Chapter IV

Indigenous Church Leaders and Their Role in Society

The recent historiographical trend of studying history of Christianity by looking at it from a “coming” perspective rather than from a “sending” perspective has tried to bring under its scope the study of the Indian Christians themselves instead of focusing on the foreign missionaries. Such kind of a standpoint has therefore brought in an awareness that much attention has to be given to the study of indigenous Christians. Keeping this in view, an attempt has also been made to look into the role of the indigenous Christian leaders of the Presbyterian Church in the Khasi-Jaintia hills who worked in different capacities in different fields of works in the church and society.

Education

The crucial role played by education as an instrument for the spread of Christianity can be seen when Thomas Jones proposed to educate the people first and then evangelise them gradually as education spread among them. Usually a school was the forerunner of a church in a village and education was even made a condition for church membership among the Presbyterians in the early years. The connection between the two was so close that people did not differentiate between them. They were thought to be synonymous. It was noticed that the non-Christians associated schools with education and Christianity and therefore when they say “ki skur” (school), they automatically refer to the Christians.

2 P.N Dutta, Impact of the West on the Khasis and Jaintias, Cosmo Publications, New Delhi, 1982, p.185.
3 O.L Snaitang, Christianity and Social Change in Northeast India, Vendrame Institute, Shillong, 1993, p.116.
The establishment of primary schools and teachers’ training institutions had generated a number of teachers who were sent to various parts of the Khasi-Jaintia hills. It may be mentioned that the first mission school was built at Mawsmai in 1842 and U Larshai was appointed as its teacher there. U Nising taught at Mawmluh and U Jom became a teacher at Sohra. Until that time only three schools were present. However with the help of the first local converts, more schools came up in Shella in 1851. Later Ka Nabon Sawian became the first woman to be appointed to teach among the women of Shella.

U Jidor Sing, Syiem of Khadsawphra, though not a Christian was responsible in setting up primary schools in Mawnai in 1853. It was he who requested the Welsh missionaries to set up a school there. Later when U Larsing Khongwir visited that area in 1857, education began to spread through the opening up of new schools in Nongrmai, Mairang, Laitdom, and Nongthymmai and Mawdem. At the request of U Liar, the Sirdar of Mawdem, a teacher named U Dorsan was sent to that village.

In Jaintia hills, Christianity began its first strides when a school was opened at Jowai in 1854 under U Luh who was the first teacher in that area. U Larsing Khongwir took over the work of U Luh and in 1859 a second school was opened at Lamin. In the Bhoi area, local converts were employed to teach there.

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8 J.H Morris, *op. cit.* p. 162.

9 D Ropmay (ed.), *op. cit.* p. 68.

It was in 1891 that the native Christian leaders enunciated the principle of self-reliance for the support of schools through the foundation of the Home Mission. In 1908 U Babu Joel Gatphoh, Deputy Inspector of Schools, introduced the *Khawkham* system where each Christian household was required to set apart a handful of rice to be sold for procuring funds towards maintenance of schools. A school at Shynturbulia became the first one to be set up through this collection. This system is still practised today. In 1960-61, the minimum of over two lakhs of rupees was collected from the sales of rice and over 400 schools were supported that year.\(^{11}\) Besides funding for schools, the sale of such rice is also beneficial for the poorer sections of the society who buy it cheaper than the market price. The task of collection of *Khawkham* is left to the women.

In a number of places which did not have any school building, teaching was carried on in private huts. Some of the local Christians visited many adult males and females in their huts early in the morning and late at night and taught them to read and write.\(^{12}\) Although they were doing evangelistic work *Bible*-women helped in creating a reading population through *Bible* reading during their house-to-house visits.\(^{13}\) It is reported that some of these women\(^{14}\) first taught the *Khasi Primer* and then the Khasi *New Testament*.

The year, 1892, marked the beginning of the work among women being recognised as an official task of the Mission when a lady missionary was officially sent by the Presbyterian Church in Wales, to work among the Khasi women and she was given charge of the Shillong Girls’ School\(^{15}\) (now known as KJP: Khasi-Jaintia Presbyterian School). In the list of notable headmistresses, one cannot overlook Miss A W Thomas and Hilda Jones who took the school to great

\(^{11}\) Hamlet Bareh, *op. cit.* p. 396.


\(^{13}\) O L Snaitang, *Christianity and Social Change in Northeast India*. Vendrame Institute, Shillong and Firma KLM, Calcutta, 1993, pp. 31-32.


heights. The self governing principle of the Mission was put into practice in 1945, because when Hilda Jones returned to Wales in 1945, a Khasi graduate, Hilda Bhajur became the first Khasi in a long line of illustrious Khasi headmistresses.\textsuperscript{16}

Some of the students of the school who would play sterling roles in society later were Annamon Tham, who stood first in the whole of Assam in 1904 in the first Arts Examination, Dr. Flora Mohon Diengdoh and Dr. Eribon Passah who were the first lady doctors from these hills, Enola Pariat, the first student to become a graduate, Kelo Kharsati who obtained B. Sc Degree and founder principal of pearly Dew School, Shillong, Mavis Dunn lyngdoh, the first woman in Assam to become a Law graduate and later the lone lady member in Assam Legislative Assembly, Dr. Bluebell Reade, the first Ph. D from these hills from the University of California, USA, who worked in prestigious institutions all over the world, retiring as Professor Emeritus of the University of Hawaii and Dr. Susan Passah, Gold Medalist and the first Khasi lady to obtain MD degree in Pediatrics from the Pondicherry University, Lariamon Khongwir, who, in 1952, was nominated by the government to be the first lady member of the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council, Nikki Haralu, the first Indian Foreign Service officer from north east India and Ambassador of India to Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Bonnily Khongmen, the first lady Deputy Speaker of Assam Legislative Assembly, first elected member of first Parliament of the Republic of India and Chairman of Assam Public Service Commission; and two Padmashree awardees, Silverine Swer and Evelyne Shullai,\textsuperscript{17} the first Director of the Institute of Arts and Culture and state secretary of Meghalaya Bharat Scouts and Guides and Dr. Fairliancy Kharkongor, who obtained her degree in Pathology from Manchester, UK and became Director of Health Services, Government of Meghalaya.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.

One of the early local educationists was Mondon Bareh. He had his early education at Jowai and joined the Cherra Theological College. After completion of the Advanced Course of the College, in 1904, he served as evangelist and teacher in Jaintia Hills. Later he became a teacher at the Theological College. In 1918 he joined the post of Sub-Inspector of Schools and was later put in charge of the Deputy Inspector of Schools and held the post till his death in 1932.

In his capacity as an inspecting officer, he had contributed his part in raising the standard of education. Wherever he went he would spread the awareness for the need of self supporting and self governing educational institutions. In such campaigns, he urged upon various syiem, doloi, lyngdoh, sirdar, and the people in general to make generous contributions towards education.

Mondon Bareh also organised many teachers’ conferences and training workshops for improving and updating the methods of teaching. One of his views on education is, “To educate people means, first and foremost, to win their hearts and souls.” His efforts towards extending education were borne out of his passion and determination to uplift the people.

The results that came out of his crusade for educational support were noticed when some villagers came forward to help in contributing towards the pay of the teachers. School houses were also constructed and looked by them. The Syiem of Mairang also was trying to have all the schools under his territory, roofed with corrugated iron. Among those who set up schools in their individual

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19 Ibid., pp. 1-2.
20 Ibid., p. 2.
21 Ibid., p. 7.
capacities was D Ropmay. In 1957, Babu D Nihon Singh Wahlang founded the Khasi Jaintia National School at Mawkhar.\(^{22}\)

When the Union Christian College (UCC) which was set up by the Assam Christian Council was inaugurated in 1952 at Barapani, the road to higher learning was opened to the people. There was much skepticism about the location of the institution in the beginning because the public claimed that it was malaria infested and generally, a very unhealthy area.\(^{23}\) At that point of time, there were also other colleges in Shillong, like St. Edmund’s College, St. Anthony’s College, St. Mary’s College and Lady Keane College.

I M Simon, who was an elder in the Presbyterian Church, and a person with a varied career as a linguist, teacher and a civil servant, left his job as a magistrate to teach English at UCC.\(^{24}\)

In 1962, the Synod (or the Church Council at the top at that period) in the Khasi-Jaintia Hills began to consider seriously the sponsoring of a college under its own auspices. A committee of five, of which Wilson Reade or Babu Wil,\(^{25}\) a veteran educationist of about 60 years standing was the chairman, was appointed to prepare plans for its establishment. Through this commitment, the Synod College was inaugurated in 1965, beginning with the evening section. B M Pugh was appointed as its principal. Students came every evening from places as far as ten to twelve miles and went home after eight at night.\(^{26}\)

From humble beginnings at Mawsmai, education progressed significantly, especially in the primary and upper primary sections. Though there were many obstacles in teaching female students, in 1879, it was reported that the Khasi-Jaintia Hills was the only district in Assam, and one of the very few throughout

\(^{22}\) Ibid., pp. 58, 69.


\(^{24}\) Information is provided by Mrs. Gwyneth Pariat, daughter of I M Simon, on 28th December, 2011.

\(^{25}\) He received the National Award for Teachers in 1964.

\(^{26}\) B M Pugh, op. cit., pp. 127-128.
India, in which female education can be said to exist. By the turn of the twentieth century, many Khasi-Jaintia had benefitted from the educational work of the Mission. Solomon Blah and Dohory Ropmay became the first local people to graduate in 1898. By 1969, therefore, many primary and English middle schools were set up. Besides these, a few high schools were also in place along with a college. Education paved the way for many Khasi-Jaintia to enter into different avenues of professions like teaching, civil service, health care and medicine, etc., In 1971, the literacy rate in Khasi hills was 36.6 %, while in Jaintia Hills it was 19.94 %.

**Evangelisation**

Propagation of Christianity was the primary goal of the Welsh Mission. With this objective in mind, the missionaries set out to achieve its aims by imparting Christian doctrines to the people through its various schools, public gatherings, Sunday schools, house visitations etc., In the beginning, a few of the Khasi-Jaintia converts were despatched to preach the new religion to their own people. Among them were U Luh, U Jarkha, U Larsing, U Laithat and others.

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28 According to Nalini Natarajan, *The Missionary Among the Khasis*, Sterling Publishers, New Delhi, 1977, p. 72, in 1972, there were, 275 high schools, 29 middle English schools, 6 High schools, 1 college and 1 teachers’ training centre.


The endeavour of these indigenous church workers is much appreciated considering the fact that they had little or no formal theological training and only minimal Christian literature and a portion of the Bible that has been translated into the vernacular language.\(^{31}\) U Jarkha, was an evangelist known for his eloquence and authoritative demeanour.\(^{32}\) Realising his own want of such kind of confidence, U Laitmiet who was the first Christian convert in Nongkroh, confided to a fellow preacher that he sensed the people were starting to get uninterested at his speech because he kept on repeating the same sermon Sunday after Sunday.\(^{33}\)

For a few years after 1841, the work of the Welsh Mission was confined only to the neighbouring areas of Cherrapunjee. Later, with the coming of more foreign missionaries and the help and dedication given by many local converts Christianity started to reach to remote places as well. Robert E Frykenberg’s observation that Indian Christian leaders always far outnumbered those who came from abroad is valid in the case of the Khasi-Jaintia. In 1893, for example, there were 12 Welsh missionaries supervising over 8 main stations – Cherrapunjee, Shillong, Mawlai, Shella, Mawphlang, Khadsawphra, Jowai and Shangpung while

\(^{31}\) The Bible was fully translated into Khasi in the year 1891.

\(^{32}\) D Ropmay (ed.), \textit{op. cit.} p. 113.

\(^{33}\) J.H Morris, \textit{op. cit.} p. 131.
there were 34 Khasi-Jaintia church ministers and preachers working in the interior areas of the selected fields \textsuperscript{34} which included Sohbar, Nongsawlia, Mylliem, etc.,

One of the significant events in the history of the Presbyterian Church in the hills occurred at the Presbytery held at Nongsawlia in March, 1869, where a decision was made allowing a number of probationers to sit for the Evangelists’ Examination. Following this the first six “licensed preachers” were approved – \textit{U} Timothy, \textit{U} Jura, \textit{U} Samuel, \textit{U} Ksan, \textit{U} Badon, and \textit{U} Sati.\textsuperscript{35} In 1887, at the Liverpool General Assembly, a resolution was made to establish a theological institution in Cherrapunjee with John Roberts as Principal. Prior to this, in 1884 it was decided that the indigenous evangelists would take charge over some churches in order to allow them to have experience in clerical and other church related activities.\textsuperscript{36} The endeavour to establish a pastorate consisting of the Khasi- Jaintia people was achieved when \textit{U} Juramon Lyngdoh, \textit{U} Ksan Natep, \textit{U} Ksanbin Gatphoh and \textit{U} Iang Laloo were ordained on 11\textsuperscript{th} October, 1890\textsuperscript{37} under the charge of John Roberts. Commenting on the ordination, John Roberts praised the four ministers saying, “…Their knowledge is full, their judgement is sound, their influence is considerable…” Such an evaluation measures up to the opinion held by Heike Liebau that the native missionaries had to manifest a certain amount of authority toward the local people, on one hand and also had to remain close enough to them in order to be accepted by them to be identified with them and to win their confidence.\textsuperscript{38}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{34} J F Jyrwa, \textit{Reports of the Foreign Mission of the Presbyterian Church of Wales on Khasi-Jaintia Hills, 1864 to 1899}, op. cit., pp. 264-265.
\item \textsuperscript{35} J.H Morris, \textit{op. cit.} p. 154.
\item \textsuperscript{36} G Angell Jones, \textit{Ka History ka Balang}, KJP Synod, Shillong, 1966, pp. 69-70.
\end{itemize}
Among the first indigenous pastors, U Juramon Lyngdoh was more popular and deserves a mention. He belonged to a priestly clan, while his father came from a myntri clan of Cherrapunjee. From the time he became a Christian he showed a keen interest in preaching. He was appointed evangelist and later served at Mairang. U Kine Sing, Syiem of Nongkhlaw was impacted by his preaching and accepted Christianity later. \(^{39}\)

U Juramon was also very creative and would illustrate his sermons with the familiar sights and scenes from nature, which were known to his audience. His command of the Khasi language was an added advantage and enabled him to communicate articulately, his Christian ideas and doctrines with the people.

“…Possessing a thorough acquaintance with the Khasi customs and mode of thought, he employed his knowledge with wonderful skill… U Jura held the rapt attention of the thousands of… [non-Christians] and Christians who congregated to hear him on the great open-air “preaching day”…” \(^{40}\)

Juramon’s reputation was eminent not only among the local community but also among the missionaries in the hills and the churches in Wales. He was especially known for his preaching abilities and was well respected by the people. The people of Mairang remembered him as a wise, articulate and a great man. To the rest of the Khasi-Jaintia he is known as the chief among preachers. \(^{41}\)

U Siang Blah was also another important leader and preacher, who is remembered for his admirable command and choice of language. Born at Jowai, he grew up under the care of his mother, who was a follower of the traditional religion. From his own testimony, we come to know that his family was not well off. “Had it not been for the generosity of the missionaries, I could have had no schooling at all… the Rev. Griffith Hughes gave me a stipend of three rupees a


\(^{40}\) J.H Morris, op. cit. pp. 191-192.

\(^{41}\) Ka History Lyngkot ki Pastor ba la Khlad noh Jong Ka Balang Presbyterian ha Ri Khasi-Jaintia (1897-1997), op. cit., pp. 2-3.
month, and put me to ring the Church bell, and to light the lamps in the Church for the evening meetings."\(^{42}\)

**U Siang Blah**

Siang Blah also assisted Dr. John Roberts in the translation of the *Bible* into Khasi. Besides his busy schedule as a pastor, he also contributed frequently to *Pateng Khristan*, a Khasi journal of the Presbyterian church. He also wrote in Khasi, *A Commentary to St. John*.\(^{42}\)

**U Khnong Sutnga**

Besides the above, there was *U* Khnong Sutnga who is known for his meticulous method of preparation for his preachings. It was said that he would inform the people to read portions of the *Bible* one or two weeks prior to his arrival.\(^{44}\) Khnong also was responsible for constructing schools and footpaths in

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\(^{42}\) Quoted in M G Lyngdoh, *op. cit.*, pp. 64-65.


\(^{44}\) G Angell Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 168.
some villages as well as giving advices on some cultivation methods. Others like U Rai Bhajur, U Dorkha, U Myngor Sing and many more are still remembered for their services in the evangelistic field.

By the end of the twentieth century, some local church leaders of Shillong Presbytery were initiating the idea of self propagation to those areas where Christianity had not made any inroads. In 1898, at Mawthoh, a decision was made to collect a sum of money towards the Home Mission Fund, on every second Sunday of the month. A committee under U Babu Mohonroy as Chairman and Babu Jakobus as Secretary was constituted which would look after the work of evangelisation in the Shillong-Mawlai Presbytery. As a result of this Babu Dhorom was appointed evangelist for Mawlai area while Babu Lot was to look after Bhoi region.

A significant development in the history of Home Mission took place in 1900, at Shillong, when it was decided to establish one Home Mission for the whole of Khasi Jaintia region. Dohory Ropmay was appointed as Treasurer and Joab Solomon as Secretary. On the recommendation of the Pastoral Committee, the selected fields of operation were identified. The areas situated on both sides of the Umngot river, which divided the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, namely, the neighbouring area of Mawlat in the Khasi hills and Padu, Pamtdong and the surrounding villages in Jaintia Hills, were the first evangelistic fields of the Home Mission.

In the following year, i.e., 1901, the Century Fund was started and a total collection of Rs. 10,000 was set apart towards the spread of Christianity through evangelisation in the Home Mission field. Two pastors were also appointed, Hormu Roy, to look after the Khasi Hills and Shai Rabooh Manar, who was put in charge of the Jaintia Hills. In 1923, the Home Mission had 8 schools and 343

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47 Ibid., pp. 117-118.

Christians in the Khasi Hills, while in Jaintia Hills, and it had 9 schools. By the end of 1940, the number of converts was 1354 in the Khasi hills and 1195 in the Jaintia hills. About 24 churches\(^49\) were organised under the Home Mission.

When the work of evangelisation is discussed, one cannot ignore the commendable efforts of the women. Many Bible-women were engaged in the spread of Christian teachings and knowledge of the Bible among other women. In the second half of the nineteenth century, a sum of £ 144 was obtained from the British and Foreign Bible Society\(^50\) towards the maintenance of Bible-women in the hills of Khasi- Jaintia.

Besides evangelistic work, these women also taught young girls and elder women to read and write. Ka Kmie Ka Johmon (or the mother of Ka Johmon) taught at two places- Nongrim and Twa. She worked three days at one place and the next three at the other. Ka Kmie U Morkha (the mother of U Morkha) also worked in two villages- Mawkisyiem and Mawpunkyrtiang. Kong Ien, from Sohrarim, was a nongkitnong (labourer engaged in carrying loads) but was employed as a Bible-woman later. These women undertook house-to-house visits and taught grown-up girls and elderly women to read, first, the Khasi Primer then the Khasi New Testament. They also indicated portions to be read.\(^51\) Their sincerity and their faithfulness led many women and their families to Christianity. As a result of their endeavour, it was estimated that there were about 1500 women audience\(^52\) that were reached through the Bible-women.

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\(^{50}\) J F Jyrwa, *Reports of the Foreign Mission of the Presbyterian Church of Wales on Khasi- Jaintia Hills, 1864 to 1899*, op. cit., p. 31.


\(^{52}\) G Angell Jones, *op. cit.* pp. 112- 113.
In 1971, out of a total population of 4, 91, 209,\textsuperscript{53} in the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills District, there were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>2, 48, 800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non Christian Khasi-Jaintia</td>
<td>1, 27, 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>1, 02, 709</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>4, 282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jain</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>7, 286</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Literature:

Ever since the Roman script was adopted into the Khasi language, the foundation of Khasi literature was laid. Works in the vernacular started to come out in many of the translated versions and other original compositions. It can be seen that during the nineteenth century, the literary scene was dominated by missionaries\textsuperscript{54} although there were also the educated local people\textsuperscript{55} who were assisting them in their translations. These pioneer Khasi litterateurs were not only assisted by their spouses but also by the Khasi members of the church whom they called for advice\textsuperscript{56}. Frequent disagreements\textsuperscript{57} would also arise between them.

\textsuperscript{53} Meghalaya District Gazeteer Khasi Hills District, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 50. According to Nalini Natarajan, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 61, the total number of members of the Presbyterian Church in 1973 was 1, 24,000 making it the largest in the Khasi-Jaintia Hills.


\textsuperscript{55} It is believed that U Duwan Rai and U Jungkha helped Thomas Jones in learning the Khasi language.

\textsuperscript{56} Nigel Jenkins, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 266.

\textsuperscript{57} J H Morris, \textit{op. cit.} p. 79.
regarding the correctness of their translations. In their translation of the Bible, the missionaries were conscious of the importance that the sooner it was completed, the better it would be for the growth of Christianity. A major obstacle to the Lewises, as to any translator, was the Khasi language’s dearth of suitable words for the articulation of religious emotions.\textsuperscript{58} It is said that Thomas Jones was being helped by \textit{U} Laithat\textsuperscript{59} in the preparation of the first books that were published -- the \textit{Gospels} and primers. Since that time, there was no looking back and many writings have appeared on various themes and subjects.

Beginning with the latter part of the nineteenth century, \textit{U} Rabon Sing Kharsuka, an eminent writer and an elder of the Mawkhar Presbyterian Church, brought out three books- \textit{Ka Niam Khein ki Khasi}, which throws light on the Khasi religion, with special reference to the rites and sacrifices, funeral ceremonies and other related themes. \textit{Ka Kitab Jingphawar} is a book on religious sacrifices of the Khasi, fables and oral traditions in the form of proverbs. Another important work is \textit{Ka Kitab Puriskam}, which is, again, a text containing oral traditions including, myths, folktales and legends. Thus, apart from Christian literature reflected in various books, there were also other writings which concentrated on Khasi religious thought forms and culture also, as seen in the works of \textit{U} Rabon Sing.

In an anonymously written article which appeared in a souvenir, \textit{U} Rabon Sing is described as a “victim of a religious conflict.”\textsuperscript{60} On one hand he wanted to be a good Christian leader, on the other he longed to uphold the tradition and customs of the Khasi. In order to conceal himself and avoid criticism for his writings, he just put in his initials ‘R. S. M’ for Rabon Sing of Mawmluh, or ‘R. S.’\textsuperscript{61}

\textit{U} Morkha Joseph Chyne, a pastor, is famous for his poem \textit{U Sier Lapalang}. His works were composed between 1890 and 1916. A number of them

\textsuperscript{58} Nigel Jenkins, \textit{op. cit.} p. 218.

\textsuperscript{59} Hamlet Bareh, \textit{op. cit.} p. 365.

\textsuperscript{60} \textit{140 Years of Khasi Literature in Roman Script (1841-1981)}, DIPR, Shillong, n. d., p. 27.

\textsuperscript{61} \textit{Ibid.},
were published in *Ka Ryngkap* in 1967. *U Sier Lapalang* runs into 51 verses and was first published in the monthly journal, *U Nongkit Khubor.* According to Hamlet Bareh this poem “was the first of the creations from an indigenous angle.”

In the early decades of the twentieth century, Khasi-Jaintia Christians were emerging in the literary field and it is noted that most of their writings are “underlined by Khasi thought forms. They gave due emphasis to the importance of the traditional world view embodied in *Ki Khanatang* (folklores), *Ki Puriskam* (mythologies), and *Ki Phawar* folk song…” Among these writers, U Soso Tham occupies the central place as far as poetry is concerned. After giving up his theological education, he joined the Government High School as a teacher. His first publication was *Ki Phawer U Aesop,* a Khasi translated version of *Aesop’s Fables* which came out most likely in 1920. The masterpiece of his poetic genius is considered by many to be *Ki Sngi Barim U Hynńiew Trep,* which can be loosely translated as ‘The Olden Days of the Seven Huts’ was published in 1936. One of the important features of this work lies in the ability of the poet to depict cultural, religious, political, and social heritage of the Khasi, as well as contemporary social conditions of his times.

Although a physician, Dr. Homiwell Lyngdoh, was a well-known writer also. His first book published in 1914 is *Ki Aiň ka Jingkoit- Jingkhiah* (‘Principles of Health’) which provides information on basic preventive and curative measures against common diseases prevailing among the Khasi and Jaintia.

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62 Joseph, Morkha, *Ka Ryngkap,* Published by Barlow M Lyngdoh, Shillong, 1998, 3rd Edition. *U Sier Lapalang* is believed to have been written in 1891.

63 Ibid. pp. VIII-IX; cf. ibid., pp. 97-103.

64 Hamlet Bareh, *op. cit.* p. 386.


67 Ibid., p. 67.

68 Homiwell Lyngdoh, *Ki Aiň ka Jingkoit-Jingkhiah,* Published by the Author, Shillong, 1914.
In 1928\(^{69}\) he published *Ka Pomblang bad Thang Syiem*. He also was able to give illustrations on the two famous state festivals of the Khasi. Homiwell Lyngdoh toured different parts of the Khasi-Jaintia Hills and collected first hand information for his next projects. As a result of this, he was able to publish one of the most referred texts on the culture and administrative system of the Khasi and Jaintia, *Ka Niam Khasi*, \(^{70}\) and *Ki Syiem Khasi bad Synteng* which were published in 1937 and 1938 respectively. His writings are easily communicative and brought out a fair amount of historical perspective too. Lyngdoh was also instrumental for his role in the inclusion of Khasi as one of the subjects for graduate courses in the Calcutta University.\(^{71}\) Thus, though a medical doctor by profession, through his dedication and passion for writing, he had enriched Khasi literature manifold.

I M Simon, in 1969 published *Khasi Folk Tales and Beliefs*. Besides he also wrote articles on different topics of general, anthropological, linguistic and historical interest.\(^{72}\)

Apart from the works cited above, there are also a number of translated texts like *Sindbad the Sailor*, *Measure for Measure* and *Alladin* by Mondon Bareh. He also wrote *Ki Sermon U Dr. John Roberts*, *Ka Komentari Sha Ki Galatia*, *Anglo-Khasi Primer*, and some of the Jaintia folk tales in a book, *U Mawpun Jingtip*. Bareh also rendered valuable help\(^{73}\) to Mrs. Roberts in the translation of *Pilgrim’s Progress* into Khasi.

Books regarding information on geography of the Khasi hills, *Ka Geography Khasi*, came out in 1925 by Ondromoney Dkhar. He also wrote two books on arithmetic\(^{74}\) in Khasi.

\(^{69}\) Hamlet Bareh, *op. cit.* p. 370.

\(^{70}\) Homiwell Lyngdoh, *Ka Niam Khasi*, Published by the Author, Shillong, 1937.

\(^{71}\) M G Lyngdoh, *op. cit.* p. 70.

\(^{72}\) Interview with Mrs. Gwyneth Pariat, daughter of I.M.Simon on 28\(^{th}\) December, 2011.

\(^{73}\) *U Mondon Bareh Birth Centenary Souvenir*, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

On language, books appeared in 1904, when *Khasi-English Dictionary* by Nissor Singh Lyngdoh Nongbri\(^{75}\) came out. This was the first kind of dictionary in those days that provided a Khasi to English translation of words. His book, *Hints on the Study of Khasi Language* was used in schools\(^{76}\) for the language course.

In the area of journalism, mention may be made of a periodical entitled, *Ka Seng Presbyterian* edited by Mondon Bareh in 1915-16. Another educational monthly, by the same editor, *Ka Jingshai Jong Ka Ri Khasi Pnar* (‘The Light of the Khasi Pnar Land’) was in circulation in 1931-32. S R Manner and Siang Blah jointly edited *U Jaintia*. Soso Tham, Wilson Reade and DNS Wahlang were editors of *U Lurshai*,\(^{77}\) a popular monthly on current opinions on political developments and social and economic issues of the period. Homiwell Lyngdoh was the first editor of *Ka Pateng Khristan*, in 1937.

In summing up, the literary works of these indigenous leaders, in English and in the vernacular had opened up the doors of learning, firstly, of Christian teachings and western knowledge; secondly, it also led to the emergence of many works from the Khasi-Jaintia perspectives which threw to light, the multi-features of Khasi-Jaintia culture. Thus, literature served the double purpose of spreading and sharing knowledge and also preserving the language of the people.

**Health Care and Medicine:**

Health care in the whole of India, especially in Northeast India was low even up to India’s Independence. However, the Khasi-Hills District has always been a fairly enviable spot of health activities even before the First World War. The credit goes to the pioneering Welsh Presbyterian Mission in general and Dr. Gordon Roberts in particular.\(^{78}\) Whereas in the beginning, the Welsh Presbyterian

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\(^{76}\) *U Mondon Bareh Birth Centenany Souvenir*, op. cit., p. 50.


Mission was skeptical about starting a full-fledged medical mission since this would interfere with their primary goal of evangelisation, it later decided to venture into the area of medicine and health care on receiving reports about the suffering of the people from frequent outbreak of plagues. Consequently, in 1878, the first medical missionary, Dr. Griffith Griffiths, arrived in the Khasi Hills. The first doctors were faced with a lot of difficulties in trying to administer western allopathic medicine to the people. Suspicion and doubt loomed over them when the doctors tried to give relief against diseases like smallpox, which the Khasi-Jaintia believed to be the favour of the spirits that came and visited them in the form of diseases.

Despite the fact that there was already a sanatoria and medical services in Cherrapunjee before the Welsh missionaries arrived, these were set up for the benefit of the colonial officers and soldiers. The rest of the inhabitants in the hills were left to fend for themselves with their own traditional herbal medicine and knowledge. Before the advent of Dr. Griffiths, the missionaries who already had some amount of medical training and knowledge were able to provide a fair relief to the Khasi. Though the early years of medical service was not popular, the firm determination and dedication of the doctors attracted many people to seek their help and care.

One of the early local assistants, who worked with Dr. Griffiths at Mawphlang was U Ngorsing. Braving the ravages of cholera in the villages of Mawkdok, Nonglwai, Kukhon and Mawbeh, he reported that many people had died and others were given timely help with the arrival of the doctor and his assistant. Apart from providing medical redressal, it was also noticed that preaching, by the assistants like U Ngorsing, was also going on in the dispensary.

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80 Nigel Jenkins, *op. cit.*, p. 298.

81 *Ibid*.

82 *Ibid*.

83 J F Jyrwa, *Reports of the Foreign Mission of the Presbyterian Church of Wales on Khasi-Jaintia Hills, 1864 to 1899*, *op. cit.*,58.
Dr. Griffiths said that several patients could not have been brought to the knowledge of Christianity had they not sought his medical help. Another such helper was U Kpa Ka Hen (or Ka Hen’s father), who, as noted by J Herbert Roberts, would try to give a sermon among the patients. In his *Ymweiliad à Bryniau Khasia*, Roberts wrote about the evangelist as “…well suited to this work, being an unrivalled conversationalist, full of stories, and able to speak on any subject under the sun…”

In Jaintia hills medical work started in 1887 under Dr. A D Hughes, who left in 1893. After the disastrous earthquake of 1897, Dr. E Williams took up the reconstruction of the hospital there. He also gave lessons in health care to eight young men. In 1898, the doctor, owing to some urgent circumstances was compelled to entrust the task of dispensing to the local compounders. Among them was Solomon, who was also a health visitor to the villages near Jowai.

Just as in the case of education where numerous local teachers were trained and sent to different corners of the hills; similarly, medical mission was also responsible for paving the way for many Khasi-Jaintia to be trained under the supervision of the Welsh doctors and nurses. These medical assistants, compounders, nurses and midwives, rendered valuable help to the Mission and to the society through their selfless services.

Through the instances it became clear that the medical mission had done a good service to the cause of evangelisation also. Another example of the close connection between medicine and religion is reflected in a story of a widespread conversion of the people of Nongshken village. It happened that when a man was seriously ill and emergent help of Dr. Griffiths was sought, the former was cured successfully. The people, consequently, began to respond to the advances of this

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84 Ibid., p. 236.

85 Quoted in Nigel Jenkins, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

doctor and believed that his arrival was a providential intervention. Such conversions took place partly because people had always perceived that illnesses were caused by ‘spirits and demons’, hence in curing of the diseases also, certain religious rites and sacrifices were performed. When their traditional mode of trying to cure the sick failed, they began to look for a different kind of cure provided by doctor, whom they regarded as someone sent by a Christian God.

During the outbreak of cholera at Shillong in 1879, Babu Barnabas, assisted Dr. Griffiths and Jerman Jones and rendered valuable service to the people. Among the first trainees were U Babu Barnabas, U Kormuni Diengdoh and U Kiron Singh Jyrwa. Such training given to the compounders and some evangelists came in handy to the people of the hills. Dr. Oswald Williams was also known to have imparted training to Joohon Kongor, Philingstone Diengdoh, Jarmanik, Kale Kharmawphlang, Same Roy and Long Sing. Babu Kormonisingh, a deacon of the Nongsawlia Presbyterian Church and a son of Borsing Sing Syiem, had his training at the mission dispensary for many years, after which he set up his own practice at Charrapunjee. It was reported that he was able to make a good living out of this because he had the advantage of being well connected with the people due to his prior service as dispensary assistant of Dr. Griffiths.

When teaching in hospital care was first started, three pupils attended classes. Textbooks on osteology, anatomy, physiology and elementary medicine were used. Besides these, bandaging, application of splints had been taught to the students. Dr. A D Hughes was impressed when he found that the local compounders at Mawphlang were performing their work efficiently like any other

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87 Basil Griffiths, *op. cit.* p. 120-121.
89 E C Syngkon, “Ka Jingshakri Jong Ka Jingpynkhiah Ka Balang Presbyterian ha Ri Khasi naduh ka Snem 1841 Haduh Mynta” in *Silver Jubilee Souvenir of Shillong Ri Lum Presbytery*, n. p. n. d., p. 34.
western counterparts. Before he served as evangelist in Bhoi, U Rai Bhajur Jyrwa went to England in 1909 and completed a short term course in medicine. He was able to help the Bhoi people especially in the treatment of malaria and other diseases prevalent in the area.

The inauguration of the Khasi Hills Welsh Mission Hospital or Roberts’ Hospital (as it is popularly called after its founder, Dr. Gordon Roberts) at Jaiaw, in 1922, marked an important development in the area of medical service. Under the dynamic leadership of Dr. Roberts, a sum of £ 50,000 was collected from various donors towards the construction of the hospital which began in 1917. Within a few years after its completion, it became the leading hospital in northeast India attracting patients from various parts of the subcontinent.

Soon after the opening of Roberts’ Hospital, a nurse named Margaret E Buckley undertook the task of training of nurses. Many of the trainees were women who had worked as labourers in the construction of the hospital. Some of them were first generation Christians and some were children of Christian parents. The difficulty of Margaret Buckley in training the nurses can be understood from the fact that most of them had only completed elementary schooling in the vernacular language. Another problem was the refusal by the Khasi trainees to carry out night-shift duties. Their non-compliance was because of their fear of *U Thlen*, a deity which feeds on human blood. However through the committed guidance of Buckley, this belief began to wane. The girls under her training were the first of a regiment of Khasi women who served in some parts of India and abroad as well. They also helped to change the attitude of the

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93 *Ka History Lyngkot ki Pastor ba la Khlad noh Jong Ka Balang Presbyterian ha Ri Khasi-Jaintia* (1897-1997), *op. cit*.

94 M G Lyngdoh, *op. cit.*. p. 25.

95 Nigel Jenkins, *op. cit.*. p. 304.


97 G Angell Jones, *op. cit.*. p. 223.
people towards nursing as a vocation for women. In the beginning, the duration of training was for five years which in 1970 was reduced to three years. The first local trainees\textsuperscript{98} to join the Nursing School in 1924 were Lesibon, Derila Pale, Estella Nongsteng and Welibon Tiewtaby.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image}
\caption{Doctors, nurses and staff of Robert’s Hospital}
\end{figure}

Among the local nurses that earned the distinction of being the first nursing superintendent was Plesimai Lyngdoh. She completed her training in nursing and midwifery under Dr. H Gordon Roberts and Amy K Bullock. She worked as a nurse and tutor and also supervised works in the operation theatre.

\textsuperscript{98} E C Syngkon, “Ka Jingshakri Jong Ka Jingpynkhiah Ka Balang Presbyterian ha Ri Khasi naduh ka Snem 1841 Haduh Mynta” in Silver Jubilee Souvenir of Shillong Ri Lum Presbytery, op. cit., p. 35.
She took charge as nursing Superintendent in 1968. During her tenure, she allowed staff nurses to complete their graduate courses at Synod College. Three other nurses were sent to the college of nursing in Delhi and after they had finished their training there, they came back to work as tutors at the hospital.\footnote{Souvenir of the 75th Anniversary of the K.J.P Synod Hospital, Shillong, Souvenir Sub-Committee of the Platinum Jubilee Celebration of the K.J.P Synod Hospital, Shillong, n.d. pp. 86-87.}

The numbers of nurses trained\footnote{Ibid., p. 87.} at the hospital were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
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<tr>
<td>1921-1925</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1946-1950</td>
<td>38</td>
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<tr>
<td>1926-1930</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1951-1955</td>
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<tr>
<td>1931-1935</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1956-1960</td>
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<td>1936-1940</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1961-1965</td>
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<tr>
<td>1941-1945</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1965-1970</td>
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In Jaintia Hills, it was only in 1947 that the nursing school of the Jowai Presbyterian Hospital was started and two local students from Jowai passed the midwifery examination. The quality of training in that school was one of the best because, in 1949, Newbylis Lyngdoh was placed in the first position\footnote{Amena Passah, “Welsh Presbyterian Mission in the Khasi-Jaintia Hills (1841-1969)”, Unpublished Ph. D Thesis, op. cit., p. 276.} in the Assam Nurses, Midwives and Health Visitors Examination.

As far as the local doctors were concerned, Dr. Homiwell lyngdoh earned the distinction of being the first among the Khasi-Jaintia to graduate from Calcutta Medical College in 1903. After serving as a surgeon in Assam for many years, in 1939 he was appointed as a Medical Officer-in-Charge of the hospital at Jowai. The women were also not far behind and it was a pride for the Khasi – Jaintia Hills when three of them-Flora Mohon Roy, Sahin Rynthathiang and Eribon Passah- completed their degrees as Sub-Assistant Surgeon. Dr. Eribon Passah

\footnote{Souvenir of the 75th Anniversary of the K.J.P Synod Hospital, Shillong, Souvenir Sub-Committee of the Platinum Jubilee Celebration of the K.J.P Synod Hospital, Shillong, n.d. pp. 86-87.}

\footnote{Ibid., p. 87.}

worked as a doctor at the Jowai hospital for some years after the death of Dr. Edward Williams.102

Soon after the inauguration of the Roberts’ Hospital, Dr. Plinsingh became the first doctor to serve there. But he was unable to continue his work due to his health condition and in 1928, Dr. Drin Singh Hynniewta was appointed in his place. He continued his service for thirty four years.103 Before he joined the mission hospital, Dr. Hynniewta set up his own private practice at Cherrapunjee. He was known for his excellent work not only in medicine but also in surgery, midwifery, gynecology, X-Ray and other areas of health care as well. He was admired not only by his patients but also by those who knew about his dedication and his charitable services104 to the poor.

In the early part of 1939, Dr. Homiwell Lyngdoh took the initiative to open some health centres in some villages in Jaintia Hills. However due to financial constraints, only one centre was able to function at Wahiajer. He also was responsible for the selection of the site called Lum Tari Ksiar, for the proposed new hospital to be constructed.105

Dr. Risa Mary Ropmay was another important figure in the medical field. After serving at the Satribari Baptist Christian Hospital, Guwahati, as Associate Medical Superintendent and conducting rural extension medical efforts, she came back and joined Roberts’ Hospital to work at the rural health centres located at Mawphlang and Laitmawsiang. She along with the resident nurses also conducted house calls in the neighbouring villages. The Christian Medical Association of India awarded her, in 1992,106 for her selfless services in the rural areas.

102 G Angell Jones, op. cit., p. 164.
103 E C Syngkon, “Ka Jingshakri Jong Ka Jingpynkhiah Ka Balang Presbyterian ha Ri Khasi naduh ka Snem 1841 Haduh Mynta” in Silver Jubilee Souvenir of Shillong Ri Lum Presbytery, op. cit.
104 Souvenir of the 75th Anniversary of the K.J.P Synod Hospital, op. cit., p. 73.
105 M G Lyngdoh, op. cit., p. 28.
106 Souvenir of the 75th Anniversary of the K.J.P Synod Hospital, op. cit., pp. 75-77.
In the early 1950s, Dr. R L Cunville, who was the first Khasi to complete the M.B degree, was appointed Director of the Pasteur Institute, Shillong.\textsuperscript{107} The other doctors who rendered their valuable services to the society were Dr. Orlando Lyngdoh who was appointed by the government to serve at the Jowai mission hospital, Dr. Dowell Probodh, Dr. Nessily Shullai who contributed immensely to the field of health and medicine.

**Social Service:**

One of the features of Christian teachings is the emphasis on humanitarian services. Therefore, not only were the missionaries and local Christians passionate with preaching the tenets of Christianity, but they also took interest and worked earnestly for the well being of the people in general. Notwithstanding, sometimes, the risks that endangered their lives, these people continued to boldly face such adversities, thereby earning the respect of the society.

Among one of the important services that the Christians did was to raise funds for relief projects of the church. Owing to failure of rice crops, in 1873 and 1874, the people of Mawdem and the surrounding area were facing a lot of distress. A special collection of £ 774 17s and 1d was made from the various churches to help them. A portion of the sum of money was donated to the people of Shella, who were also facing difficulty as a result of the destruction of their villages by a ravaging fire.\textsuperscript{108} In 1903, a decision was made to give assistance to the people who were suffering from the recent plague in Bhoi area. More than a thousand rupees was collected from the different churches.\textsuperscript{109} Through U Kine Sing Syiem, an appeal was sent to the government and the Syiem of Mylliem. Generous donations also came forward from the missionaries. U Liar Sirdar had to feed about a hundred of people for many months.\textsuperscript{110} When the plague hit Shella, again the Christians did not hold back, but willingly lent support towards

\textsuperscript{107} G Angell Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 270.

\textsuperscript{108} J H Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 164.


the victims there. The Mawkhar Presbyterian Church choir organised a concert for fund raising for the flood victims of Sylhet and Cachar. In 1964 (and 1971), when the refugees came from East Pakistan, the Christians extended much help to them.

The children and youth of Laitkynsew under the Christian Endeavour Society organised a committee called The Sunshine Committee which was responsible for visiting the afflicted and the sick in the society. The Jowai youth started an association for the hospital fund. It was observed that as soon as the decision for the construction of the hospital had materialised, hundreds of people- Christians and non-Christians came forward voluntarily, to dig the foundation ground of the building.

Under P C Khongwir, another project was started for rural upliftment in the field of agriculture. Similarly, B M Pugh, through his foresightedness, was able to work through the Union Christian College, by making it an instrument for the upliftment of the rural areas. Being also a specialist in agriculture, he enlisted the help of experts in the field of agriculture like Milton E Windham, who later became an agricultural advisor for the whole of north-eastern region. The World Neighbours Inc., USA, also made substantial contributions to the agricultural programme of the College.

U Rai Bahadur Rai Singh donated a significant amount of money for the setting up of a scholarship fund. Besides, he had also contributed a lot of his wealth towards the afflicted and evangelistic works.

111 G Angell Jones, op. cit., p. 223.
In 1909, the temperance awareness was started by Ellen Hughes and since 1921, women began campaigning against the ill effect of alcohol and drugs.\textsuperscript{118} However, people like Liar Sirdar, had taken precautionary steps against distilling and consumption of alcohol at\textsuperscript{119} Mawdem. U Dorsan tried to change the drinking habits of the people by teaching the people to prepare a healthy drink of rice-water\textsuperscript{120} as a substitution of the local alcohol.

\textbf{Ka Jingiaseng Kynthei (Women’s Wing of the Church):}

Women were also organising themselves into different Jingiaseng Kynthei or women’s wings of the church. The earliest instance of the Jingiaseng Kynthei was the one held at Nongsawlia, under the leadership of Mrs. Roberts, the wife of Dr. John Roberts. In 1899 at the Shillong-Mawlai Presbytery at Umsaitjain there were about 300 women who attended the meeting of the Jingiaseng Kynthei.\textsuperscript{121} Although these branches were originally instituted to work for the development of church related activities only among fellow women,\textsuperscript{122} they were, however not confined only to such spheres. Women were actively taking part in the management of Khawkham collection. Through their outstanding efforts, they were able to gather handsome amounts of money which supported different primary schools in the Khasi-Jaintia Hills. In 1961, more than 300 schools were efficiently managed by Khawkham fund.\textsuperscript{123}

In addition to their temperance movement, women also organised Ka Seng Sang Kiad for restricting the production and consumption of alcohol. In November, 1967, under Kong T Shullai, they called together various leading men and women of the society to deliberate on the menace of rampant sale and intake of liquor. They urged upon the people to abstain from drinking alcohol and at the

\begin{itemize}
  \item J F Jyrwa, \textit{The Wondrous Works of God}, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 93.
  \item Ka History Lyngkot ki Pastor ba la Khlad noh Jong Ka Balang Presbyterian ha Ri Khasi-Jaintia (1897-1997), \textit{op. cit.}, p. 25.
  \item J H Morris, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 163-164.
  \item G Angell Jones, \textit{op. cit}, pp. 87-88.
  \item Constitution of the Presbyterian Church of North East India, p. 28.
  \item J F Jyrwa, \textit{The Wondrous Works of God}, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 93.
\end{itemize}
same time encouraged the youth to spread awareness on the hazardous effect of such consumption. Women were also contributing towards raising funds for hospitals donations, fetes and concerts. In 1967, the Jingiaseng Kynthei started the hospital fund and in that year they donated Rs. 46,518 towards that fund.

Miss A W Thomas and staff of Shillong Girls’ High School

However, though women were contributing much to the church and society, they were not being given leading roles as far as the hierarchical positions in the church are concerned. According to Prechard Basaiawmoit, a church minister:

“Our church is very male-heavy as far as the ministry goes, but in other ways women play an important part. The women’s wing is semi-autonomous body with its own programme. They raise funds for the hospitals in Shillong and Jowai, organise the temperance movement and run the Bible Society and evangelistic committees. But if they are going to be more involved in the ministry, and I hope they are, they are going to have to campaign for it.”

Thus women were relegated outside the domain of the ordained ministry. Their work in the church was confined mostly to raise funds for the male-

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125 Quoted in Nigel Jenkins, op. cit., p. 278.
governed institutions\textsuperscript{126} and their authority and creativity was expressed only in their own Jingiaseng Kynthei.

The Role of the Local Community Leaders:

In the spread and consolidation of Christianity in the Khasi-Jaintia Hills, the important part played by the leading local community members like the syiem, doloi, sirdar, lyngdoh, and other members of their families cannot be left out. In many cases, their warm reception of missionary work in the field of education, health care and other services had largely helped in opening up the different corners of the hills to Christianity. Moreover, because of their social position, they were able to exert an influential amount of power to direct their people towards missionary enterprises.

Chiefs and other traditional administrative heads and priests along with their family members, contributed significantly to the spread of Christianity when they accepted it. Their conversion stood as an example for their subjects to follow henceforth. In 1913, Ron Sing, Syiem of Mylliem, became a Christian.\textsuperscript{127} When the chief accepted the new religion, there was a considerable effect on the people because his action served as a source of encouragement to them. Christians constituted the largest number of the total population in his hima or territory in comparison to other chiefs’ territories.\textsuperscript{128}

Similarly, the conversion of U Kine Sing, Syiem of Khadsawphra, along with his family on 20\textsuperscript{th} August 1882,\textsuperscript{129} was instrumental in the spread of Christianity in the western part of the Khasi Hills. In fact, he was the founder of the Mairang Church. Apart from being a chief, he was also a deacon of the


\textsuperscript{127} Nalini Natarajan, op. cit., p. 69.

\textsuperscript{128} G Angell Jones, op. cit, p. 173.

church. His tireless zeal in evangelisation and the spread of education resulted in the expansion of Christianity in the different villages.\textsuperscript{130}

In the year 1902, Chundro Singh Syiem, the chief of Cherrapunjee, became a Christian. He highly praised the missionaries for their evangelical works as well as their humanitarian services.\textsuperscript{131} U Pyrba Sing, \textit{Syiem} of Nongspung, too became a convert in 1886.\textsuperscript{132}

Among the other notable heirs to \textit{syiemship}, one cannot, but appreciate at the self sacrificing action of \textit{U} Shemuel, the rightful successor to the Nongkrem \textit{Hima}, who forfeited his right to the honourable position. He lost his claim to the rich revenue returns of the \textit{syiemship}. He later worked as a teacher at Malki.\textsuperscript{133} In retrospect, one cannot but marvel at the sacrifice of individuals like him, who had to relinquish their high administrative ranks because they wanted to be Christians. \textit{U} Suna also faced the same fate when he was not chosen as \textit{Syiem} of Nongstoin because he had already become a Christian\textsuperscript{134} at that time. The case of \textit{U} Borsing, the rightful successor to the Cherrapunjee \textit{syiemship} had been mentioned in the previous chapters. He gave up his position because of his conversion to Christianity.

There were also other officials of the chiefs and their family members who were prepared to surrender their important roles in the affairs of their villages and their territories in order to serve the church. The first converts in Nongkrem were members of the \textit{syiem's} family- his nieces, \textit{Ka} Painkiri and \textit{Ka} Rupamai. Even though the chief had shown much hostility towards the missionaries,\textsuperscript{135} these two persons bravely cast their lot with their Christian friends.

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{130} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 22-23.
\item \textsuperscript{131} G Angell Jones, \textit{op. cit.} p. 99-100.
\item \textsuperscript{132} L M Lyngdoh, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 21.
\item \textsuperscript{133} J H Morris, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 199.
\item \textsuperscript{134} D Herbert, \textit{Succession to Siemships in the Khasi States}, Directorate of Arts and Culture, 1991(Reprint), p. 103.
\item \textsuperscript{135} J H Morris, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 176.
\end{itemize}
Ka Ormai Syiem, the mother of the Syiem of Nongkhlaw, was a popular personality in the society. She worked diligently to spread the message of her new faith and also did many charitable acts among the people. Ka Pletimai, sister of the Syiem of Khyrim became a Christian in 1927. She turned out to be a leading figure in her church and the other neighbouring churches. She was regarded as “Ka Kmie” or the mother of the church in that area.

Besides these converts there were also those who gave a lot of support to the mission and extended their help, especially in the field of education in their individual and official capacities. For instance, the Doloi of Nartiang welcomed the proposal of the missionaries to set up a school in the village. U Kpa Ka Dura, was a myntri or an administrative official in a hima, was a supporter of the Christians and tried his best to protect them from many false accusations that they were charged with. Thus he stood to lose much of the respect of the people by his decisions to side with the Christians.

Opposition to Christian missionaries started to dwindle when these people began to show a friendly attitude towards them. Another instance was seen when the Lyngdoh of Mawphlang allowed the construction of a school within the village. At the same time there were also other local administrative leaders like the wahadadar or the chief of Shella, the doloi, lyngdoh and basan, who were ready to accept the mission works in the field of education.

Music:

Ever since the missionaries introduced the tonic sol-fa notation, church music started to gain an important place in the worship services. A number of young men passed the intermediate examination of the Tonic Sol-fa College,

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137 D Ropmay(ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 41-42.


140 Ibid., p. 116.
while quite a large number have passed the lower examination.\textsuperscript{141} In 1898, the Assembly set up the Komiti Rwai or Music Committee. The members were Babu Shai Rabuh, Babu Sorkin, Babu Mania, Babu Joseph, Babu Seton Roy, Babu Nissor Singh, Rev. R Jones, Dr. E Williams. The Assembly also agreed to print out some songs along with notations. This committee in the decades ahead was also responsible for bringing out a Khasi hymn book, \textit{Ka Kot Jingrwai Centenary}.\textsuperscript{142}

Lower Examinations were conducted in tonic sol-fa, staff, general musicianship theory, solo singing, pianoforte, and organ. The tonic sol-fa college also gave diploma certificates to those who had talent in music composition. In order to get this certificate candidates had to appear in the examinations on subjects like Harmony Counterpoint, musical Theory and Form, Theory of Teaching and Orchestration.\textsuperscript{143}

Translations of western hymns were started by the missionaries followed by the local hymnologists where the hymns were sung in their original tunes.\textsuperscript{144} Wilson Reade was a prolific writer of hymns that continue to be favourites in church services.\textsuperscript{145} Hymnologists like Siang Blah, Larsing Khongwir, Soso Tham and others had also important hymn translators who had contributed their share to the Khasi hymn book. Indigenous music, however, was not brought into the mainstream of Christian worship\textsuperscript{146} and western hymns and tunes largely dominated.

In studying the role of the church leaders in the Khasi-Jaintia Hills, we see that they had immensely contributed towards many church works as well as

\textsuperscript{141} J F Jyrwa, \textit{Reports of the Foreign Mission of the Presbyterian Church of Wales on Khasi-Jaintia Hills, 1864 to 1899}, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 391.

\textsuperscript{142} D Ropmay (ed.), \textit{op. cit.}, p. 132.


\textsuperscript{144} Hamlet Bareh, \textit{The Art History of Meghalaya}, Agam Kala Prakashan, Delhi, 1991, p. 174.

\textsuperscript{145} J N Choudhury, \textit{The Khasi Canvas}, Published by the Author, Shillong, n.d. (Second Reprint), p. 435.

the society. However, we find that the people were not prepared to take up the reins of complete self governance and self support. Partly, the reason for this was due to the presence of the missionaries who were still actively supervising them. Secondly, the people still needed such support, especially, in the area of health care. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the Home Mission was working hard on self propagation of Christianity. Other evangelists had also endeavoured towards the same goal. The people were also able to support many schools through Khaw Kham fund, Home Mission fund and other financial donations. Besides, they were also able to raise money for other activities as well. However in the 1930s and 1940s certain developments\textsuperscript{147} took place and the realisation for self governance was imminent.

\textsuperscript{147} These will be discussed in the Chapter V.