

COMMERCIAL EXPLOITATION OF  
FOREST AND MINERAL

RESOURCES IN TWO JAINTIA  
VILLAGES AND ITS IMPACT  
ON SOCIAL AND CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS



DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PART FULFILMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENT OF M. PHIL DEGREE IN  
ANTHROPOLOGY

BY

HENRY LAMIN, M.A.

DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY  
NORTH-EASTERN HILL UNIVERSITY  
SHILLONG 793-014

1986

MEMO Library  
Acc. No. 101795  
Acc. by *Deu*  
Class. by *261618*  
Sub. Heading by  
Cat. by  
Transcribed by

DS  
301.240954164  
LAM

C E R T I F I C A T E

This is to certify that the thesis entitled "Commercial Exploitation of Forest and Mineral Resources in Two Jaintia Villages and Its Impact on Socio-Cultural Institutions" submitted by Sri Henry Lamin for award of the Master of Philosophy in Anthropology (Social) is based on the fieldwork conducted by him under my supervision. The thesis, or any part thereof, has not been previously submitted for any other degree.

SHILLONG.

September, 1986

  
(Dr. K.H. Bhat).

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation entitled "Commercial Exploitation of Forest and Mineral Resources in Two Jaintia Villages and Its Impact on Socio-Cultural Institutions" submitted by me to the Department of Anthropology, NEHU, is of my own and it is not submitted for degree to any other University or published at any before.

Shillong  
September, 1986.

*Henry Lamin*  
15/9/86  
(Henry Lamin)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

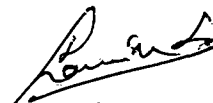
I wish to express my deep sense of gratitude to my teacher and guide, Dr. K.H. Bhat, who suggested this topic of study for my M. Phil Dissertation. He has not only been my mentor and guide but has been a constant source of inspiration in every aspect of my life. He has taken great pains in discussing, criticising and clarifying my entire thinking and working process in a systematic manner. I lack appropriate words to express my indebtedness and sense of gratitude to him.

I also thank Prof. P.K. Mishra, Dr. A. P. Sinha, Prof. B.N. Saraswati and Dr. I.J.S. Jaswal of the Department of Anthropology, NEHU, who have been sources of inspiration during my academic career.

I thank my young Jaintia boys in Bapung and Byndihati who have been my helpers in collecting data in the villages and for their invaluable services. I express my deepest gratitude to my wife and sister-in-law who have undergone untold hardships and sacrifices to enable me to make this humble attempt.

I shall be failing in my duty if I do not mention all those respondents and informants who have in one way or other contributed towards the completion of my humble endeavour.

Any inaccuracy and poor presentation in this dissertation are completely my own responsibility. I finally thank all concerned people especially my parents and wife for their cooperation and services.



(HENRY LAMIN)

SHILLONG

THE 15<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 1986

## CONTENTS

	<u>Pages</u>
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	... (1)
CHAPTER - I : SCOPE OF THE STUDY	... 1 - 26
CHAPTER - II : MEGHALAYA: LAND AND PEOPLE	... 27 - 43
CHAPTER - III : MINERAL AND FOREST RESOURCES IN MEGHALAYA	... 44 - 70
CHAPTER - IV : BAPUNG AND BYNDIHATI: TWO JAINTIA VILLAGES	... 71 - 98
CHAPTER - V : TRADITIONAL AND CHANGING SOCIO-CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS AND VALUES: A GENERAL ACCOUNT	... 99 - 130
CHAPTER - VI : SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHANGES IN BAPUNG	... 131 - 155
CHAPTER - VII : CONCLUSIONS	... 156 - 163
REFERENCES	... 164 - 167

CHAPTER - I  
SCOPE OF THE STUDY

In this chapter I shall be discussing (A) Theoretical Background, (B) Review of Literature, and (C) Formulation of the problem of study and methodology.

A. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

There are only a few social anthropologists, who write about 'primitive economy', who are professionally trained in the discipline of economics. Professional economists have chiefly studied the complicated economic institutions of western societies, with their complex monetary systems and their wide range organization of production and distribution. They generally ask questions like:

1. How people extract the natural resources?
2. What is done with the goods after they are produced?
3. How the economic entrepreneurs operate in the society?
4. What are the aims of commercialization?
5. What is the expected outcome of commercialization?
6. What do the people gain?
7. What forms of exploitation that grows?
8. Is there any organization involved in the process?
9. How the system continues?
10. How is the decision making process takes place in the community, family and individual?

The most essential requirement for any human community is to feed itself and in some of the very simple societies this is everybody's main pre-occupation from childhood to death. It is a truism that everything we eat, whether animal, vegetable or mineral, comes either directly or indirectly from the earth. But this is much less obvious to the modern man who lives in a world of processed foods and super markets, than it is to a member of peasant community, living at or near a bare subsistence level. As well as food, the environment has also to produce shelter, clothing and essential tools (Beattie, 1964: 184).

Occupation is the means through which a person earns his livelihood, it is an activity and through this activity, the person gets something. For example, the fruit seller gets money by selling fruits.

As all our interactions with other individuals is relevant, in particular cultural matrix of which we form a part, so also the nature and variety of occupation is totally determined by the culture. The main occupation of 'primitives' is hunting and gathering. Their material culture is so undeveloped that they know nothing about farming. The lack of a variety of occupations in a low cultural level implies lack of specialization. Specialization starts at a higher level of culture

when some sort of a division of labour comes into existence. Division of labour in the society causes specialization of skills and such skills are acquired by particular individuals or groups of individuals. The diversification and the stratification of occupation comes along with some other peculiarities like religious sanction, endogamy, untouchability. According to Marx, this type of division of labour resulted in the formation of two classes, one having power over the other. In the present world we usually identify three classes viz., upper, middle, and lower, and it is impossible to find out a rational nexus between the occupations and the classes because the rating of an individual into one of the three classes is not based on any rational ground; so also, the rating of an occupation in the hierarchical scales is not based on any rational consideration. However, many scholars have tried to devise an occupational scale for particular societies (North and Hatt, 1961). These scales are based on some particular aspects of the occupation, like income, education, training etc. or on the combination of more than one such aspect. But the rating of an occupation mainly depends upon public opinion. And it is very difficult to judge on what the public opinion about an occupation is based. Moreover, the status of an occupation may also change from time to time.

Miller and Form (1964) have shown the impact of industrialization and modernization of economy on the occupational structure. They have noted the following changes:

- (i) With industrialization and modernization of economy occupations become more and more specialized and hence require long period of training, resulting in delay in entering the labour market.
- (ii) Modernization of economy involves universalistic norms in hiring practices and so more women enter the labour market at all its levels.
- (iii) Due to the demand of labour in the area, many outsiders come into the area. Some work temporarily, and some settle permanently.
- (iv) At the early stage of industrialization workers in manufacturing and new services increase. But this takes a different shape with the growth of industrialization. When industrialization comes to its full form the requirement of occupations, connected with transport, communication, trade, finance and government goes on increasing.

The size of an occupational group is also a thing of great importance, because it indicates the trend of the society towards that particular occupation. An occupation which may be

held in high esteem by the society will not certainly attract many persons if the reward from it is meagre. At the same time, an occupation in which the reward is high but not held in high esteem will not attract many people towards it. However, usually occupations which are held in high esteem are highly rewarded. Form (1965) formulates that changes in the size of an occupation group depends upon the market demand. On the other hand, the dependence and the financial rewards affect how it is evaluated by the society.

Intra-generational mobility was studied by Miller and Form (1964). Their study of individual mobility has shown that most of the occupational mobility takes place within the first ten years of work life. They have also found that proprietors and managers move rapidly and in an orderly way while skilled manual workers and clerical workers change jobs in the first part of life. It is also interesting to note that according to their finding workers in domestic and personal service and semi-skilled and unskilled workers change jobs throughout their work life. Miller and Forms' findings may be true for the areas they studied and may not be true for other areas or in other societies where occupations are graded differently and rewarded differently.

Economic theory and market economy:

In the 19th century Britain, factory industrialism and market organization compelled people to sell their labour, land, and material resources to market for livelihood. Finance, transportation, market place, purchase and sale at money price are all linked to each other. This is called market mechanism or market principle in which all components of the economy are mutually dependent.

According to economists, market is a self regulating system. The price change induces the sellers and the buyers to economize. When market organization is economy-wide it creates market society. Social organization has to adapt to market needs e.g. movement of labourers for high wages.

The market economy is highly decentralized. The individual fixes the buying and selling and reinforces the atomistic view of society and self-interest of individuals. Anthropologists ask the question: Why the economic theory derived from such a specialized institutional matrix should be relevant to all economics including primitive? Economists and some anthropologists like Le Clair argue that since the analysis is structured in the physical universe, so, it is universally applicable. Moreover, the economists use the economic approach to focus on economy as separate from society and independent of the other social institutions. Economic motivation induces the

labour to work for fear of hunger. Another assumption of natural scarcity is that because of man's unlimited wants, which is relevant only to some societies, market economy is regarded as universal fact. Economists believe that man has unlimited wants, but the material means are limited, maximum material acquisition therefore requires economizing calculation. If such things happen, it is a socially determined result in a materialistic society.

Preference for materials at the cost of social goals might be in conflict. If we see that the importance given to material acquisition is determined by social institutions, then the scarcity of means also depends on social circumstances, not physical circumstance. This is the argument of some economic anthropologists.

#### Two meanings of economic:

There are two meanings for the term economic according to Karl Polanyi, viz., substantive and formal. In substantive sense, provision of material goods for satisfying biological and social wants is general in its applicability. In any economic system natural resources are exploited with some techniques, goods are distributed among all people and there is an institutional structure for repetitive attainment of these aims. Participants in the system are mutually dependent for technique, labour and natural resources. Rules integrate all activities in the system.

Formalists say that an economic system has a special set of rules designed to maximize some ends or minimise the expenditure of some means. There are four aspects of this meaning:

(i) It has no necessary connection with substantive meaning of economic. (ii) Economizing calculation need not be universal in substantive sense. (iii) Economizing calculation is not confined to the creation, distribution or use of material goods, and (iv) It can be found in any human activity. Price and distribution theory is an application of economizing calculation to a special set of conditions and organizational practices for the provision of material goods.

The fruitful application of the economic theory derived from the formal meaning of economic depends on the existence of a substantive, real world economy so organized that at least some of the special postulates of the analysis are institutionally fulfilled.

Western market industrialism and primitive economy:

Both meanings of economic are relevant to market organised industrial economy. Material goods are acquired in market structure. That every society must have substantive economic organization to provide material means of existence does not

mean that each must have market exchange institutions for analysing which formal economic theory was designed. Market integrated economy is historically and anthropologically rare.

Polanyi and his associates have shown that there exist at least two non-market principles of integrative economic organization for the analysis of which conventional economic theory is inappropriate. They said that economy-wide market mechanism, its materially self-gainful economizing calculation and its monetized internal and external trade do not exist as integrative pattern in primitive economies.

In primitive societies, production and distribution involves little of profit motive; labour is not available for sale; and distribution is set in a non-economic matrix in the form of gift or ceremonial exchange. The different types of right in holding land affect its use. The kinds of choices involved in the assembly of labour force differ. Different sanctions maintain its operation. The magical and other ritual procedures affect the allocation of productive effort. Different kinds of social factors provide the basis for and give meaning to the scheme of distribution of the product of labour. There are local media of exchange with specific mechanism of operation. The incentives, individual and communal, in inter-community trade are also specific in nature.

### Tribal and Peasant Societies:

A tribal society is characterized as isolated in ecology, demography, economy, politics and other social behaviour. Tribal society flourished all over the world before the invention of agriculture i.e. about 10,000 years ago. With the advent of agriculture and food production a new social category emerged in the society. This came to be known as peasant society with the emergence of cities and civilization arising 5,000 years ago. Generally, a peasant society is in contact with a city for ideological, political and economic reasons.

Definition of the term 'peasant' has been the subject of some argument in recent years. It can be held that this is not a critical term, capable of much theoretical handling, but it is a broad descriptive term of an empirical kind, suitable only for demarcating rough boundaries in categorization. From this point of view, 'peasant' refers to a socio-economic category. It describes a socio-economic system of small-scale producers with a relatively simple, non-industrial technology. The system is a rural one, though as Robert Radfield has shown, it depends on a rural-urban antinomy and interrelationship, particularly upon the existence of market. Definition of a system as 'peasant' implies that it has its own particular local character, partly because of intricate

community interrelationships and partly because in economic and social affairs, it both contributes to and draws upon a town in trade, cultural exchange and general ideology. The term peasant is commonly restricted to agricultural producers, even to those who retain effective control of the land and are not tenants. But such distinctions are difficult to maintain when owners and tenants, as in a Malay rice-growing area, are mingled together and may be related by kinship or live in the same village.

In Raymond Firth's opinion it is not necessary to restrict the term 'peasant' only to those people who cultivate the soil as owners. It can usefully include other 'countrymen' also who share the social life and values of the cultivators, so that we can speak not only of peasant agriculturists but also of peasant fishermen, peasant craftsmen and peasant marketers, if they are part of the same social system. In any case, such people are often in fact part-time cultivators as well. If the concept of 'peasant' be viewed as indicating a set of structural or social relationships rather than a technological category of persons engaged in the same employment, then this unconventional inclusive usage seems justified.

Definition of some key-terms:

Some of the key-terms used in this thesis are discussed below:

1. Commercialization - Commerce means an exchange of merchandise especially on large scale (Oxford Dictionary). Production of goods and services may be for self consumption (subsistence economy) or primarily for sale (commercial/market economy). By commercial exploitation, I mean, large scale utilization of natural and human resources for sale. People produce more goods than what is required for consumption. Money plays an important role in this economy as a medium of exchange, a unit of value and a means of accumulating capital. Market also plays an important role in this economy because almost all transactions between buyer and seller take place through the market institution.

2. Market - Originally, market was understood as a public place in a town where provisions and other objects were exposed for sale. When we generalise it means any group of persons who are in intimate business relations and carry extensive transactions in any commodity. A great city may contain as many markets as there are important branches of trade and these markets may or may not be located in specific places. The idea of locality is not necessary. The traders may be spread over a whole town, or region, or a country and yet form a market, if they are, by means of fairs, meetings, published price lists, the post office or otherwise, in close communication with each other (Marshall, 1936: 134-35). A

market has certain essential components like commodity, buyers and sellers, a place, intercourse between buyer and seller, and one price for the same commodity at the same time. Markets are also variously classified on the basis of area, time and the nature of competition (perfect and imperfect). The size of the market depends on various factors. In order to have a wide market a commodity should be portable, durable, suitable for sampling and grading etc. A commodity of general consumption (fuels, foods, clothings etc) is bound to have a wide market.

3. Factors of production - The important factors of production are land, labour (including organization) and capital. Land and labour are original or primary factors. Capital is the outcome of the combined efforts of land and labour. Organization is only a form of labour. The entrepreneur also plays an important role in production.

Land:

The term land has given a special meaning in Economics. It does not mean soil as in the ordinary speech; but it is used in a much wider sense. In the words of Marshall, land means 'the materials and the forces which nature gives purely for man's aid, in land and water, in air and light and heat. Land stands for all natural resources which yield an income or

which have exchange value. It represents those natural resources which are useful and scarce, actually or potentially' (Marshall: 1936 - 138).

In every stage of economic evolution, nature has been man's most useful ally. In the hunting and fishing stage, nature supplied food freely and sustained human life. In the pastoral stage, the land surface and the pastures and meadows, herds of cattle and sheep could have been reared and kept. In the agriculture stage man grew his crop in the soil. Even when the agriculture gave place to the handicraft and industrial stage land is still essential. Every commodity that we can use can directly or indirectly be traced ultimately to land. Our very existence would be impossible without it. Marshall's word earth's surface is a primary condition of anything that a man can do, it gives him room for his actions. Land marked certain peculiarities: Land is Nature's gift, is fixed in quantity, is permanent and lacks mobility.

### Labour:

In our ordinary understanding 'labour' means an unskilled person. But in Economics it is used in a wider sense. Any work whether manual or mental which is undertaken for a monetary consideration is called labour. Any work done for the sake of pleasure or love does not fall under labour.



Marshall's words 'Any exertion of mind or body undergo partly or wholly with a view to some good other than the pleasure derived directly from the work is called labour' (Marshall, 1936: 65). So labour, include the very highest professional skills of all kinds, as well as the labour of unskilled labour.

Labour is manifestly different from the other factor of production. It is a living thing, and that makes all differences. Labour is not only means of production but also ends of production. There are certain characteristics: Labour is inseparable from the labourer himself, the commodity that labour has to sell must be delivered in person, labour does not last, labour has a very weak bargaining power, the changes in the price of labour react rather curiously on its supply and there can be no rapid adjustment of the supply of labour to demand.

#### Capital:

In ordinary language capital is used in the sense of money. But when we talk of capital as factor of production, the economist regard capital as that part man's wealth, other than land, which yields an income. The money which is a form of wealth and which yields income when it is lent out cannot be called capital. With money, we can buy machinery and raw materials which then serve as factor of production. Securities,

bonds, stocks and goods possessed by a man yield income to him but they cannot be called capital because they represent only titles of ownership, rather than factors of production. Capital is defined as 'produced means of production'. Capital consists of those physical goods which are produced for use in future production, machines, tools and instruments, factories, canals, transport equipment, stock of material are some of the example of capital. All of them are produced by man to help him in the production of further goods.

Capital may be classified into fixed capital and working capital. Fixed capital are the goods which are used in production again and again till they wear out e.g. machinery, tools, railways. Working capital are the single use producer goods like raw materials, goods in process and fuel. They are used up to a single act of consumption. Moreover, money spent on them is fully recovered when goods made with them are sold in the market.

#### Enterprise:

In the earlier stage of economic evolution, the independent worker owned his own land or shop, supplied his own capital, worked with his own tools, planned the operations himself and stood by the result of venture. He was, in short, the landlord, the labourer, the capitalist and the entrepreneur

all rolled in one. But considering the complexity and the scale of production today and the nature and magnitude of problems involved in modern production, undertaking of all these responsibilities by one man is out of the question. Hence, the emergence of the entrepreneur. Factors of production are divorced from one another. Land, labour, and capital are all separately owned and lie scattered. The entrepreneur brings them together and harnesses them to the work of production.

The entrepreneur specialises in the work of organization. He may own no land of his own and probably no capital, and he will not be expected to labour in the ordinary sense of the word. He possesses one thing i.e. organising ability. He will be able to take land on rent, borrow capital, hire labour and use each in the right proportion so as to yield the best result. That is how he organises production.

The role that the entrepreneur play consists in coordinating and correlating the other factors of production. He starts the work, organises and supervises it, and faces the issue. He undertakes to remunerate all the factors of production: to pay rent to the landlord, interest on the capital, and wages to labour and pays them in advance of the sale of goods. The residue, if any, is his. Nothing may be left after

he has made the necessary payments. In that case, his venture will have been miscarried. But it is also possible that he may be lucky to make a handsome profit. Whatever may be the outcome, he must be prepared to accept. He thus, takes the final responsibility of the business.

As it appears today all these factors of production are operating in the coalmines of Bapung area. Land where there is mineral resources i.e. coal, labourers who had come from different regions to work in the coal mines. Capital is required to work in the mines, tools and implements are necessary and last and not the least, is the entrepreneur who will take the risk of the whole business. Thus the people could reach to the stage to commercialise coal of the area.

#### B. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

The tribal areas constitute a very significant part of backward areas of the country. The areas covered by the tribal sub-plan comprise about 15 percent of the total area of the country and 7.63 percent of the total population. In addition the predominantly tribal states cover 3.74 percent of the area and about 0.5 percent of the population of the country. The concentration of tribals however, varies from area to area. Some areas have highly tribal concentration, while in other areas, tribal people form only a small proportion of the total population (N.E.C. 1981: 1).

The Indian constitution envisages a special position for the protection and development of tribal communities. The Fifth Schedule of the constitution gives the Union Government a special responsibility for administration of the scheduled areas. There are provisions for special development programmes as also for providing financial assistance to raise the level of the administration of these areas and their development. The legal framework for administration of these regions has been kept extremely flexible so that a smooth transition could be ensured for them as the nation as a whole marches ahead (N.E.C. 1981: 2).

Meghalaya is a tribal state, situated at the North East region of which 60 percent of the population live a "primitive" life, except the urban areas like Shillong, Jowai and Tura. The study is conducted in Jaintia Hills District of Meghalaya. The literacy of the people is only 28 percent. The people practise shifting and dry cultivation. In the recent years coal mining has become one of the major economic activities of the people in some villages of Jaintia Hills. The coal mining has changed the entire economic activities and the mode of living of the people in certain areas.

An attempt is made in this section to review some of the studies on transformation of tribal communities, with special reference to industrialization. Most of these studies

will not throw much light to the problems in Meghalaya because of certain constitutional status accorded to this region. The socio-economic forces cannot act here in the same way as they act in other parts of India where such restrictions are not found. However, an overview of such studies is necessary to gain insights into the problem of socio-economic transformations of a community.

T. S. Epstein has conducted a pioneering study on the impact of the changing economic opportunities on social institutions and also the effect of different kinds of social institutions in inhibiting or assisting the response to changing opportunities in two South Indian villages. She has collected innumerable statistics on income, expenditure, cost, capital, distributions, and other quantitative expressions. She has also collected data on social institutions, kinship, caste, class, religion and political allegiance. After a gap of about 15 years she revisited the villages and further added both qualitative and quantitative data to support her conclusions (1962, 1973). Another important study on the relationship between economy and social institution is by F.G. Bailey (1957). He has discussed the changes which have been brought about in the structure of a village society in Orissa over a hundred years of British rule. Private rights in land, sale of land in the market, money economy and new economic opportunities like business and trade brought many changes in the traditional social structure of the village.

Several studies have been conducted by anthropologists on the impact of industrialization on tribal communities in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal. It is worthwhile to review some of these studies.

Sachchidananda (1965: 172-179) observed a number of changes in Hazaribagh and Dhanbad coal mine areas. The changes in tribal life are attributed to the intensive mining industry. Some of the changes mentioned by him are as follows:

1. Displacement from hearth and home.
2. Disorganization of village life.
3. Process of detribalization.
4. Introduction of money economy.
5. Shift from egalitarian to class society.
6. Change from communal goals to personal achievement.
7. Growth of criminality.
8. Ineffectiveness of traditional leaders in social control.
9. More anxiety in people leading to alcoholism, petty quarrels etc.
10. Preference for conjugal family.
11. Indebtedness.
12. Change in food habits.
13. Free mixing between tribals and non-tribals including marriage and illegitimate sexual relationship.
14. Contact of new diseases.
15. Changes in language, dress etc., religious ceremonies etc.

L. P. Vidyarthi and B.K. Rai (1977: 462-471) have summarized the findings of several researches conducted in Bihar, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. These studies also confirm that industrialization of the area brought about many socio-economic changes in tribal life. One important change noted by almost all researchers like L.P. Vidyarthi, Sachchidananda, Rajendra Singh, J. Sarkar, T.R. Sharma, P.K. Das Gupta and J.S. Tandon is that of alienation of tribal land (Ibid). The lands were taken either by the government for setting up industries or purchased by non-tribals, often by paying very low prices.

The tribal people of Meghalaya have one advantage. Since they are protected by special laws under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, alienation of tribal land to non-tribals is almost impossible.

There is no literature on the impact of industrialization in Meghalaya. Descriptions of the traditional life-styles of the tribal people of Meghalaya are available since the days of British rule. I have utilized several of these reports, books and articles in this thesis which are discussed in different chapters.

### C. FORMULATION OF THE PROBLEM OF STUDY AND METHODOLOGY

As a tribal youth from Jaintia Hills, the area of present discourse, I have been noticing certain socio-economic changes among the people during the last ten years or so. I was curious to know whether the changes were apparent or real. Since I became a student of anthropology this curiosity increased, and so I decided to study the problems of socio-economic change in small region of Jaintia Hills, for my M.Phil. degree.

Coal mining and timber lumbering are the two most important commercial activities of the people. Timber lumbering started much earlier than coal mining. In the traditional economy cultivation of paddy was the most important activity. Since rice was the staple food of the people, much of the product was consumed locally. Left-over paddy was sold in local markets. People had very little money in hand. About twenty years ago, people started exploiting natural resources like timber and about ten years ago they also started exploiting coal in large-scale.

This is primarily an explorative study since no work has been done on these problems by any social scientist. In the present study I have asked a rather simple question: What are the implications of the commercial exploitation and sale of coal and timber with special reference to the socio-cultural institutions of Jaintias (Pnars)? The implications are extensive and rather deep.

I have started the study with the following assumptions:

1. Commercial exploitation of natural resources and monetization of economy influences the society in many respects.
2. Expansion in knowledge and accumulation of wealth lead to further exploitation of the natural resources in the area.
3. Outside people (entrepreneurs and labourers) act as catalysts to some of the social changes.

The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To make a review of the existing literature on coal and timber on the basis secondary material.
2. To make a review of the socio-cultural institutions of the people on the basis of published literature and field work.
3. To investigate the factors (variables) relevant to the present study since no work has been done on the problem so far.
4. To investigate the modus operandi of coal mining and timber lumbering in the specified area.
5. To find out the nature and extent of utilization of natural resources viz., coal and timber.
6. To find out the impact of commercial economy on other economic activities and socio-cultural institutions in general and matrilineal social structure in particular.

The theoretical premises for this study are mainly from functional anthropology. According to this approach:

"The social structure, customs, beliefs, economic life etc. are closely related. When the economic structure changes it would affect changes in other aspects of life. With the change from subsistence to commercial economy, there must be relevant changes in the social structure of the society."

#### Methodology:

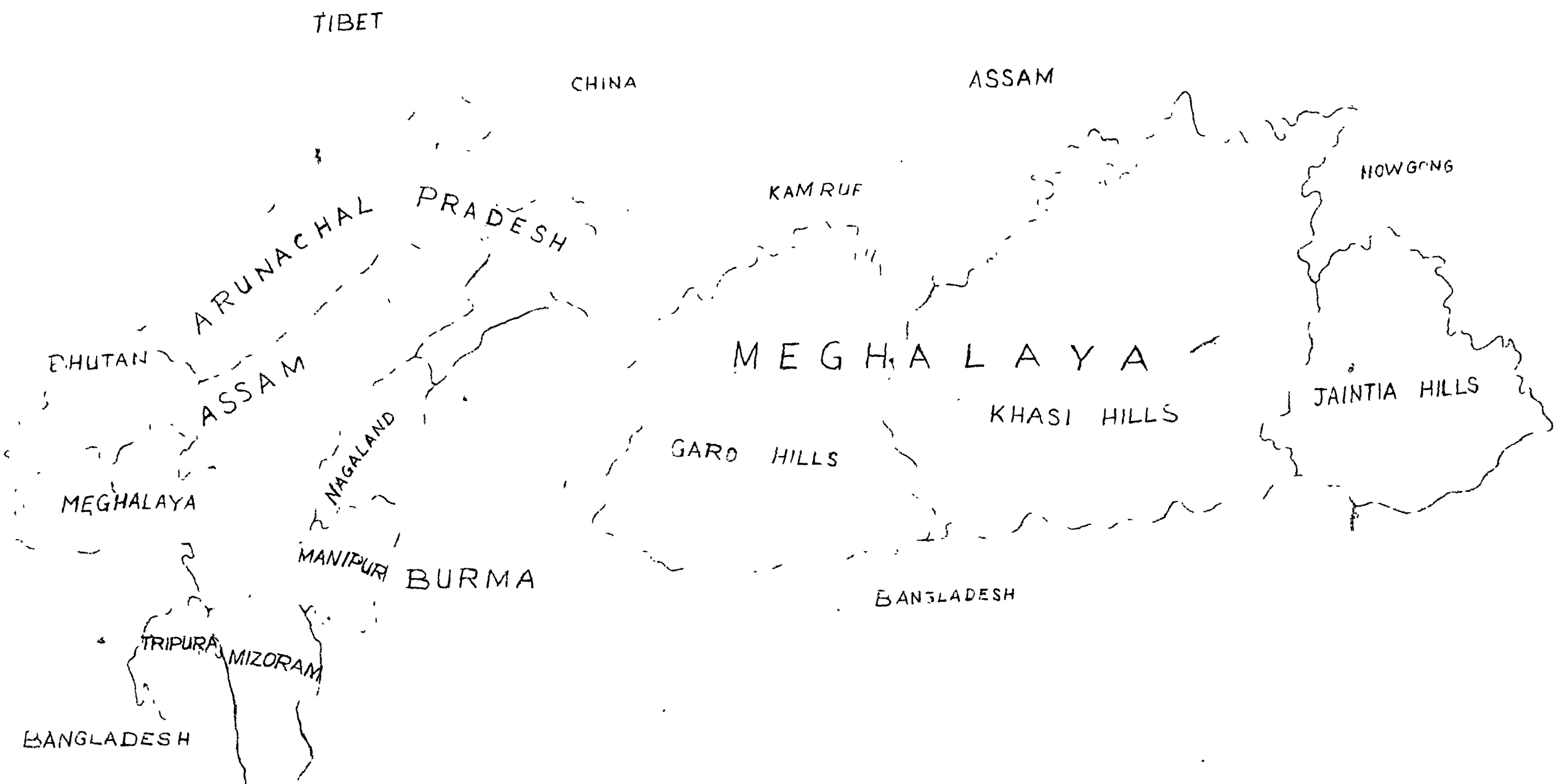
The study was conducted in two villages of Jaintia Hills viz., Bapung (Wapung) and Byndihati for a period of about 4 months, from June to September, 1985. Coal mining is an important activity in Bapung. Timber lumbering was an important activity in Byndihati a few years ago. At present, their main economic activity is cultivation of paddy.

In spite of my knowledge of local language and ethnic affiliation I had to face many problems during the field work. The people were very suspicious about my work. Since there was some efforts by the government to nationalise or control coal mining, I was not welcomed by the people. I could not get an independent room for more than a month.

I had prepared a schedule for household census. I visited majority of the houses but could not complete the

schedule in many houses. Therefore, I have not used much of quantitative data in this dissertation. I hope that people will trust me when I visit them again.

My data are largely derived from interviews and observation. I have also collected some case studies.



TIBET

CHINA

ASSAM

KAMRUJ

HOWGONG

ARUNACHAL PRADESH

MEGHALAYA

JAINTIA HILLS

KHASI HILLS

GARO HILLS

ASSAM

NAGALAND

MANIPUR

BURMA

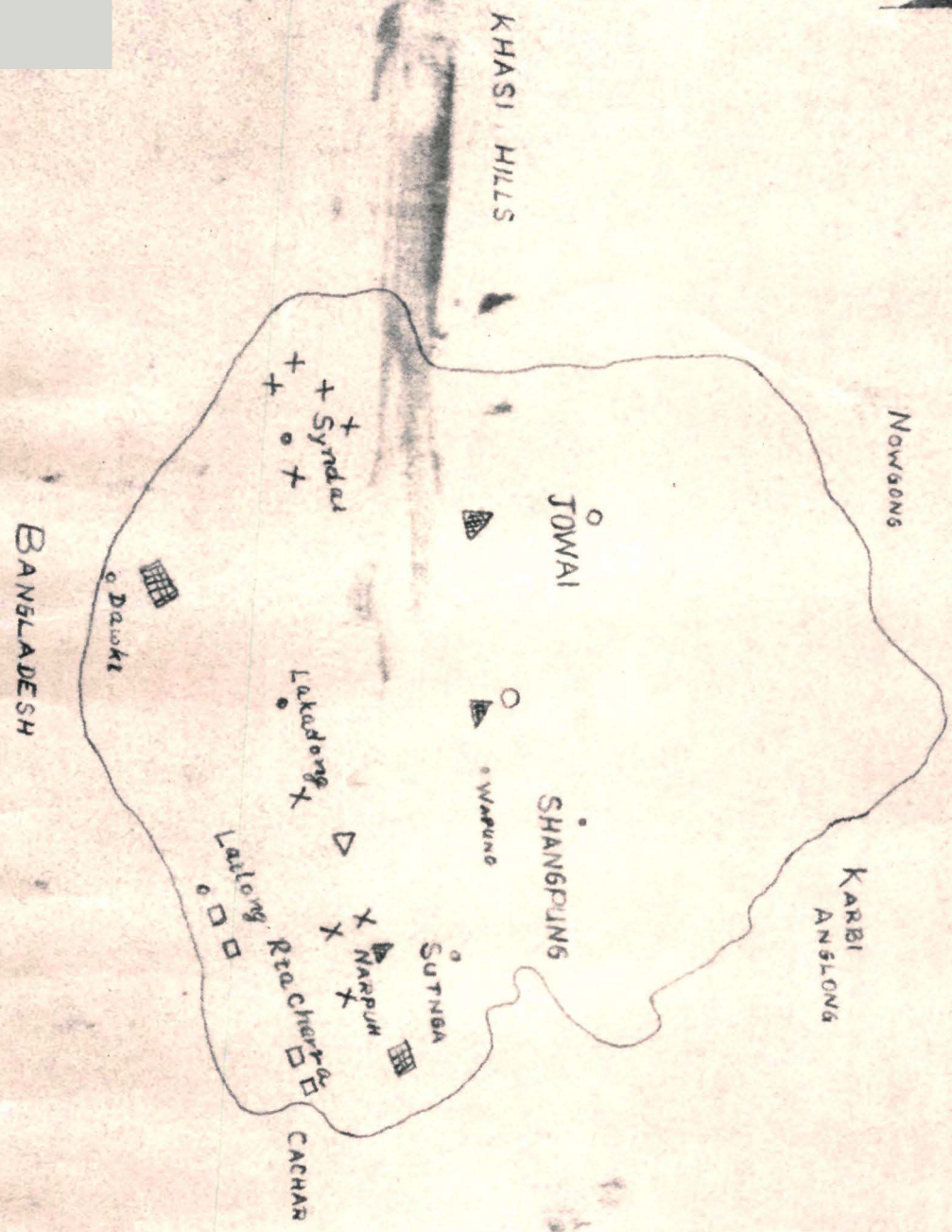
BANGLADESH

MEGHALAYA

TRIPURA

MIZORAM

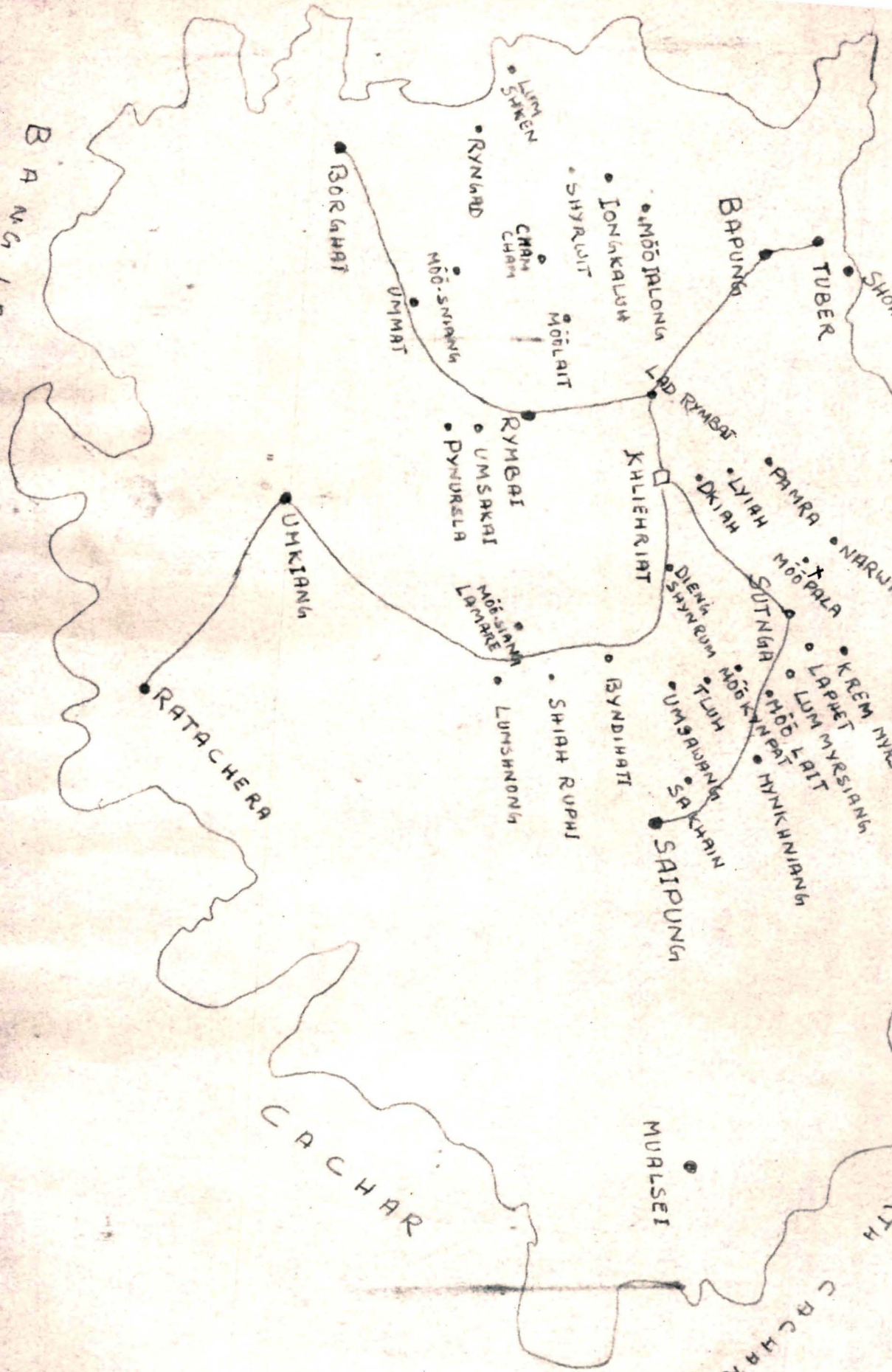
BANGLADESH



- ▲ - COAL (DEWINGS)
- ▣ - MAWSHYNRUT
- X - LIMEKA (MAWSHRUN)

LASKAIN BLOCK

JAINTHIA HILLS DISTRICT  
NORTH CACHAR  
MEGHALAYA



BANGLADESH

NOT TO SCALE

## CHAPTER - II

### MEGHALAYA: LAND AND PEOPLE

Meghalaya is one of the hill states of India. The name 'Meghalaya' is derived from two Sanskrit words 'megha' and 'alaya' meaning the 'abode of clouds'. It was carved out of the two districts, viz., United Khasi-Jaintia and Garo Hills, of former Assam State.

The Assam Reorganization (Meghalaya) Bill was passed in two houses of parliament on 24th December, 1969, with a view to create a new state. As a first step, the status of Autonomous District Council was given on 2nd April, 1970. Meghalaya, consisting of the two Autonomous District Councils, was created on 20th January, 1972. At present, the state is divided into five districts viz., West Garo Hills, East Garo Hills, West Khasi Hills, East Khasi Hills and Jaintia Hills.

#### LOCATION:

Meghalaya is situated between 25°N latitude and 26°N latitude and 90°E longitude and 93°E longitude. The land forms the central section of the watershed between the valleys of the Brahmaputra and the surma and is bounded in the north by Kamrup and Nowgong districts of Assam; on the south by Sylhet and Nasirabad district of Bangladesh.

AREA:

Meghalaya covers a land surface of 22,500 sq. kms. which is approximately 0.70% of the total area of India. Only four other states of India, viz., Sikkim, Tripura, Nagaland and Manipur are smaller than Meghalaya in area.

TOPOGRAPHY:

Meghalaya is a land of hills and valleys. To the north, the hills rise gradually from the Brahmaputra valley in succession of low ranges covered with dense evergreen forests of teak, sal and bamboo. On the south the hills rise immediately from the plains to a height of 4,000 ft. forming a level wall along the north of Surma valley. The southern and central portions of the land consist of a wide plateau between 4,000 ft. and 6,000 ft. above sea level, the highest point of which is the Shillong peak at 6,450 ft.

Considerable number of rivers arise in the hills, but are of little importance as a means of communication within the hills. The big rivers flowing towards the north are Kopili, Barapani, Umiam and Umkhen. The rivers flowing southwards are Lubha, Kynshi and their tributaries. Due to the terrain and heavy rainfall, these fast flowing streams and rivers break into waterfalls as they descend to the plains. With varying climate and sufficient rainfall, evergreen tropical forests are found on the northern slopes. Temperate forests of a

variety of pine and oak are found in the central region, while in the southern slopes, because of the poor top soil not much natural vegetation in the form of forests, is seen.

### CLIMATE

The climate of this region differs from that of the Brahmaputra valley mainly due to its high relief, which in general makes the climate very salubrious, while that of Brahmaputra plain is comparatively warmer in summer and cool in winter. However, the climate of the central part and eastern Meghalaya (Khasi and Jaintia) is conducive. Whereas the western part of Meghalaya (Garo Hills except for the winter (November to February) becomes oppressive as the result of high temperature and heavy rainfall.

The climate of the central and eastern Meghalaya is bracing due to the high altitude. In Shillong region, winter temperature goes down to about  $5.2^{\circ}\text{C}$  and seldom rises above  $26^{\circ}\text{C}$  in any part of the year. During winter from the month of December to January, there is heavy frost in Shillong plateau. Snowfall is not experienced in the area. The most interesting climatic feature is the heavy rainfall with an average 7,196 mm annually. The other part of Meghalaya do not receive such a heavy rain. However, there is great variation of rainfall within this region from south to north. This is because the central upland zone is on the higher level, having an east and west

alignment renders a rain-shadow effect on the area lying to the north. Consequently, the rainfall in Cherrapunjee which is located in the structural platform on the south is as high as 12,033 mm, while Shillong being located only 50 Km. to the north with a rainshadow effect gets only 2,296 mm. Mawsynram a village situated on the similar plateau as the Cherra plateau, about 16 Km. west to Cherrapunjee received the highest rainfall in the world with 13,923 mm. Since 1976, Mawsynram became the wettest place in the world. The highest rainfall in Cherrapunjee and Mawsynram region is due to the fact that south-west monsoon laden clouds, with great amount of moisture from the Bay of Bengal blows over Bangladesh and is suddenly cut by the cliff of the table land, in the south with an average elevation above 1,200 metres and as a result the monsoon having reached the heads of the gorges ascends vertically upwards causes very heavy rainfall. Jowai which is located at the ridge of the eastern section of the central upland receives the greater amount of rainfall than Shillong with 3,077 mm as it does not experience a rainshadow effect (Meghalaya Year Book: 1976).

#### POPULATION:

According to the 1981 Census, the population of Meghalaya is 13,27,974 persons. The density of population was 59 per sq. km. The population was 10,11,699 persons in 1971.

THE PEOPLE:

The Imperial Gazetteer of India the origin of Khasi and Jaintia is discussed as follows:

"On ethnological grounds there are reasons for supposing that the Khasis and Syntengs have been established in these hills for many centuries; but, living as they did in comparative isolation in their mountain strongholds, little is known of their early history. At the end of the eighteenth century they harried the plains on the north and south of the district" (quoted in Choudhury, 1978: 36).

With regard to the racial origin of Khasi and Jaintia the most recent postulate (Bongard-Levin, 1971) favours an autochthonous theory according to which they might have belonged to a common racial stock which occupied a large area of northern India, Burma, Indo-China and parts of south China in the neolithic period.

The convergence of cultural and material traits which occurs between Khasi-Jaintia and scattered groups of people in Burma and Indo-China beyond the confines of India can be explained on the supposition that they all originally belonged to the same racial stock. Hooker observed: "The Khasi and Jaintia people are of the Indo-Chinese race, they are short, very stout, and muscular, with enormous calves and knees,

rather narrow eyes and little beard, broad high cheekbones, flat noses and open nostrils. The hair is gathered into a top knot, and sometimes (they) shaved off the forehead (1854).

When Khasi and Jaintia were first encountered by Europeans, they appeared to be of mixed blood. Some resembled the Chinese, and some with flat noses and thick lips, seemed almost African in appearance. While those who lived in the highest parts of the hills were very fair and handsome and resembled Europeans, those living at the foot of the hills looked like Bengalees. The average cephalic index is 77.

Accounts of the general disposition and character of the Khasi and Jaintia vary. According to Hooker, the first Europeans who came in contact found them very unpleasant. "They were sulky, undisciplined, slow; no inclination to please and were most independent in manner, fought bravely with bows and arrows and displayed a cruel and blood thirsty disposition" (Hooker, 1854).

Lish, another early European observer, gives a somewhat different picture of their character: Khasi and Jaintia were fond of amusements and were gay and happy people. The cheerful disposition was an attraction to strangers. When at work they were amiable and energetic, but they were otherwise lazy. In general they were 'a plain, open-hearted, honest people'.

They were susceptible to tender feelings and capable of sincere gratitude and affection, and a sense of obligation was very strong. The bond of blood relationship was also very strong. Though polygamy did not exist in the strict sense of the term, a man did not think it wrong to have extra-marital relationships with two or more women besides his wife, provided he was in a position to support his legal wife in comfort.

Another account states that the Khasi and Jaintia possessed two outstanding virtues, truth and honesty. The petty meanness practised by Bengalees were spurned by them. They were however revengeful and seldom forgot injuries. I feel that the latter descriptions are more accurate than the account given by Hooker.

#### LANGUAGE AND LITERACY:

The Khasi and Jaintia language is undoubtedly associated with the Mon-Khmer group of speech. The retention of Mon-Khmer words in Khasi is stronger than the other languages. The Khasi language for teaching, writing and speaking in the schools of Khasi and Jaintia Hills is taken from Cherra, because the people of Cherra had the first contact of the British. In its present form, Khasi has borrowed a few words from Hindi and English.

According to the 1971 Census, the literacy rate in Meghalaya was 28.43% and it became 33.22% in 1981. Khasi, Jaintia and Garo are the main spoken languages of the state. English is an official language of the state.

POLITICAL STATUS:

The special features of tribal policy in North East Region have been reflected in the provisions contained in the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution. This Schedule applies to the state of Assam, Meghalaya and the Union territory of Mizoram. The Sixth Schedule provides for the formation of autonomous districts within this autonomous region.

In terms of geographical coverage, the applicability of the Sixth Schedule has been considerably modified since the initial enactment. The principal changes arose with the reorganization of the North Eastern Region. Each autonomous district of the region set up under the Sixth Schedule has a Council which has the power to make laws.

Since Meghalaya has more than 80% tribal population it can be even labelled as a tribal state. It enjoys some special political status since it comes under the sixth schedule of the Indian constitution. Under this schedule, District Councils and Regional Councils can be set up to administer the state. The council has also an extensive power at taxation.

Specifically, the district councils have the power to assess and collect land revenue from all lands under their jurisdiction and to levy and collect taxes on lands and buildings and tolls on persons resident within such areas. District Councils have the right to levy and collect taxes.

- (a) taxes on profession, trades, callings and employment,
- (b) taxes on animals, vehicles and boats,
- (c) taxes on the entry of goods into a market for sale therein and tolls on passengers,
- (d) taxes for the maintenance of schools, dispensaries or roads.

District councils also have the right to share in the royalties occurring from licences or leases for protecting or extracting minerals granted by the state government. There is a provision for a District Fund into which all moneys received by the council can be credited.

The District Councils and Regional Councils have been given powers under clause 3 of the Sixth Schedule to make laws with respect to:

- (a) The allotment, occupation or use or the setting apart, of land, other than any land which is a reserved forest, for the purposes of agriculture or grazing or for residential or other non-agricultural purposes likely to promote the

interests of the inhabitants of any village or town:  
Provided that nothing in such laws shall prevent the compulsory acquisition of land, whether occupied or unoccupied, for public purposes (by the Government of the State concerned) in accordance with the law for the time being in force authorising such acquisition;

- (b) the management of any forest not being a reserved forest;
- (c) the use of any canal or water-course for the purpose of agriculture;
- (d) the regulation of the practice of Jhum or other forms of shifting cultivation;
- (e) the establishment of village or town communities or councils and their powers;
- (f) any other matter relating to village or town administration, including village or town police or public health and sanitation;
- (g) the appointment for succession of Chiefs or Headmen;
- (h) the inheritance of property;
- (i) marriage and divorce; and
- (j) social customs.

In the State of Meghalaya the position is slightly different. In this case "while the State Legislature can make laws in relation to subjects in the state list, the District or Regional Council can make laws in respect of the items

mentioned above. But the laws made by the State Legislatures will over-ride the laws made by the District or the Regional Council.... So far as the Acts of Parliament are concerned, the Governor has been empowered to direct that they shall apply to such District or Region or in part thereof, subject to such exceptions or such modifications as he may specify in the notification.... The Sixth Schedule also makes a special provision for administration of justice in autonomous Districts and autonomous Regions. The District Council can constitute courts for trial of suits and cases.... The District Councils have been given certain educational and developmental functions under clause 6 of the Sixth Schedule" (Government of India, 1981: 28-29).

The village council, the District Council and the State often clash with each other over issues relating to land and exploitation of natural resources. It is interesting to note that the villagers in Meghalaya enjoy substantial autonomy relating to ownership and use of land and land-based resources. It is not possible for a non-tribal to acquire land or real estate in Meghalaya, especially in villages. The Constitutional safeguards played an important role in protecting the interests of the tribal people of Meghalaya. Therefore, the present study has to be understood keeping in view the special status of Meghalaya.

POLITICAL HISTORY:

The Jaintias have a long history and the mythology traces their origin to the days of Mahabharata. Shadap Sen, wife of the famous Indologist, A.L. Basham, in her book on 'The Origin and Synteng People' observed as follows: "According to tradition, in the days of Yudhisthira, the victor of the Mahabharata wars, the Jaintia territory was ruled by a Brahman king named Indrasena and many Brahmans came from all over India to dwell in his kingdom. Unfortunately, Indrasena offended Bhima, the brother of Yudhisthira, when he refused to visit him and do homage to him. As a punishment, Bhima attacked Indrasena's kingdom, captured him, and had him castrated. Hence the Jaintia king was called Khasi or 'castrated' and hence Jaintia is still known as Khaspur." (1981: 78).

The earliest definitely datable event in the history of Jaintia Kingdom is its conquest by the Kochs in the reign of the great Koch king Naranarayan (1540-1586 A.D.). The kingdom of Jaintia was attacked and its king was killed by Chilarai, the brother of Naranarayan, a brilliant general. The son of the dead king was installed on the Jaintia throne as a tributary chief of the Kochs with an annual tribute of 100 horses, 10,000 rupees, 1,000 gold coins and 100 swords. The Jaintia king was also forbidden to mint coins in his own name. Until 1731 no king of Jaintia put his name on coins. There were some other historical data available with regard to the war between the Ahom and Jaintia King.

The history of Jaintia Kingdom ends with the abdication of Bargohain II, since in the next reign of Chattrasimha (1770-81 A.D.) the Jaintias first came into conflict with the forces of the East India Company and the process of subjugation began. Chattrasimha was followed in quick succession by Jatra Narayan (1781-86 A.D.), Bijay Narayan (1786-89 A.D.) and Ramsimha II (1789-1832 A.D.). Ramsimha II was in turn succeeded by Rajendra Simha who was captured and imprisoned by the British in 1835. Since that date Jaintia kingdom became a British territory. His direct descendants were still known in the Jaintia and Khasi lands as late as 1938, as pensioners of the government, and the family of the Jaintia kings no doubt survives to this day (Shadap Sen, 1981; Gait, 1905).

The Jaintia kings, known as Rajas, were to some extent hinduized but still retained many of the features of the traditional Jaintia religion and customs.

When Jaintia Hills became a part of British territory, then it was divided into twenty doloiships, the doloi being an officer elected by the people for life. But the government reserved the right of approval or the reverse to the doloi's appointment. The dolois, under the rules for the administration of justice in Jaintia Hills possessed certain judicial powers. They were assisted by officials known as nators, basans and sangots in the performance of their duties (Gurdon,

1914: 79). This traditional political set-up continues even today. But after independence new political institutions were added as mentioned earlier.

#### LAND CLASSIFICATION AND OWNERSHIP

In Jaintia Hills lands are classified as follows:

- (1) Raj lands, the property of Rajah of Jaintiapur (now in Bangladesh), now the property of Government, which are assessed to land revenue.
- (2) Service lands, are lands given rent free to dolois: pators and other officers who carry on the administration.
- (3) Village puja lands, being lands of the occupants of which pay rent to the doloi or lyngdoh, which are set apart in each village for purposes of worship. These lands are not assessed to revenue.
- (4) Private lands held by the individuals, and which have been transferred from time to time by mortgage, sale at the will of the owner.

Uptil now the Government has not assessed revenue on highlands which are its own property. Surveys have been made from time to time of the Government Raj hali lands in Jaintia Hills, revenue on such lands is assessed at the uniform rate of 62 paise a bigha. But even this revenue was removed in 1981. People need not pay any land revenue. A list of service

lands of dolois and others are kept in Deputy Commissioner's office. Puja lands are plots of lands set apart entirely for the support of Lyngdoh and other persons who perform the puja. The occupants of the puja lands have to present annual sacrifice.

To understand the principle of Khasi land ownership we have to imagine a stage in the dim past. Some group of people roamed about the interior of the hills in search of suitable land for cultivation. At the beginning land was plentiful and population sparse. Leading families came and claimed and occupied lands, later distributed to the family members. In the course of time, they claim absolute right of ownership over the lands, which consequently formed "Ri Kynti". Important point to be kept in mind is that the land system of the states is that the state cannot demand a land tax from its subject.

There are two main categories of land, Ri-raid i.e. land for the community. Ri kynti i.e., land in absolute possession. The principle of private ownership of land developed very early and it is exceptional of that, even when the mode of cultivation is the shifting method, the idea of private ownership prevails. This is, however, not to say that the idea of communal land is totally absent or that it does not have a place in Khasi Social organization. It will only be

true to say that Communal Land known as 'Ri Raid', acquires importance not so much in relation to clan affiliation as to the village community.

#### OCCUPATION:

The common mode of subsistence is cultivation by simple implements. Both wet and slash-and-burn cultivation are popular. Some people raise kurve-stocks, manufacture furniture and other wooden articles of daily use, or have taken to petty trade. There are also quite a few civil servants, engineers, medical practitioners and lawyers, especially in the urban areas.

The percentage of workers to total population is 44.2. Out of the total of 5.87 lakh workers, cultivators constitute 63.6%. Agricultural labourers constitute only 9.33% of the total population in Meghalaya. The percentage of other workers was 25.38% in 1981.

The important crops grown in Meghalaya are paddy, maize, millet, potatoes and a variety of temperate and tropical fruits. Betel leaf, arecanut, and bay leaf are also grown.

#### TRADE AND TRANSPORT:

The main articles of trade are oranges, potatoes, coal, lime, timber etc., are sold to the plain areas in Assam and also sold across the international borders to Bangladesh.

In the olden days loads were carried by men and mules. Motorable roads were constructed very recently. At present, all important villages in the state are linked to Shillong and Jowai, the two important towns of the state, by motorable roads. With the help of jeeps, trucks and buses the villagers transport their goods to the weekly markets for better prices.



A COAL MINE AT BAPUNG



CARRYING COAL FROM THE MINE

HEAPS OF COAL AT ROADSIDE

MEASUREMENT BOX FOR COAL

## CHAPTER - III

### MINERAL AND FOREST RESOURCES IN MEGHALAYA

#### A. MINERAL RESOURCES

The use of minerals have been instrumental in the raising the standard of living of mankind. The names of minerals and their products have been used in various eras of civilization, such as the Bronze Age, the Iron Age and the Nuclear Age. The sophisticated world today is largely the result of the enlarged use of minerals. Some of these minerals are coal, petroleum, natural gas, lime stone, iron and other metals which are sources for manufacturing the automobiles, aeroplanes, ships and other means of modern communication which are derived from the use of minerals.

In the history of mining there was a great effort made by the British Government to locate the coal and lime stone in Khasi and Jaintia Hills. Since there was no sale, the Inglis Company stopped the mining. Another reason was that they were unable to locate a good deposit. Lack of proper communication was yet another hurdle. As a consequence they withdraw from the mining.

After Independence, India looked forward for progress and development. Different departments were set for the administration of this vast country, one of this department is the Geological Survey of India (G.S.I.). Its work is to

investigate the available mineral resources in the country. It is a privilege for the G.S.I. to confirm in their investigation that there are plenty mineral resources in Meghalaya. The following are some of the important mineral resources of Meghalaya.

### Coal

Coal occurs in the Garo Hills, Khasi Hills and Jaintia Hills. The total reserve of workable coal in Meghalaya is estimated at about 3,883 lakh tonnes.

There are three ways of mining coal:

- i) Open cast mining.
- ii) Long wall mining.
- iii) The Conventional cord and pillar mining.

The method adopted in mining coal in Meghalaya is the conventional cord and pillar method. Currently 98% of the coal in India is worked by this method only.

In Garo Hills, the hidden coal field contains at least 13 million tonnes spread over an area of 5.18 sq. kms. and has a reserve of about 10 lakh tonnes. It is mined near Derrengri in the Someswary valley. Nongwalbira coal-mine is one of the major coal-mines.

In Khasi Hills, coal is found at Cherrapunji and Laitryngew. It is also found near Mawsynram at Rangsoxham and Jathang.

In Jaintia Hills, coal is found in a number of places. It is found at Bapung, Raliang, Lakadong, Khonshnong, Sutnga and Mukuroi.

Meghalaya exported about 454.80 tonnes of coal to Bangladesh through Mineral and Metal Trading Corporation of India Limited upto the middle of September 1976.

### Lime Stone

Next to coal is lime stone. It is abundantly found in the State. It is found generally in the southern part of the State spread over a large area. The mineral is of flux grade which can be used in iron and steel industry.

In Garo Hills, it is found at Siju. In Khasi Hills at Cherrapunjee, Shella, Komarra and Laitryngew. In Jaintia Hills at Lumshnong, Mynkerra, Lakadong and Nongkhlieh. Lime stone is used in the manufacture of cement and other products.

### Sillimanite

It is a rare mineral having the qualities of natural refractory. Since it is fire resisting, it is used in high temperature blast furnace.

Meghalaya is the major producer of sillimanite in India, producing nearly 90% of the country's total output. Reserves of this mineral are estimated at about 5 lakh tonnes. It is mined at Sonapahar in the West Khasi Hills district.

### Kaolin (China clay)

This is used in the production of potteries, earthenwares, tiles, insulators and sanitary wares in ceramic industry. It is also used in paper textile and rubber industries in powdered form. Deposits of this mineral are found at Mawphlang and Laitlyngkot in Khasi Hills. In Jaintia Hills it is found at Thadlaskein. In Garo Hills it is found at Sarrengri.

### Corrundum

This is the second hardest mineral after diamond. It is crystallized mineral, used when ground as polishing powder. Its deposit occurs in the form of massive sillimanite corrundum. Hence it is found at Sonapahar, West Khasi Hills District.

### Fire Clay

Fire clay is poor in lime and iron. It is suitable for making refractory pottery and firebricks. In Meghalaya it occurs around Jowai in Jaintia Hills District. Lithomargic clay is used in cement, refractories and ceramic products.

### Mica and Felspar

Felspar is the most important rock forming mineral. It is found in workable deposits near Tura at Nengkhra in Garo Hills.

### Glass Sand

This mineral occurs in the Laitryngew coalfields in Khasi Hills. This mineral is suitable for glass manufacture as it contains sand quartz.

### Gypsum

It is found at Mahendraganj in Garo Hills.

From the above mentioned minerals available in Meghalaya, coal, sillimanite and limestone are the only minerals which are commercially exploited. The other minerals have not even mined. The G.S.I. and Mines and Mineral Resources Department of Meghalaya are investigating more minerals which are available in the State but left unknown.

Meghalaya is rich in minerals. The history shows clearly that the British traders and Bengalees were interested to get minerals from these hills. The existence of coal in the Khasi Hills appears to have been first brought to notice in 1815 when Mr. Stark reported that he had found some beds in the lower hills of Sylhet, from which he forwarded specimens to Government. This coal was examined at the Gun Foundry at Cassipore at the Mint and Co. and being favourably reported on. Mr. Stark offered to supply any required quantity to the Government at one rupee eight annas per maund. This offer was declined, and he appears to have obtained permission to bring to Calcutta any quantity during five years, free of charge. Not finding sale however, for the first cargoes he brought down, he abandoned the mines.

Mr. Jones in a paper on the mineral production of Bengal, describes the limestone and coal at Sylhet but does not appear to have known of the coal at Cherrpunjee.

Since there was no sale, it appears that much further was done, towards exploring these hills for coal, from this time until Mr. Cracroft in 1832 brought to public notice the existence of beds of coal close to the station of Cherra Punjee. This discovery was followed up by the finding of other beds of coal in various places.

In September 1844, the Government reserved the right in the coal-mines at Cherra at a stipulated royalty of one rupee for every 100 maunds, excavated by the Government, reserving at the same time the right of all subjects of Cherra Raja to mine on their own account, which the Government are not to prevent was transferred on the same terms to Mr. Engledene then the Agent in Calcutta for the Peninsular and Oriental Company, the mines to be worked by him, either on the part of that company or on his own account.

It appears that from that time, the quantity of coal extracted from those mines annually diminished considerably. In 1846, Major Lister reported that "the mines subsequently to this transfer had not been worked with spirit which was expected from the correspondence prior to their being granted

and that only about one half the quantity which was formerly sent down from the Agency had been sent down during that season on the part of Mr. Engendene's Agents."

There was no such restriction affecting the mines at Lakadong, which were the property of the Government, the whole of Jaintia Hills in which they are situated, having passed into the hands of the Indian Government, together with the rights to mines, previously held by the Jaintia Raja who resigned and gave his claims on mines to them (British) in 1835 (Thomas Oldham, 1863; Reprinted in 1984). The report on the Administration of Jowai for the year ending on 31st March 1878 (pages 17-18) refers to mining in Jaintia Hills.

Some of the extracts from the Report are given below:

"Lime Stone is found in abundance in these hills, in fact its supply may be said to be literally inexhaustible, and is of excellent quality. The localities where it is found are:

- |                 |                    |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| 1. Chun Chora   | 5. Nongthlang      |
| 2. Lama Pushi   | 6. Rupnath         |
| 3. Lithang      | 7. Rowai           |
| 4. Mynrei Punji | 8. Umthma Cherra." |

The spelling of the above names are not familiar today. These names were spelt out by the Britishers. Some of these names may not even be known today.

The following statement from the same Report shows that lime stone was quarried at six of the above mentioned places and brought in a revenue of Rs. 26,063/- to the Government.

Table 1: List of Lime Quarries in Jaintia Hills

Name of Quarry	To whom leased	Annual rent (in Rupees)	Term of lease	Date of termination of lease	Remarks
1. Chun Chora Zosing Chera Rowai Chera	Messrs Inglis & Co.	14,570.00	2½ Yrs	31st March 1878	Extended to 30th September 1878.
2. Nongtha- lang	Ditto	1,016.00	2½ Yrs	Ditto	Ditto
3. Umrail Punji	Ditto	206.00	2½ Yrs	Ditto	Ditto
4. Rupnath	Ditto	1,516.00	2½ Yrs	Ditto	Ditto
5. Lama Pushi	Ditto	815.00	2½ Yrs	Ditto	Ditto
6. Umthma Chera	Ditto	8,000.00	2½ Yrs	Ditto	Ditto
Total		26,063.00			

Regarding coal it is said that: "Coal is found in connection with lime-stone formation. As a rule, the carboniferous strata is not extensive, and it is, for the most part in localities more or less inaccessible. Consequently, the development of the resources was in a backward state."

Coal has been discovered at the following places:

1. Amwih at an altitude of about 3,800 feet.
2. Lakadong " " " 2,200 "
3. Narpuh " " " 500 "
4. Sutnga " " " 3,500 "
5. Shermang " " " 4,000 "

According to the Report, the most extensive of the coal beds are situated at Lakadong; the area of these coalfields is computed to extend 0.394 of a square mile, and the estimated yield of the mineral is calculated to be 1,100,000 tons. The coal is in quality equal to some English coals. It is quick in its action, gives out a large quantity of smoke, it is fragile and easily broken, from the absence of that definite structure which produces the planes of division known to the English miners 'as backs or joints' it breaks into unsymmetrical pieces and consequently does not store well. From its composition, quick combustion, and its irregular cleavage, it is estimated to be from 5 to 7 percent inferior to good English coal. But as a gas producing coal, it is considered superior to English produce, both as regards quality and purity of its gas.

No revenue was derived by the British Government from any of the coal beds mentioned above. During the year 1877-78, 5,000 mounds of coal were quarried by the Executive Engineer of Sylhet for Government purposes and a small quantity was

obtained from America by European residents of Jowai for private consumption (Trotter: 1901). A general examination of the coal tracts in Khasi and Garo Hills was ordered by the Government of India under the supervision of Mr. Medlicott. All necessary arrangements were made by the Government for facilitating the enquiry, which however did not tend to confirm the expectations formed of the richness of the coal fields. In the more conveniently situated localities where coal had been reported to exist, nothing but thin strings of the poorest quality were found. This could not even repay the working. The better quality was found in a difficult area to assess, because the road construction was very costly, which was 50 miles distant from the Brahmaputra river. The coal was in no large quantity and was within a few feet of crystalline rocks, gneiss and granites which shut out the prospect of discovering fresh seams beneath those which were visible.

The examination of Mr. Medlicott was confined to the base of the Garo Hills. Before the results of it were ascertained an application was received from Mr. Franklin Prestage, Agent to the Eastern Bengal Railway proposing the formation of a company for exploring all the coal fields in the Garo Hills, Khasi and Jaintia Hills and for working them after purchasing the good will of Messrs Inglis and Co. Mr. Prestage asked for the following concession in furtherance of the scheme,

viz., (1) that the Government should assist the Company in coming to terms with the Hill chiefs to obtain the right to quarrying coal and other minerals from the mines, (2) that the Company should have the right to take up the Lakadong Coalfield or any tracts already in the possession of Government, on the terms on which mining grants are made in Upper Assam, (3) that the company should have the excessive right of working the mines for ten years, and (4) that within those ten years the Company should have the privilege of having all leases and now held by Messrs Inglis and Co. renewed in their favour upto the termination of their monopoly.

In reply to this application it was explained that, as it was no longer expedient to extend the protection of a monopoly to different branches of trade carried on by Messrs Inglis and Co. but rather to give play to free trade and competition, the government will not either by granting the renewal of the time expired leases of the right of working minerals or by any other means, give encouragement to the intention of securing the property and business of Messrs Inglis and Co. as a whole for the proposed company, but apart from this, it would view with satisfaction and give every encouragement to any arrangements in the Company might make with Messrs Inglis and Co. and Khasi, with the express object of working coal only. On this understanding the Government, it was said, would willingly

aid the proposed Company in making explorations and in coming to terms with the various Hill Chiefs in order to obtain the right to work in the coal area. It would also grant the concession demanded by the second requisition and likewise that required by the third, with this reservation that the decision as to the claim of the Company to keep out other parties will rest with the Government in each case.

Since the close of the year a further communication was received from Mr. Prestage intimating the intention of the Company proposed by him to commence operations in the direction of Lakadong and asking for permission to take up land between Lakadong and Barr Ghat on the bank of Hurru river for the purpose of making roads. This was sanctioned, subject to the approval of the local authorities. As the explorations of Mr. Medlicott proved and there was little hope of finding coal in Garo Hills, the operations of the proposed Company confined to Lakadong. (Annual report on the Administration of Bengal Presidency for 1867-68, Calcutta, 1868).

Coal was important, but the difficulty and the expense of carriage prevented its being of much commercial importance as it could not compete in price with Burdwan Coal in Calcutta. Consequently, the exploitation was limited to stations in the vicinity. The only mines of importance were those of Cherra and Lakadong. The first was almost worked out, of the latter

a special report was prepared to the Government by Prof. Oldham, Superintendent of Geological Survey. Coal was found in the southern side of the hills but generally near or on the summit. It was carried to the banks of streams at the bottom of the hills in baskets by coolies. (Mill, Esq., 1901).

#### Mining of Coal in Bapung Area:

An investigation conducted by Geological Survey of India (G. S. I.) estimated the quantity of coal deposit available in the Bapung area. G. S. I. had a very successful survey in Bapung and its neighbouring villages. Some of the important findings of the survey are given below (Government of Meghalaya, 1973: 11-13).

At Bapung, coal occurs in the Therria Stone Stage of Palaeocene age and is exposed on both sides of the Jowai Badarpur road. Bapung is situated at a distance of 24 Kms. from Jowai town along Jowai-Badarpur road. Two seams of coal are encountered in the area. The main seam (lower) ranges from 0.3 metre to 0.9 metre in thickness and occupies an area of 7.2 sq. Kms and the average thickness of the seam is thin, the thickness is only 0.30 metre. From preliminary investigation carried out in 1962, the probable reserve of coal is estimated to be 7 million tonnes over an area of 7.2 sq. kms. In 1963, drilling was done in two selected blocks near Bapung village and 14 boreholes were sited over an area of 0.31 sq. kms.

The thickness of the seam encountered in the various boreholes ranges from 0.31 metre to 0.91 metre, average being 0.40 metre. The measured reserve of coal proved by drilling in two blocks is estimated at 1,18,000 tonnes over an area of 0.31 sq. km.

In 1971-72, investigation of coal was done in the adjoining areas around Bapung and Pamra village. The coal seam encountered in the area ranges from 0.30 to 1.20 metre in thickness and the average thickness is taken to be 0.50 metre. The coal bearing area is 11.73 sq. kms. which include the area mentioned above. The probable reserve of coal is estimated at 7.6 million tonnes, considering 25 percent as working loss, the total reserve of coal comes to 5.7 million tonnes. The coal is good having low ash and low moisture content, the sulphur is high and varies from about 4 percent to 7 percent. A rough analysis of coal is given below.

Average of four samples of coal around Bapung:

Moisture	....	26 percent	to	31 percent
Ash	....	2.6 "	to	7.87 "
Volatile matter	....	41.8 "	to	44.3 "
Fixed Carbon	....	46.9 "	to	50.0 "
Calorific value	....	7,015	to	7,490 Cal/Kg.
Sulphur	....	4.7 per cent	to	7.1 percent

Character of coal - Bright to dull coal

Lakadong Area:

The area can be approached by a fair weather road from Khliehriat which is situated 32 kms. from Jowai along Jowai-Badarpur road. The area is divided into two coalfields, these are as follows:

(1) Umlatdoh Coalfield

Preliminary investigation has shown that a coal seam, about 0.3 metre to 2.13 metres in the thickness extends over an area of 1.04 sq. kms. The coal seam is not uniformly thick and continuous and thins out within a short length. Over burden is hard quartzitic sandstone which varies from 4 metres to 8 metres in thickness.

The general strike of the coal seam is north  $60^{\circ}$  East and south with a southerly dip ranging from  $5^{\circ}$  to  $10^{\circ}$ . The coal is of hard lump variety with carbonaceous shale ranging from 0.25 to 1.00 metre in thickness. The analysis of the coal shows the following results:

Fixed Carbon	...	44.76 percent	to	59.86 percent
Volatile matter	...	29.68	"	to 38.50 "
Ash	...	2.25	"	to 24.70 "
Moisture	...	0.44	"	to 0.86 "
Sulphur	...	3.40	"	to 4.96 "
Calorific value	...	B, Th u/cb 10,250 to 13,500		

Taking into consideration the average thickness of the coal seam to be 0.50 metre the possible reserve of coal over an area of 1.05 sq. kms. is of the order of 470,000 tonnes.

(ii) Pamsaru Coalfield

In the investigation in an area of 0.31 to 1.15 metre thick, coal seam is exposed in the southern part of the Pamsaru Plateau about 1.62 kms. to the North-east of Umlatdoh village, associated with Lakadong sandstone over an area of 0.50 sq. kms. approximately. A seam of 1.10 metre thick has been traced over a strike length of 300 metres on the southwestern of the plateau, close to the Umlatdoh-Pamsaru foot track.

In addition to the above, there is a large area, covering nearly 2.00 sq. km. in the rather inaccessible northern part of the plateau, where coal seam ranging from 1.50 metres to 3.50 metres in thickness is exposed in a few scrap faces. The maximum thickness of the coal seam encountered in the area is 3.50 metres thick exposed a long cliff face in the cut off central portion of the plateau. It however thins down within a short distance when traced along the periphery of the plateau.

(iii) Sutnga

In Sutnga area, there are two coal seams, the top one being only 10-20 cm thick and the bottom seam varies in thickness from .30 to .60 metre and the vertical interval between the two seams is 3-5 metres.

The coal of the Sutnga area shows the following results:

<u>Moisture</u> %	<u>Ash</u> %	<u>Volatile</u> %	<u>Fixed</u> <u>Carbon</u> %	<u>Character</u> <u>of coal</u>	<u>Colour of</u> <u>coal</u>
1.3	6.3	42.8	49.6	Bright coal	Light brown
2.3	2.2	42.4	53.2	"	"
7.0	9.7	32.9	51.4	"	"

In Sutnga area, the total reserve of coal is 0.65 million tonnes over an area of 160,579 sq.m. taking the average thickness of the bottom seam as 0.45 metres.

#### B. FOREST RESOURCES

The word 'forest' conveys the idea of a vast collection of trees, but a 'forest' really may include tracts completely bare of trees and the foresters have very often to manage such tracts.

Whether the forests are owned by the State or the ownership lies with a private party, the forests are maintained for two purposes. The object of maintenance will be either:

1. for climatic or protective purpose or physical effect sometimes referred to as indirect objectives,
2. for productive purposes or with economic objectives sometimes referred to as direct objectives.

The forest maintained for physical effects are:

- a) protection of mountain slopes and catchment areas,
- b) protection against wind,
- c) protection against erosion and ravine formation,
- d) their (trees) aesthetic value and recreation,
- e) pastures or as road side avenue,
- f) wild life.

In all these, the form of management must be such as to conserve moisture, preserve climatic factors, prevent erosion etc. so the main concept of the forest in recent years, assumed great importance not so much from the aesthetic value but from the point of view of their role as primary agents against erosion.

Protective forest protects the soil, prevents it from being washed away and it prevents ravine formation. It definitely conserves moisture if it happens to be on mountain slope, it protects the slope from denudation. Its function as protective agent for the catchment areas for small village tanks and huge reservoirs for irrigation is also important.

Forests have value from the aesthetic point of view also. Cattle are grazed and so they perform the function of pasture land and if they happen to have important roads passing through them, they perform the function of road side

avenue. In the same way, a protective forest may and usually is a productive forest also. There is no forest maintained, primarily for the protection of the soil or against ravine formation or as roadside avenue or to provide timber or firewood. So from the forest we may have:

- a) Major produce
- b) Minor produce.

The major produce of forests are timber and firewood. By minor produce consists of a variety of produce differing in different localities. Some of these are bamboo, cane and grasses. The forests maintained for the productive purposes specially, those maintained for the production of timber and firewood are by far the most important.

Forests are variously classified for different purposes. Legal Forests are Reserved, Protected or unclassified Reserved Forests are areas so constituted under the Indian Forest Act. Protected forest is a legal term for an area subject to limited degree of protection. All other forests of the country are referred to as unclassified. (Man and Forest, 1980: 4). The authority concerned therefore can enforce some rules and regulations to protect the forest from the unnecessary destruction. At the present the Government makes a great effort to protect the forests.

### Forest Policy

The first national forest policy was enunciated in 1894 which accepted administration of the State forests in the public interest as the sole object. The idea of regulation of rights and restriction of privileges of the user in the forest by the neighbouring population was introduced as a measure for preservation of forests. Forests were still plentiful and the pressure of population was not large. Therefore, subject to the preservation of natural forests on the hill slopes and commercially valuable timber, the policy envisaged even clearing of forests for cultivation wherever such a need arose with the growth of population (Government of India, 1981: 39).

The rapid increase of population and the effect of war in the country gave a new look for the forest-resource-base for the industrial system. The national leadership decided to make a determined effort for fast economic development. The forest policy therefore was revised in 1952. The new policy accepted as its primary goal the need for evolving the system of balance and complementary land use under which a type of land is allotted to that form of use in which it would produce most and deteriorate the least.

The policy also took note of the needs for checking of denudation, establishing free lands, providing facilities for

industrial use and maximum revenue consistent with its primary goal. The tribal communities were granted certain concessions under this policy including collection of minor forest produce, grazing of cattle etc.

Another important element in the context of overall forest resource in the country was the abolition of princely states and Jagirs and Zamindars. The forests were the personal property of the chieftains. Forests became the main source of revenue, so they were carefully protected and guarded. Many states promoted forestry on a substantial scale. The taking over of these forests by the State resulted in a period of uncertainty which caused substantial damage to the forest. It took considerable effort before the new area was put under systematic administration and control covered by the general state policy on forests.

The fast growth of population in tribal areas, the availability of rich resource base for new developmental activities resulted in considerable in migration. The demand for timbers, fuelwood and other commercial uses of forests continued to rise rapidly. Further, the forests provide a good source of augmenting state income. Two commissions made a study on tribal economy viz. Scheduled Tribe Commission (Dhebar Commission) and National Commission on agriculture.

The Dhebar Commission observed that the full control of tribal communities over forest resources as some rights was made by the 1894 Forest Policy. These rights were merely accepted as concession for 1952 policies which did not mean in concrete term. They urged a basic change in the forest policy so that the tribal communities can regain the control of this resource base. On the other hand, the National Commission on Agriculture accepted inter-relationship of forest economy with rural and tribal economy and urged for better rationality in the forestry operations and their utilization. The two cannot work in isolation and the inter-relationship between them had to be considered in terms of employment, rights of user and involvement of the local people. Employment itself could be as an alternative to the right of the user, if the forests had to be properly organised. The forestry base itself needed strengthened by larger investments and use of new technology so that it could yield a greater surplus to be shared locally, regionally and nationally.

#### Forest and Tribal Economy:

Forests are intimately connected with the life of tribals and play a vital role in their economy. The relationship has been recognized but has not been defined and interpreted in terms of clear cut policies and programmes. This has caused adverse ecological balance. In some cases forests have suffered a great loss; while in others tribal economy has been badly

affected. There is an urgent need to review the relationship of forests to life, culture and economy of the people in Jaintia Hills or any tribal areas.

The history of tribals can be narrated in terms of changing relationship with the nature and forest. Early man acquired greater skills in food gathering and hunting, with increased power of exploitation of natural resources. Shifting cultivation had been practised. Trees had been felled according to the need of man.

History indicated that, much more of India was once covered by forest, but was not a unidirectional process. Possibly people practised slash-and-burn cultivation and indirectly assisted the expansion of agriculturists, practising intensive cultivation.

With the pressure of population and agricultural technology, forest receded into the background. With the development of communications, it became feasible for the settled and migrant non-tribal communities to specialise in agricultural production and satisfy all their needs, initially through barter and subsequently through money. The tribals once occupied a large part of territory but pushed into interior of the hills and forests. Thus, for centuries together, there developed a very intimate relation between tribal and forests. This

dependence on forest continued for a very long time, they adopted agricultural practices of cultivating the field. In the early stages of human development, the local communities owned the land as well as the forest resources.

Forest has been essential throughout history for the survival of tribal communities. During the pre-Independence, the free use of forest and the liberty enjoyed by the tribal was curtailed through the imposition of restriction by British administration. During the post-Independence period, the policy of assessment of the forest resources in terms of modern economics had greatest blow on traditional tribal forest economy based on forest goods and service relations. This resulted the forestry development into the resources developing and revenue earning activity. Initially, rights of tribals in forest were not challenged and tribals never felt bothered about these states of activities. While the State may begin to assess its right, but the tribal still believes that the forest belongs to him. Some conflicting situation arises, when the State asserts its right, through formal legal concessions in some cases, with further change of forest policies.

#### Forest Resources in Meghalaya:

From the climatic condition and the rainfall the State receives, it indicates clearly that Meghalaya is rich in forest resources. Due to variation in the nature of the land, topography and diverse climatic condition, a variety of forests

are found in the State. It is a fact that as per National Forest Policy, 50% of the hill districts should be covered with forests and Meghalaya has only 38% of its geographical area under forest utilization, yet the economy based on the forest is by no means meagre.

Table 2: Area under Forests in Meghalaya (1975-76 to 1977-78)

Class of Forest	1975-76	1976-77	1977-78 (in 1000 hectares)
Reserved	*	*	71.00
Protected	*	*	1.17(+)
Unclassed			778.83
		Total	851.00

Source: Chief Conservator of Forest, Meghalaya

\*The areas under reserved and protected forests have been the same as that of 1977-78.

\*Excluding protected forests under District Council.

Table 3: Out-turn of Major Forest Products in Meghalaya (1973-74 - 1974-75)

Product	1973-74	1974-75
<u>Timber</u>		
Out-turn (Cubic metre)	3,097.7	6,606.1
Value (Rs. '000)	423.1	730.5
<u>Firewood</u>		
Out-turn (Cubic metre)	489.0	523.6
Value (Rs. '000)	6.6	7.2

Table 4: Forest Area

Type of Forest	Area
Forest Area	8,510 Sq. Km.
Reserved Forest	700 Sq. Km.
Sal Forest	119 Sq. Km.
Evergreen Trees	565 Sq. Km.
Pine Trees	18 Sq. Km.

Source: Basic Statistics on Forest (1981), Government of Meghalaya.

The Reserved Forests are under the control of the State Government, but a great portion of the forest is under the control of the District Council.

The following are some of the names of trees which are available in the State of Meghalaya which yield valuable timber:

Sal, teak, titachamp, hollock, boca, gogra, chaplash, sirch, toon, pine, chilawni, walnut, and mahogani. In Khasi and Jaintia Hills in the higher altitudes of about 1000 metres, pine trees are found, and in Garo Hills in lower altitude rich sal forest is found. There is dense forest of canes and bamboo in Garo Hills, northern Khasi Hills and eastern part of Jaintia Hills.

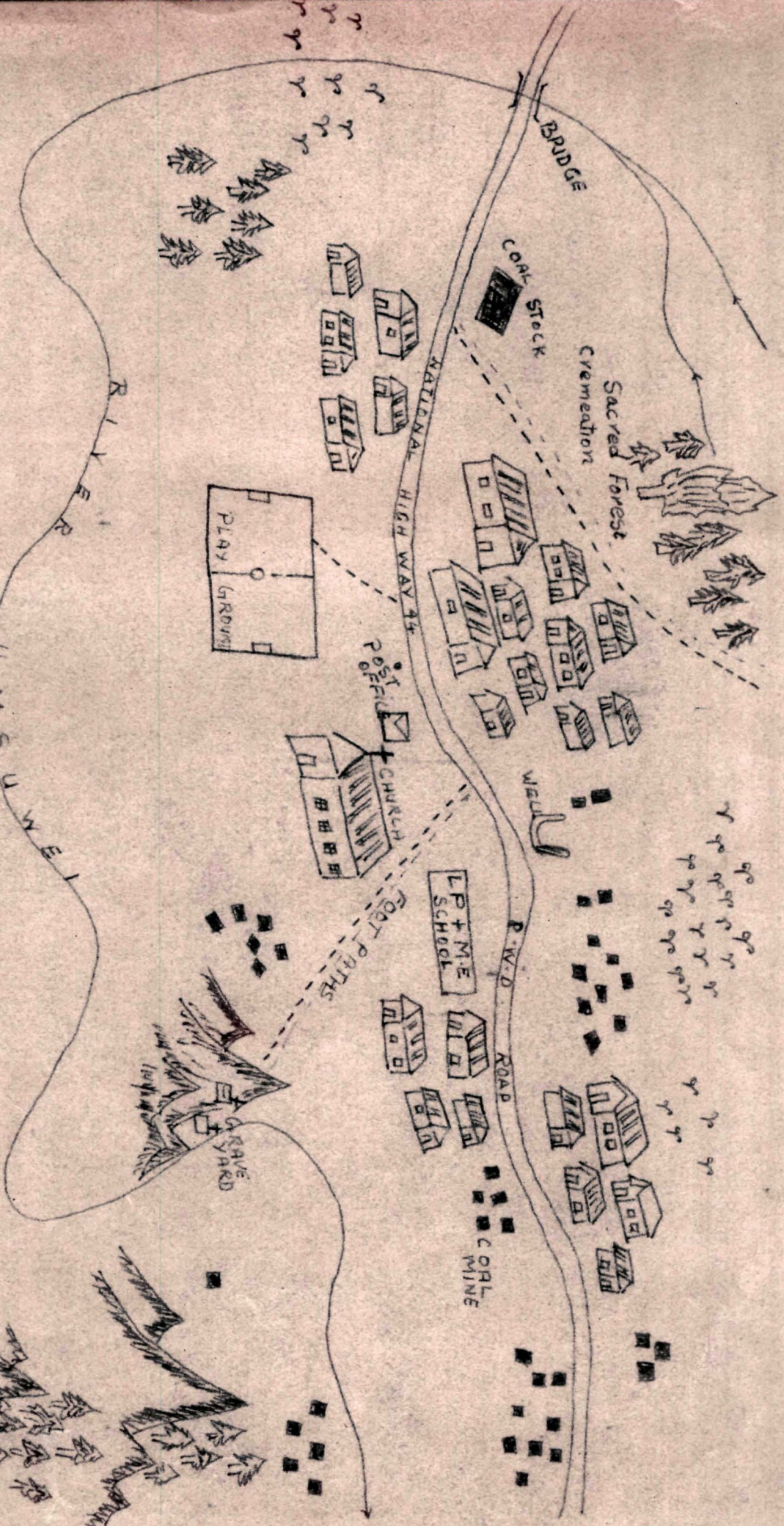
Timber is the most important product of the State. Proper processing of the timber will reduce the unnecessary manufacture of wood. Railway sleepers, wooden utility goods, sports goods, and particle boards are important products of forest.

Canes and bamboo are found in Garo Hills, Khasi Hills and Jaintia Hills. Bamboo is one of the most important material in the tribal way of life. The thatched houses are made out of bamboo; fencing and other handicrafts are made out of bamboo. The young shoots of bamboo are eaten. We find it in the market as vegetable.

Another important product of the forest is the charcoal. Charcoal is an important commodity. It is used as fuel. Most people of Shillong, the capital of Meghalaya, use it for domestic purposes. In winter, more charcoal is consumed in hearths and fire places. A large quantity of charcoal is needed daily. Hence the production of charcoal as a consumer commodity has assumed special significance.

---

# BAPUNGG VILLAGE (1985)

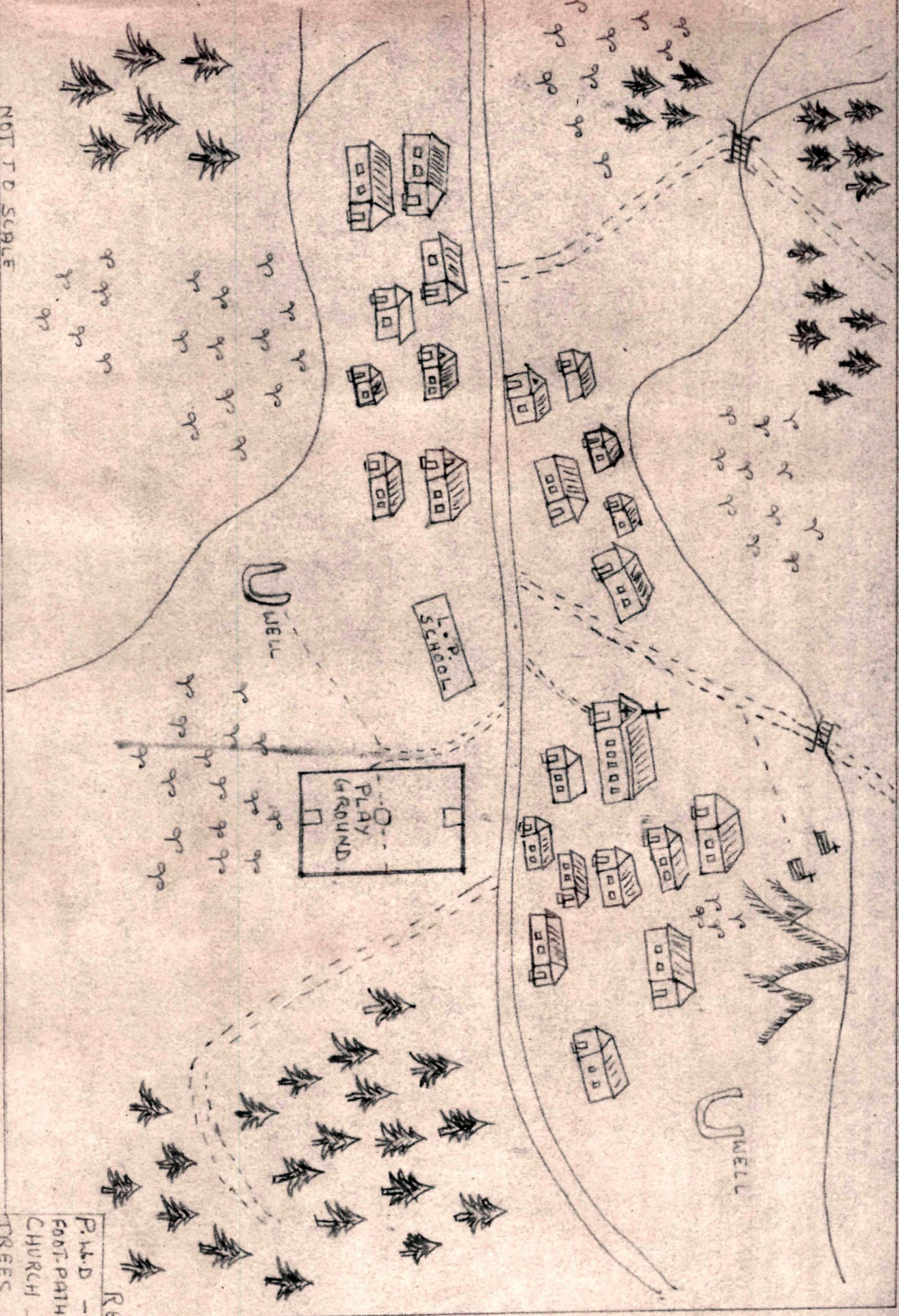


NOT TO SCALE  
 IRRIGATED  
 PADDY FIELDS

## REFERENCES

- P.M.D. ROAD
- FOOT-PATH
- STREAM
- COAL MINES
- CHURCH
- PADDY FIELDS
- GRAVE YARD

BYNDI-HATI VILLAGE (1985)

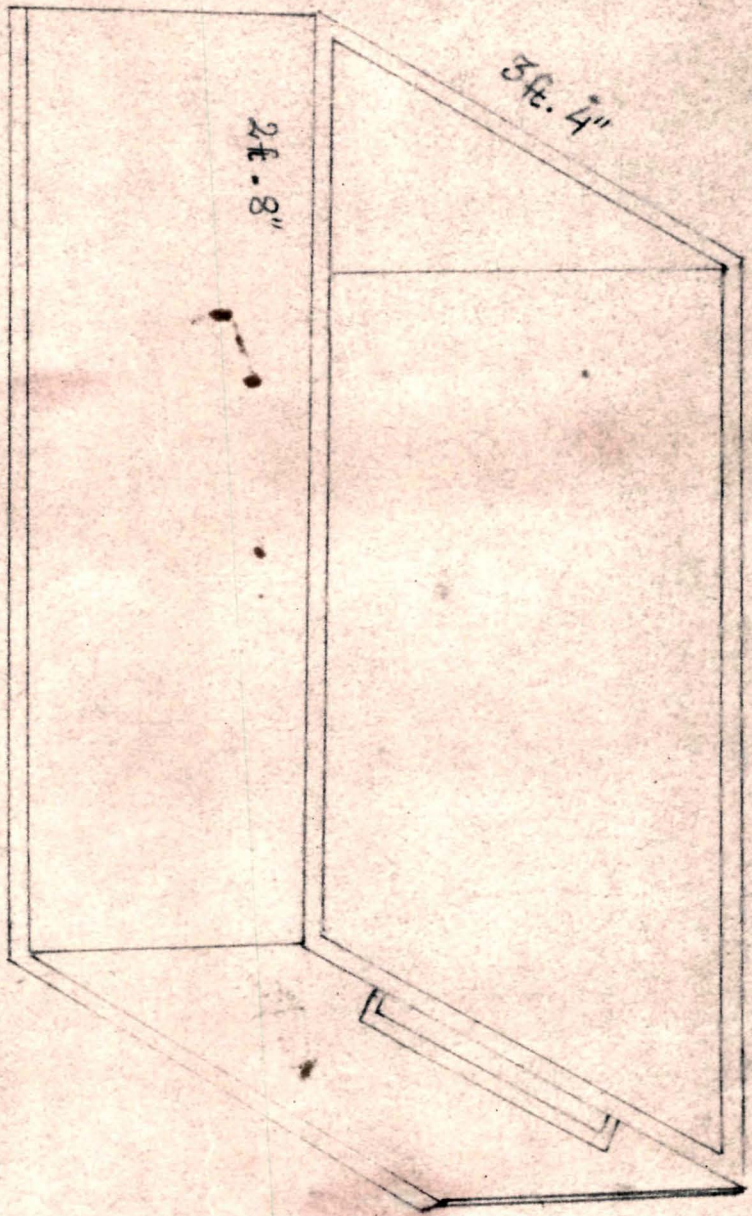


NOT TO SCALE

REFERENCES

P.W.D.	-	
FOOT-PATH	-	
CHURCH	-	
TREES	-	
STREAMS	-	
PADDY	-	
FIELDS	-	

BOX MEASUREMENT



6ft. 8"

2ft. 8"

3ft. 4"



A MANAGER OF COAL MINES IN CONVERSATION WITH LABOURERS.



A TENT HOUSE NEAR BAPUNG

A BIHARI WOMAN LABOURER AT A CAMP.

A COAL MINE OWNER'S HOUSE

FIREWOOD COLLECTION AT BAPUNGA

## CHAPTER - IV

### BAPUNG AND BYNDIHATI: TWO JAINTIA VILLAGES

#### A. BAPUNG

##### Introduction

Bapung is situated at a distance of 24 Kms from Jowai on the sides of National Highway No. 44 (Jowai-Badarpur). The houses are scattered on both sides of the road. It is a nucleated village because all the houses are spread in an area of about two square kilometres. The settlement is divided into two, viz., Pohskur and Pohsiej. The division is largely on the basis of religion. Majority of the residents in Pohskur are Christians. People following their traditional religion (Niamtre) live in Pohsiej. The people of Bapung are also called Tuber. It is an old village, probably more than 100 years old.

It is interesting to note the etymology of the word Bapung. People told me that the real name of the village is Wapung. Etymologically, 'Wa' means continuous and 'pung' means pouring. So, the name refers to continuous pouring of rain. In Jaintia language we often use the phrases/sentences like (a) da pung u slap (raining continuously) and wapung u sla te shlai ka um (because of the continuous rain the rivers and streams overflow). Even today the local people refer to the village as Wapung. The name is entered as Bapung in government records since the days of British. I feel that it was done

by the Bengali clerks working in government office as in Bengali language wa is generally written and pronounced as ba.

The people are called Tuber because in the olden days there was a small village called Tuber Kmai shnong which later became a part of Bapung and lost its identity as an independent village.

Administratively, Bapung falls under Jowai Elaka and Khliehriat sub-division. Elaka is a region comprising of a number of villages under the traditional socio-political system which has legal sanction under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. Dolloi is the head of the Elaka. There are two parallel administrations in Meghalaya. The people have to approach officials in both traditional and modern systems for social, economic, religions, legal and political activities.

The landscape of Bapung area is hilly. The hills are covered with denuded forest and grass. The denudation of the land has been largely due to cutting of trees for timber and fuel. Most of the hills are barren. Mining in Bapung has affected the landscape to some extent. It is found that after mining the land sinks down. Many landslides are also reported in the mining area during the last ten years. So, there is some danger to the people as well as to the cattle. Several cases of physical injuries are reported these days.

The climatic condition of the district has been already described. The monsoon rain creates inconvenience to the daily wage earners. In general there is a great handicap to all the work, especially agriculture and mining.

Bapung is well connected to the State capital as well as to the plains of Assam. There are two routes to Assam on the National Highway. Gauhati and Badarpur in Assam are the nearest railway stations. Since most of the transactions take place in Gauhati, people move more frequently to Shillong and Gauhati. Gauhati is located at a distance of about 190 Kms.

According to my counting in June 1985, there are 208 households. The population of the village is 1252 (649 males and 563 females). I visited all the houses and collected information on name, age and sex of family members but could not collect detailed information from all the houses. I could get good amount of information from about 25% of the houses.

According to the 1961 Census the population was 421. In 1971, it rose to 736 and in 1981 it became 946. The age and sex-wise distribution of the population is given in Table No. 1.

Table 1: Population: Age and sex-wise

Age group	Population		Total
	Male	Female	
0 - 4	86	74	160
5 - 9	112	82	194
10 - 14	78	68	146
15 - 19	52	38	90
20 - 24	62	45	107
25 - 29	60	40	100
30 - 34	40	48	88
35 - 39	52	46	98
40 - 44	20	26	46
45 - 49	32	28	60
50 - 54	21	25	46
55 - 59	16	28	44
60 - 64	4	8	12
65 - 69	3	4	7
70 - 86	1	3	4
TOTAL	649	563	1252

Migrant Population

Migrant population is a population which comes from other places and lives temporarily or permanently in another place. These people move from their own village and live in another village. Such population comes to live in another village with a purpose, usually it is to earn livelihood. In this case the population which comes from outside to live in

Bapung is because of coalmining. We find that most of these people are Nepalees, Biharis, Assamese, Bengalees, Garos, Kacharis, Nagas and Mizos. There are also many Khasis and Pnars who come to work in coal mining during the off-season.

Since the population is an influx population the people come and go, and there is no specific place where they settle. These people move from place to place to work in coal-mines. Thus it is very difficult to take into account the population and to identify these people. The techniques are applied for collection of information on migrant people. Observation and interviews on the weekly market day at Lad Rymbai, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., for one month. There are four weekly market days called Iaw Pyngkat in a month. On this particular day the people who come for marketing are more because no work is done on this day.

Table 2: Migrant labourers at Lad Rymbai Weekly Market  
(an average of four markets)

S. No.	Ethnic Group	No. of people who attended the market
1.	Khasis/Pnars	715
2.	Nepalese	620
3.	Biharis	305
4.	Bengalese	240
5.	Garos	230
6.	Kacharis	175
7.	Assamese	130
8.	Nagas	60
9.	Mizos	40
10.	Others (unidentified)	55
Total		2570

### Village Economy:

The economy of Bapung village can be classified into two viz. agriculture, coal-mining. Economy is the backbone for any development in a society.

### Agriculture:

Ten years ago the economy of Bapung was agrarian. Paddy cultivation was the main activity. Today, it has declined very much from the past years. Only a few are taking agriculture as a main activity. The agriculture is based mostly on traditional technology, human labour and bullocks. The terrain is hilly and therefore the fertility of the land varies sharply on account of the nature of the slope and soil cover. The source of water is mainly monsoon but some irrigation becomes possible by diverting water from natural streams. The main crops are paddy and maize.

Paddy cultivation is the mainstay of the people. Most of the cultivators are owners, tenant, farmers or wage earners. Most of households are self-employed. But now the trend of agriculture has changed. Most of the owners call outside labourers for agricultural work. The agricultural implements used are as follows:

- i) a large hoe (mohkhiew heb)
- ii) an axe for felling trees (u sdie)
- iii) a large dao for felling trees (wait lynggun)

- iv) small dao (wait prat)
- v) sickle (rashi)
- vi) plough (lyngkor)
- vii) a harrow (ioh moi)

In dealing with agriculture the land may be divided into the following classes:

- a) forest land
- b) wet paddy land called (hali or pynthor)
- c) high grass land (ri lum, ri phlang)
- d) homestead land (dew kper)

Forest lands are cleared by the process known as slash-and-burn (jhum). The trees are felled early in winter and allowed to dry till January or February when fire is applied, logs of wood being placed at intervals of few feet to prevent the ashes being blown away by the wind. No manure is applied. There is no permanent irrigation. The seeds are sown directly when the first rain falls. Wet cultivation is adopted on those plots where irrigation is made possible by cutting water channels down the slope from the hill streams. The most typical practice of agriculture in Bapung is that of ploughing and sowing without much interval. One paddy crop per annum is harvested.

All operations whether agricultural or non-agricultural are primarily based on labour intensive techniques and are

basically organized on the basis of self-employed household economy. In households which do not own enough lands it is necessary to keep them sufficiently employed. Thus, the demand for wage employment emerges. Some predominantly wage employed households may have a small sized farm which they may farm themselves so the labourers and small cultivators are mutually interchangeable. Self-employed household is a form of traditional productive organization in which the household operates as a unit having command over certain resources which include land, labour organizational activities and a little capital, in which the members of the family play complementary roles and function as one operational unit for the achievement of the economic goals of the family.

I found during my stay in the village that agriculture is dying slowly. Most of the paddy fields are left fallow. People are involving more in coal mining. As a consequence no local labourers are available, for those who still want to have agriculture alive. They collect labourers from outside the villages. Some families bring labourers from distant villages. Trucks are being used to bring them in the morning and they are taken back to their respective villages in the evening. So, there is an additional expenditure of transport for the labourers.

Commercial exploitation of coal:

Today, Bapung is a well known village in Meghalaya because of coal production. Conversion of Shillong-Jowai-Badarpur road into a National Highway in 1978, is largely responsible for stimulating this new activity. The road was very narrow before and transportation of goods by trucks involved a lot of risk. The road was widened and metalled properly since it became a National Highway. It does not mean that mining was started all of a sudden in 1978. The magnitude of coal mining was very less before 1978. Old Shaktiman trucks auctioned by the Armed Forces were largely used before 1978. These days Shaktiman trucks are used to bring the coal from the mines to the National Highway. Today, most of the young men and women are involved directly or indirectly in coal business. This gives them income all through the year.

Mining industry is one of the oldest industries in India which has been overwhelmingly dependent upon the tribal labourers, for example, the coal mines of Asansol-Raniganj and the Jharia belt undertaken by the Government. The coal mining in Bapung, Jaintia Hills, Meghalaya is undertaken by the people themselves. We know that in other parts of India the mineral wealth belongs to the Government, but the Government of Meghalaya considers that it belongs to the people. In my interviews with the Government officials, I was told that the

Government have classified coal mining as a Cottage Industry. There is only one document in the Department of D.M.R. (Directorate of Mines and Mineral Resources) about coal mining. The document shows the royalty rates to be shared by the Government and the District Councils (see table).

Table 3: Royalties collection by Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council on Coal from Cottage Coal Mines for the Period from 1974-75 to 1984-85.

Year	Coal despatched in tonnes.	Collection by the Jaintia Hills Dist. Council, Jowai (in rupees)	Share of the Jaintia Hills District Council Jowai at 60% (in rupees)	Share of the State Govt. at 40%
1974-75 to 1980-81	8,75,149.50	31,95,452.91	19,17,271.75	12,78,181.16
1981-82	3,25,615.68	34,47,825.40	20,68,698.24	13,79,130.16
1982-83	5,06,889.00	36,47,370.50	21,38,422.30	14,58,948.20
1983-84	8,10,833.00	56,74,326.00	34,84,595.60	22,69,730.40
1984-85	9,40,847.00	66,02,743.00	39,61,645.80	26,41,187.12
Grand Total:	34,54,334.18	2,25,67,717.81	135,40,630.69	90,27,087.12

The coal mines are distributed in a vast area in and around Bapung. There are about 32 mining villages. All these villages play a very significant role in the economy of Bapung. Coal is collected and stored on road sides in many places, but most of the coal comes to Bapung and Lad Rymbai (another new

market town which has emerged since 1978, about 5 Kms. to south of Bapung). Outside businessmen generally refer to the coal extracted from all these villages as "Bapung coal". The villages are as follows:

- |                        |                                  |
|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Bapung              | 18. Kairang                      |
| 2. Iongkaluh           | 19. Nongthymmai                  |
| 3. Pynthor Sala        | 20. Moo Pala Sutnga              |
| 4. Moo Ialong          | 21. Moo Lemylliang - Iarian Tluh |
| 5. Sham Sham           | 22. Lamyrsiang                   |
| 6. Moo Tong            | 23. Moolait                      |
| 7. Moo Shut - Musniang | 24. Jalaphet                     |
| 8. Ryngat              | 25. Narwan                       |
| 9. Lum Shken           | 26. Moo Rwai                     |
| 10. Moo Sniang         | 27. Sakynphor                    |
| 11. Moo Lang           | 28. Pamra                        |
| 12. Moo Lamanoh        | 29. Jalaioh                      |
| 13. Umshong            | 30. Tamjai                       |
| 14. Rymbai             | 31. Moo Siang - Lamare           |
| 15. Khiah              | 32. Shieh-Rypli                  |
| 16. Khliehriat         | 33. Lakadong                     |
| 17. Byndihati          |                                  |

The local people also call it as "the black stone of Wapung" (Mooiong ka Wapung). It is also said that coal mining first started in Bapung village.

Coal mining activities are organized as follows:

Malik (owner)



Manager



Sordar (supervisor)



Labourers

People are the owners of land and the mines. Lands are classified as Hot Kseh (with pines or other trees), Pynthorkba (wet land for cultivation) and Kper (gardens). Paddy is cultivated in Pynthorkba. Vegetables and fruits are grown in kper.

The people have the right to own property with the knowledge and authority of the headman and the Daloi (person elected by the people for administrative purposes) and the District Council. For wet land, the District Council issues a document known as patta. But no patta system exists for dry land. The people can claim, with the knowledge of headman and the Daloi (person elected) of the Elaka (province), any amount of land.

Owners (Malik) of coal mines:

Those who inhabit the area, first claim wet land and get the documents. Dry land is claimed through the knowledge of the

headman. The property belongs to the first man who claims his ownership over a plot of land. The dry land should be used in one way or the other by the owner.

But it is found out that in most of the cases, poor people cannot invest to dig the coal, so as a consequence, they sell the whole plot of land to those who have money for investment. In some cases the plot of land is sold for money and in some other cases they sell the right to extract coal. Thus it is found that sometimes a non-tribal also manages to take some coal-mine. But he has no right to claim the land. After taking out the coal, the land belongs to the owner. This land remains in the hand of a non-tribal or a tribal only for a short period.

Manager:

Manager is a person who looks after the work. In Bapung, coal mining work is generally entrusted on contract basis. Some owners take over the work of managers themselves. Some hand over the work to others known as the managers. In Bapung an advance of Rs. 1000/- is given to the manager to buy all the tools and implements required to dig the coal. Pipe and pumps are required to drive the water in the mine. An agreement is made between the manager and the owner, how much the owner will pay for the manager. In Bapung, the usual amount is Rs.150/- per truck. This is a commission given to the manager for the coal per truck load when it is ready.

The main function of the manager is to provide coal as per agreement made with the owner. The owner will pay separately for those labourers who cut and collect the coal at the outlet at the rate of Rs. 80/- per box. The size of the box is 6 ft 5 inches by 3 ft. 8 inches by 2 ft. 6 inches and weight of coal per box is 30 mounds or 1200 kgs. The owner will come to collect the coal when it is ready to be carried to the main road by Shaktiman trucks.

Sordar (Supervisor):

The main duty of the supervisor is to check the boxes that the coal collected is well measured and not wasted. He also guards the collection. In most of the cases, the managerial work is done by the owner himself. He appoints only one supervisor to look after the labourers and the coal collection. To the supervisor also payment is done on contract basis at the rate of Rs. 150/- per truck (Shaktiman). For loading one truck, 8 boxes (size mentioned above) of coal are required. It weighs 240 mounds (960 kgs).

Another function of the supervisor is to check the cutters inside the mines. It is the duty of the supervisor to give all the information and conditions of the coal inside the mines.

**Labourer:**

Those persons who are directly engaged in digging or cutting, carrying coal to the outlet, and those who carry the coal from the outlet to a place where a truck can come, and those who load the coal in the truck are labourers. There are two groups of labourers, viz. local (Khasis and Pnars) and migrant (from outside Meghalaya).

**(1) Local labourers:**

It is found that most of the local labourers are small land-holders. They earn their wages from the well-to-do families. Those who have their own land come to work during the off-season. They work for sometime and then go to their respective villages.

**(ii) Migrant labourers:**

The migrant labourers are those who come from other States of India. These labourers come to work in the coal-mines for long periods. They go to their respective homes when they earn some money. The local or migrant labourers stay in the camps for work. When they stop cutting in one mine, they move to other camps. The labourers move from place to place. The only day where we can see these labourers is on the weekly markets at Khliehriat and Dad Rymbai. On the market day the labourers from all over the area come for marketing. It is on these market days that we can see people of different ethnic communities who come to work in the mines of Jaintia Hills.

Wages:

High wage is an important factor which attracts people from different states to the mining area. The daily wage in Bapung is Rs. 50/- for men and Rs. 25/- for women and children. The daily wage is high in the whole mining area, so the owners of the coal mines give work always on contract basis wherever it is possible. It is only when they collect the coal the owners pay them in cash. The labourers are usually paid once in a week and the managers and supervisors are paid on the completion of the assigned task.

Tools and technology:

The main tools which are used in the mining are: hoes, crobbers, hammers, chisels, rolleys, baskets, lanterns and candles. None of the miners use new technology. Cutting is done manually.

Transportation:

One of the main problems in the whole mining area is transportation of coal. After digging, the coal is to be carried from the outlet to a place where a truck can approach. Usually, coolies carry the coal on contract basis at the rate of Rs.20/- per box. The usual rate for the truck to carry the coal to the main road is Rs. 600/- per truck. If the place is too far from the main road, the rate will be higher.

The whole work is incomplete if the coal is not ready for sale at the main road. The average price of coal was Rs. 400/- per tonne in mid 1985. On an average a truck carries 10 tonnes of coal. So, the price is Rs. 4000/- for one truck-load of coal. The price varies from time to time, from place to place, and the quality of coal. It involves a lot of labour and capital before it is ready for sale. The cost of mining is computed as follows:

A. Initial investment (for tools and implements)	...	Rs. 1,000.00
B. Running cost		
a) Commission to Manager and Supervisor @ Rs. 150/- per truck (150 x 2)	...	Rs. 300.00
b) Labourers wage for cutting @ Rs. 80/- per box (2 x 8 x 80)	...	Rs. 1,280.00
c) Coolie at two places @ Rs. 20/- per box (2 x 8 x 20)	...	Rs. 320.00
d) Loading @ Rs. 80/- per truck (at two places) (2 x 80)	...	Rs. 160.00
e) Transport @ Rs. 400/- per truck (cost two trucks) (2 x 400)	...	Rs. 800.00
	<u>Total</u>	<u>Rs. 2,860.00</u>
C. Selling @ Rs. 400/- per tonne x 10 (one truck-load)	...	Rs. 4,000.00
		Rs. 2,860.00
	<u>Net Profit</u>	<u>Rs. 1,140.00</u>

My interviews with the authorities at Mawkyndur Check Gate, 20 Kms. from Jowai, where they collect royalties, there are 350 trucks approx. loaded with coal every day going to

Gauhati and from the Check Gate Beat House (Police Station) of Khliehriat there are 150 trucks approx. loaded with coal going towards Silchar.

So there are 500 trucks plying every day loaded with coal. The coal flow from Jaintia Hills is 5,000 tonnes in a day. And the money flow into the Jaintia Hills is Rs.20,000,00 in a day. Its impact will be felt in many years to come. This figure gives us an idea about the prices of goods in the mining area. It is naturally different from other places of the State. The mode of living is different from those of simple villages of Jaintia Hills. The wages also are very high. The influx population is also increasing day by day.

#### Weekly and daily markets

In Jaintia Hills weekly markets play an important role in economic transactions. It is also a meeting place for friends and relatives. There are eight days in a week in Jaintia calendar. Each day is named after a market. Each day the market is held in more than once place. The following are the days and places of markets.

<u>Name of the market/day</u>	<u>Market places</u>
1. Iaw hat/Mukshash	Mukroh and Mawkaiew
2. Iaw Kyllaw	Jowai (small market) and Namdong
3. Iaw Pynsin	Sanaro and Ummulong

<u>Name of the market/day</u>	<u>Market places</u>
4. Iaw Mulong	Raliang and Nartiang
5. Iaw Musiang	Jowai (big market)
6. Iaw Mushai	Shangpung and Shangrain
7. Iaw Pyngkat	Khliehriat, Lad Rymbai and Mynso
8. Iaw Thymblein	Khaduli and Barato

A small market is also held at Bapung village on Pyngkat which lasts hardly for three hours. Most of the people from Bapung and Byndihati villages and the migrant labourers visit the weekly market at Lad Rymbai and Khliehriat. The articles of daily use are purchased from the weekly markets.

A new market centre is emerging at Lad Rymbai. There were only about half a dozen families staying there about ten years ago. The phenomenal growth of the place has taken place during the last 3-4 years. At present there are about 110 shops and about 50 Jaintia families. About 70% of shops belong to non-tribal people, especially Bengalis and Marwaris. All the buildings where the shops are housed belong to Jaintias who migrated to this place from the neighbouring villages. The non-tribal shopkeepers are males who do not stay with their female family members. I was told by them that the place is not safe for their women. The shops are closed around 6 p.m. to

avoid the trouble created by local drunkards. The shopkeepers alleged that local boys, after intoxication, misbehave with them and demand money. Petty quarrels are quite common at Lad Rymbai. Since the buildings are owned by the local people, rent for buildings is a good source of income for them. The shops are owned by both males and females. It is a self-acquired property for males. Many local people also sell at the road-side and open ground on weekly market days.

The difference between a daily market and a weekly market is that the latter attracts both buyers and sellers from a wider area. All kinds of goods which are used by the people are sold in weekly markets. I called Lad Rymbai as a daily market because all the goods needed for the people are available there on all days. Moreover, it is exclusively a market town. It serves the needs of the floating population, especially businessmen, truck drivers and labourers.

The goods are very expensive at Lad Rymbai. The customers are not permanent and not local residents. This may be the reason for high price. The wages for mining work are also high. So, the buying capacity of the people is also more. I made a survey of the shops and the prices of essential commodities. One interesting finding is that local prefer business in tea stalls, grocery shops and vegetable shops which are also found

in any Jaintia village. Radio shops, studios, footwear shops, wrist-watch shops, hair cutting saloon are exclusively owned by outsiders.

Table 4: Ownership of shops

Type of shop	Tribal owners	Non-tribal owners	Total
1. Restaurants	3	9	12
2. Tea stalls	12	8	20
3. Vegetable shops	6	2	8
4. Grocery shops	10	2	12
5. Studios	-	2	2
6. Haircutting saloons	-	3	3
7. Footwear shops	-	4	4
8. Radio shops	-	3	3
9. Wrist-watch shops	-	2	2
10. Miscellaneous items	16	30	46
11. Road-side hawkers on a weekly market day (12-6-1985) selling vegetables, rice etc.	200	50	250

**Table 5: Prices of essential commodities**  
**(June to September, 1985)**

Name of Commodity	Price at Jowai (Rupees per Kg)	Price at Lad Rymbai (Rupees per Kg)
1. Rice	5.00	8.00
2. Wheat flour	3.00	4.00
3. Sugar	6.00	8.00
4. Mustard oil	18.00	24.00
5. Tomato	8.00	12.00
6. Potato	4.00	6.00
7. Onion	3.00	5.00
8. Egg	1.50 (per one)	2.50 (per one)
9. Tea	1.00 (per cup)	2.00 (per cup)
10. Vegetables of common use like cabbage, beans, brinjal etc.	5.00	7.00
11. Chicken	30.00 (per one)	40.00 (per one)
12. Beef	18.00	22.00
13. Pork	24.00	32.00
14. Mutton	30.00	34.00

## B. BYNDIHATI VILLAGE

Byndihati village is situated at a distance of 40 Kms from Jowai. The habitation of the village lies on both side of the road. The National Highway 44 passes through this village. It is a permanent village. The exact area of the village is not available. The village is situated on slopes and table land of the hills. The inhabited area of the village is 3 to 4 Kms in its length. Like most of the villages in Jaintia Hills, the houses are constructed near the road side. The road is passing through the village but some of the houses are scattered.

The village contains different localities, namely, Lumshnong, Nengshnong, Lumshyiap, Pdengshnong, Dongsurok and Wahshnong. There are 95 families living in the village. The typical Jaintia house can be found. Some of the buildings are constructed in modern style. A variety of houses are found. The modern houses are roofed with corrugated iron/zinc sheets. The traditional houses have thatched roofs.

The inhabitants of the village are Jaintias. According to the 1971 Census, the population of the village was 474 and in 1981 the population was 582 and in 1985 the population is 680. The village does not have any health centre. If a person is seriously ill he is taken to Khliebriat or Jowai.

The village has one Primary School located in the middle of the village. This school is financed by the government. The literacy rate is very low. Out of the population of 680 only 30 know how to read and write. 5 are Post-Matric students. Some of these have gone out of the village. Most of the people are engaged in agricultural activity.

Regarding the communication and transportation, Byndihati village had some advantages in its location. The village secures a regular bus service everyday from Jowai to Silchar. The village has small quantity of water in wells and springs.

#### Economy of the Village

The primary occupation in the village is cultivation of paddy, maize, and vegetable, cattle farming, and carpentry works. Paddy is cultivated in dry land and wet land. The traditional practice of jhum cultivation is still maintained. Ploughing of the land is done after the harvest. The early rain is important for sowing the paddy. The sowing period is in the months of March, April, May and early June. After sowing the next work is weeding. This is in the months of June, July and August. Other activities are only subsidiary activities. There are some people who earn their livelihood by selling essential articles of daily use. While some other people earn their income from daily labour. Therefore the sources of income are different to each group of people.

### Jhum Cultivation

Jhuming (shifting or slash and burn) cultivation is a traditional mode of occupation. It is part of social and cultural way of living which comprises a very important role in Pnar community, this is applicable mostly to the landless people who have no wet paddy fields. Even today 20% of the total population still depends on jhumming. The poor people are compelled to depend on it. Though it is very unproductive and requires a large portion of land, the people do not have other choices. But number of families with shifting cultivation as their major source of income is decreasing. Because the land is not available due to short period of cultivation cycle. As the land and the forest is owned by the community themselves the selection of site is according to one's choice. But now this system has declined. The people have applied for permission from the District Council and the headman of the village to grow forest in the land. This creates problems to the poor farmers who do not have any land for cultivation. Formerly, the people did not have the concept of market. Now the dry community land is not in much circulation among the people because people want to grow forest in the same plot.

### Settled Cultivation:

If we look back to the history of the stages of human development we find that permanent cultivation is in the second stage. Instead of shifting from area to area, under this type

of cultivation, a particular plot of land is used permanently. Generally, in hilly places permanent cultivation is located at the sides of rivers where water is easily available. In some areas hill terracing has also taken place. Like all other places multiple crop cultivation is practised by the villagers.

As it was said earlier there are different groups of people with different types of occupation. There are some groups who practise jhum cultivation and wet cultivation. In a settled cultivation the land is fed with water from the stream or river. The topography of the village provides adequate amount of flat land for permanent cultivation. Permanent cultivation demands a lot of physical labour and skill. Besides water is another essential element.

Regarding the area which lies under permanent cultivation in this village it is about 32 hectares. The main crops are paddy and maize. Another feature of permanent cultivation in comparison with shifting cultivation is the period of cycle. At least five to six years are necessary in shifting cultivation where as in permanent cultivation crops can be cultivated every year. Thus, permanent cultivation shows that it requires more amount of physical power and the income from the same plot of land is also more.

### Cattle Farming:

Cattle farming is an important source of subsistence for the villagers. 20 households are securing their livelihood from this occupation.

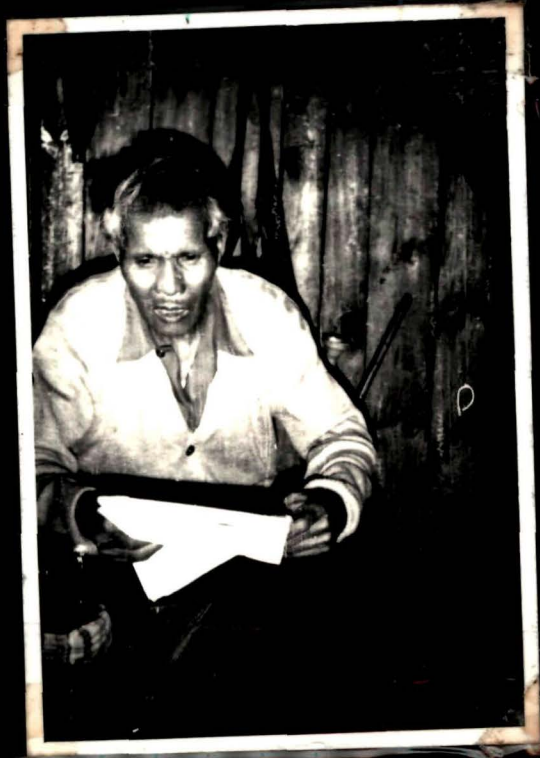
It is a tradition for the Pnar people to rear domesticated animals. Keeping domesticated animal is essential in the context of social prestige and religious functions. From the point of view of social prestige and social status wealth is measured in terms of the number of domesticated animals like cows, pigs, goats and fowls. So these animals have significance in relation to social prestige and social status. But from the time Christianity entered, these beliefs have declined.

Regarding the working hours of farmers it varies from family to family. Thus the family which keeps cattle devotes more time to feed animals to get better production. But it is found that the cattle farming in Byndihati is not for milk. The animals reared are for sacrifice, meat and manure. A large amount of cowdung is available which is used in manuring the field, especially for growing maize.

### Exploitation of forest:

One of my main intentions to select Byndihati was to explore the nature of exploitation of forest wealth. But unfortunately, I could not get quantified data on this. I could estimate the extent of exploitation from my observations.

My interviews with elders revealed that about 20 years ago Byndihati was covered with a thick forest of pine trees. People realised the commercial value of timber and started felling trees. An acre of pine forest yields about Rs.10,000 at present. About 20 years ago, the price was about Rs.2,000 to Rs. 5,000. People invested the money mainly in two ways, viz. for construction of houses and for terracing small valleys for cultivation of rice. Part of the timber was used to construct the house. People bought corrugated iron/zinc sheets to roof the houses. So, majority of the thatched houses disappeared from the village. Some people have also used the money to buy dry or wet land in other villages. Some more details about these investments are discussed in Chapter VI.



THE HEADMAN OF BAFUNG



CHILDREN OF COAL MINE OWNERS PLAYING CARROM



DRINKING WATER AT BAPUNG



TIMBER FOR SALE AT BYNDIHATI

CHAPTER - VTRADITIONAL AND CHANGING SOCIO-CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS AND  
VALUES: A GENERAL ACCOUNT

In this chapter an attempt is made to review the traditional and changing socio-cultural institutions and values on the basis of reports and books published by British administrators and ethnographers. The latest publications by Indian writers are also reviewed. The description mainly refers to the Jaintias (or Pnars), but sometimes it covers both Khasis and Jaintias. For example, Christianization cannot be considered in isolation. The movement to convert Khasis and Pnars into Christianity was taking place simultaneously and the same organizations were involved in the religious activities. The socio-cultural life of the people of Bapung and Byndihati has to be understood keeping the entire society of Jaintia Hills in mind. The changes discussed in this chapter are mainly due to British contact, introduction of formal education through schools and colleges, and introduction of Christianity.

Religion:

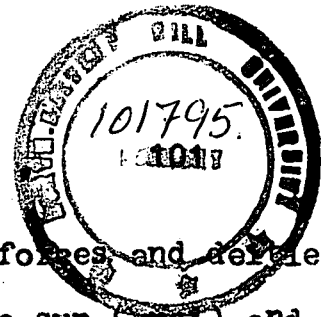
The religion of the Pnar was described as animism or spirit worship by the British ethnographers. Propitiation of spirits, both good and evil, on certain occasions principally in the times of trouble was an important aspect of traditional

religion. The propitiation of these spirits (or deities) is carried out either by the priest (lyngdoh) or by old men well versed in the art of necromancy (art of predicting by means of communication with the dead). The spirits and deities worshipped by the Pnar are numerous. The following are the principal spirits and deities:

- a) Blai Muluk (the god of the State) who is propitiated yearly by the sacrifice of a goat and a cock.
- b) Blai Lum Blai Wah (god of the hill and water). This god is also similarly propitiated once a year.
- c) Blai Spah (the god of wealth) this god is propitiated with a view to increase prosperity.
- d) Blai ryngkaw wasa (the tutelary deity of the village). This is propitiated by sacrifices whenever thought to be necessary.

The Pnar have also a belief in God the Creator, U Blai wa buh wathoow (the goddess who look after for the well being of men) and ka blai synchar (care taker).

In the traditional belief the dead body of a person is always cremated. After a few days a ceremony of feeding the spirit of the dead is performed at the ancestral tombs where bones of the dead person were collected. Pigs, hens and goats are killed in the ceremony, which are offered to the spirits of only those members of the family whose remains have been recently deposited in the clan cromlech.



As regards the worship of natural forces and deities, the Pnar worship the rivers and hills, the sun (sngi) and lightning (u pyrthat). Kupli river was selected as a place for sacrifice, up to the late 18 century. The human sacrifice by the Jaintia king was stopped by the British in mid 19th century. Its main tributary Myntang river is also annually appeased by the sacrifice of a he-goat.

In the last few years a large number of Pnars accepted Christianity, viz. Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, Seventh Day Adventist, Anglican, Church of God and other denominations.

#### Christianization:

While education made a tremendous progress, Christianization also set a pace. To the missionaries, education was a hand maid of evangelization. As in the field of education, the Welsh Mission encountered initially severe opposition from the tribes against evangelization. In Jaintia Hills the resistance was very acute. So stubborn was the opposition that after two decades of evangelization the Welsh Mission could convert only 158 by 1861. However, gradually, the mission gained success. The Welsh Mission organized a native presbytery which set up apart, men as evangelists and appointed licensed preachers and opened numerous preaching stations in the villages. Since then they began to derive the fruit of the labour. In 1871, the converts rose to 514 souls. In 1881 the number came up to 2060

and in 1891 it climbed to 17,125. In 1905 a Christian revivalist movement started, where the Welsh Mission alone had 23,000 and 1000 to 1500 converts were admitted annually (Natarajan, 1977: 61).

Like the Welsh Mission, the Roman Catholic and other denomination gained converts. Though late in the field, the Catholics counted 2,000 Khasi followers. The Adventist and Unitarians also won some adherents. B.C. Allen pointed out: "By the beginning of the 19th century it appeared as the most correct thing to become a convert to Christianity." An effect was the emergence of a class of professional and salaried preachers, writers and missionaries who replaced the traditional Khasi and Jaintia priests (lyngdoh) who were discredited in the moral leadership of the country. But the converts could not get rid off the tribal collective mind. They had to obey the most basic tenets like inheritance of property, title, the norm of marriage. They visibly discarded the worship of their own deities and accepted instead going to church.

"The Khasi and Jaintia felt the gentle breezes of the change with the arrival of the Britishers and Missionaries in the early nineteenth century. The first Anglo-Khasi contact followed the annexation of the adjoining Sylhet district by the East India Company in 1765 A.D. As a consequence of the grant of Diwani of Bengal. The initial uneasiness about the

relations between the natives and aliens later took a new turn. As early as 1807 A.D., the importance of the knowledge of the tribals for efficient administration was first realised. The Board of Directors of the East India Company took a formal decision to this effect. In the plain areas of the country, the British rule was more comprehensive and touched more aspects of administration and day to day life. In Khasi and Jaintia Hills, however, from its full annexation in 1833 A.D. to their departure in 1947 A.D. the British rulers administered the area by minimum presence and interference respecting the tribal laws and customs leaving the Syiems (Kings) to exercise their authority on local matters as before." (Natarajan, 1977: 90).

Though the Khasi Jaintia society is so strong and close-knit and integrated in its culture and tradition yet it was bound to be affected by the presence of an alien ruler, the subtle influence of his culture and the need to adjust to his ways and methods. Besides, there were exotic influences such as the work of the Christian missionaries. A society manifests changes not only because of the direct factors but also because of the reaction, resistance and sometimes opposition engendered in it by exotic forces. Thus, inevitably, contact with an alien religion involved the Khasi Jaintia individual and society deeply; it also affected the cultural dynamics and structural

integration. The earlier cultural setting changed and after the initial cultural shock, by slow degrees the pace of change was accelerated.

The first band of converts formed base of western culture in the hills. The converts were preferred to others in th job. This created a system which helped in spreading of Christianity. In this context, it may be mentioned that a decade preceding the independence, a brawl developed between the people and administration. Even a traditional annual performance festival (Behdein Khlam) was stopped by the S.D.O. of Jowai who happened to be a Christian himself. Persons who protested against this action in the court of law at Shillong were expelled from Jowai. However, the Behdein Khlam an annual festival in Jaintia was revived in 1948 (Deb Roy: 1981). Even today, those villages who follow the traditional faith are known as Chnong Niamtre who fear to transact with the educated because of conversion. They are so suspicious in sending their child to school est he becomes Christian. The matter became confused after independence and creation of the State of Meghalaya. The Government is manned by the tribal 'elites' who are Christians. Poverty compels many to move out for money. The converted are freed from many troubles, they need not bother for sacrifice, divination rather they get help and co-operation from the new community. They find that now they can live well even if they abandon the tribal mode of life. The society is

no more to fight with nature. Individuals are no more to depend on the old community. So the non-Christians are in a conveyer belt of development in which they are to pass through the wheels of Christianity. Still now, most of the poor and the diseased are the non-Christian who live in a comparatively unhygienic conditions. They are less cared till they come through the conveyer belt of Christianity. Most of the people believe that Christianity is not doing any harm to their custom and traditions. But the educated few and those old custodians of tribal culture believe that it is obliterating their culture and customs making their youth unruly and indifferent to the parents.

In an interview with some non-Christian old men and priest (lyngdoh), they expressed their deep concern "that, though there is a great impact of Christianity, yet they would try to keep their culture and beliefs but not knowing how long they would be able to retain it." Their pessimism is due to many causes, the answer to which they do not know. "People are to earn money so should be educated. But when they become educated, they abandon their original traditional faith. The charm of modern education is taking boys out of doors. If they are objected, they would become Christian. So it is killing of culture both ways. Now, modernity means Christianity and civilization means westernization to the tribals. Christianity is spreading in Jaintia Hills.

In Bapung village presbyterian denomination came first. In Christian denomination, there is a church leader known as Tymmen Basan who looks after the welfare of the faithful. While the non-Christian (Chnong) they have a Sangot or Lyngdoh (priest) who look after the ritual performance. Today it is not well observed. The annual rituals are neglected. Thus Niamtre is declining day by day.

A few years ago it was a rare case to have a Pnar girl with an outsider husband. Today it is found that mixed marriage with the non-tribals e.g. Nepali, Bengali, Kachari etc. are increasing. If the couples happened to be Christians the church takes over the matter. At first it was encouraged by the church leaders to get more people converted to Christianity. When such cases happened, the Hindu did not take Christianity easily. But many such non-Christian people accepted the new religion later.

The Church have tried to adjust to the given social structure. It has been indeed the policy of the church since the first century A.D. to accept the social structure of the new believers. "As the church is for all mankind; it follows that in relation to each segment of mankind the church will be the church for that segment be it nation, province and local community. The church does not try to demolish the forms of society (except in so far as they contradicted the purpose of God for mankind as revealed in Jesus Christ) but rather

accepts them as the provisional form in which the new humanity is to be made manifest. It is thus entirely congruous with the proper character of the church that, from the beginning, it took over into its life the forms of social organism which were found in the society of which it was a part." (National Christian Council Review Vol. XC III, 1973: 4). The Christian missionaries left untouched the matrilineal system followed by Khasi and Jaintia. But a new concept of the 'Christian holy matrimony' where husband and wife are joined together 'till death' was introduced. The missionaries had also introduced restrictions on the following:

- (a) Pre-marital and extra-marital sex.
- (b) Drinking
- (c) Grambling
- (d) Observation of Sunday as Holy Sabbath (God's day)
- (e) Non-observation of the clan exogamy principle.

If any one transgresses any of the above mentioned, he or she is liable to be excommunicated outside the church.

As a consequence people are slowly Christianised. The inclination to join the church, in general confirms the 'central discovery of contemporary philosophical anthropology that there is a living unity between man and the world, which is more fundamental reality the world which I perceive around me

is not an objective world which I live, my world, a milieu constituted by that totality, which I called my life, my existence, my subjectivity ( C.H. Winckel, 1970: 5). My stay at Bapung for field work made a clear understanding that most of the business are closed on Sunday.

In the same village there is a clear cut division in management between the two localities viz. Dong skur (Christian) Poh Snong (traditional religion/Niamtre). Both the groups easily and naturally form social affiliations. Whatever tensions emerge between the two groups are confined to marital relationship. These tensions almost always emerge from the non-Christians because the church insists on the assimilation of non-believer into the church's fold.

But whenever a Christian is excommunicated from the church it is easy for that person to cross over to the non-Christian fold and continue to live a socially harmonious life. This facilitates the management of tensions and permits fluidity between the two groups. At this point, it is essential to note that the Christian and non-Christian follow the principle of clan exogamy i.e. marital alliance within the clan is strictly prohibited. The violation of the principle of clan exogamy is considered a more serious crime than adultery or murder or any other crime and is known as Chong sang

(taboo). Both Christian and non-Christian considered it an unredeemable sin. Thus Christianity has not attempted to alter the basic kinship structure.

In contrast, 'Shu ia shong' (self-arrangement) refer to a marital alliance which is neither solemnized in the church nor is entered into according to traditional rites nor is registered in the court but is otherwise not an antisocial alliance. The church considers Shu ia shong to be a carnal sin; and suspends the offenders for a period not less than six months after which the suspension is lifted, provided the offenders regularize their alliance and satisfy the church of their true repentance. (Constitution of Presbyterian Church in North East India Khasi Jaintia Press, Shillong, 1972: 14). On the contrary, though the non-Christian considers shu ia shong an undesirable act, they do not condemn it as a 'cardinal sin'. The parties are not considered offenders and no penalty of any kind is meted out to them. Over the years if the parties settle down into a nuclear family, their relationship is deemed to have been regularised, that is, time sanctifies their union. This differential treatment between the Christian and non-Christian to the parties shu ia shong indicates that the Christian doctrine of carnal sin, which was developed in non-Khasi Jaintia (non-matrilineal) society is not really compatible with the matrilineal social structure of

Jaintias and to that extent is an artificial grafting done by the foreign missionaries and perpetuated by the indigenous church leaders. But it is pertinent to note that even though the church had declared self-arrangement to be a carnal sin yet the parties are not socially ostracized when they are excommunicated from the church for not regularizing the relationship and remaining impenitent. Thus, in the ongoing social process the penalty system even among the Christians is weak and this weakness is imputed to the fact that Jaintia Christian like the Jaintia following traditional religion is subjected to the same pressures of the inner logic of matrilineal system.

Some of these marriage norms, the church had set up, made problems for the people to marry native girls. But today the mixed marriages are increasing day by day for the sake of conversion.

Another marginal effect on the society caused by the British rule was opening up of communications. Changes consequent on location of the capital of Assam at Shillong in 1874 were such that it gave rise to influx of outsiders in large numbers leading to more and varied inter-ethnic marriages, the upsurge in economy and improvement in the prospect of trade, greater horizontal and vertical mobility of population,

better communications resulting in rapid circulation of new ideas. But the prime factor which induced and fostered silent and mammoth changes was the work of the missionaries for nearly a century or more. This work also nourished and unfas-tened the forces of adoption, resistance, adaptation and opposition. The changes that occurred by the invisible degrees and stages, in the hitherto undisturbed Khasi-Jaintia society, grew more tangible over a period of time.

#### Social Hierarchy

The earlier social hierarchical pattern was the ruling clans - viz. Syiems (Royal Clans) Dolois then followed by priestly clans Lynedoh, the ministers and nobleman, soldiers, agriculturists and commoners. Bandsmen at the base, were distributed. The classes of bandsmen, slaves and criminals, were made to work for the rulers. It became extinct during British rule. Prisoners were now kept in jails and slavery of previous days became exist. Christianity preached an egalitarian society, based on the tribal egalitarian character. Traditionally, the priestly clan had power and authority on ritual matters but with the coming of the new order the priestly clan had no room. The cash economy dominating the market led to the consequent rearrangement of social order on the basis of wealth. Inter-marriages within the social pyramid increasingly cut

across the vertical distinctions. Since the earlier respective occupations were not followed strictly by clans, the new social hierarchy that arose was more of a sub-cultural than cultural nature.

### The Pnar Family

The Pnar practise the natalocal segmented lineage residence and domestic group, while the Khasi and Garo practise the uxori-local nuclear family residence and domestic-group. Gurdon mentioned clearly that "The Syntengs (Jaintia/Pnar) seem to have more closely preserved the customs of the matriachal than the Khasis, and the Syntengs claim that their niam or religious ceremonies are purer i.e. that they more closely correspond to what they were in ancient times than those of the Khasis." (Gurdon, 1914; 76).

Pnar matriliney on the basis of the relationship between the residence pattern of the spouses after marriage stands out distinct from the other forms of matriliney as found in this region (Meghalaya) and also in other part of India (the Nayar and the Mapilla) and other parts of the world. I, as an anthropologist and son of the soil, would like to express as follows: 'The husband is only a father and has nothing to do with the management or otherwise of his wife's family. He is to live and work with his mother and his clan and his right of ownership whatsoever exists only in his mother's time. In the Pnar

custom the eldest daughter of any of the nearest surviving lines of any clan is to inherit any dislocated property. In Jaintia it is known as rap lung (right to claim). Ka sdiah/Wakham (last daughter) inherits a biggest share of her mother's property. In Jaintia it is known as hiar natein (inherits legally). In the case of the Khasis all property is to return to the youngest female. The traditional practice of the Pnar husband was that he does not go to live in the house of his wife. He remains in the house of his mother or female Kurs (clan) and only visit his wife. His connection with his Kurs (clan) is therefore more intimate than among the Khasis. This difference in mode of life has resulted in the differences of customs of inheritance to self-acquired property of the male. Pnar families make a strong claim to the earning and property of the sons. In regard to inheritance, of the self-acquired property of the male, the Pnar husband remains in his mother's house and only visit his wife; (whereas) the Khasi husband leaves his mother's house, and lives in the house of his wife after marriage. Apart from this difference in respect of self-acquired property, 'the customs of law of inheritance regarding ancestral property is the same among the Khasi and Jaintia as both follow the matrilineal system'. (The Govt. of Assam, 1964: 14-16 and 39).

In a strict sense of the term family as a conjugal unit is not known to traditional Pnar matrilineal system. The Pnar are matrilineal people and the traditional household pattern is matrilocal rather than conjugal. However, there is an emerging and to much extent a preferred tendency for the Pnar wife to insist that her husband stays with her. The traditional Pnar custom has been visiting husband. The family is more a domestic group rather than conjugal family.

In the traditional form 'the husband is a visitor to the house of his wife with whom live the children', even after marriage, he continues to live and work with his mother and sisters. In the strict sense traditional Pnar social organization did not have any economically functional institutions of conjugal family i.e. comprising husband, wife and their children. In the social structural sense there can be no denying that it is possible to identify a family under the traditional Pnar practice as marriage after all did create a husband and wife and later through them their sons and daughters. But in the more functional - interactional sense for the individual this structural alliance was not an effective group in the conduct of affairs critical to his/her social and economic existence. We have in a domestic group: (i) the female head, (ii) her mother, (iii) married and unmarried male and female siblings (brothers and sisters), (iv) male and female offsprings

of married sisters. Absent in this unit being spouses and children of the married male matrikins. It will be thus apparent that membership to the traditional Pnar domestic group is by birth and that there is no contingent relationship between marriage and the mode of residence of the matrikins. Under the Pnar system of matrilineage both traditional and emergent there is perfect adherence to the matrilineal rules of descent, succession and inheritance. The rule of residence is natalocal. A woman who gives birth to children continues to live with her mother while the father of the children lives with his mother. This is the crucial subsistence group for the society and its members, helping to maintain strong bonds of matrilineal descent group affiliation, which is not disturbed by marriage of the male or the female. Inheritance of property is by the rule of female ultimogeniture, the main bulk of the property including the ancestral house of the female (tre iung) goes to the youngest daughter with the understanding that all the other daughters have received their share from the mother during her life time. In actual practice, after her marriage a daughter may continue to co-reside with her mother for sometime. Marriage for a Pnar girl, however does create a number of new situations. Mihjung means start a new house. This is inborn in the heart of every new couples except the last child known as Sdiah/Khatduh/Wakham (youngest daughter).

The girl moves from her mother's house after getting one or two children. When she lives in a new residence, she will try to manage and decide about economic consumption and thus production of material goods vital for her own subsistence and her children. There is a deliberate consideration now of the distribution and exchange aspect of economic goods as in this there is an active involvement of the male head of the domestic group, which under the traditional practice is her brother and in the emerging forms it is her husband. The overall suggestion is not that the Pnar woman after her marriage is in any way deprived or denied her basic economic needs. On the contrary, the married daughter continues as before to share in the kitchen and economic pursuits of her mother's domestic group. The change occurs because of many extraneous factors such as difference in opinion in decision making on economic affairs vital for the household, a sense of disenchantment of the other married daughters with the property of their mother as they will not inherit it, diversification and increase in the personal economic needs of the married daughters with the birth of children and so on.

The earlier large familial institutions (kph and lung) began to be modified and a certain ambiguity arose in society as earlier socio-religious customs viz. family cromlechs, funeral ceremonies, ancestor-worship and memorial stones began to die down, and ties of kinship loosened. Non-matrikin began to assume new importance.

The basic role of women still corresponded to the earlier role owing to the increasing economic independence, and the introduction of men to the Christian idea of patriarchal societies, two new trends are noticeable. The Christian women who, more than their orthodox counterparts, supplemented their incomes or earned these by means of small trade such as stitching, tailoring, basket-weaving or by working as daily labourers had a greater air of dignity or self-respect about them than the non-Christian women. They began to nurture new ideas about patterns of child care and house keeping, an eye for utility and beauty, a keen sense of aesthetics, unlike the rigid criterion of sheer utility to which the women clung in the earlier days.

The other trend was, increasingly, for the Khatduhs (youngest daughters and heiresses), more so those residing in urban areas, to surrender their rights to inheritance voluntarily as they wanted to be free of their social and religious obligations. Even as early as 1900, under the influence of Christianity, a few orthodox heiresses did not stay in the ancestral house as required by ancient Khasi custom. They set up new residences with their husbands. Although society remained matricentred, the woman did not act under as many safeguards as before from her maternal uncle and elder brother.

With new occupations growing like mushrooms, an increase in the number of educated women, there came ideational independence for women too. But as yet, women were not encouraged to participate in acts of legislation, administration and judiciary. In traditional meeting known as durbar (assembly) women were not allowed to participate. And yet, women still occupied an important position in Khasi-Jaintia society. They now had more freedom of movement, although the women from aristocratic and cultured families had imposed their own restrictions.

Reverence of female progenitors diminished in importance as a feature of the later family organization although the mother's clan, as before adopted her children. Matrilineal inheritance prevailed but as indicated earlier, there was a slight alteration in the position of women. Women depended less on the male relatives of the kur. They either managed it independently or with the help of the husband. The earlier Khasi usage ordained women to be loyal to their domestic duties, especially in the task of furthering family ties and affection. Women were quite free in their movement and participated actively in political and social affairs. In continuation of the past system, they assumed control of important family business concerns and showed themselves thrifty in the management of business. Men have lagged behind in this respect.

In Christian families influenced by western ideas, men had acquired a new sense of assertion; to this extent, there was a decline in the earlier status of women, which now came to be on par with that of men. Men disapproved increasingly of the interference of the wife's brother and other relatives in matters concerning the children and the family. Today many educated women are interested in number of activities besides the home. They are also interested in politics.

It has been stressed that in early days, the matri-centred nature of the early Khasi-Jaintia society was in a sense counter-balanced by the significant roles of the eldest maternal uncle and elder brother. Now the importance shifted from the maternal uncle to the father. Children came closer to the father than to the male matrikin relatives. The earlier family ties loosened and religion was no longer as cohesive a bond as before. In general religious practices and beliefs have died down not only due to economic circumstances, widening disparities, poverty and changing times, but because of a change in the ideology too. Along with the dying down of the practices of placing of bones under clan stone (Mawbah) and erecting memorial stones which was religio-economic in nature has also been broken. As a result, for the first time in Khasi social history the problem arose of orphanages and illegitimate children in families where women were not as close to their own

families as before. Care of the old and aged became a problem too. The shadow of the authority of the clan was felt in every matter, but the grip was loosening.

### Marriage:

Earlier, courtship had been the traditional mode of marriage, although arranged marriages prevailed, especially among the aristocratic family. Their free mixing led to pre-marital sexual play and chastity was not valued. Later on, the traditional pattern of courtship became a more frequent pattern of marriage. While the basic modes remained the same customs and elaborate practices associated with marriages were simplified, marriage ceremonies became less elaborate. The number of marriages by elopement increased. Divinations were not consulted, or sacrifices made, prayers were offered to U Blei (God). The main ritual was the mixing of the liquor (kiad), from the two gourd containers brought by the bride and the groom. Despite the spiritual basis of marriage as an institution, many men took marriage lightly. Desertion and divorces were on the increase especially among the orthodox Khasi-Jaintia, even among the Christian divorcees, extra-marital affairs and licentiousness had increased although the number of desertions had gone down among the Christians. As it appeared today marriage had been stabilised. (Natarajan; 1977: 101).

All the earlier rules in matter of marriage were strictly observed. But in the last few years, the tribal endogamy diminished. The new political importance of Khasi Hills had led to better developed communications and consequent boost of the economy, the influx of outsiders into Khasi-Jaintia Hills and great mobility which led to increase in the number of inter-tribal marriages and marriages with non-Khasi and Jaintia. Marriages took place between Khasi-Jaintia and people such as Nagas, and Mizos and among the non-tribals such as Biharis, Bengaleese and Nepalese. In spite of all these changes the women have kept the exogamous unit, kur or laid (clan or an overgrown family) almost in tact.

There were changes in certain wedding rituals and customs too. Society became more relaxed.

Although marriage remained a sacramental tie many beliefs and omens relating to marriage died down gradually by the end of nineteenth century. The younger generation of the twentieth century did not believe in them, because they hardly heard of them. The custom of offering betel leaf and nut, around which the entire Khasi-Jaintia culture revolved, was retained by all orthodox Khasis and Jaintias and by large majority of Christians who identified themselves with the Khasi-Jaintia society. Most

of the earlier laws and ordinances that permitted and recognised remarriage of widows, widowers and divorcees were still in force, except among the Catholics. Procreation was considered the chief end of marriage. In the earlier Khasi-Jaintia society methods of contraception were not known, strength lay in numbers and it was God's will that men should multiply. Children were looked upon as the blessing of God. Family planning was not accepted. It is well known in local language: 'Man la u briew uba la kha, u wan rah la u sohkhaw' (every person who is born has his share of a grain of rice i.e. God provides for every one).

In the latter years, as before, no stigma was attached to the barrenness, except in the War area, where belief in divination for ascertaining the cause of barrenness prevailed. Divination was resorted to, so that the cause of barrenness could be ascertained. It could well be the sin of the family (daw ing) believed to have fallen on the woman. As before this did not prevent the occurrence of a divorce should a man so desire. Concubinage was accepted by the earlier Khasi-Jaintia society as a weakness of human nature. Christians guided by the church considered it to be a sin. The man who kept a concubine was called ka tnga tuh. He had no economic obligations to the woman and her children.

Marriages of Christians to non-Christians posed initial difficulties which included social adjustment and clash of religious principles. If the last daughter (khatduh) got married with a Christian boy, she lost her place and privilege in the family and another girl was chosen as heiress in her place.

Appearance (dress, personal decoration etc.):

The external appearance of Khasi and Jaintia underwent changes in comparison to the traditional way of life. The missionaries placed emphasis on the maxim of 'Cleanliness is next to Godliness' and taught the Khasi-Jaintia inexpensive methods of personal hygiene. Regular bath, keeping oneself otherwise clean, wearing washed and pressed clothes, especially on Church Service days (Sundays) and some important functions.

The Khasi and Jaintia dress underwent slow but certain change. European and semi-European clothing began gradually neglecting the indigenous costumes. The traditional dress of men could be seen only in the annual festivals like Shad Nongkrem, Shad Suk Mynsiem or Weiking Dance. The traditional dress of women could be seen in these dances.

Women showed a natural taste as regards blending of colours in their different garments. Most young ladies of fashion wore short clothes of velvet, stocking and smart shoes

and Jainsem (two long pieces of cloth hanging across the shoulder) and cloak. The dress was not only functional as before but became stylish. Hair of most women were done up in neat buns, and knotted at the nape of the neck. Some urban women trimmed their hair and wore it in short tresses. Some rural girls wore their hair in plaits and used no cosmetics and not even hair oil. But some urban women used hair oil, face and talcum powder, lipstick, perfumes etc.

The stylish Khasi and Jaintia male wore knicker-bockers made by tailors, stockings, tailor made coats, neck-ties, waist coat, jackets and shoes. Wealthy old men wore turbans and gold rings in the ear-lobes. But the bush-coat and trousers made the most commonly accepted dress, perhaps because it was inexpensive and convenient.

#### Diet:

The importance of a healthy and balance diet was unknown to Khasi and Jaintia people. They live a simple life. Eggs and fowls were earlier used entirely for the purpose of divination and sacrifices, but now came to be eaten on a larger scale than before. Milk was considered as a taboo, so milk was not considered as a food item. It was only when the missionaries taught the people to use milk then people started using it. Yet in many places, especially in the interior villages people did not take milk as a beverage or with tea. Either it was not available

or it was too expensive, or it was avoided on the ground that it was an animal secretion. The staple food of the Khasis and Jaintia remained the same. The daily meal of the average person consisted of cold boiled rice, chillies, and dry tuberous root called iyllang. In the villages they hardly took tea. They ate sumptuous meals and only drank water in between. Rice cakes prepared in two or three ways, fruits of the jungles, berries and wild roots and common vegetables such as squash or gourds, potatoes and sweet potatoes and bananas are eaten commonly. Dry fish, boiled beef, pork and chicken are considered luxuries. David Scott introduced the potatoes to the Khasis. Italian missionaries introduced many new vegetables in Shillong, explained the importance of tending vegetables carefully using manure viz. cauliflower, cabbage, a variety of beans, tomatoes, brinjals, capsicums and fruits such as pineapples, plums and peaches. Now these are very familiar.

Now, tea has become a popular drink. Most urbanites took tea with sugar and milk. In the interior area, tea is taken without adding sugar and milk by most of the families except a few who are rich and progressive. Coffee is taken by very few families living in and around Shillong and Jowai.

Meals were normally eaten with fingers. Well-to-do, educated families began the use of cutlery and crockery. Spoons made of metal were commonly used. In addition to earthen vessels

and bamboo and gourd containers used earlier to store water and grain, vessels made of aluminium, copper and brass were used. Glass and metal containers were used for drinking water.

### Stimulants

Drinking still forms very much a part of the life of every Khasi and Jaintia despite the fact that Christianity preaches temperance. Indeed many Khasi-Jaintias following different religions are habitual drinkers.

The Pnars, mostly those who are not Christians are in a habit of drinking considerable quantities of spirit either distilled from rice or millet or rice beer which is of two varieties - (i) kiad lyndem, and (ii) kiad harak. Both of these are made from rice and in some places from millet and the root of a plant called U Khawiang. Kiad lyndem is made by boiling rice or millet. It is then taken out and spread over a mat, and, when it cools fragments of yeast (u khawiang) are sprinkled over it. After this is placed in a basket, covered tightly with a cloth so as to be air-tight and it is allowed to remain in this condition for a couple of days, during which time liquor has oozed out into the bowl. Rice-beer is a necessary article particularly for all Pnar religious ceremonies of importance, it being the custom for the officiating priest

to pour out libations of liquor from a hollow gourd (Mazumdar and Dattar Ray, 1984: 51). With the coming of the British, and other outsiders, sophisticated drinks common to the westerners were introduced.

### Child-birth

In early days, old and experienced women from the neighbourhood attended delivery cases. This was the case even now in the interior, for few rural families could afford other medical facilities. Dispensaries and hospitals were located only in few places only in twons like Shillong and Jowai such facilities had been provided. In most of the cases women who go for child birth in the hospitals the placentas was not preserved for the naming ceremony as before.

### Recreation

Although drinking was forbidden and temperance was preached by Christianity, many Khasis and Jaintias as noted earlier were habitual drinkers. The vast number of distilleries and facilities with which liquor could be obtained were a constant source of temptation to the Christians as well.

All people condemned gambling. To earn money by gambling is a sin. Despite this, gambling is very popular among the Khasi and Jaintia. As a rule, women do not gamble. Tambola (housie) is popular in clubs. Horse racing was popular in

Shillong but it was stopped ten years ago. Teerkhela (butting an archery, the game of the Khasi) was also popular in Shillong but it led to an acute law and order problem and though was banned a few years ago. On market days, men relaxed in this fashion. Archery still remains the game of the Khasis in some areas.

Hunting was one of the main activities in Khasi and Jaintia Hills. But most of the animals were exhausted and the Govt. also enforced law to prohibit killing of animals. Now it is no longer remains a sport or an occupation. In the interior, the poorer sections still use earlier weapons. The well-to-do family use guns and pistols. Fishing remains popular but more as a sport than as a pastime. The common way was to poison streams by using a plant that stupefied fish. Trap nets and fishing baskets are also used.

Many other western games viz. football, cricket and hockey became popular. In the interior ring-tennis and skip-ping are also played by girls. Among indoor games, carrom is the most popular game.

Cock fighting became a game of the past. Bull fight is still prevalent. In Jaintia Hills bull fight is conducted once a year. But now it is dying out.

Since villagers have little time for leisure, other recreations are few in rural areas. The touring cinema (conducted by Block Development Officer) is liked immensely. The first film was shown in the Khasi Hills in the year 1913 A.D. Shillong has now seven cinema houses and both Hindi and English films are liked. In Jowai there is only one cinema hall. The drama has also now become a cultural force. In the Khasi Hills, around 1925 A.D. staging of western play became an annual feature. New theatre forms have been adopted from Bengali and western dramas. A popular Khasi drama is on the life of U Tirot Singh, a Khasi patriot, and U Kiang Nongbah, a Jaintia patriot, are played frequently by the people of Shillong, Jowai and in many villages.

#### Music, Dance and Art:

The people of Khasi and Jaintia Hills love music immensely. The missionaries made a great impact in the sphere of music. Western education and civilisation which came with the missionaries for the past century, shaped the Khasi and Jaintia musical tastes, especially among the Christians. As a consequence, musical compositions of the post-missionary period leaned towards a western mode not only in form and melody but in harmony and counterpart as well. It came to stay as a popular school of music. Music came to be taught and assimilated

mainly through the hymns sung in churches. For this, the missionaries produced translations of western hymns in Khasi and added notations. Young and old alike sang these hymns in unison in the church, without a single false note. Earlier, Khasi songs had a melancholy air. Later, themes of love, devotion and joy were also adopted and this was the influence of western. In the last century, the Welsh Mission imparted regular training in singing on Solfa notations while the Don Bosco later produced a good number of musician and pipers to play on staff notations. In view of the growing popularity of western songs and musical, arts among the Khasi and Jaintia and tribal people fear is expressed by many that the original songs and music may disappear. The Khasi and Jaintia, like most tribals are gifted singers and quick in picking up melodies.

The Khasi and Jaintia had no Jolo dancing, their dances were community dances and most of these were religious. Owing to the influence of western culture, all room dancing became popular among modern youth.

There was no particular liking for sculpture and painting by the Khasi and Jaintia people.

---



AN AGRICULTURIST

BAPUNG

CHAPTER - VISOCIO-ECONOMIC CHANGES IN BAPUNG

Significant changes are perceptible in the social aspects in the areas of family roles and status, decision making, family structure and community leadership and management. Subsistence economy is replaced by surplus economy. Occupations have changed. Produces which were of only food value in the traditional economy have acquired commercial value. Consumerism is taking its firm roots. Erosion of values is evidenced by the increase in crime rates and decrease in religious activities.

In Khasi and Jaintia Hills, Christianity and education were the two important forces of social change. I have already discussed this issue at length in Chapter - V. These two forces have brought about some changes in Bapung and Byndihati. Christianity is found in both villages more or less to the same extent. Since it is a common factor it can be ulred out as a major cause for bringing about change in Bapung.

Schools were opened even in remote areas of Meghalaya with the advent of Christianity. In Bapung there are two Lower Primary and two Middle English Schools. One primary and middle schools each were started by the Welsh mission, the other primary school was started by the state government and the middle school was started by the villagers themselves.

Table No. 1: Bapung Students passed in the years 1980-85.

Year	Total number of students at L.P. School Class I to III		Total number of students in M.E. School Class IV to VI		Total number of students in High School		Total number of students at P.U.C.		Total number of students at B.A.	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
1980	8	4	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
1981	6	2	4	2	-	-	-	-	-	1
1982	3	4	2	3	1	-	-	-	-	-
1983	4	2	3	2	2	1	1	-	-	-
1984	8	3	4	2	3	2	3	2	1	-
1985	12	8	2	1	2	1	2	1	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>

Source: School records and author's census.

According to the 1971 Census, there were 12 literates (1.6%). There are 138 (11%) literates according to my census conducted in June, 1985. The village has produced only two graduates so far who are residing in Shillong. 8 girls and 4 boys had passed matric examination between 1980-85. There are more girls studying in schools than boys (approximately the ratio is 5:1 respectively). In my interviews majority of the boys in the age-group of 10-15 years expressed their wish to work independently in coal mines or to take up independent business.

An important change is taking place in family and kinship. I shall first discuss the various dimensions of this institution. The changes are significant in Bapung whereas it is absent or insignificant in Byndihati. Some of the basic aspects of matriliney like inheritance and descent through the female line are still maintained by the people.

#### Change in family structure:

The traditional family structure consisting of mother and her offsprings (minor and major; married and unmarried) is disintegrating. In the traditional set the married daughters with their offsprings continued to depend on mother as the only source of income was agriculture. The sisters used to establish their independent households one by one with the help

of mother and youngest sister. Now this gap has been reduced because of the new economic opportunities. There are 60 (63%) joint and 35 (37%) nuclear families in Byndihati. This ratio is also prevalent in other Jaintia villages where agriculture is the primary source of livelihood. There are 148 nuclear (71%) and 60 joint families (29%) in Bapung. This disintegration has taken place during the last ten years. The average size of joint families is 9 at Byndihati and 8 at Bapung; the size of nuclear families is 4 and 5.2 respectively. This trend clearly shows that there is some relationship between commercial exploitation of coal and family type.

Change in authority:

Woman is the owner of property, bearer of children, sustainer of the family members and manager of the affairs of the family. Both married and unmarried daughters and sons have to remain faithful to her. Husbands of daughters visit at nights. They do not have any responsibility or authority in the family. Sons and brothers also help the mother or sisters respectively in the management of the household property. A man is a worker in his mother's or sister's paddy fields and farms. A new form of relationship is emerging now since the formation of neolocal households. Here, man and woman are equal partners.

Those Pnars who have come to work in the mines have also broken their traditional custom. Pnar women left their mothers and come to Bapung area with their husbands and children. I could not estimate their number since they are scattered all over the mining area. But their number appears to be quite substantial.

Division of labour in family:

In the traditional Pnar family the division of labour of males and females are clearly defined. Domestic services are done by women. Men are responsible for provision of security, clearing the forest for jhum cultivation, ploughing the paddy fields, hunting, building the house etc. Women also assist in farm work. Boys have to rear the cattle. The division of labour between the sexes is slowly fading. Now men and women share equal freedom in relation to work and it is usually based on the circumstances. Rich families in Bapung employ maid servants to do household chores like cooking, cleaning the utensils, carrying water, cleaning the houses etc. The women are just "housewives" or participants in the new business.

Individualism is growing in the family. In many families brothers and sisters do not know each other's economic enterprises.

Mixed Marriages:

My survey shows that mixed marriages between Pnar girls and outside men are on the increase in Bapung since the coal mining operation started in Bapung area. There are no mixed marriages in Byndihati.

The first mixed marriage between a Pnar girl and a Bengali occurred in 1979. Since then such marriages are increasing every year. The role of the husband is not so significant in the Pnar family. So, the local people do not give much importance to the incident. But when a Nepali businessman married a Pnar girl and started his business in Bapung in 1981 many local men disliked this union. The business is carried out in the wife's name by the Nepali. At present, he is one of the richest businessmen of the village. Several marriages between labourers also took place in the recent years (Table 2).

Table 2: Mixed marriages between Pnar girls of Bapung and outsiders.

Year	Nepali	Bengali	Assamese	Garo	Total
1979	-	1	-	-	1
1980	-	1	-	-	1
1981	2	1	-	-	3
1982	2	2	-	1	5
1983	3	3	1	2	9
1984	3	3	2	2	10
1985	3	3	2	3	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>40</b>

Economic changes:

Coal mining brought about many changes in the economic activities of the people. The land, coal mines and forest belongs to the local people. Land transactions between Pnars were very few about ten years ago. Paddy fields which are highly valued by the people are very rarely sold. The dry land in the hills had no commercial value except for the trees. But it takes about 25 to 30 years to grow a forest. The yield from the forest is also less. An acre of pine forest hardly fetches about Rs. 10,000 (i.e. in a period of 30 years). Realization of the commercial exploitation of coal has completely changed the attitude of the people towards dry land. Uncultivated barren lands belong to the community. Any member of the village can approach the village headman for permission to use the dry land. In the olden days it was used for shifting cultivation and the plot of land went back to the community. Again somebody else or the same person would claim the same plot of land after a gap of 5 years or more for shifting cultivation. The principle of dry land use was based on sharing the resources of nature and the community.

Since coal mining started people rushed to claim dry land all over the village. The lands were fenced by them or stones were put to demarcate the boundaries. Now the people

are claiming the dry land for a different use. The lands are not returned to the community because mining is a long term activity. Since everybody is interested in coal mining the traditional system simply broke down. In the process, some families claimed more land than other families. According to my observation, about 15 families own majority of dry land in Bapung. Since dry lands are not measured by the people, it is very difficult to estimate the amount of land owned by each family. They would just show a hillock and say that part of it belongs to them. Paddy fields are measured in terms of yield. But this method cannot be applied to dry land because the yield of coal is not known.

Lands are also acquired by outside people on lease. At present the rate of lease or purchase of one acre of dry land is about Rs. 20,000/- in Bapung and Rs. 1,000/- in Byndihati. One acre of forest land costs about Rs. 10,000/- in Byndihati. The cost of one acre of paddy field in any part of Jaintia Hills varies from Rs. 50,000 to Rs. 80,000/-. Contingent expenditures on health or death of a working member of the family compels a man or woman to sell land. Another motivating factor to sell or lease land is desire to acquire cash wealth without much effort. Mining is a new activity which has to be learnt. Those who do not wish to learn it simply gave their land on lease to outsiders.

Another important change which has taken place in the process is that of ownership of dry lands by men. Women did not take as much interest as men in claiming dry community land. As a result, men became owners of property. Since this is a self-acquired wealth, according to Pnar customary law, man can take independent decisions to manage his own affairs. After his death the property goes to the female children. Male children can enjoy the wealth and start their own business during the life time of the father.

A vast majority of the people in Bapung have given up agricultural activities. In the traditional system, agricultural works by big landowners were carried out on the basis of labour exchange. But now the exchange system has completely disappeared in Bapung. It is still in operation in Byndihati. I made a random selection of 30 households to find out the change of occupation from agriculture to coal mining. I found that agriculture was completely given up by 25 families. The other 5 families cultivate the lands with the help of hired labourers from distant villages. One reason for giving up agriculture is the high cost of labour. Another reason is that since the people now have more money they can buy rice and other foods from the market at any time.

Some coal miners have economic transactions with Marwaris residing in Jowai and Shillong. The Marwaris lend money to Pnar businessmen and charge interest at the rate of 25 to 30%.

Coal mining industry is in its infancy. None of the coal miners had substantial amount of deposits in banks. I verified this from the co-operative bank at Khliebriat. I was informed that they invested their profit in buying more land and for mining coal. About 12 mine owners have at least one truck each and some of them have upto 6 trucks. In all about 30 trucks are owned by the people of Bapung.

It is observed that people are becoming conscious of their economic class these days. Rich people have more contact with each other irrespective of their clan affiliation. The poor people who work in the mines are looked down upon by the rich people.

Mining operation in Bapung created a number of new occupations for the people. The earnings from these occupations are much higher than the earnings from agriculture. One crop of paddy is grown in Jaintia Hills mainly due to ecological and climatic conditions. So, the people are not fully engaged in productive labour for about six months in a year. Baskets, agricultural and other implements were made during the off season. High wages are paid by the coal miners. So, both men

and women of Bapung started working in coal mines. Men took up jobs such as drivers, managers and supervisors of coal mines, and manual labourers. Women started new shops (tea, grocery, vegetables etc.) to meet the needs of influx population.

Most of the shops are set up on the road side. There are about 12 tea shops on the road side in Bapung. These are managed by women. The average income in a tea shop is about Rs. 100/- per day. The net profit is about Rs. 50/- per day.

The prices of all commodities are very high in the mining area. People have started to realise the economic value of local commodities which had only food value in the traditional set up. Vegetables, fowls, eggs, were of little commercial value in the village. But now all these goods are in great demand. Any commodity can be sold by sitting near the road side for a few hours. Men, women and children are engaged in growing fruits, vegetables etc. with the intention of sale rather than consumption.

It is found from my household survey that about 65% of the population (above 15 years of age) are primarily engaged in coal mining either as owners or labourers and about 25% of the population is involved in agriculture and other subsidiary occupations. Hardly 10% of the population is primarily dependent on agriculture.

The main purpose of working in new areas is for money to cater to new needs. People prefer modern amenities like modern houses, vehicles and luxurious foods and clothing. The love for consumer goods like radio, tape recorder, T.V., video etc. have also increased.

The difference between an agricultural family and a coal mining family can also be noticed in dress, food habits and their behaviour. The rich people wear footwear, good clothes and women wear ornaments. They buy expensive foods from markets. Men from the rich families drink costly alcoholic beverages purchased from Jowai or Shillong whereas the agricultural families men drink locally made alcoholic beverages. Some changes can also be observed in the behavioural pattern of the business people.

Another significant change is found in the social life of the people. Disputes were less about ten years ago. The village elders and the headman used to resolve any dispute within the village. In the recent years the disputes have increased especially due to coal mining activity. Boundary dispute is the most common one between the villagers. Drinking and gambling by young men is also responsible for more disputes. Disputes sometimes lead to murder. Money played an important role in making the traditional leadership ineffective. It is said that anybody can be bribed these days.

The peaceful life of Bapung was disturbed by the mining industry. There is a steady increase in crime rate during the last ten years. Murder, dacoity, robbery, theft, burglary, rape etc. are quite common now. This is a new phenomenon in a tribal society. Earlier a murderer would be deported from the village. But now he evades arrest by the police and does not care for the village elders. The elders suggested that the tribals have learnt all the anti-social activities from the non-tribals. Majority of the crimes such as murder and rape are not reported to the police. Hence it is very difficult to get the statistics on these matters.

A Bihari labourer was killed and his body was thrown into a bush on 12th June 1985. He had come to Bapung with his wife to work in the coal mines a few months ago. The wife told me that some local youths might have killed her husband after petty quarrels. This case was not reported to the police.

Another murder took place on 21st June, 1985. A Pnar woman who was managing her own coal mine was killed by her labourers in the mining area. She had gone there to pay the wages of her labourers. The labourers took all her money and fled the place immediately.

Many cases of murder and rape were reported to me but I could not establish the authenticity of the reports as my stay was brief and my rapport with the people was not so close.

I also observed certain changes in the language and communication. Since the influx of outsiders who generally speak Hindi, Bengali or Assamese, a large number of local people have picked up these languages. Hindi is the most popular medium of communication between local entrepreneurs and migrant labourers. For example, local people have picked up words like kitna and kaha even when they are talking to each other. The Hindi movies and songs are also very popular in the area.

Certain changes have also taken place in religious activities and values of life. In Byndihati, if anyone dies all the villagers cancel their work, irrespective of their religion, and participate in the burial ceremony. They share certain common values. The situation is quite different in Bapung. In case of death, the participants in death ceremony are close relatives and friends. People are too busy in their economic pursuits. If they do not attend the mines the whole work will be suspended and the customer from the plains will be displeased. The individual in Bapung is caught in the web of complex economic relationships. The Christians of Bapung generally work on Sundays. This is also a new development which has taken place recently.

In the preceding paragraphs I have given a general account of the change which is still taking place in Bapung. I could not observe any such change in Byndihati village. I could not give

much quantified data to demonstrate the magnitude of change because of my brief stay in Bapung and the problem establishing rapport in a short period, especially when the people are very suspicious of the state government. They do not want any interference from the state in their mining activities. At the time of writing this report the issue of nationalising the coal mines of Meghalaya is being discussed in Meghalaya Legislative Assembly.

#### Case Studies:

In our study of human behaviour, we strive to obtain a fundamentally real and enlightened record of personal experiences which would reveal in concrete detail a man's inner strivings, tensions, motivations that drive him to action, the barriers that frustrate him or challenge him, the forces that direct him to adopt a certain pattern of behaviour and to live according to a certain scheme and philosophy of life, only some of man's experiences that can be learned by observing him in action. To understand his behaviour fully and intimately he must supply a detailed and penetrating account of what he does and has done, what he expects to do, and says he ought to do. A fairly exhaustive study of a person or group is called a life or case history. A comprehensive study of social unit - be that unit a person, a group, a social institution, a district, or a community is called a case study.

Case - 1:

Mr. P, 26 years of age at the time of study is a tall stately appearing person; morally alert, frank in manner, pleasing personality; has considerable poise; speaks with some insight into his situation. He displays traits generally found among other members of his group. He speaks English fluently. His case illustrates the difficulties involved in an agricultural society to acquire wealth. He had to go to Bapung for more wealth in the form of agricultural land and coal mines.

"I was born at Byndihati village. My mother says that my birth day is on the new year day. I spent my childhood in the village. My mother sent me to Lower Primary School in the village. Later on she sent me to Jowai. My early childhood was in the village of Byndihati, my boyhood was spent in Jowai town. I do not remember much about my first few years of life, except that we were always poor, toiling day and night. My father could not make a living. My father was a farmer. I remember that wherever we went people looked at us queerly. My father had a bushy beard, mother wore a shawl on her head.

At the age of fifteen I went to work in the paddy fields during my winter holidays. I earned five rupees a day. I collected this little amount of money for my schooling. I bought exercise books and other stationery required in the school.

Thus, I completed my schooling in hardship. I underwent many difficulties. I took a new life when I sold my trees to the contractors who came at Byndihati. The timbers had been cut down for sale. Now it is for the first time I could see a huge amount of money. At first I was tempted to misuse the money. I was thinking of spending it for drinks and other enjoyments. But when I realised that I am at the wrong track I invested the money by buying coal mine at Bapung. From this investment I became better in the family. I bought one truck and built a modern house. Now I am in a better position. Poor people in the village come to ask for help, some of the extremely poor families were aided by me. For I knew the difficulties the poor people faced, as I had experience as a poor man in the village. But the fate gave me the chance to be in a better position.

I am a bachelor, I want to look after my parents. My two sisters got married but left the family. They live with their husbands. My father and mother were very sorry to see the negligence by my sisters. They left my father and mother at their old age at home, without any care, they cried for help. Thus I decided to stay at home and look after them."

Case - 2:

Mr. AB is one of the enthusiastic coal mine owners and managers in Bapung in 1985. He is the eldest in the family. His present age is 28 years. In his family there are five boys and three girls. His father sent him for schooling at Jowai. After

Matric he dropped the studies. He applied for a job. He got a job at P.W.D. The P.W.D. Department sent him as a Maharal for Bapung and Lad Rymbai road. While working as a Maharal he saw the workers of P.W.D. master roll who have some business with the coal of Bapung. They bought the coal at a very low rate of 25 p. per kg. where they stock at the road side and sell it to the truck drivers who go to Gauhati.

There was an old woman who has no children, living alone. She has a coal mine, but she could not dig the coal out because she had no capital to work it out. Thus, with good understanding she gave to Mr. AB to work it out and get a share out of it. The business to work in the coal mine started since that time only.

The money received from selling the coal was shared between an old woman and Mr. AB. From the money he earned and salary from P.W.D. he bought a coal mine of his own. From this coal mine he earned enough money to buy 5 other coal mines. He bought one coal mine each for his sisters and brothers. He bought this so that they can earn money at the latter stage of their lives.

He bought two trucks to carry the coal from the jungle to the road side. What did he do with the money he received from selling coal? I was informed that when he got money, the

first thing he did was to construct a house. He bought chairs and other furnitures to beautify the room.

In the year 1983 he got married with one girl from neighbouring village. He made up his mind not to marry a girl from Bapung for he knows all their family background. Most of the girls from the rich families are proud and thus he was afraid to get married with such girls. Mr. AB has one child. The village of his wife is far and thus he had to go each day to her house by truck which was really a great hindrance to his business. In the last 6 months he brought his wife and child to his mother's house. A separate bed room is given to him and his wife. But for food and other essential things he depends on mother. There are many young me who brought their wives to live with them.

Mr. AB is one of the local youth leaders. Whenever there is any disputes with people from outside his decision is honoured by the people.

Case - 3:

Mr. S. is an old and experienced business man. His age is 65 years. He belongs to Nepali community. He left Nepal at the age of 20 years. He did some business at Shillong. He knew the wealth hidden in Bapung. But he found it difficult to enter the village. He managed to enter the village only through

marriage with Miss P. whom he met regularly at Shillong. Miss P married Mr. S with an intention to acquire wealth. She knew that he was a rich business man. He was too senior for her age in the marriage. Through this marriage with Miss P he could buy coal mines and land in her name. Mrs. P. lets her name, the real work is managed by her husband. All the decisions are made by him. The days of hardship in the life of Mrs. P has turned to a comfortable life since the time she married Mr. S. Her main activity now is the household activity. She cooks food and looks after the children. They have four children. All are using father's surname. Mr. S is a shrewd business man. He employed most of the labours who belong to his community. At certain times there were even conflicts with the villagers. His workers are so well armed that the villagers are scared to fight against them. The police force was invited to take up the matter several times. Thus many of his labourers have been removed from the village. Being a rich man the people are afraid that he may use force against them. He constructed a big concrete building. The house is well fenced. He has two cars, one jeep and six trucks. In his house there is video. The neighbouring families come to see video.

Mr. S arranged the marriage for his daughters with his own people. He knew that only through marriage he could get the rights in the coal mining area of Bapung. Such cases have come

up in Bapung. An outsider wants to marry a Bapung girl for the sake of wealth or for opening business in the area. According to the local customs daughters born to a local woman belong to the local community. So, the daughters of Mr. S and Mrs. P are entitled to own property in Bapung. Since their husbands are Nepalis, Mr. S still controls the business through the help of his sons-in-law.

Case - 4:

Mr. H, a resident of Byndihati, is 50 years. He has four children, three boys and one girl. At their very childhood he wanted to train them for agricultural activity. The story of this family is as follows:

"I am old now, I cannot go to see my wet paddy fields. When I was young I spent half of my life in cultivation. Early in the morning my mind is occupied how to cultivate for that particular day. I want to go early in the morning. My eldest son was trained to follow my example. My wife packed all the essential things required for the day to work at the paddy fields. Thus the whole day is spent in the paddy field. In the evening I come back to my home. From one season to another I am busy in my paddy field. During the winter season I prepared the land for sowing. During the sowing period I was extremely busy, it is one of the hardest season. After a few months I will be busy in weeding. I am very busy during the harvest season.

After harvest season I rest for a while and then I get ready to prepare the land for cultivation. My life time is moving like this from season to another. But now it is a great surprise to see the decline of traditional economy. My sons are no longer interested to work in paddy field. They are more interested to do business in markets and to do some contract work."

The family of H is one of the families which abandoned the agriculture work. They sold their trees in the form of timber and invested the money in other business.

But as it appears today, vast majority of people in Byndihat1 still practice agriculture. The only source of each money to the people is forest. But once the tree is cut, it takes about 20 to 25 years to grow another forest. Thus the people face a lot of problems when the forest is cut for timbers. So, some people who live in the village have to search for another economic activity from which they can get money.

Case - 5:

The biggest money-lender of Bapung village is illiterate and is around 55 years old. Since he had no sister his mother's land was inherited by his mother's youngest sister. After his mother's death he stayed for two years in the youngest aunt's house (Ka Iing Seng) and worked on the lineage paddy fields. At that time he was a boy of around 14-15 years.

He then moved out to another village in quest of fortune. He worked in a liquor shop for 6 - 7 years and accumulated a little savings and came back to the village. He lent his savings within the village and for two years he worked as household labourer during the ploughing season in exchange of free food, clothing etc. He accumulated some more savings both in cash and kind (paddy) and lent them out. In the third year he bought a plot of land and cultivated it himself. Around this time he got married but within a year lost his wife in child-birth. He did not remarry immediately. With consumption expenditure remaining more or less constant the volume of loanable funds kept on increasing from year to year with a rise in income. According to reports he never took the mortgaged land in default of repayment of loan. But whenever the debtor was not able to redeem the debt he got the opportunity to buy it off on favourable terms. Slowly he came to own more land than he could cultivate himself. First he employed one labourer and then the next year another labourer for the full ploughing season, making a team of three plough men together cultivating paddy, maize etc. His income from credit activities kept on increasing and he kept on buying paddy fields and dry lands. The land which he could not cultivate was given on rent. Renting out of land naturally decreased his net returns from land. This led him to buy cattle and rent them out at the

rate of Rs. 3/- per month per cow. This, however, does not imply that he completely stopped lending against land mortgage or stopped buying paddy fields. He actually preferred investing in land because returns from rented out land were higher than the returns from cattle. Moreover, (a) he understood land transactions better, and (b) he expected the land value to rise while that of the stock of cattle to fall due to old age and their ultimate death.

The factors which made him a rich man in the village are good health and hard work. Stable consumption level despite rising income and small family size (2) with him, perhaps thrift is simply a habit, almost a reflex whose origin he does not himself know. He keeps increasing the size of the cake without eating it. Is the increase in the stock societal wealth or is it at the expense of someone else in the society? We know that land deal is merely a transfer item. So that we can straight-away state that increase in his land ownership is at the expense of some else in the society, all other things remaining constant. However, if we assure that he is a more hard working man than the previous owner, the transfer of land would prove to be more beneficial to the society because the aggregate output, to that extent there is a net increase in the size of the cake. Thus 'net investment' remaining constant, if land is transferred from a lazy man to a hard working man the

aggregate societal output tends to rise. Labour thus turns into capital. In the conventional estimates of capital resources of capital formation in underdeveloped countries. The results of the expenditure of time, effort and money in the creation, extension, improvement and upkeep of agricultural holding are often disregarded.





BULKS USED FOR PLOUGHING AT BYNDIHATI

WEEKLY MARKET AT K LAD RYMBAI

WEEKLY MARKET AT K LAD RYMBAI

CHAPTER - VIICONCLUSIONS

I did not start this study with any specific hypothesis to be tested. My main aim was primarily to examine the situations of change which are taking place in two villages Bapung and Byndihati because of certain economic activities which are well known today as coal mining (Khieh Mooiong) and timber lumbering. The new economy has changed the mode of life to some extent. My design to the study the implications are stated in the following question:

What are the implications of commercial exploitation of timber and coal on the general economy and the traditional socio-cultural institutions in two villages, viz., Bapung and Byndihati?

We can say that there is a change in the entire economic activity of the people in the coal mining area. The inhabitants of Bapung have moved from agriculture to coal mining. Multiplicity of occupations and occupational mobility are two other features. When in a village a farmer becomes a truck driver it should be considered as a case of occupational mobility. Such cases are rare in villages but very frequent in urban areas. As it appears today there is a tremendous change taking place in the whole mining area. The population is increasing in the mining area. People have come from different parts of the region

and the country to work in the area. Some are locals and others are Nepalese and Bengalese. Most of the labourers stay temporarily in the mining area. They move from place to place. There is no fixed place where they work. The local people (Pnars) of neighbouring villages come to work in the mines during the agricultural off-season.

#### Economic Changes:

My economic change I mean a change in economic roles and relations. Both Bapung and Byndihati have undergone considerable economic development during the last 15 years, that is to say in both villages the output of goods and services has increased considerably with the same or greater labour input. Both villages have changed from subsistence to cash economies. But the resultant economic changes were quite different in Bapung and Byndihati. Byndihati economy has remained wholly agricultural, while Bapung has a diversified economy. Diversification of economy in Bapung led to its integration into regional economy. People of Bapung took up employments such as contractors, managers of coal mines, drivers. They participate in new trades and commerce. The mining activity has been diverted for commercial purposes. Individuals act in their self-interest as they perceive it and are usually unconscious of the social relations which affect their behaviour. The employment of men in the new economy has increased. The economic role of women has

also changed. The women of those well-to-do families in Bapung do household activities. The earning is mainly done by men and the household activities are done by women. But in the poor families women are also involved in many other activities to earn their livelihood.

The economic role of wives has changed since the advent of coal mining. Men in Bapung devoted all their time in coal mining. It became a matter of prestige for a husband to relieve his wife of the duties of helping in cultivating the land. The population in the area has increased by a large number of immigrants. This influx coincided with and was made possible by the coming of the outsiders to work in the mines. Formally land was for practical purposes the only source of wealth. The coal mining opened a new source of wealth, which the local people as well as the immigrants started to exploit. At one time there must have been two distinct socio-economic categories: the old residents who own the land, the new comers who have no land but derive their wealth from commerce. Subsequently some of the new comers became landowners and some of the old residents went in for trade.

The commercial exploitation of coal in Bapung raised the value of land. Formerly, the farmer lived a simple life. Land, that gives and sustains life was the centre of social,

economic and cultural life of the farmer. To the farmer each fragment of land has a different name. A farmer talking about his land gives the impression that he is talking about a vibrant and important living being, which has to be served and invoked. Land is at the core around which the details of social and economic institutions are woven. He is emotionally entangled with the land.

The economic measures of individual land holding, however, was difficult, because in this village no record exists of individual land ownership or occupational holding. The estimation of land ownership, productivity of the land, labour ratio etc. in accordance with the accepted practice in economic literature was difficult. But the non-existence of records of all kinds of lands posed certain problems in this research. Until recently the dry land was not in great demand. The traditional land laws were based on the needs of households and clan. Formerly most of the dry land known as (hot kseh) were used for jhum cultivation.

The immigrants would obtain land and the old residents learnt to exploit the new economic opportunities. It would be wrong to imply that the new comers were a corporate socio-economic group to be set off against the old corporate village. They were not counted as a group. They come with their friends, relatives etc. and most of them do not stay permanently in the area.

The environment and the techniques set a limit to the amount of land in the vicinity of the village that in the past years the dry land did not come into the market. But from the time of the excavation of the coal the value of the land has come up, especially in those places where the coal deposit is abundant.

This poses the problem: Why did the residents sell their land? Other businesses were also increasing in the mining area. The outsiders tried to acquire more land on lease. The persuasiveness of the money lenders no matter how compelling, cannot in itself be an efficient cause. Many villagers preferred to lease the land to outsiders rather than to take the trouble of learning a new trade.

Whatever be the case in other areas, Bapung's land still comes into the market because the demand for coal is increasing. They want to get more money. In other words the owners want to realize capital and in certain income categories this means selling or leasing land.

When lands come up for sale or lease they are bought by persons who have other sources of income than cultivation alone. This has led to a considerable redistribution of land. Some people have tried to find money through other means. Here is the opportunity even to the poor man to make money. Because there are many activities involved in coal mining.

Land yields food and food is essential to life. However farming is not merely an economic activity or a means of making a living it is rather a way of life. Each farmer develops an emotional attachment to his land. By working in his land he will continue to be a farmer. The persistence of the value attached to farming in Byndihatl reflects the stability of the economy and the resistance to change from agricultural to non-agricultural economy. The resistance to change in economic values appears to be a general social phenomena.

Economic development has considerably increased the strife for prestige in Bapung. Traditional Pnar people have an egalitarian outlook. There is no caste system. It is not surprising therefore that when increased economic opportunities led to challenge those ascribed status by those with achieved status. The struggle for prestige became intensified. The different criteria of prestige employed in two villages reflect the different types of economic development they have undergone. The economic diversification led to greater economic differentiation. Dress has become an important criteria of prestige. The rich wear fine cloths even on the working days.

It is seen that most of the rich men smoke cigarettes, increased expenditure on wedding and so on. Similarly relieving women from agricultural labours is a prestige for men.

The type of home a man owns is a matter of prestige in both villages. The poorest villagers live in mud huts with thatched roofs.

Economic development has effected a change in prestige values in Bapung to a great extent and to a lesser extent in Byndihati, because the higher incomes allow for greater refinement in prestige criteria. Economic development led to the dominance of the nuclear family unit. Familial change may thus occur quite independent of any other structural change. Economic development results in some change in prestige values and the latter are influenced by the principles on which the social life of the people have changed.

It is found that the greater the opportunity for profit in any social-cultural situation the weaker the ties of extended kinship will become. Thus economic development whether or not it brings about economic changes has almost invariably resulted in the breaking up of joint family ties. The partitioning of joint families affects the relationship between parents and children. Formerly, the son showed great respect to the parents, especially mother. Now they are independent in decision making. The sons assume an attitude of greater independence because they have their own business. At the same time, the relation between brothers has also changed. Formerly younger

brothers showed high respect to their elder brothers. But now all these have changed. Greater economic independence affected the respect shown by men towards their father and brothers. It also affected the relationship between husband and wife to a great extent.

The immediate effect of the influx population in the area is the increasing number of mixed-marriages. Several Pnar girls have married the outsiders who came to work in the mining area. Mrs. K who married a Bengali told me that she married him for money and security. After marriage she adopted the style of living (food habits, dress etc.) of her husband's community. Such marriages are on the rise now. The local boys do not want to see their girls get married with the outsiders or the non-tribals. The mixed-marriages create conflicts between the local boys and outside men.

---

REFERENCES:

1. Banerjee, Sukumar,  
1981  
Impact of Industrialisation on  
Tribal population of Tharia  
Ranigany Coal Field Areas.  
Calcutta:  
Anthropological Survey of India.
2. Barih, Hamlet  
1977  
The Language and Literature of  
Meghalaya  
Simla:  
Indian Institute of Advanced Study.
3. Brease, Gerald  
1969  
Urbanization in Newly Developing  
Countries N  
New Delhi:  
Prentice Hall of India Pvt.Ltd.,.
4. Choudhury J.N.  
1978  
The Khasi Canvas:  
A Cultural and Political History  
SHILLONG
5. Dalton, G.  
1971  
Economic Anthropology and Develop-  
ment  
New York:  
Basic Books,
6. Das and Banerjee,  
1964  
Impact of Industrialisation on the  
life of the Tribals of Bengal  
Calcutta:  
C.R.C.Special Service 4.

~~XXXXXXXXXX~~

7. Firth, R.  
1967  
Themes in Economic Anthropology.  
London:  
Tavistick Publication.
8. Govt. of India  
1981  
Report on Development of Tribal  
Ateas
9. Gurdon P.R.T.  
1907  
The Khasis  
New Delhi:  
Cosmo Publication (Reprint)
10. Hatt and Goode  
1952  
Methods in Social Research copy  
right by M.C.Graw Hill Book  
Company.
11. Herskovitz, M.  
1974  
Economic Anthropology  
New Delhi:  
Eurasia.
12. Kaushal, Vincent  
1978  
Socio-Economic Study of  
Bhoilymbong  
A Village in Meghâlaya  
Madras:  
Diocesan.
13. Mathur, P.R.G.  
1979  
Khasi of Meghalaya:  
A Study in Tribalism and Religion  
New Delhi.



