known as Dandha, Kutwal or Sohsla and the Shangman.

If any person suffered from any disease, the family concerned invited a diviner for diagnosing it and curing the person. The villagers as well as clan members gave donations to such priests in the form of rice, money and so on. Especially in the Domahi ceremony they had to give a gourdful of beer (Shi klong ka 'iad um) to the priest. This ceremony was performed during the month of May before sowing. It was held once in every five years.

There were many other rites and rituals performed by the people. The most important of these are discussed below:

Gurkhia Gohai is the goddess of the cowherds. The sacrifice of cock was made in every five years at the most sacred place. The sacrifice was done so that the goddess would look after those cowherds and protect them from causing any harm to them.

Gaphru Nasha is a rite performed by U Syiem before entering a newly built house. While performing the sacrifice, a dance was held on the compound of the new house. In this dance, only virgin females would take part. But as for the male, both married and unmarried ones could participate. Until and unless the Binong and the Syiem clan members started the dance, no one should join. Further, the members of the Binong and the Syiem clans dance in the middle, while members of the other remaining clans danced around forming a knot. On the next day the owner of the newly built house prepared a feast where each and every participant must have food. A string of flesh locally known as Kyndong Mongo was given to each of those participants. To commemorate the new house, they offered a pig sacrifice known as Bhiji

Kura to their household deity.

Hangrinia is a harvesting festival performed only by the Syiem clan. It is held once in every five years. All the rites and rituals are to be performed by the Syiem clan only. During this festival they ate only a sour plant locally known as Jajew which was cooked in the paddy field. They even used fishing traps to catch fish from the nearby streamlets during this festival.

Raid Kanon is a festival celebrated by the Marngars in connection with the ploughing of paddy field. It is held every year. It is a community festival and therefore every family contributes for this festival.

Domahi or Bihu is a festival celebrated every year during the month of April or May. They collected donation from the market place with the consent of the Syiem of Myllem. It was in this festival that they give bath to their cattle (cows and oxen). They also carried a hoe, a heavy bladed knife locally known as Ka Wait and so on. A fine had to be paid if any one cultivated crops on that day. This was performed in order that they would have enough food or rice

for the whole year. It lasted for about two weeks. The last day of this festival was known as Owai Kura which was performed only in the Iing Sad, i.e., the house where U Syiem performed the family and the state sacrifices. To conclude this festival, drum beatings with nine types of sound was done. On the following day, they could start ploughing their field and do any other types of cultivation.

Each and every clan had a specific day in celebrating certain rites and rituals. The Syiem clan used to perform its rites on Saturday and Sunday, and the Damlong clan on Sunday and Monday. This was the practice since the olden days and it has continued till today. The days were chosen with the consent and agreement of the elders and ancestors or ancestresses of the clans in the past. The reason for choosing the days for performing sacrifices is but not known to the present villagers.

Rod Puja (Knia Khlam) is a sacrifice offered to their goddesses known as Ka Lei Duwan. An offering was made at a sacred place which was known as Ka Duwan Knia Khlam (literally meaning the altar for offering sacrifices for epidemic diseases). The ceremony was held to drive any type of epidemic which might befall

on the villagers. For this ceremony, the diviner must be from the Syiem clan. It was from the Syiem's house that a diviner had to carry a large bladed knife locally known as Ka Wait or Dakar for killing the goat. This ceremony is locally known as Pomblang. When this is over, a village feast is then held in which all the villagers take part.

Lukhmi was an important religious festival of the Raid Marngar and other place in the Bhoi area. It was held during the month of March after harvesting. This festival was connected with agriculture which was the main occupation of the people. This festival was performed to propitiate Ka Lukhmi or Ka Leikha, the goddess of rice and agriculture. According to one knowledgeable person, Rev. Father Sngi Lyngdoh, the word Lukhmi might have originated from the word Lukhi which means rice in the language of the Marngar people.

With regard to this festival, the people cleaned the area where the sacrifice was to be performed. On a particular day, a bunch of paddy was stolen by two diviners of the village from the field and then tied in a bundle and hidden. On the following day the search for this specific stolen bundle of paddy

would be taken up by the villagers. When the bundle was found by those diviners themselves information was given to the Chief that they had found it. Then each and every house carried along a handful of paddy, which was put in a straw tied with bamboo looking like a basket locally known as Pura to the place where the sacrifice was to be held. Division of work was also maintained while performing that ceremony such as the Sokhwai and the Binong clans played the drum, locally called Ksing Padiah, whereas the Damlong clan played the drum called Nakra or Tuntruth. The Majhong clan played the flute, i.e., Tangmuri locally known as Kahlia.

Next day, all the villagers went to their own paddy field. Then the diviner of each clan made a sacrifice for his own clan. Then the sprinkling of a kind of ground-rice, which was used for sacrificial ceremonies locally known as Pujer, started from the paddy field to the Iing Sad or place where the festival was held. The procession started from their own paddy field to the gate or Khyrdop first and then lastly to the Iing Sad. As a sign of thankfulness for their prosperous life, and for asking the blessings of their gods in future a sacrificial offering was

made, to their gods with a cock and a goat which is known as Sajol Mura. This was done by the whole village together.

After finishing all the ceremonies the dancers from the various clans participated in a dance which was known as Ka Mastieh. Thus, the festival ended with that dance and each and every villager would sprinkle a ground rice (Pujer) from the gate to his house.

TRADITIONAL SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

The traditional society mostly had joint families, which consisted of the parents, the children, and their wives and husbands in one household. The eldest brother was the head of the family and he performed all the rites and rituals relating to the family. He had the power to make any decision on any matter relating to the family. But there was an exception, i.e., he could not make any decision regarding the marriage of his sister's son or daughter. With regard to all the rites and ceremonies he was the head of the family and he was also one of the Longsan (Minister) of the raid. From each and every clan there was at least one or more Longsan who would represent the clan to the Raid.

Traditionally some clans traced their descent from the mother's side and others from the father's side. In the matrilineal clans it was the man who went to his wife's place and stayed with his in-laws, whereas in the patrilineal clan it was the woman who went to her husband's place and stayed with her in-laws.

The following were the Kinship terms used by the Marngar which show that they had both descriptive and classificatory types of kinship terminology:

<u>Kin terms</u>	<u>Kins</u>
U Pa	Father
Dada/Detho	Younger/Elder brothers
Pih1/Detha1	Younger/Elder sisters
Mai	Mother
Mama	Mother's brother
Detha1/Mahu1	Mother's sister
Ata	Father's father
Abu	Father Father's mother
Detho	Father Father's brother
Pih1	Father Father's sister
Kaka	Elder brother
Bhai	Younger brother
Bow	Younger brother

<u>Kin terms</u>	<u>Kin</u>
Bow	Elder brother's wife
Bowari	Younger brother's wife
Bhagi	Younger sister's husband
Bomari	Elder sister's husband
Bai	Elder sister
Buni	Younger sister
Swali	Daughter
Huru Jongai	Younger daughter's husband
Dongar Jongai	Elder daughter's husband

In case of arranged marriage, the relatives of the girl were approached by a go-between from the side of the male and when the former accepted it, they consulted their priest or U Nongknia to find out whether there was any taboo or not. If there was no taboo the marriage was finalised, and if there was a taboo it was cancelled.

Traditionally, marriage with parent's approval was common among the Marngars. For this type of marriage, they made a sacrifice to their gods, i.e., a household deity in the forest for the couple before the day of marriage. Sacrifice was made so that no harm of illness would befall on the new couples.

Property was inherited by the daughters only among those who followed the matrilineal descent. The largest share went to the youngest daughter. In case of those who followed the patrilineal type of descent, the inheritance of property male ultimogeniture as the largest share went to the youngest son.

Further, according to the Marngar customary laws, a person could be debarred from his/her right of inheritance. A murderer could inherit any property.

Death ceremony of the Marngais was of two types. They were known as the Borkam and the Kamrit. Borkam was mostly performed only for those people who had high status or power such as the Syiem or Chief and the Myntri (minister). The sacrifice made in the Borkam was totally different from that of the normal sacrifices. A sacrificial ceremony was held for seven days for the Borkam. The materials used for the Borkam were Am Khuri, Jam Khuri and Gomari tree, which were special kinds of wood used for burning the dead bodies. They even had to buy a new pot for putting food and other essential commodities for the deceased person.

For the Kamrit they cremated the person on the fourth day. Kamrit was performed for any layman.

The sacrifice was very similar to that of the Kamrit of today. They sacrificed pig, hen, etc. for the dead. Any type of wood could be used for cremating the dead.

When any member of the Binong, Damlong, Majhong and Diri clans died, the members of one's clan had to go and catch fish from any stream with a fishing trap only and not by any other means and on that very day.

On the day of cremation a female known as Giiati or the priestess of the clan gave bath to the dead body. After that, 'iad um (beer made from a gourd) was poured on the dead body by one who performed the religious ceremonies of the clan locally known as U Nongknia. Then the dead body was taken to the cremation ground. A male locally known as Giiati cremated the dead body and walked around the pyre and bowed his head three times. The female and male Giiati got some amount of money for the service rendered by them.

They believed that if the dead body did not burn properly there must be a reason for it. The reason could be (i) one had not finished performing all the rites and rituals during one's life time, and (ii) one must have breached some taboos during one's life time.

After that, all their friends, relatives and neighbours ate pujer, a kind of rice cake. Then the cleaning of the house was done. On the following day, they distributed half a bottle of cooking oil to each and every villager who had attended the funeral. Further, they believed that those who came to the funeral must eat something or else the soul of the deceased person would not go to heaven.

The Binong, Damlong, Majhong and Diri clans formed a Phratry. The members of these clans used fish instead of pig during the death ceremonies. After cremation, they cleaned the area where they had cremated the dead body by daubing it with mud and cowdung. Then they offered a sacrifice and also kept food for the dead person. All the commodities used for the dead person were the same as in other clans such as cooking oil, banana leaves, etc.

BIRTH AND NAMING CEREMONY

Before giving birth to a child, they made a sacrifice of eggs locally known as Habih Khedawa in the forest. Similarly, they made a sacrifice in the house of the pregnant woman. They even believed that the birth of a child was the reincarnation of their ancestors or ancestresses. If the child born

was a boy they made a bow and a heavy bladed knife known as Ka Wait, and if it was a girl they made a Dahda or an arrow like thing. Three days after the child was born they again offered a sacrifice to the household god by asking the mother to carry the child and walk round the area of sacrifice for seven or nine times. Naming ceremony of a child was held in the same day after they completed certain rites and rituals dealing with it.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing description of their traditional economy, beliefs and values, and social institutions depicts the Mārngars in their pre-Christian, pre-Hindu state of life which had been predominantly characterized by what Tylor called 'animism'. It had ancestor worship, spirit worship, and worship of various deities for prosperous harvest and peaceful life. The dependence on nature was almost absolute and the knowledge of science and westernization had not polluted their milieu. Their economy, beliefs, and institutions were intertwined with each other and often inseparable though they might have migrated from various places in Assam and Meghalaya many years ago.

CHAPTER IV

MARNGAR IN TRANSITION

In this chapter, I seek to discuss the changes in economy, beliefs and values and social institutions of the Marngars.

CHANGES IN ECONOMY

The transition from consumption-oriented economy to a cash economy has changed the basis of social relationship among the Marngars themselves and between them^{2nd} other neighbouring people. Cash economy has brought a kind of modernity, individuality and independence in the economic life of the people.

At present, traders from outside the village have to get permission from the village council to trade within the village. Items like broom stick, bamboo etc., are gathered together by a particular person who is either from the village or from outside the village but permitted by the village council. After selling these items, he has to distribute the money to those from whom he had taken those items.

Land in the traditional Marngar society was

owned by the clans. But now private lands are acquired by means of reclamation of the wastelands. In the past, land was given free of cost, but this is not so anymore. The sale and purchase of land have started taking place perhaps due to the coming of cash economy.

Earlier, leasing of land on rent was not known. But at present, anyone can lease in or lease out a land. But it is still the custom for the tenants to give a gourdful of beer (shi klong ka 'iad um) to the owner of the land at the time of concluding an agreement.

Division of labour in the village is mainly based on sex and age. Adult males normally do the heavier work while the females do the lighter ones. But the women also have to do other domestic chores such as husking paddy, fetching water from the stream and cooking, besides working in the field.

Children under the age-group of sixteen years do lighter works such as looking after the goats and cows grazing in the field. The village council fee is not charged for the children below that age. And if any one is found guilty of crimes, normally no punishment is given to them as they are considered under-aged.

The main agricultural implements used are the hoe (Mohkhiew), a heavy large bladed knife (ka wait) and a sickle (rashi) for shifting cultivation. In the past shifting cultivation or rep shyrti was the dominant practice of cultivation among the people of Marngar village. But nowadays, settled cultivation is also practised, though to a lesser extent. Tilling of the soil under settled cultivation is done with the help of power tiller by the richer people while the poor people still depend on ploughing.

The most important crop grown in the village is paddy. It is broadly of two types (i) hill paddy (dry paddy), and (ii) swamp paddy (wet paddy). Hill paddy requires much less water than the swamp type and the amount of rainfall which the area gets is sufficient for it. Swamp paddy requires sufficient water and must be raised on level ground suitable for irrigation. Hill paddy is broadcast, while the swamp paddy seeds are germinated in a seed bed and allowed to grow to about 6 to 10 inches tall after which they are transplanted.

Some of the principal crops grown on settled cultivation lands are maize, soyabean, topioca and

potatoes. Numerous other crops like carrot, turnip, raddish, wild potato (phan khlaw or soh kyrsiew), eatable root (phan dieng) and a big yam (phan shynreh) are also cultivated by them.

Pineapple is an important cash crop. It is grown extensively but requires to be protected against the attack of insects and diseases. Jack fruits are also grown there. Other fruits grown are papaya, soh-iong or black berries, turmarine (sohkyntoi) and sohbel (a hard skinned fruit). Lime and lemon fruits grow abundantly, the most common variety being sohjew and soh myndong, besides others called sohmad, sohsying, sohmyngor etc.

Plantain is either planted or gathered from the forest. The most important type found in this village in the Japanese dwarf plantain and the other types consist of those locally known as kait syiem, kait mon and kait jrong.

The agriculture calendar of the villagers is as follows:

- January - harvesting of broom stick.
- February - plantation of broom plants and fresh beans.

- March - plantation of bamboo and pumpkin.
- April - sowing of hill paddy and a sour eatable root locally known as jajew and phan dieng (eatable root).
- May - cultivation of swamp paddy in the nursery bed, sowing of nei (black sesame) and cultivation of yam locally known as wang.
- June - transplantation of the paddy seedling from the nursery beds to the field.
- July - cultivation of sweet potatoes locally known as phan karo.
- August - harvesting of hill paddy.
- September - sowing of mustard seeds or symbai
and
October tyrso.
- October - plantation of mints.
- November - harvesting of swamp paddy.
and
December

Livestock is of considerable importance not only for their meat and hides, bones, hair and hoof but also for various socio-religious purposes. Cow,

oxen, goats, pig and poultry are reared by most villagers.

The table below clearly shows the type of livestock which the people of Marngar rear.

Table V - Livestock reared by the Marngar people.

Type of livestock	Total livestock	Average number of livestock per household
Cows	382	1.3
Oxen	312	1.0
Pigs	599	2.0
Goats	118	0.4
Total	1411	1.2

Source: Field work.

Table V shows that the average number of livestock per household is 1.2. It is also clear that the rearing of pigs is quite popular in the village as shown by 2.0 average number of pigs reared per household. Pigs are also essential for the people as they need them for sacrificial purposes especially during the cremation ceremony and marriage.

Compared to piggery, we find that the rearing of cows is less popular. This is perhaps due to the fact that they are reared mainly for milk. The members of the Binong, Danlong, Majhong and the Diri clans and the Hinduized families do not eat beef; while for the rest of the population eating of beef is not forbidden.

Oxen are reared mainly for ploughing. Diji or oxen hiring is practised in the village. An oxen is equal to 6 kilograms of paddy when hired and this amount of paddy has to be given to the lessor by the lessee. Thus oxen are also used as a source of income by them. Goats are reared by the Marngars for their meat and for sacrificial purposes.

Animals are stall-fed till the time of harvesting after which they are allowed to graze on the paddy field.

The people of Marngar take good care of their animals. Sometimes they even show respect and gratitude towards their animals. For example, if any animal dies they bury it and offer food and rice beer (iad-um) at the burial place.

Pigs are sacrificed for the deceased person

and offered in the sacrifices to the lightning gods (Jomai Pyrthat) and for driving away evil spirits (Daijor-joh Khedawa).

Eggs are an important item in any sacrifice as they are used during the birth ceremony and dih kiad um thymmai (literally meaning drinking of new rice beer) an occasion which occurs once annually after the harvest and before sowing of cotton seeds.

CHANGES IN BELIEFS AND VALUES

The Marngars have their own religious beliefs, rites and rituals. But nowadays, some changes have been noticed in the religious realms due to their contact with the Hindu and Christian missionaries. Some of the traditional beliefs and ceremonies of the Marngar have still survived, while other have disappeared. For example, there is no trace of a particular sacrifice of the Marngar known as the Rongkoh Lyngdoh today. But almost all the rites and rituals are related to harvesting and sowing are still retained.

The Syiem is not only the headman of the village but also the head priest during any festival.

Magic, religion and medicine are closely inter-linked in the religious system of the Marngar. One of the most striking features of Marngar life is that the diviner is consulted on almost all important occasions.

They worship numerous gods and goddesses. These gods and goddesses are supposed to exercise good or evil influence on human beings according to whether they are propitiated with sacrifices or not. The illness of a person is thought to be the caused by one or more of the spirits.

Table VI - Distribution of religion among the Marngar.

Religion	Frequency	Percentage
Christian	1127	61.8
Hindu	108	5.9
Indigenous	590	32.5
Total	1825	100.0

Source: Field work.

From the table above, it can be seen that majority of the people are Christians (61.8%). The

percentage of the people following their traditional religion is 32.3%. And only 5.9% of the people belong to the Hindu religion.

With the setting up of some missionary schools, it has been easier for the various missionaries to convert the Marngars into Christianity or Hindu religion. Though a school like the Sankardev Mission of the Hindu missionaries was the first to be set up here, yet we find that Hinduism has not really been able to displace their traditional culture and belief system as much as the Christian missionaries.

According to the villagers, the Lukhmi festival was a later acquisition. They celebrate it after the harvesting of crops. They also make sacrifice to propitiate Ka Lukhmi or Ka 'Lei Kba or the goddess of rice, for prosperous life.

Traditionally, Borkam which was one of the death ceremonies performed for a person having high status and power was held for seven days. Now there is a change though with regard to the days of observance only and not about the ceremony itself. Only two days are spent for the Borkam, while for the Kamrit

performed by the layman, they bury the dead on the following day and not after four days as earlier.

Earlier special firewood such as Am Khuri or Jam Khuri was used. But now any kind of wood may be used.

Ancestor worship plays an important part among those who still profess their indigenous religion. They propitiate their ancestors by offering sacrifices to them, from time to time particularly when they are troubled. Jongon Mura is a sacrifice made by them to their ancestors and ancestresses.

CHANGES IN SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

(a) Family - Traditionally, they mostly had joint families but now such type of family is becoming rarer. In a joint family, the parents, their sons and wives along with their children stay in one household. Nowadays, we see a trend towards nuclear type of family which includes the parents and their children only. The table below shows the distribution of nuclear and joint types of families in Marngar.

Table VII - Types of Family in Marngar.

Types of family	Frequency	Percentage
Nuclear family	227	75.7
Joint family	73	24.3
Total	300	100.0

Source: Field work.

This table shows that most of the families there are of nuclear type. Those who have still retained the joint type are becoming lesser in number.

Regarding the role of the father and mother, we have seen no significant changes. The people of the village do not define either a mother or a father as the head of the households. Instead the senior most member according to age, whether a male or female, economically dependent or independent, is considered to be the head of the household.

Traditionally, among many clans, the maternal uncle did not have power or status to make decision regarding the marriage of his sister's daughter or sons. But now the maternal uncle has more power and

authority regarding the family matter and marriage which could be an influence of the Khasi culture.

The control over the family matter and other resources vested mainly on the males among those who migrated from the plains and who still follow the patrilineal descent. The father or the eldest brother (in case the father dies) exercises control over the family resources. The control of the important family matters and resources is by the mother and her brother. The mother and the mother's brother act as the check and balance to each other's powers.

In the everyday family life of the Marngar both the mother and the father have their respective role to play. One cannot be the hard task master over the other. For all practical purposes; there is a division of labour between a man and woman, the husband and the wife, and the father and the mother for the smooth working of family life.

(b) Marriage - Marriage is a bond between a man and a woman, a bond for procreation and cultural continuity. It is a bond which connects two kurs, the kur of a man and the kur of a woman.

In the past, Ringkongor or marriage by capture was prevalent. In such a case a girl was captured and brought to the village. Then a marriage ceremony was performed. This practice was carried on due to the low number of the female population in comparison to the males. Nowadays such type of marriage is absent.

Marriage by elopement was also prevalent. This was done when there is disagreement between the two parties. Today, we also find such cases but the village council has now imposed a fine for those who practise it.

Marriage by mutual consent seems to be the common type of marriage today. The first approach might have been initiated by the couple in love who reported the matter to their respective parents. The latter if agreeable, reached a decision to arrange such marriage. This is marriage by mutual agreement. The parents themselves might have negotiated directly with regard to the marriage subject to the consent of the couple. There are cases when a male asks his parents to initiate such negotiations with the family of the girl relating to his marriage proposal. Further, the parents and the maternal uncle of the boy has

to carry along with them betelnuts and leaves which has been packed in a banana leaf locally known as Bata Bahon. Exchange of this Bata Bahon is done between the families of the girl and the boy on the day of engagement. The girl's family used to employ a man known as Adam Sorpoh to act as a go-between or negotiator. Whereas from the boy's side a lady known as Gerthani was employed for such cases. These two negotiators or go-betweens have to carry Bata Bahon every time when they go to their house. If the girl is from the Syiem clan, the marriage day has to be fixed on Sunday. This particular day has been sanctified by the ancestors or ancestresses as the day for the Syiem clan only to make ^{any} offerings. The boy and the girl even make a sacrifice to their household god in the forest so that no harm or illness occurs before the day of marriage. The marriage ceremony is mostly held during the months of January to March, the reason being that during these months, people are free from their work.

After the great day is fixed, the boy, before leaving his home receives the blessing of his parents, maternal and paternal aunts, his friends, and near

ones so that he could establish a new home, take care of his wife and children, and be a respectable man in the real sense of the term. On reaching the girl's place the couple has to go to the ancestral place of the girl's family to offer sacrifice to the deceased ancestor and ancestresses in order that the couple will have a prosperous life in future.

The marriage ceremony begins with the sprinkling of fermented liquor on the ground and the swearing ceremony follows. The couple has to swear that they would not commit adultery, take care of each other throughout life, etc which they have to swear before God and villagers.

On the next day, the boy takes his wife along with her relatives to his mother's house. After that they go to his ancestral place locally known as Ka Iing Heh.

Certain sets of marriage rules were strictly observed. Kur or clan exogamy is held sacrosanct; it is considered a grave sin to marry within one's clan. No polyandry nor polygamy among the Marngar is reported.

Separation or divorce is allowed only in case of adultery, barrenness, incompatibility. Before a separation or divorce takes place the consent of the parents and the maternal uncles of both the parties is needed.

Remarriage is also practised by the people of Marngar. Both males and females can remarry after a lapse of one year after the spouse's death or from the time of divorce.

As the village is formed by the people of diverse culture and origin, intra-village marriage is allowed. The rule of exogamy is strictly followed only in regard to one's clan.

(c) Kinship – Descent is traced either through the male or female line. This is so because in this village we find both those who trace their descent from the father's side and those who belong to the matrilineal descent.

Clan is logically known as Kur. This word is used by the people of this village; whether matrilineal or patrilineal. In the matrilineal type kinship is traced through the first ancestress. While the

first ancestor is very important in tracing the kinship system of the patrilineal people in this village.

Different clans have emerged from the ancestor or ancestress. There are 14 clans in the Marngar village today which are already enumerated.

In the past, the Syiem was known as Raja from Gobha (erstwhile Jaintiapur now in Assam) and was patrilineal. After coming to this village they changed their descent to that of the matriline type.

The clan names have also changed by the people coming from the plains. For instance, the Diri clan is changed to Giri and Hokhai to Sohkhwai. The new clan names sound Khasi which might be due to their desire to be absorbed in the Khasi society.

There is also the presence of phratry groups in the village. Two or more clans are related to each other, may be due to the gift of land agreed between the two clans in the past. For example, the Marwet and the Shilling clans are related to each other in this manner and marriage is forbidden between the member of these two clans. We also find that the clan by the name of Binong, the Damlong, the Diri and the

Majhong form one exogamous group, whereas the clan Syiem, the Lyngdoh and the Pator form another exogamous group and the Marwet and the Shilling form yet another.

Another element uniting the people together is the lineage, which is formed by the group of families tracing their descent from the common ancestor/ancestress. In this village, we find numerous lineages - a sub-division of a clan composed of actual and fictitious kin. From the Syiem clan we find the Majhong and the Diri (Giri) lineages following the matrilineal type of descent. The Binong and the Damlong lineages have emerged from the Ket clan.

It seems that after so many generations that these lineages have originated, they have not achieved the status of a clan; especially when the names are different from that of the parent clans.

The type of kinship terminology in this village is found to be a combination of both classificatory and descriptive types. There are certain kinship terms which are common to both affinal and consanguineous ins. In this sense, they are classificatory in nature. uethai, for instance, is used for both the maternal

and the paternal aunt. Detho is used for father's brother and for father father's brother and Pihi for both the father's sister and father father's sister.

Descriptive type of kinship terminology is also found among the Marngars. For example, U Pa is used for father; Mai is used for mother; Mama is used for mother's brother; Ata for father's father; Abu for father father's mother; Kaka is used for elder brother; Bhai for younger brother; Jongai is used for daughter's husband and so on.

Avoidance relationship is practised between the mother-in-law and the son-in-law, and also between the father-in-law and the daughter-in-law.

If the husband and the wife do not have children they adopt a female heiress or a male heir when such necessity arises. Therefore all the religious ceremonies are to be done by the adopted heir/heiress for this family. All the property will also belong to him/her and the title of the adopted heir/heiress is taken from the foster mother's and foster father's clan.

In Marngar, property includes land, houses,

cattle, poultry, household and agricultural equipment, tools, weapons etc. All the children have equal share, i.e., both sons and daughters have a share in the family property with the exception that the youngest get an extra share. The sons mostly get land, some agricultural equipment etc. Whereas daughters get house, household articles, land etc. Money is divided equally among all the children.

But when a woman is remarried, the property belonging to the husband usually goes to the sons, while her property goes to the daughters only. In case of Iap duh or when no heir/heirress is left since all the relatives have died out, it is admittedly the custom of J Syiem (Chief) to succeed to the property of such a family.

Thus, in this village, there is both continuity and change. Certain institutions have either vanished or changed, while other are still prevalent.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In Chapter I, I have discussed the problem, survey of literature, methods, objectives etc. A description of the village is given in Chapter II. We find that the entire population of the village are migrants.

The traditional Marngar society is described in Chapter III. It is characterised by barter system and shifting cultivation in the field of economy. Regarding their beliefs and values, they worshipped many gods and goddesses such as the Jomai pyrthat, 'Lei Duwan etc. Traditionally, the Marngars mostly had a joint family system. Marriage by mutual consent and elopement were practised by them earlier too. Some of their festivals like Lukhmi are related to the Assamese culture. The ceremony performed in the market place are very similar to that of the Jaintias. Descent and the erection of monoliths are similar to that of the Khasis. All this shows the mixed culture of the villagers. They have also clan and village deities.

Changes in this village are discussed in Chapter IV. Significant change is seen to have been brought about by the Christian and non-Christian missionaries who have inculcated new ideas and culture through the establishment of educational institution. This has led them to change their dress, food habits, etc. too. Change in religion has also been noticed. Majority of them have changed to Christianity and some of them have changed to Hinduism. Clan names have changed too as they have been living here for a long time. More nuclear families have sprung up now. Marriage by mutual consent and elopement are still practised by them. But in the case of elopment, a fine has to be paid to the Village Council if such a case occurs. Change in the descent of some clans has also occurred in which they now trace their descent from the mother's side.

Traditionally, egg and fowls were used mainly for the purpose of divination and sacrifice. But now people practise poultry farming mostly for commercial purpose.

The males are usually found engaged in ploughing and other much heavier works, whereas the females

are seen doing household chores. However, there is no strict division of labour based on sex or age as is prevalent in the Hindu societies. ✓

The market is a cultural centre, an important place for meeting the relatives and friends. Again it is also from the market place that they gather information about political situation, social, economic and cultural happening. Market provides a social link between the different villages. It is a great pleasure or excitement for the people to go to market on the main market day. There are certain rites which are still performed in the market, which is locally known as Knia Iew.

Sale and purchase of land was not known to them as most of it was a clan land, locally known as Ri Raid. The villagers had the right to build house and cultivate only. Thus the land would not be used by an outsider who did not belong to the village.

There is also a clan division of work especially during any ceremony or festivals to propitiate their village deities. ✓

The Syiem and the Binong clan members are

the first to customarily till the soil of the Ri Raid followed by the Damlong clan according to their custom and other remaining clans.

The community land or Ri Raid is a land where every member of the community has a right to occupy a part for his or her use. But if the land is left unutilised for three consecutive years it reverts to Ri Raid and any other member of the village may be given that plot. In the case of Ri Raid, sale and purchase of land do not occur even today.

The availability of faster means of communication has led to a greater mobility and independence. The older generation people were used to covering long distance on foot but the younger generation villagers like to avail of transport facilities even for short distance.

It is seen that a large section have now changed into Christianity, while some of them have changed into Hinduism. These religions have brought about many changes in their rites and ceremonies too. Even the law of inheritance and succession seems to have changed from matrilineal to collateral system.

Though some of them have become Hindu or Christian, the village council has a standing rule that they have to perform all the rites and rituals about the village deities. This has resulted in a cosmopolitan outlook of the villagers.

The main reason why the people have changed into Christianity or Hinduism is that they cannot afford to procure all the essential things for their rites and rituals.

Another factor of change is the spread of education through schools which have been set up by the Hindu and Christian missions.

Marriage by mutual consent and elopement are common among the Marngar. Sacrifices are also made by some clans for their household deity at the time of their marriage ceremony. They also make sacrifices for the new couple so that no harm or illness would occur.

There are two types of death ceremony i.e., the Borkam and the Kamrit. The Borkam ceremony was performed only for the people with high status and power for seven days. The Kamrit ceremony was held

for four days and for the layman only.

The rite known as Ka Rongkoh Lyngdoh was performed to please the evil spirit, so that it would not bring any harm to them. But now this rite has disappeared for a long time.

There is a change in the attitude towards child-birth too. In former days old and experienced woman from the neighbourhood attended the delivery cases. But now dispensaries and public health centres have been set up in the village. Therefore the villagers go there at the time of child birth.

Food habits have also changed. Earlier they ate phan khlaw (wild potato) but now they eat rice. Eating of beef was permitted earlier but now some of them have given up eating of beef due to the influence of the Hindu religion. This is true of the Binong, Damlong, Majhong and the Diri clans. These clans said to be low caste status, who had migrated from Assam (erstwhile Jaintiapur). Being the first settlers of this village, they now own land which has elevated their social status to a much higher degree. But those who have migrated from other parts of Meghalaya still

eat meat (beef) as most of them are proselytised Christians.

It is also reported that drinking of alcohol was not known to them before but now this habit has crept in. The spirit is distilled for home consumption as well as for sale.

In addition to earthen vessels, bamboo and gourd containers were used earlier to store water and grain. Vessels made of aluminium, copper and brass are rather new. Today even glass and metal containers are used. We also see that gourd containers are still used as water jars by some of the villagers who are poor. Bamboo spoons are also still used.

Previously, the males used to wear a loin cloth known as Palong Gamsha and Langtih Gamsha. They even wore a turban, or Kharsola and a shirt. On the other hand, females wore a cloth known as Mikhli which they wrapped around the body from the armpit to the ankle. Besides these, they wore a piece of white cloth covering their shoulders. Earrings were worn by both men and women and these were made of dry wood. But at present there has been a change regarding the way

of dressing. Males dress in western style. Even women are now following the western way of dressing. Further, earrings are rarely worn today by the males.

Electricity is one of the important changes in the village. With the coming of electricity it has made their life easier as they do not have to depend on kerosene for lamps. But till now only about 50 per cent of the houses in the village have got electricity. The other 50 per cent still depend on kerosene for their lamps.

Further, the villagers today have sewing machine, television, radio, tape recorder, machines for weaving and spinning clothes and thread etc. Out of 300 households, 256 households, i.e., 85 per cent of the households are having at least one of these items.

It may be concluded that the Marngars have undergone significant changes during the last hundred years or so. Though many features of their past have continued in spirit they have changed in content. Above all, the people's values and ethos towards their past are apparently buried in their efforts of evolving a new identity severed from their past.

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