CONCLUSION

We have reviewed the Anglo-Khasi relations. What are our conclusions? We may say that when the British first set foot on these hills, they were charmed and fascinated by the land of myriad natural hues and evergreen vegetation, cascading waterfalls and rippling brooks. They were captivated by a land, which though far away from theirs, bears resemblance to their own in a variety of things.

Khasi matrilineal society is unique in its kind. It does not presuppose of an all powerful woman but man as the head of the family. The line of descent is taken from the woman; she is the keeper and custodian of the clan but man is the defender of the chastity of woman. It is he who has to risk his life for his wife and children, it is he who acts as the connecting link between his wife's clan and his own clan. In fact, he has a double role to play as 'father' to his children and 'uncle' to his nieces and nephews. The Khasi society expects a Khasi mother to train and mould her children according to Khasi norms and ways of life but the final authority is the father. His mother (ka Mei Khê) is held in high esteem by his children. His sisters and brothers (mei kha, pakha) are honoured and respected by
his children. He is, on the whole, respected both in his clan and in his wife's clan. Thus, a Khasi man occupies an important position in the Khasi society.

Speaking of the evolution of a Khasi State, first it was founded on religion, a religion which reflects both man and God. The Khasis have no pagodas or Churches or mosques but religion starts within the 'Kur', which is the first social and political entity of the evolution of the Khasi state. Religion plays a predominant role in the development of Khasi political thought.

The Khasis strongly believe in 'ka Sang ke Ma'—a taboo or an unpardonable sin to marry within the same clan. The clans may be known by different names in different places, but so long as they belong to the same 'Kur' having the same or common ancestress, they cannot think of inter-marriage. Ever since the beginning of creation, the Khasis believed that they descended from the seven roots, the seven huts, which roughly stand for the seven kurs, where each kur would enter into marriage with another kur and so on. Through marriage the different kurs multiplied in course of time. By a slow process of the assimilation of kurs in a certain place, they formed a village, (Shnong) under the headman (Tymmen Shnong) or the elders of the village (Vi Tymmen.
ki San). With the multiplication of the villages, the elected members of the villages whether 'Ki Tymmen Shnong' or 'Ki Tymmen ki San' would form a village council. The office of the Basan thus came into existence at the head of the village council.

In course of time, the Khasi states were also formed as a result of a mutual agreement among the Basans or Lyngdohs or leaders of the Raids (Communes), who exercised an authority over the different raids.

Finally, the Khasi States were formed under the Syiems called "Ka It ka Hima". Among the Khasis any person cannot take the title of Syiem or make himself Syiem or establish a state, but the Basans, the Lyngdohs and the leaders of the Raids founded the state and annointed a particular Jaid as 'Jaid Syiem'. Since the beginning of creation, the Khasis were born with a democratic instinct in their veins, the Syiem could not be a dictator but a philosopher and guide of the people. It is no wonder therefore, that the Khasis' love of freedom, the stamina, virility and competence of the people was at its best in their struggle against the British. They found that they had to encounter with a people who fought till their last breath. It is no wonder also that the Khasis were the last to submit to British Imperialism. Under the democratic impact, it
would be the duty of the Syiem to administer justice with as much care and attention in accordance with Khasi rules and norms of conduct since the Khasis believe that they come to this world to earn righteousness. Accordingly, the Syiem would be helped by two Councils—"The Syiem and the Durbar" (U Syiem bad ka Dorbar) which consists of the Myntris, the Basans, the Lyngskors and the Lyngdohs; secondly, by the "General Assembly" (Ka Dorbar Hima) which should consist of all male adults from all villages within the hima or state.

Local administration and local autonomy had already existed even before the coming of the British and the latter either moulded the native institutions or modified old forms of administration. At times, changes were introduced to suit the convenience of the British.

Speaking of the early Anglo-Khasi relations, it may be observed that the British did not lose time to explore the untapped mineral resources of these hills and they felt that first, new avenues for trading facilities must be obtained at all costs. Secondly, the British found it expedient to have direct communication between Sylhet and Assam. Lastly, the British wanted to establish a sanatoria and a military cantonment in the Khasi Hills. In the field of trade, the Khasis were made to come into contact not only with the local people of Sylhet but the English as well. This gave a chance to
the English to be able to exploit the mineral resources of Khasi Hills to the maximum extent taking advantage of the straightforwardness, honesty, and illiteracy of the Khasi rulers. It was on the 24th February 1826, with the Treaty of Yandaboo, that the question of linking up the two valleys by a road across the hills engaged the serious attention of the authorities.

In 1824, two years before the Treaty of Yandaboo was signed, the English were determined to have their desired objectives fulfilled. They were determined too that their penetration into the hills would not be just for trading facilities or exploiting the mineral wealth of the hills but at the same time to exploit the Khasi rulers politically. Thus, they initiated the policy of Negotiation and Agreements by which agreements were to be signed between the English and the Khasi Rulers. The latter were made to think that the agreements were signed between two equal powers. The first agreement was signed between Ram Singh, Syiem of Sutnga and the British. The Syiem of Sutnga was however adamant to fulfil the terms imposed by the British. Again, the agreement did not contain any clause renewing the pledge of the Syiem to the English. It goes beyond doubt that the stubborness of Rajendra Singh to fulfil the terms of the agreement and to comply with the demands of the
English, finally culminated in the forced annexation of the plain areas of the Syiem of Sutnga to the plain district, in accordance with the policy of force or Doctrine of Lapse. Thus on the 23rd February 1835, the possessions of the Syiem of Sutnga in the plains were confiscated by the British leaving him to exercise jurisdiction only in the hills. Jaintia Hills, was thus new name given by the British to East Khasi Hills.

The agreement signed between Dewan Singh, Syiem of Sohra and the English placed Sohra under the sovereign power of the Company and the voluntary cession of Saitsohpen to the British in lieu of Pandua in Sylhet made Saitsohpen as a base of military operations for the British in the struggle of the Khasis against the British. With the conditions of the Treaty at hand, during the Khasi insurrection, Dewan Singh, Syiem of Sohra, who was bound by the terms of the Treaty perhaps found that his hands were tied to help his own Khasi people. It was with the help of Dewan Singh, Syiem of Sohra that the English were able to conquer other Khasi places.

When Sohra was placed under the sovereign power of the British, a Political Agency was established in 1835 for the administration of the affairs of the Khasi Hills with its headquarter at Sohra. This was a means to curb the power of the Khasi rulers from all possible
quarters so that the British would be in a position to establish their real paramountcy in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills. The sovereign power was thus transferred from the Syiems to the British. In short, the establishment of the Political Agency created not only an impact on the conquest of the Khasi hills by the British but also on the administrative and political sway over these hills. This was one of the main causes which increased the tension of the sub-national movement in the Khasi hills against the British.

Shortly after the establishment of the Agency its jurisdiction was extended by the annexation of the Jaintia Hills belonging to the Jaintia Raja. Undoubtedly the British were responsible in creating an artificial political division by the creation of the Jaintia Hills. The institution of Syiemship in Jaintia Hills was abolished by the British after the whole area was conquered and occupied by them. But they did not interfere with the Village Dorbar though the raids were converted to Doloiships. This division has created a tension among the Khasi people, making them feel that they do not belong to one administration and origin. In reality this policy has limited the boundary of Khasi hills comprising of Khasi and Jaintia Hills only.

But the British were successful in establishing
their rule in the Khasi Hills because the Khasi states were small in size. They were not equal to the British in any respect. The British had superior skill in all respects. Further, the Khasi states were not united. Added to this, there were factions among the people in all the states in the Khasi hills. Thus, disunity among the Khasi states and in the people themselves enabled the British to penetrate into the Khasi Hills to exploit its natural resources for their benefit and to establish their political sway in these hills.

The British found that agreements and negotiations with the Khasi Syiems had not worked well to secure all what they wanted. So in 1859, side by side with Agreements, Sanads were introduced to the Syiems. In 1877, agreements were abolished and Sanads remained. It was the only means by which relations between the Syiem and the British were regulated. In the case of Lyngdohs, Sardars and Wahadadars, the relations were regulated by Parwanas. Till 1878, Sanads were signed by the Viceroy but from 1878 they were signed by the Chief Commissioner. Later, they were signed by the Commissioner of the Surma Valley and the Hill Division. The Parwanas were signed by the Deputy Commissioner.

The abolition of agreements was intended to indicate that the Syiems were not parties to a contract,
occupying a position of equality with the British. The Sanad indicates that the Syiem occupied an inferior position. A Sanad is imposed by a superior on an inferior. Thus, the Government assumed to itself the right to appoint the Syiem and not merely ratify his election. In other words, Syiemship is a gift in the hands of the British. This implies that the British had not only the right to appoint but also the right to dismiss a Syiem at pleasure. Though the states were semi-independent states in subsidiary alliance with the British Government in practice, the Syiems were reduced to the position of messenger boys or tools in the hands of British administration. So wide were the powers of Government under the Sanads, that the states were actually parts of the British Empire. Actually the Deputy Commissioner controlled the Syiem in every respect.

Thus the British interfered with the Khasi political life, Khasi way of administration, Khasi justice to suit their convenience. They had relegated the Khasi Syiem or rulers into the background. The Khasi rulers were not made to understand why some should be served with Sanads and some with Parwanas. According to Khasi polity, the Syiem or any Khasi ruler was equal in rank and status. He would be there in the Hima as a Constitutional head. He would preside over the Dorbar Hima so that
all deliberations would be conducted smoothly with a spirit of equality, justice, love and responsibility. Khasi polity assures a unique example of an equal opportunity to all in the administration of the state based on traditional genius and organisation. This is a check on the usurpation of power by the Syiems.

The British failed to understand the impact of the Bakhraws in Khasi polity. The Syiems are, in fact, the creation of the Bakhraws. The Bakhraws are the leaders and the administrators of the Raids or Communes who are responsible in founding the Hima or State and who anoint a particular jaid as "Jaid Syiem" (Syiem clan) and appoint a particular man from the Syiem clan to be the Syiem. The Bakhraws found the state with the consent of "ki khun ki hajar" (Khasi citizens). But the Bakhraws during the British regime were relegated to the rank of Ministers.

Speaking of the later Anglo-Khasi relations, it may be noted that the submission of the Montague-Chelmsford Report, 1917, created a deep political sensation among the people of the hills and the plains. The Khasi states realised that forced political assimilation or reform of the Constitution of the States would be undesirable without full reciprocal understanding. It was opined that since the Khasi states were self-governing
in nature, a reform of the constitution of these states by any Commission or Committee would be undesirable. Moreover, the inclusion of the Hill Districts in the Reformed Council would entail or give rise to grave issues both to the Hills as well as to the Plains. Therefore, it was felt that this artificial union should speedily end in divorce. There were various differences between the Hills and the Plains politically, socially, culturally or racially.

When the Indian Statutory Commission embarked upon the task of finding a suitable constitutional formula to solve the hill areas, several suggestions came up from the leaders of the Hill and Plains. The Khasi states however, objected to the inclusion of Khasi native states within the Reforms on the ground that they were not conquered territories but in subsidiary alliance with the British. Added to this, they have so far enjoyed self-government and they were in advance of any reform. They have been law-abiding, civilised and accustomed to freedom and independence since time immemorial; and perhaps, it might go against conscience or public policy to make the Khasi states subject to reforms. However, the Constitutional position of the Hills was discussed by the Hill leaders. But it was strange, that in spite of heated debates during this particular period the hill leaders did not cooperate with one another to assert the
Constitutional position of the hills. Because of this Assam was not represented in the Second and Third Round Table Conference.

Ever since the twenties of the present Century the Khasi States felt it necessary to know their position under the impact of the changing constitutional pattern of the whole of India. The Khasi people were compelled to open their eyes for the preservation of their social, cultural, political and mental growth of the people. And out of this, was born the Khasi National Durbar, to fight back the forces which might become detrimental to the people. It sowed the seed of unity and co-operation among the Khasi leaders for the preservation of Khasi culture, Khasi polity and Khasi way of life. The Khasi National Durbar must be equipped to foster and strengthen the administration of justice, laws of the land tenure system in Khasi Hills, the codification of Khasi rules and laws and for the education of the Khasi rulers about the rapid changes in administration in the country. Therefore, the need of the hour was unity among the Khasi states, that is, the formation of the Federation of the Khasi states. The British who came as foreign administrators failed to understand that the Khasis were and are federalists by nature. The Syiem represents the people of the Hima. Within this entity, there are several localities having their own Tyumen Shnong or Headman, who in collaboration with the Durbar
Shnong of that locality decide vital issues within that area. But the various localities within any Hima or Syiemship would definitely join hands or federate themselves for the common cause.

When the British Government announced that they would quit India by June 1948 and when "the method by which power will be transferred from British to Indian hands", was broadcast, the Standing Committee of the Federation of the Khasi states met and a draft constitution of the Khasi states was circulated to all the Khasi states for approval. As a counter to this, Rev. J.T.N. Nichols Roy stood up for the cause of the Khasi Jaintia Federated States. When the question of national importance came to the forefront, the Khasi states, whether Federation of Khasi States or the Khasi Jaintia Federated States faced a critical situation. In the meantime, a new party called "The Khasi States People's Union" was born. Side by side several other views of various Khasi leaders also came up. But at this moment the Federation of the Khasi States had leaders of moderate views and they suggested that the Federation should follow the advice of Sardar Patel and Lord Mountbatten. The Khasi rulers finally agreed to sign the Instrument of Accession together with the Annexed Agreement. Nineteen out of twenty five Khasi states signed the Instrument of Accession. The
remaining Khasi States also signed later on.

On the momentous day of 21st July 1945, the Khasi States Constitution Making Durbar consisting of all the Heads or elected representatives of the Khasi States realised the urgent need of one administration. It was during the British rule therefore, that the Khasi Rulers were awakened to a sense of unity and cooperation, bound by social and cultural affinity, to fight back the alien forces. They may belong to their own respective Himas or states, they may belong to different walks of life but they still have a firm belief that they all belong to an undivided land of the Hynniew Trep Hynniew Skum - the Seven Huts, the Seven Roots. Let us recall the words of Sardar Patel who remarked on the 5th July 1947:

"This country with its institutions is a proud heritage of the people who inhabit it. It is an accident that some live in states and some in British India, but all alike partake of its culture and character. We are all knit together by bonds of blood and feeling, no less than of self-interest. None can segregate us into segments, no impassable barriers can be set up between us."

In conclusion, the Khasi people have undoubtedly inherited a rich legacy from the British Rule in the social, political, educational and administrative fields.