CHAPTER II

GAROS, THE PEOPLE AND THEIR HABITAT

Habitat

The location of the Garo home land is at the entrance to North-East India, to the west of Khasi Hills of Meghalaya, in western part of North East India, where the great river Brahmaputra turns to the south and enters the plains of Bangladesh. The area lies within 25°9' and 26°1' north latitude and 89°49' and 91°2' east longitude. Centuries before, the whole surrounding region comprising the western part of Meghalaya, part of Goalpara and Kamrup districts of Assam, northern part of Mymensingh and eastern region of Rangpur district of present Bangladesh were predominantly inhabited by the Garos. Major part of the tribe now inhabit mostly the mountain promontory which stretches like an arm towards Rangpur district of Bangladesh, thereby dividing the two great valleys of Brahmaputra on the north and plains of Mymensingh district of Bangladesh on the south. Till the time India obtained independence in 1947, Garos retained northern part of Mymensingh district of undivided Bengal bordering Garo Hills and Khasi Hills as an integral part of their kingdom and Garos living in Assam particularly in the southern plains of Goalpara and Kamrup districts were feeling quite complacent as being in their own territory. It is in the course of history that the main habitat of the Garos shrank into a small nucleus which
comprises mostly the hilly regions in the western part of present state of Meghalaya. In the southern slopes of Garo Hills, some other tribes like Hajong, Banaes, Dalu and Keeses were also found living side by side with the Gares from time immemorial and similarly on the north-west Garo Hills are found Rabhas and Kacharis and they still remain a major plains tribes of western Meghalaya. After centuries of strife and struggle, Gares could retain only 8084 sq. K.M. as their own home land, which at present constitutes the two western districts of Meghalaya, east Garo Hills and west Garo Hills. In 1941, the population of Garo Hills was 2,23,569 and in 1951 census it totalled 2,42,075 of which, 2,39,816 returned Garo as their mother tongue. In 1961 census, total population came upto 3,07,228; in 1971 it rose to 4,06,615 but in 1981 Indian census, the district population shot up to 5,05,003.

The increase in population from 1941 to 1961 was more or less steady but in the succeeding to decades, the population has tremendously increased, and such sudden growth in population is partly due to the heavy influx of migrants from the erstwhile East Pakistan in 1964 and partly owing to the outsiders entering Garo Hills for business, trades, services and as workmen.

The Gares speak a Tibeto-Burman language; all other tribes found in Garo Hills and its surrounding areas are also
beleived to be from the same stock. Bose (1949 : 146) also observes "apart from the doubtful Negrito, the tribal elements in India represent to distinct racial types, one Australoid, the other Mongeoid. The Mongeoid tribes are found in the north eastern frontier of India, in Assam (the Garos of Bengal and Rajbanshi are mixed Mongeoids) and also in the cis-Himalayan region". Garos are widely scattered all over North-Eastern India. There are many Garo pockets in North Bengal, Chittagong Hills in Bangladesh, Tripura and in different parts of Assam. Even after partition of Bengal, significant number of these people were living in villages on the East Pakistan side of the border. In Mymensingh district alone, the population of Aberginals comprising the tribes like Gareas, Hajongs, Dalus, Haidas and Banaos was about 1,21,000 in and around 1939 (Report - Aboriginal Welfare Exhibition : 1939 : 1), and the figure had definitely gone up much higher in the subsequent decades. Even this day, in Goalpara and Kamrup districts of Assam which was the parent state of Meghalaya, there are Garo population of about 63,113 living in 316 villages spread all over the southern part of Kamrup and Goalpara districts of Assam (Sketch - Merger Movement : 1974, 11). This figure does not include the Garo population of the said districts on the north bank of the Brahmaputra river.

The present homeland of the Garos have many beautiful mountains, hills, rivers, natural lakes and lovely water falls. Being an owner of many rivers and streams, it also stands as
perennial source of irrigation to the vast plains around it.

Its important mountains and hills with their height above sea level are Nokrek hill (4,652 ft.), Chitmaong (3,375 ft.), Arbell (3,277 ft.), Meninram (3,200 ft.), Mengminjek (3,077 ft.), Tura Hill (2,863 ft.), Balpakram (2,831 ft.), Papira (2,573 ft.), Haslong (2,336 ft.), Misi-Kekdek (2,271 ft.), Mengari (2,261 ft.), Ranggira (2,207 ft.) and Keasi (1,817 ft.).

From the bosom of its majestic hills, Gare Hills sends forth many fresh-water rivers and streams in different directions irrigating thereby, the wide valleys of Assam on the north and the plains of Bangladesh on the south. On the north, rivers like Ildek, Manda, Damring, Didram, Didak, Jinjiram and Ditti pass through the southern bank of Goalpar a district and join the great Brahmaputra river as its tributaries. On the south, rivers like, Meheskali, Mahadeo, Simsang, Dareng, Bugi, Tuleng, Marsi, Sarai and Rokai flew down to the great plains of Mymensingh district of Bangladesh. Rivers on the west are Ringge, Galwang, Ganel, Daru and Rengkai flew across the portion of Goalpara plains of Assam and join the great river Brahmaputra at Rengpur district of Bangladesh.

While in the domestic front, the forests and jungles of the hills are getting thinner and thinner year by year owing to constant jhumming and deforestation thereby losing its natural fertility due to erosion and denudation of the top soil, hills and rivers of Gare hills have been giving out best of its
As regard the story about the origin of the word 'Gare', there is no authentic informations so far; so adding something new to the already existing popular saying would simply lead to unending controversy. But, one point is clear, that is, there is definitely certain correlation between the name of the tribe and the name of the land they inhabit. Sometimes, the tribe get its name from the name of the land they live; and in certain cases, the land derive its name from the tribes inhabiting thereon. Although there is no confirmed source of information about the genesis of the word 'Gare', different clues are found to have been traced by different writers. Jobang D. Marak (1930 : 1) citing the oral statement made by the early Garos says that, in the very ancient time, Garos were living in the mountainous region of Tibet beyond the Himalaya mountains where various tribes lived the area which is shown in the map of Asia as 'Various Tribes'. In that region, there was a place called 'Gare Pradesh' and the tribes inhabiting it were called 'Gare Mandae' and hence, the title 'Gare' and 'Mande' became the permanent title of the Gare tribe and it is currently in vogue. Referring to the observations made in the Imperial Gazetteer, Eastern Bengal and Assam (1909 : 502-504) and records found in Bengal district Gazetteer (Mymensingh 1917) Sangma (1965 : 7-10) writes, "Bede or Tibeto-Burman were the great tribes. These tribes once lived in the upper region of the land between Yangtze-Kiang and Heanghe rivers on the north-western China."
In that region, there was a place called 'Torus' in the Tibet province and that place was inhabited mostly by the Gares. "With the passage of time, sometime in and around 400 A.D., that great Bede or Tibeto-Burman tribes migrated down to the region where they are now settled. Chatterji (1970: 6) writes, "Certain Tibeto-Burman and other Sino-Tibetan-Speaking tribes (Mongoleids) have formed parts of the settled population of Assam since time immemorial, and they have come within the orbit of Indian civilisation at a fairly early age; and now they form part of the Indian body politic". He further says, "The steady Hinduisation of the Tibeto-Burman (mainly Bede) people during the ancient period brought about a Sanskritisation of the local pre-Aryan names of both Sino-Tibetan and Austro-Asiatic origin, and in bringing them in line with Brahmanical Hindu notions and religious notions current among its people (1970: 34)". So, if this view is accepted, it could easily be presumed that the term 'Gare' is as old as the tribe itself and they brought and carried the name with them all along their long period of peregrination.

There is another view regarding the origin of the word 'Gare'. A very strong and energetic man named 'Garu' led the tribe out of Tibet and the tribes under his command were called 'Garu' or 'Gare' after the name of their courageous leader. Some Gares maintain that, a sub-division of the tribe, with the regional name 'Gara' or 'Gara-Ganching' inhabits the hills lying between Simsang (Semisyery) and Dareng (Nita) rivers on the southern Gare Hills. That way, the whole tribe came to be known as 'Garrew' or
'Gare'. There is yet another version to this effect. In the North-Eastern part of Bengal, there was once a great 'Geur' or 'Gor' kingdom. Geur people is believed to be of Bodo origin. Geographically, of course, the said kingdom should be very near the present Gare name land and there, it will not be wrong if the hills of the Gares were viewed as Geur Hills. So, according to such observation, from the word 'Geur' of 'Gor', the name 'Gare' was derived. All the above arguments, however, seemed to base on the records collected from the Imperial Gazetteers (Eastern Bengal and Assam and Gait's History of Assam). Therefore at the moment, there is no meaning in entering into further argument in this regard since it will add a mere logomachy, after all, name or title is sometimes acquired even by accident. There are still more communities belonging to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes all over the country bearing the similar nomenclature. For example, 'Mang-Garedi' a scheduled caste community found in many districts of the states like, Andhra Pradesh, Bombay, Mysore, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. 'Gharas' are found in Orissa. 'Gareda or Gare' and 'Garura' are found in Mysore. 'Gare', 'Garura' or 'Gareda' are found in Rajasthan. 'Gares' are also found in West Bengal; and 'Gares', 'Geur', 'Gunar', 'Gur' and 'Gurang' are found in Tripura (Sastrri 1957: 259-288). From the social nature of the tribe it is observed that name is given to the individual at the very moment of one's birth and name is not acquired at half-way. It can therefore be presumed that the Garos get their own name right from the
beginning without waiting it to be given by others from outside. Perhaps the word 'Gars' existed along with the emergence of the tribe Gare and it is futile to seek its etymology.

Mukerjee (1955 : 112-115) writes the Gares who are one of the aboriginal tribes of Assam, number 23,4799 (Census 1951) of which 69.34% profess tribal religion, 25.71% Christianity, 4.93% Hinduism, and 0.02% Islam. They are scattered over Assam Hills and plains districts, but the Gare Hills district is the stronghold of the tribe, where their population is 1,86,788.

At present Gares are found in all the areas around Gare Hills. They are also found in almost all the districts of Brahmaputra valley. Their population (1971) in the different areas are shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>4,11,532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meghalaya</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gare Hills</td>
<td>2,39,747</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khasi Hills</td>
<td>88,866</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tripura</td>
<td>5,559</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assam (Hill Districts)</td>
<td>9,161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other parts of India</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>69,199</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From the size of the present home land of the Garos as mapped out and marked out from the rest of the country, it is inconceivable to note that Garos were flourishing as a distinct dominant ethnic group controlling a large part of North-East India from time immemorial. Before the final annexation of Garo Hills by the British in the year 1872-1873, the tribe was living in their own primitive style of life in their jungle lair, and these aboriginals were the lord of all they could survey. Although they were not happy over the gradual shrinkage of their territory as a result of regular encroachment made by intruders from outside the tribe could not express themselves in clear term due to absence of any administrative authority in the region. Moreover, simple, unlettered people of the region still being in the pre-literate stage, the tribe could not move forward in a sanely and more civilized method in putting forward their grievances with regard to any territorial dispute except by showing their restlessness by some violent acts like raiding, attacking and head hunting and so on wherever possible in the nearby plains, thereby causing constant menace to the neighbouring plains all around. It is only with the British occupation of the area and with the coming of Christianity into Garo home land, the tribe began to see the light of the world. Also, it is with the complete control of the whole region by the British and a new pattern of administration set up by the British, almost all the low lying Garo settled areas were merged with the plains districts of Assam and Bengal bringing the entire zone under feudal control of the
neighbouring Zaminders. From the time the parts of Garo inhabited area were tagged with the Plains Zaminderies, Garos felt some sorts of uneasiness, discomfort and inconvenience in their natural tribal social and economic activities. The new system of administration disturbed the peace and tranquility of the tribal zone and thereby created mutual distrust and suspicion in the minds of the tribal people living in the hills. It was towards the close of the nineteenth century that some educated Garos woke up and became more vocal in raising some sorts of protest against such deliberate merger of the Garo inhabited areas with the nearby plains zaminderies; notable among them were Sonaram R. Sangma and Renan Sangma in the Northern Garo Hills and Swarup M. Sangma on the Southern Garo Hills. On the northern region, Sonaram R. Sangma was spearheading the movement following the inclusion of all northern Garo habitat with the Bijni Zamindery of Goalpara district of Assam by the British authority. It is perhaps because of the fact that he was fighting a lonely battle without any adequate support and strong backing from home, his struggle could not gain momentum and as a result, the movement got frozen after his death in 1915 and there was none to further carry out the plan. On the south, Swarup M. Sangma (popularly known as Swarup Manda) too failed to achieve his objectives. Presumably, these two groups of petitioners could not convince the British authority about the propriety of their demand; and their voice ever remained a far cry. Thereafter, during the long period of British domination, the Garo inhabiting both plains and the hills remained quite calm.
and law abiding to the government. They lived with complete resignation and composure under the prevailing situation. They seemed to have adjusted to the new system of administration and passed the times with full imperturbability. All earlier movement and agitation became very inactive and dormant all through. During the subsequent decades, Garee lived with the seeming inarticulate silence without hinting any sign of territorial ambition. With the advance of time, however, social economic and political consciousness amongst the tribal people grew and with the dawn of country’s independence, the people became more aware of their social and political security and to achieve that objectives, territorial adjustment was felt absolutely imperative. Political independence of the country resulted in partition; India and Pakistan came into being as two distinct dominions. Bengal was divided and all Gare areas in East Bengal particularly the northern part of Mymensingh district was carved out in favour of East Pakistan. The partition of the country gave birth to many evils. Gares as well as the hinduized tribes living in East Bengal and Sylhet were subjected to all sorts of untold suffering following partition. They lost their social and economic status. They lost all their political rights under the theocratic government in East Pakistan. Thus, within a few years of obtaining independence, innumerable difficulties, disadvantages and shame were faced by the “aboriginals living there. It is because of this fact that, the Gares felt the need for amalgamation of Gare inhabited areas of the Mymensingh district of East Bengal.
with the Indian Union, and accordingly, in 1931, the Garos of the Garo Hills proper, the Garos living in Assam and Gares in Shusung and Sherpur Parganas of Mymensingh district jointly petitioned the Prime Minister of Indian Republic. The representation made by the Gares after four years of partition seems to be too late for taking any decision since the country had already been divided. The memorandum contains many valuable historical data and factual informations connected with the Gares and their land. References were also drawn from innumerable records and documents from various sources.

Speaking about the ancient A'chik A'song (The main ancient Gare country), the memorandum (pp. 17) maintains that, the ancient A'chik A'song or the main ancient Gare country lying between the Himalayas and the Bay of Bengal was borne out by the old historical records, traditional accounts and in the old documents some of which are still found in private possession of the members of the Garo tribe. Garos believe that the Brahmaputra was essentially a Gare river flowing through the midst of the ancient A'chik A'song. The Gares call this river sengdu, which means the 'Feeder to Village', and the Himalayas they call ohuma, which means the Mother of Heights, and the ocean, on the shore of which the A'chik A'song was they call Aema Ditema, Siksikma Wilwilma. According to their traditional account, the ancient A'chik A'song was on the sea shore. That this is not very far from being certain is borne
out by the following geological statement: 'From an examination of the nature of the deposits from the area of the Ganges Brahmaputra Delta South of a line joining the Rajmahal with the South-West corner of the Gare Hills, it is clear that the Ganges-Brahmaputra entered the sea at the South-west corner of Gare Hills'. Giving some more details in their Memorandum (pp. 2-4), the petitioners bring out the description of the original Gare country in Assam and Bengal. They maintain that there is enough evidence in the archaic records, in the old government or private publications, in the old government or private journals and in old documents in possession of some members of the Gare tribe and in government archives that most of the Zemindaries in North Bengal, Eastern Bengal and in Assam were originally founded and owned by the Gare Chieftains.

The representation also states that at the commencement of the fourteenth century, Someswar Thakur (or Someswar Pathak), the progenitor of the Shusung principality, established himself as an independent ruler of Shusung and Gare Hills by dispossessing Baisa Gare. In this regard reference was made to 'The modern Indian History of Indian Chiefs, Rajas, Zemindars, etc. by L.N. Ghose. It was further stated that Baisa Gare was of manda clan and progenitor of mraig, chambugong and rangsha clans. Even at the present age, manda, mraig, chambugong and rangsha clans are widely found amongst the Garos. It is also stated that, Sherpur Zemindary was originally founded by one
Dipu Garo. He kept one Kayastha as minister under him, whose descendants ultimately supplanted the Gare successors and usurped the Zemindary. Giving a reference to the writings of J. Wise, Gares says that the Ishakhan of Khijirpur, the most celebrated of all Bhuyas, however, was described by Abul Fazal as Marsben Bhati or Governor of Lower Bengal and as the ruler of great Zemindars. The Gare name of Ishakhan was Arimbit Raja Ishadoba. Ishakhan was a Gare Chieftain. They also believed that, some centuries back. Once, one Gare Raja, named Shankar, was a very strong ruler in Geur, now in ruins, in Bengal.

Quoting Hamilton's An Account of Assam (1808-1814), they maintain that most of the known Zemindaries in lower Assam were essentially of Gare origin. Also, the strip of land in the Mymensingh district, known as the Shusung and Sherpur Parganas and comprising the six police Stations of (i) Kalumakanda, (ii) Durgapur (Shusung), (iii) Huauaghat, (iv) Maltabari (Taraganj), (v) Sribbardi and (vi) Sherpur were 'essentially a Gare country which, according to the Gares was already admitted in the The Government of India Act, 1935, wherein it is stated, "Inte this area then under jungle the Gares came some 150 years ago. They were the first to open the country". It was also stated in the Memorandum that, the strip of the country in the Mymensingh district known as Shusung and Sherpur Parganas and more areas in East Bengal known as the Gare country and found to be so by the Government of India surveys since 1842 are integral, contiguous, organic and inseperable part of the
main Garo country (or in native tongue, 'Achik Asong') in Assam, which the British Government divided into fragments on the principle of 'Divide and Rule'. Some portions of the main Garo country lay merged, as the result of the division, in the districts of Assam and Bengal adjoining the district of the Garo Hills, which forms but a mid-portion of the actual 'Achik Asong' (or the Garo country) of about three to five centuries back.

From very ancient days the Garos of Assam and the Garos of the Mymensingh, Sylhet, Rangpur and Dacca districts have been living as the same integral solid block of community, being socially and economically interrelated and interdependent; and the artificial and unnatural boundary set up by the British between the Garo Hills and other districts has by no means disintegrated the social and economic interrelation and interdependence of the Garos of Assam and the Garos of the aforesaid Shusung and Sherpur Parganas in the Mymensingh district and other districts in East Bengal. The Garos of Assam and the Garos of the aforesaid Shusung and Sherpur Parganas and of areas in other districts stand and fall together. The British Government, the Memorandum says, having recognised the Shusung and Sherpur Parganas as 'essentially Garo country', made it a partially excluded area to ensure a just and considerate protection of the Garos therein, (Memorandum Date 17th January, 1931: pp. 2-4). In support of their stand and to justify their demands, they gave a number of historical references and other documents.
explaining the social, religious and political disadvantages in the newly created dominion, the Memorandum (1951: 8-9) states "the social and religious practices of the forefathers of the Garos are closely akin to Primitive Hinduism, with the exceptions of a considerable number of the Garo Christians. The Garos, wherever they are, live under matriarchal system, according to which, the septs, clans and surnames are all derived from the line of motherhood. They are all divided amongst themselves mainly on the basis of matrimonial necessity into different septs and clans amongst themselves with customary social laws, strongly binding them together, as an inward ligament of the whole Garo social structure, so that all the Garos, irrespective of their places of residence, are all closely interrelated by blood counting their relationship from the lines of their motherhood and the Garo Nokma (or Headman) of the different septs and clans exercise social control of the respective septs and clans under them. Being under the law of matriarchism, girls are much valued by the heads of the families than are the boys among the Garos".

The movement for amalgamation of the part of Mymensingh predominantly inhabited by the Garos into the Indian Union was made only in 1951 after three years of independence when everything was settled in favour of East Pakistan; it was perhaps too late for such move when the so called Garo country in Bengal had gone and lost for ever from the hands of the Garos.
On the northern Garo hills, Garos living in the Goalpara and Kamrup districts of Assam were found making frantic effort for getting all the Garo settled areas of the districts merged with the Garo hills district; but, their movement appears to be ineffective, might be, because of the fact that the Garos of Assam faced no so much critical situation with respect to the social, economic and religious issue, they being in the same dominion except in language, political and administrative disadvantage. No doubt, Jonaram R. Sangma (1939-1980) was launching some sorts of movement for the inclusion of all Garo inhabited areas of those two districts with the present Garo hills, but after him, the movement came to a standstill. Again, it was only after the creation of a new state Meghalaya in 1972, fresh attempts with the same objectives appeared in the scene. The major problems necessitating such movement seem to lie in the fact that, certain inconvenience in respect of language, political and administrative issue were being faced by the Garos living in the state of Assam; whereas, the problems of the Garos of West Bengal district of erstwhile East Pakistan were mostly, social, political and religious. So, there is a difference between the problems of the Garos of Assam Valley and the problems faced by the Garos of East Pakistan.

Having thus already lost the battle in the south, Garos were losing ground in the northern front too. Presumably, the movement on both the regions failed to hit the iron when it
was not. It is perhaps because of this reason that the present
district of Garo Hills in Meghalaya only remains as a main
centre of all social, cultural, religious, economic and political
activities of the Garos in the twentieth century India.

Political Institutions, Traditional and Modern

Absence of a formal organization is a characteristic
of the Garo village political organization. Unlike the Ao Nagas
(Mills 1926) who have a clear-cut political organization at the
village level (there being practically no political organization
at a higher level). The Ao political organization can be consi­
dered as a continuum of the bachelors' dormitory organization,
in which the powers and functions of different office bearers
and age grades were culturally defined. On the other hand Garos
have neither a clearcut organization to manage affairs of the
bachelors' dormitory nor the affairs of the village in general.
The Garo system works on the principle of involvement of all
the adult males in the decision making process, be it for the
dormitory or for the village.

The unit of political cohesion in the Garo political
system is the aknin; the territory the ownership right of
which is vested on a particular lineage but utilized for
shifting cultivation by a number of villages. But the villages
of the aknin; were loosely bound by common interest of using
land for shifting cultivation. However, each village has an area demarcated within which the villagers have to confine their shifting cultivation operations. Such an area within the akzhing is known as aook. Utilization of land for shifting cultivation is the binding force between a group of villages and so when shifting cultivators adopt permanent cultivation the whole concept of akzhing gets obliterated and the villages adopt other basis of cohesion.

The managerial right of the akzhing practically amounts to granting usufructuary right to families migrating from some other akzhing. The akzhing owning lineage has a 'major household' which symbolizes the unified right of the lineage over that particular territory. A nominal fee known as awil is taken from a migrant family. There is no clear-cut procedure as to how the amount of the awil is to be appropriated. As the amount in question is usually very small there is no opposition if it is appropriated entirely by the major household. Probably in pre-British days there were very few cases of inter-akzhing migration and probably the inhabitants of an akzhing composed of the descendants of the akzhing owning lineage and the members of other lineages marrying into that lineage.

The principal male of the major household of the akzhing owning lineage is known as nokma. The nokma is, for
all practical purposes, regarded as the head of the akkning, though he is always to abide by the decision of the elders of the lineage. In no case he can take a unilateral decision. So, in fact he is only a figurehead, a symbol. The nokma's position is paradoxical. He enjoys the position as the head of the akkning by virtue of his marriage in the akkning owning lineage, though by birth he belongs to another lineage. The nokma does not exercise any executive or judicial powers. In case of disputes the lineage elders of persons involved take steps to settle the dispute (Majumdar 1966) and it is not obligatory on the part of the nokma to take any active part in such disputes unless his own or his wife's lineage is involved. However, the nokma may, if he wishes, take the role of a mediator. Matters of common concern for the village community in general are decided by the common consensus of the married males of the village. After the British annexed the territory of the Gares they tried to disturb as little as possible the traditional political system of the Gares. The British Deputy Commissioner now became the supreme authority in administration and to help him two new offices were created, the lashkar and the meuzadar. The British government vested statutory powers to the lashkars and the meuzadars.

After independence the administration of the Gare Hills district came under the purview of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, according to which besides law and order and matters concerning the non-Gare inhabitants, all other
matters relating to the administration of the district, like trial of cases in accordance with Garo customary laws, rural development, running of primary schools, etc. have been entrusted to the district council. The district council is a miniature state assembly. It comprises of representatives from different constituencies elected on the basis of adult franchise. The candidates for membership to district council seek election on party basis, and the party gaining majority support in the council forms the executive council comprising of one Chief Executive Member, and a number of Executive Members for different departments of the district council like, education, Forests, revenue, etc. The district council has its source of revenue from land revenue, market tolls, royalties from forest products, house tax, grazier's tax, etc. It also receives substantial grants from the state government.

So far as the traditional political system is concerned the district council has recognized it. The district council recognizes the rights of the nokma over the land and the forest products within the akning. However, it has also retained the system of lashkars and mouzadars. The court of the council at the district headquarters functions as a court for trial of cases relating to property inheritance, marriage, land disputes, etc. among the Garos and also functions as an appellate for the decisions taken by the lashkars and the mouzadars.