Chapter 111.

Political Systems.

A. The Nokma.

The Nokma and the Village Council were the earliest political systems of the Garos. They were the only political systems that existed among them prior to the advent of the British.

Origin of the word: The word "Nokma" in common parlance means a "rich man" but it has two literal meanings. First, "Nok" means a "house" and "Ma" is both an affix and suffix, which in some context means "big." Thus, according to this etymology, Nokma means the "big house." Though it is used to refer to the man of the house, and not the house, it carries some meaning as the houses of the Nokmas are generally bigger than other houses of the village. Moreover, the houses are constructed with specially carved posts and decorative roofs. Secondly, the word "Ma" means also "mother" and in this sense, it means the "mother of the house." Though it invariably refers to the man of the house, but since the man owns the house and the household property in the name of his wife and her clan, this etymology also conveys some practical meaning. Thus, though the Nokma, that is, the man is theoretically the owner, the actual owners are his wife and her clans. As the head of the clan, the Nokma is only a custodian of the lands and property of his wife and her clan.

Different kinds of Nokma: There are four kinds of Nokmas among the Garos. They are:

1. The Gami Nokma: He is a mere rich man of the village. He has neither power nor authority, and as such, it is not a political institution.
2. **The Gana Nokma**: He is also a rich man of the village, but in order to gain social prestige and standing, he performs the Gana ceremony in which he gives sumptuous feast to all the people and dances round and round merrily in front of the assembled guests. As a symbol of recognition of Nokmaship, he wears a thick metal ring round his elbow. Such a Nokma commands respect from his co-villagers because of his wealth, but is devoid of any political power. As such, he does not exist as a political institution.

3. **The Kamal Nokma**: He is a village Priest, and as a Priest, he conducts religious ceremonies only. Therefore, he does not have any political power.

4. **The A'king Nokma**: The A'king Nokma is a person who holds title to the a'king land of the village community, as head of the clan. He becomes the A'king Nokma by virtue of his marriage with the girl of the senior most house of the village. As the head of the clan and as the custodian of the a'king land, he has certain powers and functions. As such, the A'king Nokma is the only Nokma which is a political institution.

**Succession to A'king lands**: Succession to a'king Nokmaship is subject to ordinary laws of inheritance through the system of Nokna (heiress), and Nokkrom (man married to an heiress), who are entitled to the a'king and they shall be recognised by the government as Nokma. When they succeed to Nokmaship, their names are entered in the record of Nokmas by the Deputy Commissioner, but now the records are kept and maintained by the District Council.

Usually, the a'king Nokma, like any other Nokma, looks for a nephew, that is the son of his sister, to come and be his son-in-law and heir. Thus, the nephew not only becomes the heir to the house and property but also succeeds to the 'headship' when his father-in-law dies. As a rule, a Nokma should be a member of the lineage and from the same village as the previous Nokma. Therefore, generally a succession of Nokmas are members of one village and lineage by descent but hold the status of Nokma or headman in another village by virtue of being married to the girl who are successively chosen as heiress in the senior house of the village.

In the absence of a daughter, the nearest female relation of the Nokma's wife is adopted as heiress and she together with her husband succeeds to the a'king land. However, in recent years, there has been a few cases where, after the death of the Nokma, his surviving wife succeeded as Nokma in supercession of all her daughters and their husbands. In any case, it is the important relations of her clan who have a final say in the matter. They have every right to elect anybody to the Nokmaship by majority vote or consent and the government will simply endorse it.

The place of Nokma in society: Each Garo village community is an autonomous political unit, the head of which is the Nokma. The Nokma holds his office through the right of the a'king which theoretically belongs to his wife and her clan. The Office of Nokma has the intrinsic importance from the point of view of the Garo organisation. It is the pivot of the village organisation, through which the basic network of the entire Garo society is woven. In fact, the Nokma plays the leading role as the central figure in the village activities, and externally represents the village.

However, the position of the Nokma is very delicate. As a matter of fact, the Nokma can not be compared to a Chief who exercises his political authority with various social and economic advantages. The Nokma is rather social and economic representative of the village without having any advantage or authority.

The Nokma's position becomes clear when we consider the characteristics of the Garo social structure, associated with the "Nok" or "House" institution. Though every house or nok is independent, the function of the Nok is always backed by all the members of the two lineages in moiety relation. No Nok can develop a social solidarity or a differentiated status from others. The Nokmaship also follows this principle. No doubt, the Nokma's house has the prestige as the oldest household among the houses of the village. The word "Nokma" itself indicates "mother of the house" according to one etymology. However, the Nokma including his family members can not claim any superiority of status, because he is simply a selected member from both local lineage groups in which the members are of equal status in the kinship network.
Any male member of the same lineage group may become the Nokma. The opportunity is provided according to the circumstances and sometimes, the villagers together with the important members of the lineage group have also the right to dismiss him from the Nokmaship should he fail seriously to perform his duties, as happened a few years ago in a neighbouring village of Hombagiri, where the Nokma was replaced because of his failure to arrange the funeral of his wife. Thus, structurally, the Nokma's status does not confer on him any distinguishable social rank.

On the other hand, a long traditional custom endows certain privileges to a Nokma. Breach of these privileges would amount to a usurpation and an insolence to the Nokma, and naturally, he would resent it with vehemence. The following are the instances:

**Performance of Gana ceremony:** This ceremony is performed by any rich man of the village in order to display his riches after which he is conferred the title of Gana Nokma. But no man can perform this ceremony unless permission is granted by the Nokma of a 'king concerned. If he does so, it would be a usurpation and the a'king Nokma can bring action against such person and impose fines.

**Possession of Kram or Drum:** A Kram is a Drum made of hollow tree covered on both sides by cow hides. It is different from other common drums and is believed to have been endowed with supernatural powers. Special sacrifices are required before making it. It can be used only on special occasions such as funerals and some annual ceremonies of religious nature. But no one can permanently possess it except the a'king Nokma.

**Performance of k'songtata:** A plot of land is set apart at the outskirt of every village inhabited by the non-

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Christian Garos. On this plot of land, sacrificial stones are erected which is called "A'song". A sacrifice is given to A'song to drive off dangers to village community from sickness, animals, etc. This sacrifice is known as "A'songtata". A priest officiates at this sacrifice but it is for the Nokma who has the right to perform or provide for or sanction. If anyone offers such sacrifices, it would not only be a usurpation of Nokma's authority but would be tantamount to asserting himself as Nokma and such person would be liable to pay a heavy fine.

Thus, a certain amount of prestige is connected with the Nokmaship. It is by no means a completely unattractive position, though the office has no obvious privileges.

His economic status and responsibilities: Economically, the Nokma's status is basically equal to that of the others. Though the A'king belongs to the wife of the Nokma, it is actually held in common by all the inhabitants of the village. Every member of the village has the right to cultivate the village land. The possession of the A'king is simply represented by the Nokma's wife. As a rule, no portion of the A'king can be sold or mortgaged by the Nokma, since it is the common property of the villagers. The village land is divided into several parts on the basis of annual rotation of jhum cultivation. Every year one of these parts is distributed to each household according to the number of its members. The share of the Nokma's family is allotted in the same way as that of the other families. The Nokma, in theory, has no special economic advantages over commoners. In fact, some of the Nokmas are even poorer than others.

5. Nakane, Chie; Garo and Khasi-Comparative studies, p. 61.
On the other hand, the Nokma being the centre of social activities within the village as well as outside, his expenses are high. The entertainment of visitors rests on his shoulders. It is the usual custom for visitors who have no kins in the village to stay at the Nokma's house and eat there. Festivals, funerals and marriage ceremonies are conducted in his presence. And specially the social and religious ceremonies are started from his house and ended in his house. Therefore, it is his obligation to provide extra meals and drinks to the people. Such social activities resulted in considerable expense to the Nokma. If the Nokma is poor, the responsibility is taken over by the second Nokma or third Nokma or even by the Gana Nokma. Likewise, if the Nokma is a Christian, certain activities in which the Nokma has to play a religious role a wealthy and senior non-Christian husbandman or the second Nokma if he is not a Christian, is to take his role. When a wealthy man takes the place of a Nokma in a religious ceremony, such a man is addressed as the Gana Nokma. Otherwise, the Nokma has to play a ceremonial role to mark important points in the annual cycle, such as clearing the jungle, planting and harvesting, etc. On such occasions, the Nokma must act as ceremonial leader, performing sacrifices and reciting incantations to ensure vigour for the crops and prosperity for the village. At many of these sacrifices, the Nokma is expected to provide the sacrificial animal himself. Though this brings a degree of prestige, but it is also a considerable economic burden on the household of the Nokma. Of course, if the Nokma is really unable to furnish the animal, other villagers may assist him, but it is always preferable for the Nokma to provide it himself.

7. Burling, Robbins; Rengsanggri, p. 228-229.
However, the Nokma receives one direct economic benefit from his title, though it is insignificant. That is, if an outsider wants to cultivate land within the a'king land, he has to pay an annual fee called "A'wil", which is usually about Re. 1 per plot, to the Nokma. This is at best little more than a token payment, and it is rarely paid since few people cultivated outside their own villages.

Nepalis who have settled in the hills and who wish to obtain grazing privileges for their cattle may pay the Nokma an A'wil fee.

The Nokma also receives some share from the extraction fee called the Nokma's fee for certain forest products, like timber, bamboo, etc.

Other responsibilities: The A'king Nokmas are also responsible for the peace and good administration, submission of reports on epidemics, on births and deaths or any unusual occurrences in his A'king. Besides, he also regulates jhum cultivation and participates with the villagers in all public and social works and functions. In olden days, it devolved upon the Hokmas to lead his parties to wars and to protect his villages against external invasions.

In the settlement of disputes, the Nokmas tried all cases of theft, injury to property, injury to the persons not affecting life or limb, house-trespass and affronts, provided neither of the parties is a near relative of their or a foreigner. They punish by fine, after proceedings held in open Durbar. The decisions made in these durbars are final and put into execution at once.

12. Mackenzie, A., History of Relations, etc., P.554.
B. The Laskar.

Meaning of the word: "Laskar" is not a Garo but a Hindi word. The word as it has been used for official purposes, means the elective head of a group of villages called Elaka or area which are united for fiscal and administrative purposes; each village being under its hereditary Nokma. The Garo Hills District Council defines "Laskar" as a Laskar recognised as such by the District Council.

Origin of the Office of Laskar: The Office of a Laskar was first introduced by in the Garo Hills by the British government. It was David Scott who proposed the introduction of the Office of Laskar in the Garo Hills, in his Draft Regulation of 1819, for the administration of Garo Hills. His sagacity and foresightedness led him to entrust the local influential headman with the responsibility of maintaining peace and the collection of revenues, with a promise to reward them for their good behaviour. He, therefore, proposed in his Draft Regulation that the existing Chiefs of the local Divisions called Duars, should be given policing of the Garo Hills and associate them with judicial administration. These Chiefs whom he called Laskars and Sardars should be responsible for reporting murders and other heinous offences within their limits. They should also be made responsible for the security of the lowland territories adjoining their villages or duars and for preventing Garo inroads upon that territory and for apprehending any Garo who should commit such outrage. In return for these services the Laskars and the Sardars would be allowed a salary. In case of misconduct, however, they would be removable from office by the Commissioner.

13. Assam Secretariat, File No. 507 of 1907 (Rev. & Agr.).
Finally, Scott proposed that when the Commissioner tried Garo cases, the Laskars and the Sardars should be consulted on all points connected with the peculiar customs and manners of the Garos, and their opinion as to the guilt or innocence of the prisoner should be recorded, though this should not bind the court in passing judgment. All civil and criminal disputes which the Laskars and the Sardars were unable to settle should be tried by a Panchayat either appointed by the Commissioner or chosen by the parties. If their decision is considered fair by the Commissioner, it should be immediately carried into execution.

The Governor-General-in-Council and the Court of Directors accepted these proposals, and the Regulation X of 1822 was passed on the 19th. September, 1822, embodying Scott's proposals.

Thus emerged an institution of Laskar in the Garo Hills with limited Police, Civil and Criminal powers.

Appointment of Laskars: In 1824, after the Garos had been brought to reason by a successful military demonstration from Hymensing, Scott proceeded to enter into specific agreements with the Laskars or village headmen along the frontier. The agreement stipulated for punctual payment to government of the nuzzeranah which was an acknowledgement of British sovereignty. It bound the Laskars moreover to report criminal cases to the police and to assist in their investigation and also to apprehend the escaped offenders in their respective jurisdictions and to endeavour to suppress the practice of using human skulls as household furniture, and to put an end to the atrocities which this practice naturally led them to commit. Conditionally upon their observing their agreements the Laskars were to receive small money allowances.

15. Enclosure 2 of Scott's Draft Regulation of 1819, vide Borooah, N.K., David Scott in North-East India, Pp. 59-60.

The number of Laskers with whom it was arranged to make agreements were 19, and the total amount of allowances sanctioned for them amounted to Rs. 1020. The scheme was, however, carried out only with regard to 13 Laskars, whose money allowances amounted to Rs. 649-3-5; the remainder of the sanctioned allowance was carried to deposit. On receiving the sanction of government, Scott, while he took written agreements from all Chiefs (shown in Appendix A), submitting to government in the form of Appendix B, made payment for specific services to those Garo Chiefs who are mentioned below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Laskar of Village</th>
<th>Rs.-as.-P.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dollunggiri</td>
<td>83-7-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boyragee</td>
<td>73-2-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chipuk</td>
<td>41-12-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dasagram</td>
<td>60-0-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harreegram</td>
<td>52-4-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shathjowar</td>
<td>52-4-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tikree</td>
<td>52-4-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jowalleee</td>
<td>52-4-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damulgiri</td>
<td>31-5-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porakhasoca</td>
<td>50-0-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachooreparaah</td>
<td>10-7-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gandooparaah</td>
<td>50-0-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choyani</td>
<td>40-0-0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The sum of Rs. 1020 per annum still remained and the savings from this head were, until 1865, carried to deposit. Under order of the Accountant General the actual expenses incurred on account of payment to Garo Laskars are afterwards charged against this sum.

17. Assam Secretariat (General Dept.), File No. 618(a) of 1865-1866, 289(b)
In 1866, Lieutenant W.J. Williamson, Deputy Commissioner of Garo Hills, made tours in the Garo Hills and appointed more Laskars. In 1873, he again forwarded a list of new men whom he had appointed as Laskars to the Commissioner of Cooch Behar along with the increase of salaries he proposed for the old Laskars, whose jurisdictions he has extended. He appointed Laskars, as a rule, over about 10 or 12 villages which were contiguous to each other. The L.C. selected altogether 52 Laskars and submitted the list to the Commissioner of Cooch Behar. The Officiating Commissioner of Cooch Behar sanctioned the appointment of Laskars nominated by Captain Williamson, and issued sanads on parchment as usual.

The renumerations he paid to the Laskars also received the sanction of the Commissioner. At present, there are altogether 60 Laskars in the Garo Hills.

**Mode of Selection:** When David Scott appointed the Laskars for the first time, he appointed only those headmen or Nokmas who were the most influential men in their elakas or areas. Moreover, he appointed them only on getting the assurance from them that they would remain loyal and pay the revenues regularly to the British government.

In 1866 and in 1873, Captain Williamson, appointed as Laskars the principal Chiefs, men of authority and influence, whom he thought would be able to maintain law and order. Thus, the Laskars were mostly men of weight among the people, and were always the Chief Nokmas of their own villages.

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18. Files received from Govt. of Bengal, No. 7 of 1871-1872.
19. Assam Secretariat, File No. 11J. of 1874.
22. Assam Secretariat, File No. 11J. of 1874.
During the British rule, the D.Cs used to summon the headmen of each village in the circle and ask them to nominate a Laskar from among them. The D.C. would then send the name for sanction to the Commissioner along with his recommendation.

Under the District Council, the Executive Committee is authorised to appoint the Laskars taking into considerations the following qualifications:

That he must maintain the age of 35 years; he must possess good character; he must be a man of integrity; he must be conversant with tribal social customs and usages and he must be financially sound and capable of depositing 25% of the total annual demand of House-Tax and local rate security.

In 1964, in the fourth session of the Garo Hills District Council, it was resolved that in order to make the selection, some sort of examination will be arranged for testing the knowledge regarding the social customs and usages. In such an examination, question of the following kind may be asked: "Suppose one man is married to a girl of the family and they lived together in the girl's family. After some years, for some reasons, they have been separated from the main family. What will be the result of the separation?" It was further resolved that since the customs of the people are so deep-rooted in their ways of life which is not commonly known to the educated persons but only to the village elders, it will be the policy of the District Council that the examiners of the candidates shall be the village elders. As such, educational qualification was not found necessary for the appointment of Laskars. However, no examination has been arranged so far for the selection of Laskars.

23. Assam Secretariat, File No. 11 of 1874.
25. Ibid.
The powers and functions of Laskar have been clearly drawn up and legalised by the Scheduled Districts Act of 1874. According to it, the Laskar was to exercise some powers in matters of Police, Civil and Criminal Justice and in Revenue administration within their own respective elakas or jurisdictions. The following are the powers and functions of the Laskars:

**Police Powers:** According to the Scheduled Districts Act, 1874, the ordinary duties of the Police in the Garo Hills in respect of crime would be discharged by the Laskars. They shall arrest all criminals and maintain peace and order within their respective circles.

Secondly, it shall be the duty of the Laskars to report to the D.C., all crimes, violent deaths and serious accidents occurring in their circles, and all occurrences whether within or beyond their circles which may come to their knowledge likely to affect the public peace, at the earliest practicable moment, and to deliver up offenders as soon as may be to the Officer authorised to try them.

Thirdly, on the receipt of the report from the village Officer or Officers on the occurrence of any heinous crime, like arson, cattle stealing, counterfeiting coins or passing it, dacoity, forgery, house-breaking, murder, rape, rebellion, robbery, riot, wounding to the injury of life or limb, in his circle, the Laskar shall proceed without delay to the place where the crime occurred and enquire into the matter. If the crime beyond the cognizance of the Laskar has been committed, he shall within eight days report to the D.C. or any other duly authorised Officer, whether the offender has been apprehended or not.

Fourthly, the Laskar may pursue with hue and cry an offender fleeing beyond their jurisdiction and arrest him but ordinarily, no Laskar or police officer shall attempt to arrest an offender beyond his own jurisdiction without the cognizance and co-operation of the Laskar of the circle to which the offender has fled. When an offender is traced from one jurisdiction to another, it will be sufficient to point out to the Laskar of the circle in which he may be found, aiding them if required to effect his capture.

Fifthly, when the Laskar was unable to arrest an offender, they shall apply to the D.C., or any officer duly authorised, for the aid of the regular police.

Sixth, the Laskars were empowered to arrest and fine all drunkards and other disorderly persons found brawling out of their own houses, and all persons found gambling. The fines imposed on them was not to exceed that awardable under their power in criminal matters, by the procedure laid down for which they would also be guided.

Seventh, the villagers were liable to be fined for the failure of the maintenance of order or apprehending offenders and the fines were to be adjudged by the Laskar to the extent of his powers in criminal cases.

Eighth, when the particular persons liable for failure to aid in the arrest of the offenders can not be ascertained, the Laskar of the village or community concerned shall be held primarily answerable.

Lastly, an appeal shall lie from all orders of the Laskars in police matters to the Deputy Commissioner, whose orders are final, but the Chief Commissioner may at any time call for the proceedings and modify or reverse any order of the D.C.

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27. Government of Bengal, File No. 70 of 1873 (Judicial).
Rules for the administration of Police in the Garo Hills have been revised in 1910. According to this Act, the ordinary duties of Police shall be discharged by the Laskars along with the Sardars and the Nokmas in the Hill mauzas only. They were empowered to arrest all criminals and repress all disorders within their respective jurisdictions, whereas in the plain mauzas, the Gaonburas shall possess such powers and perform such duties as are prescribed for Gaonburas by any orders in force in Assam, and shall also perform the duties of village headmen as prescribed in the Code of Criminal Procedure. Thus, the Hill and the plain mauzas have been put under different officials and under different rules.

Over and above these, no other changes have been made by the Act of 1910.

Rules for the administration of Police were revised again in 1937, but this Act did not contain any change. Therefore, the Laskars continued to enjoy the same powers till independence.

The Garo Hills District Council recognised the Office of the Laskar with all its powers and functions as have been drawn up in the Act of 1937.

28. The Eastern Bengal and Assam Gazette, July 20, 1910 (Part 11).
Powers in Criminal Justice: The Act of 1874 provided that Criminal shall ordinarily be administered by the Laskar within his circle, and within a certain limit. The following are his powers and functions:

First, the Laskars may themselves dispose of the cases of persons charged with the following offences:

(i) Theft,
(ii) Injury to property of whatever kind,
(iii) Injury to persons not endangering life or limb,
(iv) House-trespass, and
(v) Affronts of whatever kind.

Second, the Laskars may impose a fine for any offence they are competent to try up to a limit of Rs. 50. They may award restitution or compensation to the extent of the injury sustained, and enforce it by distraint of the property of the offender.

Third, the Laskar may carry out his decision as soon as pronounced, unless the defendant appeals, and may hold the defendant in custody or to bail while distraint is made, but not for a longer period than eight days. But the following reservations are to be maintained in carrying out the above decisions:

(i) The Laskars may not decide in cases where their father, mother, son, daughter, their wife, or the children, husbands, or wives of any of these are concerned;
(ii) where the defendant is not a native of the Garo Hills, or is a Garo living beyond the hills, or the son of any other tribe living in the Garo Hills;
(iii) where the offence is one against the State, or has caused death or danger to life or limb, or in cases of robbery of any sort with violence, or passing or counterfeiting coin, or
making of fraudulent documents, and the like.

Fourth, the Laskars shall not decide any case but in open Durbar, in the presence of at least three witnesses, and of the complainant and defendant, whose attendance they are empowered to compel. Either party may appeal from the decision of the Laskar at the time decision is pronounced. In such a case, the Laskar may take the parties and witnesses, or cause them to be taken at once before the D.C., and with one of the persons required to attend as a court witness, to the D.C. The case shall then be tried de novo.

Fifth, the proceedings of the Laskars need not be recorded in writing.

Lastly, all fines levied by the Laskars shall be paid to the D.C., Assistant Commissioner, or other officer empowered to receive the same within eight days from their collections.

The Act of 1910 made the following amendments with regard to the powers of the Laskars in Criminal Justice:

First, if the fine imposed by the Laskars on the guilty is not paid or realised either in part or in whole, the Laskars shall represent the facts and send the offenders to the D.C. or to the Assistant Commissioner who may re-try the case and impose such other punishment as he is competent to inflict;

Second, when an appeal is made to the D.C. against the decision of the Laskars, the D.C. or the Assistant Commissioner will try the case de novo only when they are satisfied that justice was not done.

Lastly, it provided that the proceedings of the Laskars need not be in writing, but added that if at the trial, any person who can write can be found, a brief note of the proceedings is to be made.

The Act of 1937 has simply repeated the provisions contained in the previous Acts.

The Garo Hills autonomous District Council accepted the provisions contained in the Act of 1937 in regard to the powers of the Laskars in Criminal Justice, and added that the Laskars shall be the ex-officio president of the Village Court and thus, as a president, he will exercise all powers and functions contained in the Act.

Civil Powers: The Act of 1874 provided that the administration of Civil Justice shall be conducted by the Laskars within their own jurisdictions. Their powers and functions in Civil matters are as follows:

First, the Laskars are empowered to try civil suits without limit as to amount, but with the following reservations:

(i) Laskars may not try suits in which their fathers, mothers, sons or daughters, uncles or aunts, sister or brother, the children of any of the foregoing, their wives or persons in the above relationship to a wife, or any near relative, are concerned.

(ii) the Laskars may only try suits in which complainant and defendant are living within their jurisdictions.

(iii) all suits shall be decided in open Durbar, in the presence of the parties, and at least three respective witnesses.

32. The Eastern Bengal and Assam Gazette, July 20, 1910 (part 11).
33. The Assam Gazette, March 31, 1937 (part 11).
Second, the Laskars shall have power to compel attendance of parties to any suit and their witnesses, all such persons being residents within their jurisdictions, and to fine up to a limit of Rs. 50, persons failing to attend when ordered to do so. They have power to award all costs, also compensation to defendants for unfounded or vexatious suits brought against them.

Third, all proceedings shall be viva voce, and the Laskars shall not be called on to make either record or registry of their decisions. After hearing both parties and their witnesses, if any, they shall, with or without the opinion of assessors, as they may see fit, forthwith pronounce a decision.

Fourth, the Laskars may carry out their decisions at once, and may retain the party liable in custody for a period not exceeding eight days till the decree has been executed, or security given to the Laskars's satisfaction. But if an appeal is made at the time of decision, he shall send the parties and their witnesses to the D.C. forthwith. He shall either accompany them himself or send at least one respectable person who has been present at the trial with them.

Fifth, all notices given by the Laskars to parties or witnesses shall be verbal, and for a fixed day, not exceeding eight days on which it is given. If the case is postponed, it shall be for a fixed day, not exceeding eight days from the date of the order. If either of the parties are incapacitated from attending, the case may be adjourned for a period not exceeding eight days.

Sixth, suits which under these rules the Laskars cannot try shall be tried by the D.C.

Seventh, the D.C. shall try to refer the cases coming to him, in which the parties are indigenous inhabitants of the district, to a Panchayat. In that event, each party shall name arbitrato-
rs or choose an umpire, or leave the arbitrators to choose an umpire. Then the Laskar or some other person may be directed to assemble the Panchayet and witnesses within eight days.

Eight, on appeals to the D.C. from the decision of the Laskar, a record shall be made of the matter in dispute and of the decision of the Laskar. If necessary, the court shall examine the parties and if the decision appears to be just, it shall be affirmed and enforced by the court as its own. If, on the other hand, the court sees ground to doubt the justice of the decision, it shall try the case de novo, or refer it to a Panchayet.

Lastly, all appeals from the orders of the Laskars in civil cases shall lie to the D.C.

The Act of 1910 contained the following amendments:

First, in all suits affecting the possession of land, the Laskar shall cause his decision to be registered in D.C's office.

Second, the Laskar may order attachment of property to be made, but in no case is property so attached to be sold if the party cast claim to appeal within eight days.

Lastly, the proceedings of the Laskars may be noted if any person who can write is available.

The Act of 1937 did not make any change except that the property so attached can not be sold if the party cast claim to appeal within 30 days, instead of 8 days mentioned earlier.

The Garo Hills District Council repeated all the provisions contained in the Act of 1937, except that under the District Council, the Laskars have become the ex-officio members of the Village Councils.

35. Government of Bengal, File No. 70 of 1874 (Judicial).
36. The Eastern Bengal and Assam Gazette, July 20, 1910 (Part 11).
37. The Assam Gazette, March 31, 1937 (Part 11).
38. The Garo Hills District Council, Acts, Rules, etc., rp. 183-188.
Statement exhibiting the names and relative population of the Dowars or Divisionals of the Tributary Garo Country, names of Luskars, and the salary it is proposed to assign to each for police duties:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names of Dowars</th>
<th>Names of Luskars</th>
<th>Number of houses taxed</th>
<th>Revenue in 1820</th>
<th>Proposed annual allowance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dolimgiri</td>
<td>Agging</td>
<td>not ascertained</td>
<td>700-0-0.-</td>
<td>80-0-0.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buragee Dooar</td>
<td>Soncha</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>925-0-0.-</td>
<td>70-0-0.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dusgang</td>
<td>Soobul</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>635-0-0.-</td>
<td>60-0-0.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tikree</td>
<td>Pagla</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>294-0-0.-</td>
<td>50-0-0.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forakuswa</td>
<td>Tyrong</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>335-0-0.-</td>
<td>50-0-0.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sateyooar</td>
<td>Thosong</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>248-0-0.-</td>
<td>50-0-0.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachooparah</td>
<td>Abooja</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>70-0-0.-</td>
<td>10-0-0.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towbe</td>
<td>Thoossong</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>377-0-0.-</td>
<td>50-0-0.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gandooparah</td>
<td>Myaram</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>263-8-0.-</td>
<td>50-0-0.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harugong</td>
<td>Khansama</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>374-8-0.-</td>
<td>50-0-0.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funulgiri</td>
<td>Kewal</td>
<td>not ascertained</td>
<td>200-0-0.-</td>
<td>X-X-X.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheepook</td>
<td>Iabia</td>
<td>not ascertained</td>
<td>X-X-X.</td>
<td>40-0-0.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Formerly attached to Karoobaree.

Dolimgiri, Buragee Dooar, Dusgang, Tikree, Forakuswa, Sateyooar, Bachooparah, Towbe, Gandooparah, Harugong.

Formerly attached to Mechparah.

Tikree 2nd., Hatoogang, Nibbaree.

Formerly attached to Kalloomallooparah.

Dusannee, Chowani.

Attached to Habraghat.

Western Division - Dhunsing, Central, Eastern.

Total - 1020-0-0.

D. Scott, Commissioner.
Appendix B.
Form of Agreement taken by Scott.

1. I, _______ having been appointed Luskur of mouzah named below, with the general consent of ryots, do hereby, of my freewill, declare that I shall remain subject to the British Government and pay rupees _______ nuzzaranah for the mouza specified below.

2. I shall assess and collect rents from ryots at the rate prevailing in the mouza, and pay nuzzaranah either into the sudder station or the Surburakar's Cutcherry. I shall never pay without receipts; all allegations of payment without receipts will be considered invalid. Any order of alteration of Jumma I shall attend to. If any Officer on the part of Government happens to be in my jurisdiction I shall assist and guide him till he reaches another illaqa. When a criminal case occurs, I shall report the matter to the police or the Fouzdarree Court, and I shall assist in its investigation. If I fail, I shall be subject to any order that may be passed.

3. It was customary with us to murder human beings and hang their skulls in our houses. I shall henceforward discontinue the practice and shall not allow any of my subjects to do the same. If anyone adheres to his former practice and commits murder, I shall apprehend and bring him to justice.

4. If any escaped offender happens to come to my jurisdiction, I shall apprehend and bring him to justice.

5. I shall annually pay the nuzzuranah either in the Sudder or Surburakar's Cutcherry and abide by the foregoing rule; in case of failure, our houses will be assailed by sepoys and our property destroyed, for which any claim on my part will be groundless. I shall keep the boundaries of my mouzah unaltered.

(True Translation).

B.W.D. Morton, Deputy Commissioner.
The word "Sardar" is not of Garo origin. It is a common word among the north Indian languages. According to these languages, it means a "headman" or a "Chief" of a village. The Garo word for a village Chief or a headman is "Nokma."

The office of a Sardar was introduced by the British Government in the Garo Hills. It was David Scott who first referred to the Nokmas as Sardars. In his Draft Regulation of 1819, Scott proposed that these Sardars or heads of villages should be made responsible for murders and other heinous crimes within their jurisdiction. They should also be made responsible for keeping peace within their villages as well as in the adjoining plain lands. In return for these services, they would be paid a salary. In matters of dispute, civil and criminal, the Sardars or the heads of villages should be empowered to settle between the inhabitants of their villages, with the aid of a Panchayet. Their decision if not considered unjust by the Commissioner, should be executed.

From the above, it is quite clear that the words "Nokma" and "Sardar" were used as synonyms.

In course of time, there evolved an Office of a Sardar. The Sardars were appointed by the Laskars to work under them, but they were not recognised by the British Government. The Sardars received remunerations from the Laskars direct. They might be a Nokma or any other man residing within the jurisdiction of a Laskar.

41. Revenue & Agriculture, File No. 507 of 1907.
A Laskar appointed one or more Sardars under him to serve as his Peons and sometimes as his assistants to help him in his work. A Laskar in certain cases, may ask a Sardar to go to a village to conduct a trial if it was not possible for him to attend personally. Matters of great importance, however, were decided by the Laskar himself.

The Garo Hills District Council recognised the Sardarship. The Laskars, as before, appointed his Sardars and the District Council pays an annual stipend of Rs.100, together with a shirt and a pair of short pants. But not every village has Sardar. They have, in fact, no jurisdiction over a particular village. As a general assistant to the Laskar, he may assist him in collecting informations about a dispute and in petty matters, a Sardar may sit as representative of the Laskar and preside at a trial. But he has to act only on the order of his Laskar and according to his instruction. Laskar's job is a full-time job, whereas Sardarship is a part-time post, and as such, the Sardars spend most of their time in their fields.

42. Sinha, Dr. T. C., The Psyche of the Garos, p. 12.
43. Burling, Hobbins, Hengsanggri, pp. 244-246.
In 1860, Captain B. W. D. Morton, Deputy Commissioner of Goalpara, introduced a new system known as the Zimmadar system. The idea of the Zimmadar system was not novel. It could be said to be only an extension of the office of a Laskar introduced by David Scott. In fact, Captain Morton intended the Zimmadar to be responsible for the maintenance of peace in his area and the Laskar responsible for the payment of government revenues. Lieutenant Williamson, Principal Assistant to Captain Morton supported the proposal saying, "I quite agree with Captain Morton in thinking that it is advisable to invest the Zimmadar with criminal cases. The Zimmadar should continue to try all cases not involving any serious crime. In all serious cases, complaint should be laid before my court and I should be invested with power to hear them and pass orders." This proposal being approved by the Government and settled at a meeting of the Chiefs, Captain Morton drafted a form of Sanad (shown in Appendix C) to be granted to the Garo Zimmadars.

Powers and Functions: They were to exercise, like the Dollois in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, criminal powers in petty cases, and civil powers for the trial of suits when the property in dispute did not exceed Rs. 50.

They were responsible for the administration of justice impartially in accordance with village customs; to ende-

44. Assam Secretariat (General Dept.), File No. 618(a) of 1865-66.

45. Ibid.

46. 1866, Assam Commissioner's File No. 647.

47. Annual Administration report on Assam for 1892-1893.

48. Assam Secretariat (General Dept.), File No. 618(a) of 1865-66.
avour to maintain peace in their respective jurisdictions and to apprehend heinous offenders; to prevent persons from other elakas from overstepping their jurisdiction and committing murder or other heinous offences on the hills or plains; to prevent human sacrifices; to report accidental deaths; and to endeavour to induce those Garos who have acknowledged the sovereignty of the British Government, but who have since failed to show any token of allegiance; to submit and to pay their nuzzaranah dues. As remuneration for the due performance of these duties, the zimmadars were to receive from the Government specified annual allowances in cash.

There were 20 zimmadars at an aggregate cost of Rs. 1,405, and it was proposed to extend it to the elakas of five other laskars at a cost of Rs. 215 per annum. It was also proposed to give each of these zimmadars an old musket with some ammunition. These arrangements were proposed at the initial stage to be effective among the Garos on the side of the Goalpara district, but to be extended further gradually.

Merger of Zimmadari with Laskari system: In 1866, Lieutenant Williamson, after becoming an Assistant Commissioner of the Garo Hills, found the zimmadari and the laskari systems to be duplication and unsuitable for the effective administration. Therefore, he proposed the abolition of the zimmadari system and combine it with that of the laskari system. The Lieutenant-Governor has approved the proposal and therefore, the office of zimmadar has been merged with that of the laskar.

49. Assam Secretariat (General Dept.), File No. 618(a) of 1865-66.
50. Ibid.
52. 1866, Assam Commissioner's File No. 647.
53. Letters received from Government, Vol. 53(b), No. 5502 of 1866.
You are informed that in accordance with the wishes of an Assembly of Luskurs you have been appointed Zimmadar of police within the limits given below. The government has been pleased to vest you with criminal powers as regards the trials of all petty suits, and with civil powers in the trial of all suits, the value of each does not exceed Rs. 50.

The following rules are laid down for guidance:

First, You will administer justice impartially and in strict accordance with your village customs. Should you during the year, carry out these rules attentively, you will receive from the Deputy Commissioner, on the part of the government, a sum of Rs. ______, this will be paid to you at a time and place to be fixed, and of which you will be yearly informed by the Deputy Commissioner.

Second, You will try to maintain peace in your jurisdiction. Should any person of those under you, or Garos of other illaqaqs be guilty of any crime of a heinous nature within your jurisdiction, you will do your best to apprehend and bring the offender to justice.

Third, you will not allow any person of a different illaqaq or from the plains to overstep your jurisdiction and commit murder or other heinous crimes on the hills or the plains. Should such happen, you will do your best to apprehend the offenders and bring them before the court of the Deputy Commissioner.

Fourth, it was customary upon the death of a Chief to sacrifice a human being, or to burn human remains on the funeral.
pile; you will on no account permit such practices within your jurisdictions, and you will in every way exert yourself to disuade from any and prevent the same in other illaqs, and should your remonstrances not be attended to, you will report and assist in apprehending the offenders.

Fifth, you will, after enquiry, report to the Deputy Commissioner all accidental deaths, such as those from bites of snakes, fall from a tree, etc; but you will on no account, when you can not trace out offenders, conceal a murder and report it as an accidental death.

Sixth, you will try and induce those Garos who at one time acknowledged the sovereignty of the British government, but who have thrown off their allegiances, to submit and pay their nuzzaranah as herefore.

Zillah Goalpara, Deputy Commissioner.
Dated the _____186 ,

The Form of Agreement made by Garo Zimmadasr on appointment.
The Form of Agreement made by the Garo Zimmadars on appointment, is the repetition of the above sannad, except "you" is transformed into "I".

54. Assam Secretariat (General Dept.), File No.618(a) of 1865-66. 289(b)
The Plains portion of the Garo Hills district, that is, the three mauzas nos. VI, VII and VIII, were cut off from the Zamindari estates of the Goalpara district and included in the Garo Hills in 1675. These tracts came under settlement in 1678-79, and the principle followed was that of settling the land with the ryots in actual occupation to the exclusion of middle men. But there existed at that time, a class of men calling themselves Jotdars who sublet lands. This system of land tenure existed in the neighbouring Hangpur parganas and in the Gauripur parganas in the Goalpara district and in Jalpaiguri.

It was decided, however, not to recognise the claims of Jotdars but to deal directly with the occupant ryots, who would be responsible for the payment of government revenue. In this connection, Captain H.J. Peet, the B.C. of Garo Hills said that "most of the claims are imaginary or at least unsupported by anything but the bare assertion of the claimant; it seems from all I could gather that Jots made by the Zamindars could at any time be cancelled. In fact, a Jotdar seems to be simply a temporary farmer, removable at will. Government being now in the Zamindars's position, is quite legally entitled to cancel all the Jots, and, in the interest of the greater number, should, I think, do so." Captain Peet's views were approved by the then officiating Chief Commissioner, Sir Steuart Bayley, and leases were accordingly issued to the occupant.

ryots. These arrangements have remained undisturbed and leases have issued year by year to the previous lease-holders till 1894. In 1894, Kennedy, the D.C. of Garo Hills, reported that "a class of middle men, otherwise called Jotdars, had been allowed to creep in between government and the raiyats," that these jotdars could show no title of any kind to the lands they held beyond the annual leases granted to them, that they were not the actual cultivators of the lands, and that revenue they realised from the actual cultivators rents equivalent to three or four times the revenue they paid to government. Kennedy, therefore proposed that they should be called upon to show cause why their leases should not be cancelled and their lands settled with the persons actually in occupation. The D.C. further proceeded to take action to give effect to his proposals in anticipation of the Chief Commissioner's sanction. As the action proposed by the D.C. would certainly cause much discontent, and as Kennedy gave no detailed information as to the areas in which he intended to take action, the Chief Commissioner was unwilling to sanction his proposal without further information. The D.C. was accordingly called upon to furnish further information justifying his proposals, and especially to state the rents paid by the cultivating ryots to jotdars. He was also directed to keep in abeyance, pending the Chief Commissioner's further orders, the action which he had commenced to give effect to his proposals.

Kennedy showed that these jotdars were not middle men on any scale worth taking into account. For instance, in mauza VII, there were only 80 persons holding 5,976 bighas or an average of nearly 75 bighas per man. The total revenue paid by them amounted to Rs. 1,699 - 11, equal to an average of Rs. 0-2-6 per bigha. The amount

58. Ibid.
of revenue realised by the tenants from their sub-tenants amounted to Rs.3,109, or an average of Rs.0-11-10 per bigha and in mauza No. VI, the rate charged was Re.1-2-0 for Basti and 6 annas for Faringati lands.

Lyall, the officiating Chief Commissioner, came to the conclusion that Kennedy had taken an exaggerated view of the case, and that no evils had been shown to exist calling for action, as that proposed by him. But as Mr. Ward was intimately acquainted with the circumstances of the Garo Hills, he left the case over for final decision on Ward's return from leave.

On 31st August, 1894, Kennedy referred to the practice as regards annual pattas in the Assam valley. He wrote, "I consider that we have every right to follow the rules which obtain in the rest of Assam, that is, that at the annual measurement of land, the holdings be settled with the persons actually found in personal possession, that is, the land be settled with those who actually occupy and cultivate it, and that no middle men be recognised."

Mr. Kennedy was under a misapprehension as regards the practice in the Assam valley districts. Although an annual lease confers no permanent or transferable title to the land and the government is entitled at any time to settle it with the actual occupant, the practice is to allow the previous settlement-holder to obtain settlement until he has altogether severed his connection with the land by resignation or death. So, Lyall and Ward decided that no action was necessary on Kennedy's proposal, because, there was no

59. Revenue A, November, 1894, Nos. 66-76.
60. Revenue A, May, 1895, Nos. 171-172.
61. Revenue A, November, 1894, Nos. 66-76.
large middle men or land-jobbers coming into existence, as Kennedy supposed, but merely a few settlement-holders who sub-let excess lands which they do not require themselves; the total area so sub-let was not large; these settlement-holders have been allowed to sub-let for many years without interference, and there was no evidence of excessive rents being charged to the tenants of such settlement-holders. Therefore, the Chief Commissioner assured the government of India that there was no danger in these tracts of the growth of middle men, and that the government of India need have no apprehension in this respect. As such, the government merely recognised "de jure" a form of tenure which has been in "de facto" existence for several generations.

F. Korfa Tenant.

Mr. C. K. Rhodes, a member of the Finance Department reported that there was a class of tenants in the Garo Hills, known as Korfa Tenant. According to him, a Korfa tenant was a sub-tenant holding land from a Jotdar and paying rent to him in money and not in kind.

64. Ibid.
The post of Mauzadar was first created in 1878, by Captain H.J. Peet, the D.C. of the Garo Hills, for the purpose of assessing and collecting the land revenues, House-Tax and other taxes. Two types of mauzdars were appointed for this purpose, namely, (a) the Hill Mauzadars and (b) the Plain Mauzadars.

(a) The Hill Mauzadar.

In 1878, Captain Peet appointed four Garos as the Hill Mauzadars as they could read and write Bengali, for the hill tracts. They were all Christians, educated by the American missionaries.

Duties and responsibilities: The Hill Mauzadars were to reside in a village located within the jurisdiction of their respective mauzas. They would be assisted in their duties by a Mandal, whom the Mauzadar himself appointed subject to confirmation by the Deputy Commissioner.

Their main duties were to ascertain and report annually the names of all the villages in their mauza; to ascertain and report every year any movement of villages from one side to another; to ascertain and report every year the number of houses in each village, and the causes, as far as may be known, of all increases and decreases; to report on the 1st and 15th of each month on the state of crops, the public health, and generally anything of interest regarding the well-being of the community; to report immediately all cases of crimes that came to their knowledge in whatever way;


to receive any revenue tendered by any laskar, to give receipts for the same, and to cause it to be forwarded to Tura; ordinarily this will be done through the outpost Constable; to watch the timber mahals, and to report any destruction of sal or other valuable trees, and to report at once the presence of any unlicensed wood-cutter in their mauza; to transmit all orders received from the D.C., to their respective addresses.

Besides these specific duties, they must obey all orders issued from time to time by the D.C. and his assistants. They must, as far as they could, endeavour to promote the spread of vaccination; they should set examples of sobriety and cleanliness, and do their best to eradicate all savage customs.

They were not invested with any judicial or police functions. These still remain with the D.C., the laskars and other officers as mentioned in the Garo administration rules.

They were responsible for keeping the D.C. acquainted with everything that might happen in their mauza or its immediate vicinity which was likely to affect the public health, morals, or safety, and also that they were liable to summary dismissal, in addition to any other punishment prescribed by law, in the event of their taking or receiving, or attempting to take, or offering or agreeing to receive, any gratification whatever besides their salary.

Besides, the Hill Mauzadars had to count the number of cattle in the bathans and to settle the amount of taxes which the bathan holders had to pay. They had also to settle the boundary disputes among the A'king Nokmas in their respective mauzas. The question of succession to Nokmaship had also to be settled by them,

and report the matter to the D.C. In addition to these duties, they had also to record the births and deaths within their mauza and report them to the Civil Surgeon.

From the nature of their duties and responsibilities, it is clear that the Hill mauzadars were more correctly speaking, the Sub-Political Agents of the Government in their respective mauzas, the revenues in their mauzas which was in the shape of House-Tax, being collected by the Laskars and the Nokmas. For their services, the mauzadars were paid a salary of Rs. 25 per month, but now it has been raised.

(b) The Plain Mauzadar.

The Office of the Plain Mauzadar was also introduced by Captain H.J. reet, the D.C. of the Garo Hills, in 1878.

In the Plain mauzas of the Garo Hills district, the D.C. introduced the Assam Settlement Rules in their entirety. Therefore, the duties of the Plain mauzadars would be in every respect those of ordinary Assam mauzadars and their jurisdiction should extend to the hoe-cultivating people as well as to the actual plainsmen, who cultivate with the plough.

Qualifications for Plain Mauzadars: Subject to the control of the Chief Commissioner, mauzadars were appointed by the D.C., with the approval of the Chief Commissioner. The mauzas inhabited by such indigenous races as Kacharis

69. As told by W. Ch. Marak, retired hill mauzadar.
and Mikirs should be committed to a Mauzadar, who himself belonged to one of them.

Second, subject to changes as may be required in order to give effect gradually to the foregoing principle, a mauzadar's successor would ordinarily be selected from amongst the members of his family, including relations on the female side, if no qualified heir is available on the male side. If a heir, otherwise suitable, was a minor, the post might be kept open for him for a period not exceeding three years, an agent being appointed, provided that the L.C. was satisfied that the agent was doing his best to qualify himself for the post. But the family of a Mauzadar who was dismissed for misconduct lost its hereditary claim.

Third, when it was necessary to appoint a man a Mauzadar, who had no family claim to the post, he should as a rule, be selected from a family resident in the mauza.

Fourth, it was essential that a person who was selected for appointment as Mauzadar should be financially able to fulfil his obligations. But appointment should not be limited to men of large means.

Fifth, he must have a fair vernacular education, such as was required for the keeping of the mauzadari accounts. It was desirable to have a man who had education up to the Middle Vernacular standard.

A Mauzadar must permanently reside in his mauzas with his family. The dismissal or suspension of a Mauzadar required the Commissioner's sanction. In exceptional cases, the L.C. might impose a fine upon a Mauzadar of an amount not exceeding Rs. 200, but such a punishment should be rarely inflicted.
A mauzadar must ordinarily furnish security for a quarter of the amount realised by him as land revenue and local rate. But with the sanction of the Commissioner, the amount of security might be reduced raised to one half, or might be reduced, or, in the case of mauzadars of respectability and standing, the taking of security might be dispensed with altogether.

**Duties and responsibilities:** In regard to land revenue, the mauzadar's duties were confined to collection, and he had no concern with its assessment, the checking of maps, assessment papers and Jotrahin lists. But he was held responsible for reporting any systematic or extensive omission of land from assessment on the part of the Mandal or Kanongo.

His other duties were to supervise the work of the Gaonburas; to receive applications for mutation or for waste land and to submit them with a report; to submit reports on the cases which were sent to them by special order for local enquiry; to assist the district authorities in the assessment of income-Tax; to issue forest permits under the forest rules in force; to report upon the sufficiency of security offered by such lessees as those of Ferries and Fisheries; to submit a monthly report upon the condition of crops, upon the prevalence of epidemics amongst men or cattle, and upon loss of life caused by wild animals; to compile and submit monthly returns of vital statistics, and to check the Gaonburas' reports of birth and death.

Besides, there were other minor administrative matters in which the mauzadar's assistance or intervention was occasionally required. But care must be taken not to impose upon him any work
which interfered with his primary duty of collecting land revenue, and in particular, not to refer cases for enquiry. Every encouragement should be given to the prevailing custom under which a mauzadar was commonly referred to by the people as an arbitrator in cases of petty dispute.

From the above, it is clear that the plain mauzadars were the real mauzadars whose main duty was to collect revenues and measure lands. Even with regard to their salary, although, in the beginning, Captain Feet, the D.C. of the Garo Hills, fixed at Rs. 50 per mensem, later on when the Assam Settlement rules were enforced in the Garo Hills, they were appointed on commission basis, at the rate of 10% for the first Rs. 5000, and 5% for the remainder.

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Along with the introduction of the mauzadari system, the office of Mandal was also created in 1570 by Captain Peet. There are two types of Mandalas, viz., the Hill and the Plain Mandal.

**The Hill Mandal.**

The Hill Mandalas were appointed by the Hill Mauzadars subject to confirmation by the U.C. There should be one Mandal for each Hill Mauzadar. Their salary was fixed at Rs.7-6-0, per mensem. **Their duties:** The Hill Mandalas have to perform all duties assigned to him by his mauzadar in his official capacity. He has to accompany him during his tours of inspections, help him to count the houses, cattle and assess the revenue to be paid by the villages and the bathan holders. He has also to settle the disputes for A'king land of the Nokma whenever he was asked to do by his mauzadar. They were thus the Assistants of the Hill Mauzadars. As such, they could be called the Assistant Sub-Political Agents.

**The Plain Mandal.**

The Plain Mandalas are quite different from the Hill Mandalas. The Plain Mandalas have to be trained in the Survey department. Their main function was to survey and demarcation of lands. They were appointed by the government, and therefore, they were government servants.

**1. The Kanungo.**

One supervisor called Kanungo was appointed to supervise the work of 12 Mandalas in the plain portions of the Garo Hills.

73. Annual Administration reports on Garo Hills for 1570-79.
75. As told by Benendra Sangma (Hill Mandal), Tura.
76. Annual Administration reports on Garo Hills for 1906-1907.
Conclusions: Since earliest times, the village had been the pivot of administration in the Garo Hills, and the village government was carried on under the supervision and direction of the village headman called the A'king Nokma. There was one Nokma for each A'king land or Nokma land, but the growth of many new villages within the a'king land necessitated the appointment of more Nokmas. Thus, there emerged the Second and even the third Nokma within one Nokma land, though these Nokmas were not to succeed the first. Thus, the Nokma was the most important single person in the village administration. However, the nature of the Garo society never permitted the concentration of power on any single person. As such, the Nokma was only a social and economic representative of the village. However, as a President of the Village Assembly which decided all matters of common interests, an intelligent and energetic Nokma could become a powerful person in the Village administration, and in fact, in pre-British days, many Nokmas led the expeditions against other villages.

Under the British rule, however, the powers and functions of the Nokmas have been usurped by the new offices introduced by the British government. As a result, today, the A'king Nokmas have become mere managers of their A'king lands and custodians of the family property.

The first Office introduced by the British in the Garo hills was the office of a Laskar. It was introduced by David Scott in 1619. One Laskar was appointed for 10 or 12 Nokmas. The Nokmas elected their own Laskar from amongst themselves. The Laskars were entrusted with the work of village administration and in the settlement of disputes. The Act of 1674 gave the office of a Laskar a legal status. According to this Act, they were given the
Police, Criminal and Civil powers and could impose fine up to Rs. 50. Thus, the Laskars acted as rural magistrates. His other duty was to collect House-Tax and received 10% commission on the total collections. Under the District Council, the Laskars continued to enjoy the same powers and functions as before.

The Office of a Sardar was next introduced by David Scott in 1819. He had no particular duty to perform. Generally, he performed any duty assigned to him by his Laskar. Under the District Council, however, the Sardars enjoyed better facilities than before.

The Zimmadari system was introduced by Captain Horton in 1865, by transferring the police, civil and criminal powers from the Laskars, and leaving only the revenue duties with them. But on becoming the L.C. of the Garo Hills district, Captain Williamson found it inconvenient in having to deal with a new set of officials whereas in the old set up, all these were combined in the Laskar. Therefore, Captain Williamson urged the government to abolish the Zimmadari system, and the government approved the proposal.

A new class of persons called the Jotdars were found to exist in the plain portions of the Garo Hills district when they were created into mauzas. The Jotdars were the middlemen who sublet their excess lands to the cultivators. Kennedy, the L.C. of the Garo Hills suggested the abolition of this system of economic holdings, but the Chief Commissioner did not think it necessary to do so as the number and the total holding of the Jotdars were negligible.

Another system of economic holding was found to exist in some parts of the plain mauzas of the Garo Hills. This class of persons were known as the Korfa-Tenants.
was a sub-tenant, holding land from a jotoar and paying rent to him in cash, but such kind of tenants were few in number and did harm neither to the government nor to the actual cultivators.

The mauzadari system was introduced in the Garo Hills by Captain Peet in 1676. There are two kinds of mauzadars, namely, the Hill and the plain mauzadars. The Hill mauzadars were more of administrative rather than revenue officers, as they had to settle over boundary disputes between the Nokmas and other quarrels within their mauzas, besides the assessment of House-Tax and other Taxes; whereas, the plain mauzadars, were purely the revenue officers. Similarly, the Hill mandals were more of sub-political agents than the revenue officers, whereas the Plain mandals and the kanungoes were purely revenue officers.

Thus, the powers and functions of the Nokmas have been distributed among the new offices created by the British government. As a result, the Nokmas became mere figureheads and custodians of the properties of their clans.