KHASI POLITY

The migration of the Khasls into their present abodes - The evolution of administrative setup - The village councils and the village headmen - The grouping of villages into Raids or Communes - The evolution of the office of Bakhraws viz Lyngskors, Lyngdohs, Myntris, Dolois and others - The evolution of the Khasi States - The origin of Syiemships or Kingships - The law of succession - Governmental Machinery - The Administration of Justice.

The world over witnessed various revolutions, to struggle for democracy and Self-Government, to fight for the principles of equality, liberty and fraternity. The French Revolution, the Glorious Revolution, the American Revolution and several other revolutions are all fitting examples of a democratic exertion and political aspiration. Democracy is the life blood of the Khasi people, they are born with a democratic instinct in their veins. Colonel Herbert remarked, "The Khasis are a singularly
progressive and intelligent race with democratic tendencies."\(^1\) Democracy is the ideal shaped, moulded and brought into stature by the ancestors in the dim mists of antiquity. Imbibed with this ideal, the Khasis may be few but sturdy, they may be hard pressed by time but adventurous; they are ready to sacrifice their lives at the altar of preservation. It is no wonder, therefore, that when the British colonised India, the Khasi people were the last to submit to British Imperialism. The late Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru remarked of the Khasis as those who "by their stamina, virility and competence still maintain their freedom based on ancient ways and tenets of the race. They are an extremely disciplined people, often more democratic than most of India, without a (written) Constitution they function democratically and carry out the decisions made by their elders and representatives without exception."\(^2\)

**Evolution of "KUR":**

Having believed to have descended from **Hynniew Trep** **Hynniew Skum** - The Seven Huts, the Seven Roots - each 'Trep' signifies a 'Kur'. There was inter-marriage among the different Kurs and thus the Kurs were multiplied in course of time. Each Kur traced its descent to

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1. Herbert, Capt D : Succession to the Syiemship in the Khasi States No 3541.
2. (a) Nehru, Pandit J : Speech delivered in New Delhi on June 7, 1952.
   (b) Ibid : Speech delivered in Shillong on October 19, 1952.
With the multiplication of the different Kurs, population increased considerably. Some Kurs migrated in search of new lands for agricultural pursuits, better means of livelihood and other facilities. This further led to the formation of 'Jaid's' The Jaids claim to have descended from the same common but younger ancestress called "Ka Iawbei Tynmen". So each Kur is further sub-divided into a number of Jaids and each Jaid is further subdivided into a number of 'Kpohs' who claimed the Iawbei Khynraw (Young Ancestress) as their Ancestress. Each Kpoh is further sub-divided into Ings or Houses or Families. The graphic description below will give a clear view of the clan and sub-clan organisations.

So long as they know that they belong to the same Kur they

4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
cannot think of intermarriage because this is regarded as Ka Sang or a Taboo. However, when one Jeid migrated to another place, it might be known by another name but they belonged to the same Ancestress. The number of families and people were slowly multiplied. They have a firm belief that God had handed over a Commandment that it is not only an act of sacrilege but also an unpardonable sin if a person should marry within his own clan. That is the reason why till to-day, to which ever religion they may belong, any Khasi will get a nightmare if he is being taught to believe any other theory of the origin of mankind, which might become detrimental to the rule of consanguinity founded at the beginning of creation. Christians and Non-Christians alike still observe the Khasi Customary Laws of consanguinity of the Khasi idea of life and this is the secret of the continuance of the Khasis as a race. A Khasi strongly believes in 'Ka Sang Ka Byrsieh' or a Taboo and an unpardonable sin if there is inter-marriage within the same clan, he fears that any wrong done in this matter will dry up his existence in this world.

Dr. R.R. Marett says "Exogamy and everything else that we do is instinct with a plus; and for the student of religion, or of human culture in any of its forms, to

6. (a) Lyngdoh, H: Ka Niam Khasi - Chapter X
   (b) Gordon, P.R.T.: The Khasis.
7. Roy, David: Who is a Khasi?
account for that plus is the sum and substance of his task whereas then, there is little likelihood that any posteriori reason existed for believing that in breeding makes for sterility, if indeed it be true in fact at all, there might well have been a priori conviction to much the same effect based simply on a fear that to tamper with the fountain head of human vitality would somehow cause it to dry up".

Through migration, some Kurs or Jaid{s} may change their names but as long as they belong to the common ancestress, they cannot think of inter-marriage. Besides, there are certain other cases where one Jaid becomes Kur with another Jaid through acts of kindness, done by one Jaid to another Jaid. They are said to belong to the same Kur, hence there can be no inter-marriage like Jaid Warjri and Jaid Kharbuli. It is 'Ka Sang Fa Fa' or an unpardonable sin to marry one's sister-in-law or mother-in-law, which is called as "Ka Sang Shong Synri". There is Ka Sang Sohpet Kha - a sin to marry the children of one's father's brother. There is Ka Sang Syng-ken Kha - a sin to marry father's sister's or their grand children. A Khasi can marry his own cousin(nakha) that is, the daughter of his uncle, but if the uncle is

8. (a) Roy, David : Ka Jaka U Khasi ha ka Pyrthei.
(b) Roy, Jeebon : Ka Niam jong ki Khasi.
still alive, this is not permitted. He cannot marry his Bakha, the daughter of his Nia Kha (Paternal Aunt) because this tantamounts to a taboo called Al Khaw Kyliang which is an insult to the father, because it means a return of bread and luck and the person of his father to his own clan. The following list gives us an idea of the different Jaiden belonging to the same Kur. Khonglah and Khongwir belong to the same Kur. Nongrung, Rymbai, Rumnong, Nengnong and Nongneng belong to the same Kur. Bajjawmoit, Majaw and Hynniewta belong to the same Kur. Sun and Lamare belong to the same Kur. Paswett, Lytan, Lanong, Lakiang, Liwait, Gatphoh, Kynjing, Pakyntein, Nikhla, Niangphoh, Rangat Syngkon, Kma, Lipon, Pyrdiang, Mytyen and Singbud belong to the same Kur. Tariang (Khasi War) and Tariang (Khasi Khynriam) belong to the same Kur. Swer (Khasi Pnar) and Swer (Khasi Khynriam) belong to the same Kur. Blah (Khasi Pnar) and Blah (Khasi Khynriam) belong to the same Kur.

"Ka Shong Kha Shong Man" (Marriage) is a sacred bond between a man and a woman. It is believed to be ordained by God. It is also said "ba la iathoh

9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
12. Girl, Helen: Speech delivered on "Ka Shongkha khleh ka pynmyntoi ia ka jaid bynriew" - 24.4.7E5 - Khasi National Durbar Hall.
"ka shiyieng krung". After the marriage, the man goes to the woman's house and becomes "U Khun Ki Briel" (the son of other people). Though the line of descent is taken from the mother, though she is expected to train and mould her children in accordance with Khasi norms and ways of life, yet the father is the pivot round which the whole family revolves. He is the connecting link between his mother's clan and his wife's clan. His children will look to their father's mother as Mei Kha (Born of a mother) and his sisters and brothers as Mei Kha Pakha and his children will be Khun Kha to his mother's clan. The Mei Kha is usually held in high esteem by his children and the latter also give due respect to all members of his clan. Thus, it is very wrong to say that a Khasi man has no place whatsoever in Khasi society.

Tradition tells us that the Khasis first settled in the East, they moved to the West in search of new lands or iron ore. First, if we judge the orange groves, we shall find that the line of orange groves leads from Sutnga to Hawkaiew, then to Mawpdang, Mawroh and Mawtawar. We are also reminded of the people of Shella who fled away from Pom Shala. Again, going...
downwards from Sutnga, the line followed westward along the slopes to the five villages known as Panch Poonjee up to the western most part of the southern slopes. The Panch Poonjee viz. Lyngkading, Tyriang, Umniuh, Tmar and Nongri and even Mukertila of Khyrin are still part and parcel of the Pnar people in their manners, customs, ways of life or village administration.18

Secondly, if we judge at the boundary, demarcation of land, separating the land of one kur and another kur, one village and another, we will find that this demarcation leads from the East to the West.19

Thirdly, the form of speech spoken by the Khasi people is in the War Amwi dialect which has a close affinity with the Monkhmer form of speech,20 it then gradually changes to Jowai, War Mawshai (Nongkrem dialect) Swer dialect, then finally Sohra dialect.21 We can understand this by taking one sentence to illustrate that Khasi language had its origin in Amwi, it gradually changed as the people moved westward.22

U Amwi = Ah umi u jurre w arbe (arbai) i hun tyrmei.
U Jirang = Ah de i mi u karo u ah irbe i ki hun hun tyrmei.

19. Ibid.
20. Weldert Alfons I Tkong Amwi - p.1
22. Ibid.
U Jowai - Em uwi u bru uwa em ar ngut ki khon shynrang.

U Nongjri - La em u wei met u brew uba la em arngut ki phan shynrang.

U Nongkrem - La don uwei u brew uba don arngut ki khon shynrang.

U Sohra - La don uwei u brisew uba la don arngut ki khun shynrang.²³

Fourthly, most of the ruling clans and kurs of Khasi Hills claim that they migrated from Pnar area. Diengdoh Bah, Diengdoh Kylla, Diengdoh Shngain Lang, Pariong (Khynriam) belong to the same Kur with the Laloo Clan from Pnar. Shabong, Mukhim and Khyriem clans (Khynriam) belong to the same kur with the Shallam Clan (Pnar), Thangkhiew Clan (Khynriam) belongs to the same clan with the Slong, Shylla, Pariat and Pde Clans (Pnar). Lyngdoh Nongbri, Lyngdoh Nongkynrih clans (Khynriam) belong to the same kur with the Shadap and Passah Clans (Pnar).²⁴ Lyngdoh and Lamin Clans belong to the same kur with Laloo Clan (Pnar).²⁵

Lastly, Nongkhlaw and Nongspung Siemships claimed descent from the Sutnga ruling family. Mawsynram and Sohra claimed descent from the Malngiang Ruling Family.²⁶

²³. Ibid.
²⁶. Lyngdoh, Dr H : Ki Siyem Khase bad Synteng.
When each Kur settled down in a certain place, they formed a village. The eldest male member along with the other members of the Kur would exercise a great influence on the social and economic life of the Kur. Consequently, this Kur would increase through assimilation with the other Kurs who came and settled down in this village. Secondly, the male members of this Kur would marry the women of the other Kurs and they would bring their wives to stay with his Kur, thus increasing the Kur. Thirdly, in times of war or trade relationship with the plains, Khasi men would marry women from the plains and would bring them to stay with his Kur. The ancestresses of these Kurs were plains women, carried off no doubt in the raids made by the Khasis over the border into Assam and Sylhet. In this way, various Kurs might be willing to stay in the same village. The first or founding Kur would elect a wise, eldest male member to be the ruler of the village. Such a man assumed the office of a Basan. The remaining small Kurs of that village would simultaneously elect their own representatives called Ki Tymmen Ki San but in a village which was founded jointly, these Kurs would elect the Tymmen Shnong or Headman. There might

27. Lyngdoh, Dr. H ; Ka Niam Khasi.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
be one or more headmen but whatever be the case, all the elected members whether ki Tyumen ki San or Tymen Shnong would form a village council with the Basan.\textsuperscript{31}

Speaking of the evolution of Khasi States, it has been said that "the State was founded on religion"\textsuperscript{32} Khasi religion is referred to as "Ka Niam Tip Briew Tip Blei"\textsuperscript{33} (A religion which knows man known God). Khasi believes in God (U Blei) who is omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient, he believes in a religion that reflects both man and God. The Khasis have no pagodas, mosques, temples or organised church\textsuperscript{34} but religion starts within the Kur which is the first social and political entity of the evolution of the Khasi State. The religious rites and ceremonies are performed by the Kur and the husband has no right to take part in the religious ceremony in his wife's house because he belongs to another Kur. The bones and ashes of one Kur will be put in the same "MANBAH".\textsuperscript{35} Religion has thus played a dominant role in the development of Khasi political thought.

With the growth of Khasi Kurs, Khasi villages, Basans and Lyngdohs, in course of time, the Khasi States were also formed as a result of a mutual agreement among the leaders or Basans of the Raids (Communes)

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{32} Tharo soso t Ki Sngl Barim U Hynniew Trep.
\textsuperscript{33} Roy, Sib Charan : Ka Niam Ki Khasi.
\textsuperscript{34} Roy, Hipshon : The Khasi Heritage - their religion and culture.
\textsuperscript{35} Costa, G : Ka Fiti jong ka Ri Laiphew Syiem, Part II - p.78.
who exercised an authority over the different Raids. The Sutnga State emerged as a result of an agreement between the Lyngdoh and Doloi Clans. The Shillong State emerged as a result of an agreement between the Sawkher and Lai Lyngdoh (Four Basan Clans and Three Lyngdoh Clans) — that is the Hima or State with four raids, each Raid having its own Basan and three raids, each having its own Lyngdoh. The Raid Sawkher are Nongksen, Nongumlong, Swer and Synrem or Mawlieh Kawsel; they also include five villages of Marbisu, Sadew, Markhan, Mawshanlang and Nonghsap having their own Tymmen Shnong or Headmen. The representatives to the Dorbar Hima from these raids, are Basan Nongksen from Thangkhiew Clan, Basan Nongumlong from Nongmeng Clan, Basan Swer from Swer 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 Nonghsap from the Nonghsap Clan. The men of the five villages (San Shnong) were warriors of great courage among the Sawkher and thus they came to be known as Khyndai Bah Ryntieh (Nine holding the Bow). The "Lai Lyngdoh" raids are Mylllem, Nongbri and Pongrup or Nongbet and they include the San Kur (Five Kurs)
i.e. the Mylliem Ngap, 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 Nongbat from the Pongrup Clan, the Lyngskor from Mylliem Ngap Clan, the Myntri of Kurkalang from the Kurkalang Clan, the Myntri of Nongkhlaw from the Nongkhlaw Clan and the Rynjah Myntri from the Rynjah Clan or Kharkongor Myntri from the Kharkongor Clan.39

The Hynnlew Raid (Seven Raids) and the San Kur San Shnong (Five Kurs Five Villages) which formed the Shillong State were also known as Lai Basan (Three Basans), that is those Raids under the administration of Three Basans, which include - The Basan Tyngkong who administers the Raid of Mylliem, Nongkrem and San Kur and who also has the right to "Ring Kongor" (a person would be forcibly ordered to marry any female from the Syiem clan according to the liking of the female Syiem and he would be known as Kongor) - The Basan Khrum who administers the Raid of Nongkseh, Nongumlong, Synrem or Mawlieh Mawshai and San Shnong (Five Villages) and lastly, the Basan Swer who administers the Raid of War Khatarshnong and Khatarblang. It may also be noted that some raids joined with other raids while some other raids did not. In any case, some Khasi

39. Ibid.
States came under the administration of the Syiem or the Lyngdoh or the wahadadar or the sirdar as the case may be.\textsuperscript{40}

The final stage in the growth, development and evolution of the Khasi States was the formation of Khasi States under the Syiems called Ka It Ka Hima. Among the different nations or peoples of the world, the strong and mighty made themselves kings and sovereigns. But among the Khasis, any person cannot make or take the title of Syiem or establish a state to satisfy his personal caprice. It is the Basans, the Lyngdohs and the leaders of the Raids who founded the state and annointed a particular jaid as Jaid Syiem.\textsuperscript{41} Tradition or political evolution tells us of the origin of Syiemship in Khasi Hills. In the first instance, Sutnga, Madur Maskut and Khyrim regarded their Syiems as Ki Syiem Ki Blei (The Syiem The God);\textsuperscript{42} because it is believed that they have a divine origin, Sutnga believes to have come out of Ka Li Dohkha (a fish) and Loh Ryndi, whose children are Ka Raputong, Ka Papunga, U Syngkhlein am, U Bania am and U Tetia Ksaw - from Raputong sprang up the Syiem Sutong and from Papunga, the Syiem Sutnga. Madur Maskut believes to have come

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
out from the Pig and Kyllong Raja Syiem has been called 'U Syiem Sait Snier' (The Syiem who washed his intestines). He was killed treacherously by his enemies, through a woman, who jilted him and led him to his doom. Since that time, the Sutnga or Syiem Synteng conquered the whole of Madur Maskut and it has also been said that the Malngiang Syiemship spreads to the four corners of Khasi and Jaintia Hills. Mawsynram and Sohra States claim to have descended from the Malngiang Clan. Speaking of Shillong State, it is believed that there was a Mermaid, who was the niece of the Shillong deity, who is regarded to be the first mother or root ancestress of the Jaid Syiem of Shillong. She was lured by a flower—hence 'Ka Pah Syntiew' (enticed or lured by a flower) by a man from the Mylliem Ngap Clan. She was then given in marriage to U Kongor Nongjri. The children of Ka Pah Syntiew are called Yi Khun Biel (God's Children). It is also said that Mylliem Ngap Clan regards it a taboo to marry a person from the Syiem Shillong Clan (Khyrim or Mylliem) because Ka Pah Syntiew, the Iawbei Tynrai or Root Ancestress was taken care of by U Mylliem Ngap. Secondly, the people of Sohra regard their Syiem as U Syiem U Kmie - The Syiem The Mother. It is said that there were four

43. Ibid.
44. Ibid.
45. (a) Ibid.
(b) Gordon, P.R. : The Khasis - p.165.
46. Lyngdoh, Dr H : Ki Syiem Khasi bad Synteng.
47. Ibid.
sisters and brothers - U Buhsing, U Sadang, Ka Shan and Ka Jah who wandered to Swer from Sumer (Synteng or Jaintia) and U Basan Swer who was the Basan of Khatar Shnong Khat-ar-Blang gave them shelter and took care of them. They were loved and respected by the people for their good behaviour. The Basan Swer went to tell this to the Shillong Syiem and he was given the power by the Shillong Syiem to annoint them as Sylems. From that time, the four who came to Swer claimed to belong to the same clan with the Swer Clan, under whose maternal care the four were brought up - hence, U Syiem U Kmie. Lastly, the people of Mawlang regarded their Syiem as 'U Syiem U Mrav' (The Syiem The Slave) because during the time when the Dariong Clan ruled over Mawlang Raid, it is said that their territorial sway stretched to Sunamganj (Sylhet). But when there was war with Maram, they lost all these territories. It happened that during this time, the ruling clans of Mawlang captured four Muslims - three men and one woman from Punatit and annointed them as Sylems. Till today, the muslim family at Punatit (Sunamganj) still call their children 'Khasia Raja'.

It may seem curious why sylemship came into existence. Valid reasons for the evolution of Ka It...
Hima may be the following. First as the villages grew in size and population, the people found it necessary that there should be a Syiem to administer justice; he is not to dictate but to be their philosopher and guide, he would be the mediator between the people and the Dorbar Hima. Secondly, the common people believed that it would be a taboo for them to administer justice, hence the necessity of the Syiem. Thirdly, the people also believed that the Syiem, who was ordained by God to come to the earth had certain super power to decide between right and wrong, to take charge of Ka Mar Ka Bili, to collect or impose fines or embrace the wealth and belongings of Ka Taro, U Thlen or Ka Shwar, which the Bakhraws or the people would regard it a taboo or a religious impurity within their hearth or their clan. Fourthly, in some parts of Khasi Hills, the Syiem must hold the goat for religious sacrifices. Herein comes the necessity of the syiem in religious matters. Fifthly, as the Khasi States grew in strength, power and influence, there was also every likelihood that they would fall a prey to foreign invasion. The question of defence demanded the entity of syiemship to decide this vital issue. Sixthly, the Basans of the Raids or the Ruling Clans had equal status, hence there is the necessity of evolving an institution as Head of the State.

51. (a) Lyngdoh, Dr H: Ki Syiem Khasi bad Synteng.  
(b) Cjoe, Theodore: Principles of Khasi Culture.  
52. Lyngdoh, D. H: Ki Syiem Khasi bad Synteng.  
53. Ibid.
Syiemship, Daloiship, Wahadadarship or Sirdarship evolved not by arbitration but by the will and consent of the people (Ki Khun Ki Hajar) the customs and tradition of the land. Ri Raid, Ri Kur, Ri Syiem, Ri Kynti all testify to the fact of the democratic set up of Khasi States. 54 This is the picture of Khasi States as shaped and moulded by the ancestors of 'The rule of the people, by the people and for the people.' The Syiem is referred to as 'Pa Iem' (Father Syiem), the women of the Syiem Clan as 'Mei Iem' (Mother Syiem) and the citizens (Khasis) as Ki Khun Ki Hajar (Children). The Paiem is the Father of the 'Hima', the Mei iem as the Mother of the Hima and 'Ki Khun Ki Hajar' as their Children. 55 The wife and the children of the Syiem have no right whatsoever in the proceedings of the State. The wife of the male Syiem is called as Mahadei and the husband of the female syiem is called as Kongor. Nowhere in the history of Khasi State do we find any mention of Mahadei or Kongor, because according to Khasi tradition, they are regarded as the servants (shakri) of the syiem. 56

Let us then examine some of the factors leading to the appointment or selection or election of the Syiem Syiemship entity is limited only to the Syiem Clan in conformity with the reasons evolving the entity of K. It Ka Hima. 57 Secondly, the Kur formed the political

54. Ibid.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid.
57. Ibid.
nucleus but the female members have no right in the election or selection or appointment of the Syiem. The smaller Kurs also have no share in such matters.

Succession:

According to tradition, custom and usage, the law of succession in Khasi and Jaintia Hills presents a very fascinating picture. In Khyrim State, the Syiem descended from the Syiem Sad who is the custodian of all religious rites and ceremonies. She is not the High Priestess as Khasi society does not permit a woman to take part in political or religious deliberations because she is said to "kynih Ka iar Kynthei" (crowing of the hen). The religious deliberations will be performed by the Sohblei, the religious Lyngdoh (Priest) of the highest order. 58 Heirship in Khyrim State is limited to the male relatives of the Syiem Sad; the eldest brother of the Syiem Sad should become the Syiem, failing him his second brother, his third brother and so on and failing brothers by the eldest son of the Syiem Sad and failing all or in case there is no male heir, the Syiem Sad herself would become the Siem till a son is born to the Syiem Clan. 59 Besides, there are certain limitations for Syiemship. 60 First, if he

58. Lyngdoh, Dr H : Ka Niam Khasi.
59. Herbert, Capt D : Succession to Syiemships in Khasi States Part-I.
60. Ibid.
changed his religion. Secondly, if he married any one within his own clan. Thirdly, if he was infirm for a long time. Colonel Herbert observes, "No heir apparent used to be recognised in this state." But it should be noted that it was during the Shad Nongkrem - an annual religious festival that the Syiem delegated to the rightful person the sword to cut the sacrificial goat. If the electors raise no objection, such a person usually succeeds to the Syiemship after the death of the ruling syiem. The so called election by the electors is usually taken as a mere formal affair, such person is considered as heir apparent and he is styled as 'Syiem Khynnah' or Deputy Syiem. The syiem delegates some administrative powers to him. He is also the link between the Syiem and the Syiem Sad."

The Syiem Sad is succeeded by the eldest daughter failing her by the second sister and so on and failing daughters, by the eldest daughter of her eldest daughter, failing all daughters of her eldest daughter, by the eldest daughter of her second daughter and so on. Failing daughters and grand daughters, the Syiem Sad is succeeded by her eldest uterine sister and so on.57

The Syiem Sad may be disqualified if she changes her religion, if she marries a person within her own clan,

61. Ibid - Part-I ($).
and if she is infirm for a long time. She is locked upon as Mei 'Iem (Mother Syiem). She stands as a model of justice, love and service to the people — a peace maker of broken homes and broken families, disrupting tendencies of the Raids or villages, mis-understanding among the Basans and the Lyngdohs. She along with her husband and children live in the Ingsad called 'Ka Sad Ka Sunon'.

The institution of 'Ka Sad Ka Sunon' symbolises sovereignty, justice, unity, harmony and peace. Herein stands the Symbol of Khasi religion.

Kynrim also called as the hima of Hynriew Lyngdoh (Six Lyngdohs) has six raids. The six raids are the following:

1. Raid Nongkrem includes Mylliem Ngap, Mylliem Pdah, Warbah, Pongrup, Khyriem, Mujat and Lyngdoh Nongkrem. The representatives to the Dorbar Hima from this include one Lyngdoh from Lyngdoh Nongkrem clan, one Lyngskor from Mylliem Ngap clan and one Myntri each from Mylliem Pdah, Warbah, Pongrup and Khyriem Mujat. There are six more representatives from three shnats within the raid — two Basans from Sohryngkham Shnat — one from Nongbri clan and one

63. Ibid.
64. Lyngdoh, Dr H. Ki Syiem Khasi bad Synteng.
from Warshang clan; from Mawpdang shnat there are two Basans - one from Pongrup clan and one from Warlapih clan; from Mawlynrei shnat there are two Basans - one from Pongrup clan and one from Synteng clan.

2. Raid Nongbri includes Synnah, Swer, Mawthoh, Kharummuig and Lyngdoh Nongbri clans. The representatives to the Dorbar Hima from this raid include one Lyngdoh from Lyngdoh Nongbri clan and one myntri each from Synnah Swer, Mawthoh and Kharummuig clan. 65

3. Raid Mawlieh or Khatarblang includes Khongsngi, Khongsti, Khongwir, Nongrum and Lyngdoh Mawlieh clans. The representatives to the Dorbar Hima from this raid include one Lyngdoh from the Lyngdoh Mawlieh clan and one myntri each from Khongsngi, Khongsti Khongwir and Nongrum clans. Within this raid, there are twelve shnats (a colony of the commune) having their own sordar, who can be elected by the people from any of the clans within the shnat. These shnats are Nahkken, Nongblai, Nongkhlieng, Shabong, Mawjaw, Nongshken, Liting, Ryngneh, Pyrjet, Shitwit and Lyngkhat. 66

4. Raid Mawshal or Raid Phra Blang and Sari Prei include Lyngdoh Mawshai, Nongspung, Mawthoh, Rynthang and Muwa clans. The representatives to the Dorbar Hima

65. Ibid.
66. Ibid.
from this raid are one Lynddo from the Lynddo Mawshai clan, and one myntri each from Nongspung Mawthoh, Ryngthong and Kuwa clans. Within this raid, there are fourteen shnats. Three of these shnats, Lawlat, Lyngshing and Rynqngi have their own sordar, and eleven shnats, Iapngar, Nambsha, Nongtham, Thialang, Nongtaring, Nongkhap, Sukra, Umjong, Mojong, Mukhod and Lumphuit have their own Basan. 67

5. Raid Lawal includes Lynddo Lawai, Sohtun, Lawai Sawkher, Kharsati and Synteng clans. The representatives to the Dorbar Hima from this raid includes one Lynddo from Lynddo Lawai Clan and one myntri each from Sohtun, Lawai Sawkher, Kharsati and Synteng clans. 68

6. Raid Nongkynrih includes Lynddo Nongkynrih Mylljem, Nongrum, Rynjah and Nongkynrih clans. The representatives to the Dorbar Hima include One Lyngdoh from the Lynddo Nongkynrih clan and one myntri each from Mylljem, Nongrum, Rynjah and Nongkynrih clans. 69

Raid Nongumlong is replaced by Raid Mawlieh and Raid Mawshai, Raid Nongkseh is replaced by Raid Nongkynrih. 70 The electors of the syiem therefore include the six lyngdohs of the six raids, twentyfour myntries

67. Ibid.
68. Ibid.
69. Ibid.
70. Ibid.
of the six raids. On the death of the Syiem or the Siemsad or the Syiem Khynnah, the Lyngskor would formally propose the name of the Siem or the Siemsad or the Siem Khynnah respectively. The apparent families live at Smit whereas the presumptuous families live at Lyngkyrdem.

Mylliem Siemship evolved as a result of its secession from Khyrim Siemship in 1853. According to the prevailing Khasi custom it is the eldest sister of the ruling Syiem family who is the Siem sad, who is also the custodian of all religious rites in the State. Mylliem descended from the line of the younger sister - as such there is No Riti(tradition) in Mylliem Siemship. The custom of heredity or observation of Khasi religious rites are not observed and respected. Mylliem Siemship has the following raids:

1. Raid San Kur includes Lyngdoh Mylliem, Sohtun, Nongkhlaw, Kurkalang and Kharkongor Clans. Representatives to the Dorbar Hima from the raid include one Lyngdoh from Lyngdoh Mylliem Clan, and each mlyntri from Sohtun, Kurkalang, Nongkhlaw and Kharkongor clans.

2. Raid Nongkseh includes Thangkhiew, Rumnong, Nengnong and Lyngdoh Nongkseh Clans. The only representative from this Raid is the Basan Nongkseh from

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71. Ibid.
72. Ibid.
73. Ibid.
Thanqkhiew Clan. 74

3. Raid Nongumlong includes Nongneng Daloi, Nongneng Pator and Lyngdoh Shanpru Clans. The Pasan Nongumlong is the only representative to the Dorbar Hima from the Nongneng Clan. 75

4. Raid San Shnong includes Pathaw (Sadew), Lyngdoh Nongbsap, Sun (Marbisu), Rapsang (Markhan) and Majaw (Mawshanslang) Clans. Each Myntri represents each clan in the Dorbar Hima. 76

5. Raid Khatwei Matabor includes Wartyngha Synteng Nongdhar, Synteng Umwi, Langstleh, Karleng, Rubon, War Nongjri, Kharmawphlang, Kharmon, Mylliem Umlong and Kharlukhi Clans. One Matabor from each clan is selected as representative in the Dorbar Hima. 77

6. Raid Nongbed includes Lyngdoh Nongbed, Iawiang Songlangu and Khyriem. The representatives to the Dorbar Hima include one adult male from each clan. 78

7. Raid Phra Kur at Masar has eight adult male representatives from the Phra Kur or Eight Kurs. 79

The above Lyngdohs, Basans, Myntris, Matabors and the adult males were the electors of the Syiem of Mylliem. But later on, the Sun Clan (Marbisu) lost its right of being the elector when it became a British

74. Ibid.
75. Ibid.
76. Ibid.
77. Ibid.
78. Ibid.
79. Ibid.
territory; the Phra Kur (Eight Kurs) also lost because they came to be administered by Nongkrem Siemship; the Rapsang (Markhan) clan and the Majaw (Mawahanlang) clan also lost their representation because they scattered to the different parts of Khasi Hills. So during the British period, 24 electors formed the electoral college, two Lyngdohs, four Myntris, eleven Hatabors, two Basans and five heads of the other five major clans. It present, 23 other clans have been added, having one elector each. Thus, the total number of the electors is forty seven.

It may be noted that since the customary practice of succession of Syiem is not adopted in Mylliem Siemship, it is the electors who have the upper hand in the election of the Syiem. It is usually found that there is even competition among the syiem families, thus creating rivalry and jealousy among the Kurs; ways and means are adopted to grease the palms of the electors, to get the desired objective fulfilled. The candidates even resorted to force, as was recently done when Jum Manick Syiem exercised a coup d'etat during Jormanick Syiem's time. The Syiem Khynnah or the Deputy Syiem, Victor Manick Syiem was even confined in prison under a false charge. By all means, when the majority of the electors elected the

80. Ibid.
81. Herbert, Capt D: Succession to the Siemship in Khasi States.
82. Ibid.
83. Ibid.
84. Personal experience.
Syiem, this is announced to the whole Hima, but when the number is evenly distributed, a candidate having the 'best claim' would be selected as Syiem.

The electors of Nongstoin Siemship consist of one Lyngkor, two Myntris, one basan, thirty one Lyngdohs and twenty five sirdars. 85

Hima Nongkhlaw had popular election conducted by the Deputy Commissioner, Colonel Bivar in 1873 but it was soon followed by the decision of an electoral college which consisted of three Lyngdohs and two Myntris from the Five Kurs which include Lyngdoh Nongum, Lyngdoh Nongbri, Lyngdoh Nongtariang, Diengdoh and Kharwanlang. 86 Lyngdoh Nongkynrih became the Bakhraws at the Hima and they were also given the right in electing the Syiem. Later, Kharwanlang (Mawmluh) became a British area; Diengdoh and Nongtariang went to Sohra; Nongkynrih was no longer under the Hima of Nongkhlaw. 87 But at present the electoral college consists of four Lyngdohs and one Myntri.

The electoral college of Sohra consists of the twelve Kurs:

(1) Nongrum (2) Diengdoh (3) Khongwir (4) Shrieh
(5) Marbah (6) Tham (7) Nongtraw (8) Majaw (9) Umcor

85. Herbert, Capt D: Succession to Siemship in Khasi and Jaintia Hills.
86. Lyngdoh, Dr H: Ki Syiem Khasi & Synteng - p.161.
87. Ibid.
88. Ibid.
(10) Dohling (11) Mawdkhap (12) Sohkhia. This electoral college was further increased to **Forty Eight** including the Sirdars of 36 prominent villages. 89

The electoral college of Heram consists of 72 electors - including 8 Lyngdohs - Lyngdoh Sakwang, Lyngdoh Nongkhlaw, Lyngdoh Nonglwai, Lyngdoh Nongsynrih, Lyngdoh Nonglyngkien, Lyngdoh Nonglang, Lyngdoh Marshillong, 50 Myntris, 13 Sirdars and one Basan. 90

The electoral college of Myrivaw consists of 4 Lyngdohs: 91

1. Lyngdoh Mamgor (from Ramsit village)
2. Lyngdoh Mamgor (from Laitkah village)
3. Lyngdoh Langkhoi
4. Lyngdoh Mawkhyllup.

The electoral college of Rambrai consists of 3 Lyngdohs:

1. Lyngdoh Mawdo from Mawdo.
2. Lyngdoh Kynshi from Dompep
3. Lyngdoh Shynlong from Synmia - two Myntris - Myntri Rambrai and Myntri Matlah and 15 Sirdars of villages. 92

The electoral college of Nongspung consists of 5 Lyngdohs: 93

1. Lyngdoh Mawdkhap from Raid Nongspung.
2. Lyngdoh Jyrwa from Raid Lawkla.
3. Lyngdoh Marthong from Raid Umyngmar.
4. Lyngdoh Mawlong from Raid Umwai.
5. Lyngdoh Mairang from Raid Mairang.

The electors of Mawiang consists of 1 Lyngdoh - Lyngdoh. Nonglait Laikpoh (Nonglait) and 5 Basans. 94

89. Herbert, D : Succession to Syiemships.
90. Lyngdoh, Dr H : Ki Syiem Khasi bad Synteng. p.168.
91. Ibid.
92. Ibid.
93. Ibid. -pp.163-164
94. Ibid - p.185.
2. Basan Thabah (Law Byrtun).
5. Basan Marthong (Laitnamlang).

Later the Dozbar Hima of Mawiang elected 14 Basans more so form the electoral college of the Syiem of Mawiang.

The electoral college of Nobosohpoh includes

4 Lyngdohs: 95

1. Lyngdoh Mawlat from Mawsynram village.
2. Lyngdoh Iawphniaw from Ksan Maw and Sohsniang Rangblang villages.
3. Lyngdoh Thungnibah from Mariem and Ksan Mat villages.
4. Lyngdoh Paliar from Mawpat or Mawkyrda villages.

The electoral college of Mawsynram consists of 5 heads of the five chief clans: 96

1. Malngiang.
3. Lanpen or Syntein.
5. Nongdisiar.

The Five Bakhraws from the Five Kurs or raids who represent their respective raids elected the Basan of Malngiang to be the Syiem of the Hima. Since that time, Malngiang Clan becomes Syiem clan and the other Four Kurs are the electors of Mawsynram Siemship. 97

The electoral college of Bhowal consists of the Basans of the eight major clans:

1. Risaw.
2. Thungneibah.

95. Ibid. p. 188
96. Ibid, p. 189
97. Ibid
98. Ibid. p.193
The electoral college of Malaisohmat consists of the six heads of the six major clans:

1. Nyrwah.
2. Kajied.
3. Dew Khait.
5. Ronsang.
6. Pewsawbah.

The last clan (Dew Sawbah) lost its entity, so the remaining five heads of the five clans form the electoral college of Malaisohmat.

All male adults of the Wahlang clan form the electoral college of Jirang.

The Lyngdohs of Sohiong, Mawphlang and Lyniong are elected from the Lyngdoh clans by all adults. Sometimes they were also elected by the Myntris. The Sirdar, the Lyngdoh and the Doloi of Mawlong were elected by male adults.

However, there is one Sirdar for Mawlong who has been elected by adult males of Mawlong. The four Wahadadas were elected for a term of three years for

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100. Ibid.
101. Ibid.
102. (a) Herbert, P. : Succession to Siyemship in Khasi Hills.
    (b) Gurdon, P.R. : The Khasis Section III.
103. Gurdon, P.R. : The Khasis Section III.
Sheila but there is only one Wahadadar at present who has been elected by the people. The Sirdars of Nonglwai, Mawdon, Pamsenngut and Dwara Nongtyrem were elected by the people for a certain period of time. But now the Sirdars hold the office as long as they command the will and majority of the people. Last of all the Dalois of Jaintia Hills are elected by the people.

The Khasi Political System:

One of the important institutions in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills is the Syiemship, an institution that existed even before the coming of the British. Moffat Mills reported in 1853 that there were twenty four Khasi Chieftainships - the most important of these were the Syiem of Sohra, the Syiem of Mylliem, the Syiem of Maram, the Syiem of Khyrim and the Syiem of Nongstoin. The Syiems of Sohra, Khyrim, Langrin Nongspung and Nongstoin exercised civil and criminal jurisdiction in their respective areas. Petty cases were decided by them when they were their own subjects. The agent to the Governor General exercised sole jurisdiction over Sohra.

In the Jaintia Hills, there were twenty three Dalois. Each one of them had certain number of villages under his charge. They investigated all petty cases civil and criminal within their jurisdiction. An appeal could

104. Gurdon, P.R. : The Khasis Section III.
105. Gurdon, P.R. : The Khasis Section III.
106. Ibid.
be taken from the Sordar to the political agent.

The Doloi, at the first instance, held office for one year but their term was extended for three years by the political agent, provided they were of good conduct. After the expiry of their term, the community had the right to elect another or re-elect the same person for another term.

Under the Doloi, there were the Pattors. Each village had a Pattor. Under the Pattors there were the priests. All suits were heard by the priest. Against the decision of the priest, an appeal could be taken to the Pattor, then to the Doloi and finally to the agent to the Governor General.

Rev. Lewis described the form of Government in 1853 as a mixed one where the Syiem was mostly controlled by "the character of the people". The Syiem was absolute by nature but in some places, he exercised limited powers because the people controlled him. Nevertheless, all the Syiems were easily accessible to the people. 107

In 1915, Gurdon wrote on the nature of the Khasi States that the Khasi Syiem was a limited monarch because he exercised limited powers. He had to consult,

and most often, he had to obtain the consent of the Dorbar, consisting of Myntris. This Dorbar was a distinct body from the electoral Dorbar. The Dorbar, consisting of myntris, was an executive council over which the Syiem presided. It performed judicial functions also.\textsuperscript{108} In some states, the members of the Syiem's family had a considerable say in the management of the state. In some states there were village headmen, styled as Sordars who settled cases, recruited labour, collected taxes and received presents from the Syiem.\textsuperscript{109}

In Nongstoin, there was an official designated as Lyngskor, who supervised the work of a number of village Sardars. He was the Syiem's Deputy Governor.\textsuperscript{110}

\textbf{The Number of Syiems:}

Normally each Khasi state had only one Syiem. But in some there were more than one. The state of Maram had two Syiems—Senior Syiemlieh and Junior Syiemlong. Though both were held to be equal in rank, yet the Junior Syiem was considered as a subordinate of the Senior. The practice of having two rulers subordinated, it is presumed, is in the democratic instinct of the Khasis. Both of them were intended to check the other from exercising powers arbitrarily.\textsuperscript{111} Whatever might have been the intentions with which this institution was devised, conflict was

\textsuperscript{108} Gurdon P.R. * The Khasis p.68.
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid. p.69.
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid p.70.
\textsuperscript{111} Foreign Proceedings May 1875.
inherent in such an arrangement. The Senior Syiemlieh committed robbery at Nonglong. Therefore, he was deposed. A successor was not elected in his place and the administration was placed in the hands of the Syiemlong, Adhor Singh. He died soon after and he was succeeded by his heir, Kison Singh who was elected on 14th December 1877. There was no doubt opposition to his election by Jit Singh from the deposed Siem but was defeated. The election of Kison Singh was confirmed by the Viceroy. Since then Maram had only one Siem. In 1878, two petitions from certain inhabitants of Maram, praying for the appointment of two Siems for Maram, were received but they were rejected.

Before the arrival of the British in the Khasi Hills, the State of Sheila was ruled by one known as Gangkta Singh, who resided in the plains of Sylhet and the affairs of the state were managed by Wahadadors, who after the death of Gangkta Singh asserted independence and constituted themselves into democratic rulers under the style of Wahadadors. This was the position when David Scott entered the Khasi Hills in 1829.

In 1858, Allen in his report on the Khasi Hills said there were six Wahadadors in Sheila. He proposed

112. Foreign Proceedings March 1878.
113. Foreign Proceedings June 1878.
that four Wahadadars should be appointed to decide all civil and petty criminal suits with an appeal to the Principal Assistant Commissioner at Sohra and a Special appeal to the agent to the Governor General. Accordingly, it was laid down in 1858, that the Wahadadars should be elected by the people, the elected Wahadadars should receive the approval of the Principal Assistant Commissioner at Sohra. They were liable for removal by the Principal Assistant Commissioner for any serious misconduct. The appointment should be reconsidered every three years and if the Wahadadars gave satisfaction to the people and the Principal Assistant Commissioner at Sohra, they would hold office for a further period of three years. If they gave dissatisfaction to the Principal Assistant Commissioner they would be removed and fresh election would take place. 114

In 1860, the Government of Bengal ruled that the Wahadadars should be appointed like the Dolois in the Jaintia Hills. That is, they should be elected by the people, approved by the Government and liable to dismissal by the Government and that their appointment should be considered every three years.

In 1873 there were complaints against the Wahadadars. In 1874, Colonel Bivar reported that the

114. Foreign Proceedings October 1875.
affairs of Shalla confederacy were very bad and was not in favour of the existing management for the administration of the affairs of the state. He proposed two alternatives—first, to do away with the four Wahadadars and elect only one as the Siem or to make the confederacy a British possession pure and simple and administer it in the usual British fashion. He also suggested the dismissal of two Wahadadars who were bad enough and responsible for mal-administration and the retention of the old system. Later on, he suggested that the Wahadadars, on dying out, should not be replaced and thereby reduce gradually the number of Wahadadars from four to one.

In 1876, one of the surviving Wahadadars died. Bivar recommended that the remaining one should be the sole ruler of the Shalla confederacy. The Chief Commissioner approved the proposal, subject to the condition that if any strong representation was made by any large section of the community, asking for any change, the matter should be referred to the Chief Commissioner. Bivar was disappointed with this condition because the people of Shalla were always fond of agitation and would demand four Wahadadars. Therefore, Bivar once again urged upon the Chief Commissioner to appoint only one ruler for Shalla. The Chief Commissioner directed Bivar
to sound the community on the following points - (a) Should the Siem be elected for life? (b) Should three Wahadadars be elected? (c) Should four Wahadadars be elected? (d) Should Government depute one of its officers to manage the affairs of the State? The Chief Commissioner reserved to himself the right to accept or reject the views of the community.

A meeting of the people of Shella was held on 6th June 1876. It was attended by 562 persons. The Deputy Commissioner explained the desirability of electing only one Wahadadar. But the meeting unanimously decided to revert to the old practice of electing four Wahadadars. The Deputy Commissioner reported on 19th June 1876 the decision of the meeting. The Chief Commissioner accepted the decision of the meeting and directed the Deputy Commissioner to hold a meeting of the people of Shella to elect three more Wahadadars. The meeting was held on 22nd, 24th and 25th July. It divided itself into two groups, one consisting of 773 persons and the other 305. Each group set up its own nominees for the seats available for contest. The minority group protested that the majority group consisted of the relatives and kinsmen of the candidates. The Deputy Commissioner held an enquiry and decided that two candidates must be elected from each group. The Chief Commissioner approved the election. Thus came into

115. Foreign Proceedings August 1876.
existence once again four Wahadadars and the anarchic condition that existed before 1856. The Wahadadars were elected by sheer bribery and corruption. The candidates, it was alleged, spent ₹10,000. This produced two evils. First, the community finding it profitable to have frequent elections petitioned for the dismissal of this or that Wahadadar. Secondly, the elected Wahadadar went on plundering and pillaging the common man to recover the amount he spent on the election. Therefore, the Deputy Commissioner reported in 1887 that the system of having four Wahadadars with equal powers in a small community, was not desirable. They never acted together and there was no harmony among them. On the other hand, there was constant fighting against each other in the open Dorbar. The people had neither respect, affection or fear for them. They were ignorant, utterly corrupt and unreliable. Therefore, the Deputy Commissioner, Colonel Peet recommended that the system of having four Wahadadars should be abolished and in their place, one Syiem should be appointed. The Deputy Commissioner also said that should the Chief Commissioner agree with his views, he would dismiss all the Wahadadars and place the state under the charge of a Special Officer who had some administrative experience. Normally, his orders would be final. After the affairs of the confederacy were set right, a Syiem should be appointed but he should be an educated man.
The Chief Commissioner was not prepared to accept any of the suggestions of the Deputy Commissioner. Colonel Peet was succeeded by Colonel Clarke. The Chief Commissioner directed Colonel Clarke to make enquiries on the spot and report on 16th March 1889, the people of Sheila met and decided to have four wahadadors that the present wahadadors should be dismissed and that fresh elections should be held. The Chief Commissioner accepted the decision of the people.

On the 12th May the people assembled for the election of the wahadadors. There was no unanimity. There were 22 candidates for the four seats nominated by different factions. The Deputy Commissioner ordered a poll. The assembly was about to disperse. There was a shout that the Deputy Commissioner should nominate four candidates and that the community would accept his decision. The shout was repeated by several. The Deputy Commissioner called for a meeting of the twenty-two candidates to ascertain their views, whether there should be election or nomination. Ten were for election and twelve for nomination. Since a majority decided for nomination, the Deputy Commissioner nominated four persons who were accepted by the people. 116

In Mawlong there were two headmen styled Lyngskor alias Luskars. The office of Lyngskor was hereditary

116. Ibid.
but one of the Sardars died without a male heir in 1877. A Dorbar was held for the election of Lyngskor but it was decided that the affairs of the state should be entrusted to three Basans. The Deputy Commissioner accepted the proposal and three Basans were appointed.117

**Election of the Syiem:**

The first election was held when Hajar Singh, the Syiem of Mylliem was removed by the people of the state in 1863 and the Durbar disqualified all the members of his family from reigning. Milk Singh, a distant relative of Hajar Singh was appointed Syiem with the permission of the Deputy Commissioner. He was elected and his election was confirmed by the Chief Commissioner, thus breaking the regular line of succession. Milk Singh was succeeded by his own nephew Hain Manick Singh, who was elected on the death of his uncle. His election was confirmed. Chand Manick, a nephew of the deposed Syiem, Hajar Singh, contested the election but was defeated.

The Deputy Commissioners were not in favour of election of Syiems because it resulted in the division of the community and in the generation of much bitterness. Therefore, they suggested that immediately on the death of the Syiem, the Durbar and the members of the Syiem's

117. Foreign Proceedings February 1877.
family should be summoned to nominate a successor. The person nominated should be proclaimed Syiem provided there was no objection against him. Election should be held only when a demand was made by the Dorbar. The Chief Commissioner agreed with the proposal.118

In 1880, the position was as follows. In nine out of fifteen states, the right of the cousins (sons of the sister of the mother) failing uterine brothers and nephews was recognised. In Sohra, both the brothers and the cousins had an equal right, the older of the two having first claim to succeed. In Langrin, the cousin had no right whatever. In Rambrai, cousin could succeed a Syiem if there was no uterine brother to the deceased. In Nongkhlaw the right of succession was limited to uterine brother, nephew, sister niece and cousin. Thus the position of succession was as follows:

118. Foreign Proceedings November 1898 p.3. The Government of India ordered that the election of the Syiem of Cherrapoonjee should be held because there was a dispute about succession. On 20th March 1903 the Deputy Commissioner notified that an election would be held on 3 April 1902.
CLAIM TO SUCCESSION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the State</th>
<th>First claim</th>
<th>Second claim</th>
<th>Third claim</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Bhowal</td>
<td>Brother</td>
<td>Nephew</td>
<td>Cousin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Sohra</td>
<td>Both Brother and Cousin have equal claim, the elder of the two having first claim</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Khyrim</td>
<td>Brother</td>
<td>Nephew</td>
<td>Cousin</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Langrin</td>
<td>Brother</td>
<td>Nephew</td>
<td>Cousin</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Malaischmat</td>
<td>Brother</td>
<td>Nephew</td>
<td>Cousin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Maram</td>
<td>Brother</td>
<td>Nephew</td>
<td>Cousin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Myriaw</td>
<td>Brother</td>
<td>Nephew</td>
<td>Cousin</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Cousin</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Mawsynram</td>
<td>Brother</td>
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<td>Cousin</td>
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<td>10. Mylliem</td>
<td>Brother</td>
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<td>Cousin</td>
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<td>11. Nobosophoh</td>
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<td>12. Nongkhlaw</td>
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<td>14. Nongstoin</td>
<td>Brother</td>
<td>Nephew</td>
<td>Cousin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Rambrai</td>
<td>Brother</td>
<td>Nephew</td>
<td>Cousin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(a) Nephew - Sister's son  
(b) Cousin - Son of the mother's sister  
(c) Niece - Sister's daughter.

In Malaischmat and Nobosophoh, failing brothers, nephew and cousin, cousin's nephew could succeed to Sylemship. In Nongkhlaw, in the absence of brother and nephew, sister or niece, cousin had a right to succeed to Sylemship. In Nongstoin, the nephew, the son of the youngest sister could succeed to Sylemship. If the youngest sister had no male children the son of the sisters could succeed to Sylemship, the oldest of them having the first claim.

There is no doubt that succession to Sylemship
was controlled by the Deputy Commissioner. In 1902, the Syiem of Khyrim desired to entrust the management of the state to two of his nephews. The Deputy Commissioner thought that both the nephews would make use of the office to strengthen their position. Therefore he suggested that the administration should be entrusted to the Dewan. The Chief Commissioner agreed with the proposal.

Sometimes, the electoral College may not accept a particular candidate for appointment as Syiem. Even then the Deputy Commissioner's opinion is final. In 1904, Klur Singh, the Syiem of Khyrim died. There were four claimants, Samuel, Man Singh, Amen Singh and Dakhor Singh. The Dorbar disqualified Samuel on the ground that he became a Christian. Man Singh was also disqualified because of Ka sang or taboo, that is, he did not burn the body of his mother, Ka Tulamai. Further, he attempted to poison the Syiem. Dakhor Singh was supported by the Syiem Sad, by the Lyngskor of the State and by the more influential myntris of the state and five out of six Lyngdohs. The Chief Commissioner and the Deputy Commissioner accepted the decision of the majority.

119. Foreign Proceedings October 1902.
120. Foreign Proceedings A July 1904.
To sum up, the procedure for the election of the Sylem was as follows. A meeting of the electors of the area was called for. The person elected by a majority of the votes was appointed Sylem by the Deputy Commissioner which was formally approved by the Chief Commissioner. The Commissioner communicated the result of the election to the Viceroy till 1888. The practice of obtaining the formal approval of the Viceroy was discontinued. The Sylem appointed or elected, paid Muzaranna in cash and received Khilat which was equal in value to the amount paid as Muzaranna. Very often the Sylem himself presented the khilat. Kison Singh, Sylem of Maram paid Rs.300 as Muzaranna and asked for a double barrel gun etc.

Thus the Sylem was appointed from the Sylem’s family. There was such a family in fifteen states. The succession was through the female side. The line of succession is uniform in all cases except in Khyrim. In some places, cousins rank with uterine brothers. But generally, the eldest son of the eldest uterine sister is appointed Sylem. Sometimes, this rule was disregarded. In the absence of the male heirs from the eldest sister, the male children of the next eldest sister inherited the Syiemship. In Khyrim, the Syiemship was limited

122. Foreign Proceedings - Ibid.
to the male relatives of the Sylem Sad.

Succession was originally controlled by a small electoral college, consisting of Lyngdohs of certain priestly clans. The college sometimes rejected certain candidates on religious grounds. Later on, the electoral college was broad bottomed by the inclusion of certain headmen but not of priestly clan. In some states the electoral college was widened by the inclusion of village headmen such as Sardars, Basans etc. In some places there was popular election at which all adult males participated in election. In the Langrin state, all adult males participated in the election of the Siem. It was also in vogue in Nobosophoh and Bhowal states. The method of popular election was resorted to when the electoral college could not come to a unanimous decision. The Khasis considered the Dorbar as a divine institution. Hence, if the Sylem was chosen by the Dorbar, he was chosen by divine will.

In 1902, the Government of India considered the principles which regulated the succession to Siemship and laid down that in Khyrim, Sohra, Mylliem, Nongstoin, Myriaw, Rambrai, Maram, Nongkhlaw and Malaischmat, the nomination of the Sylem should rest with the majority of the small electoral body which was recognised in each case.
In the case of Nongspung, Mawiang, Nobosophoh, Bhowal and Mawsynram, the nomination should, in the first instance, lie with the small electoral body in each state. But, if there is no unanimity, the matter should be referred in the first four cases to the people, while in the case of Mawsynram, it should be referred to the Government whose decision was final. In the case of Langrin, the Siem should be chosen by popular suffrage.

A Khasi State is a "limited monarchy." The Syiem whether he be the uncle or the brother or the nephew or the grandson of Ka Syiem Kynthei (Female Syiem) is only the representative, in the Dorbar or in the battle field, of the female syiem. The Syiem brings all the produce of the Hima to Ka Syiem Kynthei and he has no right to spend it without her consent. The Syiem and the Syiem Kynthei or the Siem Sad work harmoniously together for the good of the Hima.¹²³ Gurdon writes "according to custom, he can perform no act of any importance without first consulting and obtaining the approval of his Durbar upon which the Myntris, the Dolois, the Sordars, the Lyngdohs sat ......... ........."¹²⁴ Again, he pointed out "The Syiem in matters judicial acts as a judge, the whole body of the Durbar being the jury."¹²⁵ Mr. Robertson, the Commissioner after David Scott, wrote of the

¹²³ Lyngdoh, Dr. H : Ki Syiem Khasi & Synteng-Jinglamphrang VII.
¹²⁴ Gurdon, P.R. : The Khasis - p.66.
¹²⁵ Ibid - p.69.
Khasi Himas, "Among many peculiarities apparent in the form of society and Government, existing among the Cossyas, the absence of any recognised organ of supreme power is very remarkable. The nation or horde presents the appearance of a congregation of little oligarchical republics, subject to no common superior, yet of which each member is amenable in some degree to the control of his confederates". Ten years after this remark, Yule wrote "They show no very particular courtesy of bearing towards their Rajas. Indeed the latter do not seem to have much power". There is however, the Hima with the Syiem, the Lyngdohs, the Myntris, the Basans and the Headmen or Sirdars. In Sohra, there is the Syiem and the Twelve Kurs, in Khyrim, the Syiem and the Six Lyngdohs and so on, in accordance with the established norms of each Hima. Each major clan has its own Lyngdoh or Bakhraws (nobles). As the Himas expand by embracing new villages, the Dorbar Hima also has more representatives. The Syiem can do nothing without the will and consent of the Dorbar Hima. This Dorbar Hima elects or dethrones the Syiem, it promulgates laws and bye-laws, it gives its assent to the appointment of Myntris or Lyngdohs or Basans, it decides war and peace and finally gives its final decision to any suit.\(^{126}\)

\(^{126}\) Cajee, Theodore : Ka History Jong ka Jingsynshar ia ka ri Khasi bad Jaintia : Syngkhong jingtip 1937.
The Syiem is assisted by two Durbars - first, the council called "U Syiem bad ka Dorbar" which consists of the Myntris, Basans, Lyngskor, Lyngdohs called the Bakhraws. Secondly, there is the council called "Ka Dorbar Hima" or the council of the people or a general assembly, all male adults are to represent in the Dorbar Hima where matters of great importance are to be discussed and decision taken upon. However, the Shnats are not given any representation in the Dorbar Hima.

In spite of certain changes introduced by the British, the Khasi States functioned with a high sense of justice. As the State was founded on religion, justice would be administered with as much care in conformity with the norms and customs of Khasi religion. In the first instance, when a person lodged a complaint against another person to the Syiem or Headman. The complainant would be asked if he had any uncle or not, so that the complaint could be lodged by them. There would then be enquiry whether the complainant had any relationship with the accused as this would involve 'Ka Sang' or a taboo. The complainant would then be asked to settle the dispute amicably. If no compromise could be brought about, the accused would be summoned to appear

127. Costa, G : Ka Riti jong ka Ri Leiphew Syiem Part II - p.91.
before the Syiem with his or her maternal uncles or parents. There were no paid lawyers but the uncles would plead for the complainant and the defendant accordingly. According to Gurdon, the ostensible object would be to attempt to bring about a compromise between the parties. If they could not reconcile, the Torber Shnong would be held to discuss the matter. The crier or Sangot or Nongpyrta Shnong would be sent to proclaim at the top of his voice in the evening, when everybody had returned from their works, to call one and all to assemble the following morning for the Durbar Shnong.

The English translation of the Sangot runs as follows:

"Kaw, thou, a fellow villager,
    thou, a fellow creature,
    thou, an old man
    thou, who had given up
    thou, who art young
    thou, a boy
    thou, a child
    thou, an infant
    thou, who art little
    thou, who art great

Hei! because there is a contest
Hei! for to cause to sit together
Hei! for to cause to deliberate
Hei! for to give intelligence together
Hei! about to assemble in durbar
Hei! for to listen attentively
Hei! ye are forbidden
Hei! ye are stopped to draw water thou not to cut firewood then

129. Ibid - p.2.
131. (a) Ibid.
    (b) Bareth, Hamlet & Khasi Democracy - p.64
132. (a) W.J. Allens' Report 1858 on the Khasi and Jaintia Hills.
    (b) Gurdon, P.R : The Khasis - p.91.
    (c) Costa, G : Ka Riti ka Ri Laiphew Syiem, Part II - p.2.
Heil to go as coolies thsn
Heil to go to work thsn
Heil to go to journey thsn
Heil to descend to the valley thsn
Heil he who has a pouch
Heil he who has a bag
Heil now come forth
Heil now appear
Heil the hearing then is to be all in company
Heil the listening attentively then is to be all together
Heil for his own king
Heil for his own lord, lest destruction has come,
lest wearing away has overtaken us;
Kawl come forth now fellow mates

This is called as "Khang Shnong" 133

In the Durbar ground, there are flat stones arranged irregularly for the people to sit. The headman would open the meeting with a long speech, others made short speeches too "touching upon all sorts of irrelevant matters but throwing out hints now and then, bearing on the subject of accusation." 134 Slowly, the came nearer to the point. Then the complainant and the defendant would throw their Iarong (a bag of pan, betel-nut, lime) in front of the Dorbar as a sign or a token that they would agree to the proceedings of the Syiem and the Dorbar, the Syiem being the judge and the Turbar being the jury. 135 Witnesses were examined on oath usually on a pinch of salt placed on a sword. Sometimes, the oath was sworn on U Klong (a hallow gourd containing liquor). It is believed that if a person swore falsely

133. (a) Khang Shnong means no one is allowed to go and work. One male adult at least should be represented in the Dorbar Shnong. Those who refused to do so, would be fined.
(b) Gurdon, P.R : The Khasis - p.97.
135. Ibid.
by U Klong u Khnam or U Klong u Skaw, he or the family or clan he represents will die. According to this ordeal, there would be a klong (Gourd) containing sohpdh (rice) and a feathered arrow with a barbed iron head which would be planted in the fermented rice. The person who took the oath would give this klong to the person or judge of the case. He would invoke the Goddess as follows:

"Come down and bear witness, thou Goddess who reignest above and below, who createst man who placest him (on earth), who judgest the right and the wrong, who givest him being and stature (i.e.) life. Thou Goddess of the State, thou Goddess of the place, who preservest the village, who preservest the State, come down and judge. If this man's cause be unrighteous, then shall he lose his stature (being) he shall lose his age (life) he shall lose his clan, he shall lose his wife, and children; only the post of his house shall remain, only the walls of his house shall remain, only small posts and the stones of the fireplace shall remain, he shall be afflicted with colic, he shall be racked with excruciating pains, he shall fall on the piercing arrow, he shall fall on the lacerating arrow, his dead body shall be carried off by kites, it shall be carried off by the crows, his family and his clan shall not find it; he shall become a dog, he shall become a cat, he shall creep in dung, he shall creep in urine, and he shall receive punishment at thy hands, oh, Goddess and at the hands of men, If on the other hand, his cause be righteous (lada u kren hok) he shall be well, he shall be prosperous, he shall live a defender and preserver of his clan, he shall be a master of tens and a master of hundreds (very rich) and all the world shall see it. Hear oh! Goddess, thou who judgest."

136. Ibid - p.95.
U Klong is next invoked as follows:

"Thou, u klong, with whose assistance - according to one religion and one custom, a man when he is born into the world is named - hear and judge. If he speaks falsely, his name shall be cut off (by thee) and he shall surely die."

The Fermented Rice is then invoked as follows:

"Thou yeast, thou charcoal, thou rice of the plough, thou rice of the yoke, thou too, hear and judge. If he speaks falsely, eat off his tongue, eat away his mouth."

Last of all the arrow is invoked as follows:

"Thou piercing and lacerating arrow as thou has been ordained by the Goddess, who creates man, who appoints man to occupy a pre-eminent place in war and in controversy do thou hear and judge. If he (i.e. the man taking the oath) speaks falsely, let him fall upon thee, let him be cut and be torn and let him be afflicted with shooting and pricking pains."

The man then takes the Klong and holds it on his head uttering the same invocation. The Klong is then given to the Syiem or the Sirdar as the case may be. The person who undergoes this ordeal, is the winner, the production of evidence being unnecessary. However, this ordeal by U Klong or U Klong U Khnam would be regarded to be the most serious ordeal by the Khasis. As such the Syiem or the Porbar would not propose such an ordeal but would be proposed by one party and accepted by the other party. However, the oath taken on U Klong U Khnam or any type of oath taken, testifies to the true Khasi religion "Ka Niam Tip Briew Tip Blei" (a religion which
knows man knows God) a religion which teaches man to respect Ka Juban Lak or the promise to speak the truth and nothing but the truth.\footnote{137}

If the case could not be decided, the Dorbar would continue for days together. When the verdict was pronounced, a fine of money would be imposed along with the presentation of a pig to be given by the losing party, supposed to be sacrificed to Ka 'Lei' Synshar - Goddess of the State. It is however eaten by the Syiem and the Dorbaris.\footnote{138}

If the Syiem and the Dorbar found that the evidence given by both the parties were unsatisfactory, they would call a witness called Saiphla,\footnote{139} a person of repute who would speak the truth irrespective of the two parties concerned. He would be asked to attend the Dorbar. He would be examined on oath and the oath would be regarded by the Khasis as ka samai ha khmat U Blei,\footnote{140} the oath before God. Again, according to the tradition of Khasis, the Saiphla must not be a 'khalijan'\footnote{141} or Iapduh or one who has no female relative, far and near. They said "Ka Khun ka duh jait ka lah ban kren katba ka mon" - being a Iapduh or duhjait or who has lost the line

\footnote{137. Roy, Sib Charan : Ka Niam ki Khasi - p.20} \footnote{138. Gurdon, P.R. : The Khasis - p.93.} \footnote{139. Costa, G : Ka Riti jong Ka Ri Laiphew Syiem - p.4.} \footnote{140. Ibid - p.4.} \footnote{141. Ibid - p.5.}
of descent, since there is no female relative, could say whatever came to his mind without thinking for his kur. But the Saiphla who had his kur or children or near relatives would not dare to speak falsely. It is believed there was no untruthfulness in him, and normally, the decision would be taken accordingly.\textsuperscript{142} Decision of disputes also decided by \textit{water Ordeals}. Each party, had its own man called \textit{U Kslh}. Such a water ordeal is called as \textit{ka Ngam Kslh}.\textsuperscript{143} The Syiem, the Basans or the Tymmen shnong would come to the appointed place, prepared for this purpose. The Syiem gave the order and the two ksihs dived into the water and any ksih who could remain longer inside the water - his party won the case.\textsuperscript{144} Another water ordeal is by placing two pots - one pot containing a piece of gold and the other pot a piece of silver. They would be asked to dip their hands into the water and any person who got the piece of gold would be adjudged as the winner of the dispute.\textsuperscript{145}

According to Mackenzie - "The judicial customs which prevailed among the tribe, previous to the establishment of our supremacy continue to be observed with such occasional modifications as experience proves necessary."\textsuperscript{146} The above mentioned practices are no

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\textsuperscript{142} Ibid - p.5 \\
\textsuperscript{143} Ibid - p.16. \\
\textsuperscript{144} Ibid - p.17. \\
\textsuperscript{145} Ibid - p.17. \\
\textsuperscript{146} Mackenzie, Alexander : The North Eastern Frontier - p.234. \\
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longer in vogue and with the changes brought by the British rule and the present trend of thought, these age-old customs seemed to slip away into oblivion. But, whatever may be the case, whatever may be the attitude and whatever may be the situation, the Khasis still cling to truth and nothing but the truth and they still believe that God sees the truth but waits. There is justice for all, though, during the British regime, the powers of the Syiems and their durbars were very much clipped and reduced. Criminal justice was however mostly taken away from their hands. "The Rules for the administration of Justice and Police in Khasi and Jaintia Hills as laid down by the British Government limit the powers and function of the Syiem. Again, with the coming of the Federation of Khasi States, when the Federation was given the power to have its own judge to be the appellate authority against the authority of the Syiem and the Durbar, the power of the Syiem and the administration of justice were further changed. However, at present, the Syiems and their Durbars function as additional Subordinate Courts of their respective District Councils Courts. In spite of the multifarious changes, we still can find the Dorbar Shnong, there is still Ka Pyrta Shnong, Ka Khang Shnong - in short, Durbars still play a vital role in the social and political life of the people. Ways and means are adopted to revitalise and revive the old political traditions and institutions.147