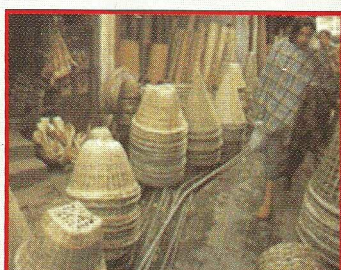
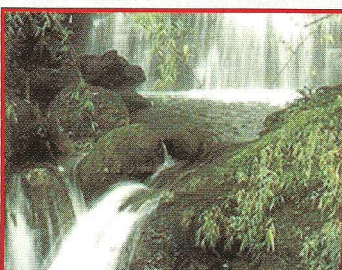
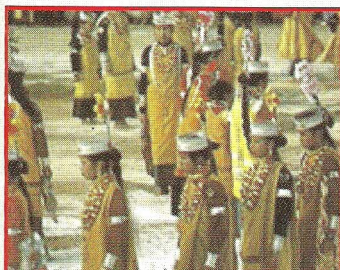
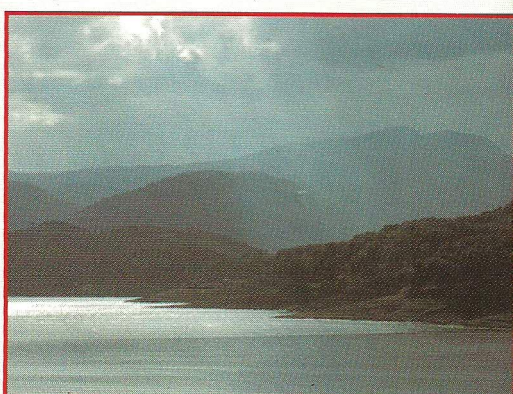


Encyclopaedic Studies of North - Eastern States of India

MEGHALAYA



Swapnali Borah
Deke Tourangbam
A C Meitei

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Preface

THE most striking paradox in this age of globalization, when the globe has been hyped as a small global village, is the abundance of still unexplored wonderlands sprawling across it in the midst of unprecedentedly powerful scientific and technological facilities which enable us to explore the secrets of the universe one after another, on a daily basis.

For there to be peace and harmony among human beings co-inhabiting the earth, there has to be understanding among the members of this dominant species, and understanding one another and honouring the values of other communities, *i.e.*, their belief, culture, custom, religion, socio-economic conditions, literacy as well as geography, political situation, agriculture, industrial development, natural beauties and natural resources and environment of their land.

From this perspective, books contributing to building an atmosphere of understanding are an invaluable welcome and timely endeavour. The present volume on *Meghalaya* is an attempt to explore the land and understand the people inhabiting it. Besides acquainting the readers with the geographical features of the land (a state in the north-eastern part of India), covers social, cultural, religious, economic, political, anthropological, environmental, geographical, agricultural, historical, educational as well as industrial development aspects of the state.

The volume is a part of *Encyclopaedia of Indian States and Union Territories*.

Planned for common, uninitiated readers as well as rich reference material for institutions, who would like to have an overview of Arunachal Pradesh and the people living in it, the volume will be an invaluable guide which will ultimately lead them to appreciate this little paradise with the diverse information provided in the volume.

The data provided in the volume are authentic. Not only the individual readers but institutional, public and educational college libraries will also benefit from the volume by using it as reference tool.

Swapnali Borah

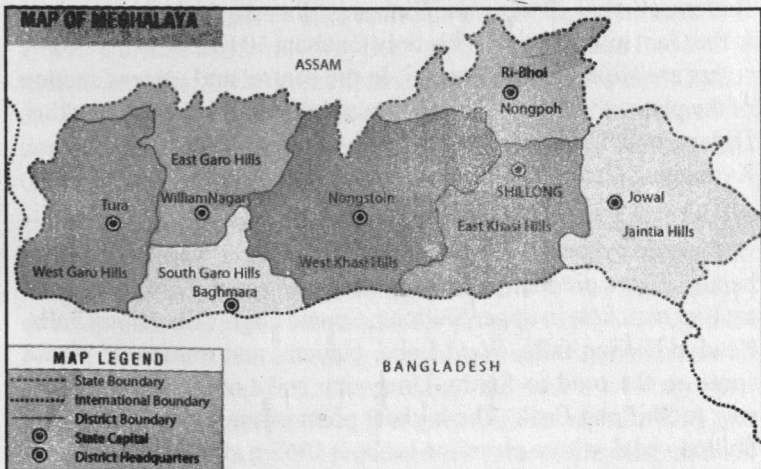
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Introduction

MEGHALAYA is a hilly state of north eastern India with its capital at Shillong. Its a hilly strip, covering an area of 22,429 sq km. Historically, it was formerly a division of Assam, but on 21st January 1972, it was declared as a state of the Indian Union accompanied by the districts of Khasi, Garo and Jaintia hills. The name 'Meghalaya' means the "abode of clouds." It is geographically known as the "Meghalaya Plateau" or the "Shillong Plateau". The area is made of the oldest rock-formations. It is the detached north-eastern extension of the Peninsular India. Some parts of it lie buried under the alluvium deposited by the Ganga-Brahmaputra system of rivers. This gap is known as Malda gap.

The state has clear-cut account of historic, geographic and strategic significance for India. Meghalaya is surrounded on the



north by Goalpara, Kamrup, Nagoan and Karbi Anglong districts of Assam State, and on the east by the Districts of Cachar and North Cachar Hills, also of the State of Assam. On the south and west is Bangladesh. The elevation varies between 150 meters to 1961 meters above sea level. The Plateau is highly dissected and has irregular terrain in the western and northern side. The southern side is marked by a continuous escarpment with steep slopes.

The broken hills and ranges in the north are not of a well defined boundary. The western part of the plateau or the Garo hills has an elevation of 600m above sea level. The most important relief feature of this part of the plateau is the Tura range with its highest point at Nokrek 1515 meters above sea level. The central and the eastern part of the plateau or the Khasi and the Jaintia hills district play prominent senile topography. The presence of many penepplain surfaces, flat-topped hills and numerous river valleys are the characteristics of this region. The central upland zone covers more than one-third of the area. The eastern side of the Garo hills is the most important feature of the area.

Some of the significant rivers of the northern region from west to east are the Kalu, Ringgi, Chagua, Ajagar, Didram, Krishnai and Dudnai. Of these rivers only Krishnai and Kalu are navigable. Some another important rivers of the southern region are Daring, Sanda, Bandra, Bhogai, Dareng and Simsang. Simsang is the largest river in the Garo hills and navigable only for about 30 Km. other navigable rivers are Nitai and the Bhupai. In the central and eastern section of the plateau the important northward flowing rivers are Umkhri, Digaru and Umiam and the south-flowing rivers are Mawpa, Kynchiang (Jadukata), Umiew or Barapani, Myngot and Myntdu.

Shillong, the capital of the state is a popular hill station as it is surrounded by scenic hills and is well-known for its wonderful natural beauty. There are many picnic spots in and around Shillong, such as; Elephant falls in upper Shillong, Spread Eagle falls, Sweet Falls, Beadon/Bishop falls, Ward Lake, Umiam, and numerous picnic spots on the road to Sohra, Umrynjah and Lover's Lane on the way to Shillong Peak. The highest point of the entire state is the Shillong peak whose elevation is about 1965m above sea level. It is bounded on the south and southwest by Bangladesh and on all other sides by the boundary of Assam.

Shillong is located at an altitude of 1496 metres above sea level. Geographically, it is located at 25.57° N 91.88° E. It has an average elevation of 1526 metres (5006 feet). There are several falls in and around Shillong. The Shillong peak is highest in the state and is good for trekking. It is also known as the 'abode of the gods' and has excellent views. The capital city derives its name from the manifestation of the creator called Shyllong. Meghalaya is a region of great scenic beauty; a panorama of lush, undulating hills, fertile valleys, 250 species of orchids, meandering rivers, waterfalls, sparkling mountain streams and lakes.

Meghalaya is known for its natural beauty and the simple lifestyle of its tribal people. Meghalaya also receives limelight on account of Cherrapunjee, the wettest place on earth, which is only 56 kms away from Shillong. In fact, Meghalaya is the abode of Tribals groups who were influenced by the Hindu cultures, especially the Khasis, Jaintias, Mikirs and Cacharis, who are said to have inhabited this region before the start of the Christian era. They established their tribal district council and the tradition they followed were the kingship.

The Tribals who inhabited in this area were the Khasis, Jaintias, Garo, Mikirs and the Cacharis. These tribes evolved out of the migration into north east by the migrants who belonged to the Indo-Chinese linguistic family, the Mon-Khmer and Tibeto-Burman. The Tibeto-Burman subfamily was the Naga, Kukichin and Bodo. The Khasis group of tribes came from the Khasis and Jaintias. Later, the Bodos were also sub divided into small linguistic groups viz; Garo, Kachari, Mechs, Dimasa, Tippea, Lalung, Rabha, and Chutiyas. The tribal district council was established.

The tradition among the tribals was kingship. The earliest Jaintia Raja is said to have ruled from 1500 AD. The British influence in Meghalaya extended to the improvement of the landscape, development of roads. The works for progress and development of this region is still continuing after independence and formation of Meghalaya into a state. These tribes had their own kingdoms, until they came under the British crown. Objectively speaking, the British rule in Meghalaya was a disguised form of blessing, as it led to the development of the landscape and the development of linking roads of the state.

The British included Meghalaya into Assam in 1835. Thus the region enjoyed a semi-independent status by virtue of the Treaty relationship with the British crown. Before attaining full state hood, Meghalaya was given a semi-autonomous status. When Lord Curzon partitioned Bengal on 16 October 1905, Meghalaya became a part of the province of ' Assam and East Bengal'. When the partition was reversed in 1912, Meghalaya became a part of Assam.

Other than the Khasi States, the Governor declared all the areas in Meghalaya as backward areas under Section 52 A of the Government of India Act of 1919. However, the backward areas were regrouped into two categories as 'excluded' and 'partially excluded' by the Government of India. Furthermore, 'The Assam Reorganization (Meghalaya) Act' accorded an independent status to the state of Meghalaya. The Act came into effect on April 2nd 1970, and thus an autonomous state of Meghalaya was created. The autonomous state had a Legislature in agreement with the Sixth schedule of the Constitution. In 1971, the Parliament passed the North-Eastern Areas Act, 1971, which offered full statehood to Meghalaya.

Geographically, Meghalaya is known as the 'Meghalaya Plateau.' It consists of rocks, which are rich in valuable minerals like coal, limestone, silimanite and uranium. The central part of the plateau consisting of the Khasi hills has the highest elevations. The land has abundant rivers. Meghalaya is about 300 km long in the east west and 100 km wide. About one third of the state is under forest area. The Meghalaya subtropical forests eco region encompasses the state; its mountain forests are distinct from the lowland tropical forests to the north and south.

The forests of Meghalaya are notable for their biodiversity of mammals birds and plants. The climate is humid as it is the wettest state of India with an average annual rainfall of 1200 cm. For instance, the town of Cherrapunji holds the world record for the heaviest rain in a month, while the village of Mawsynram, near the town of Cherrapunji, holds the distinction of having the heaviest yearly rains. For most of the year, western part of the plateau experiences the highest temperature. The Shillong area experiences lowest temperature. The maximum temperature in this region does

not go beyond 28 degree. The temperature during the winter is sub-zero degrees.

Physical features

Broadly, in terms of its physical features, the state is divided into three regions:

1. The Central Plateau includes the Khasi--Jaintia Hills, which is an imposing, plateau. The Garo Hills forms the western part of the plateau. Its elevation varies between 150M to 1961M above the mean sea level. The Shillong Peak serves as a catchment area for rivers and streams traversing the state. Comparatively, it has the largest area of grassland, which can be profitably utilised for animal husbandry, dairying and horticulture. It is the main centre of potato cultivation and vegetables for supply outside the state.
2. At the end of the southern face of the Central Plateau, the border area begins. Deep gorges and slopes at the foot of which a narrow strip of plain land runs along the international border with Bangladesh forms the southern region of the state. It is a region of the heaviest rainfall. The world-renowned Cherrapunji and Mawsynram, the wettest places in the world are located in this area. The areca nut plantations and subtropical and tropical fruits like mandarin, lemon, guava, pineapple and banana are grown in plenty in this region.
3. The sub mountain region also forms a continuation of the Central Plateau till it merges with the plains of Assam. But unlike the border area, which is generally steep and abrupt in certain places, it slopes gently downward until it merges with the plains of Assam in the north. It is a region of comparatively lower rainfall but has favourable scope both for agriculture and horticulture.

Demography

With reference to 2001 census, the population of Meghalaya is 23, 06,069, which were earlier, 17, 74,778 in the year 1991. As against the decadal growth rate of 21.34% during (1991 – 2001) at

the national level, the population of the State has grown by 29.94% during this period. While the density of population is 103 persons per sq. Km, the sex ratio stands at 975 females per 1000 males, which is significantly higher than the national average of 933.

The rate of literacy has appreciably grown from 49.10% in 1991 to 63.31% in 2001 which is of course still below the national average of 65.38%. There is however some difference in the levels of literacy among males and females. While the rate of literacy among males is 66.14%, it is only 60.41% among females.

Out of the total population of 23.06 lakh, 18.53 lakh (80.37%) persons live in the rural areas and 4.52 lakh (19.63%) in urban areas. Although the total urban population of the state has been gradually increasing but practically it is concentrated in the Shillong Urban Agglomeration which was the capital of the undivided state of Assam till 1972. Only Tura and Jowai (Class III), Nongstoin and Williamnagar (Class IV), and Cherrapunji and Baghmara (Class V) have emerged as new urban centres. Meghalaya India

People

The state is predominated by three major groups of people. The Garo in the east and west Garo hills, the Khasi-Pnar in the east and west Khasi hills and the Jaintia hills. The Khasi group belongs to the Mon-Khemar sub-family of the Austro group of people. The Garo group is a part of the greater Bodo Kacheri family both by ethnic group and language. The Khasi-Pnar group indicated two prominent sub-groups of the Khasi and the Pnar. The former occupied the central highlands or the Khasi hills and the latter towards east, the Jaintia hills.

The groups living in the northern and southern part of the main central highland, section were known by the terms of 'The Bhoi and War'. They are subdivided into many of clans. Actually, they are differentiated from each other by their location and their living style.

There are number of dialects within the four districts of the combined Khasi and Jaintia hills. Based on the dialects, the community is generally divided into five groups namely the Khasis of the central plateau, the Pnars or Jaintia in the east, the Wars in

the south, the Lyngams in the west and the Bhois in the north. The Meghalaya plateau is inhabited by three dominant tribes. These are:

- The Garos in the western section of the plateau
- The Khasis in the central section of the plateau
- The Jaintia in the eastern section of the plateau

Garos

The Garos self-style themselves as “Achiks.” It is believed that the ‘Garos’ have derived their name from one of the sections of the tribe who are found in the middle of the districts southern belt. The tradition of Garos conveys that, they are the migration from Tibet. In course of time, the Garos society was divided into three major exogamous, ‘Kin-groups’ or Katchis, namely Marak, Sangma and Momin. These are further sub-divided into such groups as Areng, Shirra and Ebang.

According to their customary law, marriage between same members of the same Katchi is totally prohibited by tribal customary law. Each of these Kin-groups is further sub-divided into a number of lineages called Machong. The Machong with its component households is the basic unit in the Garo social organization. A Garo belong to his particular Machong from his birth. In each village, the dominant Machong selects the headman who is Nok-ma literally means house-mother.

Usually Nok-ma would be a man. Inheritance among the Garos is restricted to the female line. Each family selects an heiress (nok-ma). A couple who have no children may adopt the daughter of the wife’s sister as their heiress. Usually, the heiress is coupled with the son of the father’s sister.

The institution of the ‘Bachelors Dormitory’ (Nok-pante) is found only among the Garos. All unmarried young men and growing boys must live in the dormitory. These young people carry out their allotted tasks titled by the elders of the village.

The Garo tribal groups consist of sub-tribes. They are:

- (a) Ambeng (in the western part including Tura)
- (b) Atong (in the lower Simsang valley)

- (c) Akawa (north-eastern parts and extend upto Goalpara and Kamrup in Assam)
- (d) Matchi (upper reaches of Simsang valley)
- (e) Chibok (upper Bhugi valley)
- (f) Ruga (lower Bhugi valley)
- (g) Dual (upper Simsang valley)
- (h) Chisak (north of Matchi and Dual in central highlands)
- (j) Kotchu (eastern parts)
- (k) Koch (south-western parts)

Besides these, there are others like Megamo in the mid-western parts and the Dikos.

The Khasis

By different names, the Khasis are known according to the place they live. For example, those who live in the northern lowlands and foothills are collectively called Bhois, those who live in southern tracts are called Wars. While those inhabiting the tracts adjoining Garo hill are called Lyngngams or Dkos, however Khasi is the general name given to them. The Khasi name for the people of the plains is Dkhar usually contracted to Khar.

The Khasis which enumerates the exogamous clans of Khyrem Syiemship alone will show that a good proportion of the clans are made up of those descended from original ancestors from the plains. These clans or sects are called Kurs in Khasi. These Kurs are invariably exogamous. Marriage within the Kur is unimaginable to a Khasi. Ostracism from the community is the least form of punishment. The society can impose ultimate punishment on those who disobey the customary law of the region.

Jaintia

The people of the Jaintia hills have various names given by various anthropological authorities such as Jayantias, Syntengs. The people commonly refer to themselves as Pnars. The people of the Jaintia Hills belong to the same race as those who live in the Khasi hills to their west. They share some traditions of origin and with some understandable local variations, same customs, beliefs and habits. This language is the variant of the standard Khasi language.

The Khasi and Jaintia tribal groups include:

- (1) **Khynriam** in the central upland
- (2) **Pnar** of the Jaintia hills. They are also called as the Jaintia and Syntang
- (3) **War** in the southern parts.
- (4) **Bhoi** in the northern parts.

Moreover these, there are Mikirs in the north, Lalung, Viate, Vaiphe and Hmass in the Jaintia hills, Rabhas and Garos in the north and the Ayongs or Hajongs found scattered in the southern parts. The inhabitants of this area trace their origin to Austro-Asiatic family and have migrated from the south-east Asia. They came from the east and settled in groups to form scattered village settlements in the hilly terrain. The Khasis were shifting cultivators and broadly practiced 'Jhum cultivation.'

The Population

The population of the state can be classified into tribal and non-tribal population. Tribal peoples make up about 85% of Meghalaya's population. The density is not uniformly distributed and is determined by physiographic factors and accessibility. The sparsely populated areas of the state are found in the northern and southern Khasi hills, most of the Jaintia hills and the interior of the Garo hills.

The population of the state is mainly concentrated in:

- (1) The area around Shillong urban agglomeration, Jowai, Nongstoin, Williamnagar, Tura and Baghmara.
- (2) The neighbourhood of Cherrapunji and Dawki and
- (3) Northern, western and southern fringes of the Garo hills.

On the basis of dialects, the community is generally divided into five groups namely the Khasis of the central plateau, the Pnars or Jaintia in the east, the Wars in the south, the Lyngams in the west and the Bhois in the north.

Houses

According to their desire and wish, they construct the designs and structures of their house. There is a vast difference which

ranges from the old Khasi type to the modern types found in Shillong and other important towns of the state. Each dwelling structure has a compound and in some cases cattle sheds are occupied by each household irrespective of the number of members and income.

The ancient style of the houses was oval in shape. Not only the foundation, the roof is also oval shaped. The foundation these types of buildings are made on the plinths. The house is usually divided into three rooms; a porch, a centre room and a sleeping room. The floor of the centre room and sleeping room are covered with planks. The floor of these rooms is much higher than that of the porch.

The walls are generally made of wooden planks and the roofs are covered with thatch. In such houses, there is only one door in front and a window or a small opening on one side. The hearth made of mud and stones are always in the middle of the centre floor. Nowadays, most of the houses are much improved except those in very interior part of Khasi and Jaintia hills. Thatch and wooden planks are replaced by iron sheets and tin sheets.

In the old Khasi types, the porch is used as the store room in which the inmates keep their agricultural tools and implements and firewood. The centre room serves as the kitchen as well as the sitting room. Usually, two sides of the building are separated from the centre to serve as sleeping compartments while part of the remaining sides is used as the washing place where water containers are kept and the remaining wall in this side is converted into a shelf for hanging the utensils.

The hearth of the room in these houses is in the middle of the room. It is an open one with no arrangement for the smoke to leave the room. Above the hearth is a swinging frame where articles are put to be dried up such as firewood, crops, dry fish and cane or bamboo articles. The advanced type of houses is usually divided into two or more rooms. One is used as a kitchen and others are used as sleeping compartments. The centre room is furnished with short wooden stools and higher cane or bamboo stools (Mula).

The sleeping compartments are always provided with wooden bedsteads and boxes where clothes are kept. In the modern type, the arrangement of the kitchen is more or less like that of the

centre room of the old Khasi type houses. In some of these types of houses, a separate room is attached where water container is kept and washing is performed. The other rooms are furnished with bedsteads, boxes both steel and wooden almirahs. Stools, tables, and chairs are properly arranged side by side. The Khasis amuse their friends and visitors in their kitchen too, even in cases a separate visiting room is present. In this case, the sitting room is meant for visitors and strangers.

Generally, each of the houses is attached with a compound. The chicken-shed and the pig-sty are always kept at the backside of the building. The sty consists of a small shed and opens space and fenced by strong wooden poles or planks. The cow-shed is also behind the building at the far end of the compound. The remaining part of the compound is used as the kitchen garden where fruit trees, maize and other vegetables are grown. In course of time, people began to realize that the old Khasi type of houses is uncomfortable and unhygienic as a habitat; so they replaced the old type by modern type, which consists of more windows and doors.

Festivals of the Region

Meghalaya celebrates some important festivals, having religious associations but a few of the celebrations are apparently secular.

'Wangala' is a very significant harvest festival among the Garos which is performed in honour of Saljong, 'the Sun-god of fertility.' This festival marks the end of a period of toil, which brings good yield of the fields. It is the time to relax and for days the hills and valleys resound with the distinctive beat of drums. The dance itself has certain subtle variations, the main motif being a queue of two parallel lines- one of men and other of women clad in their festive regalia.

Young and old join the festivities with equal gaiety. While the men beat drums, the line moves forward in rhythmic unison. The 'orchestra' of men consists of drums, gong and flutes punctuated by the sonorous music of an indigenous flute made of buffalo horn. There is a noticeable sense of rhythm in the music and the dance of the participants, which leaves an enduring impression upon the beholder.

The Khasis and Pnars have religious festivals as well as secular celebrations too. Shad Nongkrem (Nongkrem dance) is one of the significant festivals among the Khasis, held annually at Smit, the capital of the Khyrem Syiemship near Shillong. This is used to be held in the past in the month of May but for some years the date has been shifted to November. An important part of this festival is Pomblang (decapitation of goats), at which goats offered by subjects of the Syiem of Khyrem are sacrificed and offerings are made to the ancestor and ancestress of the ruling clan to the first uncle to the deity of Shillong peak.

Religious part of the festival precedes dances, in which unmarried girls in all their finery participate. The men's dancing is naturally more vigorous and energetic. They hold a sword in their right hand and usually a white Yak hair whisk in their left hand, keeping time to the changing beats of drums and playing of the tangmuri.

Shad Suk Mynsiem or the 'dance of Contentment' is a counterpart of the Garo harvest festival which is celebrated in April at the Wecking grounds near Shillong and at other places. Among the Pnars, the most celebrated religious festival is the Behdien-Khlam. (chasing away the Demon of Cholera). Early on the first day, young men go round the village beating on gate post of individual houses.

The climax of the celebration is the tussle for a large undressed beam by two groups of people in opposition to each other. This involves getting this heavy beam across a muddy ditch called Wah-eit-nar. A lot of horse play enters into this part of the proceedings when mud is generously smeared by the participants on each other. This celebration held at Jowai is one of the most renowned festivals in the state.

Dances

Dances play a vital role in their traditional celebration. Generally, it is held in an open ground or in a public place. There are two traditional dances of the Khasis.

- 1) Shad Sukmynsiem or Weiking dance
- 2) Shad Nongkrem or Pomblang Nongkrem

Shad Sukmysiem (Dance of the Blissful Heart) is popularly known as Shad Weiking. It is so called after the name of the ground where the dance used to be held every year. A thanksgiving festival, Shad Suk Mynesiem is a symbolic offering of salutations to God, homage to their ancestors and proclamation of unity of the Khasi people. There is no fixed date for this dance. It used to be held during the month of April of each year. This is the most popular dance among the Khasis. It is organised by the Seng Khasi.

The dances last for three days. Only unmarried men and women are allowed to take part in the dance. Youngsters and damsels from different part of Khasi hills participate in the dance. The Shad Sukmysiem welcomes the whole of the Khasi community to take part in the dance. There was no bar for any one to take part in the dance since it is the traditional dance of the Khasis. Christians or Hindus as long as they belong to Khasi community could take part in this dance.

Young lads brilliantly clad in colourful silk dhotis, coat and a plumed turban and adorning glittering ornaments look like Rajput Princes. They dance around with a sword or spear in one hand and a plume in the other. Pretty maidens in magnificent many-splendoured silk-ropes and elaborately decked in priceless intricately designed ornaments of gold and silver and wearing a silver crown emerge before us as apsaras from the world beyond. These 'angels' move in an inner circle in two's and three's in tiny steps while the lads form a protective ring around them and flashing their weapons.

The embroidery on the girl's apparel and the workmanship of their ornaments, many of them handed down for generations as heirlooms, can make even an aristocratic millionaire envious. It is difficult to see how the European missionaries could so heartlessly condemn these fine expressions of blissful hearts as 'barbaric'. The dancers dance rhythmically making regular movements and keeping time with the beat of the drum and pipe (Tanguari). Damsels (unmarried) dressed colourfully in their very originality and making tiny steps in the centre while men folks with swords and sometimes with shields in their hands encircling them.

Shad Nongkrem is another folk dance of the Khasis, associated

with Ka Pomblang Nongkrem. Like all other ceremonies of the Meghalayans, it is performed to propitiate the all powerful Goddess Ka Blei Synshar for a rich bounteous harvest and prosperity of the people (subject). There is no fixed date for this festival. It is generally celebrated in November of every year.

The Syiem of Khyrim accompanied by the high priest performs the Pomblang ceremony. He offers oblation to a Lei Shyllong; the god of Shyllong peak by sacrificing a cock. Goats are killed during the ceremony.

The Nongkrem dance is associated with the Pomblang Nongkrem. The beginning of the ceremony is observed by Syiem and the high priest only then the Nongkrem dance starts. At drawn-break on that day a maiden dance is held in which virgins from the Syiem house take part and the Syiem Sad shaded by an umbrella, dance with great solemnity.

This is called an opening dance or royal dance which is generally done by the Syiem before the dance starts.

When the royal dance is finished, youngsters and damsels of the Khyrim Syiemship enter the field and the dance of U Khun U Raiot (subjects) of the Hima Khyrim (Khyrim Syiemship) starts. The dance lasts for three days, the last day or the third day is the biggest of all. Unmarried males and females from four corners of the Khyaim Syiemship take part in the dance.

Doregata is another folk dance among the Khasis in which the women try to knock off the turbans of their male partners, using their heads. Another dance that the performer dangles a pomelo or any other fruit on a cord tied to his waist and then whirls it round and round after the initial impetus with a barely perceptible movement of his hips. Some experts can control two separate pomelos in this way.

The Garos have traditional dance called Do Dru-su'a in which two women dance like doves pecking each other. For entertainment, the Pnars have their Laho dance, in which members of both sex participate in their festival finery.

Usually two young men on either side of a girl link their arms together and dance in steps. While in place of pipe and drum there

is a 'Cheer leader', usually a man with the gift of impromptu recitation who recites disrespectfully humorous lines for the enjoyment of the audience.

The Physiology of Meghalaya

The state of Meghalaya is geographically known as the "Meghalaya Plateau". The area is made of the oldest rock-formations. Meghalaya consists of the Garo Hills, Khasi Hills and Jaintia hills along with their outliers formed by the Assam ranges. It is the detached north-eastern extension of the Peninsular India.

Part of it lies buried under the alluvium deposited by the Ganga-Brahmaputra system of rivers. This gap is known as Malda gap. Nestled in the hills of eastern sub-Himalayas is Meghalaya is one of the most alluring state in the country. It is blessed with abundant rainfall, sun-shine, virgin forests, high plateaus, crystal clear rivers, tumbling waterfalls, meandering streamlets and above all with hardy, intelligent and hospitable people.

Climate

The climatic condition of the state is dependent to the monsoon. The climate varies with altitude and is moderate but humid. With average annual rainfall as high as 1200 cm in some areas, Meghalaya is the wettest state of India. The western part of the plateau, comprising the Garo Hills Region with lower elevations,

Climate Table

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Mean daily maximum temperature (°C)	14.4	17.8	21.8	24.5	24.2	23.6	23.8	23.7	24.1	22.3	19.3	16.7
Mean daily temperature (°C)	10	12.5	16	19	20	20	19	19	19	18	15	11.5
Mean daily minimum temperature (°C)	5.3	8.1	12.4	14.9	16.1	16.7	17.7	17.5	17.3	14.3	10.5	7.4

experiences high temperatures for most of the year. The climate of Khasi and Jaintia Hills is uniquely pleasant and bracing. It is neither too warm in summer nor too cold in winter, but over the plains of Garo Hills, the climate is warm and humid, except in winter.

The Shillong area generally encounters low temperatures. The maximum temperature in this region rarely goes beyond 28 degrees, whereas winters temperatures of sub-zero degrees are common. The town of Cherrapunji in the Khasi Hills south of capital Shillong holds the world record for most rain in a calendar month, while the village of Mawsynram, near town of Cherrapunji, holds the distinction of seeing the heaviest yearly rains. Best time to visit Meghalaya is during the months of March to July. Originally the British and Assam Tea Estate owners would shift here during the summer months to escape the heat of the Indian Plains.

Encyclopaedic Studies of North - Eastern States of India

MEGHALAYA

Swapnali Borah • Deke Tourangbam • A C Meitei

Dr Swapnali Borah did her B.Sc. (Home Science) in 1993 and M.Sc. (FRM) in 1996 from Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat. She was awarded Senior Research Fellowship by ICAR, New Delhi in 1997. She secured Ph.D (FRM) from Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana in 2002. In addition to *Encyclopaedic Studies of North-Eastern States of India* (8 volumes) she has contributed 12 research papers in different journals, presented 6 papers in national and international conferences and wrote science articles in journals and newspapers.

Presently she is working as Assistant Professor, COHS, Central Agricultural University, Tura, Meghalaya for the last 4 years.

Deke Tourangbam did his B.Sc. (Physics Hons) in 2003 from Manipur University, Manipur. In 2006 he did Masters in Human Resource Management from Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Institute of Rural Development under Dr B R Ambedkar University, Agra. He is freelance writer, has contributed many articles in journals and online publications. He is a columnist for different vernaculars based in North-East and particularly Manipur based.

At present he is HR Consultant in Enhancee Training and Staffing Solutions.

A C Meitei did his early studies in Mizoram. He obtained MBA degree in HRM and is a freelance writer.

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