Chapter III

Relations between the British and the Hill people of the Garo, Khasi and Jaintia Hills

In the nineteenth century, the Hill people of Garo, Khasi and Jaintia Hills were caught in the vortex of mighty political and administrative changes. Many new administrative set-ups were brought into existence, new administrative machinery was introduced, large tracts of territories were taken away by the British. Different types of agreements were concluded between the traditional chiefs and the British Government to regulate their relationship from time to time. Some of the native rulers were in subsidiary alliance with the British. Some were recognised as semi-independent States and some as dependent States while many others came under the direct control of the British.

Against this backdrop it is necessary to narrate the relationship between the British and the Hill people of these areas.

Garo Hills: The Garos were the first among the mountain tribes to have been affected by these changes. In 1824, after a successful military operation from Mymensing, David Scott, the first Commissioner of Assam thought that it would be better to bring into existence a new institution to overshadow the traditional institution of Nokmaship and the traditional councils. Therefore, he brought into existence the institution of Laskars. This novel scheme prepared by Scott was approved by the British Government. Scott introduced written agreements. The number of these Laskars from whom Scott received the written agreements was nineteen. The terms of the agreement were as follows:

   Administration Report of Assam.1896.
1. I, having been appointed Laskar of Mouzah named below with the general consent of ..........hereby, of my own free will, declare that I shall remain subject to the British Government and pay Rupees ..............nazzuranah for the Mouzah specified below.

2. I shall assess and collect rents from ryots at the rate prevailing in the Mouzah and pay nazzaranah either in the Sudder Station or in the Surburarkar's Cutchery. I shall never pay without a receipt; all allegations of payment without receipt will be considered invalid. Any order of alteration of juma I shall attend to. If any officer of the Government happens to be in my jurisdiction, I shall assist and guide him, till he reaches another illaka. When a criminal case occurs, I shall report the matter to the Police or the Pouzadar Court and I shall assist in its investigations. 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 homes. I shall henceforth discontinue the practice and shall not allow any of my subjects to do the same. If any one adheres to the former practice and commits murder, I shall apprehend and bring him to justice.

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

5. I shall annually pay nazzarannah either in the Sudder or Surkurakari's Cutchery 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 is groundless.

6. I shall keep the boundaries of my Mouzah unaltered."

A close examination of the terms of the Laskars' agreement clearly indicate that the British were determined to stop any further raids of the Garos, to put to a stop the practice of head-hunting and to bring about a homogeneous administration in the Garo
territory directly under their control. The Laskars had to act completely under the complete direction and control of the British Government.

A new change in the administrative set up was suggested by Capt. Morton, the Deputy Commissioner of Goalpara district which included the Garo hills also in 1865. According to him, the Laskars should have a more homogeneous jurisdiction and that one or more Chiefs should be appointed as Police Zimmadars. The suggestion of Capt. Morton contained the distinction between a Laskar and a Zimmadar. The Laskars would be made responsible for the payment of revenue due from the Mouzahs whereas the Zimmadars who would be appointed by the Laskars would be responsible for the maintenance of law and order and they would have limited jurisdiction over civil and criminal cases. Since the duties of Zimmadars were more difficult, more onerous and more responsible than those of the Luskars, Morton suggested that they might be paid higher remuneration than the Luskars themselves. But, Col. Hopkinson made a suggestion that the Zimmadars should be styled as Amulacus because the word Zimmadar might mislead the mind of the people of a territorial Chief. He though that the Zimmadars, in course of time, might assume territorial rights within their territorial jurisdiction. The British Government accepted the suggestion made by Capt Morton and set aside the one given by Col. Hopkinson.

Further, Capt. Morton made a proposal that the Zimmadars should be given a Sanad by the Government. Such a Sanad might be printed on a paper with broad margins on all the four sides, the fringes of which should be emblazoned with gold. Each of the Sanads
to be given to Zimmadars should contain the following terms and conditions:

1. You will administer justice impartially and in strict accordance with your village customs.

2. You will try to maintain peace in your own jurisdiction. Should any person of those Illakas under you or any Garo of other Illakas 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.

3. You will not allow any person of a different Illaka or from the plains to overstep your jurisdiction and commit murder or other heinous crimes on the hills or the plains. Should such an event happen you will do your best and bring them before the Court of the Deputy Commissioner.

4. It was customary upon the death of a Chief to sacrifice a human being or to burn human remains on the funeral pyre. You will, on no account permit such practice within your jurisdiction and you will in every way exert yourself to dissuade from and prevent the same in other Illakas and should your remonstrance not be attended to, you will report and assist in apprehending the offender.

5. You will, after enquiry report to the Deputy Commissioner all accidental deaths, such as those from bites of snakes, falls from trees etc, but you will on no account, when you cannot trace offenders, conceal a murder or report it as an accidental death.

6. You will try to induce those Garos, who at one time acknowledged the sovereignty or the British Government, but who have thrown off their allegiance to submit and pay their nuzzarannah as herebefore.

2. Ibid.
7. 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 ........ This will be paid to you at the time and place to be fixed and of which you will be yearly informed by the Deputy Commissioner."

Apart from the fact that the Zimmadars were to accept in good faith the whole contents of the Sanad, each Zimmadar was also required to execute an agreement, the terms and conditions of which were as follows: 3

"Having in accordance with the wishes of an assembly of Iuskars been appointed Zimmadars of Police within limits given below and the Government having been pleased to vest me with criminal powers as regards the trial of all petty suits, the value of which does not exceed Rs.50/-, I give this written agreement setting forth my willingness to abide by the Rules laid down below:

1. I will administer justice impartially and in strict accordance with my village customs. Should I, during the year carry out these attentively, I shall receive from the Deputy Commissioner on the part of the Government a sum of Rs....... This will be paid to me at a time and place to be fixed and of which I shall be yearly informed by the Deputy Commissioner.

2. I shall try to maintain peace in my own jurisdiction. Should any person of those under me or Garos of other Illakas be guilty of any crime of a heinous nature within my jurisdiction, I shall do my best to apprehend and bring the offender to justice.

3. I shall not allow any person of a different Illaka or from the plains to overstep my jurisdiction and commit murder or any other crime on the hills or plains. Should such a thing happen, I shall do my best to apprehend the offenders and bring them before 3. Ibid.
the court of the Deputy Commissioner.

4. It was customary upon the death of a Chief to sacrifice a human being or to burn human remains on the funeral pyre; I shall, on no account, permit such practices within my jurisdiction and I shall, in every way, exert myself to dissuade and prevent the same in other Illakas and should my remonstrance not be attended to, I shall report and assist in apprehending the offenders.

5. I shall, after enquiry report to the Deputy Commissioner all accidental deaths such as those from bites of snakes, fall from tree etc, but I shall, on no account, when I cannot trace out offenders, conceal a murder and report it as an accidental death.

6. I shall try and induce those Garos who at one time acknowledged the Sovereignty of the British Government, but who have thrown off their allegiance, to submit and to pay their nuzzaranah as heretofore."

Whereas the British had introduced the system of issuing Sanad to the Zimmedars and by making them execute written agreements, the Laskars were not issued Sanads and they were only required to execute agreements. In the same manner, the Zimmedars were paid yearly lumpsum amount which varied from one Zimmadar to another according to the extent of their area of jurisdiction, in addition to rewards which they got for some specific services as in the terms and conditions of the agreements and Sanads. The Zimmedars were also given old muskets and were provided with some ammunition. These measures were adopted with a view to raising the status of the Zimmedars in the estimation of the subjects. At the time when Garo Hills became a separate district in 1866, there were twentyfour Zimmedars.

The Laskars, on the other hand did not get any reward. They
were given small money allowance only if they observed the terms and conditions of the agreement.

The new institutions of Laskars and Zimmedars introduced by the British proved to be successful. They acted as a night watchman to the British. It was these people who assisted the British to finally consolidate the Garo Hills within the British Empire. At a glance, it appears as if the terms and conditions imposed upon the Laskars and Zimmedars were overlapping. But they were not really so. They were complimentary to one another. Another characteristics of the new functionaries is that although the Zimmedars were appointed by the Laskars, yet they served under the pleasures of the British Government. On the other hand, they received more recognition from the Government as well as the people. Thus, through the system of checks and balances between the functions of the Laskars and the Zimmedars, the British Government were successful in exercising full control over the people and the land in the Garo Hills.

Anglo-Khasi Relations; The history of the Anglo-Khasi relation is one of the most fascinating chapters in modern Indian history. It was in this part of the country that the British had to utilise all their diplomatic and military resources at their command. Sometimes they deployed the diplomacy of negotiations and sometimes they used the military force, and quite often they took resort to a policy of intrigue. In some cases they established their authority by means of treaties and agreements whereas in some others, they claimed their sovereign authority by right of conquest, and in a few cases, they established their sovereign jurisdiction over certain areas by right of purchase or by exchange of territories.

It must be recalled that the aims of the British to establish their authority in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills were three-fold.
First, they wanted to have a free passage through the hills to connect the Assam valley with the Surma valley. Secondly, they wanted to regulate trade relationship with the hills. Thirdly, they were bent upon establishing Salatoria and a military Cantonment in the hills which is midway between the two valleys.

In order to achieve these aims, the British started with a policy of negotiations in which they were successful. From 1324 to 1822, the relation-ship between the British and some of the Khasi States was regulated by means of treaties. The first ever treaty concluded by the British with any Khasi Syiem was the one which they concluded with Ram Singh, Syiem of Sutnga (Jaintiapur) on 10th March, 1824. The treaty was signed by David Scott, Agent to the Governor-General and Raja Ram Singh, Syiem of Jaintiapur. The following is the text of the treaty (A true translation):4

"Article 1
Raja Ram Singh acknowledged allegiance to the Honourable Company, and places his country of Jynteah under their protection. Mutual friendship and amity shall always be maintained between the Honourable Company and the Rajah.

Article 2
The internal Government of the country shall be conducted by the Rajah, and the jurisdiction of the British Courts of Justice shall not extend there. The Rajah will always attend to the welfare of his subjects, and observe the ancient customs of Government, but should any unforeseen abuse arise in the administration of justice affairs, he agrees to rectify the same agreeably to the advice of the Governor-General-in-Council.

Article 3

The Honourable Company engages to protect the territory of Jynteah from external enemies, and to arbitrate any differences that may arise between the Rajah and other States. The Rajah agrees to abide by such arbitration, and to hold no political correspondence or communication with foreign powers, except with the consent of the British Government.

Article 4

In the event of the Honourable being engaged in war to the eastward of the Berhampooter, the Raja engages to assist with all his forces, and to afford every other facility in his power in furtherance of such military operation.

Article 5

The Raja agrees in concert with the British local authorities to adopt all measures that may be necessary for the maintenance, in the district of Sylhet, of the arrangement in force in the judicial, opium and salt Department."

A separate article of this treaty was also attested as follows: 5

"Raja Ram Singh engages that to assist in the war commenced in Assam between Honourable Company's troops and those of the King of Ava, he will march a force and attack the enemy to the east of Gowhatty; and the Honourable Company agrees, upon the conquest of Assam, to confer upon the Rajah a part of that territory proportionate to the extent of his exertions in the common cause".

It was really most uncommon that Ram Singh, Syiem of Sutnga, should conclude a treaty with the British without even consulting

5. Ibid. p, 240.
the State Durbar. In contrast to this failure on his part to observe the traditional customs, Tirot Singh, Syiem of Nongkhlaw on the other hand concluded a treaty with David Scott with the full knowledge and full agreement of the State Durbar. The following is the text of the agreement arrived at between David Scott and Tirot Singh on 30th November, 1826 (A true translation). This agreement was signed by David Scott alone. 6

"Article 1

Rajah Teerut Singh, the ruler of Nongkhlaw and its dependencies, with the advice and consent of his relations, dependent Lushkurs and Sirdars in Council assembled, voluntarily agrees to become subject to the Honourable Company, and places his country under their protection.

Article 2

The said Rajah agrees to give a free passage for troops through his country to go and to come between Assam and Sylhet.

Article 3

The Rajah agrees to furnish materials for the construction of a road through his territories, receiving payment for the same, and after its completion to adopt such measures as may be necessary to keep it in repair.

Article 4

The Agent to the Governor-General agrees, on the part of the Honourable Company, to protect the Rajah's country from foreign enemies, and if any other chief injures his, to enquire into the facts and if it appears that he has been unjustly attacked to afford him due support. The Rajah on his part agrees to abide by such decision and not to hold any intercourse or correspondence on political

matters with many foreign chief without the consent of the British Government.

**Article 5**

The Rajah agrees that, in the event of the Honourable Company carrying on hostilities with any other power, he will serve with all his followers as far to the eastward as Kulliabar in Assam, his men being entitled to receive subsistence money from the British Government when employed on the plains.

**Article 6**

The Rajah promises to serve his subjects according to laws of his country, keeping them pleased and contented, and carrying on the public business according to ancient custom, without the interference of the British Government; but if any person should commit violence in the Honourable Company's territory, and take refuge in the Rajah's country, he agrees to seize and deliver them up.

Again, in 1829, the British received the written agreement of Dewan Singh, Syiem of Sohra (Cherrapunjee). The agreement is the translation of an agreement executed in 1829, by Dewan Singh, Raja of Cherrapunjee. The Rajah having lost his eye-sight, Soobha Singh, his nephew put his mark in the agreement on the part of Dewan Singh, Rajah.

"To

Mr. David Scott,
Agent to the Governor-General

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Presented at Cherra Poonjee, on the 12th September 1829, Corresponding with year 1236 B.S.

Some land having been required of me for erecting Government edifices and for gentlemen to build houses on, I voluntarily cede this land, and enter into the following Agreement:

1st - For the erection of these buildings etc, I have given up some land in a place to the east of Cherra Poonjee, bounded on one side by the dell or below the rest of the valley, and on the other side by the Seit Oodoi river, where bamboos have been put up on the part of the Government; and if more land is required, it will be furnished to the east of that spot; but in exchange for as much land as I may give up altogether in my territory, I am to receive an equal quantity of land in the vicinity of Pundah and Companygunge, within the boundary of zillah Sylhet.

2nd - I am to establish a haunt in Mouzah Burzyile, on a spot of ground that I have purchased, pertaining to the foresaid Zillah, and I am always to manage the haunt, and to make investigations there according to the customs of my country and in such matters I am to have nothing to do with the Honourable Company's Court. This place is moreover to be transferred from the foresaid Zillah, and made over, as rent-free-grant to my Cossiah territory, and if any person who has committed a wrongful act in the Government territories should come and stay on this land belonging to me, I will apprehend him and deliver him up on demand.

3rd - Whenever limestone may be found on the Cherra Poonjee hills in my territory, I will allow the Government to take it gratis when required for their own use.
4th - If any quarrels and disturbances should take place between Bengalees themselves, it will be necessary for you to investigate them, and I am to investigate disputes occurring between Cossias. Besides which, if any dispute should occur between a Bengalee and a Cossiah, it is to be tried in concert by me and a gentleman on the part of the Honourable Company. To which purport I have executed this agreement. Dated 10th September, Corresponding with the 26th of Bhadro 1236 B.S."

Again, in 1830, Soobha Singh (Suba Singh) Syiem of Sohra signed another agreement, the text of which runs as follows:—

"An Agreement executed by Soobha Singh Rajah and the officers, Sirdars and other Cossias of Cherra Poonjee in year 1830 (Translation).

Sd/- Soobha Singh Rajah and others of the 12 Tribes(clans) Sirdar Cossias of Cherra Poonjee.

To

The Honourable Company

The written Agreement of Soobha Singh, Rajah, and the officers, Sirdars, and other Cossias, residing at Cherra Poonjee, executed in the current year 1237 B.S. to the following purport:—

Whereas the locality ceded by Dewan Singh, Rajah, during his life-time, to the Honourable company, under an agreement he furnished for the purpose of erecting buildings on for gentlemen and convalescent persons, is now insufficient for that object in consequence of a great number of Government subjects having resorted to this place, we therefore, in compliance with the request of Mr. David Scott, Agent to the Governor-General cede to the Government,

8. Ibid. p.233.
agreeably to the terms of the previous agreement furnished by the
late Rajah, the land lying to the South-east of that place,
extending up to the valley and river and specified in the said
agreement, and give this agreement to the effect that we will
abide by, and act in accordance to the conditions specified in
the late Rajah's Agreement. To which purport we have executed
this agreement.

Dated the 19th October, 1830, Corresponding with Cartick
1237 B.S.

Sd/- T.C. Robertson
Agent to the Governor General

The said area ceded by the two Syiem of Sohra came to be
known as Saitsohpen which became the headquarters of the British
Government, both for the district as well as for the whole of the
North Eastern frontier.

Immediately, after the outbreak of the war in 1828, the
British began to follow the policy of punishment and annexation.
This they did by forcibly taking away a part of the territory of
any Khasi State, or by forcibly annexing some States into the
British territories through the application of the Doctrine of
lapse or for administrative convenience, or by forcibly asking
the native rulers to come to an agreement or by the doctrine of
force itself. The British became also more interested to detach
the plain areas of many Khasi States to be attached to any of the
plain districts. They became more conscious also to have a full
control over the mineral resources in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills.

The first of such attempts was to force Bor Manik, Syiem
of Khyrim (at that time, it was also known as Shillong State) to
sign an agreement with David Scott, by which the former was forced
to abandon his sovereignty over his possession in the foot-hills.

The Articles of the Agreement are as follows:

"To David Scott, Esquire
Agent to the Governor-General.

My country having been taken possession of by the Honourable Company in consequence of my having made war with them, and thereby caused considerable losses, I now come forward and placing myself under the protection of the Company, and acknowledging my submission to them, agree to the following terms as sanctioned by the Presidency authorities:

1st - I cede to the Honourable Company the land I formerly held on the south and east of the Cceeam river, and I promise not to interfere with the people residing on those lands without the orders of the Agent to the Governor-General.

2nd - I consent to hold the remaining portion of the territory agreeably to the Sunud of the Honourable Company as their dependants, and to conduct its affairs according to ancient customs; but I am not at liberty to pass orders in any murder case without the permission of the Governor-General's Agent, and will report to him any case of this kind that may occur.

3rd - When any of the Honourable Company's troops pass through my territory, I will furnish them with such provisions as the country produces, so that they may not be put to any inconvenience, receiving payment for these supplies from Government; and I will construct bridges, etc, when ordered to do so, and am to be paid for the expense incurred thereon.

4th - In case of any Hill Chieftains making war with the Honourable Company, I will join the Government's troops with the

fighting men of my country, but they are to receive subsistence from the Government.

5th - I relinquish my former claim regarding the boundary of Desh Doomorooha, and agree to the Afden Nuddee being the future boundary, I am however, to be assigned some lands near the Sonapur market for the purpose of trading there.

6th - I agree to pay a fine of 5,000 rupees to the Honourable Company on account of the expenses now and previously incurred by them in the subjugation of my country.

7th - If Teerut Singh, Rajah, who is inimical to the Honourable Company, or any other of his guilty followers should enter my territory, I will immediately apprehend them and deliver them up, and I promise to produce all criminals who may come and take refuge in my country from any place in the Honourable Company's dominion.

To which effect I have excluded this agreement on this 15th day of January 1830, Corresponding with the 4th of Mugh 1236 BS.

This agreement was signed by Bormanick. In 1834 there was a proposal to restore the tract to the State, but it was never carried out, the promise to give Khyrim lands in Sonapore area in exchange for Desh Doomorooha was never honoured. But, Sing Manick, the successor of Bor Manick paid the amount of Rs.5000 in 1841.

The next story was narrated by Alexander Mackenzie thus:

"Omeer Singh, of Nurtung, is the next on the list. Of this Chieftain, Mr. Robertson says - 'he has large possessions in the direction of Goalpara, where he, last year (1831), made an inroad, in consequence of which several of his villages in that frontier were taken from him and annexed to our dominion. But little is known of the State of the interior of his domain."10 There were territories of other

Khali States which were annexed to the plain districts. "The territories of the Muliang State in the plains were also annexed to the Kamrup district". It must also be mentioned that "the entire territory of the State of Nongwah was engulfed within Kamrup district". It is not understood how Nongkhlaw State lost its territories in the plain inspite of the fact that the articles of agreement between Rujon Singh, Syiem of Nongkhlaw, and Captain Francis Jenkins on 29th March 1834 do not contain any reference to any agreement that these territories be ceded to the British.

From 1833 onwards all negotiations were conducted by the political Agent who was stationed at Nongkhlaw. But after sometime the political Agent shifted his office to Saitsohpen (Cherrapunjee). To continue the story of annexation, the annexation of the Sutnga State was the most unfortunate. On 15th March, 1835, the British occupied Jaintiapur. By right of conquest, the British annexed Jaintiapur and the whole of Jaintia Farganah and tagged it to Sylhet while the plain territories of Gobha in the north were tagged to Nowgong District. Since the last Syiem preferred to become a pensioner under the British, the whole of Sutnga State in the hills was also annexed to the British dominion. No agreement was signed and no treaty was concluded with any one. All these were simply done by orders of the 30th March, 1835 which placed Jaintia Hills under the political Agent, Khasi Hills. This is one of the most unjustifiable acts that the British had done. If they could still accept the subsidiary positions of other States like Nongkhlaw, Ehyrim and other States even after they had fought against them, if they could still come to agreements recognising the successor, if they could restore their

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12. Ibid. p.12.
hills possessions; it is not understood how the British could forcibly annex the Sutnga State even without waiting the claims of other successors who might belong to the Sutnga or Nartiang branch of the Syiem clan.

The process of consolidating their possession in the Khasi Hills continued and by 1839, all States had accepted British paramountcy. From this year onwards, the British Government made successful attempts to get certain areas for the purpose of converting them into reserved forests. They also succeeded in getting perpetual lease of most important limestone, coal, stone and other quarries. All these were done by means of agreements. But in none of the agreements did the Syiem or other ruler surrender their sovereign rights.

Further, the British succeeded also in converting many villages into British territories by various dubious methods. These villages, thirty-one in number became British territories. On the eve of India's independence, the following villages were found to be British territories: - Byrong, Jyrngam, Laitlyngkot, Leitkroh, Lakading, Wyrdon, Mawmluh, Hawbah-Larkar, Hawthang-Sohkhyllung, Mawsmai-Nongthymmai, Karbisu, Lynteng, Nongbah, Nongpoh, Nongkroh, Nongjri, Nongriat, Nongshluit, Nongriangsi, Nonglang, Nonglyngkien, Nonglait, Ramdait, Saiatsphpen, Synnei, Sinai-Mawkhynrut, Sohbar, Tyrna, Tynrong, Tynriang and Umniuh-Tmar.

Let us now examine the relations between the British and the Khasi States. From the beginning till 1859, the relations between the Khasi States and the British Government were regulated by treaties and agreements executed by the rulers. But in 1859, the Government decided that on each occasion that the ruler was elected, an agreement would be executed by such ruler. In return the Government would confer upon him the election of a new ruler or Chief.
a Sanad confirming his election. In 1867, a general form was prescribed for such agreements. The phraseology of the first paragraph runs as follows:

"I, ___________ resident of _________Illaka ________, having been appointed to the Chiefship of the said Illaka ________, hereby agree and promise that I will conduct myself agreeably to the following rules". It is evident that the British tried to assume upon itself the power of appointment by ignoring the customary practice of election of the Chief or rulers. Thus, there was strong reaction against this general form of agreement.

After realising the real situation, to establish their authority over the States in the guise of respecting the customary practice - the Government decided to abolish the agreements but to issue Sanads. This was done in 1877. From that year the relations between the Khasi Syiems and the British Government were regulated by the Sanads. A standard form was also prescribed. But in the case of the Lyngdohs, Wahadadars and Sirdars, the relations were regulated by Purwanas.

A pertinent question may be asked - why was this done? Judged by any standard, the British Government clearly intended to reduce the status and influence of the rulers. By abolishing the systems of agreements, the Khasi rulers were no longer recognised as a contracting party. In political parlance, a Sanad was generally issued by the British Government to indicate a grant of recognition from the British Crown to the ruler of a State. From this, it follows, that the Government wanted to create a feeling of subordinate position on the part of the Khasi rulers and to foster the idea of the absolute supremacy of the British Government.
A Sanad was issued in a manner by which the Syiemship would appear as if it were a gift of the British to the ruler. Let us have a look at the opening sentence:

"You __________ having been elected Syiem of the State of __________ in the district of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, this Sanad ratifying your election and appointed you Syiem, is conferred upon you on the following conditions". A close examination of this sentence makes it abundantly clear that the British Government had assumed to itself the right to appoint the Syiem and not merely to ratify his election. The natural corollary which automatically follows from this sentence is that since the Government had usurped the power of appointing the Syiem, it had also the power to dismiss the Syiem at any time without assigning any reason. Thus the following sentence was incorporated: "you shall be subject to the orders and control of the Deputy Commissioner or any other officer authorised in that behalf by the Government may issue to you". This is more evident if we examine clause IX of the Sanad which runs as follows: "If you violate any of the conditions of this Sanad, or in the case of your using any oppression, or of your acting in a manner opposed to established custom, or in the event of your people, having just cause for dissatisfaction with you, you shall be liable to suffer such punishment as the local Government, subject to the control of the Government of India, may think proper to inflict."

The position of the Lyngdohs, Wahadadars and Sirdars was made more inferior. First, they were not issued any Sanad. Instead, the only symbol of recognition was the issue of Purwanas. Secondly, the wording of the Purwana was brief. It enjoined the person concerned
thus: "you should conduct yourself in accordance with the custom of the community, and you should carry out orders issued to you by the British Government". The last sentence treated them as if they were Government Servants. "In the event of misconduct on your part, you will render yourself liable to dismissal from the Sirdarship or Lyngdohship". This distinction made by the British between the two sets of rulers can be described as a blatant miscarriage of political justice. In fact, they were, and they have been looked upon by the Khasis as equal in status.

Most of the clauses contained in the Sanad were arbitrary, discretionary, confiscatory and even ex-parte in nature. Mines and minerals, waste lands and forest were required to be ceded to the Government on fifty-fifty per cent basis of all profits accrued thereupon. What remained to the people was the land they had actually occupied such as Rikynti, Ri Raid, Ri Seng, Ri Kur, Ri Phniang, Ri Shyieng, Ri Khaîn, Ri bam Syiem and the like. Even the right of hunting and capturing elephants was subject to similar conditions. Further, the Sanad authorised the Deputy Commissioner to entertain appeals against the decisions of the Syiems even in cases where his former jurisdiction was absolute. It also stated that the laws made by the Indian Legislative Council could be introduced in the Khasi States. For the construction of roads and railways, the Syiems were required to provide land without compensation except for the occupied lands and that they should render all help to the Government for such purposes. Furthermore, the local Government assumed to itself the right of establishing civil and military Sanitaria, Cantonments, Post and Telegraphs in the Khasi States, and to occupy lands for these purposes, free of rent.
At first the Sanad was signed by the Viceroy himself. Later on, from 1878 onwards, it was signed by the Commissioner of the Surma Valley and Hill Division. Much later on, it was even signed by the Deputy Commissioner. But the Purwanas were signed by the Deputy Commissioner. This practice continued till 1947.

In the thirty one British villages which had been annexed to the British dominion the relationship was simple. The British respected the custom of election of Sirdars by means of male adult suffrage. After the election, the order of appointment was issued. At first the election of Sirdars was made annually, later on it was extended to three years and then to five years, and much later on the Sirdars served as long as they enjoyed the confidence of the Deputy Commissioner.

As far as Jaintia Hills is concerned the picture is quite different. After the annexation of Jaintia Hills in 1855, it is not understood how the British Government pushed the more important functionaries like the Lyngskor, Lynjohs and Lyntris into the back-ground and brought the position of Dollois into prominence. Writing in 1853, A.J. Moffat Hills observed: "There are 23 dullais (Dollois) and Sirdars in the Jaintia Hills who have a certain number of poonjees or villages under their charge, and they investigate all petty cases of a civil and criminal nature within their district. An appeal lies from the decision of the Dollai's (dolloi's) to the Political Agent......... The Dollai's (dolloi's) were formerly appointed annually, but the Political Agent has extended the office to three years, the retention, however, depending on good conduct. On the expiry of that period, the community have the right to re-elect another dullai (dolloi)". This graphic description of Hills clearly indicates that for all practical purposes, the dolloi's were the officers of the British Government.
The position of Shillong was peculiar. In 1862, the British Government declared to shift their capital from Sohra (Cherrapunjee) to Shillong. In 1863, they succeeded to acquire large tract of land in Shillong from Melay Singh, Syiem of Mylliem, who signed an agreement as follows:—

"Whereas it was stipulated in the agreement entered into by me, Melay Singh, Raja of Myleem (Kylliem), under date 19th March, 1861 with the British Government, that the right of establishing civil and military Sanatoria, posts and telegraphs and Cantonments, within my country should remain with the British Government; whereas Lieutenant-Colonel J.C. Hargton, Agent to the Governor-General, North-East Frontier, under the instruction of the said Government, has selected for the purpose of Civil and military Sanatoria, etc., the land hereinafter described. I hereby renounced, with the advice and consent of my Huntress (Hyntris) and the heads of my people, all sovereign and personal rights therein to Her Majesty the Queen of England and the British Government. It is, however, stipulated should the proprietors of any of the land within the limits hereinafter described be unwilling to sell or part with their land to the British Government, the said persons shall continue fully to enjoy the same without impost of taxation as heretofore, but that in all respects the jurisdiction and sovereignty of Her Majesty, the Queen of England, and of the British Government, and the officers of Government duly appointed, shall extend over the said land and over all persons residing thereon, and to all offences committed there within."

It was in this area that the British Government established its capital. The area described in this agreement covers that portion of Shillong known as European Ward, Police Bazar Ward.

and Jail Road Ward of the Shillong Municipality and also the Shillong Cantonment area. This was the first case that a Khasi Syiem surrendered his sovereign right over a certain area. The land was actually taken on lease from the Khasi land owners and upto this day, successive Governments have been paying annual land rent to the heirs of the original Ri Kynti land owners. For the purpose of administration, the British Government treated this areas as normal area where the Acts and Rules of the Government were applicable. Later on, the British Government purchased also other plots of land outside the normal area. But as pointed out by the Land Reforms Commission for Khasi Hills (1974): "For other Government lands at Rilbong and Kench's Trace Wards, there was no agreement like that of 1363 executed by the Syiem and Durbar when the land was purchased by the Government. While the British Government made settlement of the land in these Wards as their own, the System of administration was not wholly taken over from the Syiem and his Durbar. The area is known as Administered area where the Syiem and his Durbar still wields certain restricted administrative and judicial power."

Shillong became the capital of Assam in 1874. When the Government decided to introduce the Municipal Board in 1878, the Government requested the Syiem of Mylliem that some other areas of Mylliem Syiemsip in Shillong were also to be included in the Municipal Board. Hain Manik signed an agreement on 15th November, 1878 thus: "I Hain Manik Syiem of Mylliem, understanding that it is required by the Chief Commissioner of Assam that the villages of Hackhar (Mawkhar) to the Northward and Laban to the South-west, and adjacent to the station of Shillong, and within my territory
should be subjected to sanitary and Municipal regulations do hereby agree that the said villages of Mawkhar and Laban shall be included within the Municipality of Shillong and I agree to pay on account of such villages, and on account of the residents thereof, all rates and taxes which may be provided for to be paid under the bye-laws, or which may from time to time, be fixed, by the Commissioners, of such Municipality, and to do every and all things required by such Commissioners.

Provided that my proprietary and manorial rights and my authority as Syiem within such villages, otherwise, than necessary to be waived for the purposes of such Municipality shall not be interfered with. I further agree that, for that purposes of this agreement, the limits of the said villages shall be deemed to include the whole of the land at present occupied by such villages, or which may be occupied as such villages shall enlarge and extend and such limits may be fixed, varied and extended as the Commissioners for the Municipality may from time to time find to be expedient."

From the above, it is clear that Mawkhar and Laban were the first villages within Mylliem State area to have been subjected to the Municipal laws. By the time, the foreign jurisdiction order of 1902 was enacted, it was realised that the laws could be applied in the Mylliem State areas of Shillong by invoking the provision of the said order. It was only on 25th January 1934, that the Syiem of Mylliem (Kmuin Khanick) who exercised jurisdiction in the Shillong area ceded to the British Government's jurisdiction necessary for Municipal Administration in accordance with the Assam Municipal (Amendment) Act, 1923 of the villages of Mawkhar, Laitumkhrah, Mission Compound, Jaiaw, South-East-Mawkhar and Garihkhana, Mawprem and Jhalupara, Laban, Malki, Haneng Umkhrah subject
to the maintenance of power and other rights as Syiem of Mylliem. Throughout the whole of the British period, each succeeding Syiem of Mylliem was nominated to the Shillong Municipal Board.

The Khasi States: We have no definite information about the exact number of the Khasi States before the British period. But there is a saying of Dr. John Robert which describes the whole of the present Khasi and Jaintia Hills as "Ka Ri Laiphew Syiem bad Khadar Doloi" (A land of thirty Syiems and twelve Dolois). A number of theories have been advanced regarding this number, but none of the theories is wholly acceptable. Suffice it to say that the number varied from time to time. It is really shocking that even the British administrators who were stationed in these hills could not give the correct number. Writing way back in 1853, A.J. Moffat Mill wrote in his Report on Khasi and Jaintia Hills thus: "the Chieftains are 24 in number". The States mentioned by him are only 23 in number. The following are the names of the States: Cherra, Sooleem (Mylliem), Nongklow (Nongkhlaw), Maram (Maharam), Shella Poonjee, Khyrim, Langree (Langrin), Nusting (Nongstoin), Nuspoong (Nongspung), Kully (Malai Sohmat), Ramrye (Rambrai), Bhowall (Bhowal), Murreow (Myriaw), Howyong or Maolong (Mawiang), Mowlee (Muliang), Syong (Sohiong), Moflung or Maoflang or Maoflang (Mawphlang), Dewara (Dwara), Jerang or Jeerang (Jirang), Namloo or Maomlu (Mawmluh), Mulung or Maolong (Mawlong), Sibar (Sohbar), Hoosinge.

But W.J. Allen in his Report on the Administration of the Coocheyah and Jyntia Hills Territory in 1858 gave the number of Khasi States as twenty-five. He classified these States into two categories. According to him the five States, namely, Cherra,
Khyrim, Musteng (Non-gstoin), Lyngree (Langrin) and Nuspoong (Nongspung)" are commonly called the Semi-independent States and their Chieftains have always been permitted to exercise, with the aid of their village counsellors, Sirdars and Elders, sole civil and criminal jurisdiction in their respective districts over their own people in all matters pertaining to them. The other States, twenty in number, are known by the name of the Dependent States...... the Chiefs and their Muntress, the village Sirdars and elders are permitted to investigate and decide all civil and criminal cases in which all parties concerned are their own people, with the exception of cases of murder, homicide and accidental deaths". The twenty dependent States mentioned by him are: Non-gklow and Lykenso, Loken, Murrow, Ramrye and Rowlie, Chyla, Powarrah and Notoormen (2 Poonjees) Mowsynram, Howdun Poonjee, Mahram, Mullai Chummut, Shawal, Seenai Poonjee, Longkhoon Poonjee, Howyang, Nobo-sopho, Jeerung, Syung, Moflong Poonjee, Howlong Poonjee, Lyksom Poonjee.

Further, W.J. Allen observed "Among the Appendices* will be found a list of the Cossyah States and of the British possession in the Cossyah and Jynteah Hills, in which has been given the names of the Chiefs, village Sirdars and Elders who are in charge of and responsible for each State and dependency. On this list there are petty States, which are not in the list submitted with Mr. Mills' Report. These small Chieftainships were not known to the then political agent as distinct and separate villages, or were accidentally omitted from the list furnished to Mr. Mills, by Lieutenant-Colonel Lister."
The Principal Assistant Commissioner has informed me that very little is known about the petty States which lie to the West and North-western side of these Hills, and it is not at all unlikely that there may still be other villages existing as separate communities which have escaped the notice of the Authorities. It is certainly astonishing how much ignorance there is regarding the interior of these Hills which have been for so long under the charge of British officers. If we compare these two lists vis à vis the list of Khasi States as they existed on the eve of independence we find that: (1) Although Allen said that Mills omitted Mawsynram, yet Moosinge of Mills' list may be identified with Mawsynram. This name cannot be identified as Mawsmai because this territory had already become a British territory. (2) Mills mentioned of Howlee (Muliang) as a State, but Allen clubbed it with Ramrye (Rambrai). (3) Mills mentioned Moolu (Mawmluh) and Sabar (Sohbar) as States but they were not mentioned by Allen. These two territories had already become British possessions. (4) Mills omitted five other existing States, namely Dwara Nonglyram, Pamsanngut, Mawlong, Lyniong and Nonglwai. (5) Allen mentioned Seenai Poonjee and Byrung Poonjee which had become British territories. On the other hand, he omitted Pamsanngut and Nonglwai. (6) Longkhom Poonjee of Allen's report was not in the list of States, as it stood on the eve of India's independence.

There is yet another list in the Geographicus Indicus, by J. Frederick Barness, Survey of India in 1881, showing the number of States as twentytwo. In this list the name of Nonglong (Nonglang) and Kariapara and Charduar appeared. But Nonglang had already become a British territory whereas Kariapara and Charduar did not
appear in the list of States on the eve of India's independence. This list mentioned all Khasi States except five, namely, Sohiong, Lyniong, Nonglwai, Mawphlang and Pamsannigut.

The most accurate list of States can be found in the Accounts of Alexander Mackenzie. But, Mackenzie also wrongly entered Nonglang in the list of States, but left out Pamsannigut. Till 1947, there were 15 States under Syiem, one under Wahadadar, three under Lyngdoh and six under Sirdar. But in 1947, the Sirdar of Jirang received a Sanad as Syiem of Jirang.

In 1924, there were 25 Khasi States with a population of 1,80,000 of whom 1,63,000 were Khasis. Excepting Khyrim, Mylliem, Sohra, Nongkhlaw, Nongstein and Maharam, none of the States had 4000 inhabitants; four of them had just 500 inhabitants. Since the States were small in size and population, their financial resources were inadequate. It is too much to expect of them to provide public services. Maintenance of foot-paths, cleaning of markets, decisions of disputes and occasional religious functions were the only functions of the State. Of course, bigger States like Khyrim and Mylliem could maintain few schools. It was the Christian missions which provided education, dispensaries and hospitals. Government maintained dispensaries and hospitals only in the district and sub-divisional headquarters. In fact, the Khasi people did not expect better services from the State as they paid no taxes to the State. They paid no taxes on land, they paid no direct or indirect taxes. The only revenue arrived by the State were tolls in markets called "ka khrong ka dan" 14, tolls on products which were to be exported outside the State called "ka musur or asir" 15 and fines. For special purposes, the ruler with the consent of his Durbar, was empowered to raise contribution from each house within

14. "Ka khrong ka dan" means an entry fee to the market.
15. "Ka musur or asir" means a toll on entry of commodities.
the State and such contribution was called "ka pynshok". 16 Revenues which were not earmarked for specific special purposes were appropriated by the Syiem and his Durbar for the maintenance of the Syiem's family, salary for the officials of the State and other expenses of the State. The Syiem's family did not include his wife and children but his kars (members of the Syiem clan). Expenditure for the maintenance of his wife and children should be with the consent and knowledge of his kur. There was no such thing as civil list or taxation. Hence, there was practically very little done for public works of real beneficial nature.

During the twenties of the present century, the rulers of the Khasi States became conscious of the changing situation and desired to come closer together. In order to materialise this aim, the rulers and other representatives of the States constituted themselves into an association called "The Khasi National Durbar" on 4th September, 1923. 17 This Durbar completed two important works - The codification of "the laws of citizenship in the Khasi States" and "the laws governing the land tenure system in the Khasi States". It was at a meeting held on 2nd May 1929 that for the first time a long discussion took place for the necessity of constituting "the federation of Khasi Native States" 18. At the end of the discussion, the Khasi National Durbar came out with a resolution which runs thus: "It is proposed and agreed that pamphlets be printed and circulated to explain about the necessity of constituting the federation and it is entrusted to the

18. Ibid. 2nd May 1929.
following members to publish them:

Rai Bahadur Rai Diengdoh,
Mr. Rai Mohon Diengdoh,
Mr. Joab Solomon,
Mr. S.G. Nalle,
Mr. Ajra Singh Khongphai".

This idea of a federation of the Khasi States could materialise only in 1933. In their address presented to the Viceroy (Lord Willingdon) who paid a visit to Shillong on 3rd October, 1933, the Khasi rulers requested him to define the status of the Khasi rulers so that they might be represented in the federal legislature. They also requested him to place them in direct relation with the Viceroy through the Political Agent and not through the Deputy Commissioner. In his reply, Lord Willingdon pointed out that in comparison with the large States in India, the population of the Khasi States was so small that they would not be able to secure representation in the proposed Federal Legislature. He gave his advice that they might form a federation. "This is obviously the first and the most useful step which should pave the way towards your entry into the greater federation", observed the Viceroy. So far as the second request is concerned, the Viceroy made a promise to consider the case. As advised by Lord Willingdon the Khasi States met and passed a resolution which runs as follows: "we the Chiefs of the Khasi States, the Syiem, the Lyngdohs, the Mahadadars, the Sirdars, on behalf of the Khasi States, whom we represent have now associated and made a federation of these States:— Khryim, Kylliem, Mongkhaw, Cherra, Mongstoin, Mongapung, Laharam, Kawiang, Kyriaw, Hawsynram, Langrin, Rambrai, Abosolphiich, Halaisolmat, Bowal, Solah, Lyngiaw, Nemphlany, Jirang, Lawlong, Sheila, Newdon, Monglai, Tansangmat, and Dwaranchongtyowen, which will be called the "federal Khasi States".
The real intention of the Khasi rulers in forming the federation was to secure the status which any other Indian State was enjoying at that time. The Khasi States were in Subsidiary alliance with the British. Therefore, it was but natural for the rulers to make an attempt to free the Khasi States from the control of the Deputy Commissioner. Some may argue that the rulers wanted to increase their own status among his people. But this was not really so because the people themselves had given the sanction to their rulers to form a federation.

Sir Keith Cantlie who was Deputy Commissioner at that time expressed his own idea about the federation. Way back in 1934, he suggested the reunion of Mylliem and Khryim States under a single Sylem. He pointed out that till the last quarter of the nineteen century they were one. It was the rivalry between the two branches of the family which brought about the Bifurcation of the State. He also brought forward a proposal that the three States under Lyndohs adjoining the Mylliem State might be merged into this new State. The Sirdarships of Pamsannngut and the Lyndohship of Nonglvai might also be included in the new State. The second step suggested by Cantlie was that the Sirdarships of Dawdon and Dwar Nongtymen might join Sheila confederacy. But, he pointed out that this proposal might not work out since Sheila and Hawlong had been antagonistic rivals and that these Sirdarships were lying between them. However, if possible, all these States might be constituted into a War Confederacy. The third step that Cantlie suggested was that the remaining States might be placed in three groups.

1) Maharan, Daweynram, Malaisohmat, Bhowal
2) Nongkhlaw, Nongspung, Myriaw, Rambrai, Mawiang and Sirang.
3) Nongstoin, Laimgrin, Nobosohphoh

It was suggested that members of each of these groups might
unite together to form a State. The result was that there might be only three States. The three States might federate with Khyrim-Kylliem and the War Confederacy. But Cantlie did not say what would be the fate of Cherra (Sohra). However, the suggestions made by Cantlie could never be carried out due to the presence of insurmountable difficulties such as rivalry, claims and counter-claims by the ruling families and the like.

It is surprising that the Khasi rulers did not press their case of representation in the federal legislature in their memorandum presented to the Viceroy Lord Linlithgow. The only point pressed by them was to place them in direct relation with the viceroy under a political Agent. The arguments advanced by them were untenable. They argued that Deputy Commissioner was generally selected from the I.C.S. with experience in the plains where the conditions were different from the Hills, and as such he was not able to understand the psychology of the hill people. This was undoubtedly not true always. In fact Deputy Commissioners like P.T.R. Gordon and Keith Cantlie had profound knowledge of the Khasi customary law, social and political systems and the like. Their books are still considered as standard publications. They also represented that all the 25 States be included in the list of States so that they might be represented in the federation. It must be mentioned that till then the British recognised only the States under the Syiems as States proper. But the Viceroy did not accede to any of their request.
In conclusion, in 1947, there were the following types of administrative units in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills.

(1) The Khasi States areas (16 under Syiems, 7 under Lyngdohs, 5 under Sirdars and 1 under Wahadadars.

(2) Partially excluded Areas which meant the Jaintia Hills and the 31 British villages.

(3) British portion of normal areas of Shillong which include European Ward, Police Bazar Ward and the major portion of Jail Road Ward of Shillong Municipality.

(4) Shillong Administered Area which included the 9 Wards of Shillong within Myllia State.

(5) Shillong Cantonment Area.