Preface

Political activities occur within the framework of the most encompassing and embracing organization, the state. This organization was by no means a universal feature of all societies. Studies undertaken on political organizations of ethnic groups around the world reveal a spectrum - well developed states at one end and stateless or acephalous societies at the other.

Traditional political institutions are an important component of the tribal milieu of North-East India. The development of such institutions among the Khasi and Jaintia people in the pre-colonial period has been gradual. The highest territorial principality that evolved was the Hima, that is, the state, administered by a leader designated by various names, Syiem, Lyngdoh, Sirdar or Wahaddar. Presently there are 25 Khasi states (ki Hima Khasi), the important states being Khyrim, Mylliem and Cherra. The contacts that these states established with external powers and authorities brought them first, under the British through a relationship of subsidiary alliance, second, under the Dominion of India through the Standstill Agreement and the Instrument of Accession, third, under the Indian Union
through the operation of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India and
lastly, under the State of Meghalaya through the North-Eastern Areas (Re-
organisation) Act, 1971 and through the operation of the Sixth Schedule.

This study examines these events that affected the position of the
Khasi states in their relations with the various external powers and
authorities. The study focuses on the demand for constitutional recognition
of the Khasi states and the role played by the Syiem of Khyrim and Syiem of
Mylliem in this regard. The issue relating to the demand for constitutional
recognition of the Khasi states has generated considerable interest among
scholars, local institutions and non-governmental organizations. The study
undertaken attempts to gauge the opinion of the stake holders, that is, the
Khasi states and their administrative heads, the Khasi Hills Autonomous
District Council (hereafter KHADC) and the Government of Meghalaya on
these issues and to examine whether the Khasi states will be able to adjust to
the existing political framework.

This study could not have been undertaken without the assistance and
support of many individuals, institutions and organizations. At the outset, I
express my gratitude to Professor L.S. Gassah, my supervisor for his
meticulous guidance, his encouragement and most of all for his patience,
which has enabled me to complete this doctoral research. I express my gratitude to the Head, Professor B.J. Deb, Professor R. Borgohain, Dr. Pascal Malngiang, the faculty and staff of the Department of Political Science for their constructive suggestions and for their support. I express my gratitude to the Principal of Synod College, Shillong, Dr. D. Wanswett for not only granting me permission to undertake this research work but for his constant encouragement.

I thank the Indian Council of Social Science Research - National Social Science Documentation Centre (ICSSR-NASSDOC), New Delhi for providing a study grant to visit libraries in New Delhi which was of immense benefit to the research work. I also thank Indian Council of Social Science Research-North Eastern Regional Centre (ICSSR-NERC), Shillong for providing a contingency grant to complete the documentation process of the research work. I take this opportunity to convey my gratitude to Dr. C.J. Thomas, Acting Director, ICSSR-NERC, Shillong, Ms. Cerilla Khonglah, Documentation Officer and also to the staff of the Centre for the assistance they have rendered.

I thank the librarian and staff of the National Archives, New Delhi, ICSSR-NASSDOC Library, New Delhi, Nehru Memorial and Museum
Library, New Delhi, Jawaharlal Nehru University Library, New Delhi, North Eastern Hill University Library, Shillong, ICSSR-NERC Library, Shillong and Synod College Library, Shillong for granting me permission to consult and access resource materials in their respective libraries.

I thank Professor David R. Syiemlieh, Controller of Examinations, North Eastern Hill University, Shillong, Dr. A.K. Nongkynrih, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, North Eastern Hill University, Shillong, John F. Kharshiing, Dr. Balajied S. Syiem, P. Lyngdoh, Nishan Wahlang, Dr. W.R. Kharlukhi and S.S. Majaw for constructive sessions and for sparing their time to offer me their valued assistance. I also thank members of the Syiem of Khyrim’s executive council, the Syiem of Mylliem and members of his executive council and members of the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council for their co-operation and assistance.

My family has always been my constant source of support in this academic journey. Their overwhelming encouragement, patience and prayers have enabled me to complete this research work. For this, I am deeply grateful to my dear wife, Kezha, my children, Rachel and Ianna, my Dad and my Mom for their love and for constantly reminding me of the urgent need
to fulfill this academic obligation, and to all my near and dear ones who have resolutely stood by me.

Praise and honour be to the Almighty Father who makes all things possible.

Shillong


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