

# Students & Politics in Meghalaya

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# Students and Politics in Meghalaya

(A case study of students and Politics in the Khasi Hills)



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by Pascal Malngiang

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## PREFACE

Student unrest, student politics, student revolt, student power and student movements are some of the terms currently used when referring to the students organisations all over the world. This is due to the fact that the student community all over have become very powerful, class conscious and alert of their rights and roles. After freeing themselves from the subdued syndrome, they have posed a number of challenges to the political, economic, social and academic systems. This is true especially in the 'New societies' than those with a long drawn formal system of educational tradition. In the North Eastern Region and Meghalaya in particular, the students have become a source of concern and fear not only to the Government but also to the large section of the society. This community is often a misunderstood lot. This is due to the fact that, no efforts were made to understand them and the factors giving rise to the issues, whatever it be academic or otherwise.

In this book, *Students and Politics in Meghalaya (A case study of students and politics in the Khasi Hills)*, an attempt has been made to understand not only the historical development of student organisations, or the issues that they have taken up but also probe the other important factors influencing such a community.

It was not an easy task to undertake this investigation, however, thanks to the co-operation of the leaders of the various organisations that this work could be completed.

Originally, the six chapters of the book belonged to the M.Phil dissertation which was completed under the supervision of Prof. B. Pakem. Later on, other relevant chapters were added to make the study more comprehensive. I am grateful to my supervisor for the guidance and interest that he has taken in the preparation of the work.

In a very special way, I am thankful to all the student leaders who were in close association with me, especially those in the Khasi Students' Union (KSU) and the Meghalaya Post-Graduate Students Union (MPGSU), whom I had a close contact by dint of

being the ex-advisor in the former and President and Advisor in the latter.

I owe a great deal of thanks to Bah T. Syiemlieh of the Implanter, Bah E. K. Mawlong of U Nongsain Hima, Bah Sumar Singh Sawian of U Apphra, Bah Francis Khongwar, Journalist, Bah K. T. Nongbri, my wife, Rosa Domenica Pathaw, and a host of friends, well wishers and family members who have assisted me directly or indirectly in the completion of this work.

I also wish to record my acknowledgement to the Publisher, the Sevenhuts Enterprise for the task of publishing this and other works, like the *Aspects of Khasi Philosophy* and *Taxation Laws* in a record time.

Last but not least, my two sons, Pascal Mario and Pascal Mariadon have been a source of much inspiration. To them, I dedicate this book.

Dated Shillong  
the 5th April, 1994

**Pascal Malngiang**

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## INTRODUCTION

Students and Politics constitute an interesting and relevant field of investigation in social sciences especially in a state where the student phenomena have just started to emerge and establish itself. Students in the Khasi Hills of Meghalaya, since 1952 have played an important role in State politics. They have contributed much to the goal of attaining a fullfledged Statehood to Meghalaya and also took active part in the societal issues in the State.

In 1983, some students and youths began participating directly in the elections to the Meghalaya State Legislative Assembly under the garb of the Hynniewtrep National Front (HNF). Later in 1988, student leaders actively contested for the election from the newly formed party, the Alliance for the Reconstruction of Meghalaya State (ARMS). In this election, one student leader was elected. In between the period, there also emerged the Democratic Hills Movement (DHM) which participated in the parliamentary elections in 1984. Nearly all these groups had their origin in the leadership of the Khasi Students' Union (KSU) and tacitly had its support on all these occasions.

In this book, an attempt has been made to understand the impact of the various student organisations and to examine the problems of political participation and political recruitment including that of student leaders, since it is being viewed that the students form the basis for any political activity and political parties in the State. The issues taken up by the various student organisations and the pressure tactics applied have been examined.

The objective of the study is to investigate on the historical development of various student organisations, the prominent issues, both in-campus and off-campus, that they have championed like the problems of scholarship, reservation of seats to educational institutions, bus-fare concessions, elimination of corruption, reservation of job opportunities,

strengthening local durbars and the course of action that they have been pursuing. It also attempts to understand the background of student leadership and the process of how students are drawn to politics.

The methodology for data collection was divided into primary and secondary sources. Primary sources were drawn from Government materials and documents, printed leaflets, appeals, hand-outs, letters, memoranda, representations and press releases brought out by the various student organizations, and also from the interview arranged with students' office bearers. The secondary sources included data drawn from published and unpublished works, newspaper, journals, magazines and other printed materials.

A number of books have been brought out in recent years on students and politics in India. A few books were also written on the role of some students' organizations in the political life of the North East, but nothing has so far been written on Students and Politics in the Khasi Hills of Meghalaya. However, only sketches of the students' involvement in politics have featured in a number of articles in magazines, journals, newspapers and souvenirs including editorial comments. Apart from these, the study has by and large been neglected.

The study has been divided into eight chapters.

Chapter I—deals with the conceptual framework which includes the importance of the study, the dimensions of students and politics and the characteristics of the students' community.

Chapter II—Students' Organization : Historical Development, attempts to trace the origin of the various students' organizations in the Khasi Hills.

Chapter III—Profile of Student Leaders analyses the socio-economic status, political background, subject of study, place of residence during studentship, means of maintenance and academic career of the student leaders.

Chapter IV—Political Recruitment describes the process of how students are drawn to politics. This chapter also includes discussions on students' elections, factors contributing to victory and party affiliations.

Chapter V—Political participation and role output of the student leaders examines the issues taken up which are student and campus oriented and also societal. Their roles in agitations and movements, their techniques of protests and participation in elections.

Chapter VI—Students organisations and Seng Samla deals with the relationship between the various students organisations and their relationship with the local based organisation found in all the localities in the Khasi Hills of Meghalaya.

Chapter VII—Students and Political Parties attempts to trace the involvement of students in the political life of the State.

Chapter VIII—The final chapter comprises of the findings of the study.

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