CHAPTER 111
The War Khasi society is based on the concept of Ka Khein Kur Khein Kha or the kinship structure. It is the source and the binding force of the people.

The War Khasi society makes a distinction between the matrilineal kinship group and the patrilineal kinship group as the Kur or clan and Kha or patrilineal kin.

The concept of Kur is an expression of the underlying kinship system, among the War, it is necessary to find out how the clan is organised. Being a matrilineal society, the War Khasis trace their descent from an ancestress or Kyiaw (grandmother) who is also described as Ka Iawbei Tymmen (grandmother of the root of the clan). The descendants of Ka Iawbei Tymmen are called Shikur or one clan and all the descendants of one great grandmother are described as Shi Kpoh or Lineage. Nakane (1961) has explained the nature of the Kpoh as a group of matrilineal kin usually confined to one domestic family or group of households linked by direct extension of the main household.

Among the Wars, the kinship bonds through the female show that their social structure stresses on the matrilineal solidarity, which is reinforced by the religious association of Ka iing seng or the foundation house and thus the religious sanctity which is attached to Ka iing seng reinforces the primary link of the matrilineal kinship. The customaty rules guide the members regarding the expectation and responsibilities they have about his/her Kur or clan and to his/her Kha or patrilineal kin. Therefore a War Khasi is always a member of a certain
Kur and has his/her own Kha. Among them, a distinction is made between the matrilineal and patrilineal kinship group. Diagram 1 below show the Kur and Kha among the War Khasi.

Diagram Kur or matrilineal kin and the Kha patrilineal kin.

Among the War khasi, they have a concept called Tingkur, which basically means a group of phratry clans such as the Lyngdoh Mawphlang which consist of Thawmuit, Lyngwa, Lyngdoh Nonglait as phratry clans. Members of these clans are considered as cognates.

Among the War Khasis, descent being traced only through the mother, both male and female children identify themselves with their mother's descent group. A Khasi saying goes like this: Long jait ṇa ka kmie, long rynienq na U kpa bad ka ktien U 'ni U kong ka dei ka ain. This means that they derive surname
from the mother, physical form from the father, and the word of
the maternal uncle is the law. This signifies the importance of
the mother, father and maternal uncle in founding their kinship
structure.

In the War Khasi society a man occupies two distinct
structural roles, each contra-indicative of the other. On the
one hand, as a maternal uncle or as a member of the jing or
family and the kpoh or lineage as shi kur or of the same clan
of his sister he is the main functionary for all ritual purpo­
ses, and also the jural manager of her property. On the other
hand, the same man, as husband of his wife, is a partner in her
socio-economic activities and generational continuity to the
domestic group of his wife, which is also inhabited by his
children though the husband has no jural authority over the
ancestral property of his wife. He, however, holds considerable
managerial authority over the property owned jointly by the
husband and wife.

According to the degree of kinship relationship the War
Khasis have primary, secondary and tertiary kin, although kin­
ship can be calculated to the nth degree. Primary kins are
those who are directly related to ego through the family of
orientation, e.g., ego's mother is ego's primary consanguineous
kin and ego's wife is one's primary affinal kin. Any kin rela­
ted to ego through primary kin are secondary kin, e.g., ego's
mother's sister. Tertiary kin are secondary kin of of one's
primary kin and the primary kin of one's secondary kin.

Among the Wars, the first bond arising out of socially
and legally defined marital relationship is called Ki kha ki
man or affinal relationship. The second type of bond is based on blood ties. It is called ki Kur ki jait or consanguinous relationship. The concept of kinship is so powerful among the Wars that it is regarded as incorrect to address any individual by his/her personal name. Members are addressed by the appropriate kinship term according to the relationship which is known as 'teknonymy' in anthropology.

The War Khasi kinship terminology does not show the structural significance of the marriage rules except for the basic distinction between one's own matrilineal kin or Kur and the one's patrilineal kin or kha. This distribution serves to enforce the exogamous rule.

The War Khasis have both the descriptive and classification systems of kinship terminology. Among them all members belonging to one clan are called ki kur and relatives by marriage from the father's side are ki kha. Tnga means spouse, the term kmei or mei is used both for mother and for mother's sisters and the term kpa or pa for father as well as for mother's sister's husband and also for father's sister's husband. Children of the same parents are shipara Trai. Kyiaw used respectively for mother-in-law and Kthaw for father in law, Pyrsa kurim is a term applied for both son and daughter-in-law. Mother's mother is termed as Meirad which is differentiated from father's mother which is Meikha, though the grandfathers on both sides are addressed as parad.

The term bakha is applied to both matrilateral and patrilateral cross-cousin. For instance, ka para kur is mother's sister's daughters. In the child's generation the matrilineal
nephew and niece are termed Pyrsa as well as Khun, kynum means the brother's sister's husband as well as the wife's brother and Kynsi is a term for the wife's sister's and sister's husband. Kni is the most important kinship term among the War Khasi. It designates the maternal uncle. Diagram 2, below shows the kinship terminology among the War Khasi.

Diagram 2.

Kinship Terminologies among the War Khasi.
The Wars are divided into a number of exogamous clans which trace their descent from some ancestress. Some clans among the War bear the name of some animal like the monkey clan or Shrieh and its members abstain from killing or eating it. There are many clans common between the War Khasi and the other Khasi groups such as the Dkhar, the Deingdoh, the Kharkongor, the Nongrum and the Lyngdoh. The War Khasis have no preference for any clan with regard to matrimonial alliance. Marriage is prohibited between the members who have descended from a core clan. About the Khasi marriage, Gurdon writes:

Marriage with the daughter of a father's sister is not allowed during the lifetime of the father, but after the latter's death there is no religious ban, although such unions are looked upon with disfavour by the Khasi. In the War country, however such marriages are totally prohibited. (1967: 78)

The main notion behind the aversion to mother's brother's daughter is that mother's brother being of the same family and clan, he is considered to be a consanguine.

In case taboo is strictly followed by the War Khasi as by the KhynrIAM Khasi. They believed that incestuous marriage brings death, and children born out of such union may be deformed or physically handicapped. Any person committing incest is looked down upon by the society and counted out of the clan (Tait kur). Based on the category of relationship, the War Khasis share the same term with the KhynrIAM Khasi for incest, and this is ka sangiap sangim which prohibits sexual relationship between primary kins—between parents and children, between
siblings and between members of the same clan. ka sang Sohpet-kha means incest between siblings of the same father but different mothers and also children of ago's brother up to three generation; Ka sang syngkenkha is prohibition of marriage with one's aunt from the paternal side, i.e., those classified as the father's sisters, Ka sang synrih is a taboo on exchange of both men and women between two families and this is called as Ai khaw kylliang or return of the bread earner (cited in Chatto-padhyay, 1985). From the exchange theory prospective, ka sang synrih does not allow exchange of men as well as women between two families. Only when a person of one family marries with a member of the opposite sex of another family, then it is allowed, provided that the elder marries the elder and the youngest marries the youngest. This can be represented in the diagram below:

![Diagram of marriage relations between two families]

Diagram 3.
Marriage relations between two families.
From the diagram above, d from family A can marry h of family B. According to the principle of sex, c from family A cannot marry f of the family B. According to the principle of seniority b of family A is allowed to marry e of family B because b is the elder of d as e is the elder of h but the marriage between family A and h of family B is a taboo because a is the eldest and h is the youngest. Hence, this breaches the principle of seniority, which is prohibited.

The rule of residence after marriage is matrilocal. After marriage, the husband comes to live with his wife in his mother-in-law's house. But after a year or so they construct a separate house in the same or nearby compound and shift there, while the youngest daughter who gets the parental house, lives with her husband and children in her parent's house.

Thus, among the War Khasis, kinship plays an important role and is an indispensable aspect of their social and cultural life. It enables man to have his own identity and bring about social solidarity. Economics, political, religious and social aspects are integrated through kin relationship.
References:

