PROFILE OF HIMA SHYLLONG

It is but half complete to study the evolution of any type of music without considering the background of the concerned society. This chapter is therefore an attempt to wipe out the sense of futility in the quest of researching Khasi Music and the classical content. It digs out the very antiquity of the Khasi race and the music prevalent in the society. It certainly gives the background to the type of music which contains the classical content in it. In this context, the growth of Khasi Music is considered to be as old and antique as the race itself. The music which evolved from Hima Shyllong is definitely old and tenable. Hima Shyllong* is considered to be one of the oldest native states. The music that developed from this Hima (Native State) has attained uniqueness and uniformity in terms of classification and authenticity for

* There is no English equivalent for the word Hima. It can be referred to as “native state”. In Khasi polity, the final shape of state formation process takes place with the foundation of the Hima. “Native state” is however not to be misunderstood in the context of the modern state system. It rather existed from before till today on the basis of an mutual agreement to be under one common administration. Some writers have referred to Hima as “kingdom” and Shyllong as “king” which is indeed very misleading. Shyllong actually stands for Shillong. The use of the alphabet “y” indicates the local connotation assigned to it.
over a period of decades and centuries together. This can further be explained by the fact that the Khasi race had existed for many years past and its music has developed into different stages. Speaking of the term Khasi, Edwin T. Atkinson observes that the Khasi people are the descendants of the famous Khasa tribe of pre-historic age. He further adds that the Khasa Tribes are often described as Khasia, a word exactly the same with which the inhabitants of the Khasi hills are generally called over. It may not be wrong to say that the Khasi race is very old. Pratima Choudhury asserts,

> The word Khasa is often found in different writings to denote a tribe inhabiting in the Himalayan mountainous region including the eastern most part of the ranges specially mentioning the name of Kamarupa. This nomenclation of the aforesaid tribe mainly ‘Khasa’ is obviously very much similar to the word ‘Khasi’, the inhabitants of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills.

She further adds that in Sanskrit literature the tribal people are often described by the name “Kirata”, “Mlechcha”, “Kimpurusa,” etc. and

2. Ibid., p 439.
sometimes they were described specifically by the tribe-names like “Khasa”, “Paundra” and so on.4

In this light again, Hima Shyllong as one of the oldest native states could have had a lot of contact with the adjoining areas. As Lakshmi Devi writes,

From the chronicles of the Ahoms it appears that the Ahom government had relations with the state of Khyrim, which like those with the state of Jayantia, were mainly of commercial nature. Khyrim is still one of the Khasi states ruled by a Siem, who is called a Raja by the plains people. The Siem of Khyrim resides at Nokshee5

H. Lyngdoh is of the opinion that the native rulers of the Shyllong native state were often referred to as Ki Syiem Khynriam by the Syiems of Hima Sutnga. The plains people have also referred to them as Khairam or Khyrim. He asserts that the two most prominent Khasi rulers during the period of 1563 A.D., were the Syiems of Hima Sutnga and Hima Khyrim

4. Ibid., p. 13.
*  “Nokshee” is “Nongkseh”. It may be noted that the first capital of Hima Shyllong was Nongkseh. Hence the reference to Khyrim was actually Hima Shyllong, but since the Syiems of Hima Shyllong were also denoted as “Ki Syiem Khynriam”, the word Khairam or Khyrim has been used.
or Hima Shyllong. In the annals of the Koch King Naranarayana, most notably in the Bansabali reference is made to Chilarai, the brother of the Koch king who is alleged to have defeated and slain the Syiem of Sutnga. In this connection, J.N. Choudhury mentions that even the Syiem of Khyrim or Hima Shyllong at this time also submitted and undertook to pay an annual tribute to Narnarayana at 15 thousand silver coins, 9 hundred gold coins, 50 horses and 30 elephants. The Syiem of Khyrim was also prohibited to mint coins in his own name.

Against this background, it is indeed pertinent to delve into the profile of Hima Shyllong (Shyllong Native State) to understand its structure and foundation. The Hima or native state had been in existence from before till today within the Khasi-Jaintia Hills. Each Hima has its own native chief or native ruler called Syiem. The native states are composed of the administrative units called the Raid which are either under the Lyngdoh Raid or the Syiem Raid. The concept of the Lyngdoh, the Basan and the Syiem Raid goes back to the period of "non-Syiemship Organisation". This was a period of time before the evolution of Syiemship had taken place. At the level of the Raid, it is the Lyngdoh or the Syiem Raid who looks after the administration. On a broader analysis, it may be said that Lyngdoh denotes those who are

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in charge of Ka Niarm (Religion). The Raid is composed of several villages which are under local headmen called Tymmen Shnong. As Helen Giri observes,

First, as the villages grew in size and population, the people found it necessary to be under one common administration. Therefore, the *Hima* (Native State) gradually evolved out of this necessity with the *Syiem* (Native Ruler) as a guide and protector of his people. It is very clear that the evolution of Syiemship and the *Hima* began from the village level, nay, it goes downward to the foundation of *Ka Kur* (clan) which is the nucleus of all political development. In brief, the clan, the family and hearth is the foundation of a village which in turn evolves as a *Raid* (political unit) and ultimately into a *Hima* (Native State). This can be illustrated as follows:

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Hima
   (Native State with the Syiem)
   
Ki Raid
   (Administrative Units with the Lyngdoh Raid or the Syiem Raid)
   
Ki Shnong
   (Villages with the Tymmen Shnong)
   
Ka Kur
   (Clan)
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It is with this concept that the role of the Bakhraw, which literally means 'Elder', is very significant. The Bakhraw emerged from the Kur (Clan). He is a representative of Ka Kur Ka Jait Bakhraw (Clan or family of Repute). The Bakhraw (Elder) is considered as the "Syiem-maker" and the "makers" of the Hima (Native State). Yet, he is always guided by the principles of democratic spirit. In a word, he cannot arrive at any decision alone although his role in the Hima is crucial. In fine, all policy matters are decided by the Dorbar Hima (native state Durbar).

Traditions have it that the first Syiem who figured in the annals of the Khasi-Jaintia Hills were the Syiems of Madur Maskut or the Malngiang Syiems, the Syiems of Shyllong (Native Rulers of Hima Shyllong) and the Syiem Synteng or the Syiems of Sutnga. These Jaid Syiem* have their own story to tell of their origin based on Khasi tradition. Almost all Khasi writers corroborate to the popular beliefs of their descent. In the first instance, Sutnga, Madhur-Maskut and Shyllong regarded their Syiems as Ki Syiem Ki Blei (Divine Syiem). In other words, till today, there is a belief that they have a divine origin. Sutnga is believed to have come out of Ka Li Dohkha and U Luh Ryndi. Ka Li Dohkha was a fish from Umwi water which later turned into a human

*This implies the clan name.
form and married U Luh Ryndi. The native rulers of Madur Maskut or Malngiang Syiems are believed to have come out from the pig and one of their native rulers U Kyllong Raja Syiem has been called U Syiem Sait Snier (The Syiem who washed his intestines). Oral tradition tells that he was killed treacherously by his enemies through a woman, who jilted him and led him to his doom. Since that time, the Sutnga Syiem (Native rulers of Hima Sutnga) conquered the whole of Madur Maskut. On this aspect, Hamlet Bareh writes,

One peculiarity is that Madur Maskhut did not seem to be a Khasi term. Sanskritised as Madhur-Masvut, it meant strong and beautiful. It would appear that it applied to strong fortifications and towers of stockades around it. Moreover the rulers from this dynasty were called Rajahs and not Syiems as official titles.10

Speaking of the Shyllong native state, it is believed that a mermaid called Ka Pah Syntiew (enticed by a flower) is the Root-Ancestress of the Syiem Shyllong (Khyrim and Mylliem clans). She was ‘lured by a flower’ (hence Ka Pah Syntiew) from Ka Krem Marai (Marai Cave) by a man from the Mylliem Ngap Clan, U Sati Mylliem Ngap. It has therefore

been wrongly observed by some writers like Dilip Bhattacharya in his book “Musical Instruments of Tribal India” that the myths of Synteng people of Meghalaya often recall their popular legendary couple U thlen and Ka Pah Syntiew.

There is a popular belief of Ki Laiphew Syiem Ki Khatar Doloi*. Hence, early written records differ one from the other on the number of native states which existed then. W.W. Hunter writes that “there were 19 (nineteen) semi-independent Khasi States or Democracies. These 19 semi-independent Khasi States or Democracies as shown in the Assam Administration Report for 1875-76 are the following:

1. Bhawal or Warbah
2. Cherra or Sohra
3. Sheila
4. Khyrim or Nongkrem
5. Mylim or Mylliem
6. Langrin or Lyngkin

* Laiphew Syiem, means “thirty Syiem”. In Khasi, the term Laiphew also connotes ‘many’, ‘innumerable’ and ‘plenty’. Khatar Doloi implies 12 (twelve) Doloi. In 1835, Jayantia Parganas were tagged to Sylhet district with the British policy of annexation. The Syiem of Sutnga native state, who also ruled over the plains area of Jayantia Parganas refused to be Syiem over the hills subjects alone on the ground that the British had “snatched away his rice-bowl”. He retired with a pension of Rs.500/- per month. Jaintia Hills became a British territory. However, the Doloi remained as administrative heads. The British Order limiting the authority of the Doloi was passed in 1841 and triennial elections were directed in 1850. The Land of the 12 Doloi signifies the twelve administrative units.
7. Maharam
8. Maoyang or Mao-iong
9. Maosynram
10. Malai-Sohmat or Malai Chamat
11. Mariao
12. Nobosophoh or Nongsohphoh
13. Nongklaq
14. Nongspung
15. Nongstain
16. Rambrai
17. Jiranq
18. Dwara Nonglyrmen
19. Mao-Don.\textsuperscript{11}

Likewise, Helen Giri observes that on the eve of India’s Independence there were about 25 (twenty-five) Khasi native states ruled by Syiem, Wahadadars, Lyngdohs and Sirdars which are in treaty relationship with the British Crown.\textsuperscript{12} The number of native states might have increased from time to time, but the fact remains that they were in existence and

still exist even today. This can be further substantiated by the fact that many scholars have written extensively on the structure of the social and polity formations in the Khasi-Janitia Hills. Surajit Sinha observes,

The standard constitutional units of tribal society make up a progressively inclusive series of groups: families are joined in local lineages, lineages in village communities, villages in regional confederacies; the latter making up the tribe or ‘people’. They may form a segmentary hierarchy. A tribe tends to remain egalitarian in that no one of the families is politically superior or more powerful in hereditary rank than any other.13

To go back to the profile of the Shy/long native state, with the myths and legends surrounding it, we are drawn towards the other oral sources, told and retold over the years. These oral sources have formed one of the most prominent sources which have helped in the construction of the history of the Shyllong native state. The Shyllong native state has a story and history of its own based on myths and legends. The origin of the word “Shyllong” has been attributed to myths and legends by many writers. E.W. Chyne14 observes that according to a legend from War Sheilla, there lived a young beautiful girl named Lir

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at a place called Bisi which is near Mylliem. Lir was a lazy girl and only loved to roam about in the fields and the sloping hills to while away her time. One day as she was lying on one of the rocks near River Umiew, a leaf called U Dieng Sla Kdait pierced her rectum. Lir was unaware of this and came home. From that day onwards, she felt something strange in her. Her relatives realized that she was pregnant. They were overwhelmed with shame because of the stigma Lir had brought to the family. Tired and disgraced, Lir left her home and wandered far away from her kith and kin and settled alone in a place called Rngi Shyllong. It was here that she gave birth to a son who died soon after. She buried him in the garden and planted pumpkin seed on top of it. Lir began to lead a lonely life at this place by making a small hut for herself and ploughing the fields for cultivation. One particular night as she was lying in her hut, Lir heard a strange noise outside which frightened her. She went outside her hut and saw a handsome young lad tending her fields and sowing the seeds. Afraid and trembling, she asked him who he was and why he had come to take away her fields. The lad replied that he was her son and that his father was U Pyrthat (Lightning). He also asked her to go to the village and call all her relatives and tell them about him. When the relatives and the villagers came, they were amazed at this divine spectacle. They asked who he was; one of them
said U Blei Uba Shu Long*. The young lad further said that henceforth, he shall be their guide, their protector from misfortune and danger, if they prayed and invoked his name. People gradually began to call him U’Lei Shu Long who was eventually called U’Lei Shyllong.** Till today we find U Lum Shyllong (Shillong Peak) situated about 9 (nine) kilometers south of Shillong city. Almost all the Khasi writers corroborate the belief that U Lei Shyllong is the father of Ka Pah Syntiew, the Root-Abncnestress of the Syiem Shyllong clan. The affinity between U Lum Shyllong and the foundation of Hima Shyllong has also been referred to by R.T. Rymbai, another renowned local writer. According to him U Lum Shyllong (Shillong Peak) is the abode of U’Lei Shyllong. He further asserts,

U Lum Shyllong is the highest peak in Meghalaya and is held sacred being the source of the nine revered rivers of Khasi Hills known as Ki Khyndai Umdih, Khyndai Umtong (the nine living waters).15


* Blei is ‘God’, Uba Shu Long means who has come into existence “naturally” or “by oneself”.
** Lei or Blei means ‘God’. Shyllong has been used to denote the place from where this human transfiguration had taken place. U’Lei Shyllong here can be described as one of the attributes of God in the traditional religious practices of the Khasis.
The nine revered waters from *U Lum Shyllong* (Shillong Peak) are *Um Shyllong* which originates from Forest Sang Mein, and flows to Umdingpun to Elephant Falls; *UmJasal* which originates from Riat Tynrah, and flows through Law Sohtun to meet Umshyrpi; *UmShyrpi* which originates from Wah Dienglieng, and flows through Malki and Laban, *Um Dienglieng* which originates from Lawjynriew, and flows to Umkaliar; *Umkhen* which originates from the east of Laitkor; *Umngot* which originates from Kynton U Mon, and flows to Pammura and Mawryngkneng; *Umiew* which originates from Pamnakrai, and flows through Umphrup to meet Umtynngngar; *Um long Sylem* which originates from the side of *U Lum Shyllong*, and flows to Pasil to meet Mawsawa Madan lling Syiem; it also meets Wah Umjlieng and Wah Umiew to become Umiam Mawphlang; *Umjlieng* which originates from the side of *U Lum Shyllong* near Mawkhan, and flows through Lyngkien and Baniun and meets Wah Umiew.

Referring to the legend of *U 'Lei Shyllong* Henry D. Ropmay writes,

The name of that wonderful youth was *U Shyllong* (Shu-long) which means one who grows naturally
or one who comes in existence by himself. Ever
since that time, the name Shyllong or Shillong as
we spell it today, has been a great and awful
name, a name to conjure with.16

Indeed in this context, some local writers like Shortima Syiem, have
linked this belief with the fact that U Sati Myliemngap had used
pumpkin flowers to entice Ka Pah Syntiew. The analogy drawn from the
pumpkin seed sown by Lir and the pumpkin flowers used by U Sati
Myliemngap explains the mythical background of the Shyllong native
state. It may be unthinkable that a young girl thought to be a mermaid
could be the daughter of the Shillong peak; but all this transfiguration
was something God had pre-destined. It is not surprising then that this
legend is popular in War Shella because as E.W. Chyne asserts it in the
same book that the War Shellas have been anointed by the Syiems of
Hima Shyllong. In fact, this story which began as a myth has become a
popular belief among the Khasi people. The Khasis believe in the
saying ba la phah hi da u Blei (sent by God) and the events or
spectacles are therefore no longer questionable. Suffice to speak
about U 'Lei Shyllong, we now turn our attention to the legend of Ka
Pah Syntiew, the Root Ancestress of the Syiem Shyllong clan. H.

16 Henry D. Ropmay, "A Legend of Shillong" from Shillong Centenary Celeration (Souvenir) Ed. Souvenir Sub-Committee,
1976, p.60.
Lyngdoh* writes that *Hima Shyllong* has a divine origin and the Syiem clan of this *Hima* are referred to as *Ki Syiem ki Blei* (Divine Syiem). Their root ancestress is said to have emerged from a cave called *Ka Krem Marai*. Varied narratives have been put forward to explain the origin of *Ka Pah Syntiew*. It is desirable again to refer to the views given by H. Lyngdoh in the same book. He says that young cowherds from the village of *Bisi* used to graze their cattle near the River Umiew, which is situated between *Pamnakrai* and *Nongkrem*. They would often see a beautiful maiden who lived at a cave nearby called *Ka Krem Marai*. They were completely bewildered by the beauty of this maiden who would however disappear into the cave as soon as they tried to go near her. One brave man from the *Mylliemngap* clan decided to catch her by enticing her with a flower. He plucked a bunch of flowers called ‘*Tiew Jalynkteng*’ and went towards the cave. The maiden stretched her hand to get them, but as she did so, the *Mylliemngap* caught her by the hand. He then took her home and reared her up as his own daughter. She was named *Pah Syntiew* which literally means “enticed by a flower”. At the age of twelve, *Ka Pah Syntiew* was given in marriage to *U Kongor Nong jri*. The children of *Ka Pah Syntiew* are


- H. Lyngdoh is a local writer who has painstakingly written extensively on the histories, traditions and philosophy of the Khasi Syiems, Dolois, Lyngdohs, etc. In fact, we can consider him the path-finder in digging out the ancient history of the Khasi race.
called Ki Khun Blei (God's children). Later Ka Pah Syntiew went back to the cave leaving her husband and children. Her children were anointed by the Bakhraws (Elders) to be the Syiem of Hima Shyllong. U Sati Mylliemngap assumed himself as the maternal uncle* and he is also the Lyngskor which literally means the Syiem's deputy. H.: Lyngdoh further adds that Ka Pah Syntiew was probably the daughter of U'Lei Shyllong because they emerged from almost the same area. To strengthen these views, we may also refer to the version of Shortimai Syiem** who propounds that Ka Pah Syntiew emerged not from a cave but from a hill called U Lum Marai. 18 She observes that from U Lum Marai, a young beautiful girl used to come out to play and dance on the rocks by tapping her feet rhythmically. Many people thought of her as a fairy, but one brave man from the Mylliemngap clan was determined to capture her. She writes that he found the Khasi pumpkin flowers in the fields, plucked a bunch of them and tied them with a long stick. He lured the maiden away from inside the cave by a bunch of the Khasi pumpkin flowers. 19 This version of Shortimai Syiem agrees with what E.W. Chyne asserts that Lir planted pumpkin seeds in

19. Ibid., p 9

* The maternal uncle or U Kni has an important role to play within the Khasi society. He has a vital part to play in decision-making as uncle to his nieces and nephews in his mother's clan.
** Shortimai Syiem is the grand-mother of the present Syiem of Khymir, Dr. Balajied S. Syiem. She was also the Syiem Sad of the Hima and has written extensively on the evolution of the Shyllong native state.
her courtyard. H. Lyngdoh also contends that Ka Pah Syntiew and U'Lei Shyllong emerged from almost the same areas of Bisi, River Umiew, Rngi Shyllong, Paru Namkrai and Nongkrem. Shortimai Syiem further opines that the Mylliemngap clan has been forbidden to eat pumpkin as a mark of respect for U Sati Mylliemngap who lured the maiden away from the cave. The Rumnong clan* and the Mawroh clan** have also been forbidden to eat pumpkin as they are involved in the religious practices of the Hima. This means that rituals indicate the essence of allegiance and respect to the ancestors and ancestresses.

Till today the Mylliem Ngap clan cannot enter into marriage with the Syiem Shyllong clan (Khyrim and Mylliem).20 Dennis Royse (unpublished thesis "Music and the Nongkrem: The Articulation of Meaning In a Khasi Religious Festival in Meghalaya") wrongly observes that the Syiems of Hima Khyrim alone traced their origin and descent from Ka Pah Syntiew, leaving aside Hima Mylliem which was also part of Hima Shyllong during the pre-colonial period.

_**Ka Pah Syntiew** is said to have taught little children how to sing and dance. Her dance at U Lum Marai and the tapping of her feet has_
introduced to the people the meaning of rhythm. Traditions have it
that the Khasis first learnt the art of the female dance from her.
*Shortimai Syiem* further asserts that the Khasi female dance is symbolic
of the dance of *Ka Pah Syntiew* on the rocks of *U Lum Marai*. It is from
her that the Khasis first derived the art of the female dance. 21

If we turn our attention to the political structure of *Hima Shyllong*,
we will find that it first began to take shape with the emergence of *Ki
Syiem Blei* (Divine Syiem). The children of *Ka Pah Syntiew* were
anointed the first *Syiem* of *Hima Shyllong*. It is said that *Ka Pah Syntiew*
gave birth to three children, two sons and a daughter. *M.P.R. Lyngdoh*
also writes,

> *Ka Pah Syntiew* was given in marriage to a
> young man from *Nongjri* who was a warrior and
> statesman. They lived happily, and she bore
> him two sons and one daughter who grew up
to be strong, healthy and wise. 22

Hamlet Bareh also asserts that *Ka Pah Syntiew* bore two sons and one
daughter. 23 *Shortimai Syiem* is of the opinion that *Ka Pah Syntiew* had
two children, a daughter and a son. 24 When *Ka Pah Syntiew* went back
to the cave, her daughter was anointed the *Syiem* by the

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21 Ibid., p. 21.
Bakhraws at the Dorbar Hima (Native State Durbar) in the presence of the Lyngskor. However, it was soon realized that a woman could not wield the rod of administration. A woman is considered among the Khasis to be Ka Shibor*, while a man is U Khatar Bor.** Hence it was decided at the Dorbar that her brother be anointed Syiem and she would be the Syiem Sad (Syiem Mother). From that time onwards, the concept of Ka Sad Ka Sunon (the seat of sovereignty) began with the emergence of the Syiem Sad. She is the one who takes care of all the preparations of the religious rites and ceremonies of the Hima. Without her, no religious practices can be done. The mother of the ruling Syiem becomes the Syiem Sad, failing her, the eldest sister of the Syiem succeeds, but not the younger sister, since it relates to Ka Niam (Religion) of the Hima. Till today this belief has stayed and has become part of the tradition. Hima Khyrim still retains Ka Niam and the religious music beats even after the bifurcation because Hima Khyrim customarily descends from the eldest sister and Hima Mylliem descends customarily from the younger sister and has retained only the non-religious music beats. On this aspect, R.T. Rymbai observes,

Not long after the occupation of the Khasi Hills by the British the state of Sawkher-Lai Lyngdoh was divided

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* Literally meaning having ‘one power only’.
** Literally meaning having ‘twelve powers’; Khatar means ‘twelve’ and bor is ‘power’.
into two dependent states known as Khyrim and Mylliem. The former is, of course, the parent state. But, like other freaks of history, Shillong became part of Mylliem, not of Khyrim.²⁵

Again, D. Herbert writes,

In the Khyrim State there is a Siem-priestess, called Ka Siem-Sad, the ruling Siems are descended from the Siem-priestesses .............. ......
A Siem-priestess is succeeded by her eldest surviving daughters: failing daughter, by the eldest daughter, of her eldest daughter, failing daughters of her eldest daughter, by the eldest daughter of her second daughter, and so on.²⁶

The son of Ka Pah Syntiew who was anointed Syiem, became the first Syiem of Hima Shyllong. He is known as U Suid nia Long Syiem*. According to H. Lyngdoh, the Mylliemngap clan for some reasons could no longer take care of the Syiem Shyllong clan and handed this responsibility to the Basan Nongkseh from Thangkhiew clan.²⁷ This was also due to the fact that the Mylliemngap clan wanted to institute Syiemship on the line of divine origin and tradition with Ka Pah Syntiew as the Root-Ancestor. Hima Shyllong was created by the amalgamation of the Sawkher-Lai Lyngdoh, a fact which has been

* He is one of the divine attributes invoked at the annual native state religious festival of Khyrim till today. He is also considered to be the first Syiem of Hima Shyllong and also the first maternal uncle of the Syiem Shyllong clan.
corroborated by almost all writers. It is this amalgamation which gives
the historical validity to the mythical background of the Hima. Hamlet
Bareh is of the opinion that this could have taken place sometime in
the 14th century A.D.28 It has already been mentioned in the previous
pages that sometime in 1563 A.D., the Shyllong Syiems had a contact
with the Koch rulers which strengthens the historical validity. According
to H. Lyngdoh, this amalgamation was the foundation of the Shyllong
native state itself and he does not refer to a particular year or date.29
The Sawkher-Lai Lyngdoh connotes the four Basan clans and three
Lyngdoh clans respectively, that is, the four Raids having its own Basan
and the three Raids having its own Lyngdoh respectively. H. Lyngdoh
further adds that Raid Sawkher includes Nongkseh, Nongumlong, Swer
and Synrem or Mawlieh Mawshai; it also includes the San Shnong (five
villages) of Marbisu, Sadew, Markhan, Mawshanlang, Nongbsap, each
having its own Tyumen Shnong or Headman. The representatives to
the Dorbar Hima from these Raids are Basan Nongkseh from
Thangkhew clan, Basan Synrem, the Myntri of Marbisu from Sun clan,
the Myntri of Sadew from Pathaw clan, the Myntri of Markhan from
Rapsang clan, the Myntri of Mawshanlang from Majaw clan and the

Lyngdoh of Nongbsap from the Nongbsap clan. The men of the five villages (San Shnong) were warriors of great courage among the Sawkher and they were called Khyndai Bah Ryntieh (Nine Bow Wielders). The Lai Lyngdoh Raids include Mylliem, Nongbri and Pongrup or Nongbet and they also include the San Kur (five kurs) that is, Mylliemngap, Sohtun, Kurkalang, Nongkhlaw and Rynjah or Kharkongor. Representatives to the Dorbar Hima from these Raids are the Lyngdoh of Mylliem from Lyngdoh Mylliem clan, the Lyngdoh of Nongbet from the Pongrup clan, the Lyngskor from Mylliemngap clan, the Myntri of Nongkhlaw from the Nongkhlaw clan and the Rynjah Myntri from the Rynjah clan or Kharkongor Myntri from the Kharkongor clan. The Hynniew Raid (Seven Raids) that is, the Sawkher – Lai Lyngdoh and the San Kur San Shnong (five Kurs five villages) which formed the Shyllong native state were also known as Lai Basan (Three Basans) that is the Raids under the three Basans which include the Basan Tyngkong, in charge of Raid Mylliem, Raid Nongkrem and Raid San Kur; the Basan Khrum in charge of Raid Nongkseh, Raid Nongumlong, Raid Synrem or Mawlieh Mawshai and San Shnong (five villages); the Basan Swer in charge of Raid War Khatar Shnong and Khatar Blang. The first capital of Hima Shyllong was at Nongkseh. The Syiems of Hima Shyllong went from Bisi to settle at Nongkseh and also
built the ling Sad (Religious House) there. Religious rites and ceremonies of the Hima were henceforth performed annually at Nongkseh.

Ka Thma Sawkher Lai Lyndoh (The Sawkher – Lai Lyngdoh War) marks a turning point in the re-making and re-organisation of the Shyllong native state. The issues that led to the war were trifle, it was clear that it was a conspiracy to put an end to Syiemship and proclaim the rule of the Basans. Hamlet Bareh refers to it as a “civil war” The major role in the conspiracy was played by the Basans and Bakhraws of Mylliem and Nongkrem, whereupon the conspirators besieged the royal residence at Nongseh and set it to fire. In the heat of the war, the Basan Nongkseh from Thangkhiew clan* and some men of the San Shnong (five villages) managed to rescue and take away a female member of the Syiem clan, Ka Jat Kiri to a place called Nongkhlaw. When the ling Sad (Religious House) was burnt down, the Basan Swer was proclaimed the ruler. On hearing this, the Basan Nongkseh immediately called the Dorbar Hima and brought to its notice that one of the daughters of the Syiem Shyllong clan, Ka Jat Kiri, was still alive. She was in hiding at a place called Rmen near Nongkhlaw. The Basan Nongkseh proclaimed thus, “How can we anoint Ki Syiem Brie” The

30 Hamlet Bareh, Op. cit., p.70}
Non-Divine Syiems) when we still have Ki Syiem Blei (The Divine Syiem)?" Ka Jat Kiri or Ka Jat Rmen, as she was then called was brought back to Nongkseh. She had married the Syiem Khynnah (Junior Syiem) of Hima Khadsaw phra during her stay at Rmen and had four children – U Shon Manik, U Shanrai I, Ka Pein Kiri or Pein Rmen and Ka Pah I. According to Shortimai Syiem, it was not Ka Jat Kiri but Ka Wan Kiri who fled with the Bakhraws to Hima Khadsawphra during the Sawkher-Lai Lyngdoh War. Till date the exact name of the female member of the Syiem Shyllong clan who survived the war has not been identified, but tradition has it that the war took place and the capital was also shifted. It was from that time onwards that other smaller native States emerged which were recognized by the Syiems of Hima Shyllong. The present Syiem of Hima Khyrim, Balajied S. Syiem explains that the burning of the ling Sad at Nongkseh is still recalled with resentment amongst the people within the Hima. Raid Nongkrem today cannot take part in the religious rites and ceremonies of Hima Khyrim. This Raid is also debarred from participating in the Bujai Blang* which means an offering of goats from each Raid of the Hima. Similarly, the Lyngdoh from the Marbaniang clan of Raid Mylliem.

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* Bujai means ‘to give’ and Blang means ‘goat’.
cannot take part in the religious practices at Hima Khyrim because the Bakhraws of this Raid had taken part in the conspiracy. The Syiem further adds that after the bifurcation of Hima Shyllong during the colonial period, the ling Sad built at Nongkrem caught fire, an event which remains shrouded in mystery. The ling Sad was immediately shifted to Smit, a place situated near Nongkrem, and from the 1870's onwards, Ka Sad Ka Sunon of the Hima has remained at Smit.\(^{33}\)

_Hima Shyllong_ was bifurcated during the British period. There is however no exact date of the bifurcation and no official declaration was actually given. Helen Giri observes,

_Bor Manick may be the last Syiem of Shyllong state and the first Syiem of Mylliem state.\(^{34}\)_

_Bor Manick_, the Syiem of Hima Shyllong played a vital role in the Khasi Resistance Movement of 1829 A.D. If the bifurcation took place during his time, the date could be after 1829 A.D. H. Lyngdoh opines that this break-up occurred in 1853 A.D.\(^{35}\) _Hima Shyllong_ was bifurcated into _Hima Khyrim_ and _Hima Mylliem_ under two different Syiemships. As pointed out earlier, _Khyrim_ descends customarily from the eldest sister and she retains the religious rites and practices and the religious music

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\(^{33}\)Interview had with the present Syiem of Khyrim, Dr. Baiapied S. Syiem.


beats till today.* Mylliem descends customarily from the younger sister and has only the non-religious music beats, in a word, it retains the socio-cultural beats. However the historical validity on the formation of the erstwhile Hima Shyllong can be further strengthened by the fact that the two divine pillars signifying Saw Kher and Lai Lyngdoh, still stand today at the ling Sad (Religious House of the Hima) at Smit under Khyrim Syiemship. These pillars are held in high respect till date because they symbolize the historical evolution of the Shyllong Native State. Coming from U Lum Pomblang** and before entering the ling Sad, the musicians will enter first and also play the drum beat called Ka Ksing Rung ling***. The Head Musician along with the rest of the musicians will pay homage to U Saw Kher Lai Lyngdoh with folded hands to symbolize the undivided Shyllong Native State. U Saw Kher Lai Lyngdoh is considered U Nongpynlong literally meaning the ‘makers’ of the Shyllong Native State.

Hima Khyrim today consists of the following Raids:

1. Raid Nongkrem
2. Raid Nongbri

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* The eldest is the custodian of the religious rites and ceremonies, because “she first sees the light of the day”.
** Lum means ‘hill or mountain or peak’, Pomblang means ‘cutting of the goat’.
*** Ksing means ‘Drum’, Rung means ‘to enter’ and ling means ‘House’.
3. Raid Mawlieh
4. Raid Mawshai
5. Raid Lawai

Despite this structure that is prevalent in the Hima, the people are always guided by the democratic spirit which they have inherited from their fore-fathers. Again, in the above structure, the role of the Bakhraw (Elder) is very important because he also takes part in the administration of the Raid. It is here that Ka Synshar Raid (administration at the level of the Raid) under the Bakhraws evolved. Further, pairing of the Raid or Raids explains the protocol of each Raid, as for example Nongkrem-Nongbri, or Lawai-Nongkynrih, and so on. The first Raid has a better placed position within the Hima.

In the Bhoi areas (northern region) of Khyrim native state, there exists Ki Syiem Raid, the Basan and the Lyngdoh who are incharge of the administration of the Raids. The existence of the Syiem Raid raises certain questions as to the role of the Syiem Hima and that of the Syiem Raid. The Syiem Raid is however very independent within his Raid and takes part in the Bujai Blang. As Hamlet Bareh writes,

There were three such subsidiary Syiems on the northern region, the Bhoi Syiems of lapngar, Nongtham and Thaiang. The paramount Syiem-
ruler paid a visit to their areas at least once a year.\textsuperscript{36}

The present Syiem of Khyrim explains that the existence of these Syiem Raids is due to the fact that for many years past, some areas had existed as Ki Hima Rit (small Native States) and had their own Syiems or native rulers. During the onslaught of the Syiem Synteng, they were practically subdued. Owing to the help given by the Syiems of Hima Shyllong, they survived and willingly came to form a kind of a loose confederacy with Hima Shyllong. Today they form part of Hima Khyrim and come under Raid Mawshai. Raid Mawshai also has sub-Raids within it called Ki Shnat Raid. These include Raid Lapngar, Raid Nongtham, Raid Thaiang, Nongtaring, Nongkhop, Maiong, Sakra, Nakdoh, Lymphuit, Amjong and Namsha. Maiong, Sakra, Nakdoh, Lymphuit and Amjong are areas where the Laungs pre-dominate. At Raid Lapngar, Raid Nongtham and Raid Thaiang, there is a Syiem Raid along with the Basan (Elder) and the Lyngdoh. The headquarter of Lapngar is at Liarkhla, that of Nongtham is at Pamlabon and that of Thaiang is at Umtyrkhang. Ceremonial practices are still being performed at these Raids. Till 1992, it has been found that Raid Nongtham still observes Ka Pomblang (Goat Sacrifice) which resembles the state religious practice performed at Smit. At

Thaiang, Ka Krud Ksing, a harvest dance which is accompanied by drum beats is still being performed. When the Syiem of the Hima pays a visit to these areas, ceremonial acknowledgement takes place which is a mark of respect and tribute to him. At Nongtaring and Namsha, there is the Basan, the Lyngdoh and the Sangot who look after the administration. According to my finds through field research, it has been found that in lapngar and Nongtham, the dialect spoken by the people resembles that of the Pnars of Jaintia Hills. Perhaps this is due to the influx of the Syntengs or Pnars during the attack of their Syiem. Even folk songs from lapngar are reproduced and sung in this dialect which most probably explains the migration process of the Pnars from Jaintia Hills to the Bhoi areas.

The villages of Wahkhen* and Nongblai** under Raid Mawlieh (East Khasi Hills District) from Khyrim Syiemship have been specifically identified. Wahkhen is significant because of its traditional musicians or the Duhalias. Wahkhen is a village surrounded by mountainous terrain which overlooks Bangladesh. It still produces leading traditional musicians and one of them is Komik Khong jirem, the leading exponent of Khasi Traditional Music and the Sangeet Natak Akademi Awardee.

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* Wah means 'River' and Khen, in the local dialect implies 'Big' and 'Wide'.
** Nong comes from the word Shnong which means 'Locality' or 'Place' and Blai is a local dialect for 'God'.
2001. Nongblai is significant in our study because of the crafting of musical instruments. Nokot Khriam, the Master Craftsman and the Sangeet Natak Akademi Awardee 1998, hails from Nongblai. The village of Mawnariang under Raid Mylliem (East Khasi Hills District) from Hima Mylliem has been identified for the study. Mawnariang is significant because of the presence of the ling Sad of the Lyngdoh and the Lyngdoh Sad under the Raid. Some religious ceremonies take place at Mawnariang once in a year in front of the ling Sad. Some of the music beats are also still retained by this village under the tutelage of the Lyngdoh Raid. The present Lyngdoh of Raid Mylliem, Charles Marbaniang, says that this Raid is formed by the San Kur Khatwei Kur (Five Clans and Eleven Clans). These Five Clans include Lyngdoh Clan, Kharkongor Clan, Sohtun Clan, Kurkalang Clan and Nongkhaw Clan. At the Dorbar Raid (Durbar of the Raid), Ki San Kur Bad Khatwei Kur play a significant role. The Eleven Clans assist the Five Kurs or Clans. The Five Kurs are the custodian of the religious rites and practices of the Raid along with the Lyngdoh Raid.\textsuperscript{37} It is also important to note the role of the Bakhraws within the Raid as the maker of Ka It Ka Hima (Native State). The Bakhraw anoints the Lyngdoh and takes part in the administration of the Raid. Raid Mylliem plays a prominent role in the

\textsuperscript{37} Interview had with the present Lyngdoh of Raid Mylliem, Charles Marbaniang.
making of the Hima (Mylliem Native State). Some of the religious music beats and practices are still being retained under this Raid. It is here that the concept of the Lyngdoh Sad still prevails. Ka Lyngdoh Sad is the one who prepares for the religious practices. She is the keeper of Ka Niam (Religion) at the level of the Raid. The Lyngdoh Sad is the mother of the Lyngdoh, failing her, the niece or the younger sister of the Lyngdoh succeeds but not the elder sister.* It may be noted that the Lyngdoh of Raid Mylliem is annointed by the Bakhraw at a place called Ka Madan ling Syiem (Madan means ‘field’, ling means ‘house’ and Syiem is ‘native ruler’). This place is situated near the river Umtyngngar. River Umiew which flows through Pamnakrai and Nongkrem also meets the river Umtyngngar at this place. Mawnariang is a small village situated near U Lum Shyllong (Shyllong Peak). The ling Sad of the Raid is still being preserved in this village. Before reaching this small hamlet, we pass through the village of Pamnakrai via Mawsing and then take a small turn down the road leading to another village Mawpynthih. From the turning to the right side of the road stands the village of Mawnariang under Raid Mylliem (Mylliem Native State).

It is observed that the life of the people in these villages is always

- This corresponds to the earlier observation made that Mylliem descends from the younger sister. The Lyngdoh Sad need not necessarily be the elder or eldest sister of the Lyngdoh.
influenced by the drum beats, the melody of the Tangmuri (flageolet) and the tonal beauty added by Ka Kynshaw (cymbals). It may not be wrong to say that the religious music beats have been greatly shaped and moulded by the milieu of these three villages of Wahkhen, Nongblai and Mawnariang.