CHAPTER-II

Karbi Folk Narratives and Advocacy for Liberal and Democratic Spirits:

“Although the Karbis are very simple and innocent by nature; despise wars and do not have the propensity for hatching any conspiracy because of their weakness, they too are human beings. They also do have feelings and emotions, and have the ability to realize happiness or unhappiness and freedom, but due to the incessant and inexplicable torture and exploitations openly inflicted upon us by your soldiers and councilors ever since the past did not allow us to live as animals, not to speak of the possibility of living as free human beings.....” [1]

As we go through the storehouse of the oral narratives of the Karbis with a view to gleaning information, we come across only a sizable number of kings of the community, probably because of their inability to preserve written records of the genealogy and deeds and feats of their royal pedigrees. However, there cannot be any inkling of doubt that the Karbis had real kings in the past, and Sot Recho, the first formally ordained king; Hār Pokkāŋ, Kādengsiri, Rengbonghom (the ever-known greatest king of the race), are some such examples. Anyway, they had no any specified kingdom in the real sense. We come across yet another king called Bamonpo, if we go through the Karbi epic, Sābin Ālun. Beyond this, however, history, even oral tradition, is mute regarding the coronation and continuity of kingship in Karbi community for a long period till the establishment of their kingdom at Socheng in West Karbi Anglong district bordering Meghalaya. Later on the Karbis shifted their capital from Socheng to Niz Rongkhang (also known as Ronghang Rongbong) situated at about 16 km south of Hamren, the sub-divisional headquarters of the district. They have a parliament called ‘Pinpomar’, who used to (in vogue till date) select the Karbi traditional king called ‘Lingdokpo’. The King
still exercises his traditional authority in respect of socio-cultural and religious matters. Each village under the erstwhile Karbi kingdom was (practiced till date) headed by a village headman called ‘Rong Sārthē’. Several contiguous Karbi villages constituted one ‘Longri’ (a jurisdiction) and the administrative officer of a ‘longri’ was called ‘Hābē’ or ‘Hābāi’. The kingdom had twelve such ‘longris’ and those ‘longris’ were divided into four ‘Ārtus’ (provinces) and each of them was governed by an officer called ‘Lingdok’. And at the apex of the four Lingdos was the King– the ‘Recho’ or the ‘Lingdokpo’.

It is pretty presumable that the Karbis had lost the trace of many kings, Rechos or Lingdokpos due to the lack of written records who might have reigned peacefully in those yesteryears. The present Lingdokpo may retain the symbolic strength and influence of a king but it must also be acknowledged that he has lost much of its lustre and grandeur. It is interesting to note that since time immemorial till today the Karbis had kings without ‘politics’ and sans conventions or any written constitution. Interesting again to see that there was no Queen who ever could rule, though there is a princess, ‘Sinta Kungri’, as stated in the Sabin Alun, the Karbi Ramayana, a ‘glocalized’ Hindu epic. The King of the Karbis is neither an absolute monarch like Louis XIV of France for whom “the state, it is me”; nor any ‘kongeloven’ (King’s law); nor further is he like a Zulu king, who derives his power from the government (of South Africa). He has nothing to do with political affairs or any mundane or secular matters. He wields, however, considerable influence in the realm of social customs and traditions, religion and spirituality. He has thus much affinity with that of a Prussian monarch who considers himself and is revered as ‘the first servant of the state’, an adroit organizer and a devoted reformer of the society or the state.

If we closely examine the rich plethora of the oral narratives of the Karbis down the ages, we must be prone to believe that they as a race or community were unmistakably peace-loving tactfully avoiding conflicts and animosity with their
neighbours during their migratory stages, and on unavoidable occasions, they had
evinced their capability of undertaking fierce, aggressive and vindictive actions. The
another fact that the oral narratives unfold before us is that the Karbis as a civilized
community had never lacked good people in the real sense of the term, for, examples
galore in them of a good number of intellectuals, social thinkers and reformers with
fertile brains and reformative zeal; warriors, soldiers and patriots; organizers with
unmatched administrative acumen; singers and chanters; weavers, farmers and
myriad other artisans, or to be more precise, an enviable number of tradition-bearers.
The Karbi society in the past, as in the present, was built upon or divided into
various hierarchical orders, but, surprisingly enough, the king as well as the
common folks had enjoyed the same amount of freedom while living in the society.
The king, in reality, was only one among the peace-loving multitude, who used to
lead and was spontaneously obeyed and followed by virtue of his ingenuity and
benevolence manifested through his strong urge for serving the society and his
people selflessly and devotedly, and for bringing in progress to both of them through
a series of social activism, innovative and reformative agenda. Thus, one is induced
to ponder that many, if not all, of the Karbi leaders possessing reformatory and
progressive ideologies can very justifiably be exalted and conferred the status of
actual kings, though they were not ceremonially ordained. We are further provoked
to speculate that it was not only Sot Recho, Bāmonpo, Hār Pokkāng, Kādengsiri,
Thi-reng Vāng-reng (?), Rengbonghom who were real kings, but considering the
ingenious talent and versatility displayed by a host of social thinkers and reformers
like Ru-Kāsen, Hemphu or Rāng Mukrāng, along with many unknown and unsung
heroes of the community also could be considered with due regards as kings. On the
other hand, a king requires a good number of ministers or royal dignitaries to carry
out his benevolent activities for the betterment of the subjects or of the entire
community. Thus, while Thong Nokbe, Vāisong and Rongphārpi Rongbe could be
reckoned as warriors and patriots, the Mirjeng brothers (Long Mirjeng and Sing
Mirjeng), Rāngsinā Sārpo, Longbisedu, Ve' Longbi and Hār Longbi, Kāreng and
Kading (the two daughters of Rangmukrang), could without any demur be honoured as agents of the king for successful implementation of his philanthropic policies. However, due to some unscrupulous and whimsical agenda coercively imposed upon the simple folks many of such benevolent royal policies had to earn undue blemishes opposed to the envisagement of the kings. Whenever such internal and intra-racial disaster arose the Karbi society was fortunate enough to witness a good number of reactionary groups plunging into the acts of purgation. The legendary Karbi women like Hai-imu, Dinmir, Kāché (as narrated in Dengrali Myth), Dichumāi, Lāṛā, Ser Dihun and the members of the ‘Jirsong’ under a torturous village-head who had committed a collective suicide at Cheleng Āthepāi and so forth can be duly recognized as exemplary.

A. Brief Synopses of the Oral Narratives:

1. Hemphu- The Great Creator of the Universe:

Hemphu or Songsār Recho, according to the Karbis, is the creator of the universe along with the human and non-human worlds. He is also known as Lāngmeng (Lāngming), Lāngmingpo Vo’hāng, Phuthe-Phithe, Āhem Āri, Kim Ārnām, Bochē Ārnām (God attending on the welfare of the family) etc. As narrated in the myth the universe did not exist or have any organic shape in the distant past. Hemphu, therefore, speculated upon the necessity of creating the same. That urgency necessitated him to share views and counselling with that of the other gods and goddesses, and consequently created this world along with its mountains, valleys and plains; rivers and other water bodies; trees, plants and creepers; animals and other creatures; birds and reptiles as a part of this vast universe. After accomplishing his intended task, Hemphu, however, went back to heaven. Having a bird’s eye view down this universe from above he found it very fascinating and was elated to the extreme. However, he was saddened to discover that there was none to appreciate the beauty and the creator of such a grand universe. The reason behind this was that he had not endowed the faculty of feeling or reasoning upon any
creature. Thus, out of necessity, he came down to this universe again to render the Nelson touch to his creation. With that purpose in mind he intended to create human beings- the greatest of all beings and accordingly appointed the god, Rangbeni to carry out the process of creation further on. He proceeded on to the works of creation with utmost devotion. First of all, Rangbeni moulded two different shapes of human beings having different organs- male and female. The shapes became attractive after being endowed with life. Thus, he kept on propagating human beings pairs after pairs. At a stage when he started facing shortage of materials of creation Rangbeni intimated Hemphu one day that he found no increase in his earlier creations, and therefore, they ought to think about proliferation of their family. Consequently Hemphu empowered the human beings with the knowledge and ability to procreate, and thus their number started growing ever after.

2. Sot Recho[8]— The Miserable Prophet:

As one of the Karbi legends has it, Sot Recho was believed to have been a very truthful divine human being. So far the legend goes during the regime of Sot Recho the entire Karbi society had to live under domination of a few ‘Thekeres’[9]. Some such influential quacks used to live almost in every area and the common folks under his control were compelled to bow down before his suppressive dictation. It is said that a group of innocent Karbi people had to wander precariously in the jungles in order to escape their inexplicable harassment. On the other hand, some other groups did not hesitate to involve in some barbaric acts like human sacrifice and homicide after being influenced by the tentacles of the magic and tricks of such misanthropic priestly quacks. Having to witness all those ominous phenomena Sot Recho had to lament. He could not tolerate further any such savage act and injustice prevalent in the Karbi society. That was the reason why he indefatigably strove to build a fair and new Karbi society by eradicating corruptions, injustices and superstitions. As envisaged he used to wander from one village to another and enlightened the people about reformative ideals. However, as the fate
would have it, the miserable Karbi community did not allow his dreams a congenial space to germinate.

As is recounted in the legend, a strange phenomenon had taken place in the world during the days of Sot Recho. The people of the entire world, willy-nilly, used to prepare dishes from the human flesh of their own kings. The same belief had infected some of the ignoble Karbis too, and they surreptitiously conspired to kill their king, Sot Recho accordingly. As premeditated, Sot Recho was coercively captivated and killed in public, and every possible arrangement was made to cook his flesh with mustard oil. But, alas! No sooner had the flesh been poured into the cauldron, Sot Recho returned to life and sat on the frying pan smiling. They attempted again to cook the meat but the king came back to life again. Having tried thrice, yet again the king got back alive. The conspiring Karbi people, however, were not taken aback by this miracle, rather enjoyed sadistic pleasure. Being disappointed, a public assembly was convened. In that meeting it was unanimously agreed upon that the king’s flesh should be roasted with the help of strong soda as instigated by some anti-Sot Recho factions. As proposed the king’s flesh was roasted with strong soda in a big cauldron. The king could not come to life again this time, and the pathetic cry of the king from the dish could be heard instead. That cry remained as a curse upon all the Karbi community bequeathed by the king till date. As stated in the legend, Sot Recho had addressed the whole crowd on the eve of his tragic death:

“That the Karbis are ignorant and insensible; I’ve understood it better only today. Your foolishness shall remain for a long time. You’ve shattered all my hope for re-incarnation by roasting my flesh with strong soda. Today you are revelling by watching the trauma of my death. For this you shall have to suffer generation after generation. From today onward no king shall be born among the Karbis. You shall have to aimlessly wander through
jungles kingless and anarchic. Other races shall laugh at you and despise you by seeing your misery.”[10]

Sot Recho further was believed to have forecast:

"I'll re-incarnate only after the end of the racial catastrophe of the Karbis. Many unprecedented occurrences shall take place as an omen to my re-incarnation into this world. Eggs shall germinate; quadraped pigs shall sprout out piercing from sieves. Young ones of the goats shall be born six-footed from their mother's womb. These you shall certainly witness."[11]

The body of the legendary Karbi king, Sot Recho thus got diffused with the simmering ripples of the water. The ideas and sensibilities, innovative and reformative zeal, thus disappeared with the boiling heat of the oil. Sot Recho could not leave behind any trace. He remained a legendary king forever. Hence, the Karbi society is still embracing all his curses as ideals.

3. Har Bamon- The Great Priest Counsellor:

Ru-Kasen is believed to have been the first founder and organizer of villages in Karbi society. He was that great man who offered counselling to Har Bamon to establish a new village. He also advised him to accommodate one thousand families in that village. Accordingly Har Bamon founded the large village called ‘Teron Rongsopo’ at the behest of Ru-Kasen. Ru-Kasen also had entrusted the entire administrative responsibility of that village upon Har Bamon. After getting one Bheleu tree[12], one Simolu tree[13], and one Ejar tree[14]planted he announced further that so long as those trees would live, Har Bamon would be ruling over that village.

Just after receiving the power to rule, Har Bamon too persevered to make the Karbi society advanced in every field. Realizing the irrefutable truth that every being survives only by taking food, he started contemplating to bring about agricultural revolution by making the people active and enthusiastic.
Cultivation was in vogue among the Karbi people. So Har Bamon planned to encourage the people to go for *jhum* cultivation through co-operative system. He had selected the Amseng hill as a suitable place for that purpose. Although the exact location of that particular hill cannot be known yet it is conjectured to be the present Amsoi hill situated on the bank of Amsoi river. He made the pious beginning of farming by getting a fertility rite, ‘Hāchā Kekān’, which is still perpetuated by the Karbi society till date. As narrated in the ‘Jiro Pāngseng’ folk song it is said that Hār Bāmon called a meeting with a view to devising all about this pious beginning of the co-operative farming by inviting all the ‘Pherāṅkēs’ (convenors) as well as the villagers. And in that very meeting he apprised the public of his envisagement about co-operative farming. He constituted the first-ever ‘Jirkēdām’ (the Karbi youth dormitory) after garnering the support from the common masses. The society had comprised twenty six male and equal numbers of female members who were allotted with different offices and responsibilities. A house was built to facilitate the office-bearers of the society to discuss various matters and conduct divergent agenda. That youth dormitory was actually the center for traditional knowledge, a kind of formal or institutionalized school for the unmarried Karbi teens. The members of the society had to take vow to abide by all its rules and regulations, and to execute all its aims and objectives. Har Bamon had inculcated various necessary arts and craftsmanship required in a society to juvenile youths. Thus the formation of ‘Jirkēdām’ in the distant past must be considered as important and innovative without any smattering of doubt. He had to confront with myriad obstacles, trials and tribulations; had to undergo hard labour and self-sacrifice. That is the reason why Hār Bāmon lives as an epitome of an ever-revered and worshipped great person of the Karbi society till today. He tried his best to equip the future generation of the race with proper education, because the kind of education that was imparted through such institutions was associated with social rites and customs, spiritual know-how, administration, farming, art and culture, and living together with order. Apart from
‘Teron Rongsopi’ हार बामोन was also believed to have founded two other villages, such as, ‘Okli Rongsopi’ and ‘Borli-e’.

4. Ru-Kasen- The Great Village Organizer:

The Karbis feel proud of themselves by respectfully remembering Ru-Käsen\[16\] as a social reformer. However, it is indispensable to know something about the old social system of the Karbis, if we are to know about Ru-Kasen, which alone will help us in having a genuine and clear notion about his virtuosity.

There was a perceptible difference between the collective lifestyle of the Karbis and the other hills tribes in the pre-historic days. The Karbis did not have any permanent arrangement for living. They used to select a particular hill for farming because of their love for jhum cultivation. Their system of farming also was different from others, who used to grow different types of crops on same hill slopes or ‘jhum’ field depending on suitability of the weather. They did not have any idea about granary and used to store their harvested crops in the ‘mandus’ (makeshift huts) built for that purpose. They were accustomed to leaving the place only to adopt the same temporary accommodation and sauntering lifestyle when they could learn about the decreasing fertility of the field after one or two years. In that way the Karbis used to spend ages by taking recourse to temporary farming moving from one hill to another. They did not have any idea about society or social system because of their sauntering and precarious lifestyle. At that very critical juncture of time a divine soul named Ru-Käsen took his incarnation. He is credited to have bequeathed the Karbis an organized social system. The Karbis learned to live in organized villages and towns only after Kasen’s time. As narrated in the folksong Ru-Käsen along with his consort, Bäsäpi, started to lay down the foundation for permanent living and promotion of art and culture on one fine day. In the very dawn Bäsäpi intimated her intention to her husband by offering holy ‘jorlang’[17] with reverence to this effect:
"Oh, my godly husband, please be attentive to my plea; please be wise enough to teach our subjects the art of living by establishing permanent and disciplined villages so that they can keep pace with other civilized societies of the world. If it is not done, they will be lagged far behind unlike other races." [18]

Being persuaded by his dear wife, Ru-Kasen taught his people the requisite art, that is, various rites and rituals conducive for living in a society. From that time onward they took to living by founding permanent houses and villages. Thus, Basapi planned to establish permanent lifestyle of her people in league with her husband. In the very next morning Ru-Kasen summoned the 'Pherângke' (messenger) and dictated him to collect equal amount of rice so that rice beer could be prepared for that grand occasion. He also directed the 'pherângke' to call upon the villagers to assemble at his residence to attend the meeting that would be held on the following day. The 'pherângke' obeyed Ru-Kasen and did as the wise man had wanted. On the other hand, Basapi completed the preparation of the rice beer within three days and nights being assisted by the village women, and intimated the same to her husband in the following manner:

"Oh, godly husband, as directed by your highness the process of preparation of the rice beer has been completed. Now it's your turn to initiate the conference by inviting all the villagers to our residence." [19]

Thus, Ru-Kâsen invited all the villagers through the 'pherângke' to his residence. The villagers too sat in ordered rows after coming to his house. Basapi showed her obeisance not only to her husband but also to all the villagers by offering rice beer. And then Ru-Kasen expressed his intent before the whole village folks thus:

"Oh, my children-like subjects, the farm land of our village has been losing its fertility day by day, and has been becoming unsuitable for further cultivation. None of us shall be able to prosper by lingering here anymore.
Therefore, I'm contemplating that it will be wiser on our part to move to another place leaving the present one. Now, in this context, I want to know from you whether we should proceed toward ‘Rongrengsang’ or ‘Nongkula’.” [20]

The ever-obedient subjects opined that Nongkula would prove talismanic for them after minute consultation and accordingly, Ru-Kasen arranged all the necessary materials and proceeded towards the proposed place. No sooner had they reached Nongkula, Ru-Kasen offered prayer before God for the welfare of the subjects by offering pure rice beer, ‘jorlang’ in conformity with Karbi custom. Having convinced that Nongkula was the best place for founding a permanent township, he advised all of them to prepare for the same. After getting the leader’s direction the subjects started building a vast village that could accommodate one thousand families. The houses were built in two beautiful rows with a route running in between. A road was constructed to lead them towards the river, Kopili and the bank of that river was selected as the site for collection of water. After the task of building the village Rangmukrang was ordained as the ‘Sarthe’ (Village head) and was formally entrusted with administrative responsibilities as per Karbi custom and convention. That was the first Karbi village, ‘Miring Rongsopi’ so dear to the Karbis, which was located just close to the river, Kopili.

5. Rengbonghom- The Great Social Reformer:

It is believed that Rengbonghom was the greatest and the father to all Karbi kings. He was the king who enlightened the Karbis by bringing about a sea-change to the old and superstition-ridden Karbi social systems. The changing scenario and progressive ideology of the present Karbi society owe much to that great social reformer. As the legend has it, Kadengsiri ascended the throne after his elder brother, Harpokkkang’s demise. Thong Nokbe was the chieftain of the Jaintia king during the regime of Kadengsiri, and hence the latter got the opportunity rule peacefully. Rengbonghom succeeded the throne after Kadengsiri’s death. He was
known to be a truthful, powerful, peace-loving and generous king. He was believed to have been the most famous among the Karbi kings who had ruled before their kingdom was subjugated by the Ahom king. The real name of Rengbonghom was ‘Bonghom’, whereas the name of his better-half was ‘Kareng’, and the name, ‘Rengbonghom’ was believed to have been derived from the both (Kareng+Bonghom). Proverb has it that Rengbonghom could wed Kadengsiri’s daughter, Kareng, and could succeed the king by virtue of his own potential, which helped him to rise to that status from a very ordinary life. Kareng was very intelligent and the king could solve many complicated problems with her help.

Rengbonghom maintained a rapport with that of the Jaintia king. The capital city of his kingdom was Socheng situated in Rongkhang region under the present Hamren sub-division. He was known to have built impenetrable wall round his kingdom in order to ensure complete security from external invasion. There were only two doors for entry into the capital city, one facing east and the other towards the west. There was a meandering route that led inside the kingdom.

It was Rengbonghom who thought for the first time to lead the superstition-ridden Karbi society towards the path of progress through democratic ideals. That is the reason why he offered chance to everyone to enjoy his good governance. He was believed to have been the mighty, most influential and the earthly representative of God Hemphu. Nonetheless, he was neither an audacious nor a despotic ruler. He used to seek opinions and counsels from the delegates of a forum of counsellors. The forum was comprised of fifty five delegates, each representing his region. The most noteworthy among the delegates were Millickdun, Thong Nokbe, Hār Bāmon, Leut, Lehār, Vo’pipārdon, Phāng Ātār, Sār Klenkli, Sār Klenklon, Bikhā Kāŋgburwā, Bārēlun, Kāŋgsokse, Sārnoke, Sārnopāk, Ru-Kāsen and so forth. They used to offer counsels whenever the king had faced a problem with utmost promptitude, and the king also used to accept their counseling with due regard. Apart from them the king also used to take help from his intelligent wife in
administrative matters. There were a good number of rigid social customs in the Karbi society prior to the ascension of Rengbonghom to the throne. They had to adhere to a very austere rule especially in case of marriage. The Karbis could never go for any intra-clan or endogamic marriage under any circumstance. In addition to that no kind of erotic verbal exchange could be made between the male and female youths belonging to the same clan, which were considered a taboo in those days. The crime committed by the youths by doing so was regarded as ‘Laisenem’, and those who were accused of such a crime were not allowed to live in the society. They were severely punished in conformity with the existing social customs, which might even be capital punishment like death sentence. King Rengbonghom and the Queen, Kareng, were very much opposed to that rigid social custom, because they believed that such a rigid custom causing thousands of young hearts and detrimental to the entire society should never be encouraged. However, such a stand against an existing custom in those days was not only a misadventure but also unimaginable. Therefore, Rengbonghom convinced the society to minimize the intensity of the death sentence to mere compensation as per social custom, which evinced his strong courage, intelligence and ingenuity.

There was yet another reformative act accomplished by Rengbonghom, which was very much noteworthy. A very unjust custom was prevalent among the Karbi society prior to his rule. According to that custom only one particular clan of the community could live in a particular place. Such a custom stood as a main obstacle before the racial integrity of the Karbis. Rengbonghom realized the ill effect of such a social system, and therefore, he advocated for the urgency of eradicating it so that all the clans belonging to the community could live together in unity, peace and fraternity, which, as a matter of fact, would help them build a united and mighty Karbi race. He had persevered to bring in such an ideal society in which he succeeded to a considerable extent, and for that contribution, perhaps, the Karbis still respect the king by addressing him as ‘Phu Rengbonghom’.\[21\]
6. Rangmukrang— The Great Patron:

After completing his marvelous act of creation, Hemphu, the great creator ascended to heaven. However, to his great dismay, he discovered that his creations, especially, human beings were creating a clamorous scene being unable to recognize their creators, and the proper way to call upon him. God himself was very much anxious to inculcate the human beings the proper manner of calling him, but it was next to impossible for him to descend to this mortal world in person. Therefore, he incarnated himself in the form of unfamiliar human being, Rangmukrang.

The village in which Rangmukrang used to inhabit was situated on the bank of the river, Kuleng (that is, Kiling). He was the Head of the Miring Rongsopi village, which was consisted of more than one hundred houses. He had three sons, namely, Longmukrang, Bangmukrang and Hangmukrang, and two daughters, Kareng and Kading. The public place for collection of water for all daily uses was the bank of the river, Kuleng. As narrated in a popular folk song, Rangmukrang happened to come to that very bank in order to wash his face on one fine morning. When he was washing his face he noticed that one of his teeth had fallen down the river water. He thought it would be better to bury the tooth somewhere inside his campus instead of throwing it into the water, and so he did accordingly. A few days later he noticed a creeper germinating out of it. Further after a few months he could observe some elongated fruits resembling that of water-gourd dangling from it. In due course of time, the fruit became mature, and finding no use of them, Rangmukrang brought it home. It is believed that wild bottle-gourd came to the Karbi society only after that time.

A couple of years have elapsed after that very miraculous occurrence. Once while collecting drinking water from the bank of the river with their ‘länghe’[22] Kareng and Kading noticed a bird discharging excrement on a flat rock lying close to the bank. After filling the pitcher, the duo went to see out of curiosity as to what that object could be, and discovered a flat aromatic cake stuck to the rock.
They brought that cake home and recounted everything about the discovery before their mother, who stored the same on the raft. Consequently the cake was mixed with that of rice, and they noticed a kind of scented juice spilling out of it. It is believed that rice beer, which is an indispensable part and parcel of the Karbi culture, came to the society only after that serendipity.

7. Lāngmingpo- The Incarnation of Hemphu:

Yet on another day when the two brothers, Longmukrang and Bangmukrang were on their way to the bank of the river with a view to taking bath they saw a couple waiting on the other side of the river. After taking bath Longmukrang went toward the other side of the river and inquired of the place they came from and the destination they would be going to. The youth retorted that they had come from the east. He further intimated Longmukrang that since they knew none of the locality they were waiting on the bank of the river being optimistic of getting an opportunity to find a permanent place in the nearby village. However, on learning that Longmukrang told them that he was not in a position to give them any final assurance and hence he would have to go back to the village for asking permission. Both Longmukrang and Bangmukrang explained every detail of this sudden encounter with that of the strangers before their father after reaching home. On hearing this, Rangmukrang told his sons that the strangers would be allowed to live in the village if they so desired, but for their shelter a separate house must be built first. They went back to the bank of the river and conveyed the news to the newcomers. They requested the guests to take refuge in someone’s house until the proposed residence meant for them would be completed. The strangers then told the two brothers that they were brothers and sisters, and that no spacious house would be needed for their accommodation. They also further expressed their willingness promptly that they would feel comfortable enough to stay on the bank of the river till the completion of the house. The village-head, Rangmukrang, got everything ready with the help of all the villagers in no time as assured. Longmukrang too, as
promised, conveyed the good news to the stranger youths. The youths gleefully entered into the village, but refused to enter into the newly constructed house straightaway. On being asked about the cause for the refusal, the man apprised Longmukrang that he could not enter straightaway into the house because many impure materials from the forest had been used while building the said house and so adulteration might still linger on them. The youth then purified the house by sprinkling holy water in and around the house and then entered into it to become a permanent resident of the grand village.

The stranger youth had not told his name thitherto but told the villagers that the name of his sister was Rasingja. Hesitant to ask the name of the youth the villagers started calling him ‘Rasingja’s brother’ and later on as ‘Langmangpo’ (hailing from the upper direction). Further later on, Rangmukrang, Longmukrang and others used to call him as ‘Langmingpo’. Langmingpo was loved and respected by all the villagers because of his manners and dealings with people, and he always preferred to live a simple life just like an ordinary individual.

As the time elapsed on, Longmukrang and Rasinja fell in love and were married as per prescribed rites. Longmukrang thus became a close relative of Langmingpo after that marital bond. Langmingpo started to preach his ideals and objectives among the villagers through Longmukrang availing that relationship. By virtue of integrity of character and mild manners Langmingpo could earn respect and obedience from the villagers, and being the relative of the village-head he thought of shouldering the responsibility of leading the society upon him. Keeping that objective in view, Langmingpo started promoting various socio-cultural rites and rituals. To that effect he first acquainted them of the proper rites and rituals to be performed during wedding ceremonies through the marriage of his sister with that of Longmukrang. By and by he also started to teach the people about the proper ways for calling God (Creator) and as to how various rites and rituals were to be observed. According to Langmingpo, there is no specific or concrete form as God.
The person who is obeyed with reverence and devotion from one’s core of the heart, who is believed and relied as the saviour at the time of weal and woe, he is the God, who removes all our pains and predicaments. However, Langmingpo had not let them know that he was the God incarnate. On the other hand, the people started feeling about being salvaged and their cares and anxieties, sorrows and sufferings being gradually minimized by adopting the path shown by Langmingpo. Thus, they started believing him as the Saviour or Hemphu. Some of the important ideals expounded by Langmingpo may briefly be summarized as under:

I) ‘Sotbot’ (*One should not envy anyone*).

ii) ‘Āthik làpen kāngduk kejem’ (*Self-control and humility*).

iii) ‘Ingsāmjjin làpen benghon seroi’ (*Peace and unity*).

iv) ‘Ningding làpen māthāpāngching’ (*Tolerance and foresight*).

v) ‘Ningārlō pen kekroi làpen māthāthikā’ (*Devotion and self-confidence*).

vi) ‘Kāngthir làpen pāngri’ (*Purity and sense of equality*) etc.

8) Thi-reng Vāng-reng- The Karbi Lazarus:

After a long interval from Sot Recho’s tragic demise Thi-reng Vāng-reng[23] became very famous. However, he was not a king proper, but a social reformer. He was the person who propagated many rites and rituals for the welfare of the Karbis advising them in many important matters. They still believe that Thi-reng Vang-reng who used to convey the message whether the spirits of the dead could gain a safe access to the underworld acting as spy and by frequently sojourning to it. He is credited to have introduced the Karbi rites of passage called ‘Chomāngkān’ or ‘Chomkān’[24]. The gist of this legend can be summarized as follows:
The bodyguard of the King, Māi Thengrāk, was Burā Bey. The name of his only son was Therē Bey, and his consort was Kāsāng Ingtipī. Burā Bey had to embrace death when Therē Bey was still a teen. The name of the village in which the family used to live was Nok Kevei Timung village, which is located between present Lāmding\[25\] and Lāmsākhāng. After the demise of Burā Bey the widow Kāsāng was deeply overtaken by sadness, but albeit she kept herself busy in her household chores as well as farming, and as a result she could get on with self-sufficiency and affluence. As time galloped on her only son, Therē Bey, entered into the spring of his life. He became mature enough to marry and to begin a conjugal life. Sensing all this, Kāsāng Ingtipī, the widow mother, negotiated for an arranged marriage with Kāvé Timungpi, a girl hailing from the same village. The guardians of both the groom and the bride finalized everything about the marriage in conformity with prevalent Karbi rites.

Coincidentally, there had been a mutual love and fascination between Therē Bey and Kāvé Timungpi ever since their childhood. They used to play together and could not live without meeting each other even for a single day. They could not leave one another’s company even when they used to go to forest for collecting wild herbs and vegetables, and thus, their friendship resulted into love and fascination.

The proverbs say, *Che sera sera; What is done cannot be undone; Man proposes but God disposes; Whom the Gods love die young,* and the same seemed to have occurred in the life of Kāvé Timungpi. As the fate would have it, she fell ill all of a sudden one day and so had to be bed-ridden. Since her condition worsened, Kāvé Timungpi called for her would-be husband, There Bey by her side. On receiving the news There Bey too came post-haste to talk to his dying beloved. However, the bed-ridden beloved of There Bey could utter only a few words on the eve of her untimely and tragic death in a very pathetic manner, which can be summarized as under:
"Oh! my love, there is only a faint hope of my life ahead for I've seen a very cruel dream. Our love and affection is perhaps going to end very shortly. The Providence is not in favour of our genuine love, rather very cruel and unsympathetic. Therefore, before I die, I would like to give you only a piece of suggestion: 'You would hide under a bushy grove after my lifeless body would be carried off toward the graveyard by the villagers, and the funeral crowd would return homeward. Don't forget that after a few while of my cremation a wild cat would appear there in the graveyard, which is the messenger of King of the underworld. If you do follow that animal by holding tight in its tail, you'll be able to enter into the underworld without any effort. Don't be afraid in the least for the creature would do no harm upon you. Don't be anxious, we'll begin our conjugal life in the underworld itself." [26]

Having said that much, Kave Timungpi bade adieu from her would-be husband. As anticipated Kave was taken off toward the graveyard after her death and the villagers were returning homeward after the cremation. A pin-drop silence invested the entire graveyard and there was desolation all around. And as the time passed on and as predicted by Kave, a wild cat appeared suddenly in the graveyard which cast its sight on all sides quite warily and surreptitiously. On the other hand, There' too caught hold of the bushy tail of the animal carefully as suggested by his beloved and eventually entered into the netherworld. He had thus the opportunity to re-unite with all the dead members of his family. As experienced by him, the denizens of the netherworld also think and believe the mortals as their inmates and co-inhabitants. He could also observe that the inhabitants of the underworld too do their daily activities, marry and enter into conjugal life just like the mortals. No dead mortal can have an entry into that world without abiding by some rites of the underworld. Therefore, if someone of a family dies, he is welcomed by the dead spirits of the other members living already in the netherworld only after performing some specific rituals of obsequies and salvation. No exception can occur to this
custom. For that matter as intimated to There’ by the denizens of the world of the
dead, they need to perform ‘Chomāngkān’ after someone’s death. Thereafter, they
taught There’ all the rites and rituals, rules and regulations associated with
‘Chomāngkān’. There’ Bey could have a safe return after learning everything from
the underworld just like Lazarus from infernal region.

This miraculous news spread every nook and corner of the kingdom in no
time. The tiding reached the ear of the King too. He sent for There’ Bey and came to
know about the divine power obtained by There’ after enquiry. Thus, There’ Bey
could establish a relationship between the mortals and the denizens of the
underworld, and kept on informing the Karbis about the activities of the least known
world. Likewise he used to acquaint the inhabitants of the unknown world with that
of the happenings of the world of the mortals, and was able to volunteer himself as
the messenger and mediator between the two different worlds. That is the reason
why he was later on not known by his real name, but as Thi-reng Vang-reng.

A kind of make-belief is still prevalent among the Karbis regarding an
interesting incident had taken place during There’ Bey’s lifetime. Once, as stated in
the narrative, There’ had to remain absent for days from his home on account of his
periodical sojourn to the underworld. During one such period of his absence the
villagers had arranged a community fishing by exploding poisonous roots in the
river water. However, the widow mother of There’ could not contribute any bundle
of such poisonous roots as was the custom of the village. Consequently, she was
deprived of any share of the fishes caught by the rest. On his return There’ could
hear every detail from his mother who narrated the pathetic incident with tearful
eyes. There’ was deeply moved by the narration and consoled his sad mother by
intimating her that such discrimination never takes place in the netherworld.
Everybody enjoys equal amount of freedom there in the netherworld. The King of
this world delivers equal justice to all. There is no discrimination between high and
the low, rich and the poor, married and the widow, but just the opposite dominates
the world of the mortals. Having said thus, There' made a prognosis in a baneful tone that can be summarized as under:

"When there will be an earthquake, or will be an eruption of a volcano then this particular place will sink deep below and will be transformed into a lake-like swamp surrounding our plot floating high above." [27]

The 'Hempi Alangbi'[28] located between the present Lamding and Lamsakhang area seems to bear witness to that very prophecy.

9) Kareng and Kading- The Discovery of the Yeast:

Kareng and Kading, the two sisters, were the daughters of Rangmukrang, the great Village-head and reformer. They were not only beautiful but also very skillful in every field. Their three brothers, that is, Longmukrang, Bangmukrang and Hangmukrang, were also very wise and virtuous. Both the sisters are believed to have first invented the cake for brewing home-made rice beer in the Karbi society. As the folksong has it, there was no rice beer (horlāng) in the society in the beginning. The lack of such an indispensable socio-cultural item disappointed Hemphu (the God) very much and hence he once decided to introduce the same among the Karbis by sending his two sons to the human world. Obeying their father's behest with promptitude, therefore, the duo descended to this earth in the guise of a pair of 'Kongching' birds, namely, pied kingfishers.

The chief deities of the Karbis are Hemphu, Mukrāng and Rāsingjā. However, the minor deities like Peng, Dowori, Birnē, Lāmkā, Hi-i and others also were worshipped along with the three chief deities for welfare and propitiation of a particular family as well as the society. However, no rituals for propitiation can be performed without the use of 'horlāng'. The invention of such an important thing was the result of coincidence and dream in the case of the two sisters. The story of the myth can be summarized as follows:
In the distant past there was a very famous village called Miring Rongsopi situated on the bank of the Kuleng river. Rangmukrang was the King or the Head of that village. Kareng and Kading, the two daughters of the King went to take bath in that very river on one fine day in the morning. No sooner had they started pouring water in their pitchers after taking bath, they suddenly noticed a pair of ‘Kongching’ birds swirling from the western direction quite close above them. Consequently, they discharged faeces on a flat rock and flew away from the scene. A kind of aroma started to diffuse itself in the entire area, and to excite and invigorate the two sisters. Although they could not locate the exact source of that aroma yet after a prolong search they succeeded in finding it out. They then started to homeward after wrapping it with the edge of their gown. Reaching home they kept the same above the rafter with utmost reverence. During that very night, Kareng and Kading dreamed a wonderful dream. They dreamed that they were drying grains in the sunshine after taking them off from the container (ingkrong), and to have pounded them to rice. They dreamed to have pounded the rice into powder and then to have prepared about nine flat-shaped cakes out of them. They dreamed as if they were drying the cakes inside thatch and were mixing them with cooked rice, and then to have stored the yeasted brew in an earthen pot after three days. They dreamed further to have treated their father with the pure and nectarine juice.

At that point of time they came back to their sense. In the following morning they narrated all about that strange dream before their father. The father then asked them to prepare the cake for preparing rice beer as they had dreamed. Obtaining due permission from their father both the sisters arranged for the same as soon as possible. Within anticipated time and by offering respect to God, they prepared the sweet nectar, ‘horlāng’ in the similar manner as they had dreamed. After required fermentation indicated by strong aroma they served it to their father, who liked it very much. The father felt quite exhilarated after taking that nectar. He felt as if his cares and anxieties, fatigue, hunger and thirst all fled. He felt that the gods and
goddesses would be very easily satisfied if that very nectar is used while worshipping them.

10) Rāngsinā Sārpo- The Pioneer of Karbi Music, Art and Culture:

Rangsina is regarded as the pioneering maestro (Guru) in the domain of Karbi music, art and culture. So far as the folk-belief is concerned he is revered and worshipped as an incarnated personality. As narrated in the ‘Lunse’ Keplāng, the great personalities like Rangsina Sarpo, Long Mirjeng and Sing Mirjeng, Longbichedu and Longduve had played a pioneering and revolutionary role in ushering renaissance in the field of Karbi cultural world. However, one notices the existence of variations in the narrative with exaggeration and interpolations in case of some of the prevailing versions. If we closely examine these tales, we become familiar with two archetypal versions, and Rangsina Sarpo is featured as a passive in one, and in the other as most active and dynamic revolutionary force behind the propagation and popularity of Karbi music, art and culture.

(i) As a Passive Revolutionary: In many variants of the narratives as sung by the singers of the ‘Lunse’ Keplāng, Rangsina Sarpo is shown to be involved indirectly in popularizing and propagating music in Karbi society. They are very much sensitive about their master. For these singers Rangsina is a divine personality of highest order or exalted god. He lives in heaven, and preaches music by composing it there itself by sending the Mirjeng brothers down to the human world. As stated in the narratives of these songs the Karbis did not have any idea about music in the yore, though they had acquired the art of living by founding organized villages. They used to sing by imitating the melodious sounds of the rivers and springs, animals and myriad other creatures of Nature. God had instructed Rangsina to go down to earth with a view to addressing this shortage of music. At the behest of God Rangsina then composed variety of music for the Karbi society and sent the Mirjeng brothers as messengers to this world to inculcate them to the people. Reaching the Karbi kingdom they first chose the Chieftain and the Deputy of the
‘jirsong’, Longbichedu and Longduve respectively as disciples and started teaching music to the Karbis before they returned to heaven. The Mirjeng brothers were the first to usher in a renaissance to the cultural domain of the Karbis. In such versions of the narrative, thus, Rangsina is not shown to directly involve in the new cultural renaissance of the Karbi society.

(ii) **Rāngsīnā as an Active Revolutionary**: According to those who believe the music maestro, Rangsina to have actively involved in inculcating music to the Karbis, their master was not exactly a God but he was born in this as an incarnation of God. In some versions of the ‘Lunse’ Keplāṅg’ he is referred to have founded his shrine at Telehor. According to the narrative recorded in these versions, God appealed to Rangsina to preach and popularize the art of music among the Karbis. Rangsina descended to this world as an incarnation of God in pursuance of that plan. The Mirjeng brothers accompanied him as assistant to their great master. In this mortal world Rangsina thus had enlightened the Karbis about music, art and culture taking an active and dynamic part in which he was assisted by the Mirjeng brothers.

However, in both the archetypal versions of the narrative, *Lunse’ Keplāṅg*, we find the following contributions, which are believed to have been made by Rangsina:

i) ‘Ādām Āsār’ (Traditional wedding ceremony) or ‘Piso Pāngri’; ‘Thelu Ālun’ (nuptial songs) etc.

ii) ‘Thāp Keplāṅg’ or ‘Porom Ālun’ (songs regarding the origin of cake for rice beer.

iii) ‘Bong Keplāṅg’ (songs regarding the origin of the wild bottle-gourd.

iv) ‘Rongkikim’ (songs about founding of villages)

v) ‘Sok Keroi’ (songs regarding harvesting)

vi) ‘Sābin Ālun’ (Karbi Ramayana) etc.
11) Ve-Longbi and Hār Longbi- The Tradition Bearers:

Sumphong and Sumphi, popularly known as Ve-Longbi and Har Longbi, were not famous personalities, but they are remembered as first ones to perform the Karbi traditional wedding ceremony (Ādām Āsār) perpetuated till date. Ve-Longbi belonged to Ingti, that is, Li-e clan and Har Longbi to Timung, that is, Tung-e clan as stated in ‘Ādām Āporom’. The daughter of Ve-Longbi had been married to the son of Har Longbi in Miring Rongsopi village, which is believed to have been the first formal wedding ceremony ever performed by the Karbi as per rites prescribed and shown by Hemphu through the wedding knot between his sister, Rasingja and Longmukrang. The story of the narrative describing the ever-first traditional Karbi marriage can be summarized as under:

Ve-Longbi and Har Longbi were bosom friends. Hunting deer in the wild forest with spears had been their pastime and daily schedule. They were so obsessed with hunting that they often had forgotten their responsibilities about their home and families. One day they were discussing about some matters by sitting on a rock lying upon the bank of the river Langkumphang. In the mean time they noticed that the women hailing from Akli Rongsopi town washing clothes in the upstream thereby contaminating the water of the river. They were infuriated to the extreme by seeing that unscrupulous act of those women who, in fact, were feeding dirty water to the inhabitants of the town located downstream. Therefore, they had decided to take revenge against the villagers of Akli Rongsopi by waging a war against them, and both the friends took advice from their mothers. As advised by Har Longbi’s mother, both the friends collected a huge quantity of antique weapons from a king named Longkamar and returned home. But, as the fate would have it, they met an invalid old woman named Morongpi en route upon the bank of the river Marie. Recognizing the boys who were moving so fast the old woman wanted to know as to where they were going all equipped with arms. The two friends also could recognize the old woman and hence explained everything about their war plan before her. On
hearing that, the old woman advised them to witness the very wedding ceremony of Rasingja and Longmukrang being performed at Miring Rongsopi village by shunning the idea of the proposed war. Accepting the advice with regard the duo went to the said village and consequently came back after learning about the proper system of wedding. Thereafter Ve-Longbi and Har Longbi came to meet the old woman again, and told her about their inability to recognize the three special things, such as, ‘bongkrok’, ‘dāmdām’, and ‘kāngsir ārjolāng’,[32] which they had seen at Hemphu’s house. The old woman then offered the two friends some seeds of ‘bongkrok’, which she had collected from person, named Musimulong, and asked them to sow the same in their croft. As the time elapsed by the seeds germinated to bear fruits resembling that of wild water-gourds they were so eagerly looking for, as the wedding between the daughter of Ve-Longbi and the son of Har Longbi was celebrated in conformity with the rites as they had seen at Hemphu’s house.

12) Rongphārpi Rongbē- The Leader in True Sense:

Many of the feats and deeds of the kings, heroes and heroines of the Karbis have been dragged into the quagmire of oblivion only because of the absence of any written or documented records about them. As a matter of fact, their actual doings are preserved as mere legends, ironically though some of them can be chronologically traced, and some other could have been rendered a probable lease of life, had the historians desired sincerely to do so. Kareng Rongpharpi, popularly known as Rongpharpi Rongbe, known also as Omphu Rongpharpi, is one of such historical personalities and Karbi heroines, whose sagacious feats and patriotism have not been given due recognition by any historian. Nonetheless, there are a good number of references to her one particular courageous act of resistance against the atrocity and despotism of the Kachari (Dimasa) king derogatorily dubbed as ‘parok’, i.e., the ‘Other’, though they differ in opinion about the exact time of occurrence for the very incident. The narrative recounting that particular incident can be summarized as under:
There was no able leader after the death of Thi-reng Vang-reng to lead the Karbi society onto the path of peace and prosperity, and taking the advantage the King of the Kacharis (Dimasa) subjugated the Karbi kingdom and used to inflict untold torture and exploitation upon the poor and innocent people. The Kachari king was a very whimsical and despotic kind of person. He had a strange hobby of keeping a cub of a lion as pet, which he used to feed with human milk. In order to fulfil his whimsical desire he used to send his chief along with a group of soldiers to collect human milk from the Karbi (Mikir) women by directing them to extract milk forcefully from their breasts. As the legend has it, Rongpharpi Rongbe had gone to a nearby forest in order to collect firewood with some women of her village on a particular day during such turbulent days. She had left behind her dear infant child at home. At that very juncture of unfortunate time a group of collector of human milk appointed by the despotic king directed them to give them milk from their breasts. Kareng told the group that she would concede to their command only after suckling her infant left behind at home after gathering some guts. On the other hand, the soldiers plunged into extracting milk from Kareng’s breast coercively paying no heed to her appeal. Kareng’s entire being shuddered due to her feeling of shame and insult at such a barbaric act. Thus, being extremely infuriated she hacked the leader to death with the axe in her hand in an instant. The rest of the soldiers then fled from the scene in no time after witnessing the bellicose behaviour demonstrated by Kareng. The capricious deputy in the Jamuna valley perpetrated atrocities on the poor subjects; and once when the chief, who had a peculiar whim of feeding his pet lion cub with human milk was having his whim satisfied the Mikirs revolted, and the official who laid his hands on Rongpharpi Rongbe’s breast to milk her was put instantly to death with the stroke of an axe. Later on, the chief Akola (Hokla) himself was put to death near Howraghat by his rebellious Mikir subjects most of who in body fled to the Jaintia kingdom for shelter. But sensing the imminent danger and the bitter consequence thereof, Kareng convened a secret emergency meeting in which it was unanimously decided that they should flee from their
village, Rongteplong, and thus saved the villagers from certain death and destruction. That is the reason why the most courageous and prudent lady, Kareng is remembered till date by the Karbis, and is known as Rongpharpi Rongbe (Rong = village, Be = to flee, that is to abscond), and further, the Rongteplong village was later known as Rongkerpi Rongbe. It is believed that the group spearheaded by Rongpharpi Rongbe traversed westward and established new villages in the vicinity of present Amreng by crossing the Kopili river.

13) Thong Nokbe- The Great Chieftain and the Hero:

The real name of Thong Nokbe is Thong Teron, and he was so addressed because of his fabulous and unmatched valour and heroism. In Karbi ‘Nokbe’ denotes ‘hero’ and hence Thong Nokbe stands for Thong, the Hero. He was the proud son of O’n Tamsir Teron and Kache Beypi or Che Jokphru. The name of his wife was Karik Kropi.

Thong Nokbe was almost a contemporary to Rongpharpi Rongbe and hence it is pretty presumable that the experience of the despotic exploitation inflicted upon them by the Kachari king was not yet healed. On the other hand, they did not have a cordial relationship with that of the Jaintias either. The amicable relationship the Karbis used to enjoy with that of the Jaintias in the beginning after their migration from Rongteplong was gradually deteriorating due to the inhuman treatment meted out to them by the latter, and as time fleeted by the integrity and unity that had existed between the two communities in the past got shattered and sundered. As Thong was growing older he tacitly observed all the conspiracies and sinister motive of the Jaintia king. The Jaintia king used to employ the innocent Karbi subjects in such rigorous works like construction of roads as labourers in gratis. Although there were also Jaintia subjects among the labourers, the prevalent rule was that the counting of the labourers at the end of the day’s work had been entrusted upon the Jaintias only. The way they adopted in doing so had been not only strange, but extremely inhuman beyond tolerance. They used to conduct the counting by hurting
the forehead of only the Karbi labourers with the sharp end of their axe uttering simultaneously as ‘kori wi’, ‘ar’, ‘le’, ‘san’, ‘kru’\textsuperscript{[34]} \textsuperscript{[35]}. The act of such cruelty continued to occur for certain days without any opposition, and the drops of warm raw blood kept on bleeding day after day. However, Thong the Hero, having traumatically witnessed all this and being oppressed, proffered himself as labourer on a particular day. As usual the Jaintia official started head-counting as the day ended, but was strongly resisted by Thong. Snatching the ‘dao’ from the Jaintia official he declaimed furiously: “Today, I too will count the labourers.” Thereafter, he went on chopping off the heads of the Jaintia labourers imitating the manner of the official. Thus, Thong registered a courageous protest against the exploitations exercised by the Jaintias and retaliated them in a fitting manner. However, the incident reached the king and spread a quick repercussion, which ignited a communal feud between the Karbi and the Jaintia people and aggravated their relationship further more. Anticipating counter revenge from the king’s front, Thong therefore enclosed the boundary of the Karbi inhabited areas by erecting rock walls at Ghilani, Tirkim, Jantapur, Amreng and Borpu areas of Rongkhang province.

However, the Jaintia king later extended truce with the Karbi after having realized his flawed administrative strategy. He eventually made Thong their Chief of the Jaintia soldiery after being influenced by the latter’s valour and prowess. But this act of the king disappointed the Jaintia royal officials and as a result they started hatching a secret conspiracy against Thong. During the Jaintia regime the king used to send his soldiers in and around his kingdom in quest of heroic people with a view to ensuring complete safety to his rule. Once, one of such groups came across Thong while they were returning quite depressed in not being able to find any such hero, and persuaded him to accompany them to the king’s palace. On their palace-ward journey the Jaintia soldiers entreated Thong to pluck some ripe mangoes at a place called Barat. Thong then climbed up a mango tree without denying the flattering request of the miscreants. No sooner had Thong climbed up the top of the tree; the
miscreants pointed lethal arrows towards him, and consequently murdered the unarmed hero. They chopped off the head of Thong and produced the same before their king as being the head of enemy. However, the king could instantly come to know the reality after detecting a gold-studded hair on Thong’s hair, and started beheading the soldiers responsible for that heinous act of murder of his beloved and reliable Chief.

14) Vaisong- The Patriotic Revolutionary:

Vaisong was another legendary Karbi hero just like Thong Nokbe and was a contemporary to him. He was the son of Susong and the name of his grandfather and great grandfather respectively were Ansong and Sesong who resided at Niz Rongkhang of present Hamren sub-division.

As the legend has it, Vaisong was remarkably peculiar in his character and behaviour since his childhood compared to the friends of his age. He was more stalwart and intelligent than the other young children. Hence he did not love to be guided by others but had a predilection for leading them. He was a great lover of wielding any kind of weapon and archery since his young age. As time elapsed on Vaisong became an expert hunter and started chasing after wild birds and animals in the forests. However, as the fate would have it, he had to live as destitute and in loneliness due to an all-pervasive epidemic that had swept all the villagers away along with his parents. Being helpless he started strolling precariously from one place to another. He had nearly lost his mental balance and composure. He therefore later took shelter at the house of some Onwe', but there too he could not stay longer. Vaisong left that house one day quite surreptitiously leaving the villagers bother much about his whereabouts who almost were convinced that he had been devoured by tigers or bears.

There was no courageous and influential Karbi hero to succeed Thong Nokbe after his demise. As a natural consequence the Karbis in those days had to tolerate
ineffable cruelty and exploitation from the surrounding enemies. They were unable to live as a tribe because of the deplorable lack of competent hero among them, not to speak of challenging and confronting the might of the neighbouring Ahom, Kachari, Khasi and Jaintia races. Therefore, they had been searching for an efficient leader among them. At that very critical juncture of time, Vaisong reappeared in the village one day all of a sudden making the villagers both surprised and exhilarated. The villagers made a flood of queries about his self-exile but Vaisong did not deem it necessary to answer them. Arriving back to the village, on the other hand, he started mobilizing the villagers, but none seemed to have understood his latent motive, and those who did, showed no encouragement or willingness to join his mission. Therefore, he tried his best to provoke them in strong language against the despotism exercised by the then Khasi king calling upon them to prepare for war, but none dared to comply with his request to do so against the mighty Khasi king. Quite to his dismay and chagrin, on the other hand, all of them advised him not to proceed further, which discouraged a few young youths who had gathered some amount of courage to act upon Vaisong’s plan. Vaisong left no stone unturned in inducing and instigating at least a sizable number of youths to rebel and fight against the Khasis by making provocative statements about the cruelties and injustices exercised upon them, but he failed to elicit any response or garner any support from them too. Thus, being all depressed and helpless, Vaisong resolved to proceed alone. He entered into the Khasi villages like 'Labang' and 'Nongphlut' located on the bank of the Am-i river and set fire on the houses, beating those black and white and dragging into the burning fire who tried to withstand him. Thus, ten to fifteen Khasi villages were gutted by the fury of the fire and burned to ashes in a short span of time. Since no Khasi could deter him, Vaisong returned to his native village satisfied and triumphantly after completely destroying their village according to his desire.

The unpleasant news of that catastrophe reached the ear of the Khasi king in no time. He convened a meeting of his council of advisers and the assembly
unanimously resolved that such a hot-blooded hero must be caught alive. The king then decided to send one thousand chosen Khasi soldiers to search for Vaisong, but all of them trembled in fear having heard about his unmatched heroism and flinched back. They entreated the king to exempt them from undertaking such a misadventure, but the former remained adamant in his resolution. Thus, being compelled the soldiers obeyed the king's order in anticipation of their imminent death.

The Khasi soldiers started roaming around Vaisong and appointed spies to extract necessary information about him. They found that Vaisong loved to drink home-made rice beer and that the beer was prepared by a Khasi woman who knew the art to brew sweet and strong drink. They inquired the matter by summoning the Khasi woman and ordered her to prepare a huge quantity of rice beer because Vaisong was believed to drink as much wine as could be prepared within a week. The required amount of drinks was produced by the particular woman around a fortnight's time as dictated and she started preparing mutton, chicken and pork deliciously. She then invited the hero in a dark night and solicitously asked him to sit on the stilted platform of her poor house. The clever woman started serving Vaisong generously with various types of mouthwatering meat curries, smoked fish curry and teel powder, and when the hero looked at them with curiosity the woman told him that the particular day was *Nongkrem*[^36] for the Khasis and hence that special arrangement. The hero had drunk and eaten bellyful and intimated the woman of getting a bit intoxicated. On learning that the clever woman offered Vaisong betel-nut and asked him to stop drinking further and the hero as anticipated fell to deep slumber then and there. Taking undue advantage the Khasi soldiers then caught Vaisong and produced before their king with a sense of pride and he ordered the beleaguered hero to be confined in the cell without any fair judgment.

Vaisong could not see any ray of hope or any free air, nor could he feel any hope of escape from the thralldom. Therefore, he began to recite the names of the

[^36]: Nongkrem is a traditional festival celebrated by the Khasis in Assam, India.
Karbi gods like Ārnām Kethe', Hemphu Ārnām etc. silently in his heart. In the meantime, the king sent for the council of advisers for holding an urgent meeting. The Queen, on the other hand, was getting curious to have a look at such a great hero to whom the mighty Khasi king himself was scared of and who had been confined into the dark cell for twelve long years without food and proper sleep. She could not help but meeting such a famous national Karbi hero, who did not hesitate to sacrifice even his own life for the sake of the community, a hero with undaunted patriotic zeal. Further, the Queen longed to see him because he might be rewarded with even death sentence.

Thus, right in the night before the judgment day, Vaisong saw a flicker of light inside the dark cell, which was actually the dazzle eradiated by the body of the Queen herself. Vaisong was taken aback by such a sudden and unexpected presence of the Queen. The Queen, on the other hand, showed respect to Vaisong by bowing her head before him. Vaisong discovered the celestial melody of heaven in her voice and felt invigorated after hearing it. The Queen kept on staring at the eyes and the face of Vaisong for a long time and could observe a miserable and emotional expression in them. Therefore, she whispered quite close to the ears of Vaisong to this effect:

"Hello, Karbi hero, if you want to live on and to awaken the Karbi race, you'll have to act according to my advice. I'm the Queen of a kingdom. Will you agree to do so?" [37]

Having read the mind of the Queen then the hero replied, "I'll do everything except escaping." Then the Queen went on:

"When you'll be led to the royal palace, then you'll have say in sheer amazement that you've seen two suns looking straightaway towards the sky just before reaching the palace." [38]
Having said this and assuring Vaisong of tackling the situation that might emerge, the Queen left the scene.

Vaisong did everything before the assembly as advised by the compassionate Queen. However, they considered the statement of Waison as an outcome of madness or delirium, for it was impossible, as per their logic and knowledge, that someone could see two suns appearing in the sky. The King too commented upon it as a delirium of a dying man. On hearing this comment from the King Vaisong began to count the remaining moments of certain death. But right at that juncture of time the Queen came out dashing from her room, and Vaisong again looked at the sky above and repeated his experience of seeing two suns there. The Queen then imitated Vaisong and told the assembly to have seen the same in the sky, which made their faces pale. The Queen was very much happy to have learnt that nobody among them had seen a pair of suns and started arguing addressing the whole assembly:

“All of you are mortal human beings. Further you’ve committed a lot of sins. It’s never possible for the sinners like you to see the presence of a pair of suns. The prisoner himself is a God. He might be the Rama of Sabin Alun. He might have come to this world in the guise of a mortal as a divine incarnation; hence he has seen two suns in the sky. I’m goddess, but have come to this world as Queen, and I too therefore have seen a pair of suns in the sky.” [39]

After hearing that justification from their Queen the council promptly questioned her that if the Queen were a goddess, then the King also must have been a god and hence the King also should have seen a pair of suns in the sky. Quite intelligent as she was, the Queen then offered a quick repartee:

“Since the King has to shoulder upon various responsibilities as the Head administrative of the kingdom, he has, though unwittingly, to perform and involve into a good number of unjust acts, such as, imposing punishments,
waging wars and battles, invading foreign nations and so forth. Therefore, it is very natural on his part not to see a pair of suns in the sky." [40]

The Queen further went on to say:

"There'll be no trace of the Khasi kingdom if the slightest punishment is inflicted upon that innocent, immaculate and valorous hero, not to speak of awarding any death-sentence. For our kingdom will be burnt to ashes by the scorching heat of the two suns." [41]

Having said this, the Queen entered inside the interior of the hall. The king could not gather any courage other than to believe his Queen’s justification and apprehension. He then bade goodbye to the council and wanted to know the reason for the arson from Vaisong to which the hero replied thus:

"Although the Karbis are very simple by nature, innocent, and that do not like wars and have the propensity for hatching any conspiracy and are weak, they too are human beings. They also do have feelings and emotions, and have the ability to realize happiness or unhappiness and freedom, but due to the incessant and free inexplicable torture and exploitations inflicted upon us by your soldiers and councilors ever since the past did not allow us to live as animals, not to speak of the possibility of living as free human beings. If you visit our villages even today, you’ll come to know about your bad image as the King and the entire Khasis as a race in every villa, every household, and from every individual. Tears will drizzle down from your eyes if you’ll come to learn about the pathetic tale of the injustice, harassment and vices being exercised upon the Karbi subjects by your soldiers. The Karbis as such are very poor race and the pang of poverty is intensified manifold and our backbone is broken by your soldiers since they loot and plunder the daily necessities like food grains and rice, wines and meats and by marauding precious and valuable properties. I was very much perturbed to witness such a precarious life of the Karbis. I, therefore, came forward to extricate them
from such inhuman torture. My heart trembled in extreme fury by seeing the injustice and ill-treatment, exploitations and molestations done to my sisters. The Karbis have to tolerate all these injustices and exploitations executed by your people only because of the fact that they are very passive. But one should never consider a race to be passive. The brothers should always stay united and in peace, only then other enemies cannot underestimate them.”

Having said this Vaison again went on to argue:

“You murdered Thong Nokbe through conspiracy by asking him to climb up a mango tree, albeit he was the Chieftain of your kingdom in spite of being a Karbi. You assassinated such a reliable and wise heroic person by playing treason. Not only had you murdered him, but offered his head before predecessor king after chopping it off. Nevertheless, the Karbis had never rebelled against that gruesome murder.”

The king came to understand the deep implications of Vaison’s feelings and emotions. He confessed all the previous and present wrongdoings before the Karbi hero, and released him from the thralldom and punishment. Thereafter, the King said:

“Great hero, Vaison, I’ve lent my ears to everything you’ve said. You are very much in the truth. I’m completely satisfied with you. We’ve become friends from this day onward. You go now and rule over your own people. I’ve got one of your teeth molded with gold as a token of our friendship. However, if you become King only with my concession, your future will not be good. Therefore, you approach the Kachari King for his due permission. If he approves of your plea, then only your kingdom would be secure.”

Having said this, the King sent away Vaison along with a messenger. Vaison reached Maibong as instructed by the Khasi king and intimated everything
about what the latter had told him to do. The Kachari king too conceded to the wish of the Khasi king and gave his consent to Vaisong of his becoming the king of the Karbi subjects and promised to maintain amicable relationship with him. He then got one of Vaisong’s teeth cast in gold as a token of their friendship. However, he advised Vaisong to go to Gorhgaon with a view to approaching the mighty Ahom king for favour. Accordingly the Karbi hero went to Gorhgaon along with two messengers as companions. He explained everything in detail before the Ahom king. The Ahom king too agreed with the decision taken by both the Khasi and the Kachari king after sensing the heroism of Vaisong. He offered friendship to Vaisong and sent order to the goldsmith for making a gold tooth meant for the latter as a token of friendship. He then arranged everything for Vaisong so as to enable him to become the king for the Karbis and demarcated the boundary of his newly earned kingdom. Thus, Vaisong became the king for the Karbi subjects by placing the ‘Jambili Athon’ (scepter for a traditional Karbi king and symbol of unity among the youths) with positive co-operation of the Khasi, Kachari and the Ahom kings, and was called by his subjects as ‘Ser Hongthom’ because of the three teeth cast of pure gold.

15) Si-r Vo’mu- The Dreaded Man-Eater Bird:

The real name of Si-r Vomu was Si-r Tokbi. He was born in one of the fugitive Karbi families as a consequence of their mass exodus from the Kachari kingdom during Rongpharpi Rongbe’s time. The name of his birth place was Rongmarthu-Rongmarle of Sochengdhenta area under then Ahom kingdom, now within Nowgaon district of Assam. The name of his father was Jor Tokbi and his mother was Kave Ingtipi. He was called as ‘Si-r Kangtang’ and ‘Si-r Nokbe’ because of his extraordinary intelligence and physical strength in comparison with that of the other boys of the village. He is in reality a historical hero, not legendary as some try to establish it. He earned his fame as a great hero by killing a man-eater bird called ‘Vomu’ (an eagle or a hawk) at Chelengthepai near the present Karbi
Langpi hydro-electric power project on the steep rocky cliff of the Karbi Langpi river. The cliff is steep as it is situated on such a high altitude that it is next to impossible and beyond imagination either to scale it or to climb down from it. Despite the scary height and location Si-r Tokbi dared to confront with and eventually killed a pair of huge and ferocious man-eater 'vomu' birds identical with that of 'Jatayu' bird as described in the Ramayana nesting in a cavern located right in the middle of the rocky cliff. The story of this narrative can be summarized as under:

The Karbis are simple folks and innocent by nature and they used to and had a propensity of changing their villages or dwelling places frequently in quest of fertile arable lands. Most probably the entire villagers of Rongmarthu-Rongmarle had migrated towards the remote hilly areas of Amcheng hill located quite close to the Amtereng hill in quest of suitable fertile lands for cultivation, which might have shrunk due to increasing population explosion, or probably being harassed by myriad other tribes and races. They resolved to establish an ideal village with renewed hopes and enthusiasm at the remote hilly bounds of Amcheng. However, they had to confront with a problem in executing their dream so dearly cherished by them into reality. To their dismay and chagrin they discovered that a pair of huge 'vo'mu' bird used to build their nest inside a cavern located on top of the Cheleng Āthepāi hill near Karbi Langpi river. Initially they used to carry off their livestock everyday in order to feed their little ones, but later on they turned to man-eaters by snatching away small kids, which created much panic and consternation among the villagers. One of Si-r Tokbi’s cousins had fallen prey to the ferocious birds.

The number of animals and human beings was found to be decreasing to an alarming stage due to the disturbance created by those birds. The villagers were scared to the extreme in carrying out their daily schedule at the farms. They proposed to give up the place forever, but Si-r Tokbi did not concede to that proposal. He suggested the villagers to feel secure by promising before the public to
rescue them from any kind of predicament and the jaws of death by killing the pair of birds. He requested the villagers to mould a suitable sword for that purpose. The villagers managed to mould a ‘chong’ (sword) using a ‘rengreng’ (a hard wood) as desired by Si-r Tokbi, and he on his own managed to mould a ‘nok’ (a machete). On one appointed day Si-r Tokbi prepared himself for a straight fight with that of the bird by equipping himself with all these weapons. It was not only unconquerable and unthinkable but also next to impossible for anyone to climb the most-covered steep rocky cliffs of Chelengthepai. Since the Chelengthepai is a very steep cliff so there was every possibility for Si-r Tokbi to have lost his physical balance, for if someone slips from his grip then he is bound to die by falling headlong down to the Karbi Langpi river. In order to assassinate the pair of the bird one must therefore reach the cavern before they come out of it surreptitiously without their knowledge, lest they might bring an end to the life of Si-r Tokbi by putting up counter-attack. Such a daring feat he needed great courage, patience and strong resolution and Si-r Tokbi possessed all these qualities. He climbed the steep and breathtaking height of the rocky cliffs of Chelengthepai meticulously and by immolating his precious life with a strong resolution to deliver his race from the certain defacement. As the saying has it Si-r Tokbi was believed to have worshipped and invoked the aid of mighty Chintong Ārnām\(^45\) and Langpi Deity and received unlimited strength and blessings.

Si-r Tokbi reached the cavern and confronted with the man-eater birds being inspired by the blessings of the Karbi people and the attendant gods of Chinthong as well as Langpi maintaining balance of his huge physics only upon a small rock. He first blocked the entrance of the cavern and prevented the birds from coming out of it. The birds, on the other hand, distorted the sword by attacking it time and again with their huge beaks. Si-r Tokbi then played a trick by creating a small gap so that the birds could peep out of that hole, and when one of them did accordingly, Si-r Tokbi chopped its head instantaneously with his sword. He killed the other bird in the same manner. He then entered into the cavern and came out with the raiment of...
small children and valuable ornaments after killing the little ones of the man-eater birds inside the cavern itself. The inhabitants of the entire Amcheng area and its remote vicinities were relieved of their fear and tensions at the killing of the birds and were exhilarated beyond words, and from that time onward, Si-r Tokbi became famous as ‘Si-r Vomu’ and was recognized as ‘Nokbe’ (hero).

16) Cheleng Āthepāi:

Cheleng Āthepāi is a very high cliff on the gorge of the river, Karbi Langpi near Boithalangso. Once upon a time, the Sarthe of a particular village located in the vicinity of this place was said to have been running a kind of dictatorial administration over his innocent subjects. He had been very cruel and so was not liked by the members (juvenile boys and girls) of the ‘Jirkedām’ who grew quite intolerant towards their king. The despotic Village-head refused to understand the pains and sufferings, joys and sorrows, sentiments and feelings of the young people. He had always demanded works after works from them and yet remained discontented. As a consequence the members of the ‘Jirkedām’ did not have the freedom to sleep and rest even in the nights. He had rejected any appeal made by the youths straightaway. Being jaded and compelled therefore the broken-hearted youths of the ‘Jirkedām’ decided to register protest against that oppression by committing collective suicide by jumping from the steep, high and slippery from Cheleng Āthepāi. Accordingly they tied their waists with one another through the help of a ‘Vāmkok’ under the leadership of the ‘Klengsārpo’ (the Head of the youths). The last one in the line was a boy who suddenly freed himself by cutting the rope off and ran away just on the eve of jumping head down into the fathomless and devouring gorge from the steep cliff. It is believed that the boy ran away not because of his timidity or cowardice but in order to inform the villagers about the unprecedented catastrophe. The Karbis still show their obeisance by performing ‘Riso Ārnām’ in commemoration of the mass suicide at Cheleng Āthepāi, and that daring act always inspire the Karbis to register protest against any earthly tyranny.
17) Ser-Dihun- The Maiden of Golden Mind:

If we are to believe in the veracity of legends then we must agree that the system of floral design in Karbi weaving art had first been started by a maiden named Dihun. It is said that the Karbi women did not know the art of imprinting floral designs upon their cloths though they used to weave their traditional dresses by installing looms in every household. Dihun was the first to do so and paved the way for others in this miniature art. That is the reason why she is endearingly called 'Ser', that is, 'gold' or 'Serdihun' implying 'Serdihun, the Gold'. However, there is a story behind this contribution and its success-story, which can be summarized as follows:

The heart of the Karbi maiden Dihun was once won over by a youth of a 'Jirkedām'. However, both of them were members of different such institutions belonging to two different villages, and there was a sufficient distance between the location of their training schools. They had to cross two hills by climbing in order to meet one another, though there was no such detachment or any distance between their minds. Two minds become one when they get united by oneness of feelings and emotions. On the other hand, love or affection is not a premeditated process rather it is a spontaneous phenomenon. The same is applicable to Dihun when she once went to remote village with a view to participating 'Nimso'kerung where she had to dance just close to that very youth. Each of them experienced an inexplicable sensation and an unknown feeling while they were dancing by holding each of their waists. They snatched their sights, exchanged furtive glance and straight gaze and then love began spontaneously.

Unfortunately, we cannot have a world that is designed in favour of our yearnings and desires, for we have responsibilities and must undergo restraints. We may have much freedom, but not without restraints. The 'jirkedam' stands for a collective workshop for all the male and female youths where they are inculcated and trained about all the works which are indispensable for their future. He could
not afford time to meet his beloved after the rigorous training imparted under the strict supervision of the ‘Klengsārpo’ who used to engage them in ‘Ritnong Chingdi’[^48], bamboo handicrafts, fishing, collection of the feathers of ‘vo’jāru’ and so forth through strict punctuality. On the other hand, the girls too have to carry out a huge workload, such as, knitting garlands, preparing cakes for brewing rice-beer by collecting ethno-botanical herbs from the forests, rehearsing various traditional dances, weaving clothes and what not. Compelled to lead such a life with such a hectic schedule coupled with constraints and discipline, therefore, Dihun once told her lover that she could no more be able to meet him. On being asked about the reason she further told his lover that she had to tolerate all the rebukes and criticism from the leader of the ‘jirkedām’. On hearing this from his beloved the lover told her that he knew the solution to this problem and when she wanted to know it the suitor proposed that both of them should come towards the working place quite early in the dawn so that they would meet in the midway. Thus, he said, the distance would be minimized, time would be well-managed, and they would be able to join the ‘jirkedām’ in time. This idea proved effective and Dihun and her lover kept on meeting each other frequently adopting this measure for a sufficient period of time. On one fine day the suitor gave a ‘nālāngpong’[^49] as gift of love to Dihun and on being entreated put it in her ears. Dihun was almost confused thinking as to what she should give to her lover in return as a token of love and affection and at last decided to give a ‘poho’[^50], and she installed a hand-loom for that purpose. The ‘poho’, however, would not of ordinary white colour, rather she would decorate it with panoramic and intricate designs woven out of the intense feeling of love that she bore for him. With this intention in mind she collected various leaves and roots of trees from the forests and squeezed out of them red, blue, black, and yellow etc. and dyed them in the threads to weave a rainbow-like and sundry ‘poho’ for her lover. As she was obsessed with weaving in agony of love she discovered to her surprise that a floral design identical with that of a hand-fan appeared on the cloth. May be her sub-conscious self was contemplating about the means of alleviating the pangs
of love and the floral design might have been a spontaneous manifestation of the same. Anyway, having accomplished it Dihun walked towards her lover to present that gift to him. On the other hand, the lover too began his walking trip quite in the dawn as usual in order to meet his fiancé, anticipating Dihun also to be coming from the opposite direction. They used to meet en route just nearby a rock, which is the center of distance of the starting-points of their daily sojourn. But, no sooner had the lover arrived that rendezvous, he was taken aback to find a piece of cloth with intricately adorned beautiful floral designs lying on the rock. He dashed post-haste towards that direction to pick up that cloth and gazed at the enticing floral designs imprinted on the cloth. Nobody had seen someone imposing such floral designs upon any cloth prior to that cloth to which the lover alone remained the first spectator and witness. He tried his best to understand the implications associated with those floral designs, such as, hand-fan, deer, wild creepers and so on. But he did not see Dihun there and so thought about her of playing hide-and-seek with him by lurking behind a tree. The lover, therefore, started shouting her name loudly again and again. He made a thorough search of the entire like a mad person, but unfortunately no response came, Dihun was no more to be seen anywhere. He ruminated introspectively that she might have been devoured by some wild animals or fell prey to the strict disciplinary action from the leader's (klengsārpo) of the 'jirkedām'. He again shouted her name aloud: Dihun, Dihun, Dihun...but the shout reverberated in the hills of the vicinity. Ser Dihun was no more to be found, dead or alive.

18) Hai-imu- The Pathetic Lover and the Miserable Victim of Royal Lust:

Once upon a time there had been a village called Amtarpeng in an unknown hilly area under the present Hamren sub-division and two men named O'n Teron and Sāi Ronghāng used to reside in that very village. There was good rapport and friendship between the wives of the two persons, namely; Kāreng Ronghāngpi and Kāché Timungpi, since long ago. As the saying has it, once while they were
collecting edible herbs in the forests had proposed before one another that in case a
male child in case of Kareng and a female child in case of Kache would be begotten,
then both of them would be married to one another after attainment of maturity, and
that way their childhood friendship would be perpetuated.

After a few days, as the fate would have it, a female child was born in the
womb of Kache as the last beam of the moonlit night was flickering in the horizon
just before the eye of Nature peeped through the east. The child was named as ‘Hāi-
i’ by Sai Ronghang, the father. In the mean time, Kareng also was undergoing acute
labour-pain in the house of O’n Teron’s and just a little later she gave birth to a male
child who was named as ‘Long’.

Hāi-i and Long started growing gradually. As time fleeted by, both of them
reached the threshold of juvenility by playing together in the forests, banks and
beaches of the rivers, hills and valleys of Amtarpeng. It seemed as if they had one
mind and one soul. None of them could not help but seeing one another even for a
single day.

On the other hand, Kache and Kareng also contemplated about the marriage
of their children by recollecting their former promise as the children had grown
mature enough to go for the wedlock.

Long Teron himself placed the proposal of marriage before his father. But as
per the prevailing custom of the society no Karbi youth could marry before or
without formally joining the ‘jirsong’ at least for a period of three years. Long was
very much apprehensive if some other person would be infatuated by the alluring
beauty of his Hāi-i during his absence. Thus, on being beseeched by his dear son,
O’n Teron went to the house of Sai Ronghang and betrothed Hāi-i as his would-be
daugther-in-law. In this context Hāi-i said:

“As per Karbi custom, the wife must lead her husband, and the
husband must follow her when a couple goes outside home.
Accordingly the time of my birth preceded Long’s nativity. That means Long came to this mortal world just after me. In that sense, we were married since we were born, and hence I see no reason for further formality.”[51]

However, the marriage between Hāi-i and Long was formally solemnized just after the latter’s completion of the training period at the ‘jirsong’ in conformity with the Karbi custom then in vogue. Days rolled on. Hāi-i had given birth to a male child. A very happy family was formed by Hāi-i and Long in the course of time. However, destiny never remains firm or static. The Divine Providence seemed to have stood as an obstacle before the happiness of their family. Long went to the slopes of a remote hill in quest of suitable land for ‘jhum’ cultivation and had to remain absent for certain days away from his sweet home. During the absence of Long a Khasi vendor dealing with silver ornaments came to Hāi-i’s house and stayed back as a guest. The vendor was of lewd character and his name was Ronsantang. Having tolerated the undue advantage being taken by the unfamiliar vendor and his prolonged shelter at her house without any justifiable reason for a sufficient period of time, Hāi-i expressed her reluctance and incapability of giving him further hospitality. The vendor then felt slighted and went straightaway to Socheng (then capital of the Karbi kingdom) with a vindictive heart and instigated his feudal lord, Longdili, over there against her. The villainous vendor told the feudal lord that it was not befitting on the part of the maiden like Hāi-i possessing enthralling beauty to live in the poor hut at Amtarpeng village. Only the urban atmosphere of Socheng would do proper justice to her captivating juvenile beauty. Being instigated by Ronsantang, the feudal lord of Socheng, Longdili became quite emotional and so sent a message to Hāi-i’s father through a messenger conveying his proposal of marriage with his beautiful daughter. Sai Ronghang was shocked to the extreme, for Hāi-i was not a maiden but a married woman, the mother of a child. Thus, he nullified the proposal put forwarded by Longdili. But the despotic feudal
lord took recourse to treachery in order to possess *Hāi-i* by hook or by crook. He got Sai Ronghang summoned to the capital and threatened him and simultaneously ordered him to make necessary arrangement for the wedding feast secretly by preparing rice beers and meats. On the appointed day the feudal lord of Socheng arrived at the residence of Sai Ronghang along with his followers and soldiers. He stayed as a guest at his residence keeping the intention of his coming secret (from *Hāi-i* and rest of the family). As per Karbi custom a guest is akin to God. Sai Ronghang did not show any lapse in offering hospitality to the guests despite knowing everything about their coming. Longdili and his companions were adequately received and taken care of. But the hidden motive of the feudal lord of Socheng got manifested only then when *Hāi-i* was serving them cooked rice. When *Hāi-i* was serving rice to him with a wooden spoon he put a finger-ring cast with magical spell round her finger all of a sudden as per existing Karbi custom. *Hāi-i* shuddered at such unexpected behaviour of Longdili. She dashed inside her room and started weeping by hugging her own husband, Long. But Long, being very poor and weak, could not stand against the royal conspiracy hatched by Longdili. Thus, in the very following morning the treacherous Longdili went away triumphantly with *Hāi-i* towards Socheng. Quite helpless as she was *Hāi-i* just kept on going along with her baby on her back amidst tight security of the soldiers leaving behind her footprints on the beach of Umrachi and watering the mule-track of the hilly pathways with her tears. On the other hand, hapless Long kept on following the group like a mad person. But no sooner had the group reached the gateway to Socheng town, the guards withstood Long from going inside. He was denied the liberty to enter into the capital. Long, being totally dejected, bade goodbye to *Hāi-i* from outside by calling her name aloud. During his retreat back towards the village Long kept on crying aloud out of acute mental trauma intensified by the footprints of *Hāi-i* still visible on the sandy beaches of Umrachi. However, Longdili could not win the mind of *Hāi-i* although he had forced her to come to Socheng by resorting to conspiracy. Therefore, Longdili went to her mother’s house along with *Hāi-i*. He
celebrated their honeymoon by camping at the valley of Umrachi, but albeit he could not bring any change to the mind of Hāi-i. At last, Hāi-i succumbed to a very severe illness. Longdili was ultimately compelled to summon for Long with a view to fulfilling the last wish of Hāi-i. Accordingly Long proceeded towards the capital with two country fowls as bribes for the release of Hāi-i and his child. The royal army led Long to the room where Hāi-i was lying in serious condition. That was the last meeting between Hai-i and Long, for Hāi-i breathed her last just after handing the child over her husband.

Long began recollecting the past fond memories of Hāi-i sleeping on the raised platform of the make-shift hut of the ‘jhum’ field after his return to Amtarpeng and entrusting the child upon his mother. He met Hāi-i one night in his dream. In his dream Hāi-i called upon him to come to heaven to get reunited. Just after a few days of that dream Long embraced death inside the hut itself as a result of an agonizing fever. On the other hand, Hāi-i’s mother too had dreamed a strange dream. Hāi-i, as revealed in that strange dream, was waiting at the gateway of heaven in order to welcome Long. Hāi-i would not prefer re-incarnation to this mundane world which is infected by immorality and injustice, though she would send Long for that purpose because they have left behind their child in it. Most probably Long got re-incarnation but Hāi-i never, who remained in the heaven being transformed into a goddess of rain. That is the reason why Hāi-i remained immortal as ‘Hāi-imu’ (i.e. Sister Hāi-i.)

19) Lārtā- The Bold, Virtuous and the Beautiful:

Larta was a very virtuous and beautiful Karbi maiden, and there are a good number of folk-tales in the society, which are woven around her enamouring qualities. She was so famous that certain numbers of folk-songs also were created which are associated with her virtues, and they are known as ‘Lārtā Ālun’. One of such folk-songs runs as follows:
During the 'Rongker' festival much business and revelry were seen among the members of the 'Jir Kedām'. People were discussing about reconstitution of the 'Jir Kedām'. One of the youths proposed the name of Larta as the leader of the organization, and the elders too supported the same. The reason behind it was that Larta possessed all the virtues and caliber for conducting a 'Jir Kedām'. Besides, she was an expert weaver too. She knew how to imprint the beautiful designs of the birds, deer, peacock, and a variety of butterflies. Thus, Larta was chosen as female leader of the 'Jir Kēādm' on common consent. Larta started accomplishing all the activities of the institution in a very fair and perfect manner by dint of her genius and administrative acumen. As the saying has it, Larta herself once founded a new village with only three houses in the beginning. However, the small village kept on expanding gradually until it became bigger and bigger. It grew so big at one point of time and the number of youths increasing day by day that the 'Jir Kedām' of the village had to be divided into two. One of the groups of the bifurcated 'Jir Kedām' was monitored by a person belonging to Timung clan, and the other was spearheaded by Larta herself. When Larta led the procession during 'Ritnong Chingdi', the women of the village used to gaze at her rushing out from their stilted thatched houses. As the saying goes, Larta used to go further towards her uncle's village leading the group of the 'Jirsong' even braving through the incessant rainfall and footprints of the wild elephants amidst the forest full of blood-thirsty lice. She could not cross the hilly streams teeming with sudden rain water in the beginning. However, she ordered the male members of the 'Jirsong' to build rafts with banana plants and crossed the obstacles safely. The name and fame of Larta thus spread far and wide because of such art and intelligence.

"Frailty thy name is woman" as Shakespeare said, the heart of Larta also was susceptible to emotions. She fell in love with that of a male member of the 'Jirsong' named Kronihang. Kronihang was an orphan, and therefore, her mother withstood as an obstacle to their love affair. Accordingly, she hatched a conspiracy with a view to
murdering Kronihang. Coincidentally, a ‘chomängkān’ ceremony was being observed in the nearby village. Taking the opportunity, Larta’s scheming mother gave them her consent to go there and to enjoy the ceremony together. Larta’s speculative mother had already dug a big hole just in the middle of the route the lovers were supposed to take, and the hole was dug in such a manner so that Kronihang would fall down inside it and die. But, the conspiracy of the mother did not bear any fruit. It was a dark moonless night during which the lovers undertook their trip. Larta and Kronihang took the hilly path in the dark night in order to participate in the ‘chomängkān’, which was taking place in the village just in the plains of that hill. The roaring sounds of the drums, which broke the silence of the night, were heard from a distance. Above their heads there was the sky studded with stars. They were advancing forward with their hands in hands as recognition of their mutual respect and affection. But, all of a sudden, Larta fell down a hole, and Kronihang failed to rescue her despite his sincere attempt. The finger ring of Larta, however, remained stuck to his hand. Larta was no more to be discovered. Ironically, the beautiful maiden, Larta had to diminish inside the hole, which had been dug by her mother with a sinister motive to kill Kronihang. However, the pathetic catastrophe that had overtaken the unfortunate Larta has remained as a legend and a popular fire-place narrative among the old folks of the community living thatched stilted houses located in the intractable hilly terrains.

**20) Dinmir- the Karbi Helen:**

Dinmir is the heroine of the pathetic verse narrative ‘Dinmir’, which is a heart-rending tale of her separation from her loving husband. It is, in reality, an unwritten tragic verse narrative that had taken place in the life of a simple-hearted Karbi maiden in which the anonymous folk author strives to show the destructive impact of a vindictive conspiracy, which has the toxic venom efficacious enough to disintegrate a happy conjugal life and consequently can destroy the mutual love and
affection, goodwill, respect and trust by sowing the germ of split among the people of the society.

As far the folk-song goes, the locus of this verse narrative is a hill called Batchen. A person named Mai Longbi once established a hamlet there, which was populated by one hundred families. Mai was the ‘Gaonburha’ or the Head of the village. The heroine of the folk-narrative is the only daughter of the village head. She was very much imposing in her physical features and incomparably attractive since her childhood.

Time changes its own course, and as a natural consequence of its revolving cycle Dinmir attained her juvenility. As dictated by her mother she had chosen Long, a boy of simple nature. The boy happened to be the son of her paternal (cross) aunt. The sanctity of cementing marital relationship with the son of the paternal aunts was a universal custom among the Karbis. In conformity with that prevalent custom and in order to avoid any probable calumniation that could be labelled against them by the society in future they were made betrothal by binding threads around their wrists and were given a social sanctity as husband and wife at the very nascent stage of their life.

Time kept on fleeting months after years, and all the natural symptoms of youth could be seen in the physical features of Dinmir. The enticing beauty of Dinmir spread far and wide, but her beauty proved to be her main enemy. There was a jealous and lewd person named Sar Mangbi living in their neighbourhood. He was a Gaonburha by profession and was married. He was famous in those days for his efficacious hypnotizing charm. The hairs of his head were greying, who had heard every detail of Dinmir’s beauty. His mind was filled with innumerable imaginations and fantasies. One day, being unable to resist his temptations, he proposed before his wife about his infatuation toward Dinmir’s beauty and his desire to marry her at any cost. He cannot tolerate anyone marrying Dinmir, and therefore, he decided to visit
Mai Longbi's house to see the beauty and activities of Dinmir with his own eyes. He cannot yield to his wife's dissuasion under any circumstance, and being compelled the wife arranged everything for her husband. Thousands of evil ideas occupied the contaminated mind of Sai Mangbi creating a mental commotion, and proceeded towards Batchen hill in order to meet his dream girl, Dinmir. When Sai Mangbi reached Mai Longbi’s house then the Dinmir was alone inside it since her parents were busy at work in the 'jhum-field'. Mangbi experienced a secret excitement in his mind to think that his dream was about to come true. At one point of time he felt that he was very much bemused by the beauty of Dinmir. Dinmir, on the other hand, solicited Mangbi with utmost respect and reverence, for he was her maternal uncle so far as their social relationship was concerned. Mangbi by now became so much enthralled by Dinmir's beauty that on being asked about his visit by her, he shamelessly told her that the only purpose of his coming was to see her beauty. After learning it Dinmir retorted with decency to Mangbi that it was not behooving on his part to shelter any greed over young girls at such an old age, and playfully insulted him by enquiring if he was cherishing a dream to marry again. Being stung by that insult Mangbi felt ashamed of his meanness and remained silent for a while.

After getting his long-standing desire partially fulfilled, Mangbi returned to his own home. However, there were myriad anxieties which were disturbing his somewhat quiet mind now. At times he blamed evil intention, and felt completely exhausted being torn and twisted by the quagmire of worry. In order to fulfill the jealousy of his turbulent mind, he now decided to look for some suitable match for Dinmir from among his own family. On the other hand, Dinmir apprised of every detail about Mangbi's sudden visit and the secret evil design behind that to her parent. After hearing all this from his innocent daughter and after realizing the mean character and deeds of Mangbi, the notorious master of charmed potion, Mai Longbi and his wife resolved to devise to arrange for the marriage of their daughter as early as possible. On the other hand, the youths of the village decided to form the 'jirsong'
on the very day of the ‘Rek Rongker’[52] as advised by the ‘Gaonburha’. Long, the would-be husband of Dinmir also expressed his willingness to join the same. Unfortunately, however, Long had to agree to undergo a probationary servitude at his maternal uncle’s house (Mai Longbi’s) in conformity with the prevailing custom of the community and by obeying his parent’s dictation.

In the meantime, the captivating beauty of Dinmir spread to the Tanti province, and a person named Langteroi hailing from this area wanted to have Dinmir as his wife. He was a relative of Mangbi and hence once paid a visit to the latter’s house on the pretext of searching for country fowls. He was goldsmith by calling and was very much expert in casting various sorts of ornaments. He was thus popularly known to the people as ‘Tānti Ābini’ - the goldsmith from Tanti. Both Langteroi and Mangbi beguiled away their time by eating and drinking, and in course of their conversation, the former intimated Mangbi of his miserable loneliness in not being able to find any suitable partner in his life in spite being an expert goldsmith. On hearing the heaving of pathetic sighs by Langteroi sympathy grew in Mangbi, and hence assured the former of finding a suitable bride for him. In fact, Mangbi felt very happy to that the evil designs he had hitherto been nurturing in his vindictive mind was about to take the shape of reality. He therefore gave a prolong and detail description of the fascinating beauty of Dinmir, the daughter of Mai Longbi of Batchen hill and suggested Langteroi that he could try his hand for marrying her. As planned they went to the hut at the ‘jhum-field’ to meet Dinmir with betel nuts in their possession. After a short while the girls belonging to the Batchen village were seen coming towards that place in throng with a view to collecting fire-woods from the nearby forest. Mangbi shouted at the group loudly and invited them to take betel nuts from them. Since Mangbi was a ‘Gaonburha’ Dinmir could not disobey him and hence she entered into the hut and took the betel nuts being offered by Mangbi. Taking the opportunity Mangbi introduced Dinmir with that of Langteroi, and intimated her of the expertise of the latter as a goldsmith.
During their conversation Mangbi asked Dinmir to beseech Langteroi to cast a bracelet for her, and simultaneously persuaded the latter to comply with her request to which Langteroi gave his consent. Dinmir was completely unaware of the sinister motive of Mangbi and Langteroi, but, on the other hand, the duo felt a sense of self-gratification for the possibility of their plan bearing fruits.

A few days later Langteroi came to Longbi’s house with sufficient pairs of bracelets after being instigated by Mangbi to keep the charmed pair apart meant for Dinmir. He made a generous demonstration of all the pairs of bracelets which the village girls competed to buy, but Langteroi proffered the reserved pair to her. The attempt made by Longbi to prevent his daughter from buying any bracelet for lack of money went futile as Dinmir put the reserved pair round her hands as hinted by Langteroi, and instantaneously felt a kind of excitement. Dinmir started behaving in an erotic manner which exhilarated Langteroi to the extreme, and he became extremely restless in anticipation of winning the heart of Dinmir. Believing that his desire of possessing Dinmir had virtually come true, Langteroi put an end to his demonstration of the ornaments and bade good-bye to the ‘Gaonburha’ in a hurry with a view to taking some rest at Mangbi’s house as well as to informing him of the development. When Langteroi intimated Mangbi that he put the charmed bracelets round Dinmir’s hands very proudly as had been advised by him, then the latter foretold the former that Dinmir would come running post haste to him to submit herself without fail. Both the conspirators smiled out of sheer satisfaction believing that the charm had worked its miracle and that their prey had fallen upon the noose.

As anticipated, Dinmir became frenzied and incontrollable to meet Langteroi. She could not live even for a moment without seeing Langteroi by now. Therefore, she entrusted her infant child to her mother and came dashing towards Mangbi’s house on the pretext of going to the nearby forest to gather fire-woods. She became completely blind in love and the prospect of having sexual gratification with that of Langteroi, and therefore, she paid no attention to her mother's objection. On
reaching Mangbi's house and seeing Langteroi there, Dinmir became restless and itchy to elope with Langteroi to become his wife forever. However, Mangbi was apprehensive of revenge by the villagers of Batchen and hence he advised the couple to leave the village in no time and to flee towards Tanti. They proceeded towards Tanti in the dead of the night as advised by Mangbi, and when they reached their destination it was almost dawn of the next day. Sensing their surreptitious entry into the village the dogs started barking and the villagers were awakened only to discover Langteroi with his new bride. The villagers thronged in great numbers to see the beautiful bride, and she being still in the spell of the charm kept smiling and jubilant at all the time instead of feeling shy.

The news of Dinmir's sudden disappearance, on the other hand, spread like wildfire to every nook and corner of the Batchen village and consternation prevailed in the house of Mai Longbi. Therefore, the villagers decided to chase them to Tanti in order to avenge the coercive abduction of Dinmir after propitiating before the gods and goddesses. Yet further they needed the help of a 'Lunse' (a devotional singer) for it is the songs of a 'Lunse' which alone can dispel the adverse effect of the black charm. Accordingly as advised by the 'Gaonburha' the villagers approached one such singer at Rongchikli Village and explained everything about the predicament before him, who agreed to come with the crowd to Tanti. As they reached Tanti all the villagers took to their heels for the fear of life, but when Mai Longbi threatened the Gaonburha of Tanti with war unless the latter would produce the traitor Langteroi before the crowd. However, the 'Gaonburha' appealed him to be calm and benign and helped him to rescue Dinmir from the clutch of Langteroi. Being exasperated beyond control, the villagers demolished the house and properties of Langteroi and started returning homeward. On their way back home, the infuriated mob decided to enter into Mangbi's house and to inflict deserving punishment upon him. However, Mangbi was at his 'jhum-field' when the mob reached his home, and hence he was dragged forward after being fastened with ropes.
and consequently tied to a post at the behest of Mai Longbi. Dinmir too rebuked him by spitting, spuming in order to alleviate her fury and agony. Later, as dictated by the ‘Gaonburha’, the angry crowd shattered the household properties and livestock owned by Mangbi and forced him to leave the place in an instant. “Mangbi alone is not ‘Karbi’, there are so many ‘Karbi’ people in this world” –the crowd shouted loudly in unison before they left the place with Dinmir.\textsuperscript{[53]}

21) Dengrali– The Tale of the Karbi Mary, Kāchē:

‘Dengrali’ is the name of a tree in Karbi. At a particular point of time in the past the youths of a particular Karbi village had arranged ‘Riso Chojun’\textsuperscript{[54]}. All the necessary arrangements had been made for that very festival. Meanwhile a deep love affair had by then been developed between two members, Soineri and Kāche during their stay in the ‘jirsong’. Kāche had a pre-marital conception as a consequence of that love-affair. However, the secret became public among the youths when the preparation for that festival was going on in full swing. Kāche had been deeply pained to think about that unfortunate development. “How shall I show my face before the villagers in such a situation?”- she introspected, “It’s rather better to die.” Having been torn by such remorse, she went to the nearby forest in order to collect fire-wood. However, since Kāche had not returned from the forest even after an interval of too long a period, her friends started searching for her. They kept on calling her by name time and again. Having heard her name being called by her friends Kāche too responded from the opposite direction and announced her presence there. Supposing that Kāche was hiding somewhere close by the place, her friends requested her to come out soon reminding her that the time for the proposed ‘Riso Chojun’ was imminent. Kāche then said to them to this effect: “I’m very much ashamed of myself. Therefore, I won’t go back to your company to show my face in this impure (pregnant) stage.”
Having been insisted by her friends again and again that she must participate in the ‘Riso Chojun’, Käche intimated them that she had already been transformed into a tree. She further said:

"I won’t be able to go with you in flesh and blood now, since I’ve been transformed into a ‘Dengrâli’ tree. In case I should go with you, you can do one thing—cut a leafy tangle pointing to the east off from the tree with proper prayer and reverence, and place the same before the altar meant for the festival. Keep all the offerings made for the ritual and after the end of the ritual serve the offerings to everyone of you in equal share and take the same by sitting under the leafy tangle." [55]

The friends kept the words of Käche and did as she desired. Ever since that time and occasion, a leafy tangle of Dengrâli tree is installed before the earthen altar performing proper ceremonial rite during the ‘Riso Chojun’ festival every year, which is being observed with utmost reverence till today.

22) Korhon Jângreso: [56]

‘Korhon Jângreso’, as the title suggests, is a folktale about an orphan called Korhon. The parents of Korhon and his sister, Sâng-et were Barim and Karik, who had lived a very happy conjugal life. However, Barim had to go for second marriage after his wife’s sudden death. The name of his second wife was Jangmi who was very cruel and stony-hearted and used to inflict inhuman torture upon Korhon and Sâng-et. The father, Barim, on the other hand, could not bear her ill-treatment to his children any more, and therefore, out of compulsion he went to the forest and left his children in lurch on a tall rocky plate. The orphan children had to live a miserable life of loneliness and starvation. Both the orphans cried aloud being extremely scared in the deep forest but no response came. Therefore, they kept on praying before God and at last a tangle or an offshoot came out from the bamboo groove nearby toward their direction, which helped them climb down from the rock. That marked the beginning of their wonderful sylvan life during which they developed a
close relationship with that of the entire ecology around them consisting of springs, wild arums and yams, bananas, mangoes, jackfruits and various wild animals and creatures. They took to ‘jhum’ cultivation and later developed a close relationship with that of all the birds and animals roaming around the forest. However, Sāng-et died because of a snake-bite, brought back to life by a quack at the behest of the King, and eventually became the Queen. This folktale is certainly designed to inculcate some moral edification, which in reality bespeaks of the strong ecological concern conceived by the author(s), namely, the Karbi people. The bamboo tangles sprouting out suddenly, the spring appearing before the orphans like manna dew, the roots and fruits in plenty, the friendly animals, birds and myriad other creatures all go to evince the tribe’s love and oneness with the ecology, their sense of co-existence, sharing and caring. On the other hand, the sudden death of Sāng-et may be construed to be an act of penance for Korhon for his unintentional killing of the snakes, which opposes the principle of co-existence.

23) Phāksokoinek: [57]

‘Phāksokoinek’ is yet another Karbi folktale which deals with the vicissitude and miraculous change of fortune of the hero, Phāksokoinek. He was one of the three children of a family and a physically deformed boy with a face resembling that of a pig. Therefore, he was always neglected, abused and insulted by all the members of the family as being lethargic and useless. One day he went to a nearby forest and started cultivating paddy crops and informed his brothers about the bumper crops he had grown and requested them to reap the same. But instead of being happy at that news the brothers laughed at it jeering at him as to how could a pig grow crops. But being insisted by Phāksokoinek they went to the crop-fields and was surprised to the extreme to see for themselves the health and affluence of the crops cultivated by their youngest brother. Phāksokoinek was reunited by his brothers after that incident. Yet another miraculous phenomenon took place in the life of Phaksokoinek. The king of the state had once organized a ‘sayambara’[58].
Surprisingly enough, Phäksokoinek was chosen by his daughter as the competent suitor, and consequently married him by putting the floral garland round his neck.

24) Vo' Kartāp: \[39]\]

The ritual called 'Vo'Kartāp' had its origin from a legend pertaining to an ostracized man named Binong Jangreso, and the narrative runs as follows:

Once there lived a man named Bamonpo Dera of the Timung clan. Binong was the youngest and the only male of the six siblings of the Timung family. Among the sisters, Kajir was the most wicked who treated her only brother, Binong, like a girl. The other sisters- Kanong, Kathong and Kadom also followed suit and went further in their ill-treatment by dressing Bamonpo in \( pini^{[60]} \), \( jiso^{[61]} \) and putting a \( duk^{[62]} \) across his face. Binong was forced to live a living hell as his villagers would constantly tease and taunt him as he grew up agonizingly beyond puberty. Overcome by the shame, increasing psychological agony, Binong one day quietly vanished to a forest far beyond the boundaries of his village and took shelter under a cotton tree. He only had a hen with him, which later earned him the name Binong Vopo, or Binong, the hen-man. The hen would go to nearby villages, pecked grains, collected them in its throat (\( kiju \)) and provided the master with the seeds (\( chili \)) for cultivation.

One day, a poor mother and her daughter went in search of wild roots and tubers. The daughter belonged to a \( Milik \) sub-clan of the \( Teron \) clan. The search for wild roots and tubers led the mother-daughter duo to the forest where Binong lived all by himself. As the hard and tiring day turned into evening, the mother and daughter became very hungry. To compound their woes, drizzle accompanied the advancing darkness. They noticed a lonely raised hut and hurried near it with the hope to get some food, and probably shelter for the night, as returning home was well nigh impossible. The distressed duo began to call out for help. Binong at first hesitated to respond, because he wore no cloth. Persistent female voices for help
forced him to tell the truth. The mother advised her daughter to raise her pini to cover her bosom and give the jiso to Binong to wear. The two were then welcomed to the raised hut (hemtāp), given food and shelter. In course of their conversation, Binong proposed to marry the daughter who gave her ‘jiso’ to cover his manhood to which the mother gladly agreed.

Binong then settled with his wife, raised a family, worked together hard and became well off with lots of silver and gold. One day, Binong and his wife organized a big feast by sacrificing a goat (chāi-bi-lo) that was left to him by his father. He invited his sisters to the feast and asked them to bring ‘horhāk’⁶⁵. Some of the sisters carried with them bamboo roots and dried twigs to masquerade as horhāk as they were reeling under poverty. Kanong was the only one who carried with her the best horhāk. But Binong did not make any distinction and offered the choicest pieces of meat to all the visiting sisters. The sisters who did not bring anything in their horhāk felt very ashamed and threw the pieces of meat down below through the loosely woven bamboo surface of the raised hut, which dogs and pigs ate instead.

The next morning, the sisters were bidden goodbye and cautioned not to look back. But curiosity got the better of Kanong and she could not resist the temptation to look back after going a few distances. Kanong and her husband climbed a tree to have a cleaner view of Binong’s hut. And lo! the dazzle of the gold and silver displayed in the courtyard of Binong’s hut blinded both Kanong and her husband. Tragedy struck them as both fell from the tree and died instantly. Their spirits then became birds— ‘Vo’ Keilo’ and began to fill the woods with their agonized cries of keilo...keilo...keilo...The male bird cried out ‘nāngjok-ājoine ło’⁶⁴ while the female repented ‘thek-keilo’⁶⁵. From the words ‘thek-keilo’, the birds were named ‘keilo’.

Binong was upset by the tragic incident and took it as defiance and an insult to him by his sisters. He then cursed that from then on, all female shall be doomed to
wearing a *pini* without the *jiso* while the males shall likewise be doomed to wearing *pini* and *jiso*. All the five Karbi clans were also cursed to paying obeisance to the mother's brother and all the five clans shall thenceforth suffer from *nihu kāchirī* till they paid obeisance to the mother's brother.

If the activity, behaviour, movement, and other characteristics of a person appear before other sane persons in the society he belongs to as different or eccentric, exceptional or idiosyncratic, or permanently ailing, then as per the existing belief of the people the person must seek blessings from his or her uncle (maternal). However, such strange symptoms need be confirmed through the help of the priest. The ailing person or his/her family members will have to follow three different stages of rituals to be performed at the house of the maternal uncle, such as, 1) *Åndum Kehāng* (asking for a morsel), 2) *Ârnān Kehom* (putting a ring round the finger), and 3) *Vo'kartāp* provided he/she wants to enjoy complete recuperation. Among these rituals *vo'kartāp* is the most expensive one. The person (or his family) seeking blessing is required to approach the 'gaonburha' (village-head) with 'hor bong' (bottles of wine) after completing necessary arrangements for the ritual and on the very day of the ritual he/she has to invite all his/her kith and kin and family members. During this ritual the party seeking blessing (the cousins or nephews) and the maternal uncle exchange their mutual feelings through songs. The maternal uncle recites a long 'shluka' (chant) seeking blessings from almighty God, and the thematic implication of the song bespeaks of the close attachment, respect as well as love and affection that exist between them. *Vo* (country fowls) and *horlāng* (traditional Karbi wine) are indispensable requisites for this ritual without which it cannot be performed. The following are the specimens of the songs to be sung by both the parties in turns:

**Thelu (the maternal uncle):**

Jo sānglin pen klirme'
Pāni rāni le'
Rāleng ämi me’
Thelu ähum me’(le)
Lo’humri nāngle’.
Nāng jorlāng bongme’
Dengkho’ pālingche’.
Nāng sipong phungpāmē’(rā)
Nāng jorlāng bongme’.
Rideng von pāmē’(rā)
Thelu ädungme’.
Rideng nāngpāle’
Soron nāngtongche’.
Pot chārnām mā he’?
Pālāt āphongme’(tong)
Loji ālāmthe’ (rā)
Hut-so le’ un-e’
Mālin non nīngve’
Chong bāsān lāmthe’ (mā)
Sānglin pen klirme’?
Mā nongsim āgor le’
Chili pen ār-e’
Dorde’ ālāmthe’ (si)
Ong nihu hemthe’
Seng chiki lāmthe’ (ma)
Sānglin pen klirme’?
Non sār ānghāng kuhe’
Boi phārān kāve’ (si)
Ri sele’ lāmthe’ (mā)
Sānglin pen klirme’?
Nāng chārnām nok me’
Jo kintothā te’
O, sānglin pen klirme’.[67]

(O, my dear brothr-in-law and sister, may I know what is the purpose behind your prayer to me by wearing turban (headgear) on this auspicious moment accompanied by offerings placed before me? Are you going to take some rest being exhausted by a journey to a distant place, or to seek some seeds of com during this season for cultivation, or in quest of caretaker, i.e., a daughter-in-law, at this old age?)
Sänglin (the brother-in-law):

Jo thelu kāme’
Thelu bāритhe’
Pāḷāt āphongme’.

Thelu ahum me’
Lo’humri jāngle’
Āṇchot ālāṁthe’
O, thelu kāme’.[68]

(O, respected uncle, we are not taking rest to go on a journey, nor are we coming to ask for any seed of corn, nor is it our purpose to search for any caretaker. Our child has been ailing since years, and hence we are begging your blessing for his/her speedy recuperation from bedridden state.)

25) Discovery of Lokhi (Paddy or Rice grain):

The Karbis used to sustain their life by taking wild yams as food and they used them in feasts during wedding ceremonies. Therefore, the discovery of paddy or rice (which is narrated in the folk song, Lokhi Keplāng) brought a revolutionary change into the lifestyle of the tribe. As the folk song has it, Lokhi or Lokhimi had been the dear daughter of Barithe before she landed on to the human world (of the Karbis). She got due permission from her father after repeated entreaty to observe the system of marriage as had been prevalent among the Karbis, but with a warning not to sympathize with them under any circumstance. But after learning the poverty and misery of the tribe, like Miranda, Lokhi/Lokhimi appealed her father again to send her to the world of the Karbis so that their poverty could be removed. Accordingly she was permitted by her father to do so along with her hundred sisters, but she remained hung on balance on the tangles of a ‘pepul’[69]tree en route. The tree started bearing huge amount of fruits as a result of Lokhimi’s shelter on it, which attracted many birds of different varieties. Anyway, it was Rongsopo Teron who had first dreamed of this paddy-turned Lokhimi. He had led the expedition of
discovery even by announcing to offer his youngest daughter a prize, if someone could locate the exact whereabouts of Lokhimi. The prolonged journey of Lokhimi from heaven down to the world of the Karbis is really worth-noticing. Right from her shelter upon an 'pepul' tree near Pengja Rongnihang village and the miraculous act of rescue by the orphan Ronsing, getting transformed into an 'pepul' fruit and swallowed by a fish, and eventually preserved by a fisherman at the end tell us a tale of the tribe's love and fascination, awe and reverence towards ecology around them. That is the reason why, Rongsopo Teron appeases Lokhimi after he had been informed by a person named Dandiwar Sarpo about her presence at the Langkuleng river after a short disappearance. Being guided by Dandiwar, Rongsopo and his wife set out for Kuleng river with necessary amount of pots of rice beer (horbong) in order to welcome Lokhimi back to their village. They succeeded in persuading her to come back with them but not without some obstacles. They had to propitiate, for example, the deity named 'Langjon' and at 'Pengja' hill until Lokhimi expressed her willingness to dwell at the clearing of the 'jhum' field (jimtim). She insisted upon the group that she would not go back to the village unless they welcome her with due respect. Accordingly, they welcomed her with due respect and reverence and grew prosperous, and from that time onward she was respectfully addressed as 'Mother Lokhimi', and the ‘Hacha Kekan’ dance[^70] has been organized till today by the Karbis.

26) The Invention of the Yeast and Rice Beer (Thāp läpen Hor kemān):

In the distant past there was a very famous village called Miring Rongsopi situated on the bank of the Kuleng river. Rangmukrang was the King or the Head of that village. Kareng and Kading, the two daughters of the King went to take bath in that very river on one fine day in the morning. No sooner had they started pouring water in their pitchers after taking bath, they suddenly noticed a pair of Kongching[^71] birds from the western direction swirling quite close above them. Consequently, they discharged faeces on a flat rock and flew away from the scene.
A kind of aroma started to diffuse itself in the entire area, and to excite and invigorate the two sisters. Although they could not locate the exact source of that aroma yet after a prolong search they succeeded in finding it out. They then started to homeward after wrapping it with the edge of their gown. Reaching home they kept the same above the rafter with utmost reverence. During that very night, Kareng and Kading dreamed a wonderful dream. They dreamed that they were drying grains in the sunshine after taking them off from the container (ingkrong), and to have pounded them to rice. They dreamed to have pounded the rice into powder and then to have prepared about nine flat-shaped cakes out of them. They dreamed as if they were drying the cakes inside thatch and were mixing them with cooked rice, and then to have stored the yeasted brew in an earthen pot after three days. They dreamed further to have treated their father with the pure and nectarine juice.

At that point of time they came back to their sense. In the following morning they narrated all about that strange dream before their father. The father then asked them to prepare the cake for preparing rice beer as they had dreamed. Obtaining due permission from their father both the sisters arranged for the same as soon as possible. Within anticipated time and by offering respect to God, they prepared the sweet nectar, ‘horlang’ in the similar manner as they had dreamed. After required fermentation indicated by strong aroma they served it to their father, who liked it very much. The father felt quite exhilarated after taking that nectar. He felt as if his cares and anxieties, fatigue, hunger and thirst all fled. He felt that the gods and goddesses would be very easily satisfied if that very nectar is used while worshipping them. Ever since that occasion ‘horläng’ has been used while worshipping the gods like Hemphu, Mukrang and so on, and to show respectful hospitality to the honourable dignitaries like Lingdokpos and Pinpos in the Karbi society till today. Apart from the religious rituals it is also used during ‘Chomāngkān’ and ‘Ādām Āsār’[72](Karbi Marriage ceremony). By and large,
“horlāṅg” is regarded as one of the very indispensable and revered things in the society. This myth again is indicative of the tribe’s ethno-botanical knowledge and their usage for the integration and peaceful co-existence of the society. It is interesting to note that the yeast and the rice beer (horlāṅg) was the boon of a pair of birds and the space on which they discharged their stool was a flat rock.

27) The Origin of the Bottle-Gourd (Bong Kemān):

After a few days from the discovery of the yeast and the rice beer Rangmukrang happened to go to the river bank in order to take bath as usual. To his great dismay he noticed that one of his teeth fell down the water while he was washing his face. However, he gathered it carefully and returned home. Later on finding no suitable place to store it he buries the tooth on a particular spot of his compound. Exactly after a week he noticed again that a kind of sapling was sprouting out of that spot which doubled his dismay. As the days passed by the sapling turned to a creeper and so Rangmukrang put a trellis above it to support its growth. Eventually the creeper bore flowers and fruits. There were only two fruits borne by that creeper, which he later on named as ‘bongchim’ and ‘bongdām’ respectively. As suggested by Rangmukrang, his consort, Welirbon scrubbed the two fruits smoothly by the sands of the river and stored them on top of the smoky rafter of their house. On being asked by his two daughters, Kareng and Kading as to with what name they should call the fruits, Rangmukrang told them to regard the fruits as their own brothers since they had originated from his tooth. The fruits resembled that of wild water gourd. As ‘bong’ or ‘muso’ in Karbi stands for brother, water gourd is still called ‘bong’ by the tribe. Rangmukrang used them for storing home-made rice beer since he could not find out any suitable use for the same.

28) Sābin Ālun-The Karbi Rāmāyanā:

‘Sābin Ālun’ is the Karbi epic, which can be regarded as an adaptation of the Hindu epic Ramayana to suit their purpose with a slight alteration in case of the names of the characters. For example, King Dasharatha becomes ‘Dhorom’;
Laxmana becomes 'Rām Lokhon'; Janaka becomes 'Rāmānpo'; Sita becomes 'Sintā Kungri'; Shurpanasha becomes 'Thesomāhādi' and so on. The adaptation in case of the main plot and the atmosphere that it is built around is more interesting for it is tinged with the imagination and worldview which is typically Karbi. To be more precise, the typical Karbi socio-cultural atmosphere and background, plot and characterization, various rites and ceremonies incorporated in the ‘Sābin Ālun’ vividly reflect the Karbi lifestyle. For example, Sita is shown to be born from an egg of a peahen (vo’plākpi) instead of a plough as in the Hindu epic; King Janaka (Rāmānpo) is a farmer who cultivates in the ‘jhum’ field and drinks rice beer; the gorgeous royal palace of King Dasharatha (Dhorom) here is an ordinary thatched house. Further, Sita (Sintā Kungri) also is depicted as an ordinary Karbi maiden who performs the daily household chores, carries lunch to the ‘jhum’ field for her father, and of course, weaves clothes.

29) The ‘Moserā Kihir’ Tradition (Egg Cosmogony and Migration Ordeal):

‘Moserā’, literally denoting ‘recounting the past from memories’ basically re-enacts the reminiscence of the origin and the strenuous migration ordeal of the Karbis. This typical Karbi folk-ballad with distinctive mode of rendition is sung by the Klengsārpō or the Klengdun during the pious occasions of the tribes, such as, ‘Riso Chojun’; ‘Thi-kārhi’ or ‘Chomāṅkāṅ’, the funerary ritual. As recited through the ‘Moserā’, the Karbis[73] were born out of eggs laid by a ‘mythical bird’ (Vo’ plākpi), which laid them at the base of ‘trees’ (of Tiji-Temur variety) and behind huge upright ‘stones’ and ‘cliffs’. In the subsequent part of the ‘Moserā’ again we are told about the migration of the Karbis from ‘long-le āchete’ meaning the ‘navel (center) of the earth’ and the trials and tribulations the tribe had to confront with during their migration amidst ‘white sky and white earth’, ‘white mountain and white canyon’.

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30) ‘Piso-Pāngri’- Rituals Related to Arrangement of Marriage:
Karbi wedding ceremony, ‘Ādām Āsār’ is actually the result of the system of systems which are arranged and obeyed in orderly phase-wise rituals. The system that enshrines these rituals is known as ‘Piso Pāngri’, which, however, is the women’s affair. If a family of the groom is desirous of getting a Karbi girl married to a son, then the family has to abide by three-phased rite prescribed by tradition, which demands the groom’s family to approach the bride’s family (house of the maternal uncle) three times taking necessary offerings along with them. The rituals can be briefly described as under:

1) ‘Nengpi-Nengso Kāchingki’- The Women’s Negotiation: The mother of the groom need to go to the house of the would-be bride as a casual guest or visitor along with two or three married women and one bottle of ‘Ārāk’ and she will have to express her desire to have the daughter of the particular house as bride for her son (as her daughter-in-law) during her conversation with the mother on various stray topics. This initial phase of negotiation is called ‘Nengpi-Nengso Kachingki’.

2) ‘Kepātini’- The Word of Confirmation: The negotiation is further resumed with necessary offerings, such as, ‘horbong’ as in the first phase after getting some positive signals from the mother of the bride during the previous negotiation. During this phase of negotiation a tentative date for the prospective marriage is decided and is called ‘Kepātini’.

3) ‘Ājo-Ārni Kephā’- The Fixation of the Date for the Wedding: During this third and final phase of negotiation the mother of the groom again will have to go to the bride’s house with requisite offerings and decide a definite date for the wedding during her negotiation with the mother. This decisive negotiation is called ‘Ārjo-Ārni Kephā’.

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Thus, after accomplishing the formalities during all the three phases of the negotiations and after fixing a pious day (especially during the winter season), the groom’s party proceeds towards the bride’s house along with kith and kin, families and relatives, friends and juvenile boys and girls. The formality of the wedding begins after the maternal uncle (the bride’s father) is being offered ‘hurbong’ and wines by the groom’s family. A kind of dialogue (usually in verse) is exchanged between the groom and bride’s party in the form of questions and answers. After the end of this session the maternal uncle’s (bride’s father) party recites a couple of chants (shlokaś) by holding the ‘hurbong’ and the wine offered to him asking for blessings from the gods and goddesses. The feelings and opinions of both the parties then are exchanged through nuptial songs which are very moving and melodious. Although the singers belonging to each party as per custom should perform the nuptial songs, it is not a rigid obligation, and any expert singer can do it in favour of the parties concerned.

After completing all the necessary formalities during the wedding night and the following day, the groom’s party undertakes their homeward return journey along with the newly-wed bride. After the safe return of the groom’s party back home, the next formalities of the wedding begin during which the parents of both the newly-wed couple exchange their views again through songs. After accomplishing all the requisite rites and formalities in the night the bride’s party returns homeward on the following day. However, before the party departs the parents of the bride formally hand over her to the groom’s parent and give admonitions to her regarding household responsibilities and obligations while playing her role as a bride so that she can be happy in her conjugal life.

Apart from a large amount of wine (especially spirits distilled from homemade wine), the ‘hurbong’ is the indispensable items that is highly honoured during traditional Karbi wedding without which no marriage can be celebrated. This traditional wedding of the Karbis is called ‘Ādām Āsār’ or ‘Piso Pāngri’.

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31) ‘Mān-peng Kepnāngcheng’— the Emergence of Social Hierarchy:

In the beginning of the creation of the human (Karbi) world there had been no hierarchical division in the Karbi society signifying social status, profession and respect. As a matter of fact, each individual in the society had to obey or disobey his/her fellow beings in the society according to his/her whim, and hence there had been no due respect for the elders or the wise. As a result there had been no society governed by the sense of law and order, unity and integrity, order and peace and hence mere chaos prevailed in the Karbi society. Since no one bothered to respect one another the Karbi society in the past, the wisest of all beings (human beings) seemed to have lost the meaning of their life and existence. A married couple named Kaku and Sam Teron were deeply pained to observe all those maladies plaguing the Karbi society and therefore established the concept of social hierarchies allotting various status, honour, and respect according to the profession and competence of the individuals comprising the society. The most important offices and positions, which spoke of the social status of various individuals in the society, were the Kings; Village-Head or the Gaonburha; the leader of the youths; the Convener of the Messenger (pherangke); the Priest (kurusar); the rich people; the common people and so forth. It is believed that the Karbi society became ordered and peaceful only after the introduction of such socio-economic and politico-cultural hierarchical divisions in the society in the past.

32) ‘Sār Kebāt’- Conferring of Honour upon a ‘Gaonburha’:

As per Karbi social custom, if a person is desirous of being the Village-head of ‘Gaonburha’, he will have to follow some formalities. The aspirant will have to express his desire of becoming the ‘gaonburha’ before the concerned and existing ‘gaonburha’ of the village he belongs to by offering ‘horbong’, wine, a piece of hand-woven cloth and betel-nuts. After getting due consent from the existing village-head, he will have to procure required amount of wine, fowl (chicken), pigs,
betel-nuts etc. and must invite at least two ‘gaonburhas’ hailing from other villages (especially ‘gaonburhas’ belonging the Chinthong and Ronghang clans) along with the villagers to a feast in the night of the appointed day for the purpose. When all the villagers assemble to the house of the host, i.e., the aspirant village-head, the offerings made by him, such as, country fowls, pigs along with other goods, are slaughtered and minced and offered before God. The ‘gaonburha’ or a singer will have to sing a stanza of folk-song which can be paraphrased as under:

“Our grandfather, Har Bamon was the founder of this custom. He was the first person to sow ‘thengbon’ and ‘hānthārvo’ (Phaseolus Lunatus; family – Papilionaceae) which germinated into a healthy creeper in due course of time. He dug the earth near the plant and supported it with a trellis by cutting a spike from a ‘kādengjong’ tree. After a few days the creeper started blooming and birds of various species perched on it and began sucking the nectars from the flowers. During the winter seasons everyone’s mind was exhilarated by such a fascinating sight.”

After enjoying the feast with merriment all the people resumed the same business on the following morning as in the previous ritual night. As the offerings being made by the aspirant ‘Gaonburha’ are received, he is adorned with a piece of white cloth by the existing village-head and is blessed by the villagers present. Right after the end of the feast and the formalities that follow, the people take some rest, and thereafter go to the house of the Deputy Gaonburha (of Ronghang or Chinthong clan) along with the new ‘Gaonburha’, and a collective feast is arranged there too by slaughtering fowls. The ritual like this is called ‘Mei kikhi’ and from this day onward the newly ordained ‘Gaonburha’ receives social recognition and honour. The entire proceeding observed in order to appoint a village-head is known as ‘Sār Kebāt’.
33) 'Jir Kedám' or 'Jirsong'- the Youth Co-operative:

The concept of 'jirsong', the youth co-operative of the Karbis had originated from the fertile idea of Har Bamon, the great priest, organizer, administrator and artist. The Karbi youths of the yore dwelling in the remote hilly terrains had formed a co-operative known as 'jirsong' or 'jir kedám' first founded by Har Bamon. However, there is mention of the first ever 'jirsong' of undertaking the initial collective 'jhum' cultivation at Amsekso in Resak hill led by Dichumai Rongpi in the folk-song. The formation of this 'jirsong' begins after the village-head is offered 'bántä' as a token of honour and respect. The office-bearers of this organization are many, who are entrusted with specified duties and responsibilities with a view to running it in a systematic manner. They are as under:

1) Klengsärpö (the Chief leader)
2) Klengdün (Deputy Chief)
3) Sodär Kethé' (Executive member)
4) Sodär so' (Assistant member)
5) Sāngthurāi Kethé' (Chief Defender/Guard)
6) Sānthurāi so' (Deputy Defender/Guard)
7) Chengburup Kethé' (Chief Drummer)
8) Chengburup so' (Deputy Drummer)
9) Bārlon Kethé' (Chief Surveyor)
10) Bārlon so' (Deputy Surveyor)
11) Motān Ār-e' (Person posted for showing the right side of a farm)
12) Motān Ār-vi' (Person posted for showing the left side of a farm)
13) Lāngbong Kethé' (Big Pitcher bearer/keeper)
14) Lāngbongso' (Small pitcher bearer/keeper)
15) Chinhāk Kethé' (Big container bearer/keeper)
16) Chinhākso' (Small container bearer/keeper)
17) Me' Āpāi (Provider of fire)
18) Lāng Āpāi (Water supplier)
19) Phāṅkri (distributor of betel-nuts)

Apart from the above portfolios there are other youths in the ‘jirsong’ who are never neglected as unimportant. However, the office-bearers of the ‘jirsong’ always try to perform their duties and responsibilities. The co-operative is supposed to end its tenure after successful completion of several consecutive years and is given farewell which is known as ‘Risomār Chojun’.

34) ‘Jirsong Chekāk’- The Closing Ceremony of the ‘Jirsong’:

‘Risomār Chojun’ ceremony, the time for farewell session comes, and it is known as ‘Jirsong Chekāk’. However, there is a story behind the origin of this convention, which can be summarized as under:

After the end of the tenure of a ‘jirsong’- the youth co-operative of the Karbis, a batch of youths of a particular ‘jirsong’ assembled for a discussion after performing ‘Hāchā’ dance for the last time at the house called ‘Bey Hempi’. The competent leader named Dichumai Rongpi proposed for the necessity of presenting offering for getting due permission from the village-head for the formal cessation of the ‘jirsong’. As everyone in that assembly supported her, the youths had made the requisite arrangement and approached the village-head for granting due permission to end the tenure of the ‘jirsong’, and the village-head too gave his consent for the same. After securing due permission the youths built a make-shift hut and performed a rite called ‘Riso Ālāmki’ with a view to getting purged of any kind of blame and abuse because of the offences and wrongdoings unknowingly committed by them during their stay in the ‘jir kedām’ after inviting the villagers. After the ritual is performed, Dichumai addressed her associates in the following manner:

“My dear ‘sodār’ (members), ‘motān’ (site locators), ‘phāṅkri’ (caterers of betel-nuts) and colleagues, we have been extending our services to the society like one family through the medium of co-operative (jirsong) and on
this farewell day we are compelled to part with one another with tearful eyes. We do offer our humble prayer before the villagers to forgive our unintentional mistakes. I earnestly request all my colleagues not to nurture any kind of vindictive attitude and to show friendly behaviour no matter wherever we happen to meet each other in future. I hope all of you will be co-operative and generous enough to exchange daily necessities like wine, eggs and fowls with one another."[76]

35) ‘Jambili Āthon’- The Symbol of Unity of the Youths:

The Karbis perform a funerary ritual for the well-being of the deceased according to the affordability and convenience which is called ‘Chomkān’ or ‘Chomāngkān’. During such ceremonies a kind of wooden artifact resembling that of a candle-stand is used and it is named as ‘Jambili Āthon’, which is regarded as the representative and symbol of unity among the youths. The story behind the origin of this artifact can precisely be summarized as follows:

In the remote past a man named Sar Vopong used to dwell in a place called ‘Lāngtārē’ after establishing a village there. He offered a bundle of betel-nuts wrapped round by banana leaves (bāntā) to the youths of that village as per prevalent custom to form a ‘jirsong’ during the ‘Rek Rongker’ ritual being celebrated at Chusik hill. The youths of the village dedicatedly engaged themselves in farming by forming a ‘jirsong’ in conformity with the behest and exhortation of their village-head. When the works of the ‘jirsong’ was going on in full swing the village-head suggested the youths to prepare a wooden artifact (peg) so that the bags of betel-nuts could be kept safely. Accordingly, some of the youths, namely, Lakhan, Long Teron and Sar Rongbong cut a ‘Bengvoi’ tree, smoothed in the shape of a candle-stand and finally adorned it with beautiful stripes. Four branches were joined in the middle portion of the tree and four birds chiseled out of wood were stuck on them, and on the top of the main trunk of the tree a wooden ‘Vo’jāru’ bird (a racket-tailed drongo)
is installed. Various multi-coloured pearls and nooses of thread were stuck on the stand as ornaments for further beautification.

All these works are undertaken by a carpenter for perfect designing, and a separate offering must be made for the artifact, 'jämbili äthon' during 'chomāngkān' as per the custom of the Karbis.

(B) Advocacy for Liberalism and Democratic Spirits:

The Karbi society in the mythical past might have been, and hitherto may be, built upon a monarchical structure, but albeit, it had never been, and still is not, proper monarchy in real sense of the term. The Karbi king (the Lingdokpo) in the bygone days (as well as in the present) used to reign only as the titular head of the 'longris' and 'ärtus' and of the ever-obedient subjects. The diplomatic dealings that a Lingdokpo used to embark on to had been restricted only to the maintenance of amicable relationships with that of the neighbouring states and kingdoms, asking for a safe passage from other reigning monarchs, and seeking refuge and settlement from them. Beyond that a Lingdokpo never had to entangle himself with that of the labyrinth of murky politics, his chief concern being to guide the common folks towards a peaceful, prosperous and civilized life by performing efficacious and talismanic rites and evolving out effective economic policies.

If we undertake a diachronic as well as synchronic study of the various oral narratives of the Karbis, we will find that in the garb of monarchy their societies, states or kingdoms were actually were buttressed upon democratic ideals giving topmost priority to humanistic and liberal ideologies.

In Hemphu myth, for example, the spirit of mutual co-operation and respect is given top priority by the Head of the gods and goddesses, Hemphu, before creating this universe, which bespeaks of his love and respect for the ideals of democracy. His consultation with all major and minor gods and goddesses, his complete trust in the efficacy of Rangbeni, his love for the things and beings of Nature indicate his
love and acceptance of the principles of equality, inter-dependence and co-existence. Hemphu had created human beings after the creation of all things and beings, both animate and inanimate, and hence his view of the universe cannot be construed as being anthropocentric in toto; it might be partially so but not antagonistic to the peace and harmony of the natural world. The legend associated with the miserable Karbi king, Sot Recho, also provides us sufficient proofs regarding their love of democratic ideals. The legend of Sot Recho is not remembered because of the fraudulent nature of the priestly quacks (Thekeres) and the ignorance and superstitious mindsets of the common folks, but for the innovative and reformative zeal that had been shown by the king, Sot Recho. The acceptance of the verdict of his subjects indicated the greatness and magnanimity, his respect for the laws of the land, and the sensibility of the people, bespeaks of his love and respect for true democratic and liberal ideologies. The legend of Hār Bāmon also emphasizes on the necessity of cultivating the most essential democratic ideals like social integrity and organized way of living leading to a peaceful and harmonious co-existence, equality, unity and socio-cultural and economic self-complacence.

"Man is a social animal and he lives societal life. While living in society he has to follow some rules and regulations, rites and rituals. In every race in the world there happens to a great personality who emerges to expound such principles. In case of the Karbis too we come across such a great being, and he is Har Bamon. In Karbi ‘Har’ signifies ‘great’ and ‘Bamon’ denotes ‘priest’, and thus ‘Har Bamon’ stands for ‘great priest’. However, Har Bamon was not only a religious priest, but also a pioneer in expounding well-organized social system. He can very pertinently be considered as an administrator, social organizer, and an artist.” [77]

Hār Bāmon’s greatest contribution to the Karbi society undoubtedly is his concept of ‘Jir Kedām’, which is not only the centre for inculcating and learning traditional knowledge as well as worldly wisdom, but also an ideal parliament for
the youths aiming at the ultimate welfare of the entire society. The equal representation of both the male and female members of the society, their adherence to rules and regulations, progressive visions and missions, sense of individual as well as collective social responsibility all signify the race's liberal and democratic ideologies.

In *Ru-Käsen* legend too we can observe the love and respect for the sense of unity, integrity and mutual co-operation as the soul-force of living together in peace and harmony. Further, his farsighted consort evinces her ability of fostering humanistic and progressive ideologies, and the amount of freedom she enjoys and exercises while counselling her husband for the betterment of society. The legend relating to King 'Rengbonghom' provides yet another document supporting the inherent liberal and democratic ideals that characterized the entire Karbi community. He can be considered as the first among other Karbi kings to ponder on the possibility of leading the then conservative Karbi society through democratic and progressive ideologies. He was liberal enough to consult a particular committee consisted of fifty five delegates representing their respective areas before introducing novel progressive customs, rules and regulations by discarding the outmoded ones. The King's liberal attitude in empowering the delegates through the principle of decentralization of power; worthwhile decision to minimize the capital punishment (death-sentence or ostracism) inflicted upon the person committing 'Läisenem' by evolving out less rigorous customs (imposition of nominal fine or compensation) instead, clearly indicate his predilection and respect for democratic and philanthropic outlook and strong reformatory zeal. Yet another facet of the King's personality was his love and concern for unity, fraternity, peace and prosperity of the entire race, which he evinced pretty conspicuously in his active initiatives in uniting the quarrelsome and disintegrating Karbi society of his time.

The cosmogony as explicated in the *Hemphu* myth may be a bit anthropocentric and the etiology behind it may be analogous to so many creation stories.
myths of the world, albeit the purport of the myth is worth appreciating. The Creator’s (Hemphu’s) idea of bringing ‘Order’ out of utter ‘Chaos’; his consultation with that of other gods and goddesses on the of plunging into the act of creation; the creation of all the objects, beings and creatures before the moulding of human beings testify his sense of inter-dependence, well-regulated orderly co-existence and liberal and democratic principles based on love, liberty and equality among all beings and things- insensible and inanimate. The Hemphu myth that recounts the story behind the origin of the bottle guards and consequent coming of the rice beer as indispensable cultural objects into the Karbi society tells us an edifying tale about the emergence of democracy. His (in the guise of Rāngmukrang) sowing of water-guard, coincided with that of the incidental discovery of the yeast for fermenting wine, was later on used as container of wine, which was (still today) considered as one of the indispensable cultural objects especially in traditional Karbi marriage (Ādām Āsār) and in any kind of ritual performed by the community. The dried shells of the bottle-gourd (bonglang) as well as the wine (horlāṅg/ārāk) in reality are cultural commodities that strengthen the racial bond, equality and unity of the Karbis establishing a model of perfect egalitarian society in a democratic spectrum. The Hemphu myth carries further forward the democratic ideals inculcated through the persona of Lāngmingpo, who can be considered as the perfect epitome of a true democrat revealed through both his character and actions. The principles that he preached among the villagers, such as, ‘You should not envy anyone’; Self-control and humility; Peace and unity; Tolerance and foresight; Devotion and self-confidence; Purity and sense of equality had enlightened them with progressive democratic ideologies far ahead of his time. The myth related to Th-ireng Vāng-reng seems to be a parable of ‘good’ versus ‘evil’, ‘knowledge’ versus ‘ignorance’, ‘chaos’ and ‘order’ and so on, and a narrative that brings before us the comparative merits and demerits of the world of the living and the death, and the allegorical implications that it entails highlight the ideals of democracy, philanthropy and liberalism. When, for example, his widowed mother complains before him of the
injustice meted out to her by the villagers, he says in a plaintive tone that in the world of the dead everyone enjoys equal amount of freedom; the ruler of this dark region treats everyone equally; there is no discrimination between the high and the low, the rich and the poor, married and widows, but the opposite is the picture of the world of the living. However, the baleful prophecy he had made regarding the catastrophic consequence the villagers were supposed to be facing for their discriminatory attitude seems to imply the dear price we have to pay for violating the tenets of democracy.

The myth associated with that of the incidental invention of the yeast for fermenting rice beer (thāp) is actually about the necessity of establishing order and justice, equality and unity instead of chaos and injustice, discrimination and division in the society. The main purpose of ‘Hemphu’ behind the sending of his two sons in the guise of a pair of Kongching birds, and in helping Kareng and Kading to invent the yeast and consequently the pure and holy ‘horlāng’ was to teach mankind (the Karbis) about the necessity and importance of cultivating liberal and democratic values leading to peace and prosperity. Lunse’ Keplāng, the myth about the propagation of the artist, acquaints us with the vital contribution of a divine person, Rangsina Sarpo, to the integration of the Karbi society scattered in various parts of the entire Northeast, even in some provinces of Burma and Bangladesh through the medium of cultural renaissance. They used to live a socio-cultural life without any ideology or synchronization that lacked a concrete racial identity. At this critical juncture of racial catastrophe Rangsina Sarpo ushered in a cultural re-awakening introducing a new cultural movement based on a solid ideology and united the Karbi society re-arranging it with social justice, etiquettes and discipline.

"The cultural threat overtaking the Karbi society was put to an end by Rangsina Sarpo. It is pretty presumable that Rangsina Sarpo had introduced a new phase of cultural renaissance on the basis of religious ideology and as a consequence, the Karbis got an opportunity to think of creating a sense of
racial identity, racial unity and entity despite their stay under the influence of divergent geographical spaces through liberal and democratic ideologies."

The myth, now reduced to the status of legend, i.e., Ve-Longbi and Hār-Longbi, provides us a narrative which teaches us as to how bellicosity or belligerent situation can be tackled through amicable and democratic measures. Ve-Longbi and Hār-Longbi (Sumphong and Sumphi), who were all set to avenge the women of the Ākli Rongsopi village for contaminating the upstream water of the Lāngkumphāng river, thus later on became the staunch tradition bearers as bequeathed by great Hemphu. The ever-first Karbi marriage solemnized between the son and daughter of Hār-Longbi and Ve-Longbi can, therefore, be considered to have sown the seed of liberalism and democracy, such as, non-violence, racial and cultural consciousness and national integrity instead of aggression, anarchism and internecine warfare.

The legend of Rongpharpi Rongbe is one of the inspiring Karbi folk narratives which foster unmatched liberal and democratic spirits. The act of inimitable courage in hacking the Dimasa (pārok) soldier and the spirit of democracy and nationalism that they evince in its analytical evaluation is undoubtedly an epic battle between ‘despotism’ and ‘democracy’ in one hand, and between ‘evil’ and ‘good’ on the other. Further, the social activism, farsighted decision-making potential, administrative and organizing acumen that Rongpharpi Rongbe had evinced after tactfully evading the anticipated retaliation from the Dimasa king’s end exalt her to the status of greatest democratic heroine and an epitome of liberalism among the entire populace of the Karbi community. Thong Nokbe is again another Karbi legend which instills the spirit of liberalism and democracy in the minds of all the Karbis. His daring protest against the grave injustice and inhuman torture that had for a long time been exercised upon his people by the tyrannical Jaintia king, recognition of his heroic valour and the patriotism by the enemy king by promoting him as the Chieftain, and the final
conspiracy and treachery hatched by the Jaintia soldiers that brought his tragic death will remain ever-inspiring to all the Karbi people of all generations. Yet another inspiring Karbi legend is Väisong. It can be analyzed as a parable showing us the victory of ‘good’ over ‘evil’, ‘truth’ over ‘tyranny’, which is very movingly illustrated through the tyrannical rule of the Jaintia king over the innocent and peace-loving Karbi subjects and the retaliatory means Väisong took up for the freedom and justice his people had longed for. The accumulative angst and vindictive mission nurtured since long by Väisong resulting in his act of vandalism and arson followed by the final capture and imprisonment, and consequently the sympathy shown on him by Her Majesty followed by his final release and freedom, are no less fit motifs for a grand classical epic and is edifying enough to promote liberal and democratic ethos. In the legend, Si-r Vo ‘mu, the ‘public hero’ protects not only his community, but also saves a peaceful civilization from being annihilated by a man-eater ‘Vo’mu’ bird (eagle) and his unmatched sagacity inspires love of freedom and patriotism in the sinew of the Karbi people. Yet another legend which conveys a message to the peace-loving Karbi people about self-sacrifice for the sake of establishing a free and peaceful society buttressed upon liberal and democratic ideology is the Karbi folk-narrative associated with Cheleng Âthestepäi. The collective mass suicide committed by the members (both male and female) of the particular ‘jirson’ governed by a cruel and despotic village-head at the steep cliffs of Cheleng Âthestepäi hill symbolizes the registration of protest against tyranny and injustice and advocates for the cause of liberty, freedom and democracy.

The moving tale of Ser Dihun is a passive resistance to the atrocity of the system of governance of ‘jir kedäm’ of her time. However, the ingenious means she and her suitor had adopted in order to escape from the rigidity of the custom and the rigour of the responsibilities entrusted upon them showed their acceptance and adherence to the customs and traditions they belonged to. Analysed from a holistic viewpoint, therefore, the narrative symbolizes their love for liberal, progressive and
innovative ideologies. The *Hāi-imu* narrative, on the other hand, focuses on more serious and deeper implications of freedom and justice. The heroine especially registers a tacit yet a very strong protest against the whimsical and despotic rule of the then Jaintia king by not submitting before the coercive nymphomaniac design of the Jaintia feudal lord till her last breath, and consequently the lover-hero follows the same suit. *Hāi-imu*’s resistance to tyranny may not appear as aggressive as that of Rongphārpi Rongbe’s retaliatory action against the Dimasa (pārok) king, but is inspiring enough to propagate awareness about the spirit of freedom, justice and human rights without which democracy cannot exist in its proper sense. *Larta* is another folk-narrative, which proves before us the veracity of the maxim that ‘the enemy of a woman is the woman’ in which the heroine falls a victim to the conspiracy hatched by her own mother, and the message that the narrative conveys espouses for the cause of granting due freedom to everyone while living in the society. She is not the mere paragon of feminine beauty but also the epitome of unbelievable masculinity and machismo. *Dinmir*, a beautiful Karbi folk-narrative, tells us a tragic tale of the heroine eponymous of the title of the narrative, but the message that is conveyed through it offers different implication deeper than its literal significance. Keeping aside the tragic part and element of pathos in the narrative and the loss and bereavement that she is fated to bear, *Dinmir*, if justly assessed, is actually a story about innate liberal and democratic sensibilities possessed by the community. The failure of Sar Mangbi in winning the mind of *Dinmir* and the conspiracy he hatched later on in order to take revenge against her by persuading and abetting Langteroi in ensnaring her through charm and the mass protest against that injustice and the consequent rescue very clearly bespeak of the love of liberal and democratic spirit cherished by the villagers. The narrative thus presents a two-dimensional episode— one relates to *Dinmir* and the entire villagers of Batchen, and the other, to two notorious persons, Sar Mangbi and Langteroi of Tanti village, and the conflict that ensues between them is analogous with that of the universal feud between ‘good’ and ‘evil’. *Dengrāli* also can be read as a narrative
that attempts to promote the sense of equality and individual liberty. The heroine, for example, is accepted and revered as holy in spite of the stigma of pre-marital conception she had earned as a natural consequence of her union with a member of the ‘jir kedām’.

*Korhon Jängreso* is a folk-tale that tells us about a pathetic story of an orphan, Korhon and his sister, Sāng-et, deserted by their father out of compulsion, but the actual leitmotiv that is enshrined by the narrative is intended to serve a moral purpose, that is, to envisage a society built upon the spirit of equality and individual freedom. Thus, this tale turns to be a story of resistance of cruelty and injustice and ultimate subversion of these destructive forces by the ideal and the good. That is the reason why, Sāng-et becomes the Queen of the kingdom and Korhon, the brother-in-law of the King. Yet another Karbi folk-tale identical with that of *Korhon Jängreso* is *Phāksokoinek*. However, it is not a story of an orphan, but of an unfortunate pig-mouthed deformed boy being neglected and jeered at by his own brothers of being hopeless and idle. Unable to bear the constant abuse and negligence shown to him by his own family members, Phāksokoinek therefore left the house one day only to become a prosperous farmer and was welcomed back home. Further, as the fate would have it, he later on became the King’s son-in-law by having to marry the princess in a ‘sayambarā’. The King’s generosity and magnanimity in accepting the ‘person’ otherwise despised by the society as a whole evince his love and respect of liberal and philanthropic ideals, which are the foundation of democratic nation. *Vo’ Kārtāp* teaches the moral value of perpetuating a social custom. The strong bond or kinship based upon mutual love and respect can only contribute to the formation of an integrated society without which an ideal democracy turns lame and flawed. The myth, *Lokhi Keplāng*, recounts the story as to how paddy or rice had come into this world (of the Karbis) and became popular in the Karbi society. However, there is a strong room to believe that the creator of this narrative much have striven to give top priority to ‘order’ than to ‘chaos’, for the Karbis learnt to adopt organized living...
only after the discovery of this precious grain. Likewise, the invention of the yeast for fermenting rice beer by the two daughters of Rangmukrang, Kareng and Kading and the origin of bottle-gourds from the teeth of Rangmukrang himself also are intended to inform the society of the indispensability of order and unity while living in group with concrete vision and destined goals. That is why, both these objects are still honoured and revered in Karbi society, for they are objects that bind the society together.

*Sābin Ālun* is supposed to be an adapted and glocalized form of the Hindu epic, *Rāmāyanā*, but if we examine the form and content of the local version, then we get acquainted with the worldview which is typically Karbi in nature. The calm and serene rural setting instead of the clamorous urban background of the source text, the habit of farming and proximity with Nature around enjoyed by the chief characters like Dhorom (Dasharatha) and Sintā Kungri (Princess Sita) bear testimony of the love of unity and order and finally the peaceful coexistence of all beings and objects of this universe. The *Hemphu* myth, recounting the origin of human race (Karbi and others), and perpetuated till date through the *Moserā Kihir* tradition is designed to instill liberal and democratic spirits into mind of the people. The myth espouses for the cause of peaceful coexistence of human beings along with lower creatures by stating the source of origin of human beings to have been a mythical bird, ‘Vo’ *plākpi*. It guarantees liberty and freedom to every being and anything as in a democracy. ‘*Piso Pāngri* or ‘Ādām Åsār’ tells us of a socially sanctified system of culture, which empowers the Karbi women with adequate freedom and liberty, a culture that is built upon the principles of equality. ‘*Mān peng Kepnāngcheng*’, a myth giving convincing justification for the origin and necessity of hierarchical division in a society, which is completely associated with not that of discrimination on the basis of caste or creed, but on profession and occupation without any notion of ‘high’ or ‘low’. *Sār Kebāt*, the narrative associated with the honouring and conferring of the respectable title of the Village Head (*Rong Sārthe*...
or Gaonburha) is conducted completely in conformity with democratic procedures through observance of rituals and order. The distribution of power and functions among the members of a ‘jirsong’ or a ‘jir kedâm’, the platform for learning and inculcating knowledge of works and a collective training and probation for utilizing the youth power for the welfare of the kingdom, convincingly reflects the spirit of democracy having a ‘parliament’ engaged in evolving out policies meant for the welfare of the nation. The custom of observing ‘jirsong chekâk’, the formal closing ceremony after the end of the tenure of a particular ‘jirsong’ is very much indicative of the love and regard for democratic ideology cherished by the community. The ritualistic formalities observed during this parting ceremony, and the formal apologetic speech that is delivered by the ‘Klengsârpo’, unmistakably bear the community’s age-old administrative wisdom bequeathed and inherited since centuries, which reflect its predilection for liberal and progressive ideas which foster fraternity, goodwill as well as spirit of co-operation among the youths in particular, and the village folks in general. ‘Jâmbili Āthon’ symbolizes the unity among the Karbi youths, and the structural synthesis of this beautifully designed artifact can also be considered to reflect the unity and integrity that bind the various clans and sub-clans of the community together. From this perspective, thus, this much revered traditional artifact signifies the cyclical convergence of the ‘center’ and the ‘periphery’; none being centrifugal, subverted, marginalized, otherized, oppressed or exploited, rather everyone in the entire social hierarchy is equally important, and the concept of such an egalitarian society can exist only in a democracy.

Thus, from the analyses above, we are induced to believe that the oral narratives of the Karbis vividly manifest the liberal and democratic worldview of the community, which must have originated from the fertile visions of the pioneering and farsighted social thinkers and folk-philosophers belonging to the race. This typical worldview, though we come across so many archetypes, cannot be underestimated to be the sudden invention or borrowing, imitation or adaptation
from others, because the same has been bequeathed and inherited, observed and implemented, guarded and perpetuated with much respect since time immemorial both in words and actions by every member of the community.

Notes:

2. Literally, ‘one who came from the water’.
3. Literally, ‘came from the water in search of country fowls’.
4. Great Grandfather and Mother.
5. Nucleus or the Heart of the House.
6. The Sustainer.
7. God of Fertility and welfare of the family.
8. The Truthful (Just) King. The first formally ordained Karbi King.
9. Bogus priests or quacks.
11. Ibid, p 11. (translation mine)
12. Binong tree/ *Tetrameles nudiflora* R.Br. (Family- Datiscaceae)
13. Silk Cooton tree/ *Bombax ceiba* (Family- Bombacaceae)
14. Queen Crape or Pride of India/ *Lagertroemia reginae* Roxb. (Family- Lythraceae)
15. Farming in the hilly terrain through slashing and burning method.
16. Grandfather Kasen (Ru= Grandfather, Kasen= the name of the person)
17. Traditional Karbi home-made rice beer.


20. Ibid.


22. Pitcher made from bamboo stalk.

23. Literally, one who came alive from the world of the dead (Hell).

24. Karbi funerary. Literally, the dance of the Khasis, or the dance to please the King of the Underworld.

25. Stands for Long spring or pond.


27. Ibid, p 87.

28. Literally, the swamp of the widows.

29. Literally, the origin of the artist.

30. The chieftain of the ‘jirsong’.

31. The Deputy Chief under Longvichedu.

32. Dried shells of bottle-gourds of various sizes and significations.

33. The absconder, (Rong= village, Be=to flee from)

34. Numerical counting, i.e., one, two, three, four, five in Jaintia dialect/language.

35. Machet, probably, an axe.

36. Seasonal festival of the Khasis when all the people (King to pauper) indulge in revelry of merry-making.

38. Ibid, p 66. (translation mine)
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid, p 67.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid, p 68.
45. A mighty God identical with that of Lord Shiva.
46. A traditional cloth-belt used by Karbi women.
47. A collective dance form performed during Chomāngkān.
48. A collective charity-farming by the youths of a ‘jirsong’ as a part of their schedule of the ‘jirkedam’.
49. A bamboo-made ornament for the ears.
50. A traditional Karbi muffler.
52. A collective community rite.
54. A collective festival of the members of a Jirsong.
56. Orphan.
57. Pig-mouthed.
58. A competition among all the youths (suitors) of the vicinity for the hands of his daughter).
59. The most elaborate and expensive ritual of ‘Nihu Kachiri’- seeking blessings from the uncles (maternal).
60. A dress wrapped round the waist by a Karbi woman.
61. A dress wrapped round the bosom by a Karbi woman.
62. A tattoo on the face of a Karbi woman.
63. A container hung on the shoulder for carrying wines and other materials.
64. Only because of you.
65. Sorry, not done intentionally.
66. A ritual for seeking blessings from the uncle of a person suffering from an unknown protracted disease or ailment almost akin to Autism, and is still in vogue.
68. Ibid, p 38. (translation mine)
69. *Ficus religiosa* species.
70. A dance form performed during the post-harvest festival *Sok Keroi*.
71. Pied Kingfisher bird.
72. Karbi traditional Wedding Ceremony.
73. Along with the Ahoms, Khasis and the Nagas.
75. A bunch of betel-nuts.

Works Cited: