CHAPTER V

RELIGION

The Pnars believe that originally they were celestial inhabitants. In this divine domain they lived together with God, the Creator\(^1\). There were sixteen huts in the celestial domain. The character of these people was unquestionable. They were as good and pure as saints. Even on earth their place of cultivation was as beautiful and green as the garden of Eden. The Creator could find nothing contaminating in the fresh, green planet and so He could come down to earth, mix freely and converse with the inhabitants.

The Pnar tradition nowhere ever made any attempt to describe a picture of their Creator\(^2\), but from what they said of Him, it can be safely assumed that He has certain attributes common to human beings; while on the other hand, He gives man, some of His own attributes.

Side by side with this pleasing picture of their origin, there was also an evil spirit who on seeing that

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2. Interview with the people of Puriang.
the Creator loves man so much tried to destroy Him. God the Creator\(^3\) owing to the influence of the matriarchate is frequently given the attribute of the feminine gender Ka bi synshar\(^4\). The Pnars cannot however be said to worship the supreme God, although it is true that they invoke God when offering sacrifices and in times of trouble.

The evil spirit tempted man to break the only connecting link between God and man or heaven and earth\(^5\). Thus one day when the inmates of seven huts were on the surface of the earth, one of them was tempted to free himself from the divine control of the Creator on the bait that he would be made master of the earth. Falling into this trap man destroyed the golden ladder linking earth with heaven. The seven huts were from that moment left on the earth without any direct contact with their lost domain.

As time passed, man found that life away from the Creator was difficult and always surrounded by sufferings\(^6\).

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3. U Blei Nong-thaw = God Creator
5. The connecting link between God and man was by means of a golden ladder.
6. Christian idea.
The evil spirit, who once professed a bright and prosperous kingdom on earth, brought miseries upon man. The heavy burden of these miseries turned the people back to their creator, praying and begging Him to forgive them and to help them to be free from this evil one.

The immense love of Him who has created man and given him so honourable an attribute could not turn him back completely. According to traditions He did come in person to this earth, not to rebuild the same golden bridge already destroyed but to make man pass certain tests to regain for himself, the right to enter God's kingdom.

God gave them His commandments: (1) Kami ia ka Hok-kamai, means to earn by one's own efforts and labour; ia is a preposition following a transitive verb and governing an objective noun; Ka Hok means righteousness. The importance of this commandment is the primacy of a righteous life which the seven Huts and their descendants should live throughout their lives. To live a righteous life man should not only speak truth and act fairly and

7. Ibid
8. For the Pnars the commandments are three but for the Christians they are ten.
9. Sujata Miri. Religion and Society or North East India 1980 page 38
justly in all his dealings with his fellow-men but should be honest in his very thoughts and wishes as well.

(2) Tip-briew, Tip Blei - Tip means to know; briew means man; Blei means God. The importance of this commandment is that man can only know God when he knows his fellow-men. Knowing one's fellow-men means performance of one's duty which is to be good, kind\(^\text{10}\) and helpful to one and all, not to cause harm or injury to anyone for one's own profit or pleasure.

(3) Tip Kur, Tip Kha - Kur means maternal relations; kha means paternal relations. This commandment is seen in the social structure of the Pnar which forms an integral part of the religion.

Again no direct communion between God and Man was possible, man had to approach him by prayer and would be answered back in signs\(^\text{11}\).

Time passed and the commandments were handed down from generation to generation through the centuries. But in the absence of literature among the Pnars the commandments

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10. Ibid.

11. Pakyntein E.H. Modymmai p. 40
underwent certain modifications and misinterpretations in different stages. Moreover the efforts of the evil spirit went on, always with a view to divert man as far as possible away from God. The evil influence and environment became thicker and thicker. 

But even in these gloomy days, the Creator was not forgotten. With their inward eye they perceived Him as an omnipotent being, whom they cannot see but whose eyes they cannot avoid, whom they cannot touch but from whose hands they cannot escape.

When their hearts are full of joy and gratitude they praise him in their prayers. So also when they are amidst sadness and sorrows they approach him with prayer. In difficulties they would turn to the creator to show them the right way and hope that He would answer them by way of signs.

This is generally done by a certain method of reading the signs inside the intestines of a cock or a hen or by the position of the fragments of shells of a broken egg.

12. Christians teach the same idea.
13. Inward eye = faith.
Omens are observed. Thus they gained the title of cock or egg diviners though in some occasions other methods are used.

The introduction of three ancestral terms in their religious functions have created many confusions. The three terms are Ka Iawbei, U Suidnia and U Thawlang. These three terms are always used in course of certain discussions or religious functions in connection with the clan and in certain ceremonies connected with the disposal of the dead. They even made two effigies ka paron for Ka Iawbei and U Tyngshop for U Sindnia. These are the most respectable ancestors of the clan. But they never regard nor worship them as their gods.

The Pnars believe that their primeval ancestors were pious people, hence their place after death is in the garden of God. So being with Him they can help the living members of the clan by pleading for them before him. Since it was they who received the commandments and instructions

15. Information collected from Jowai
16. Ka Iawbei = the primeval ancestress
   U Suidnia = the primeval maternal uncle
   U Thawlang = the primeval father of the clan.
from the Creator, they are in a better position to know exactly what the wishes of man are. In darkness in which the Pnars live they feel like orphans without their parent's guidance. Thus, in trying to follow the path of righteousness the many omissions and commissions are hoped to be redressed by the pleadings of their ancestors.

In approaching God by prayer or by asking the signs from him in various activities, they address Him by different names or terms. This has led to various strange opinions about their religion. Again the efforts of that evil one have in some cases been able to divert few people to worship some evil spirits. This worship is followed by some crisis. But in such cases, it cannot be said that the people are still following the real Pnar religion. As a rule, such people are always looked down by the society.

Many Pnars love and respect their religion and still consider it as a way of life, yet they are aware that the original form of rites and ceremonies are no longer in their pure form. Some of them still remain in their old faith. But in the discussion of religious topics they will

17. This indicates that they do not have the idea of a supreme God.
add phrases as ba la iasah khyannah\textsuperscript{19} and la sah ha ka lyngngoh, la bun sa ka lait ka let\textsuperscript{20}. But others, finding that they are no longer able to live according to the old religion, accept another one, but even in doing so, that which involves least difference attracts them most.

The Pnar religion is both theistic and animistic\textsuperscript{21}, though in the beginning it was apparently monotheistic. It may be recalled that at first U Blei Nongthaw alone was worshipped. But later on it was polluted with animistic beliefs such as cult of fertility, worship of mountain and river spirits, divination glorification of the ancestors and other allied elements. Animism viewed in this light, explains the fundamental association of spirit with natural objects.

**FERTILITY CULT**

These rites have much in common with the fertility cult of the Boros and the Bihu dance of the Assamese. It is said that these fertility rites had long been observed by the Pnars. The present Beh Dien Khlām of Jowai is

\textsuperscript{19} Being at a stage where guidance of the elders and wise men is no longer available.

\textsuperscript{20} Remaining in the darkness where omission and commissions are increasing.

\textsuperscript{21} Information collected from Puriang.
associated directly with the cultivation rites of the people. Nartiang people observe the following rites:

(1) In the month of March, the Knia Khang is observed; a pig and a cock are sacrificed.

(2) Before sowing the seeds Ka Knia Lyngdoh is observed, in this a cock is offered to the deity.

(3) In the month of June, Ka Knia Kupli water-goddess is held; the goddess is appeased with a pig and a cock; the sacrifice is held near the Umkoi, a pond which represents the water-goddess.

(4) Ka Knia Umtisong which consists of the sacrifice of pigs and cocks.

(5) In the month of July, these sacrifices Knia Pyrthat pyrdang shnong and Knia Khlam are held. Here pigs and cocks are offered to gods.

(6) Ka Knia Khlam is still prevalent in Pnar Hills.

(7) Thang Bula is performed at Nartiang in November.

(8) U' lei muluk - the god of the state, is propitiated yearly by the sacrifice of a goat and a cock.

22. Interview with the people of Kuth.
23. Propitiation of the Kupli water - goddess.
25. Chasing of epidemics.
26. Harvest rites.
(9) U lei Umtong - the god of water which is used for drinking and cooking purposes propitiated once a year so that the water supply may remain pure.

(10) U lei longspoh - the god of wealth is propitiated with a view to obtaining increased prosperity.

(11) U Ryngkew or U Basa shnong the deity of the village is propitiated by sacrifices whenever they are thought to be necessary.

(12) U Phan u kyrpad is a similar god to whom sacrifice is made.

Then follows a list of minor deities or rather, evil spirits e.g. Ka Rili the malaria fever devil; Ka Khlam, the demon of cholera, Ka Duba, the fever devil which is said to haunt the neighbourhood.

The Pnar religion may be defined as forms used to cure diseases and to avert misfortunes by ascertaining the name of the demon as the author of the evil and the kind of sacrifice necessary to appease it. The malignant spirits are worshipped to get rid of their evil influences.

27. Interview with the people of Kuth.
23. Ibid.
HUMAN SACRIFICE

Head hunting is not practised by the Pnars as was the case with the Naga and Garos. In warfare operations, taking of enemy's heads by the warriors was of course an important ceremony; the skull that was captured was considered as an evil. Human sacrifices were offered for propitiating the Kupli goddess but these ceased to be practised after British annexation.

With the advent of tantrikism at Jaintiapur, human sacrifice was conducted for the Kali goddess. It was observed also at the Hindu pooja house at Nartiang and some say at Borkhat also.

Traditions are still current that the Kopli goddess and her son U Iale, were propitiated with human sacrifice annually. The sacrifices were conducted on the river bank (Kopli). The place of execution was kyrpong side where blocks of stone serving as an execution platform are still to be seen. Such sacrifices were performed

29. Information received from Bah Sullai age 42, Jowai Government Officer.
30. Bareh H. The History and culture of the Khasi people p. 356
31. The present author went to see the exact spot together with a group of Pnar people.
during the autumn season and these clans, Sariang, Pastein, Papang, Lyngdoh, Sumer, Taket, Iape and Pyrngap conducted the actual sacrifices. An instrument wait Lyngka\textsuperscript{32} was employed for execution and the body was cast away into the river.

Whenever the river had to be crossed, in those days, the travellers had to confess their sins and atone for them by a sacrifice. They were not allowed to carry food across the river\textsuperscript{33}. It may be recalled that once a group of four Ki Dekhar\textsuperscript{34} crossed the river without observing the usual formalities. Infuriated and irritated, the orthodox section of the people captured these men and sacrificed them to the goddess kopli. These customs have undergone a change ever since the British conquest of Jaintia Hills. But however some orthodox people still observe such customs while crossing the river.

The Iale god is described as the powerful judge-god, two subordinate gods were his assistants who dwelt at Sdat Myntang where his court was situated. It may be recalled that human sacrifices could be performed under the direct

\textsuperscript{32} Spear Sword.
\textsuperscript{33} Narrated by the people of Puriang
\textsuperscript{34} People from the plains.
orders of the Jaintia Rajas. Generally the Brahmin priests were employed for such kind of sacrifices.

THE THLEN APPEASEMENT

The thlem is a serpent spirit kept by certain houses which must be appeased by the human blood. Its keepers, therefore in appeasing it, have to collect blood by murdering any victim that possibly might be found. The snake is reared only for material happiness and prosperity. This is not a universal belief among the Pnars.

The thlen originally was a water demon with its abode inside a cave near the Dainthlen's fall. According to the tradition, it attacked and swallowed the passers-by on market days till the Shillong deity authorised the Noh to kill it.

U Suidnoh as the thlen opened his mouth to swallow him threw fire ball into his mouth. The thlen turned into a convulsion and died. A thlen feast was next held

35. Monster-demon.
36. Discovered by the author's enquiry in the villages of Kut, Panura and Puriang.
37. Grove-priest.
38. From the lips of my professor V.V. Rao.
and the deity ordered the human beings to finish it all
and not to leave a single piece lest the thlen would
revive to life again. Both Pnars and non-Pnars finished
the share of meat assigned to them.

A certain old Khasi woman spared a piece of flesh
as a play thing for her niece and forgot the flesh at
home. It developed into a snake and demanded human blood\(^\text{39}\). This woman was the first rearer. Then it spread to other families through marriage or commercial transactions.

The village people also say that if the thlen keepers
cannot procure human blood then they pluck a piece of hair
or cloth from some body and with the help of sorcery or
magic religious practice the victimised persons grow sick
and lean. The person may even die.

Only Syiems can stop thlen's threat by using exorcism
if the victim is identified to be the result of thlen's
absorption. These people keep an annually prepared liquor\(^\text{40}\) made from the thlen's sweat which comes out during its swallowing of the victimised persons to keep themselves audacious for kidnapping and criminal purposes.

\[\text{39. Information collected from Kut, Jowai and Smith.}\]
\[\text{40. Iad tang snem.}\]
People say if the *U* thlen is not fed on certain particular occasions it comes out of its hiding places. But hurts no one. Such incidents were noticed by the people at the residence of suspected people.

Although its favourite form is snake, the *U* thlen takes on the other forms like lizard, fish, cat, worm etc. A lady is said to have seen a tiny snake of the *U* thlen reaper expanding into a huge cobra. The author is of the opinion that in the absence of real concrete evidence to show that the thlen really exists, the idea should be slowly put to the shade. However the fear of *U* thlen suspected rearers is still widespread. Kidnapping incidents and other horrible criminal actions in connection with thlen appeasement still occur.

The author feels it is a work of fear, imagination and superstition. As a whole the Pnars are free from such a disease. Therefore I find little or no *U* thlen worship in Pnar Hills.

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41. Traditional belief of the villages of Nartiang.
42. Gurdon P.R.T. The Khasis page 101.
Natural phenomena exercised tremendous influence upon primitive minds. Sacred groves preserved all over the country indicates that deities were worshipped in the form of the mountain and river spirits. Sacrifices of animals are still performed to propitiate the Kopli deity at Shangpung, Sutnga, Nongkhlieh. A pond called Bir Jympa at Nartiang was constructed as a symbol and at Nongkhlieh the sacrifice is performed at pam-lum where the sacrificers of the sukhlain, pyrngap and Dkhar clans conduct the ceremony. At Sutnga, the ceremony is conducted by the Jait Syiem. On the occasion of the Doloi's investiture at Nongkhlieh we have this sacrifice.

The modern educated generation is not so scrupulous in keeping up the ancient customs and ceremonies.

At Nartiang the Knia Umtisong sacrifice is performed in honour of the goddess of Umtisang lake. A sacrifice is performed in order to remove the weeds from the fields. To appease the thunder spirit they offer the Knia pyrthat in July. There is another sacrifice to prevent

43. Sutnga royal clan.
44. Information collected from Raliang people
45. Knia Khlam
epidemics and plague. Harvests were supposed to be
enriched by Thang Bala sacrifice. The Brahmin priests
had brought in many Hindu customs from the neighbouring
areas up to the advent of the English.46

At Raliang area there is a harvest festival called
Noh-Blei in November. A month before they have to bring
their offerings to the Doloi. This is a very striking
incident in which the Doloi sends out his assistants such
as Chutyas, Basans, Sangots to steal and bring to him
garden products but without seen by others.47

People bring offerings especially goats to the Doloi.
U Soh Blai offers sacrifice. But however the priest has
to spend three days, before the sacrifice, in meditation,
recollect and prayer dressed in a loin cloth away from
the society. Then on the forth day he performs the
sacrifice in the sacred grove at night. In the meantime
music will be played by the chutiyas while the young men
enjoy themselves some games such as wrestling.

46. Information collected from Namdong.
47. In other places also we have this custom.
48. Priest who belongs to Sutnga royal clan.
49. Law Kyntang
50. Samla
On the next day there follows the offerings of various kinds of fruits, vegetables and animals. The priest then puts on his dress and starts the sacrifice. He cuts the vegetables and the animals whose skull portions are piled upon the altar.

On finishing the sacrifice a wreath is put on the neck of the Lyngdoh 51 who and the Basans lead the crowd in a procession to the bank of the Umiurem river.

In this place the priest releases a couple of doves. If they fly to the East, the omen is that it will be a good year; if to the west it may be a bad year. Then he jumps into the river thereby releasing the wreath from his neck. If the wreath is carried by the water to the East then it is a good sign or else a bad sign.

Then all return to the priest's house where they eat all kinds of food prepared from the sacrificial vegetables and animals 52. Liquor is also part of the programme. The priest on returning from the river performs a small sacrifice at home. Then only he joins the people for merry making. After this festival they depart each to his or her respective places for harvesting 53.

51. Priest
52. Narrated by the people of Khliehriat
53. Similar practices are also done in other places like Sephyndeng and Lamlyer.
DIVINATION

The gods are supposed to possess according to the Pnar belief power over life and death of every living persons here on earth. Thus illness is believed to be caused by some gods due to the act or omission of people. Therefore the Pnars even today think that if due propitiations are made to the offended gods health can be restored\(^{54}\). In order to find out the offended spirit divination\(^{55}\) by means of breaking the eggs or examining the entrails of animals and birds was discovered\(^{56}\).

Among the various devices breaking the eggs have been the most popular and universally adopted method. The Pnars do noting of importance without breaking the eggs. When a Pnar builds a new house or before he proceeds on a journey, he always breaks the eggs to see whether the building or the journey will be lucky or not.

After the egg has been smeared with red earth, it is thrown violently down and the contents and the fragments of egg-shell fall on the board. Auguries are drawn

\(^{54}\) Educated youths do not hold this view and also the author.

\(^{55}\) The ancient Romans also did the same

\(^{56}\) Bhowmik K.L. Tribal Inia 1971 p. 145.
from the position of the fragments of shell on the board and from the fact of their position whether inner side facing upwards or downwards.

Another method of egg-breaking is for the diviner to wrap up the egg in a plantain leaf with the point uppermost or merely to hold the egg in his hand in this position without wrapping it up and then to press another egg down upon it. If the end of the egg so pressed breaks at once, this is a good sign, but if it remains unbroken, the egg has a god in it, and the omen is bad.

Another method of divinisation is by examining the entrails of animals or birds, particularly the intestine where a particular point in them is called blei and another point called briew. They are connected by a thin membrane. Directly after the bird has been disembowelled the sacrificer throws a few grains of rice on the entrails and then watches their convulsive movements. If the portion of the entrail called u blei moves towards that portion which represents man, it is considered proved positive that the god has heard the prayer of the sacrificer,

57. God
58. Man
but if the movement proceeds in the opposite direction
then the reverse is the case and the omen is bad. If the
entrails are full and healthy having no spots or blood
marks and if the membrane between the two has not been
fractured, these are favourable signs. If the intestines
are empty, wrinkled or spotted and the membrane is
fractured, these are bad signs.

Auguries also are drawn by examining the livers,
the lungs and spleens and gall bladders of pigs and goats
and cattle. If the liver of the pig is healthy and
without spot, the augury is good; if the reverse it is
bad. The spleen must not be unduly extended otherwise the
omen is unfavourable and the gall bladder must not be
over full.

Another common method of divination is by means of
the Shanam. The diviner holds the lime-case by the end
of its chain and addresses the god. He then asks the
lime-case a question, and if it swings, this is supposed
to be an answer in the affirmative; if it does not move,
it is a negative reply. This seems to be a very simple
trick, for the diviner, can impart movements to the
lime-case by means of the hand.

59. Interview with Rev. Herman at Raliang.
60. Lime-case.
A simple method of divining is by means of cowries. The diviner plunges his hand into a bag or basket after asking the particular god a question. If the number of grains or rice comes out odd then the omen is good, if it comes out even then the omen is bad.

We have omens obtained by dropping two leaves into a pool of water or on a stone, the position of the leaves as they fall, either right side upper most or upside down signifying good or evil as the case may be.

The Pnars trace back the cause of sickness, misfortune, loss of wealth due to violation of family laws and sins. The idea of sin is always in the mind of the Pnar people. Therefore the sacrificers and diviners repeat nga briew nga la pop. The idea is that man has fallen into sins of omission or commission but he expects God to spare him. According to tradition the cock lays down to life for man. Therefore the cock holds an important place in Pnar religion. God is supposed to have accepted in exchange the cock as a substitute for man.

61. Grains of rice.
62. This is called Khan-sla.
63. Sin is a Christian idea.
64. I have sinned.
ANCESTOR WORSHIP

One particular aspect of the Pnar religion is the glorification of the dead. Ancestor worship consists of the appeasement of the deceased ancestors with offerings of food and other material presents. It is closely associated with the funeral ceremonies and the megalithic erections.

The main belief is that the chief ancestors of the clan should be appeased for they have become supernatural beings, having enough power to aid, to assist and to bless their descendants here on earth in order that they may grow, thrive and prosper. The idea is to promote the material and moral happiness of the family.

PRIESTHOOD

The Pnar priest is usually called Lyngdoh. He is always appointed from the Lyngdoh clan. A Lyngdoh is one who collects sacrificial victims i.e. animals for the sake of sacrificing. There are persons called soh-blei or

65. It is not really a worship but respect shown.
66. Groups of families form a clan
67. It is also a Christian belief.
soh-sla who may also be said to be priests. The Pnars unlike the Hindu have no purhoit or priest to perform the family ceremonies. Such duties fall to the lot of the head of the family or clan who carries them out generally through the agency of the kni or maternal uncle. Apart from family and clan sacrifices, there are the sacrifices for the good of the state or community at large; it is these sacrifices that a Lyngdoh has to perform. He may be said to be the priest of the communal religion. He has duties to perform especially with regard to the violation of the social law of marriage and casting out of evil spirits. The duties of the Lyngdoh as regards to communal worship consist chiefly in offering sacrifices when epidemics break out such as cholera. They sacrifice a goat, a hen, powdered rice and a gourd of fermented liquor. The leaves of the dieng sning are also used at this ceremony. The priest assisted by the priestess may be his mother or his sister or niece or some other maternal relation.

A Lyngdoh is a priest for life. When a Lyngdoh dies, the Lyngdoh can appoints a successor after the

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68. The lyngdoh of the Pnars is like the Roman pontifices.
69. U kpu
70. Khasi oak
71. Also a Catholic priest is a priest for life.
completion of the funeral ceremonies. The new priest after performing the ablutions, proceeds accompanied by the assembled members of the Lyngdoh clan, to the top of a peak. The clansmen advance along the road dancing from Lyngdoh's house. All are clad in dancing dress. Having reached the peak, they pick the leaves of a tree which they spread on the ground. Then a goat and a cock are sacrificed, the new Lyngdoh acting as the sacrificer. Nine portions are cut from different parts of the victims and are offered to the gods. The Lyngdoh and his companions then perform ceremonies three times to the gods and the Lyngdoh walks backwards some paces. The puja is then over and they return dancing to the Lyngdoh's house.

The duties of Lyngdohs with reference to private persons are several. When it is found that two persons have made an incestuous marriage within the exogamous group of the kur or clan, the parties at fault are taken before the Lyngdoh by their clansmen, who request them to sacrifice in order to ward off the injurious effects of the taboo or sin. On this occasion a pig and a goat are

72. Ka la phiah
73. The interesting feature of the ceremonies on these occasions is the dancing.
74. It is also a Christian idea
sacrificed. The parties at fault are then sent away. The sin of incest admits no expiation for the offenders themselves.

In some places the Lyngdoh can also take possession of the property of persons who harboured an evil spirit in their houses. The house and the furniture are burnt. The Lyngdoh takes possession of the jewellery or anything else of value. The only practical service the Lyngdoh renders in return is to build a new house for the afflicted person.

In Raliang the crops should not be cut until the Lyngdoh has seen them, in other words, until the Lyngdoh has claimed and obtained his share of the produce. With the advance enlightenment these customs are vanishing.

DEATH AND CREATION

According to the Pnar custom a person belongs to his or her mother in life and also after death. They believe it is a sin to die in one's wife's house. Therefore when a

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75. The outcast people formed a new village called Puryang.
77. Information collected from the people of Puriang.
person is seriously sick he is taken to his mother's house. Suppose one dies in one's wife's house then all the rites must be offered in his mother's house. The diseased person's wife may put a betelnut in her husband's mouth as a last sign of love. However at times if they can afford country-liquor is distributed to all the people in the wife's house. In some places wine is poured and rice is cast over the earth before the dead body is taken out for cremation. At this moment also the relatives break egg, one each and swallow up the yolk. The reason is that a cock is a divine bird for the Pnars as well the Khasis. This sacred bird guides the departed soul. Therefore they feel the egg may give vitality and strength to the living relations.

In some places of Pnar Hills they revere U Sinriang Ksiar. He has an altar at the left side of the entrance to every house. Therefore out of respect, the dead body should not lie on the left side of the entrance but on the right side room.

73. Some do not agree with the sacredness of the cock.
79. The cock and egg are used by the Pnars for the rites.
80. A reformer and a prophet.
81. Opposite side of the altar of U Sinriang Ksiar.
The first thing as in all other places the dead body is cleaned. Then it is clothed with a dhoti and a turban. The general practice of wearing by living persons these articles is clock-wise so the dead body will be made to dress anti-clock wise. Again the sword and a shield are made to hold by the hands of the dead body in an opposite way the living persons would hold. The dead body may be placed in some mock-dancing gestures also. The body in this condition may be kept for three days or more according to custom. Especially if the relatives are residing at distant places they need more days to come and pay respect to their deceased.

In these three days of lying they offer, betel-nut and other food cooked and uncooked just like a living person. This is to have a safe journey, without hunger, in the next life.

As long as the dead body is in the house no relatives of the dead will go to work. These are days of mourning and prayer. After three days the dead body is carried to the cremation ground covered with white cloth and accompanied by fire. All the belongings of the dead are supposed to be cremated with him. However a bow and arrow must be with the dead body.

82. Bengali Hindus also do the same.
83. The fire is to be taken from the mother's house
84. Economic values have changed the custom.
An augury is conducted to find out the cause of death. If sin is the cause of death then a sacrifice has to be made to ward off the evil effects on the relations. For the death which occurs in other localities rather than one's native place sacrifices are not required. In those sacrifices the cock is preferred because it offered itself to suffer for the well-being of man-kind. The cock is supposed to show the departed soul the way to the nine huts.

In the case of accidental death, cremation is performed in the same locality where death occurred but on the next day the bones are taken to the native place and again cremation of the bones is done anew symbolically. It may be recalled that accidental death for an Pnar is an evil sign. Therefore in some places the bones are purified before the second cremation. There are ponds for purification in Nartiang and other areas. In case of death by epidemic the dead body is kept bried for some time so that there may not be any infection. Then the bodies are dug up for cremation.

85. Traditional Pnar belief.
86. Ancestral world
87. Umkoi
At the cremation the first fire is lit by the eldest male of the mother's family. The dead body is placed head to the west and legs to the east. At Nartiang the head of the corpse is shaved but a little is kept on the middle of the head called grandmother's lock. The Nongtengs at times keep the dead body up to one month. Addresses are made to the corpse. He is praised for his deeds. In some places they also have professional mourners to mourn.

According to tradition original fire for cremation was lit from the fire fly. But it was difficult and not satisfactory therefore U Synriang is said to have brought the fire from the God. On his way to the earth Synriang forgot how to light the fire but a monkey had remembered how it was done. The monkey taught him how to light. From that day onwards it is also called monkey-fire.

THE BONE-COLLECTION CEREMONY

There is a traditional belief that U Synriang accompanied his mother to heaven after her death.

88. Uniuh Iawbei
89. Like the time of Roman empire.
90. A leader and a prophet
91. Narrated by the people of Jowai
When he was returning to the earth his mother gave a parcel which is supposed to contain rice. His mother had warned him not to open the parcel before crossing the river. But moved by curiosity U Synriang opened the parcel before reaching the river. There he found ashes, bones, char-coal etc, the remains of his mother's cremation. He heard an inner voice telling him to preserve those in a container. This is the basis of the Pnars bone ceremony.

The bones must be taken to the mother's place. The Pnars say that God gave the spirit and the mother gave the body. However the bones of the aliens are kept separate. They may be in the same compound but never in the same cairn or ossuary.

After burning the corpse they water the ground. Then the relatives will collect the bones. They search bones only three times not more. The bones thus collected are kept in a white cloth on the lap of the mother or anybody of the clan. Here again they offer food to the departed soul. Then they carry the bones to the family respository.

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92. A river is supposed to separate heaven and earth.
93. Ppep
94. Gurdon P.R.T. The Khasis p. 134
The bones of persons accidental deaths are kept in a special place near the cremation ground. Before taking such bones to the clan cairn purification and sacrifices are needed. The bones are usually transported during the dry season in the month of January, February and March.  

**MEMORIAL STONES**

In the Pnar Hills one may come across many memorial stones. These are erected in memory of the dead. We have also stones representing places e.g. Maomluh, Maosmai, Maophlang and others. The erection of grave-stone to mark the spot where the remains of the dead are buried is an almost universal practice amongst the Western nations.

The large upright stones vary in height from 2 or 3 ft to 12 or 14 ft; but the great monolith at Nartiang is 27 ft high and 2½ ft thick. The largest table stones are also found at Nartiang measuring 16½ ft by 14¾ ft.

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95. Interview with Bah Chisim headman of Pokseh village age 65.
96. Salt stone
97. The oath stone
98. The grassy stone
The stones may be classified as follows:

1. Mawlynti or Mawkjat, the stones which are erected to serve as seats for the spirits of the departed clansfolk on their way to the tomb of the clan.

2. Mawlyuna or Mawnam are erected to commemorate an occasion.

3. Maw-umkoi are put up to mark the position of tanks or umkoi, the water of which is supposed to cleanse the ashes and bones of those who have died unnatural death.

4. Maw-shangthait or flat-stones often accompanied by vertical stones, which are placed in the market-places and by the side of roads to serve as seats for weary travellers.

5. In olden days human victims were sacrificed to the Kopli goddess on a flat table-stone at a place called Iew Ksih, close to the Kopli river. Now the goats are still annually sacrificed on these table-stones.

A puja is performed upon a great flat stone by the doloi and his officers in honour of the founders of the market, but no animals are sacrificed. Rice and rynsi are offered.

99. The author has seen the place

100. Balls of rice
In the days of Jaintia Kings only the Raja could sit upon the great flat stone, hence the name maw Jong Siem. The great upright stone is said to have been brought by U Lah Laskor and a great number of people from Suriang, a place near Nartiang.

At Nartiang there is a bridge constructed out of a single stone which is also said to have been set in position by U Lah Laskor. Near Suhtnga there is a group of stones said to have been originally thirty in number, stones to seat the weary. These were erected to the memory of a woman Ka Kampatwat who had thirty husbands. She divorced one husband after another. She established a record for divorce. Therefore her descendants commemorated her in the manner described.

GENNA OR SANG OR TABOO

The Pnar word sang which implied an interdiction either religious or social, from doing any particular thing. The word Genna is commonly used when speaking of taboo amongst the hill tribes.

101. Siem's stone
102. People of Suhtnga say.
There are some social taboos which are thought to be of serious nature. Some of which are:

1. Evil befalls a person who enchroaches on the land of his neighbour; even a touch of a boundary stone may cause rheumatic pain.
2. A family will die out if they construct a house on a triangular plot^103^.
3. Destruction or mutilation of plants in a sacred grove may invite catastrophe.
4. Urinating in a stream or on fire may inflame the private parts of the body^104^.
5. The broom-stick should not be left at the entrance, it may destroy the soul of a person. Broom should not touch anyone while sweeping.
6. None should walk before an assembly without seeking the permission to go out.
7. One should not sleep pointing the feet towards the east.
8. Spitting upon fire is bad^105^.
9. To offer anything by left hand.
10. To step over anybody's body.
11. To kill animal without first throwing rice over its body.

^103^ Told by the people of Jowai
^104^ Ibid
^105^ Interview with Rev. Kongla age 59 Jowai
12. A pregnant woman should not accompany a funeral or finish a sewing which she commenced prior to her pregnancy.

13. The husband of a pregnant woman should not thatch a ridge of a house or fix handle to an axe or a dao\(^{106}\).

14. To build a house with same walls on all four sides.

15. To use nails in building a house.

16. To use more than one kind of timber in building the hearth.

17. To build a house with resinous timber. Only the Siem or Doloi family can use such a timber.

18. To drink the milk of a cow or goat\(^{107}\).

19. To talk with any one except with one's fellow worker when the thrashing of paddy is going on\(^{108}\).

Education has banished these taboos out of sight but still in the villages especially the uneducated people observe all or some of them. Sometimes even the educated observe them. Some of these taboos are practised in the plains. For instance we should not use his left hand to offer anything to anyone or spitting on fire.

\(^{106}\) Gurdon P.R.T. The Khasis p. 159

\(^{107}\) The new generations do not observe this.

\(^{108}\) Narrated by people of Kuth near Jowai.