Chapter I

Introduction: The Arrival of the Welsh Presbyterian Missionaries in the Khasi-Jaintia Hills

Location and Landscape:

Map of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills

The Khasi-Jaintia Hills region lies approximately between 25°07 and 26°07 North latitude and 90°45° and 92°16° East longitude. The area is bounded by Kamrup on the north, Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills in the east, Sylhet in the south and East Garo Hills in the west.

Traditionally, the Khasi-Jaintia Hills is divided into three major geographical zones- Ri Lum or the hilly portion, Ri War or the sloping areas of the hills and Ri Bhoi or the plain region.

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The central belt area or *Ri lum* extends from Jowai in the east to Lyngngam in the west. Shillong has the highest elevation in the Khasi-Jaintia Hills. The southern slope receives heavy rainfall during the summer and experiences cold weather during the winter season.

*Ri War* lies on the southern side of the Khasi-Jaintia Hills. The area is divided by long ridges, gorges and valleys. The climate here is warm.

*Ri Bhoi* area lies in the north and it slopes downward to the Brahmaputra valley. The climate is warmer than the *Ri Lum* or upland region. Malaria is prevalent in this region.

**Pre-Colonial Polity:**

Until the advent of the British at the turn of the 19th century, the area comprising the Khasi Hills was divided into 26 independent states.² There was no common centralised political structure and the political units called *hima* or chieftainships were under the rule of various *syiem*, *lyngdoh*, *sirdar*, and *wahadadar* who functioned independently. In the Jaintia Hills, the Jaintia kingdom was the largest and more prosperous. The kings came from the ruling family of Sutnga. The *doloi* was the traditional ruler of the other Jaintia states.

The office of the chief and king (in the case of the Jaintia kingdom) was reserved to the ruling clan of a particular state or *hima* and kingdom. The chief or *syiem* and the kings in Jaintia Hills were the executive heads and played important roles in all social, religious and festive gatherings. Women were not allowed to occupy the office of the chief.

The religious duties of the chiefs were shared by the *lyngdoh* or priest. In the case of the Khyrim *Hima*, *Ka Syiem Sad* or the priestess was responsible for the religious affairs although she functioned under the supervision of the *syiem*.

The chiefs however had to act according to the decision taken in the state council or *dorbar hima*, which consisted of the *bakhraw* or the senior member of a clan which is believed to be the original settlers of the particular state. These

bakhraw also designated as rangbah kur, acted as advisors to the chiefs. Besides the bakhraw, the dorbar hima also included representatives from the dorbar raid or the council of a group of villages and dorbar shnong or village council.

In looking at the political set-up, there is a clear hierarchy of the levels of political structure. The dorbar kur or clan council is at the bottom of the tier, the dorbar shnong occupies the level above it, the dorbar raid or the council of a group of villages is above the dorbar shnong. The dorbar hima stands at the top of the political set-up in the Khasi-Jaintia traditional polity.

**Pre-Colonial Economy and Society:**

The economy was primarily agricultural. Agriculture was mainly done through slash-and-burn or jhum system of cultivation. Four types of agricultural land can be identified in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills- (a) forest land, (b) wet paddy land called hali or pynthor, (c) high grass land or ka ri lum or ka ri phlang and (d) homestead land or ka dew kper.³

Land was also the main source of subsistence as well as status and power. In the Khasi Hills lands were classified under two main divisions- (a) public and (b) private lands.

Public lands included crown lands or land belonging to the syiem, also called ka ri raj or ka ri syiem. Ka ri Lyngdoh which was meant for the support of the lyngdoh, ka ri shnong or village lands which were set apart for the public for provision of supply of firewood, thatching grass etc., Ki lawkyntang or sacred groves were village properties.⁴ It was considered an offence and a taboo for anyone to cut timber or take away anything that grew inside these groves.

Private lands were subdivided into ri kur or lands which were the property of the kur or clan and ri kynti or family, or acquired landed property.

In the Jaintia Hills, lands were classified as follows:

(a) Raj lands which used to be the property of the Rajas of Jaintiapur.

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(b) Service lands were given rent-free to doloi, pator, and other administrative officers.

(c) Village puja lands were those lands the occupants of which paid rent to the doloi or lyngdoh. These lands were set apart in each village for the purpose of worship.

(d) Private lands held by individuals.

In ri war, to the west of Cherrapunjee, considerable portions of the hill sides were the property of the community known as seng. In Lyngngam, the crop belonged to the person who cultivated it but the land belonged to the clan or family.

Apart from agriculture, trade was another important economic activity of the Khasi-Jaintia people. The two main entrepots for the Jaintia and the Khasi were Jaintiapur and Pandua respectively. Here they plied a brisk trade with the plains of Bengal. Among the principal goods traded were honey, beeswax, ivory, lime, oranges, betel nut, iron and coarse cotton. In return they received rice, dried fish, salt, spices, cotton, silk and copper from Assam and Bengal. The Khasi-Jaintia also acted as intermediaries, selling Assam silk in the plains of Bengal.

Apart from these occupations the people were also manufacturing iron implements. Important iron manufactures were located at Nongkrem, Laitlyngkot, and Nongspung. Spinning of cotton was done in places located at Mynso and Sutnga.

The society of the Khasi-Jaintia is a matrilineal one. The children trace their lineages from their mothers’ sides. In this system, the females were responsible for preparation of the religious ceremonies of their families. They were also the custodian of family property. They however, had no right to power in legislation, administration and judicial functions. Maternal uncles were the

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5 Ibid., p. 90.
7 PRT Gurdon, op. cit., pp. 57-58.
more important members of the society and their advice and presence were sought in all significant affairs of the family.

The social structure comprised of a multitude of kur or clans. Each kur maintained a strict observance of the social norm of exogamy. The Khasi and Jaintia regarded marriage within one’s own clan as a shong sang or incestuous. For this reason they uphold the social convention of tipkur tipkha or to be aware of one’s own clan as well as paternal relations.

Language:

The Khasi-Jaintia people did not have a common language understood by all. Different dialect groups existed and in many cases they were unable to understand each other. They also did not have a written script of their own. Knowledge was passed down orally through oral traditions that are still present today though there are others which have been lost into oblivion.

Religion:

The people practised a traditional form of religion although there were also those, who resided in the southern portions of the hills, like Shella, and in other areas, like Nartiang who followed certain elements of Hinduism. There is no evidence to suggest the existence of a community level religion. However there is evidence in the form of oral tradition of the origin myth of the people which hints at the belief of a high God or U Blei Nongbuh Nongthaw (God the Founder-Creator), U Blei U Trai Kynrad (God the Overlord- Master).

The deity was usually identified with a particular clan and at the most, it existed at the level of an administrative territory or hima. Each clan maintained its own cremation ground. A member of another clan or the father of a certain family had no place in that cremation ground. Some families were believed to have their own deities like U Thlen, Ka Shwar and Ka Taro.

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9 Ibid., p. 146-147.
Religious festivals that existed at the *hima* level were Pomblang held at Nongkrem or Khyrim *Syiemship*. This festival was arranged by the *Syiem Sad* or priestess in consultation with the chief. Another festival, *Ka Behdiengkhlam* of the Jaintia was held at Jowai and Tuber. *Ka Thang Syiem* was a cremation ceremony of the chiefs of Cherrapunjee. It was organised by a newly appointed chief\(^{10}\) and the inhabitants of the *hima* were all given a feast.

Besides the beliefs in a number of gods and goddesses, the people also believed in spirits associated with “good” and “evil”. Veneration of the ancestors also formed another feature of the traditional religion. Male progenitors called *U Saidnia* (or maternal uncle) and *U Thawlang* (father) and *Ka Iawbei* (female progenitor) were regarded in veneration by the people.

Under the traditional religion, certain rites and rituals were practised. Divination ceremonies were conducted in time of sickness and other afflictions. Rituals like birth naming, marriage, cremation ceremonies were also performed. These rituals were performed to request God for help and blessing, depending on one’s need and situation.

**The Welsh Missionaries and Their Works:**

It was to these people that the Welsh missionaries came. The annexation of the Khasi-Jaintia Hills by the colonial British power, followed by the advent of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist missionaries, later called the Welsh Presbyterian missionaries, is one among the important developments in the history of the region. People who had practised a traditional religion as well as some elements of Hinduism were now exposed to a totally different form of religious belief manifested and popularised by the Christian missionaries. The contact between the two eventually led to a transformation which had a significant impact upon the Khasi-Jaintia society.

The earliest Christian to interface with the Khasi was Krishna Chandra Pal in 1813, who was sent by the Serampore Mission and baptised two Khasi, *U Duwan* and *U Anna* at Pandua. After some years, Alexander B. Lish began

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\(^{10}\) O L Snaitang, *Christianity and Social Change in Northeast India*. Vendrame Institute, Shillong and Firma KLM, Calcutta, 1993, pp. 31-32.
missionary operations in Cherrapunjee and three schools were opened at Sohra, Mawsmai and Mawmluh respectively.\textsuperscript{11} However in 1838 the Serampore Mission had to abandon its work due to lack of funds.\textsuperscript{12} Meanwhile, in Wales, the Calvinistic Methodists were planning to set up their own missionary society, following certain frictions with the London Missionary Society. The connection between the two ended in 1840. Thereafter, the Welsh Missionary Society’s first task was the selection of its own mission field.

Upon the recommendation of Rev. Jacob Tomlin, who had spent nine months of the year 1837 in Sohra, the Society finally chose the Khasi Hills as their area of operation.\textsuperscript{13} Thomas Jones, a missionary candidate who had always set his mind to work in India, eventually arrived at Cherrapunjee on the 22\textsuperscript{nd} of June 1841, when the rainy season was at its peak.\textsuperscript{14}

Cherrapunjee became the attraction of the British administrative officers, especially David Scott. More early as July 1827, he discovered that it was a healthier place than Nongkhlaw. Duwan Sing Syiem, the chief of Sohra, had, in 1829 agreed to cede a portion of his territory to the British for construction of a sanatorium by the Company.\textsuperscript{15} Saitsohpen, the ceded portion, was also a base for military operations of the British. This small town establishment, which included a jail, a bazaar, besides the bungalows for the British officers,\textsuperscript{16} also became the first mission station of the Welsh missionaries.

As soon as British administrative machinery was in place, the need to secure assistance of the natives was felt. Local interpreters were engaged for

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 78.
\textsuperscript{15} N. K Barooah, \textit{David Scott in North-East India}, Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi, 1970, p. 212.
\textsuperscript{16} B. Datta Ray (ed.), \textit{The Emergence and Role of the Middle Class in North-East India}, Uppal Publishing House, new Delhi, 1983, p. 119.
various purposes.\textsuperscript{17} Thus when the arrival of Thomas Jones became known, people thronged his house and asked him to teach them English. They believed that knowledge of the English language would enable them to get employment. Jones’ ability to carry conversations in the Khasi language attracted people to listen to him and watch while he wrote. These bystanders also would attentively watch him while he worked with his saw, a tool they had not used before. When the missionary had finished, their wonder increased, and to them he was “like God, and could do everything”.\textsuperscript{18}

In the beginning a number of youths were daily instructed at the mission house and from these the first teachers were obtained, which according to Jones, was a plan towards evangelisation. Three schools were opened under the charge of local youths.\textsuperscript{19} After he had reduced the Khasi language into writing in the Roman alphabet, Thomas Jones began working in the production of the first primers and the \textit{Gospels} with the help of U Laithat.\textsuperscript{20} The evangelising activities were concentrated mostly in Cherrapunjee and its outlying areas during the first thirteen years of the establishment of the Welsh mission.

The new missionaries, Rev. William Lewis and his wife, who worked in the Khasi-Jaintia Hills between 1843 and 1860, carried on the task of evangelisation through education and \textit{Bible} instruction. Furthermore, they began to take in a number of the most promising pupils, boys and girls, to live with them in the mission compound at Nongsawlia. It also appears that in those villages where school buildings were not available, teaching in the vernacular language was carried on in private huts.\textsuperscript{21} The steady progress of education\textsuperscript{22} was

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{17} \textit{Ibid.}, p.121.
  \item \textsuperscript{18} J.H Morris, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 79-80.
  \item \textsuperscript{19} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 80-81.
  \item \textsuperscript{20} Hamlet Bareh, \textit{The History and Culture of the Khasi People}, Spectrum Publications, Guwahati, 1997(3\textsuperscript{rd} Revised Edition), p. 365.
  \item \textsuperscript{22} According to Hamlet Bareh, \textit{op. cit.}, p.395, there were 16 primary schools with 240 pupils in 1857.
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recognised by the British government and in 1854 a grant of Rs. 50/- per month was given to the Welsh mission towards imparting secular education. But despite increasing educational propagation, it is also evident that not all were ready to send their children to school.

The mission schools were not popular because of the ‘Romanisation’ of the alphabet and also due to the exclusion of instruction in Bengali which was used in the Cherrapunjee court petitions at that time. The local traders and others who had developed familiarity with the Bengali language also opposed the introduction of the Roman alphabet. They believed that it would adversely affect their economic transaction in the plain market. Parents were also apprehensive of sending their female children to school because of their belief that doing so would make them barren later on in life, thus leading to extinction of their clan, which traces descent from the mother’s side. Nevertheless as evidence shows, the number of students who attended these mission schools increased gradually.

In Jaintia Hills the starting point of missionary activities was in Jowai, where a school was opened in 1854 under one U Luh as a teacher. He was later joined by U Larsing in the evangelising work. After the suppression of the Jaintia rebellion in 1863, the Welsh Mission was able to expand its operations in the Khasi- Jaintia hills under Thomas Jones II, who took charge after the departure of the Lewises. In Jaintia Hills there was strong opposition to the evangelising work. In Jowai, Mrs. Hughes and her children escaped from the mission house which was set ablaze by some villagers. In Nartiang, the people opposed the doloi for welcoming Christian missionaries to work in the area.

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The reasons for such opposition and reaction were perhaps the interference of the government authorities with the religious matters of the Jaintia when they were prohibited to use the cremation ground which had been in their possession for a very long time. Secondly, when some Jaintia had become Christian they had no more veneration for the pools and the groves which were held sacred by those who belonged to the tribal religion. The discontentment of the people was increased when U Solomon, a person from Cherrapunjee, who happened to be a Christian, was assigned to collect the much resented house-tax.29

Shillong was visited by Thomas Jones II in 1864 where he held meetings with the people there.30 When it became the headquarter of the government two years later, U Babu Donrai Diengdoh became the first Christian to settle there and built the first church at Umsohsun in 1867.31 A permanent station was opened under Rev. Griffith Hughes in 187132 and a church was opened at Mawkhar known at that time as Ka Balang Shillong or the Shillong Church.33

Bhoi area in the northern region with its thick forests and wild animals and fatal black fever had been isolated from the rest of the hills. However this isolation was broken down by the coming of Christian workers in 1875. Rev. T Jerman Jones established the first permanent churches there.34 However, because of the unhealthy weather, the missionaries were compelled to assign educational and evangelistic works to the local people who were used to the climatic conditions of the place.35

In the western part of the Khasi hills, Christianity took its first steps at Mawphlang in 1849. U Jidor Syiem, Chief of Khadsawphra invited the Welsh Mission to set up a school there in 1853. U Lansing Khongwir and Rev. O. L

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30 J.H Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 150.
33 Maurice G Lyngdoh, *op. cit.*
34 O.L Snaitang, *op. cit.*, p. 103.
Stephens were the first to work among the people of Nongstoin and Mawiang in 1855 and the 1880s respectively. Khasi converts from War Shella are believed to be the first Christian workers in Maharam around 1860-61. Lyngngam, located at the extreme western corner was entered by Khasi Christians towards the end of the 19th century, and the first Christian community was established at the turn of the following century.\(^\text{36}\)

**Literature:**

As pointed out earlier, the Khasi-Jaintia did not have a written script. In addition to this, the inhabitants of the hills spoke different dialects, which in many instances were not intelligible to one another. Although transmission of information was done orally and through oral traditions, yet without any script, it was difficult to preserve knowledge. However Khasi and Jaintia chiefs had made use of obsolete Bengali, Assamese, Persian and Arabic scripts for preserving important records.\(^\text{37}\) However, it should also be pointed out that the rest of the population was unable to read or write.

The Serampore missionaries were the first to provide the Khasi language with the Bengali script. However their efforts did not bear results and they later abandoned their work in the hills in 1838. It was with the arrival of Thomas Jones, who, in 1841, introduced the Roman script in the Khasi language, adopting the Cherrapunjee dialect that Khasi literature saw its starting point.

The introduction of the Roman script was not welcomed by a number of syiem who insisted on the use of the Bengali script which they had incorporated in their court writings. A section of the people, which included the traders, also opposed the idea because they believed it was affecting their trading transactions which were carried on in the Bengali language.

Thomas Jones prepared a little book, *First Khasi Reader* and later translated *Mother’s Gift*. These were printed in early 1842 for use in the newly set up school. Succeeding missionaries like William Lewis and Thomas Jones II


made more contributions. An Introduction to Khasia Language by William Pryse focuses on grammatical structure. Mrs. Lewis also translated Pilgrim’s Progress into Khasi. Besides these texts there were also other books like Rev. Dr. John Robert’s Khasi Third Reader and Khasi Fourth Reader. He also collected a number of oral traditions which later came out posthumously, through the efforts of his wife.

John Roberts, regarded as the ‘Father of Khasi Literature’ was also a poet. He is best remembered for his work, Ri Khasi Ri Khasi, which is a patriotic poem sung till today by many Khasi-Jaintia people.

Journalism began when William Williams brought out a monthly U Nongkit Khubor followed by U Nongialam Khristan edited by J C Evans.

The first books that came out were mostly Christian literary works which included translations of English and Welsh works into Khasi. Subsequently, other secular texts began to surface and were used largely for schools. With the emergence of local writers, many secular and non-secular publications came out and enriched Khasi literature.

**Education:**

Years before the Serampore Baptist missionaries started schools in the Khasi-Jaintia hills, there were few Khasi students who studied at the Serampore College. In 1818-19 two Khasi attended the college and in 1830-33 three more were added. A few more were enrolled at Fort William College in Calcutta. Thus it is apparent that some of the Khasi had realised the usefulness of education even prior to the establishment of Christian mission schools in the hills.

After Alexander Lish set up three schools, each at Sohra, Mawsmai and Mawmluh, the Baptist Mission withdrew its work from the Khasi hills. The groundwork for education in the Khasi-Jaintia hills was laid when the Roman script was adopted into the Khasi language by Thomas Jones. The Welsh Presbyterian Mission which arrived in 1841 under Thomas Jones proposed that

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38 Ibid., p. 365.
39 Hamlet Bareh, op. cit., p. 393.
the task of evangelisation would be carried out gradually after the people were initially educated.40

“Education, was in fact, one of the most effective instruments for the spread of Christianity. With rare exception a school was the forerunner of a church in a village… it [education] was even made a condition for church membership among the Presbyterians in the early years. So close was the connection between school and church that the people generally did not differentiate between them. They were synonymous.”41

The system of education carried out by Rev. William Lewis and his wife often met with opposition from the local community who felt that it was eroding their values and traditional religious principles and beliefs.42 The unpopularity of the Roman script and the exclusion of Bengali43 in school instruction were also other reasons for the slow progress of education in the early stages. Despite many difficulties, female education took its first steps in 184344 at Nongsawlia when Mrs. Lewis began to teach young girls to read.

Ten years after the beginning of the mission work, there were only five schools Due to government’s aversion to considerable involvement in the hills, education was left to the Christian missionaries.45 In 1853, for the first time, the government sanctioned Rs. 50/- as grant–in-aid to mission schools. Later this sum was increased to Rs. 500/- per month from 1864. As of 1867 (i.e., twenty five years after the advent of the missionaries) the Mission maintained 65 schools. A Normal School was also instituted for training of teachers.

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40 P.N Dutta, op. cit., p. 185.

41 O.L Snaitang, op. cit., p. 116; G Angell Jones ‘Ka History ka Balang(1841-1966), KJP Synod, Shillong, 1966, p. 48, mentions that an exception to the rule of educational requirement in church membership was made with regard to the old people.


43 P. N Dutta, op. cit., p. 129.

44 D Ropmay (ed.), op. cit., pp. 31-32.

Beginning with the principle of self-reliance for the support of schools *U Khaw Kham* system was introduced by *Babu* Joel Gatphoh in 1908. The credit for setting up of the first high school, located in Shillong, however goes to a non-Christian, *U Babu* Jeebon Roy. This school was amalgamated under a missionary principal in 1878. The Welsh Mission did not establish high schools or colleges to an extent they could have done due to paucity of funds. Till the end of 1973, there were 520 primary schools, 22 M.E schools, 8 high schools and 1 college run by Presbyterian church management.

**Evangelisation:**

The primary objective of the Welsh missionaries in familiarising the Khasi-Jaintia people with Christianity started with education. Christian doctrines imparted, however, were not sufficient if they were not associated with a transformed lifestyle. For this reason, maintenance of certain standard of conduct was required of those who wanted to convert to Christianity. The early Welsh missionaries set the following rules for church membership—

“It was enjoined that every candidate should not only have renounced all heathen practices, and lead a moral life, but that he must also possess an intelligent knowledge of Christian principles, observe the Sabbath, and abstain from all intoxicants.”

These stringent codes of conduct prescribed by Rev. William Lewis were to be observed along with a lengthy probation before baptism and full church membership. These strict codes of conduct were introduced and strictly enforced by these missionaries to ensure that the applicants were genuinely

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50 J.H Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

51 D Ropmay(ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 110.

desirous of becoming Christians and not doing so for mere social and monetary advancements. It was on March 1846, nearly five years since the Mission started its work that two candidates - U Amor and U Rujon- were baptised. The total number of members in the Presbyterian Church in the Khasi-Jaintia hills after fifty years since the first baptism was 11,436.\textsuperscript{53}

The Welsh Presbyterian Missionaries took up another important step to train the converts in order to help the work of the mission. At the Presbytery held in Nongsawlia, March, 1869, a decision was taken up allowing some Khasi and Jaintia to sit for the Evangelists’ Examination. As a result, six of these candidates became preachers. In the years that followed, the need for a bigger institution for training resulted in the establishment of a theological institution in Cherrapunjee whose first Principal was Rev. Dr. John Roberts.

**Health Care:**

Before the Khasi-Jaintia were acquainted with western allopathic medicines, they treated their illnesses with local herbal medicines.\textsuperscript{54} They also attributed sickness to evil spirits and attempted to provide cure by offering sacrifices in the form of eggs, fowls, pigs, goats, cows, etc. It was reported that when a young man, U Junkha, was suffering from acute rheumatism, his family offered sacrifices on his behalf\textsuperscript{55} but to no avail.

Initially the Welsh Mission like the other Christian Missions that came after them, did not plan to set up any medical work because they thought that this would interfere with their primary task of evangelism and also because of paucity of funds. However, when they were confronted with the suffering of the people, they began to treat them in whatever way they could through some elementary knowledge of the use of medicines. Before the missionaries came to India they


\textsuperscript{54} Nalini Natarajan, *op.cit.* p.108.

\textsuperscript{55} M G Lyngdoh, *op.cit.*, p. 20.
were always equipped with a stethoscope and a thermometer and a case of instruments.\textsuperscript{56}

Writing in August 1853, Dr. J W Fletcher noted that the principal causes of mortality among the people were cholera and smallpox.\textsuperscript{57} When there were reports on the desperate plight of the people who suffered from frequent plagues of cholera, malaria, tuberculosis etc, the Welsh decided to set up a medical mission, which was justified not only on humanitarian grounds but also would do much to attract the people towards Christianity.\textsuperscript{58}

The Medical Mission was inaugurated when Dr. Griffiths and his wife, Anne, arrived in late December, 1878. A small dispensary was constructed at Mawphlang, and in April, 1884, a hospital for in-patients was opened.\textsuperscript{59} Water-borne diseases were a major problem in the Khasi Hills and Dr. Griffiths was always concerned about the difficulty of getting a clean water supply. Child mortality was also another health issue that was troubling both the Khasi-Jaintia and the missionaries alike.\textsuperscript{60}

Dr. Arthur Hughes who joined later in 1888 started medical work in Jowai. He found out in 1890 that it was difficult to make the patients take their medicines according to the instructions given to them;

“Sometimes a patient will throw away his medicine as useless, simply because the first dose did not cure him. At other times, a patient who feels better after the first dose of the medicine...[would] empty the whole in his haste to get well. Often times, too, the out door patients will take Mission

\textsuperscript{56} Amen Passah, “Welsh Presbyterian Mission and Health Care in the Khasi-Jaintia Hills” in \textit{Proceedings of the North-Eastern India History Association}, 19\textsuperscript{th} Session (Kohima), p. 278.


\textsuperscript{60} Basil Griffiths, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 88-92.
Teaching about hospital care and compounding to the local people was also another service that was imparted among them by these doctors. A significant milestone in the field of health care was the establishment of the Khasi Hills Welsh Mission Hospital (or the Robert’s Hospital as it is popularly known) in 1922. With the completion of this hospital, Margaret E Buckley joined her duty as a nurse and began training the local girls in the nursing vocation. Later Amy Bullock brought about considerable improvements in nurses’ training. The Robert’s Hospital was the first well equipped hospital in the North East and also established the first nursing school in the region.

Besides providing curative measures, the missionaries also taught cleanliness and hygiene to the people by teaching them to boil and disinfect drinking water, regular bathing and washing and also wearing of clean and fresh clothes. Soaps, tooth powder and brushes came to be used increasingly in the urban areas. Wooden, bamboo and bone combs were brought in from the markets in Sylhet and Kamrup.

**Music:**

Another contribution by the missionaries was in the field of music. From the commencement of the work on the hills, attention was given to the service of praise through music. P R T Gurdon was nostalgic when he heard the sound of the distant church bells on a hill side one Sunday evening followed by the familiar Welsh hymn tunes which resounded in the valleys.

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62 Ibid., p. 199.

63 *75th Anniversary Souvenir of the KJP Synod Hospital*, Shillong, n. d., pp. 57, 62.

64 Nalini Natarajan, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

Many of the Welsh hymns were translated to Khasi and it was then that the people initially experienced the taste of church music. The first Khasi hymns were published in 1846 by Thomas Jones at the concluding portion of a book, Kot Laiphew. The Khasi-Jaintia who were fond of music were able to quickly grasp the melodies that were taught to them.

The last two decades of the nineteenth century efforts were made to introduce the Tonic Sol-fa system which is a notational reading of musical tunes. It was mainly Robert Evans, who was also called ‘the Father of Tonic Sol-fa’ by some of the people, took a keen interest in the beginning to organize music classes for young people and adults in Shangpung. A sum of £ 5 had also been granted by the directors to be given as prizes to those who did well in the Junior and Elementary Certificate examinations.

A tune book, Ka Kot Jingkynud containing over 300 tunes, chants, anthems, etc., was published in 1894. Singing festivals were also occasionally organised in different districts. A number of candidates were able to clear the intermediate and other lower levels of examinations of the Tonic Sol-fa school.

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