Th« thesis presented is a study of the policy and pattern of British administration in Meghalaya. The choice of the word Meghalaya has been done to identify the Garo, Khasi and Daintia districts under British administration with the state they presently comprise. These districts were the first hill areas in north-east India to come under British administration due to their proximity with Bengal. Following the imposition of British rule over these three hills they were first administered by the Bengal Government till 1874, following which they were tagged on to the Assam administration where they remained (but for a few years between 1905 and 19140 till the state of Meghalaya was created in 1972.

It is this land, its people and the government under British colonial administration that is the subject of this thesis. The investigation attempts to give a complete monograph of the policy and pattern of British administration in these hills as no attempt has hitherto been made on this subject. No doubt some pioneering works in this regard have been done but they were part of broader themes. Mention may here be made to H.K. Barpujari's three volume Problem of the Hill Tribes North-East Frontier; J.B. Bhattacharjee's The Garos and the English; M.S. Anqma's History and Culture of the Earos; P.N. Dutta's Impact of the West on Khasis and Jaintias and H. Bareh's History and Culture of the Khasi People, apart from few other works and papers published in learned journals. None of these, however, bring out the pattern of administration introduced and elaborated by the British, or their policy behind such a pattern and to what extent this pattern served the colonial interest.

The object of the thesis is to trace how and why the British imposed their rule, what policy guided the administration, the pattern that was laid down and developed, British obligation towards these and other hill tribes in north-east India, the effects British administration had on the traditional political and administrative structure, the impact of British rule on the traditional institutions of the Khasis, Jaintias and Garos and the legacy British administration left behind for the Indian Government, The main thrust of the
research is covered between Chapter II and VII, Chapter VIII, the Epilogue takes the history from the transfer of power from the British to the integration of these hills into the Indian Republic and the search for a separate identity that took shape in the birth of Meghalaya. As a prelude to all this discussion, Chapter I "The Pre-Colonial Administrative System" briefly states the social, economic and political systems that existed in these hills prior to British rule.

Effort has been made to cover as wide a spectrum of sources as possible. The materials used in the thesis are principally the archival records in the National Archives of India, New Delhi; the State Archives, Government of West Bengal, Calcutta; the Assam Secretariat Records Office, Shillong (now shifted to Gauhati); the India Office Records, London; the Scottish Records Office, Edinburgh and at Nottingham University Library. These archival material are supplemented by administrative reports, gazettes and reports of particular enquiries and commissions. Very useful were the various Parliamentary Papers, House of Commons Proceedings; the Indian Constituent Assembly Debates and Despatches to and from India, Biographies and autobiographies added interesting information while newspapers in English and Khasi filled in the gaps where no other source was available. Journals that have been referred to in the thesis are especially useful not merely for corroborating the records but often gave information not found elsewhere. A large number of monographs are referred to, to provide continuity where primary material had not been consulted, to refute a statement or to take support from other writers.

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