CHAPTER I

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Meghalaya is located in the north-eastern part of India between 25.1' and 26.5' north latitude and between 90.47 and 92.52 east longitude. The state was created on 21st January 1972 with Shillong as its capital. This new state has an area of 22489 sq.kilometres.

In the year 1936 Prof. Chatterjee of Calcutta University wrote about La platean de Meghalaya. Meghalaya means the abode of clouds. On the advance of the monsoon, masses of clouds strike the lower summits and dissolve into torrential rains. Clouds are often seen sailing over the hills of this beautiful new born state. Meghalaya the abode of clouds is an appropriate name for this region.

The word Meghalaya obtained legal sanction when the Assam Reorganisation Meghalaya Act, 1979 gave the state the name Meghalaya.

1. Census operations of India 1981 Meghalaya p. 1
2. Statistical Hand Book Meghalaya 1978 p.5
3. Nandy Spira - A Short History of Meghalaya 1977 p. 2
At first politicians and other citizens of the state did not like the name Meghalaya. They suggested several possible names such as Lum asang, Khasi-Jaintia – Achik state or some other names which sounded Garo or Khasi. On the 12th December 1975 Mr. Humphrey Hadem voiced the opinion in favour of a change of name, in the assembly. Then the chief minister, in reply to the discussion, said that he did not favour a name which has direct or indirect reference to the three principal tribes of the state, namely, Garos, Khasis and Jaintias. Therefore the name Meghalaya was maintained.

Meghalaya is bordered on the north by Goalpara and Kamrup districts of Assam; on the east by north Cachar and Karbi Anglong (Mikir) Hills and on the west and south by the Bangladesh districts of Mymensingh and Sylhet. The southern border is the country's international extensive border separating India from Bangladesh.

The new state has been divided into five districts:

1. The Jaintia Hills District with its headquarters at Jowai.

6. Ibid. p. 1
2. East Khasi Hills district with Shillong as its headquarter. It is also the capital of the state.
3. The West Khasi Hills district has the headquarters at Nongstoin. It was created on 28th October 1976.
4. The East Garo Hills district has the headquarters at Williamnagar. It was created on 22nd October 1976.
5. The West Garo Hills district has its headquarters at Tura.

The Pnars reside in the Jaintia Hills district of Jowai. The total population of Meghalaya is 13,27,374 of which 6,73,383 are males and 6,48,991 are females. The sex ratio is 956 females per 1000 males. The total literacy rate is 33.32 percent, of which 37.13 percent are males and 29.28 are females. The urban population is 18.12 percent of the total population. The density of population per kilometer is 59 in Meghalaya while it is only 40 in Jaintia Hills.

Jowai the headquarter of the Pnars is situated on a central plateau at an elevation of 4560 ft (1350 meters) above the sea level.

8. Ibid
10. Statistical Hand Book Meghalaya 1978 p. 17
The Pnar-hills are watered and fertilised by the rivers Lubha, Kopili, Myntdu, Myntang and Umiew. They, with the exception of Lubha river, flow towards the north east. However Lubha flows south-west and joins river surma in Bangladesh.

The most important river is Kooili which rises from the upland, east of passi. It waters Saipung reserve forest, Shangpung, Pamra, Tuber, Lamarriang, Nongkynrin, Mynso and flows away to Karbi Anglong Assam. The Kopili river demarcates Jaintia Hills and North Cachar. A major hydro electric project called Kopili River valley project is under construction.

There is also a hot-water spring at Garampani where thousands of people go to observe. Some take bath in the natural hot water spring. It may be recalled that it is a remedy to various external diseases such as gout, rheumatism etc.

The river Myntdu surrounds the town of Jowai and fertilises the valleys and runs fast to the south.

13. Interview with the people of Pammura
Myntang chooses her direction towards the north and passes by the villages of Nongbah, Muhha, Wahiajor Nartiang and Nongjuqi.

The Umiew river takes the eastern direction and fertilises the village of Shangpung.

The Pnars inhabit part of Jaintia Hills. It has been said by the protagonists for a separate district council for Jowai that though the Khasis and Pnars are both Mon-khmer in origin, however the Pnars and Khasis are two different tribes of the Mon-khmer group. On this point historical references are conclusive.

The races occupying the Khasi and Jaintia Hills respectively are called Khasias and Syntengs. The Pnars form part of the latter group. The implication here is that they are two separate races.

The bulk of the inhabitants of the Khasi Hills are Khasis and of the Jaintia Hills Syntengs. This implies that they are two separate tribes. It may be said that one of the sub-tribes of the Syntengs is called Pnars.

The population consisted almost exclusively of aboriginal tribes and races viz, Khasis and Syntengs who form the bulk of the inhabitants of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills respectively. On the other hand Sir Edward Gait states that the dominion of the Rajas of the Jaintias include two entirely different tracts of country namely the Jaintia Hills, which are inhabited by a Khasi tribe called Synteng. He goes on to say that there is practically no difference between the inhabitants of the Khasi and those of the Jaintia Hills. He says that they have the same physics and they speak the same language Khasi. Therefore according to Sir Edward Gait the Khasis and the Jaintias are one and the same.

The Khasis reside in the Khasi Hills and the Jaintias in the Jaintia Hills says Gurdon. Then he further uses the word Khasi animists and synteng animists in the same book. Again Gurdon opines that the Khasis inhabit the Khasi Hills proper and the Syntengs the Jaintia Hills. He includes the Pnars in the word Khasis.

18. Gait E.A. History of Assam 1905 p. 311
19. Gurdon P.R.T. The Khasis 1907 p. 1
Barrister Pakem says that the Syntengs are, in various aspects, different from the Khasis. They should be called Jaintias which includes the sub-tribes such as Pnars, Wars etc.

R.T. Rymbai opines that the Khasis and the Jaintias are one and the same. Therefore they should be called not Jaintias nor Pnars but Khasi-Pnars. Rymbai is rather confused with the terms Khasis, Jaintias, Pnars and Wars.

The Khasis speak Khasi language. The Jaintias and Pnars speak Pnar language. With regard to the physical features the Pnars are darker, bigger and taller than the Khasis.

DebRoy holds the view that the Khasis and Pnars are different in various ways and habits.

20. Dr. B. Pakem in his paper on the seminar indigenous institutions of the Khasis and the Jaintias delivered on December 8th 1980

21. Shri R.T. Rymbai I A S in his paper on the seminar indigenous institutions of Meghalaya delivered on 9th December 1980

22. Interview with Bah Peter Shullai age 42, Jowai and the people of Jowai.

23. Dr. Deb Roy in his paper on the seminar indigenous institutions of the Khasis and the Jaintias delivered on 9th December 1980.
L.S. Gassah says that the people who are inhabiting in the Darang Doloiship are different in some respects from those in the Nongtalang Doloiship. Their dialect is almost the same as that of the Khasis inhabiting the Khadar Blang area, across the river Umngot in the Khrin Syiemship.

The Khasis and Pnars have common origin namely Mon-khmer. However the influence of Hinduism, from their neighbouring plains people especially Bengalis of Sylhet, influenced certain changes in the way of living, thinking and religious habits. It may be recalled that the Pnars have essentially very much in common with the Khasis. Nevertheless we cannot deny the fact that there are differences between the two.

The Pnars inhabit in the Jaintia Hills. The latter takes their name from the Rajas of Jaintia, the former rulers of this part of the country. They had their capital at Jaintiapur a place situated at the foot of the hills. Their territories extended up to the plains which

24. L.S. Gassah in his paper on the seminar indigenous institutions of Meghalaya delivered on 9th December 1930.
25. The author's opinion.
were known as the Jaintia pargannas of Sylhet District which is now included in Bangladesh. The early history of the Jaintias and of the Pnors is as obscure as that of other hill-tribes of Assam. Their origin is shrouded in mystery.

It is believed that they came to their present habitat from either the far east or from China via Burma and established their kingdom in the hills now known as Jaintia Hills. Later they extended their dominion to the adjoining plains of Sylhet and Nowgong.

The inscriptions on coins, copper plates and records indicate that Parbat Ray was the first King who extended the sway of the Jaintia Kings over the plains.

Prior to the advent of the British to Assam the Jaintia Kingdom consisted of a tract of plains lying between Sylhet and the Cachar border and also the territory stretching from the foot of the hills overlooking

27. Gait E.A. History of Assam 1905 p. 311
28. Ibid p. 313
the surma valley, to the Kolang river in Nowgong district. This kingdom was governed by the Jaintia Rajas who were then very powerful and maintained diplomatic relations with the Ahom and the Kachari kings of Assam.

They ruled over the kingdom of Jaintiapur upto 15th March 1835, when the last of the Jaintia Rajas, Rajendra Singh was deposed by the British.

The Pnars resemble Mon-khmer people of Indo-China in some respects such as festivities and erection of stone monoliths. Therefore it may be said that they came to their present habitat from south-east.

The Pnars were followed by waves of the Tibeto-Burmans who poured into the Brahmaputra valley and its neighbourhood from all directions. The reasons for their migration might have arisen out of the rivalry of religion and culture followed by the conquest of Assam by Naraka of Mithila between 200 - 500 A.D.

30. Gait E.A. A History of Assam 1905 p. 320
It is certain that prior to the migration to their present abode, the Pnars lived in the plains of Assam. Legends and monoliths suggest that the Pnars entered the area south of the Kopili river and crossed over to the east Jaintia Hills and to the West Khasi Hills. According to tradition Sutunga Siemship was the oldest in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills. Therefore the Pnars were the first inhabitants of these hills.

The exact period of migration is difficult to determine. Probably following the persecution of the Kiratias under the Aryan influence by Naraka they departed to the hills. The record in the chronicles of Ahom and Jaintia kings since 1500 A.D. It may be remembered that Parbat Ray was the founder of the Jaintia dynasty. The inhabitants of the Jaintia Hills formed a single state in the year 1500 A.D.

These people were probably numerically small when they crossed the river Kopili and entered into the eastern

32. Interview with Siang Pohthmi M.A. age 40 Headmaster M.E. School - Lamin.
33. Interview with Sr. Catherine Susngi F.M.A. Nongbah Village.
34. Gait E.A. A History of Assam p. 313
side of the Jaintia Hills. It was perhaps a journey for food and security. They scattered over the hills towards western side in small batches, always keeping a link with the mother population. Therefore, a new village or a new spot of migration would never be too far. Their strong racial instinct and urge for survival was another vital factor. The matrilineal system also influenced the physical and spiritual evolution of the Pnar society.

The ancient habitations were centered around the places of Shangpung, Mynso, Sutnga, Nartiang and Jowai. The Jaintia King opened markets for the people and so there came the concentration. Gradually they scattered to the west and south-west bordering Jaintiapur. Search for food and its production compelled them to tread through the new jungle paths. Shifting cultivation demanded more labouring hands and co-operation of all. This resulted in the establishment of their day to day democratic institutions like village councils and racialistic approach to problems. People found that they could survive collectively.

35. Interview with the people of Raliang
36. Information from the people of Purians.
The Pnars were never self sufficient in the basic necessities of life. They had to depend on plain's people for the import of rice, dry fish, salt, cloth etc. Even today they are dependent on others for these things. Their problem mainly was the problem of marketing. So when the Jaintia kingdom was extended upto the hills, the people welcomed willingly the establishment of markets.

The Pnars were independent people. They did not pay any tax except a goat annually to the king at Jaintiaour. Therefore when the English tried to impose house tax and interfered with the customs and religions of the people, the Pnars under the leadership of U. Kiang Nongbah rose in revolt (1860 - 1863 A.D.) against them. The people suffered most from this rebellion. U. Kiang Nongbah was hanged and others died in fighting or in custody. But the heroic sentiments of the people still remains.

The Pnars cultivated vegetables, fruits and food crops in shifting cultivation called jhum cultivation.

37. I gathered this impression from the people of Purianq.
38. Kynphan Singh - Khasi Hills and Jaintia Hills upto 1874 - 1979. p. 4
39. Interview with the people of Kuth.
The land is cleared for cultivation by burning the wild bushes, creepers and weeds. This requires a considerable period of stay at a place. This brought into existence clans. The host clan is the dominant one\(^{40}\) having the rights and privileges. This is apparent in the case of the four families (sohkpor) of Jowai. The spirit of the place is the protector of the clan. He is the law-giver, the sustainer and the saviour of all the people\(^{41}\).

The Pnar habitat is also brought about by their law of exogamy in marriage. A husband and wife should be from different clans. This compels the male population of a village to migrate.

The law of inheritance makes the sons and daughters except the youngest, to look after their own destiny which results in migration of couples to unknown hilly places.

In earlier times, the tribal laws and customs were rigid. Any one who did not observe them were exiled under humiliating conditions.

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40. Information collected from the people of Namdong.
41. Interview with Donbok T. Laloo, author of Ka Rongbiria U Hynniew trep age 39. Upper Shillong
These immigrants established villages. There is a small village at puriang 25 K.M. away from Jowai towards Shillong\(^2\). The people of this village were thrown out from Jowai. But they do not like to admit the fact because it is humiliating for them and their posterity\(^3\).

Another type of habitation was the result of conjugal dissatisfaction and quarrel. The nine daughters of Iawtalang the great ancestress of the Talang clan had to flee from their house after a shameful episode with the husband of the youngest sister\(^4\). All the nine sisters wandered in different directions and settled finally in remote villages with distinct clan names. Habitations also were brought about by conflict among groups of people.

It should also be said that economic factor was also responsible for the establishment of new colonies. Though they founded new colonies, they did not like to go to plains. They had trade relations with the plains\(^5\).

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42. Interview with the people of Raliang.
43. Ibid.
45. Interview with Siang Pothmi age 40. Lamin M.E. School Headmaster.
But they did not like to leave hills. Even today the Pnars abhor the idea of living in the plains. Employment and love affairs induce men and women to leave their original habitations and migrate to far away places. But the Pnars do not migrate in search of love affairs. Therefore it is a quest for better life, nay for better land, where the family or clan can thrive and prosper.

APPEARANCE OF THE PNARS

The physical features of the people, their character, their dress and ornaments are the main criteria by which a tribe can be identified.

In general, the Pnars are short in stature, brown in colour and having extremely muscular and developed limbs. The average height of males is from 5.3" to 6" and that of females from 4.10" to 5" but in some cases, the height of a man may be even 6.4". It is also not usual to see a Pnar woman with the height of 5.6". In respect of the

46. Ibid
47. Bhowmik K.L. Tribal India 1971 p. 129
height there is not much difference worth mentioning between the Pnars and the other sections of the Khasis. The Pnars are short statured resembling the Mon-khmer people of Indo-China. The colour of the Pnar skin may be described as being usually brown, varying from dark to a light yellowish brown. The complexions of the people who inhabit the uplands is of somewhat lighter shade. The Pnars as a whole are a little darker than the Khasis and fairer than the Garos.

The women possess a pretty gipsy complexion that is seen in Europe especially among the peasants. The Pnars have somewhat depressed nose, the nostrils being often large and prominent but less than the Khasis and the Garos. The forehead is broad and the space between the eyes is often considerable like the Khasis. They are similar to the Dravidians than the Aryans. Eye witnesses say the Japanese resemble the Pnars. The eyes are of medium size, black or brown in colour. Eyelids are somewhat obliquely set, but not so acutely as in the Chinese and some other Mongols. Jaws frequently are big, mouth large,

48. Interview with A Pyrtuh M.A. age 40
50. Information collected from Puriang
51. Interview with Siang Pohthmi M.A. age 40 Lamin M.E. School Headmaster.
with sometimes rather thick lips. Hair is black, straight and are worn long especially by modern youths. The hair of the people who adopt the old style being caught up in a knot at the back.

Some males cut the hair short and even shave off in summer in order to avoid heat and to have a better growth in future. Girls and women take great care of their hair. It is quite an exception to see a beard, although the moustache is frequently worn. At times they pull out the hairs with the exception of a few on either side of the upper lips. Moustache is a sign of maturity and as such a admit card to the Darbar of the elderly and the wise.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

The Pnars are usually short in stature, with bodies well nourished and the males are extremely muscular. This may be due to hard work they do and walk up and down the hills. The trunk is long in proportion to the rest of the body and broad at the waist; calves are highly developed.

52. Interview with A. Pyrtuh M.A. age 40
53. Information from the people of Raliang
54. Information collected from Kuth.
The women when young are comely, like men, with highly developed calves, the latter always being considered a beauty. Men and women are sturdy.55

Men and women carry heavy burdens on their backs, the load being fixed by means of a cane band which is worn across the forehead. Women carry almost as much as men. In olden days when roads were under developed they walked from Jowai to Shillong with heavy loads i.e. covering 60 kilometers. Some people walked even from Kalian to Shillong nearly 100 kilometers. Now however there are buses, trucks and road facilities for transport. Also Pnair porters were used by the Army to transport military equipments56. They even carry men at their backs seated in a basket, up the hill, across the river etc.

The people are normally cheerful, light hearted and good tempered by nature. They appreciate jokes. When they are happy they sing and dance57. In moments of sorrow

56. Interview with Rev. John Khongla age 58 Jowai
57. B.B. Lyngdoh Chief Minister of Meghalaya in his inaugural address at the seminar on the Indigenous Institutions of Meghalaya on December 6th 1980.
they sing sad tunes. In short the Pnars are fond of
singing. As they go to carry water or bring fire-wood
they sing and laugh perhaps to keep the burden of labour
away from the mind. The females are especially cheerful
and hospitable. They are industrious.

The Pnar girls are good nurses. They are wanted
abroad for this job. With care and diligence they do
their charges.

The people are fond of nature and enjoy a day out in
the woods shooting and fishing. Each bird is named by a
particular proper name. This is uncommon among other
tribes of India.

The Pnars are not afraid of manual labour. We find
even the high ranked officers in their free time, working
in their gardens or at home. Males are good drivers,
motor mechanics, stone masons and carpenters.

58. Information collected from the people of Khliehriat.
Chewing betel-leaf is a regular habit of life. In early days interior distances were measured by the number of betel-nuts chewed on the journey. Normally they are not addicted to opium. However large quantities of rice beer are consumed especially by men. Rice beer is manufactured and also exported. One of the reasons why money is kept with the women is that they are capable of imagining that often men are drunk and thus money is wasted.

The Pnars like the Khasis like gambling. Col. Bivor observed that the Pnars are not truthful. We think they are simple, truthful and straightforward. In this regard the villagers are superior. Mr. Cosh writing in 1837 speaks well of the Pnars. They are a powerful, athletic race of men, rather below the middle size, with a manliness of gait and demeanour. They are fond of their mountains and look down with contempt upon the degenerate race of the plains, jealous of their power, brave in action, and have an aversion to falsehood.

60. Interview with the people of Kuth
61. Interview with Sr. Catherine Susngi - Nongbah.
63. Ibid. p. 5
DRESS

In the matter of dress, the Pnars wear nothing separate from the neighbouring plains. As in Sylhet (now in Bangladesh) so also in these hills, they wear dhoti and the headdress pagri (turban). In addition to these the Pnars used to wear sleeveless coat or Jymphang. The common man in the villages uses only a loin cloth. Pagri or the turban was the symbol of social prestige. The Dolois are requested to wear turban. It is a symbol of power. After the annexation of the Jaintia Hills by the British dhoti has been replaced by pants and shirts. However Dolois wear turban always. When they go for social and cultural festivals the dolois always wear the traditional dress.

The Pnar females wear sari but in a different fashion. It is different from the Khasi dress but however it is similar to it. The Pnar females wear a garment called Ka Jympien, which is a piece of cloth wound round the body and fastened at the loins with a kind of cloth belt and which hangs down from the waist to

64. Information collected from Doctor Ngenmon Sutuga M.B.B.S. age 30 Jowai
the knee or a little over it. Over this is worn a long piece of cloth, sometimes of muga silk called jain khrywang. It is worn in the following manner. One of the two ends is passed under one ampit and its two corners are knotted on the opposite shoulder. The other end is then wound round the body and fastened at the waist, from which it hangs half way down the calf. Over this they wear a short of aoron generally of muga silk. They have the cloak and the head wrapper just the same as the Khasi women.

The modern men use pants, shirts, coat and even neckties. Females more or less keep to their old way of dress. They carry always a haversack of betel-nuts, lime and other odds. The females always carry money concealed within her garments.

65. Gurdon P.R. The Khasis reprint 1975 p. 20
66. Interview with the people of Raliang.
The Pnars are fond of jewellery. The women wear beads of necklaces made of brass or gold. They use ear-rings like the Khasis and Garos. Women are specially fond of gold and coral bead necklaces. The beads are round and large and are usually unornamented. These necklaces are worn by men also on special occasions like Behdienkhlam. The gold and coral beads are prepared locally by the people. They derive considerable profits from this trade. A crown of gold or silver is worn by young woman at dances. The ear-rings are of different patterns both for men and women. At times woman use silver collar. It is a flat silver collar. It is allowed to hand down over the neck in front. It is fastened behind for security. Silver chains are worn by men as well as women. The men wear them round their waist like a belt and the women hang them round their necks.

67. Bareh Hamlet - The History and culture of the Khasi people 1967 p. 349
68. Ibid . p. 349
The weapons of the Pnars are swords, spears, bows and arrows and a circular shield which was used formerly for the purpose of defence. The sword is locally made with iron and occasionally of steel. The handle is having the same material as the blade.

The spear is used for thrusting and casting. It is not decorated with wool like that of the Naga tribe. The length is about 6½ feet. The shaft is generally of bamboo and rarely of wood. The spear heads are locally made.

The most important weapon of the Pnars is the bow and arrow. They are good archers. The bow which is called ka ryntieh is made of bamboo and is about 5 ft in height. The arrows are of two kinds: one for hunting which is called ki pliang and the other is for archery games. The Pnars are fond of archery. It may be considered as a national game.

69. Interview with the people of Puriang
70. Information collected from the people of Namdong.
The feathers of birds such as vultures, geese, cranes and hornbills are used for arrows. The arrowheads are made of iron or steel. They are usually locally made. A Pnar can shoot his arrow at a distance of 150 to 180 yards. The Pnar shield is circular in shape. It is made of hide and it is studded with brass or silver.

In former days rhinoceros hide was used for shields but now-a-days buffalow skin is used. The ancient shields would stop an arrow or turn aside a spear or sword thrust. The present day shield is used merely for purposes of display.

The Pnars also know the use of gun. They manufacture gunpowder too. It is manufactured out of \( \frac{1}{3} \) saltpetre, \( \frac{1}{3} \) charcoal and \( \frac{1}{3} \) sulphur. The three are pounded together in a mortar. The rajas of Jaintiapur had cannons. The length of the cannon is 9 ft. The circumference is 3 ft 2" in the middle. The diameter of the bore is 3" inches. They are still seen at Jaintiapur.

71. Interview with Henry Lamin age 28 teacher Balian.
72. Gurdon P.R.T. The Khasis reprint 1975 page 25
ARTS AND CRAFTS

The Pnars are good craftsmen. They know the art of making pottery. Black earth is used for making vessels. They decorate them with signs and patterns.

Like the Garos the Pnars know various bamboo works with artistic designs and forms. They make mats from grass, cane and bamboo-splits. These mats are also used to make containers of different shapes and sizes. Strings made of cane are mostly used for fastening fences, baskets, and other similar articles. They make bamboo baskets of different shapes and sizes and armless seats. Bamboo pipes are used for storing water, areca-nuts, and even coins and cowries. Again with bamboo they make hats, irrigation pipes and other articles. They prepare cane baskets, conical in shape with a round and broad mouth at the top and with a tapering to a point at the bottom. These baskets are used for carrying firewood, water and articles to local markets.

73. Information collected from the people of Panamura
The Pnars are experts in iron-works. They had trade in iron ore and many smelteries all over the hills. They had detailed knowledge in iron-smelting. They smelt iron from heaps of sand floated over some artificial channels of water. The iron deposits were collected at particular reservoirs. The crude iron ore was then refined and smelted in furnaces. The furnace of iron-smelting consists of a piston bellow which is made of two barrels. Each barrel is provided with a valve. Iron is used to manufacture various tools, implements and weapons.

THE ORIGIN OF THE CLAN

In ancient times families existed. Each family was independent of one another. Increase in population and pressure on land induced some to migrate to other places in search of land. They formed small colonies. Then came the problem of distinguishing one colony from the other.

74. Chawdhury J.N. The Khasi canvas 1973 p. 62
75. Information collected from Doctor Ngenmon Sutuga age 30 - Jowai
76. Ibid.
Each colony assumed a name to distinguish it from other colonies. Thus came into existence clans. It is believed that all the members of the clan descended from a common ancestor.

The Pnars believe that it is a great sin or taboo to marry from one's own clan. The sin is still greater if it is done within the blood relations of the maternal uncle. This required identification of persons. According to social attitude the mother is the procreator, owner of food and the agent of its production. Therefore it was convenient to identify individuals from the mother's side.

The mother wishes that she herself and her future generations should inherit her property. The relatives at times may come and claim the profit or the share. This is why it is found that the four sisters with their husbands who found the village of Jowai and colonised it, gave some dozens or more new titles to their generations. It is remarked that a clan sprang up after a couple moved out and settled in a new place. Before that the person

78. Information collected from the people of Mawryngkneng.
had only his personal individual name. It is certain that the name of a clan usually comes after the mother's name. In the case of four sisters who founded Jowai we have an example. The names of these four sisters were Ka Bon, Ka Jein, Ka Wet and Ka Doh. From Ka Bon came first the Libon clan. Ka Jein produced the pakynotein clan. Ka Wet was the mother of the Paswet and Liwait clan. Then again from Ka Doh we have the Langdoh clan and so on. Similarly from Iaw Talang came out Zolang clan directly and when her daughters moved out and settled in other places they gave birth to new clans after their names. It is found that a lady came to Jowai and founded the famous Laloo clan. Her daughters founded twenty other clans after their names.

Love of youths knows no bounds. At times illicit love compels the couples to flee from their parents and relations. These couples in their new place of habitation are compelled to assume a separate identity. Again due to the violation of social customs many are forced to

80. Ibid
81. Interview with Rev. Henry Fantin-Headmaster Jowai H. School
82. Information collected from the people of Pammura.
move out or are driven out of their locality. They have to assume a new clan identity.

Sometimes quarrels between sisters prompt the aggrieved one to move out and assume new titles. The cause of moving out of the daughters of Iaw Talang was due to family conflict.

People wandered about in search of food. To satisfy hunger several families joined together and formed a clan.

Self-preservation and protection of property became prominent when men settled in a fixed habitat. When they found a suitable land for cultivation they had to demarcate land to determine its ownerships.

In those days there was no police to protect the property of the individual. Therefore the owners of property invented mythology and sought the assistance of the priest to preach the sanctity of the institution of

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83. Interview with Rev. Balavan age 59 Hamdong
84. Jyrwa Tortis - The wondrous works of God 1980 p. 92
85. Interview with Bah Peter Shullai age 42 Jowai
of property and the divine sanction behind it and the punishments which would be given to those who violated it \(^{86}\).

Whenever strangers entered any clan area they had to obtain the permission of the original inhabitants to occupy land \(^{37}\).

In Jowai there were several groups of immigrants, first, the four sisters, second, the Le Kyllung clan, third the San Syngkan clans, fourth the Laloo clan, fifth and sixth Sullai and Passah clan respectively \(^{38}\). Each clan had to perform a particular duty. The first group namely the Rymbai clan was allowed even to contest for Doloiship i.e. the village chief. The first group obtained many privileges like the original ruling clan, the Sonkphoh. The other emigrants were given less important social and religious duties like pator i.e. deputy to Doloi, Dasan, Ward commissioner, public announcer, drummer, puja-house cleaner etc. However each clan was given something and integrated into the whole community.

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86. Interview with A. Pyrthuh M.A. age 40 - Dy Director of census village Mawkyndeng.

87. Ibid

As a consequence the fear of the loss of property disappeared even though immigrants continued to come. Further the feeling of oneness became strong among the members of the clan. This feeling of oneness brought into existence the custom that land should not be alienated to others.

Therefore new rules came into existence with regard to the transfer of land by individual members, preservation of ancestral house, keeping the bones of the dead.

THE MATRILINEAL LINEAGE OF GENERATIONS

Following the example of the Khasis and the Garos, the Pnars have been following their primitive system since their migration to this locality namely Jaintia Hills.

89. Interview with Rev. Ugo Turco age 54 Raliang
90. Information collected from Donbok T. Laloo author of Rongbiria U Hnniew trep age 39 - a Pnar.
91. Interview with Rev. Herman age 69 - Raliang
Philologists and ethnologists say that the Pnar is a detached part of the Mon-khmer group of Indo-Chinese people. There are striking similarities between the Pnar and the Mon or Zalangs of Pegu and Khmers of Cambodia in language, erection of monoliths and matrilineal system. It is also mentioned that there are matrilineal tribes in Laos and in Mekong delta. Therefore it is possible that the Pnars took their matrilineal system from their ancient place of origin.

The Pnar legends recount that the world is ruled by the supreme goddess Ka Blai Synshar. Therefore the emphasis on the unifying and sustaining force of a mother god is interesting in respect of the matrilineal system.

The position of the ancestral grandmother is very great in the tribal life. She is Ka Iawbei, Ia is a word signifying the feminine gender. Iaw is a short form of Kiaw in Khasi meaning great grandmother and Bei means the mother. Therefore, Ka Iawbei is the original

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92. Bareh Hamlet - The History and culture of the Khari people 1967 page 33.
93. Ibid
94. Interview with Rev. Herman age 69 - Raliang
ancestress of the clan. Many of the clans trace their ancestry to the same Iawbeitre, literally means great grandmother of the root. The descendants of one such ancestress, Ka-Iawbeitre form one clan or chi-kur. Then the sub-clan comes out of the daughters of the clan and the sub-clan is styled as chi-kpoh. Sub-clans also may emerge again out of migration to a new place or out of conflict in the house.\(^95\)

The mother is the originator of the clan. The children should bear her name. She must feed them in hunger, nurse them in illness and protect them from danger. All property, both moveable and immovable, belongs to her. Further whatever earned by the husband should go to his mother\(^96\) and not to his wife.

We have to admit that the matrilineal system played an important role in preserving the ancient culture and alignments of the Pnars. An outsider in a patriarchal set-up could not own property or with great difficulty. The outsider is a stumbling block in matrilineal institutions of the Pnars.\(^97\)

\(^{95}\) Interview with the people of Namdong.

\(^{96}\) Roy Deb. A Tribe in Transition 1981 p. 20

\(^{97}\) Information collected from the people of Jowai.
CHARACTER

To love a Pnar one must know him long and well. A Stranger's first impression is not, as a rule, a favourable one. The noislessness compared to the Khasis, of the race would probably strike him first. It is interesting to see the Pnars discussing in a durbar. They are solemn and majestic. The rules of ethiedative are observed. Some times many may speak at one and the same time especially when passions are roused. Usually friends and relations always support each other. They are guided sometimes by emotions and impulses and therefore their decisions are not always impartial.

The Pnars are not so hospitable as the Khasis or Mikirs. They are more business minded and more interested in making money. There is no doubt sufficient attention is paid to visitors. A stranger may wish to see some persons or a particular house. A Pnar will take him there provided no expenditure is involved.

98. Interview with Simon Pawa age 35 Jowai
99. Ibid.
A Pnar is not a coward. He is courageous but does not risk, his life unnecessarily. He speaks well of his heroes, with pride, love and respect. He is not upset when things go bad. He is warlike. Armed with shield and spear he may even drive an elephant into the forest.

The village elders who sit in judgement are not always impartial. The community rarely fails to bring about a settlement which is felt to be in accordance with the established customs. They adhere to customs and traditions to preserve the race, the culture and the clans.

A Pnar thinks himself a fine fellow and resents an insult. Often separation is demanded for what seems to a stranger a harmless remark.

He is intelligent and on the whole truthful. However, he may lie to help one in trouble. Theft and crimes were uncommon but unfortunately they are becoming common. Above all they possess that pearl of great price, a sense of humour. Love permeates every thing.

100. Barkataki S. Tribes of Assam 1969 p. 47
CONTACT WITH CHRISTIANITY

The Pnar Christians had to face a number of difficulties on account of their new religion. The Raja of Jaintias favoured Hinduism than Christianity. But the missionaries fought against superstitions and harmful traditions. They established churches and schools, and spread enlightenment among the Pnars. They tried to liberate the people from poverty and ignorance. Even today the best educational institutions are run by the Christian missionaries.¹⁰²

CONTACT WITH HINDUISM

The Pnars had contacts with the Hindus on account of their proximity with the plains. Hindu officials had been appointed by the Dolois for carrying on the administration. Some of the dolois had political relations with the kings of the plains. The Pnars had close contact with Hindu than the Khasis.

¹⁰² Information collected from Jowai.
In the 15th century the Jaintia king shifted his capital from Sutnga his birth place to Jaintiapur. Nartiang was the summer capital of the kings. It was a stronghold of Hindu culture. The king himself became a Hindu and constructed two temples at Nartiang where Brahmins officiated as priests. Although the king lived at Nartiang his family stayed at Sutuga.

The Sutnga kings were called Hindu kings, as they had adopted Hindu names, rites and ceremonies. The Pnars adopted from the Hindus certain elements which did not interfere with their social structure especially matrilineal customs. The Brahman priests in turn were influenced by Khasi beliefs and ideas and they did not hesitate to attend some of the Khasi ceremonies and festivals.

The writings of some eminent Khasi authors especially the non-christian indicate that they have been influenced to a certain extent by Hindu literary tradition. Maham Singh (minister now) and Khongphai have tried to compare Khasi Jaintia religion with Hinduism.

103. Information collected from Jowai
CONTACT WITH THE TRADERS

The Pnars have had contact with the plain's people through trade. In 1800 A.D. the Pnars went to Dacca and Calcutta for trade. Many local products were sold in the plains of Bengal especially iron, cotton and limestone. The Pnars contact with the plain's people through trade resulted in the enrichment in wealth, business and learning.

CONTACT WITH THE MUSLIMS

The Pnars came in contact with the muslims in the 17th century A.D. Some Muslims seem to have been honoured by the kings. It is believed that the Muslims from Sylhet made repeated efforts to invade the Pnar Hills.

G.G. Swell's unearthing of 14 silver-plated coins from a pond in Jowai in Jaintia Hills shows that the Pnars had maintained some sort of trade relationships with the Mughal emperors of Delhi through their viceroy stationed

104. Ibid
at Murshidabad. Some of the Muslims came to Khasi, Jaintia Hills, married local women and settled down for trade and employment. Thus the non-Khasi Muslims settled in different parts of Meghalaya, occupied important positions in business, took local women as their wives and became the propagators of Islam among the people of Meghalaya.

CONTACT WITH THE BRITISH

The Jaintia Hills had been ruled by the Raja of Jaintiapur with the help of twelve Dolois. They were annexed by the British in 1835\textsuperscript{106}. In 1832 four British officers were captured by a chieftain of the Jaintia Hills. They were sacrificed to the goddess Kali at the temple of Gobs. This greatly enraged the British authorities. As a result the Jaintia pargana was annexed in 1835 since the Raja refused to give any explanation for the murder.

Pnar Hills are a part of the Jaintia Hills. Therefore together with the annexation of Jaintia Hills, all the Pnar Hills also fell to the lot of the British power.

\textsuperscript{106} Interview with Siang Pohthmi M.A. age 40 Lamin M.E. School - Headmaster.
The British government effected drastic changes in the powers and functions of the chiefs. The king lost his age-old freedom of dispensation of justice. The British government aided the protestant missionaries settlers and traders, who tried to subvert the Pnar customs and cultures.\textsuperscript{107}

\textsuperscript{107} Ibid.