

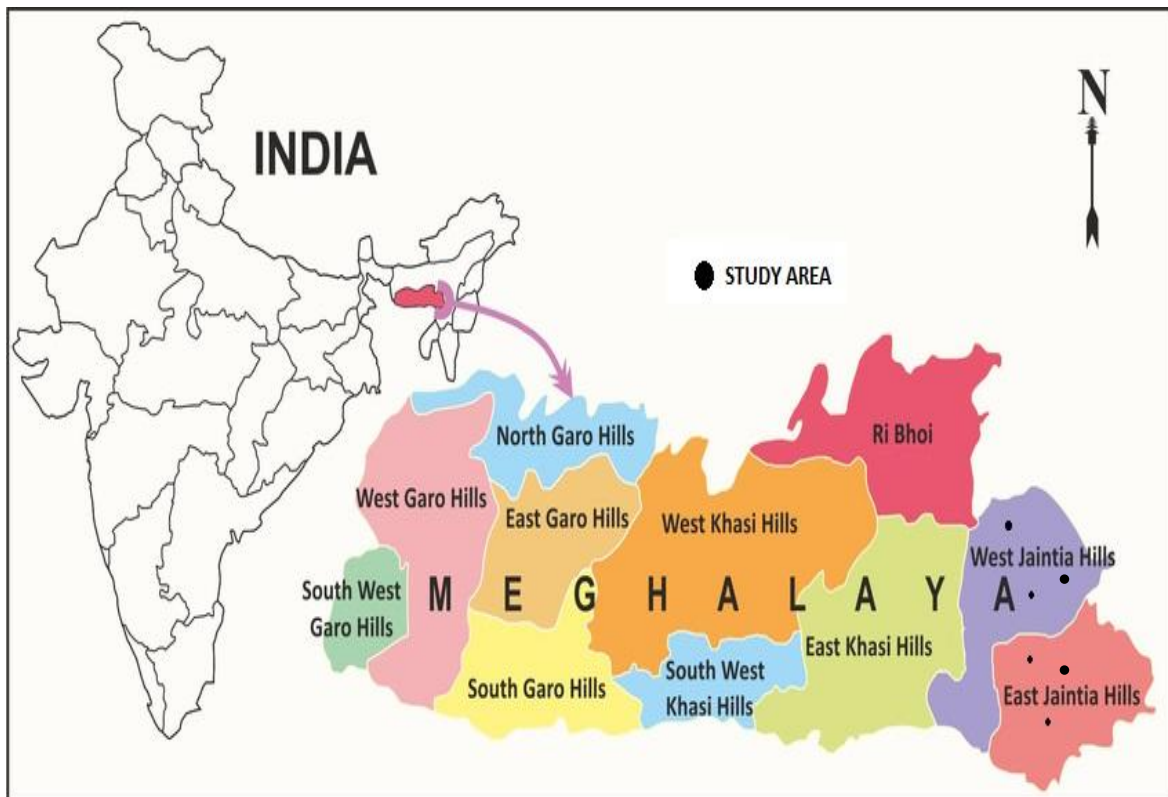
CHAPTER 2

THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE

2.1. NORTHEAST: A RAINBOW OF THE DIVINE

Northeast is the frontier part of the nation, India. This region is distinct from the rest of India because it has an extremely long international border, surrendered as it is, almost from all directions, by foreign countries and bounded together internally by the state of Assam (Subba, 2012: xiv). Surrounded by Nepal, Bhutan and China in the north, Myanmar in the east and Bangladesh in the south, this region lies between '20⁰ to '29⁰ 30' North Latitude and '89⁰ 46' to '97⁰ 30' East Longitude. These seven sisters and a brother invited the 'anthropological, missionary and administrative attention' (Subba, 2012: xiii) even before the colonial hegemony. It comprises an area of 2,62,230 square kilometers almost 8 percent of that of India, and is one of the largest diverse lands in the world. It comprises eight states: Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tripura. The Northeast India has a wide spectrum of cultural and ethnic composition which is an invitation to celebrate pluri-cultural identities, which is again a unique feature in whole of the country (Jose, 2017: 7). Writers described it as a miniature India – an epitome of the sub-continent. Anthropologists consider it a paradise for their research, an anthropological museum. 'Taking into consideration the geographical diversity, the ethnic plurality, the linguistic multiplicity and political intricacies found in the region it is apt to describe India's Northeast as a rainbow country: extraordinarily diverse and colourful, mysterious when seen through parted clouds, a distant troubled frontier for all too many' (Verghese, 1997: 1).

Figure 2.1

Map of Meghalaya

Among these eight states Meghalaya occupied an important place due to its prominent place during the colonial rule. Mackenzie (1884: 243-244) writes:

“The headquarters of the chief commissioners of Assam have been located at Shillong in the Khasi Hills. The station is on plateau 4,000 feet above the sea level and 67 miles south by road from Guwahati on the Brahmaputra. It is conveniently situated between the Assam valley districts on the one side and those Cachar and Sylhet on the other. The climate is midland equable, the rainfall averaging 83.65 inches in the year...the District Officer of Khasi hills moved his headquarters there from Cherapoonjee in 1864 to avoid the excessive rainfall of the latter place, where although only 30 miles south of Shillong the average rainfall is 368 inches ... the Chief Commissioner of Assam has perhaps the most desirable headquarters of all the local Governments”.

2.2. MEGHALAYA: LAND OF MATRILINEAL TRIBES

Meghalaya, a land with an excellent natural beauty and a very picturesque landscape is truly an ‘abode of clouds’ (*megha* cloud, *alaya* abode). It lies in the

northeastern part of the country located between '25⁰1' to '26⁰5' North latitude and '85⁰49' to '92⁰52' East longitude with the total area of 22,429 square kilometers and the state has a population of 29,66,889 and is the 23rd most populous state in the country (www.censusindia.gov.in retrieved on 20/05/2015). This state is bounded on the north by Goalpara, Kamrup and Karbi Anglong of Assam, on the south by the People's Republic of Bangladesh, on the east by the North Cachar Hills district and Barack Valley of Assam and on the west by Goalpara district of Assam and Bangladesh (Ngap Kynta, 2001: 1). 'It is a hilly strip in the eastern part of the country and about 300 kilometers long from east to west and 100 kilometers wide' (Nayak and Thomas, 2007: 57). The lovers of nature describe it as the Scotland of the East, an epithet since the colonial times. The botanists and zoologists find in the state all the pleasure of rare discoveries among the varied fauna and flora of the land (Sharma, 1998: 1).

The literature *Encyclopedia of India: Meghalaya* says that Meghalaya is 'The undulating terrain of the land basically characteristic itself; hill spurs after spurs rise and roll before the eyes, resenting their intensive craggy formation in the most steepish part of the terrain is noticed' (1994: 1). Lord Willingdon (1933), Viceroy of India said:

"... there is no place within our Indian empire wider diversity is found within a smaller compass than in the uplands of Assam where Syiems and Princely houses of Khasis represent perhaps the oldest and certainly one of the most interesting of the ancient tribal migrations. It is a proof of the stamina and virility and competence of the people that when greater empires in the east and the west ... come and gone, you still maintain in your pleasant hill the freedom of your small republics based on the ancient ways and tenets of your race" (Singh, 1980: 10).

This land of clouds, Meghalaya, one among the seven sisters of the Northeast India occupies a predominant place in the Northeast Indian canvas. It occupied an elevated position during the colonial rule since it was the center of power during the British rule in India. The state has most of its land covered by hills interspersed with gorges and small valleys. Endowed with dense forests and rivers cascading down undulating terrain, this region is one of the most scenic of the Northeastern States. However, area wise it is the third biggest state in the region after Arunachal Pradesh and Assam (Nayak and Thomas, 2007: 57).

Meghalaya's population is greatly made up the tribal individuals. The Khasi being the biggest ethnic group occupies the central group part of Meghalaya trailed by the Garo

in the western part and then the Jaintia occupy the eastern part of the state. Shillong, the capital of Meghalaya, was also the capital of undivided Assam from 1874 till January 1972. The state has most of its land covered by hills interspersed with gorges and small valleys with an elevation ranging from 150 meters to 1950 meters. The three major ethnic communities that inhabit the state namely Khasi / Khyntiam and the Pnar / Jaintia belong to the Proto-Australoid Mon-Khmer ethnicity and Garos belong to the Bodo family of the Tibeto-Burman ethnicity who are said to have migrated from Tibet. Other minor communities such as Bhoi, Warand Lyngngam also belong to the Mon-Khmer Proto-Australoid stock.

“Soon after attaining statehood in January 1972, the United Khasi and Jaintia Kingdom was divided and Jowai sub-division was upgraded to form Jaintia Hills district, with Jowai as the headquarter ... In October, 1976, the state Government issued a notification to divide the Khasi and Garo Hills into two districts each East and West Khasi Hills and East and West Garo Hills ... In 1992 the West Garo Hills was further divided into West and South Garo Hills district and the East Khasi Hills district was divided and Ri-Bhoi came into being. In July 31, 2012 the Jaintia Hill was divided and East and West Jaintia Hills came into existence” (Gopalakrishnan, 2001: 4).

For many years the people of megahalaya both in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills are broadly called by outsiders as Khasis. This generic term was in vague and these people are divided and identified into five sub-groups, namely *Khyntiam*, *Pnar*, *Synteng or Jaintia*, *War*, *Bhoi*, and *Lyngngam* (Sen, 2002: 88).

The Jaintia Hills district was created on 22nd February 1972. It has a total geographical area of 3,819 square kilometers with a population of 3,95,124 as per the 2011 census. Jaintia Hills district is the largest producer of coal in the state. Coal mines can be seen all over the district. Limestone production in the state is increasing, as there is high demand from cement industries. On 31st July 2012, the Jaintia Hills district was divided into two: East and West Jaintia Hill District.

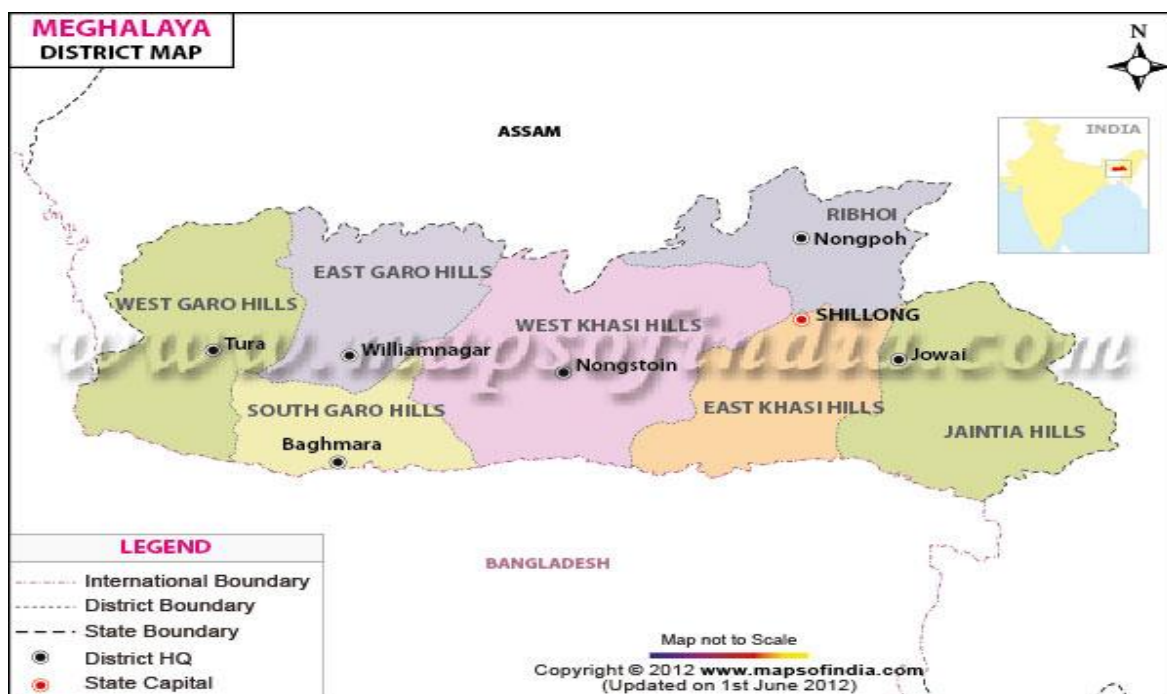
The East Khasi Hills district was carved out of the Khasi Hills on 28th October 1976. The district covers an area of 2,748 square kilometres. The headquarters of East Khasi Hills is located in Shillong. The Ri-Bhoi district was formed by further division of East Khasi Hills district on 4th June 1992. It has an area of 2,448 square kilometres. The district headquarters is at Nongpoh. It has a hilly terrain, and a large part of the area is covered with forests. The Ri-Bhoi district is famous for its pineapples and is the largest

producer of pineapples in the state. The West Khasi Hills district is the largest district in the state with a geographical area of 5,247 square kilometres. The district was carved out of Khasi Hills district on 28th October 1976. The district headquarters is located at Nongstoin.

The East Garo Hills district was formed in 1976 and covers an area of 2,603 square kilometres. The District Headquarter is at Williamnagar, earlier known as Simsangiri. The West Garo Hills district lies in the western part of the state and covers a geographical area of 3,714 square kilometres. The district headquarter is located at Tura. The South Garo Hills district came into existence on 18th June 1992 after the division of the West Garo Hills district. The total geographical area of the district is 1,850 square kilometres. The district headquarter is at Baghmara.

Figure 2.2

District Map of Meghalaya



The districts shown here are as on 2011 census period.

Today Meghalaya has 11 districts, 39 Taluks, 6,839 villages and 22 towns. As per the Census of India 2011, Meghalaya has 5,46,096 households with a population of 29,66,889 of which 14,91,832 are males and 14,75,057 are females. The population of

children between age 0-6 is 5,68,536 which is 19.16 per cent of total population. The sex-ratio of Meghalaya state is around 989 compared to 943 which is national average of India. The sex ratio in the rural area is 986, while in the urban area it is 1001. Out of the total population, 23,71,439(79.93 per cent) live in the rural area, while 5,95,450 (20.07 per cent) make their living in the urban area. The literacy rate of Meghalaya state is 74.43 per cent, out of which 75.95 per cent are males and 72.89 per cent are females.

The total area of Meghalaya is 22,429 square kilometres with a population density of 132 per square kilometre. There are 17,355 persons of the total population who belong to scheduled Castes, of which 9,157 are males and 8,198 are females. They form 0.58 per cent of the total population. A total of 86.15 per cent of total population are Scheduled Tribes in the state of Meghalaya (www.censusindia.gov.in retrieved on 10/07/2016).

Table 2.1

Total State Population

Total Rural Urban	Person Male Female	Total Population	Sex Ratio	Literates	% of literates	Scheduled Castes	Scheduled Tribes
Total	Person	2966889	989	1785005	74.43	17355	2555861
	Male	1491832		913879	75.95	9157	1269728
	Female	1475057		871126	72.89	8198	1286133
Rural	Person	2371436	986	NA			
	Male	1194260					
	Female	1177179					
Urban	Person	595450	1001				
	Male	297572					
	Female	297872					

Rural Urban Distribution of Population India, Census of India, 2011

2.3. ORIGIN AND MIGRATION

Before the advent of the Welsh Missionaries, the Khasis possessed practically no written evidence of their history. Thus, to trace back their origin seems to be difficult.

According to many they belong to one of those earliest bands of immigrants whose headquarters were supposed to have been in north-western China between the upper waters of Hoang-Ho and the Yang-tse-Kiang. However, ‘Hutton and Gurdon and others maintain that Khasi homeland is Cambodia, on the Banks of the Mekong River. The migration from the Far-East took place via Patkoi range. The Khamptis, the Syngphos and the Ahoms of Burma followed the same into Assam’ (Maliekal, 2005: 26). Chowdhary (1978) speaks they are the only people in the region who speak Austric language. Apart from them Mundari in central India, Nicobarese of Andaman Nicobar Islands, Man from lower Burma and the Khmers of Cambodia belong to this group. Gurdon (1906/2010) observed that probably the Khasis migrated into Assam in all possibility from South-East towards North-West.

2.4. MEGHALAYA IN EARLY LITERATURE

Prehistoric research in North-East India was initiated by the British administrators and civil servants. Sir John Lubbock for the first time in 1867 reported evidences of prehistoric culture of this region under the title “The stone age tools in upper Assam” (shodhganaga.inflibnet.ac. bitstream retrieved on 12/08/2018). ‘The geologists say that the present configuration of this part of India is not more than 30 million years old which is comparatively recent time in consideration the total age of the earth (4600 million years)’ (Sharma, 1998: 2). ‘The region has a very ancient history dating back to *Mahabharata* period and much of it is coloured with fables and myths’ (Das, 1996: 18-20). Sharma (1998: 2) observed that geologically oldest part of Assam is represented by the Shillong plateau comprising the Garo and Khasi-Jaintia Hills which along with its easternmost outcrop in the Mikir and Rangma Hills is believed to be Archaean in origin...at that time Shillong plateau was partly submerged by the sea and the rest was low-land swamps where coal beds were found.

The land mass that was surrounded by Tibet, Burma, China and Bangladesh, the hills and valleys of the Brahmaputra, in ancient times was known as Pragjyotisha and Kamarupa. In the Udyogaparva of *Mahabharata* we find the mention of Kamarupa

kingdom as an integral part of India (*Aryavarta*), which includes the greater part of Assam and Bengal (Sharma, 1998: 2-3). 'Mention is being made in the ancient text about the old kingdom of *Pragjyotisha* by Naraka the ruler of *Videha*' (Singh 1983: 16; Lamare 2005: 4). The early inhabitants of this region were known as *Kiratas* (Lamare, 2005: 4) or *Mlecchas* (Sharma, 1998: 2). *Yajurveda* carries the name *Kiratas*, in connection with the *Purusamedha* or human-sacrifice. 'After Naraka came to power and rose to prominence, the name of the kingdom was changed from *Pragjyotisha* to *Kamarupa*. The *Kiratas* of *Pragjyotisha* can be identified with the Khasis, Jaintias, Garos, Kacharis, Chutias, Tipperahs, Nagas and the other neighbouring tribes North-East India living during the time of Naraka' (Lamare, 2005: 4).

2.4.1. Meghalaya during Prehistoric Period

The whole history of North-East was brought to light was by the British scholars, military officers, administrators and missionaries. Among them J.H. Hutton (1928), J.P. Mills (1933), G.D. Walker and C.W. Pawsey made notable contribution in uncovering the cultural relics of pre-historic times mainly in Nagaland, the Garo hills of Meghalaya, North Cachar Hills of Assam and the former Sadiya Frontier Tract of Arunachal Pradesh (Sharma, 1998: 4). P. C. Dutta in his article 'Early man in the North East India' (1988) has proposed, 'early man appeared in the North East India during a climate phase of the middle sequence of the middle Pleistocene epoch between 400,000 to 300,000 years ago or a little belated' (Datta, 1989: 15; Lamare, 2005: 5). Earlier, Worman (1960) in his essay 'Neolithic problem in the prehistory of India' stated that 'Northeast India served as a corridor through which Neolithic tradition entered into India from the east' (Sharma, 1998: 4). Sir Lubbock in his article published in the weekly news magazine *Athenaeum* in its 22nd June 1867 issue under the title 'Stone Age of Assam' presented the evidences of the Stone age culture presented in Assam. Later these findings of Sir Lubbock were substantiated by Lt. Barron (1872), Godwin Austen (1872), and J. Cockburn (1879) (Sharma 1998: 4). 'The reports of the vertebrate fossils from the Northeast India show that conditions were definitely conducive to the early hominoids to have either evolved in this region or migrated from neighbouring areas' (Jaiswal, 1998: 27).

Dr. H.D. Sankalia in his book *Prehistory and proto-history of India and Pakistan* (1974) convinced some of the sites discovered in the Garo hills yielded cultural relics of the palaeolithic period consist of hand-axes, cleavers, choppers, and a verity of flake tools such as scrapers and points including tanged pointrecovered from several sites in the Rongram and its tributary valleys in the central Garo hills. Inthis site we find grained black or smoky grey igneous rock which supplied the basic raw material for the Stone Age craftsman of the Garo Hills (Sharma, 1998: 6-8).

2.4.2. Megalithic Culture in Meghalaya

Northeast India is an area of great anthropological interest which is the abode of a heterogeneous mass population embodying people of ethnic origin bearing diverse cultures, who poured into this area from different directions from time to time (Ganguly and Husain, 1998: 34). Among the seven states of Northeast, Meghalaya occupies a predominant place in the anthropological map due its rich megalithic remains. The systematic study of the megalithic tradition of North East started with the arrival of the British. It was Godwin-Austen initiated the study in the Khasi Hills (Sharma, 2014: 22). P.R.T. Gurdon says that the Khasi memorial stones are living ethnographic examples of a pre-historic tradition (Gurdon,1906/2010: 144) of the Khasi-Jaintias.

Megaliths are distributed over a large area in Northeast India. The greatest concentration of them is observed in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills districts of Meghalaya. Some of the larger megalithic fields in this area occur at Cherrapunji, Mawphalang, Laitlyngkot, Jowai and Nartiang’ (Sharma, 1998: 18). ‘The ample remnants of monoliths and megaliths found in the plains and on the hills provide great knowledge about the vast Khasi-Jaintia kingdom that was in existence in the Pre-British period’ (Maliekal, 2005: 22).

Bhuyan (2001: 165-169) writes the earliest mention about the people of Meghalaya is found in the *Mahabharata*. These people sided with the *Kauravas* during the famous *Mahabharata* battle in which the *Padavas* inflicted a humiliating defeat to the *Kauravas*and they and all supporting kingdoms were asked to surrender to the

Pandavas but the Khasi king refused the surrender. After Bhimsen's intervention by crawling the king on the ground he accepted the supremacy of the *Pandavas*. From this story we can understand that the presence of the Khasi-Jaintias in Meghalaya before 1500 BC or in 900 BC because many scholars believe that *Mahabharata* began during either of this period.

Sharma (2014: 39) attests 'according to *Nirayana* calendar of Hindu Astrology, the year 2000 was the 5000 *Nirayana* calendar year, which proves our 5000-year-old Indian civilization. With the connecting link of these facts and probabilities, it can be assumed that the Khasi megalithic tradition may be as old as Indian Civilization'.

2.4.3. Meghalaya in the Neolithic Period

Neolithic period is usually referred to as the last part of the Stone Age. 'The Neolithic period of prehistory is characterized by a revolutionary shift in the subsistence pattern of man from food gathering in the preceding period to food production by the way of domestication of plants and animals' (Sharma, 1998: 13). It is marked by development of human technology, 'a movement from a wholly flaked rough tool tradition to the ground to a polished smooth tool tradition' (Sharma, 1998: 13). Neolithic period is also marked by farming and domesticating plants, animals and cereals. Neolithic cultural relics have been found in many parts of the Garo Hills like Alagiri, Rongram selbalgiri, etc.

Ibu Sanjeeb Garg (2018) says that:

"In the recent excavation on the banks of Barapani hydel project reservoir in the Khasi hills have unearthed Neolithic pottery and agricultural tools. One such Neolithic site is the *Lumsohpetbneng* region of Ribhoi district in Meghalaya. Since 2013-14 regular excavations have unearthed a number of Neolithic pottery and agricultural tools in the *Lumsohpetbneng* region of Meghalaya ... Researchers have concluded that the evacuated remains go back to as early as 1220 BC ... Another important Neolithic site of Meghalaya is the Ganol Rongram river valley in West Garo Hills. The site is triangular in shape and is spread over an area of over 16 square kilometers. A number of tools both from the Neolithic and Paleolithic age were discovered in these sites. The third ... site, is located in the point of the Purana / Old Bhaitbari... on the southern bank of the River Jingjiram ... discoveries that was made was of fortifications signaling settlements which were of permanent nature of some kind. A second kind of discovery that was made was of debris of a burnt brick temple that was discovered. Interestingly, this temple had a number of terracotta figurines resembling Hindu gods like Parvati, Kubera, etc. where

figures of Ganesha seemed to dominate. The third and impressive discovery during the excavation was the discovery and exposure of the site of an octagonal Shiva temple with eight miniature octagons, each having a Shiva Linga ... However, the most important and unique discovery from this site was the discovery of a Stupa dedicated to Lord Buddha. While there is no evidence of Buddhism being practiced in Meghalaya today, the discovery of Buddha indeed points out to the confluence and change that history undergoes” (www.meghalayaeearlyhistory.com retrieved on 14/09/2018).

2.4.4. Meghalaya under the British Rule

The history of Meghalaya illustrates that Meghalaya had an eventful past. The history of Meghalaya deals with various incidents and illustrations that are witnesses to the rise of Meghalaya as an autonomous state. To begin with the history of Meghalaya it can be said that Meghalaya has been the homeland of a number of tribes, namely the Garo, Khasi and Jaintia. Till the 19th century, each of the three tribes in Meghalaya, *viz.* Garo, Khasi and Jaintia, had their independent rule in the different territories of Meghalaya. But the arrival of the Britishers in the political scenario of India changed the plight of these tribal communities in India. In the 19th century, Meghalaya became a counterpart of the British Empire in India.

During the British Raj, Meghalaya was annexed under the British Empire. Further in 1935, Meghalaya became a part of Assam and the Britishers incorporated Meghalaya in the territory of Assam. Yet, Meghalaya enjoyed a semi-independent status due to the treaty that was signed between Meghalaya and the British Crown. Moreover, after the Partition of Bengal in 1905, Meghalaya was made a part of the new province that was culled out of Bengal. In 1905, Meghalaya became a part of Eastern Bengal and Assam. Again, in 1912, when the partition was reversed, Meghalaya was clubbed with Assam as a single territory. The history of Meghalaya proves that although Meghalaya had been a part of Assam in 1947; yet it enjoyed an autonomous power within the territory of Assam. In fact, two districts of Assam were also put under the jurisdiction of Meghalaya in 1947.

2.4.5. Birth of Meghalaya

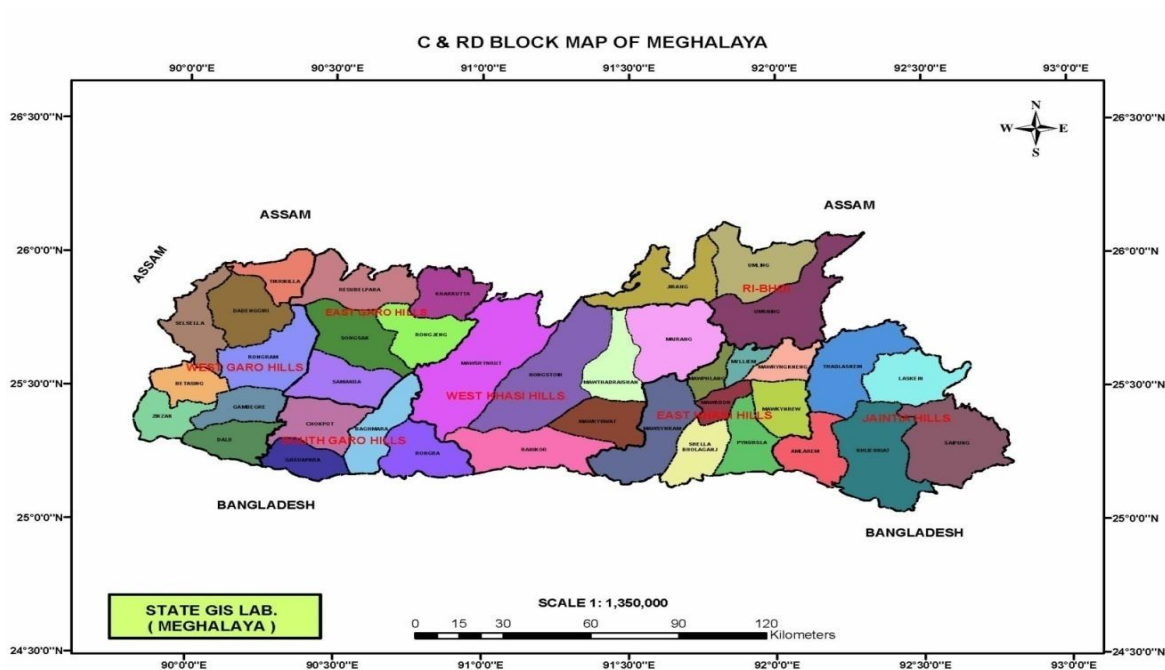
The modern history of Meghalaya maintains that in 1971, with the Parliament passing the North-Eastern Areas (Reorganization) Act, 1971 conferred autonomy on Meghalaya. On January 21, 1972, Meghalaya became an autonomous state, housing a Legislative Assembly of its own. Meghalaya has its capital at Shillong, which remained the capital of Assam from 1874 to 1972. It stands at a height of 1496 meters above the sea level. Meghalaya shares boundary with Assam in north and east, Bangladesh in south and west. There are three matrilineal communities residing in Meghalaya with their own rich cultural heritage. They have their own history, tradition, customs, beliefs, etc. The division of the districts of Meghalaya is based on the tribal inhabitation. The districts are split into three divisions, the Khasi Hills, Jaintia Hills and the Garo Hills based on three main tribal communities occupying these places (Gurdon,1906/2010: 1). While the Garo shares no commonalities with the other two, the Khasi and the Jaintia groups are culturally and linguistically close; some even claim they are the same people –the *Hynniewtrep* people (Karlsson, 2005: 5).

2.5. PHYSIOGRAPHY OF MEGHALAYA

The topography of Meghalaya comprises various elements including the landscape, climate, altitude, water bodies, flora and fauna of the entire region. Meghalaya is best known for its beautiful landscape and green vegetation. These elements of the topography of Meghalaya add charm to the picturesque state. The topography at Meghalaya comprises landscapes that have a blend of mountain and plateau regions and this is why it is also known as Meghalaya plateau. The altitude of these plateaus ranges from 150 meters to 1961 meters. The highest altitude is that of the plateaus in the central region comprising the Khasi Hills while the lowest is that of the Garo Hills which has an altitude of 1515 meters and seems almost like a plain. The highest peak in Meghalaya is Shillong Peak at a height of 1961 meters. The climate is also one of the major elements of Meghalaya

Figure 2.3

C and RD Map of Meghalaya



Though the climate remains moderate in all seasons, humidity is high in the interiors of Garo hills. The places where the altitude is high such as Shillong, the climate is cool and soothing. Meghalaya is the wettest state in India. The rainfall is not evenly spread in all regions but the state receives a large amount of rainfall with Mawsanram receiving the highest around 12000 milimeters. Forests, which are an integral part of the topography in Meghalaya, cover around 8514 square kilometers of the whole area of Meghalaya. Meghalaya comprises mainly two types of forests– tropical forests and temperate forests. The main occupation of people in Meghalaya is agriculture as the soil is fertile. Rivers such as Manda, Janjiram, Simsang, Ganol, Khri, Umkhem, Kynshi, Umiam, Mawphlang, Myngot, and Myntdu, etc. that flow across the terrain and are also the significant components of Meghalaya topography. It is due to these seasonal rivers that Meghalaya gets water for its dense vegetation.

2.5.1. Climate of Meghalaya

Meghalaya is called 'the Scotland of the East'. It is because of the soothing climate and beauty of the nature. The climate depends upon its altitude, the higher the altitude is, the more cooler and soothing is the climate. Since Meghalaya is significantly high from the level the climate and the atmospheric temperature comes down considerable, which can rejuvenate one from the worldly pleasures amidst the nature's magnanimous beauty. The region of Meghalaya where the temperature is too hot and humid in summer are Garo Hills and in the extreme east in the East Jaintia Hills. Climate in Meghalaya changes with the augment of monsoon (Nayak and Thomas, 2013: 61). The average yearly rainfall is around 2600 millimeters in the western part of the north eastern state while the northern Meghalaya receives an annual rainfall between 2500 to 3000 millimeters. The south eastern Meghalaya gets annual showers above 4000 millimeters (Nayak and Thomas, 2013: 61). Due to highest amount of rainfall, Meghalaya remains the wettest state in India. The climate at Meghalaya is neither too hot during summer and nor too cold during winter. It is dry between November and April while it rains heavily between May and October. Winter season falls in December while it goes away by February. Summer then creeps in and stays till May and then the rainy season takes over the Meghalaya climate. (www.meghalaya/climate.com retrieved on 12/10/2015).

2.5.2. Agriculture in Meghalaya

Meghalaya is an agricultural state and her agriculture is the main contributor to the economy of this northeastern state of India. Around 80 per cent of the total population of Meghalaya depends upon agriculture for their living. Agriculture in Meghalaya has been flourishing due to the conducive climate that it has throughout the year. Since Meghalaya do not receive evenly distributed rainfall the vegetation at every area differs. Some places have tropical vegetation while some have temperate vegetation. In the last 25 years, the total cropped area has increased by about 42 per cent out of which 60 per cent comprises the food grains. With the introduction of the high yielding seeds of different crops production has shown remarkable increase and thereby enhancing the

agriculture at Meghalaya. The main food crops that are an essential part of agriculture around Meghalaya are rice and maize. A spectacular achievement was obtained with the introduction of Megha II and I the cold tolerant rice varieties developed by the ICAR at Umroi near Shillong. Apart from rice and maize it produces horticultural crops such as Banana, Orange, Pineapple, Lemon, Litchi, Jackfruits, Plum, Peach, Guava, Pear, etc.

Meghalayan cash crops that have brought money and value to agriculture are areca nut, betel vine, jute, bay leaf, rapeseed, black pepper, potato, mustard, short-staple cotton, turmeric, ginger, etc. Among the non-traditional crops, mushroom, cashew nut, wheat, tea, oilseeds, etc. contribute mainly to the agricultural revenues of the state (Nayak and Thomas, 2013:72-73).

2.5.3. Biodiversity of Meghalaya

Meghalaya biodiversity comprises an enormous species of flora and fauna. Around 8514 square kilometers that is 42.34 per cent of the total land area of Meghalaya being under the cover of forests, a large number of floral and faunal biodiversity is witnessed. Out the total forest area only 993 square kilometers are under the control of the state government, while the rest is with the District Council and private management (Bareh, 2001: 3).

Meghalaya with its favourable climate supports high biodiversity of floral and faunal species. Moreover, there are several small seasonal rivers flowing across the state thereby making it apt for cultivation in large scale for marketing. The forests in Meghalaya support a vast floral and faunal biodiversity. The floral diversity includes a large variety of Phanerophytes which includes variety of trees and shrubs, parasites and epiphytes and succulent plants. The principal timber species are teak, *titchap*, *gomari*, *bhola*, pine, etc. Plants with medicinal values such as *Cinchona*, *Taxus Baccata*, etc. and plants that offer fruits and vegetables are abundantly available in the forests of Meghalaya. The insect-eating plant commonly called pitcher plant is a botanical wonder that is found in plenty in all the Hills of Meghalaya.

Meghalaya represents a wide variety in the collection of its orchids. It exhibits a superb diversity in its different colorful orchids which not only adds beauty to the nature of Meghalaya but also works as a big revenue resource for the state. The whole cosmos has a collection of 17,000 species of orchids among which 1,250 types that could be seen in India. Meghalaya orchids include as many as 300 different species that are precious to the place. The largest number of species could be found in the forests of Cherrapunji, Mawsmai and Mawmluh which have majestic collection of orchids and both hold highest positions in the collection of orchids in Meghalaya.

The faunal biodiversity of Meghalaya includes a wide range of reptiles, mammals, insects and birds. Reptiles include Coral Snake, Red-necked Kulback, Blind Snake, etc. Mammals comprise all the members of dog and cat family, mongooses, gnawing animals such as squirrels, bears, elephants, etc. Birds include Common Green Pigeon, Hill Myna, Peacock Pheasant, Blue Jay, Great Horned Owl, Black-necked Stork, etc. Among the insects one variety attracts the eyes from all across the globe towards Meghalaya is the colorful butterflies. There are around 250 species of the colorful butterflies in Meghalaya. It is due to this Meghalaya biodiversity, that there is a perfect balance in the ecosystem of Meghalaya(www.meghalaya/physiography.html retrieved on 25/09/2014).The state has two National Parks, *viz.*, the Nokrek National Park and the Balpakram National Park and two wildlife sanctuaries, the Nongkhyllem Wildlife Sanctuary and Siju Wildlife Sanctuary (Bareh, 2013: 3).

2.6. ART AND CRAFTS

The land of Meghalaya is dowered with a rich heritage of music, as its occupants just love to get drenched in its holy spirit that drives away all sorts of worries and vexations. In fact, all the major festivals in the state of Meghalaya pivot around the mesmerizing songs and dances that truly rejuvenates the soul and the mind. The heavenly delectable valleys that spans across the terrain of Meghalaya reverberate with the soul-stirring tunes of the music emerging out from the hearts of the residents. Traditional songs, legendary instruments and a soothing tempo are all the necessary ingredients that

has metamorphosed Meghalaya music into an absolute treat. The music of Meghalaya mainly draws its inspiration from natural beauties like the water falls, hills, lakes, etc. It is the individuals belonging to the Jaintias and the Khasis who consider music to be the sole passion of their life. *Phawar* is the form of music that was introduced by the Khasis and constitutes an integral wing of the music from Meghalaya. It is presented in the form of a psalm and contains the description of the occasion in its lyrics. Songs dedicated to the various martyrs who embraced death for the sake of the country, ballads, verses that depict the past and many more. Other key ingredients that make the music even more splendid are instruments like the Ksiang Shynrang and Ksing Kynthei. Flutes and drums also form an integral part of the music of Meghalaya. Various instruments like *Tangmuri*, *Shaw Shaw*, *Nakra*, *Kising Padiah*, *Besli*, *Duitara* and some others make the music of Meghalaya even more thrilling and desirable.

The crafts constitute one of the major sources of cultural heritage of the tribal people of the state. The major crafts of Meghalaya are weaving, bamboo and cane crafts, carving, jewelry, engraving, wood works, Khasi locks, carpets and wall hangings. Among the crafts in Meghalaya, weaving is a woman's domain. The various weaving products at Meghalaya include waist cloth, scarf, bodice, shawl, *lungi*, wrapper, girdle, skirt and apron. Weaving is a major traditional way of living for the Garos (www.craftclustersofindia.in retrieved on 07/04/2017). *Endi* silk and cotton handloom are the important textiles of Meghalaya. Bamboo and cane crafts are an important part of the crafts in Meghalaya. They are mainly of two types: medium quality items and good quality items. Many daily use items are made up of bamboo including baskets and mats. The Garos who are not Christian make statues in memory of the dead. These statues are actually wooden engravings. Such statues resemble the dead. In the Khasi lock, one has to screw the key to lock or unlock. Some figures resembling animals and men are engraved on the walls of the houses of the local people in a few Jaintia and Garo villages. Certain fascinating carvings are available in the state of Meghalaya. The carvings representing a lover with his beloved are found near the place of Jowai. Today, these carvings are critically acclaimed for their artistry. The Khasi and Jaintia jewelry do not differ much. A popular tribal jewelry piece is the pendant also termed *Kynjri Ksiar*. This pendant is made up of 24 carat gold. Another important jewelry for these people is a

string of coral beads, which are red in color. This is supposed to be worn round the neck. This is called *Paila*. The *Rigitok* is a Garo jewelry, which is made up of glass(www.ignca.gov.in retrieved on 21/05/2017).

Carving in Meghalaya includes wood carving. Arts and crafts lie at the heart of the cultural life of Meghalaya. Wood carving forms the basis of cottage industry in Meghalaya. Wood carving of Meghalaya is an ancient art that flourished in the rural parts of Meghalaya, especially around the Garo hills. Some of the exquisite examples of wood carving in Meghalaya can be seen in the temples and shrines spread across the length and breadth of the state. Meghalaya wood carving has attained a great height due to the technical skills involved in it. Wood carving or, broadly speaking, carving at Meghalaya has been a craft which was done by the ancestors of Meghalaya people. Besides wood carving, one also comes across a number of other crafts in Meghalaya, such as artistic weaving, winnowing fans, jewelry making. But, among these crafts, wood carving has carved a distinct position for itself. Many temples and shrines in Meghalaya bear statues made of wood that are worth seeing. These wood carving are unique in their representation and design. Therefore, tourists from across the world come to Meghalaya to witness the exotic wood carving. The Meghalaya wood carving include toys, human figurines, replica of Gods and Goddesses, famous personalities, saints and sages, animals, birds, etc. Tourists coming to Meghalaya carry back the Meghalaya carving as souvenirs to their native land. Thus, it is evident that carving in Meghalaya, especially wood carving, occupies an integral part among the crafts in Meghalaya. One will be allured by the beautiful pieces of wooden articles of the place.

Meghalaya bamboo and cane crafts are a significant part of the state's economy. The bamboo and cane crafts in Meghalaya is considered the second most important aspect of the economy of Meghalaya, the first being agriculture. The bamboo and cane crafts of Meghalaya can be classified into two broad categories – daily required medium quality items and good quality daily required as well as decorative items. The medium quality bamboo and cane crafts at Meghalaya are meant to cater to the demands of the local customers, while the good quality objects are meant for sell at big markets. A variety of crafts are formed from bamboo like different kinds of baskets and mats. The baskets are also known as *khok* or *thugi* in the local markets. The baskets like the

meghum khok are much in demand. They are prepared primarily in the Garo Hills. It is a perfect example of a functional showpiece; its outer surface exhibits a great deal of expertise in bamboo work, while its inner space is used to store items of daily use like clothes. It is primarily used by the local tribal people. One of the most acclaimed cane products of the state are the fascinating cane sieves and baskets prepared by the Khasis. This craft originates from Shillong and is formed in the basket-forming technique. These mats are made up of plaits of cane and bamboo and are mostly used in the rural regions (www.shoghganga.inflibnet.ac.in retrieved on 15/06/2017). This fishing instrument is a perfect blend of decoration and function. These are locally named *knup*. It is in the form of a shallow and hollow cone. Different kinds of furniture are made from cane and bamboo, which are sold in the markets and also locally used.

2.7. HEALTH CARE IN MEGHALAYA

The state has 12 government hospitals, 13 government dispensaries, 28 community health centers, 110 primary health centers, 423 sub-centers. There are 609 doctors, 189 pharmacists, 835 staff nurses, 163 lab technicians, 755 A. N Ms, 67 health visitors and 100 vaccinators as of 2015-16 (Statistical Hand Book of Meghalaya, 2017). A special program has been launched by the state government for the treatment of tuberculosis, leprosy, cancer and mental diseases. Over 70 per cent of the state diseases are water-related. Malnutrition and lack of potable drinking water leading to gastroenteritis are responsible for high mortality among children. Though there has been a steady decline in the death rate, improvement in life expectancy and an increase in health infrastructure, about 42.3 per cent of the state's population is still uncovered by health care, according to the status paper prepared by the Health Department.

There are numerous hospitals being set up, both private and government, some of them are Civil Hospital, Ganesh Das Hospital, K. J. P. Synod Hospital, NEIGRIHMS, North Eastern Institute of Ayurveda and Homeopathy (NEIAH), R. P. Chest Hospital, Woodland Hospital, Nazareth Hospital, Christian Hospital, Supercare Hospital, Bethany Hospital, Tirot Singh Memorial Hospital, Tura civil Hospital, Ialong civil hospital, etc.

2.8. FESTIVALS

The state of Meghalaya is dowered with many spectacular festivals which are characterized by scintillating dance performances, multi-colored robes that are enriched with the charms of a rainbow and soul-stirring music. The three main festivals of three communities are *Wangala* of Gaors, *Shad Suk Mynsiem* of Khasis and *Beh-dien-khlam* of Jaintias.

2.8.1. Wangala

Among the many marvels that have metamorphosed the state of Meghalaya into a rich cultural hub, Wangala is undoubtedly one of the most prominent and sought-after festivals that is celebrated in November. It is the Garos descending from Meghalaya who consider *Wangala* to be their one of the most sacred and coveted festivities. *Wangala* of Meghalaya is categorized as a festival that marks the auspicious onset of the harvest season. The chief deity who is revered with great devotion during this magnanimous festival is the Sun God of fertility, *Saljong*. Another major event that signifies *Wangala* is the commencement of the bone-chilling winter season. *Wangala* also epitomizes the termination of a grueling tenure of devoted hard work. *Wangala* in Meghalaya is also bestowed with another name – 100 drums festivals. Traditionally, *Wangala* continues for a span of two days but occasionally it can also extend to even a whole week.

2.8.2. Shad Suk Mynsiem

Shad Suk Mynsiem literally means 'The Dance of Joyful Heart' if roughly translated. The Khasis constitute the main community of people who take part in this delectable festival. *Shad Suk Mynsiem* of Meghalaya is principally celebrated in the months of April every year. The magniloquent knoll infested locale of Shillong hosts this so-called 'Dance of Contentment'. *Shad Suk Mynsiem* in Meghalaya is characterized by the locals who perform a dance of gratitude to mark the onset of the sowing season and

bid farewell to the harvest season. The *Shad Suk Mynsiem* festival of Meghalaya is celebrated over a period of three days. The female performers draped in orthodox garbs accompanied by the men equally well-dressed execute the *Shad Suk Mynsiem* dance with utmost sincerity and dedication. To add a distinctive flavor of jubilation and elation, drums, flutes and pipes known as *Tangmuri* are also played.

The *Shad Suk Mynsiem* in Meghalaya has another significance in terms of tradition. The eternal fertility cult is represented through this celebration. The women play the part of dual carriers of seed and fruits whereas the men act as the harvesters. All in all, this festival is marked by the contending feeling of thankfulness and appreciation and holds a special position in the hearts of the Khasis of Meghalaya.

2.8.3. Beh-dien-khlam

The state of Meghalaya is blessed with numerous intriguing and fabulous festivals, among which *Beh-dien-khlam* is truly an exquisite one. Being celebrated in the month of June through to the month of July, *Beh-dien-khlam* of Meghalaya is chiefly feted by the people of the Pnar community. Being one of the most sacred and spiritual festivities of Meghalaya, *Beh-dien-khlam* signals the end of the sowing period. The individuals of the Jaintia tribes play the role of the hosts on this dance festival.

Alike majority of the festivals of Meghalaya, *Beh-dien-khlam* also shares an integral bond with farming as it is celebrated to recite conjurations addressing the almighty in order to achieve a mega harvest. The one most significant characteristic that demarcates *Beh-dien-khlam* festival of Meghalaya from others is the fact that the women are barred from taking part in this holy dance. The sole reason behind this is that they remain engaged in the preparation of delicious food that would be put before their ancestors as a tribute.

Although, *Beh-dien-khlam* in Meghalaya is celebrated in many locations, but the celebrations at Jowai is indeed something to watch. The chief or *Dalloi* is the supreme coordinator as he conducts the entire ceremony. The men bang the roofs of the various

houses in the area in order to chase away evil spirits and cursed ailments and purify the whole area.

The culmination point of this humongous event is marked by two gangs of men engaged in brutal conflict to obtain an undressed beam. Eventually, this tug-of-war descends into a dirty ditch designated as *Wah-eit-nar*. On the third and ultimate day of this three-daylong event, the whole community assembles at a venue called *Aitnar* and shakes their legs to the enchanting tunes of musical instruments like drums. Other highlights of this event are stupendous ornamented structures called *rots* and posts made from wood known as *khnongs* that descend into a pool of emerald blue water. A replica of soccer called *Dad-Lawakor* is played at *Mynthong*.

Apart from these are many festivals which are celebrated with a lower note they are: (1) *Doregatadance* festival, (2) *Pomelo* dance festival, (3) *Nongkrem* dance, (4) *Lahoo* dance festival, (5) *Shad Beh Sier*, (6) *Umsan Nongkharai*, etc.

2.9. RELIGIOUS AFFINITY

Meghalaya is one of three states of the Indian Union having Christianity as major religion with 74.59 per cent of the population; the other two, Mizoram and Nagaland are also in the northeast of India. Hinduism is the next sizeable faith in the region with 11.52 per cent of the population practicing it. A sizable minority, 8.70 per cent of the population, follow traditional indigenous religions as per the 2011 census. Muslims make up 4.39 per cent of the population, while Buddhism, Sikhism and Jainism make 0.33 per cent, 0.10 per cent, 0.02 per cent respectively. Religion in Meghalaya is closely related to ethnicity. Close to 90 per cent of the Garo and nearly 80 per cent of the Khasi are Christians, while more than 97 per cent of the Hajong, 98.53 per cent of the Koch are Hindus. Unlike the Garo, a significant number of the Khasi still follow their original religion of Niam Shnong/Niamtre (Census 2011 refers to it as Niam Khasi). Out of the 11,23,490 Khasis, 2,02,978 follow the indigenous religion. About 17,641 of the Khasi are Hindus and 2,977 are Muslims. A number of minor tribes live in Meghalaya, including Hajong (31,381 – 97.23 Hindu), Koch (21,381 – 98.53 per cent Hindu), Rabha (28,153 –

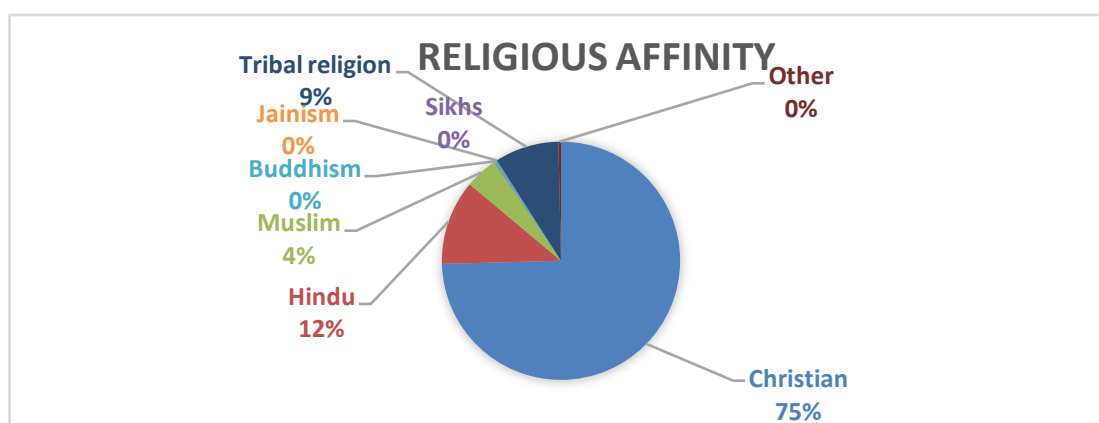
94.60 per cent Hindu), Mikir (11,399 – 52 per cent Christian and 30 per cent Hindu), and Kuki-Chin/Zomi (10,085 – 73 per cent Christian and 26 per cent Hindu). While analyzing the ethnicity of the people of Meghalaya one can find that 34 per cent of people are Khasis, 30.5 per cent are Garos, 18.5 per cent are Jaintias. Banglasis form 8.5 per cent of population while Nepalis constitute 5 per cent of the population (www.censusindia.gov.in retrieved on 15/6/14).

Table 2.2

Religious Affinity of the People of Meghalaya

Sl. No.	Religion	percentage
01	Christian	74.54%
02	Hindu	11.52%
03	Muslim	4.39%
04	Sikhs	0.10%
05	Buddhism	0.33%
06	Jainism	0.02%
07	Tribal religion	8.70%
05	Other	0.35%

Figure 2.4



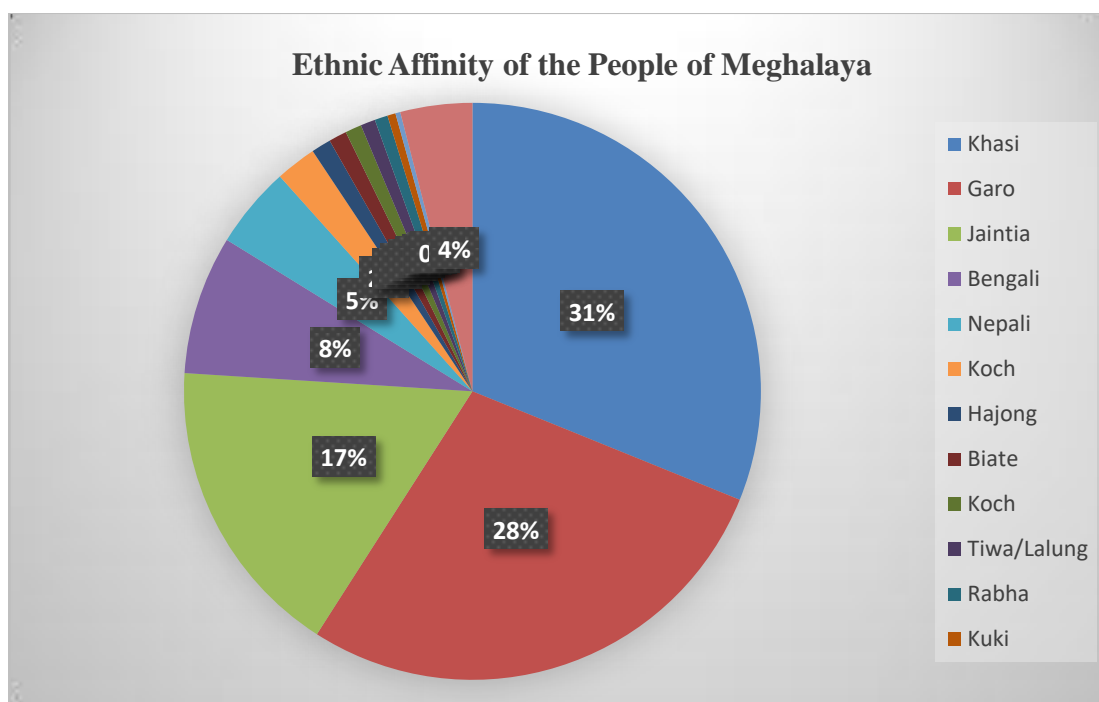
Censusindia.gov.in retrieved on 15/6/2014

Table 2.3

Ethnic Affinity of the People of Meghalaya

Sl. No.	Ethnicity	Percentage
01	Khasi	34%
02	Garo	30.5%
03	Jaintia	18.5%
03	Bengali	8.5%
04	Nepali	5%
05	Koch	2.5%
06	Hajong	1.2%
07	Biate	1.1%
08	Tiwa/Lalung	0.9%
09	Rabha	0.8%
10	Kuki	0.5%
11	Shaikh	0.3%
12	Others	4.4%

Figure 2.5



2.10. LANGUAGES

Khasi is one of the chief languages of Meghalaya. Khasi (also spelled Khasia, Khassee, Cossyah and Kyi) is a branch of the Mon-Khmer family of the Austro-Asiatic stock and according to 2011 census, Khasi is spoken by about 1,128,575 people residing in Meghalaya. Many words in the Khasi language have been borrowed from Indo-Aryan languages such as Nepali, Bengali and Assamese. Moreover, the Khasi language originally had no script of its own. The Khasi language is one of the very few surviving Mon-Khmer languages in India today. The Garo language has a close affinity with the Koch and Bodo languages. Garo, spoken by the majority of the population, is spoken in many dialects such as Abeng or Ambeng, Atong, Akawe (or Awe), Matchi Dual, Chibok, Chisak Megam or Lyngngam, Ruga, Gara-Ganching and Matabeng (www.westgarohills.gov.in retrieved on 18/07/2013).

Another is the Pnar language spoken by many people of the Jaintia Hills. The language is closely related to the standard Khasi language. The Pnar or Jaintia, language is spoken, along with Khasi, by the Khyntiam, Bhoi, Pnar and War tribal groups. Another is the Baite language spoken by many people of the Saipung Constituency Jaintia Hills. The language is closely related to the Baite of Dima Hasao, Assam Nepali is spoken in almost all parts of the state. English is spoken as a common language, enabling the ethnic and demographic groups to communicate with each other. In urban centers most of the people can speak in English; rural residents vary in their ability.

Table 2.4

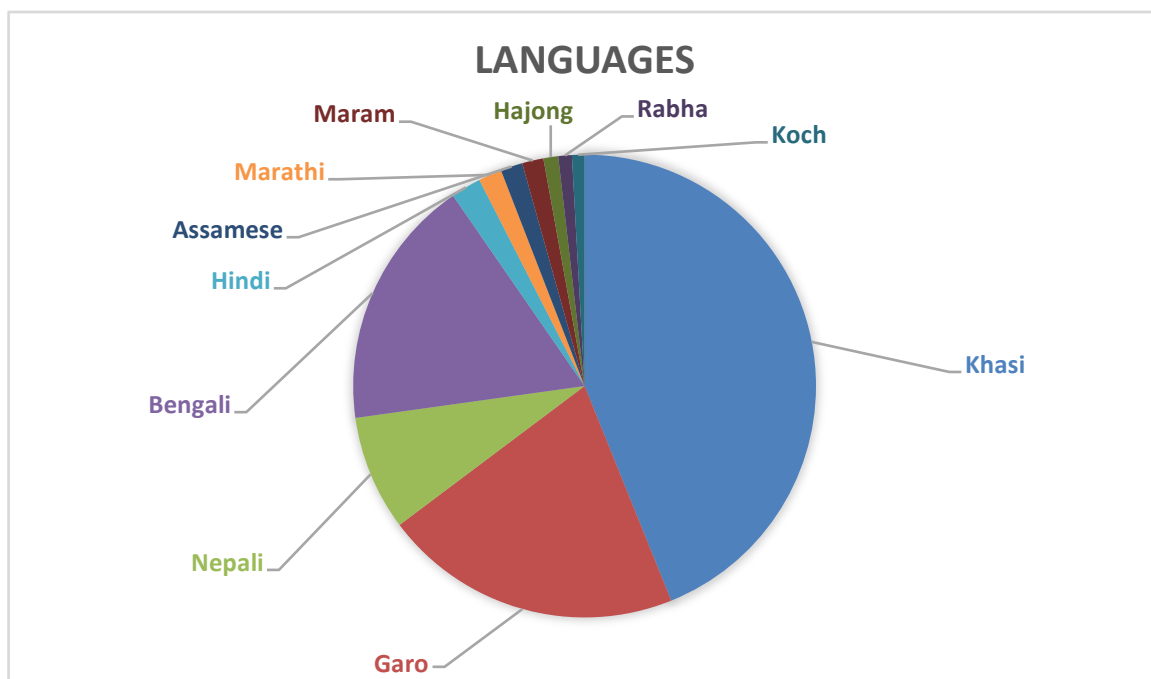
Languages in Meghalaya

Sl. No.	Language	Family	Percentage
01	Khasi	Austro-Asiatic	45.05%
02	Garo	Tibeto-Burman	21.41%
03	Nepali	Indo-Aryan	8.26%

04	Bengali	Indo-Aryan	18.04%
05	Hindi	Indo-Aryan	2.17%
06	Marathi	Indo-Aryan	1.67%
07	Assamese	Indo-Aryan	1.58%
08	Maram	Tibeto-Burman	1.53%
09	Hajong	Indo-Aryan	1.06%
10	Rabha	Tibeto-Burman	0.97%
11	Koch	Tibeto-Burman	0.90%

Census of India 2011

Figure 2.6



2.11. MEGHALAYA: THE PEOPLE

The people in Meghalaya are of Mongoloid origin consisting of Garos, Khasis and Pnars, who are matrilineal. In these tribal communities, women have the freedom to work freely for themselves. Though they do not have a say in the community matters but they enjoy great respect in their respective families. The society within Meghalaya also does not allow customs where bride has to pay the price for getting married which in other words is also referred to as dowry. Women are held high for they give birth to the new generation. But since they have to fulfill all their household duties, the men are responsible for regulating the family. Hence, the men make most of the decisions for the family though they might consult with the women in the household. The society around Meghalaya has some special rules regarding inheritance of property. Among the Khasis, the maternal property always goes to the youngest daughter, while the rest of her sisters would be provided with some portions from it during their parents' lifetime. While among the Garos, the children from birth belong to the mothers' family. Even the law of inheritance in the Meghalaya society describes the status of men and women. When a tribal chief is to retire or he dies, he is to be followed by the eldest son of his eldest sister. But if she does not have any son, then the chieftainship is followed by the eldest son of his next sister. Hence, it shows that women are held very high in family but in social activities it is the men who takes over everything.

The state of Meghalaya is inhabited by three major groups of people. The Pnar/Synteng in the east, the Khasis in the central and the Garos in the west of Meghalaya. The *Encyclopaedia of Indian States*(2010: 3) speaks that 'these tribes evolved out of the migration into north east by the migrants who belonged to the Indo-Chinese linguistic family, the Mon Khmer and Tibeto-Burman'. The Khasi and Jaintia tribes have the traits of Proto-Australoid Mon-Khmer ethnicity whereas the Garos have come from Bodo family of the Tibeto-Burman ethnicity. The Khasis along with the Pnars form a group named Khasi-Pnar. 'The groups living in the northern and southern part of the main central high land, section was known by the term of 'the Bhoi and War'. They are subdivided into many of clans' (*Encyclopaedia of Indian States*, 2010: 6). Apart from

these three matrilineal communities one could find Koch, Hajong, Dimasa, Hmar, Mikir, Lakhar, Kuki, Rabha, Nepali, and others.

Table2.5

Population, Sex Ratio, Literacy and Density

District	Area (Sq. km)	Population	Male	Female	Growth	Sex Ratio	Literacy	Densi ty
East Garo Hills	2603	317917	161223	156694	26.75	968	75.51	122
East Khasi Hills	2748	825922	410749	415173	24.68	1008	84.1	292
Jaintia Hills	3819	395124	196285	198839	31.34	1008	63.26	103
Ri-Bhoi	2448	258840	132531	126309	34.02	951	77.22	109
South Garo Hills	1887	142334	73170	69164	41.19	944	72.39	77
West Garo Hills	3677	643291	324159	319132	24.02	979	68.38	173
West Khasi hills	5247	383461	193715	189746	30.25	981	79.3	73
MEGHA LAYA	22429	2966889	149182 32	1475057	-	989	61.64	132

Census of India 2011

2.11.1. The Khasis

The Khasi community forms the highest number of souls in Meghalaya. According to the census 2011 over 1.41 million Khasi live in Meghalaya. The etymological analysis of the word, 'Khasi', gives most popular explanation. 'The word serves the dual function of indicating the ethnic group as well as the language used by them' (Maliekal, 2005: 19). The word Khasi derived from *Kha* and *Si*. *Kha* means born

and *Si* means ancient mother or the ancestor. Thus, Khasi literally means ‘born of a mother’.

It is generally considered by many Khasi sociologists that the Khasi tribe consists of seven sub-tribes, hence the title 'Children of the Seven Huts': Khyntiam, Pnar, Bhoi, War, Maram, Lyngngam, and Diko. The Khyntiam (or Nongphlang) inhabit the uplands of the East Khasi Hills District; the Pnar or Synteng live in the uplands of the Jaintia Hills. The Bhoi live in the lower hills to the north and north-east of the Khasi Hills and Jaintia Hills towards the Brahmaputra valley, a vast area now under Ri Bhoi District. The War, usually divided into War-Jaintia and War-Khyntiam in the south of the Khasi Hills, live on the steep southern slopes leading to Bangladesh. The Maram inhabit the uplands of the central parts of West Khasi Hills Districts. The Lyngngam people who inhabit the western part of the West Khasi Hills bordering the Garo Hills display linguistic and cultural characteristics which show influences from both the Khasis to their east and the Garo people to the west. The last sub-group completing the ‘seven huts’, are the Diko, an extinct group who once inhabited the lowlands of the West Khasi Hills, whose extinction still remains a mystery. (www.mapsofindia.com/meghalaya/history.html retrieved on 25/09/2018).

2.11.2. The Garos

Being located in the southern part of the Brahmaputra valley and south of Assam state, the Garo hills was always counted as an integral part of Assam till the formation of a state called Meghalaya on 21st January 1972. The Garos live in the five civil districts with a population of 8,62,473. ‘The Garos are also spread through the whole northeast India including Assam, Nagaland, Tripura, West Bengal, and in the Mymensingh District of Bangladesh. They live both in the hills and in the plains’ (Mappilarpambil 2015: 34). The main groups of the Garos are (i) Ambeng who inhabit the western area which includes Tura; (ii) Atong confined in the lower Simsang valley; (iii) Akawe who reside on the northeastern area of the district and extend into Goalpara and Kamrup districts; (iv) Matchi who settle on the central high lands on the upper reaches of Somang river; (v) Chibok on the upper Bhuri valley; (vi) Rugh at the lower Bhuri valley; (vii) Dual

close to Matchi on the upper reaches of Simsang; (viii) Chisak north of Matchi and Dual; (ix) Gara-Ganching who dwell on the mid-southeastern portion, west Atong; (x) Kotchu on the mid-eastern part; and (xi) Koch on the south-west (*Encyclopaedia of India, Meghalaya*, 1994: 72).

The Garo society is Matrilineal. Mother's clan is adopted by their children. Among the Garos, 'an heiress of the family property from any daughters at the house hold in which case she is married to one of her father's nephews. She is called *Nokna* and her husband is *Nokrom* (*Encyclopaedia of Northeast India*, 2007: 30). The social organizational terms are *Machong* (a clan), *Chatchi* (a group of clans), and *Mahari* (family). The *Nokna* and the members of her *Mahari* meet the issues related to the land. The *Mela-Salbongsa* (the traditional *Panchayat*) deals with disputes settle the issues with payment of fines.

Among the Garos there exists three types of marriages (i) love marriage, in which girl who propose a match to boys; (ii) the marriage by capture; and (iii) a formal or arranged marriage. A priest performs the ceremony, which is very simple, of a marriage. Maternal Uncle plays an important role during the marriage. Among the Garos mortuary rites are very important, elaborate and diverse. Usually they cremate their dead. The corpse is usually kept two to three days at an open *mechang* in the rear of the house for relatives and friends to show their love and respect. Their arrivals are announced by beating of gongs. After elaborated rituals and sacrifice the body is laid at an elevated pyre for cremation in the compound of the dead person. The charred bones are collected in an earthen ware and buried inside the ground and wooden shed is made to mark the ossuary. The post-funeral and purgatory rites begin with the removal of the shed which they make above the ossuary after six months of the burial. The Garos believe in the after world and re-birth of souls. They do believe in the transmigration of the soul as a state of reward and punishment (*Encyclopaedia of Northeast India*, 2007: 30-39).

2.11.3. The Pnar: The Studied People

Sir John Kerr (1928) in his address to the people of Jowai on 9th November, 1928 termed them ‘a race distinguished from other communities by time honoured political and social institutions which...they would be able to maintain unimpaired, irrespective for the feature of Government’ (*The Times of Assam*, 20.12.1928). Rev. Nicholas Roy (1928) one of the stalwarts of Meghalaya wrote ‘the district of Khasi and Jaintia Hills stands on a different footing from all other hill districts. It is not right to class this among the backward tracts’ (Singh, 1980: 9). However, the term Jaintia embraces a host of ethnic communities like Pnar, War, Bhoi, Lyngngam and so on. ‘The people residing in the central region of the Jaintia Hills are called “Pnars” by those living in the southern and northern region and who are in turn being called “Wars” and “Bhois” respectively by the Pnars. But all these collectively known by a generic term “Jaintia” or “Synteng”’. (Passah and Sarma 2002: xi). However, recently an opinion has been generated to establish that the Jaintias have a separate and distinct identity and are divided into six sub groups: the *Bhois*, the *Baite*, the *Hadem*, the *Lalung*, the *Pnar*, and the *War* (Sen, 2002: 88).

The history of the Pnar / Jaintia is shrouded in mystery. Firstly, it is suggested that the word *Jaintia* is derived from the shrine of Jayanti Devi or *Jainteswari*, an incarnation of the Hindu goddess Durga. Secondly, it could be ‘Aryanization’ of the original word *Synteng*. This word *Synteng* underwent morphological alterations in contact with Aryan culture and it became *Zaintain*, and then ‘Jaintia’. The word *Synteng* is the combination of two words like the Khasi, *syn* meaning children and *teng* meaning ‘ancestral mother’. Thus, *Synteng* means the ‘Children of Ancestral Mother’ (Bareh, 1997: 10; Maliekal, 2005: 20). However, historians find yet another theory which says that the name is derived via *Pnar* (the tribe of the rulers) from *Sutnga*, a former settlement; the myth of Jayanti Devi was probably created after the Hinduisation of the *Jaintia* kingdom. The people of the Jaintia Hills district of Meghalaya, especially the Pnars/ Jaintias and War speak Mon-Khmer languages that are related to Khasi (www.mapsofindia.com/meghalaya/history.html retrieved on 25/09/2018). Bordoloi (1991) says that the name *Synteng* originated from ‘*Sutunga*’ or ‘*Sutnga*’, the first royal dynasty of the Jaintia People.

2.11.3.1. The Pnar: Their Appearance

The Pnar of the Jaintia Hills Districts of Meghalaya are hardworking labourers. The colour of their skin is usually brown varying from dark to a yellowish brown according to the locality. Gurdon opined that ‘the Syntengs of the Jaintia Hills are darker than the Khasi up landers. He gives a comprehensive narration about the physical features of the people of this hilly terrain. To him ‘their eyelids are somewhat obliquely set, but not as acutely as in the Chinese and some other Mongols. Jaws frequently are prognathous, mouth large, with sometimes thick lips, hair black, straight, and worn long, the hair of the people who adopt the old style being caught up in a knot at the back’ (Gurdon, 1906/2010: 3). He further speaks about the males, ‘it is quite the exception to see a beard, although the moustache is not infrequently worn’ (ibid).

2.11.3.2. History of the Jaintias

The history of Jaintias could be told and taught from one generation to the next only basing oneself heavily on the oral traditions. The historical evidence and the proofs for their origin seems to be scanty and insufficient. Thus, one could build up his / her arguments based on probabilities and possibilities. ‘With the inclusion of the oral tradition, the subjective element had kept on hunting the historians and proper care should be taken handling these sources and to corroborate them with other external secular sources’ (Lamare, 2005: 2). British administrators, who were posted in India out their curiosity and compulsion had written the monographs about the people where they were posted. P. R. T. Gurdon, a Superintendent of Ethnography in Assam, was the first person who took initiative to document the information about the Khasi / Pnar way back in 1903. Jaintia historian Lamare (2005: 3) has the opinion that:

“The Jaintias are one of the many tribal groups of northeast India who do not have a script of their own and for that matter any written history. Whatever little is known about them is being handed over by their ancestors orally right from the time immemorial. Though the people have stayed in this beautiful landscape, the history and origin of the Jaintias or *Pnars*... is shrouded with mystery. In fact, nothing is known about their ancestral land, their migration, before they came over to these hills”.

Stephen Fuchs in his famous work *The Races of North East India* kept the opinion that the 'Jaintias were the second inhabitants to have migrated into the northeastern region, the first being a Negrito race that was either exterminated by the later immigrants or assimilated by other ethnic groups' (Fuchs, 1990; Lamare, 2005: 4). G. P. Singh made a series of attempt to find the root of this tribe in the early literatures of the country like *Puranas*.

2.11.3.3. The Pauranic Tradition of the Pnar (Jaintias)

Many attempts were made by the scholars to draw references from the *Puranas* about the origin of the Pnar (Jaintias) which may be considered as the earliest available references. Mention is being made in this ancient text about the old kingdom of *Pragjyotisha* by Naraka the ruler of *Videha*. *Prajyotisha* as referred to is situated on the extreme eastern fringe of *Bharatvarsha*, and its earliest inhabitants were popularly known as the *Kiratas* ... *the Kiratas of Pragjyotisha* can be identified with the Khasis, Jaintias, Garos, and the Kacharis, ... and other neighbouring tribes of northeast India living during the time of *Naraka*. 'A fierce battle broke out between *Kirata* chief named *Ghataka* and *Naraka* and after inflicting a crushing defeat on the *Kiratas* and their chief beheaded, *Naraka* installed himself on the throne of *Prajyotisha* later known as *Kamarup*. During this period many of the *Kiratas* deserted the country and fled eastward. Some pushed back to the hills. The above reference does not give a clear picture and study about the Jaintias, except they were being brought within the collective term known as the *Kiratas* (Lamare, 2005: 4-5).

2.11.3.4. Migration to the Present Habitat

Pathak (1997), an eminent demographer writes that the origin of the tribe was located from the South Western Turkey. For him matrilineal people of Jaintia has some similarities with the Lukkan or Lycians people who were living along the river banks of Sianta, now known as Koca flowing into the Mediterranean Sea in South West Anatolia. He pointed out that Lukkans or Lycians apart from all other people continue practice of

naming themselves not after their father, but after their mothers. These people could be migrated to the present habitat after the Northern foreign invasion in Anatolia and Greek areas. Huge people due to this invasion fled by sea route to Egypt and Cyprus. The prominent groups that have migrated are Lukkans, who might have come and settled in the present habitat of Jaintia hills.

Another Scholar G. Paul says that the Jaintias are the original inhabitants of a state called 'T' Sin-tiang in China. This people were called 'T' Sin-tiang or 'T' Sin-tie'. In course of time they came to known as '*Synteng*' or '*Syntein*'. Gurdon (1903) gave the first systematic account about the Khasi people pointing out north as the direction from which they migrated and Sylhet as the terminus of their wandering from which they were ultimately driven back into their present hill fast nesses by the great flood after a more or less peaceful occupation of that district. Gurdon mentions about Shadwell, who considers they originally came into Assam from Burma through Patkai range, having followed the route of one of the Burmese invasions. Pakem (1977) a famous Jaintia Scholar writes:

“Many scholars opine that the Jaintias came from the East...the Burmese accounts indicated that the Jaintias could have come from the West...it was the early Mediterraneans... who gave the world the Austro-Asiatic speech. There were also accounts that the Mediterranean Dravidians passed through Assam to Indonesia. And finally, the relation between the Austro-Asiatic and the Sumerians have also been established... there has been local tradition about their coming from the region around the West Asia. The gist of this tradition is that from Mongolia the 'Seven Huts' went to Palestine from where a branch of Jewish tribe under a female line crossed over to Egypt and Ethiopia. From Africa they crossed the Red Sea into ancient Sumer and Akkad and ultimately to India. From the plains and the foothills of Northern India the tribe continued their eastward migration to South China. It is from here that they spread into various directions...one branch went to eastward the other to Burma where they were known as the Mons. The Mons had many similarities with Jaintias...from Burma they ultimately came to the present-day Jaintia Hills in the third century B.C. ...It is to be noted that racially the Jaintias came from the North as Mongoloids, linguistically from the east as Austro-Asiatics and culturally from the West as Proto-Austroloids or Turanians (Sen, 2017: 18).

2.11.3.5. Jaintia Kingdom

The Jaintia tribe being self-reliant lived in isolation for a very long period of time in the hills. Though their origin is obscure yet, the earliest references to the Jaintia kingdom were found in the inscription in the coins, copper plates and buildings of the Ahom Dynasty (www.mapsofindia.com/meghalaya/history.html retrieved on 14/08/218).

‘The Jaintia kingdom extended from the east of the Shillong Plateau of the present-day Meghalaya into the plains to the South and North to the Barak River Valley in Assam India’ (Sharma, 2014: 68). Though the Khasis had many kingdoms (principalities) the Jaintias had only one, the Chronicles of the Ahom, Koch and Kachari kings mentioned most prominently and most exclusively only *Rajas* of Jaintia and *Khairam (Khyrim)* (Chaudhury, 1978: 235). The capital of the Jaintia kingdom was Jaintiapur, which is now ruined and was located on the plains at the foot of the Jaintia Hills. Nartiang seems to be the summer capital of the Jaintia kingdom. Nothing much remains about the kingdom in Nartiang except may be the Durga temple and nearby megalith site. The whole of present Sylhet in Bangladesh was under the jurisdiction of the Jaintia kings. ‘After the 17th century invasion by the Kachari king Satrudaman, the Jaintia kingdom came under increasing Kachari and Ahom political influence. The Jaintia Kingdom was annexed by the British East India Company in 1835’ (Sharma, 2014: 69). The available names of the rulers of the Jaintia kingdom from 1500 A.D are:

Table 2.6

Jaintia Kings

No.	Name	Year
01	Prabhat Ray	1500-1516
02	Majha Gosain	1516-1532
03	Burha Prabat Ray	1532-1548
04	Bar Gosain	1548-1564
05	Bijay Manik	1564-1580
06	Pratap Ray	1580-1596
07	Dhan Manik	1596-1612
08	Jasa Manik	1612-1625

09	Sundar Ray	1625-1636
10	Choto Parbat Ray	1636-1647
11	Jasamanta Ray	1647-1660
12	Ban Singh	1660-1669
13	Pratap Singh	1669-1678
14	Lakshmi Narayan	1678-1694
15	Ram Singh I	1694-1708
16	Jaya Narayan	1708-1731
17	Bar Gosain	1731-1770
18	Chattra Singh	1770-1780
19	Bijay Narayan	1780-1790
20	Ram Singh II	1790-1832
21	Rajendra Singh	1832-1835

2.11.3.6. Jaintias under the British Rule

The first encounter of the British with the Jaintia occurred in 1774 when Major Henniker attacked them. Gurdon (1914: xvi) narrates that the first contact between the British and the inhabitants ... followed upon the acquisition by the East India Company, in consequence of the grant of the *Diwani* of Bengal in 1765 of the districts of Sylhet. The quarries in the position of the Jaintia kings were the main supplier of lime to the delta region of Bengal, but with the British the contact was not very smooth and they were attacked 1774. Subsequently, the Jaintias were increasingly isolated from the plains via a system of ports as well as via a regulation of 1774 (Gurdon, 1906/2010: xvii-xviii). After the conclusion of the First Anglo-Burmese War, the British allowed the Jaintia king his rule north of the Surma River. The kingdom was finally annexed on March 15, 1835.

The king was handed over his property in Sylhet along with the salary of Rs 500/-. The British administered the plains directly and the hill region indirectly via a system of fifteen *Dolois* and four *Sardars*.

2.12. THE JAINTIA HILL DISTRICTS

The district of Jaintia Hills is an integral part of the Jaintia kingdom, which is otherwise called Sutnga kingdom. In Jaintia kingdom the villages that were located in a particular region formed a single political unit. The villages of this political unit were termed *elakas*. The chief of each *elaka* was termed *Doloi*. He is elected from the senior population and could be expelled for his inefficiency or immorality. A collection of many *elakas* constituted a Jaintia *Syiemship* or a kingship. The chief of the kingdom of Jaintias was the *Raja*. The *Dolois* represented their respective people in the *Raja's Durbar*. The respective *Durbars* checked the power of the *Doloi* and the *Raja*. The *Durbar*, in turn, checked the government power. Initially, Jaintia Hills was called *Ka Ri Khadar Doloi* or 'the land of the twelve tribal chiefs'. Initially, in Jaintia Hills there were twelve *Dolois*, who ruled twelve separate *elakas*. The British abolished the *Syiem* office in the Jaintia kingdom of Meghalaya though they kept the concept of *Doloi* and village headman or *WahehChnong* unchanged. The British brought the entire Jaintia Hills and a few other Khasi Hills villages under one administrative system. These regions were directly ruled by the British. In 1972, after Meghalaya was declared a separate state, the Jaintia Hills and the Khasi Hills were put under the same administrative unit. In 1952, the concept of district council was introduced in these hilly regions. Consequently, both Jaintia Hills and Khasi Hills were given separate district councils, though they remained parts of the same state.

Table 2.7

Area	Population	Sub Division	Inhabited Villages	Uninhabited Villages	Towns	Police Station	Police Outposts	Community Development Blocks
3819	3,95,124	2	498	39	1	5	3	5

Jaintia Hills District

Census of India 2011

2.12.1. Topography

Jaintia Hills, being a component of the Meghalaya plateau, has its physiographical features almost similar to that of Khasi Hills. The only difference is that Jaintia Hills has comparably more flat topography with a mild gradient. The hills gently slope towards Brahmaputra valley of Assam in the north and overlook the gentle plains of Bangladesh in the South. The main elevation of the district ranges between 1050m to 1350m. In general, the whole district is full of rugged and undulating terrains with the exception of the deep gorges, steep precipice and narrow valleys carved out by the rivers of Umngot, Myntdu, Lukha, Myntang and a good number of other turbulent streams that drain out all over the district.

The Jaintia Hills is richly endowed with natural resources and rich flora and fauna. But gradually, the harmony and quintessence of this remarkable eco-system have been disturbed and degraded by various ecological and alike physical factors *viz.* unscientific mining operation, deforestation, *jhum* cultivation, soil erosion, etc. coupled with population pressure. However, with the moratorium recently imposed by the Supreme Court of India on the felling down of trees for commercial purposes such renewable forest resources are being replenished and the fading scenery is being rejuvenated and restored to its pristine glory and nature making the land fit for god to live in.

2.12.2. Demography of Jaintia Hill Districts

The population of both the districts, East and West Jaintia Hills, as per the 2011 census, is 3,95,124 out of which 1,96,285 are males and 1,98,839 are females. Out of the total population 3,95,124 about 3,66,694 are found in the rural areas of the districts while 28,430 are in the urban area called Jowai, the lone city in both the districts. The Jaintia Hill Districts, both East and West, have 61.64 percentage of the literacy with 87,371 male and 1,00,156 females are literates. It also has 1,317 scheduled caste individuals of which 784 are males and 733 are females. They form 0.33 percentage of the total population. While the Scheduled Tribal population is 3,76,099, which is 95.19 percentage of the total population, of which 1,85,866 are males and 1,90,233 are females. The density of population as per 2011 Census is 103 persons per one square kilometer and decadal population growth 2001-2011 is 96,016 Of which 46,394 are males and 49,622 are females.

Table2.8

Total Population

Total Rural Urban	Person Male Female	Total Population	Literates	Per cent Of Literates	Scheduled Castes	Scheduled Tribes
Total	Person	395124	187527	61.64	1317	376099
	Male	196285	87371	58.14	784	185866
	Female	198839	100156	65.06	533	190233
Rural	Person	366694	Percentage of literates			
	Male	182610			SC	ST
	Female	184084				
	Person	28430	Person		0.33	95.19

Urban	Male	13675	Male	0.40	94.69
	Female	14755	Female	0.27	95.67

The demographic figures depicting the occupational structure in the District according to 2011 census is 1,54,180 out of which 50,844 are cultivators, 35,766 are agricultural labourers, 2004 are workers in house industry and 65,566 are other workers. The total number of marginal workers is 43,563 of which 21,572 are males and 21,991 are females. There are 2,40,944 non-workers exist in Jaintia Hills. Among these non-workers 107,446 are males and 133,498 are females. The non-workers form 60.98 percent of the total population.

Table 2.9

Total Population, Main, Marginal, Total Workers and Non-Workers, 2011

Total/ Rural/ Urban	Person/ Male/ Female	Total Population	Main and Marginal Workers				Total Workers	Non- workers
			Cultivators	Agricultural Labourers	Workers in Household Industries	Other Workers		
	Person	395124	50844	32766	2004	65566	154180	240944
Total	Male	196285	30916	19315	849	37756	88839	107446
	Female	198839	19928	16451	1155	27807	65341	133498

Both the Jaintia Hill Districts have 537 villages of which 498 are inhabited and 39 are uninhabited. Jowai the only town in the both districts of Jaintia Hill districts accommodates 28,430 individuals with 13,675 males and 14,755 females. There are 65,679 households in both the districts. Along with the birth of the state in 1972 the first

district Jaintia Hill District was created later in the year 2012 it was divided and two East and West Jaintia Hills districts. Apart from these there are two administrative Civil Sub-divisions, and five Rural Development Blocks in the districts. They are Thadlaskein, Laskein, Amalaram, Khliehriat and Saipung.

Table 2.10

Details of the Five C and RD Blocks

Name of The District/CD Block/Town	Total Rural/Urban	Area In Km²	Headquarter	Total Number of Villages	Total Number of Inhabited Villages	Total Number of Uninhabited Villages
Jaintia Hills District	Total	3819.00	Jowai	537	498	39
	Rural	3811.00	-	537	498	39
	Urban	8.00	-	13	13	0
Thadlaskein C. D. Block	Total	904.60	Thadlaskein	133	124	9
	Rural	896.60	-	133	124	9
	Urban	8.00	Jowai	13	13	0
Laskein C. D. Block	Total	390.40	Laskein	100	87	13
	Rural	390.40	-	100	87	13
	Urban	00.00	-	-	-	-
Amalaram C. D. Block	Total	398.00	Amalaram	98	95	3
	Rural	398.00	-	98	96	3
	Urban	00.00	-	-	-	-
Khliehriat C. D. Block	Total	1280.00	Khliehriat	109	104	5
	Rural	1280.00	-	109	104	5

	Urban	00.00	-	-	-	
Saipung C. D. Block	Total	846.00	Saipung	97	88	9
	Rural	846.00	-	97	88	9
	Urban	00.00	-	-	-	-

Directorate of Census Operation Meghalaya 2011

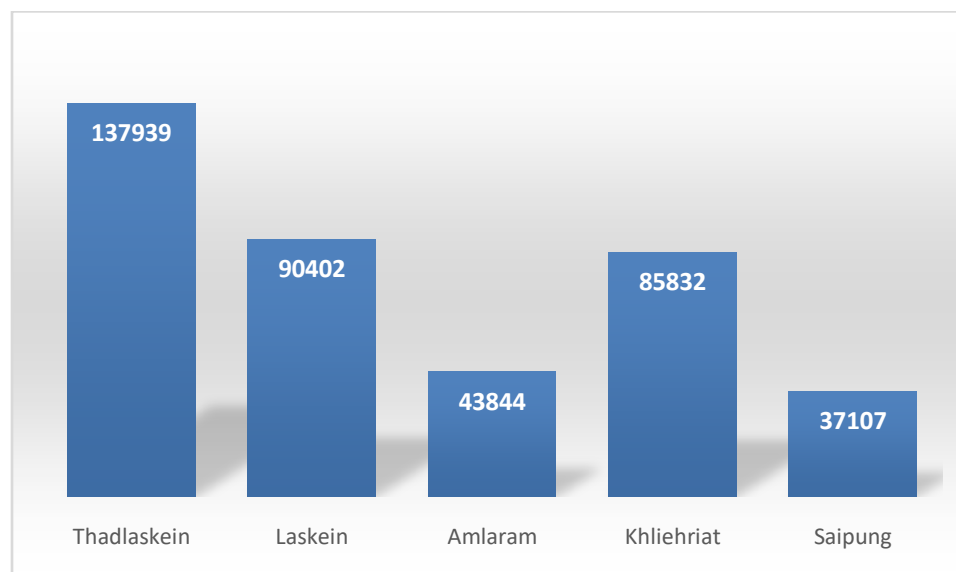
Out of the five C. D. Blocks Khliehriat is the biggest block with 1280 square kilometers while Laskein block has only 390 square kilometers. Thadlaskein, Saipung and Amalaram blocks occupies 896.60, 846, and 398 square kilometers respectively. Thadlaskein has 133 villages whereas Saipung block has only 97 households. Khliehriat, Amalaram, Saipung blocks accommodates 109, 98, and 97 respectively. Among the five blocks Thadlaskein is the most populated block with 1,37,939 inhabitants, of which 67,905 are males and 70,034 are females, whereas Saipung is with 37,107 inhabitants with 18,605 males and 18,502 females.

Table 2.11

Block Wise Population

District/Block	Area (Sq. Kms)	Population (2011 Census)		
		Persons	Male	Female
Jaintia Hills (Dist.)	3819	395124	196285	198839
Thadlaskein	904	137939	67905	70034
Laskein	390	90402	45244	45158
Amlaram	398	43844	21903	21941
Khliehriat	1280	85832	42628	43204
Saipung	846	37107	18605	18502

Figure 2.7

Block Wise Population**2.12.3. Elakas and Sardarships**

As said earlier the whole area of the Jaintia kingdom was divided into *Elakas*, which comprise several villages. Many villages together make a *Raid*, which is usually headed by the *Lyngdoh* (High Priest) of the community. While *Daloi* is in-charge of an *Elaka*, he is also the person representing the *Syiem* (king). Earlier Jaintia Hills was also known as *ka Ri Khadar Daloi* (the land of the twelve chieftains) because the kingdom was initially divided into twelve *Daloiship* in the pre-colonial period. After India attained its independence in 1947 the erstwhile Jaintia kingdom was made part of the United Khasi Jaintia Hills under the composite state of Assam. But during independence when the international border was demarcated a large part of the kingdom which lies in the plains was then handed over to East Pakistan and this includes Jaintiapur the famous winter capital of the Jaintia kingdom which is now part of Bangladesh. The size of the *Elaka* depends on the numbers of villages which are under its jurisdiction and the numbers of villages vary from one *Elaka* to another. For example, Maskut which is the smallest *Elaka* has only few villages under its *raid* and Raliang the largest *Elaka* is so

huge that the *Daloi* has to appoint a *Pator*, his subordinate, to look after one region which is called Sumer *Patorship*.

The entire Jaintia Hills District was divided into *Elakas* and the *Daloi* was elected from each *Elaka* except for Saipung which was predominantly occupied by the Biates / Beates and the Hmar. The election to the *Doloiship* is conducted by the Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council after the demise of every *Daloi*. So *Daloi* is elected for life. In the case of Saipung the villages are represented at the District Council by the *Sardar*. While the *Daloi* is elected by male adults of the *Elaka*, the office of *Sardarship* rotates amongst the five clans '*Namrnaga kea dewan*' every five years each clan nominates a male member of the clan to be a *Sardar*. (www.theshillongtimes.com retrieved on 14/10/2017). Jaintia Hills Districts, both East and West, comprises one *Sardarship* and 18 *Elakas*. The names of *Elakas* are: Nartiang, Nangjingi, Nongbah, Raliang, Chiliang-Myntang, Changpung, Mynso, Sutnga, Nongkhlieh, Lakadong, Rymbai, Narpuh, Jowai, Amwi, Nongtalang, Satpator Darrang, and Maskut. The only *Sardarship* is Saipung *Sardarship* (Lamare, 2005: 130).

2.12.4. Climate and Monsoon

The general geological formation of the district is characterized by the presence of rocks belonging to the age group of Achaean and Tertiary. The plateau is composed of granites, phyllite, genesis, sandstone and limestone. This is more or less identical with the other parts of Meghalaya plateau. Although Jaintia Hills is enjoying a remarkably pleasant climate, yet rainfall profile is very high during the south-west monsoon, which usually starts from the middle of May and declines towards the last part of September. The intensity of rainfall in the district during the last few years has registered a rising trend, due to the untimely vagary of monsoon coupled by the existence of fogs, mists and nimbus clouds which loom large during the rainy season, the indiscriminate felling down of trees, *jhum*cultivation, unscientific extraction of coal and other ecology degrading factors. This phenomenon has brought about high percolation rate which resulted in soil erosion.

Table 2.12

Climate: Maximum and Minimum Temperature of the District, 2015
(In Degree Celsius)

Month	Shillong (State capital)		Jowai (HQ of WJH)		Khliehriat (HQ of EJH)	
	Max	Min	Max	Min	Max	Min
January	13.84	9.23	14.18	13.17	14.6	13.57
February	11	10.1	14.39	13.49	15.51	14.54
March	19.26	14.68	18.8	17.68	18.21	18.17
April	N. A	N. A	N. A	N. A	N. A	N. A
May	19.3	15	21.17	20.08	21.69	20.04
June	24.5	19.2	21.66	20.95	21.55	20.94
July	19.03	15.08	22.38	21.69	21.63	21.11
August	21.01	18.46	24	20.01	21.27	20.76
September	24.06	19.03	25.14	19.34	22.27	21.03
October	23.51	17.03	25.07	17.04	23.04	21.78
November	17.28	16.28	22.38	13.09	18.04	16.91
December	17.24	8.53	18.02	8.84	N. A	N. A

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2.12.5. Natural Resources

The district is very rich in natural resources like coal, limestone, kaolin clay, etc. The heavy and long monsoon supports luxuriant forest of pine over the plateau and deciduous forest along its fringe areas against the plains. The intensity of deforestation has been reduced to a lesser degree and an appreciable extent with the judgment passed by the Supreme Court in December 1996 restricting the wanton felling down of trees for

business purposes. However, consumption of firewood being used as fuel for cooking purposes and *jhum* cultivation are still the principal causes of deforestation and environmental degradation which resulted in poor deliquescence, abnormal hygroscopicity, soil erosion, reduced soil fertility, etc. The district is enormously endowed with coal deposits particularly in Bapung, Lakadong, Chyrmang, Musiang Lamare, Sutnga, Iooksi, Rymbai, Byrwai, Jarain area and other places. The district is also endowed with rich limestone deposits in Lumshnong, Nongkhlieh, Sutnga, Lakadong, Syndai and Nongtalang areas which call for the generation of the export promotion schemes. Besides these, the district is also known for fireclay at Larnai. The fireclay is of good quality and is suitable for firebricks. Nodules and outcrops of Phosphorite minerals have also been traced out in the district. Extraction of all these minerals should be plan-oriented especially because they are the non-renewable resources. Jaintia Hills District has also a very good potential on usable water resources for hydroelectric projects. Presently, the proposal for Myntdu Lekha HE Project-I is already at the anvil. The Kupli Hydro Electric Project situated at the border of the Jaintia Hills with the North Cachar Hills District of Assam has already been commissioned.

Table 2.13

Production and Value of Minerals since 2001- 2015

Year	Coal		Limestone	
	Production (*000 MT)	Value (Rs in Crore)	Production (*000 MT)	Value (Rs in Crore)
2001-2002	5149.3	N. A	585	8.78
2002-2003	4405.9	N. A	641	9.62
2003-2004	5439.3	N. A	721.8	13.1
2004-2005	5345.2	N. A	655	12.19
2005-2006	5629.3	N. A	1044.2	16.75
2006-2007	5786.5	N. A	2132.7	35.3
2007-2008	6541.1	N. A	2153	32.87
2008-2009	5488.6	N. A	3875.9	85.82

2009-2010	5767	N. A	3881.1	91.19
2010-2011	6974.1	N. A	2667.7	N. A
2011-2012	7205.9	N. A	4825.8	N. A
2012-2013	5649	N. A	4543.7	N. A
2013-2014	5732	N. A	4364.9	N. A
2014-2015	2521	N. A	4345.5	N. A

Rural Urban Distribution of Population India Census of India 2011

2.12.6. Transport and Communication

The headquarters of the both the districts, Khliehriat of the East Jaintia Hills District and Jowai of the West Jaintia Hill District are well connected with the state capital Shillong and Silchar, the nearest Assam town by National Highway 44. All the five C and R. D. Blocks in these two districts have also been connected by roads. Metalled roads connect these Blocks through the National Highway 44. Recently the Jowai-Khliehriat-Malidor road was completed and opened for the public use. Another remarkable development in the field of transport is the declaration of the Jowai-Amlaram-Dwaki road as National Highway. Within the Blocks most of the villages are connected to each other either by *pucca* road or *kacha* road. Khliehriat, the headquarters of the East Jaintia Hill District, has grown into a township and Lad Rymbai (4.5 kms away from Khliehriat), another town growing faster than expected and is slowly merging with the Khliehriat town. The district headquarters are well connected with the Blocks and villages. The Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) has taken sufficient care to connect the people together. Private companies like Airtel, Jio, and Vodafone network facilities are available in most of the villages.

2.12.7. Education

As per 2011 census the Literacy rate of the Jaintia Hills District is 61.64 percentage. Male literacy rate is 58.14 per cent while the female literacy rate is 65.06 per cent. Due to the implementation of the *Sarva Shikshya Abhiyan* (SSA) in the district

progressive measures have taken to provide access to schooling facilities both at the Lower and Upper Primary stages even in the remote villages.

Table 2.14

Literacy Rate: Blockwise - 2011

Name of the Blocks	Total			Rural			Urban		
	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female
Thadlaskein	64.45	60.44	68.28	56.56	51.44	61.53	91.10	91.83	90.44
Laskein	57.40	50.37	64.37	57.40	50.37	64.37	N. A.	N. A.	N. A.
Saipung	57.12	55.52	58.73	57.12	55.52	58.73	N. A.	N. A.	N. A.
Amlarem	70.24	68.59	71.89	70.24	68.59	71.89	N. A.	N. A.	N. A.
Khliehriat	58.78	58.08	59.46	58.78	58.08	59.46	N. A.	N. A.	N. A.
Jaintia Districts (East and West)	61.64	58.14	65.06	59.05	55.29	62.75	91.10	91.83	90.44

Statistical Handbook Meghalaya 2017

While analyzing the data it is noticed that the lowest male literacy rate is in Laskein Block with 50.37 per cent, while the lowest female literacy rate is in Saipung Block with 58.73 per cent. According to 2014-15 statistics there are 1068 schools, of which 797 are only primary schools; 9 are primary with upper primary schools; 6 are with primary, upper primary and secondary standards; 240 are only upper primary schools; 5 with upper primary with secondary and higher secondary standards; 8 with upper primary and secondary standards; and 3 are with primary, upper primary, secondary and higher secondary standards.

RMSA (*Rashtriya Madhyamic Shiksha Abhiyan*) Scheme has also been implemented in the district in 2010-2011. As of now, only Government Secondary and

Higher Secondary Schools are covered under this scheme. Mid-day Meal scheme is also implemented in Government, Government aided and SSA schools. The benefits of the scheme are construction of kitchen shed, appointment of cook, provision of free food grains and cooking cost. The district has six Degree Level colleges, namely, Kiang Nangbah Government College, Nongtalang College, Thomas Jones Synod College, Shangpung College, Jaintia Eastern College, and St. Antony's College Extension, Byndihati. There is one Law College in the district, namely, Khat-ar-Doloi Law College, Jowai.

2.12.8. Villages in the Jaintia Hills Distirct

The villages in the Pnar habitation areas are very much similar to that of the Khasis and Wars of Meghalaya. They have well defined village boundaries and erect pillars or stones to mark where one village ends and where the other begins. Though they have definite village plan each one makes houses in their own land. There is no fixed number of households in the formation of any village. However, villages like Nongbah, Wahiajer, and Mihmyntdu have more than 1000 households. There are also villages with less than 10 households namely, Tangso (6), Umkboh (9), and Bambaitthol (9) of Saipung Block; Umlapher (7) of Khliehriat Block; Lumsohrmen (6), Amlamet (7), Wahrong (3), and Sohkhaphlang (7) of Amlaram Block; Pohriat (2), Shet Jahadem (4), and Myntang Tihwieh (3) of Laskein Block; and Umrakia (6) and Khlohriat (7) of Thadlaskein Block. Each village has their own common place *khloo chnong* (village jungle), *khlookyntang* (sacred grove), *lum jingtep* (cremation ground), *madan* (ground), etc. Each village has a lot of trees of Pine (*dienkseh*). One could find bamboo (*chikein*) groves, areca nut (*kwai*), betel leaves (*pati*) and other vegetation in the villages.

Many of the villages are connected with black coated roads and are maintained fairly well. Electricity reached in almost all the villages. According to the Meghalaya Energy Corporation Ltd, Shillong, out 6,839 villages 5,702 villages are connected with electricity by the year 2015-2016 that makes 88.28 percentage (*Statistical HandBookMeghalaya*, 2017: 102). Small tea shops, stationery shops with various provisions are integral part of every village.

2.12.9. Houses

People are mainly farmers. Agriculture being their main occupation, their houses are made mostly with tins. The household activities are centered around the hearth. People concentrate on house construction and repairing after the rainy season. Neighbouring householders come to help and they are offered either tea (*cha*), food (*jingbam*) or even alcohol (*kiad*) at the end of the work according to the financial capacity of the owner. Earlier the house walls were made with mattered bamboos and smeared mud and roof was thatched. Later it was replaced with tins, now one could see many *pucca* houses even in the remote villages. Most of the villages depend on supply water from the government; others collect it from the streams or from the ponds.

The houses have mainly three parts: (i) Drawing room (*kamra chongkai*), (ii) Bed room (*kamra thiah*), and (iii) Kitchen (*kamra chet*). They eat mostly in the kitchen (*kamra chet*). Only the affluent could afford to have houses with many rooms for various purposes. They keep the houses clean and Saturday (*Ka Sngi Sait That*), as the name indicates, is day for washing the cloths and cleaning the house and household things. Many houses have a store room for keeping grains, agricultural tools and other equipment. Those who can afford, rear animals like cows, goats, pigs, etc.

2.12.10. Food

The staple food of the people of the Jaintias Hills is rice. They take meat almost regularly and pork is their delicacy. A special chutney called *thungtoh* is very dear to them. They grow vegetable for their use in the kitchen garden and some of them have fields and the extra part is sold in the weekly markets. The main products are chilly (*sohmynken*), ladies finger (*bhindi*), cabbage (*gobbi*), raddish (*muli*), ginger (*syin*), gourd (*klong*), pumpkin (*pathaw*), tomato (*sohsaw*), cucumber (*sohkiah*), etc. The indigenous food habits of Pnars have changed due to the impact of Hinduism. Many tribals who follow indigenous religion of *Niam Tre* abstain from taking beef and consider it as taboo.

Rice being the staple food for the Pnars, they like to consume it for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Apart from rice they boil and eat pulses, yam, maize, etc. They also make use of leafy vegetables, tender bamboo shoots boiled with good quantity of water and consumed with rice. They prefer to take boiled food especially vegetables without *masala*. However, one could see these days food mixed with *masalas* available in the market to add taste. They use all available meat items to consume like pork (*dohsniang*), mutton (*donblang*), beef (*dohmasi*), chicken (*dohsyiar*), (fish (*dakha*), egg (*pylleng*) dry fish (*kutung*), and varieties of worms like silkworm as their delicacies. It is noted that the poor consume their rice either with green chilly or onion due to the non-affordability to purchase meat, fish or egg. Yet, on market days (*Sngi yaw*) they buy at least one of the meat items to prepare a special dinner. Like the Khasis, the Pnar also ferment rice-beer and make spirit out of rice or millets by distillation. Rice-beer (*kiad lieh*) is used for every ceremonial and religious occasion.

The Pnar people are very fond of *jadoh*, a nourishing Biryani clone. It is prepared from pig head and is served with *dohkhleh* (pieced pork). Another important cuisine is *tpusein* (a steamed rice bread) which is bland in taste and it is taken with piping hot tea. The Pnar are famous for preparing *tungtoh* which is a pungent mix of fermented beans and spices that adds the flavor to the simplest meal or festive spread. Another traditional delicacy of the Pnar is *kha rallg* (dried fish) which is crispy in taste. *Kwai* which is similar to *tamul-pan* in Assam has a special social importance.

2.12.11. Costumes and Jewelry

The three major matrilineal tribes of Meghalaya have distinct dress-code and jewelry. Nevertheless, with the change of time the Pnarmales have adopted the western code of dress and leaving the women to continue the tradition of ethnic sartorial elegance. However, they use a head gear (*ryndia* for males), (*muka* for females) and a special chain of thick red coral beads (*paila*) on special occasions especially during religious ceremonies. The Pnar women wear a *sari* like long cloth called *thoh khyrwang* which is wrapped around the waist. It is worn with a matching sweater and an under-blouse, short-sleeved in the summer but available in long sleeves as well. These are worn with a long

cotton. These dresses are adorned with shiny gold highlights or with sequins or beads or with ornate embroidery. A long Assam *muga* silk cloth is tied round shoulders which flows down to the ankles. A Pnar woman covers her head with a head accessory which is a cloth-piece with checks called *kyrshah*. The men and women belonging to the Pnar tribe dress up in ostentatious and splendid costumes during festivals. The women adorn their costumes with silver and gold ornaments. A unique gold pendant is adorned by the women belonging to the tribe. Traditionally *ryndia khyrwang*, *ryndia saru*, *ryndia stem*, *ryndia tlemwere* worn by Pnar women. Men used to wear *sula*, *yuslein*, *patoi*, *dhara*, etc. Usually women wear gold and silver ornaments like *khaija*, *kpien ksar*, *sahkti*, *khadu*, *pansngiat* (*tiara*), etc. during ceremonial occasions.

2.12.12. Musical Instruments

They use different types of musical instruments like *duitara*, *sarong*, (both are stringed instruments), *ka nakra*, *padiah*, *katasa* (different types of drums), *marynken* (harp) *chuwiang*, *tangmuri* (flutes), etc. Pnars are music lovers and consider *ka duitara* as the ‘queen of music’. Their evenings are coloured with music and songs. Apart from the traditional instruments they modern instruments like guitar, casio, violin, and so on.

2.12.13. Pottery

The Pnar are famous for their pottery skills. They make special kinds of earthen containers (*maloi*) used to store food items and others, earthen tea pots (*tipot khyndew heh*) used for storing the prepared tea for serving purpose or simply for storing water, earthen mugs (*mokum*) used for drinking water.

2.13. ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

Agriculture is the major occupation in West Jaintia Hills District, in which about 70 per cent of the population depend primarily on agriculture for their livelihood. Rice

and maize are the major food crops grown throughout the district with appreciable improvement in yield. Wheat has been introduced recently and the result is quite encouraging. Potato, ginger, garlic and turmeric are some of the important cash crops of the district. The district is the native of the world famous turmeric *Lakadong* variety. On southern slopes, in warmer areas, particularly in Dwaki-Syndai area, plenty of arecanut and betel vines cultivation can be seen. Special emphasis is presently laid on the non-traditional crops like oilseeds (sesame, rapeseeds, mustard seeds, and soya bean), medicinal plants, orchids and commercial flowers. The district has a vast potential for developing horticulture due to agro-climatic conditions, which offer much scope for cultivation of temperate, sub-tropical and tropical fruits and vegetables. Orange, pine apple, banana, lemon, jackfruit and temperate fruits such as plums, pears and peaches are some of the important horticultural crops grown in the district. Apart from the above crops, the district has achieved good yield in the production of tomato, cabbage and cauliflower. Sericulture or silkworm rearing is an important occupation of the people, those living near forests.

2.13.1. Markets

Both East and West Jaintia Hills Districts have many weekly markets. In this market, most of the vendors are women. All kinds of articles, food items, clothing, hardware, electrical goods, medicines, agricultural implements, handicrafts, audio-video equipment etc. are available. Food items, vegetables and clothes are sold in large scale in these markets. Market days are arranged according to the *Iawmusiang* (Jowai market), which is the biggest market in the district located at the heart of Jowai town, now shifted to a new place called Iawthymmei. On market days educational institutions, especially the schools, are given half day holiday and many people irrespective of their age gather in the market. It looks like a *mela* with all sorts of playing materials, balloons flying in the air, vendors of fruits, flowers, eatables make the market day really colorful. Agricultural products are mainly sold and bought in the market. The details of weekly market have been discussed in chapter IV.

2.14. STUDIED VILLAGES IN JAINTIA HILL DISTRICTS

Jaintia Hills Districts both East and West have 498 inhabited villages. Some are very much exposed to the development, while others still lack basic facilities like road, water and electricity. For this study the researcher had taken six villages from three blocks, three from each district. While selecting the villages the researcher kept in mind the following points: (i) the proximity to the access to development, (ii) religious affinity, (iii) households, (iv) educational qualification of the people, and (v) occupational practice to get a comprehensive information about the tribe and their identity and transition. Villages namely Mynso A, Iongshiwiat, and Nongkhyllap falling under West Jaintia Hills District and Jarain, Mynkre, and Pynthorsale falling under East Jaintia Hills District were selected for detailed empirical understanding. In addition, places like Jowai, Nartiang, Brichyrnot, Lummyrli, and Lumshnong were also visited to collect information from learned people like elderly people, village administrative authorities, educated informants especially teachers, village council elders and so on. Each village has been described in detail covering parameters like occupied households, total population with breakup of male and female population, clan, literacy level, and occupation.

2.14.1. Mynso A

Mynso A is a village in Laskein Block in West Jaintia Hills District located at a distance of 15 kms towards East from the District headquarters of Jowai. The village accommodates 214 of which study is done on 80 households of one area (*Dong*), which is the home of 466 people, among them 227 (48.71 per cent) are males and 239 (51.28 per cent) are females. The village only accommodates the Pnar tribe. The average family size is 5.82. As per the administration records, the village number of Mynso is 279245. There are 29 clans in this village of which Sytem is represented by 128 individuals, being the most dominant clan of the village followed by Sungoh with 79 individuals and War with 66 individuals respectively.

Table 2.15

Demographic Profile of Mynso A Village

Mynso A		Population		
	Households (Dong A)	Person	Male	Female
	80	466 (100 %)	227 (48.72 %)	239 (51.28 %)

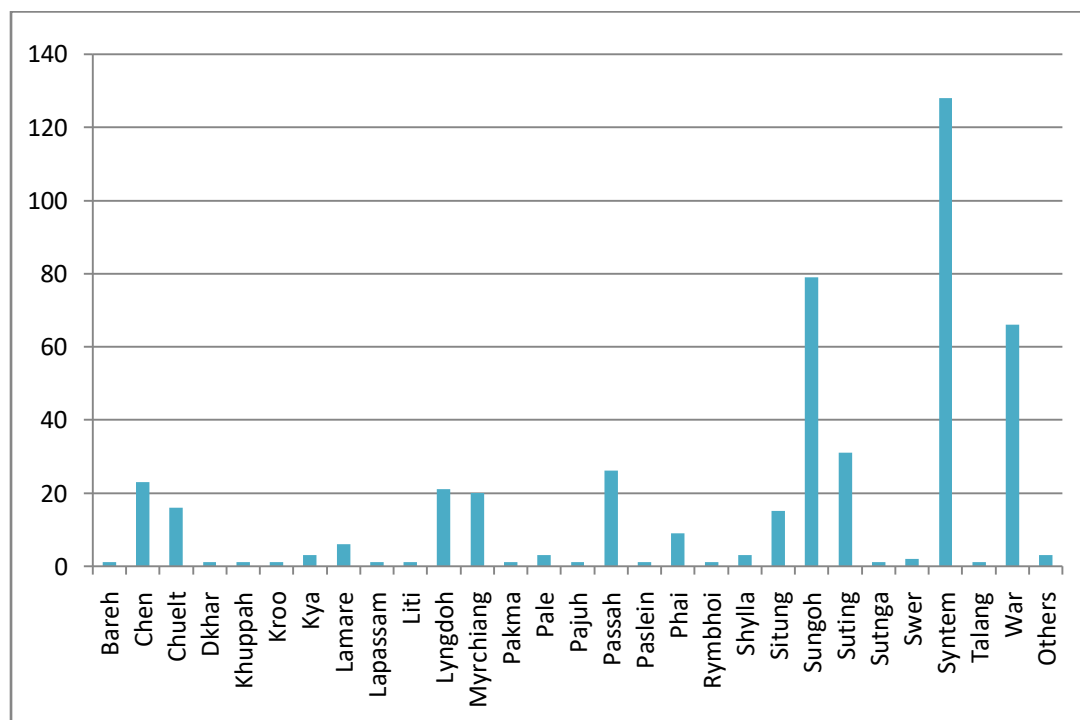
Table 2.16

Distribution of Clans in the Mynso A Village

Sl. No.	Clan name	Frequency
1.	Bareh	01
2.	Chen	23
3.	Chuelt	16
4.	Dkhar	01
5.	Khuppah	01
6.	Kroo	01
7.	Kya	03
8.	Lamare	06
9.	Lapassam	01
10.	Liti	01
11.	Lyngdoh	21

12.	Myrchiang	20
13.	Pakma	01
14.	Pale	03
15.	Pajuh	01
16.	Passah	26
17.	Paslein	01
18.	Phai	09
19.	Rymbhoi	01
20.	Shylla	03
21.	Situng	15
22.	Sungoh	79
23.	Suting	31
24.	Sutnga	01
25.	Swer	02
26.	Sytem	128
27.	Talang	01
28.	War	66
29.	Others	03
	Total	466

Figure 2.8

Distribution of Clans in the Mynso A Village**2.14.2. Jarain**

Jarain village is in the East Jaintia Hills District and in the Saipung C and R. D Block. It is 14 kilometers away from the district headquarters, Khliehriat. The village has 91 households accommodating 549 persons with 271 (49.36 per cent) males and 278 (50.63 per cent) females. The village only accommodates the Pnar tribe. This is the only village in the whole of Narpuh *Elaka* that follows the traditional indigenous religion (*Niam Tre*). Placed in rural region of East Jaintia Hills district of Meghalaya, it is one among the 97 villages of Saipung Block of East Jaintia Hills district. As per the administration records, the village number of Jarain is 279522. The average family size is 6.

Many villagers are involved in the coaling mining and transport work. Cultivators and agricultural workers are very few in the village. Though they have agricultural fields they grow mainly seasonal crops and vegetable both for consumption and for sale but these are in a very small scale. Jarain village is surrounded by two big villages namely Tluh and Latyrke. Tluh has 132 households where are Latyrke has 177 households. Though they have tremendous influences from these two villages to change over to the Christian faith they still adhere to their traditional indigenous religion of *Niam Tre*. In total there are 23 clans, of which five clans are the dominant clans of the village, the individual share being Pala (97), Malang (92), Lamare (84), Dkhar (73), and Paslein (58) respectively.

Table 2.17

Demographic Profile of Jarain Village

	Households	Population		
		Person	Male	Female
Jarain	91	549 (100 %)	271 (49.36 %)	278 (50.64 %)

Table 2.18

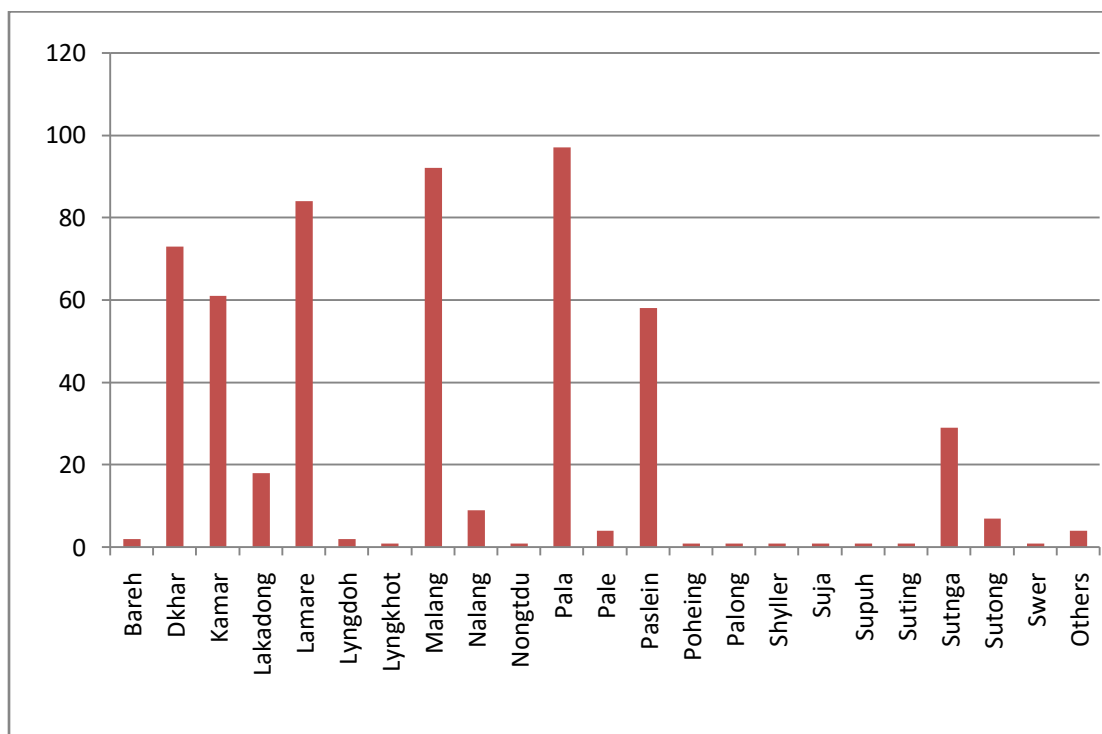
Distribution of Clans in the Jarain Village

Sl. No.	Clan name	Frequency
1.	Bareh	02
2.	Dkhar	73

3.	Kamar	61
4.	Lakadong	18
5.	Lamare	84
6.	Lyngdoh	02
7.	Lyngkhot	01
8.	Malang	92
9.	Nalang	09
10.	Nongtdu	01
11.	Pala	97
12.	Pale	04
13.	Paslein	58
14.	Poheing	01
15.	Palong	01
16.	Shyller	01
17.	Suja	01
18.	Supuh	01
19.	Suting	01
20.	Sutnga	29
21.	Sutong	07
22.	Swer	01
23.	Others	04
Total		549

Figure 2.9

Distribution of Clans in the Jarain Village



2.14.3. Mynkre

Mynkre is a village situated in the East Jaintia Hills District and under the Narpuh *Elaka*. It is under the Khliehriat Block and is situated 20 kilometers away towards the east from the district headquarters. The National Highway 44 passes through this village. This village has 65 households with 363 individuals. Among them 182 (50.13 per cent) are males and 181 (49.87 per cent) are females.

It is located 22 kilometers towards east from District headquarters Khliehriat, and 62 kilometers from Jowai. Located in rural part of East Jaintia Hills District of Meghalaya, it is one among the 109 villages of Khliehriat Block of East Jaintia Hills district. As per the government records, the village code of Mynkre is 279453. The average family size is 5.58. There are in total 16 clans in this village, of which the dominant ones are Tlang (130), Dkhar (70), and Pala (44) respectively.

Table 2.19

Demographic Profile of Mynkre Village

	Households	Population		
		Person	Male	Female
Mynkre	65	363 (100 %)	182 (50.13 %)	181 (49.87 %)

Table 2.20

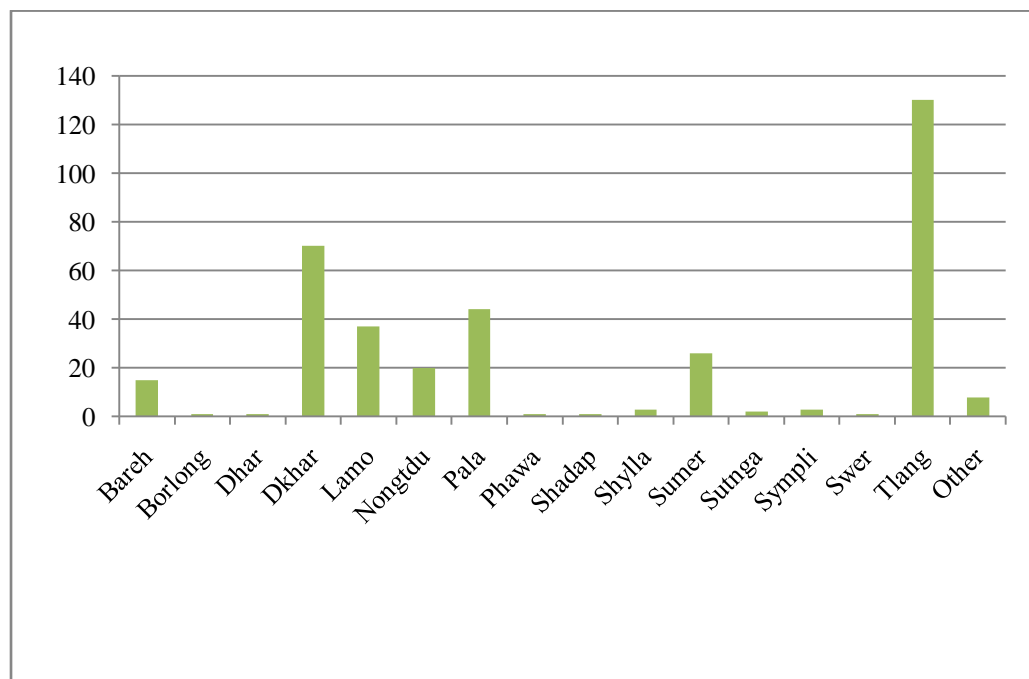
Distribution of Clans in the Mynkre Village

Sl. No.	Clan Name	Frequency
1.	Bareh	15
2.	Borlong	01
3.	Dhar	01
4.	Dkhar	70
5.	Lamo	37
6.	Nongtdu	20
7.	Pala	44
8.	Phawa	01
9.	Shadap	01
10.	Shylla	03
11.	Sumer	26
12.	Sutnga	02

13.	Sympli	03
14.	Swer	01
15.	Tlang	130
16.	Others	08
Total		363

Figure 2.10

Distribution of Clans in the Mynkre Village



2.14.4. Pynthorsale

Pynthorsale village is located in Khliehriat Block, East Jaintia Hills with total 102 households. It is surrounded by Jowai Block towards west, Saipung Block towards east, Laskein Block towards north and Amlaram Block towards south. The Pynthor village has population of 678 of which 353(52.06 per cent) are males while 325(47.94 per cent) are

females. The average family size is 6.64. As per the constitution of India and *Panchyati Raj Act*, Pynthor village is administrated by *Sarpanch* (Head of village) who is elected representative of the village. As per the administration records, the village number of Pynthor is 279396. In this village there are 10 clans of which the dominant ones are Phawa (406), Dkhar (186), and Sana (66) respectively. This is the biggest village under study where Phawa represents the maximum frequency for any clan group.

Table 2.21

Demographic Profile of Pynthorsale Village

	Households	Population		
		Person	Male	Female
Pynthorsale	102	678 (100 %)	353 (52.06 %)	325 (47.94 %)

Table 2.22

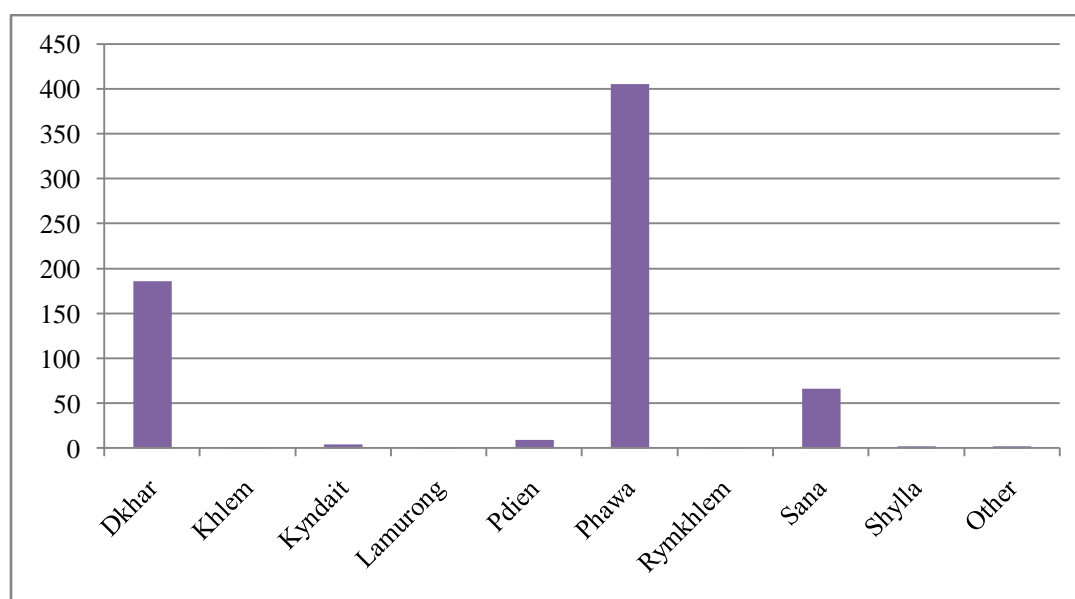
Distribution of Clans in the Pynthorsale Village

Sl. No.	Clan Name	Frequency
1.	Dkhar	186
2.	Khlem	01
3.	Kyndait	04
4.	Lamurong	01
5.	Pdien	09
6.	Phawa	406
7.	Rynkhlem	01

8.	Sana	66
9.	Shylla	02
10.	Others	02
Total		678

Figure 2.11

Distribution of Clans in the Pynthorsale Village



2.14.5. Nongkhyllep

Nongkhyllep is a village in Thadlaskein Block in West Jaintia Hills District located at a distance of 25 kms towards west from the district headquarters of Jowai. The village accommodates 16 households with 69 people, among them 39 (56.52 per cent) are males and 30 (43.47 per cent) are females. The average family size is 4.31. Being close to the monolithic garden at Nartiang, Nongkhyllep village is exposed not only to the traditional tribal religion but also experiences the influence of Hinduism on it. As per the administration records, the village number of Nongkhyllep is 279127. This is so far the

smallest village under study where 10 clans have been found mainly represented by Dhar with a frequency of 46.

Table 2.23

Demographic Profile of Nongkyllep Village

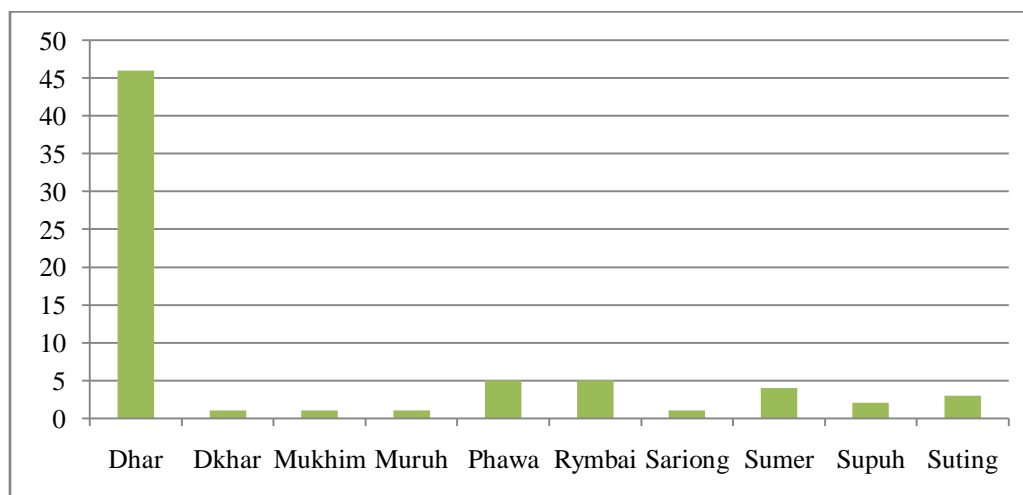
Nongkhylllep	Population			
	Households	Person	Male	Female
	16	69 (100 %)	39 (56.52 %)	30 (43.48 %)

Table 2.24

Distribution of Clans in the Nongkhylllep Village

Sl. No.	Clan name	Frequency
1.	Dhar	46
2.	Dkhar	01
3.	Mukhim	01
4.	Muruh	01
5.	Phawa	05
6.	Rymbai	05
7.	Sariong	01
8.	Sumer	04
9.	Supuh	02
10.	Suting	03
Total		69

Figure 2.12

Distribution of Clans in the Nongkhyllap Village**2.14.6. Iongshiwiati**

Iongshiwiati lies in Thadlaskein Block in West Jaintia Hills District located at a distance of 30 kms towards west from the district headquarters of Jowai. The village accommodates 53 households with 321 people, among which 162 (50.46 per cent) are males and 159 (49.53 per cent) are females. The average family size is 6.05. As per the administration records, the village number of Iongshiwiati is 279109. In this village there are 26 clans of which the dominant ones are Dhar (94), Suja (31), and Lyngdoh (20) respectively.

Table 2.25

Demographic Profile of Iongshiwiati Village

		Population		
		Person	Male	Female
Iongshiwiati	Households			
	53	321 (100 %)	162 (50.46%)	159 (49.54 %)

Table 2.26

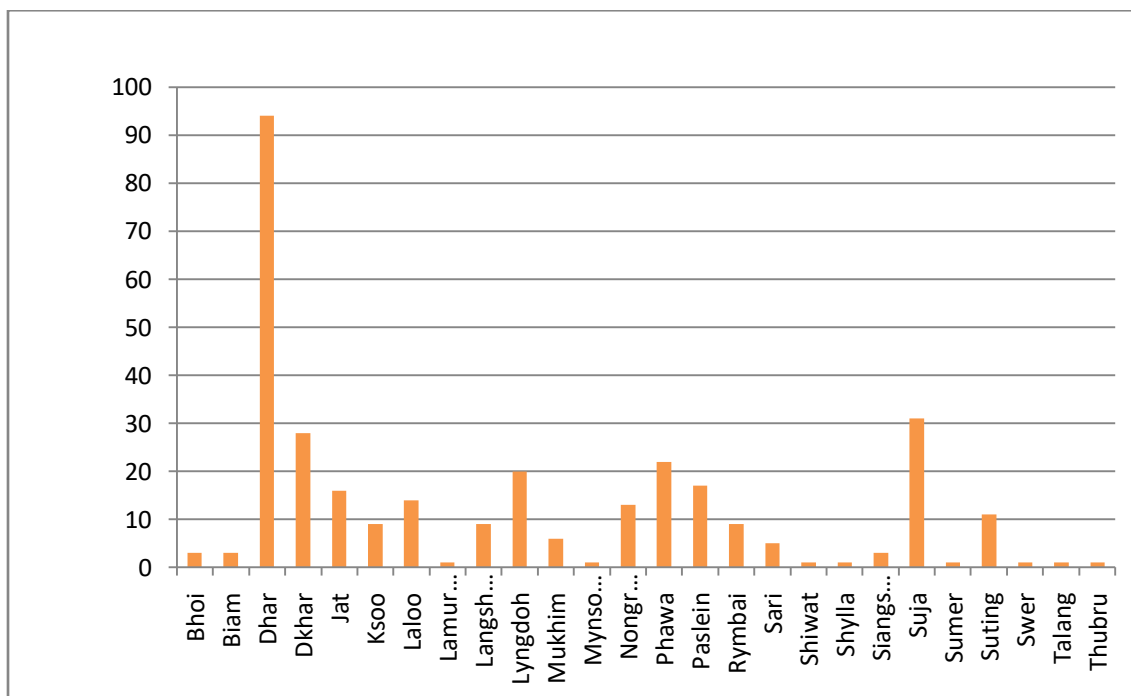
Distribution of Clans in the Iongshiwiat Village

Sl. No.	Clan name	Frequency
1.	Bhoi	03
2.	Biam	03
3.	Dhar	94
4.	Dkhar	28
5.	Jat	16
6.	Ksoo	09
7.	Laloo	14
8.	Lamurong	01
9.	Langshiang	09
10.	Lyngdoh	20
11.	Mukhim	06
12.	Mynsong	01
13.	Nongrum	13
14.	Phawa	22
15.	Paslein	17
16.	Rymbai	09
17.	Sari	05
18.	Shiwat	01
19.	Shylla	1
20.	Siangshai	03

21.	Suja	31
22.	Sumer	01
23.	Suting	11
24.	Swer	01
25.	Talang	01
26.	Thubru	01
Total		321

Figure 2.13

Distribution of Clans in the Iongshiwiat Village



The table 2.26 and figures 2.10, 2.11 and 2.12 project the summary of all the six villages with accommodation of 407 households comprising 2446 people with a male-

female break up of 1234 (50.44 per cent) and 1212 (49.56 per cent) respectively. The male to female ratio is almost equal with a minimal variation. However, villages namely Mynso and Jarain have more female population than the males. The rest four villages show the dominance of male population. The average family size of the entire six villages is 6.00. The data reveal that Pynthor is the biggest village with 102 households accommodating a population of 678 individuals. On the other side of the axis is Nongkhyllep village. Being the smallest village, it accommodates only 16 households comprising a population of only 69.

Table 2.27

Village Wise Total Household and Population

Sl.No.	Village Name	Household	Persons	Male	Female
1	Mynso	80	466	227	239
2	Jarain	91	549	271	278
3	Mynkre	65	363	182	181
4	Pynthorsale	102	678	353	325
5	Nongkhyllep	16	69	39	30
6	Iongshiwiat	53	321	162	159
Total		407	2446 (100 %)	1234 (50.44%)	1212 (49.56%)

Figure 2.14

Village Wise Household

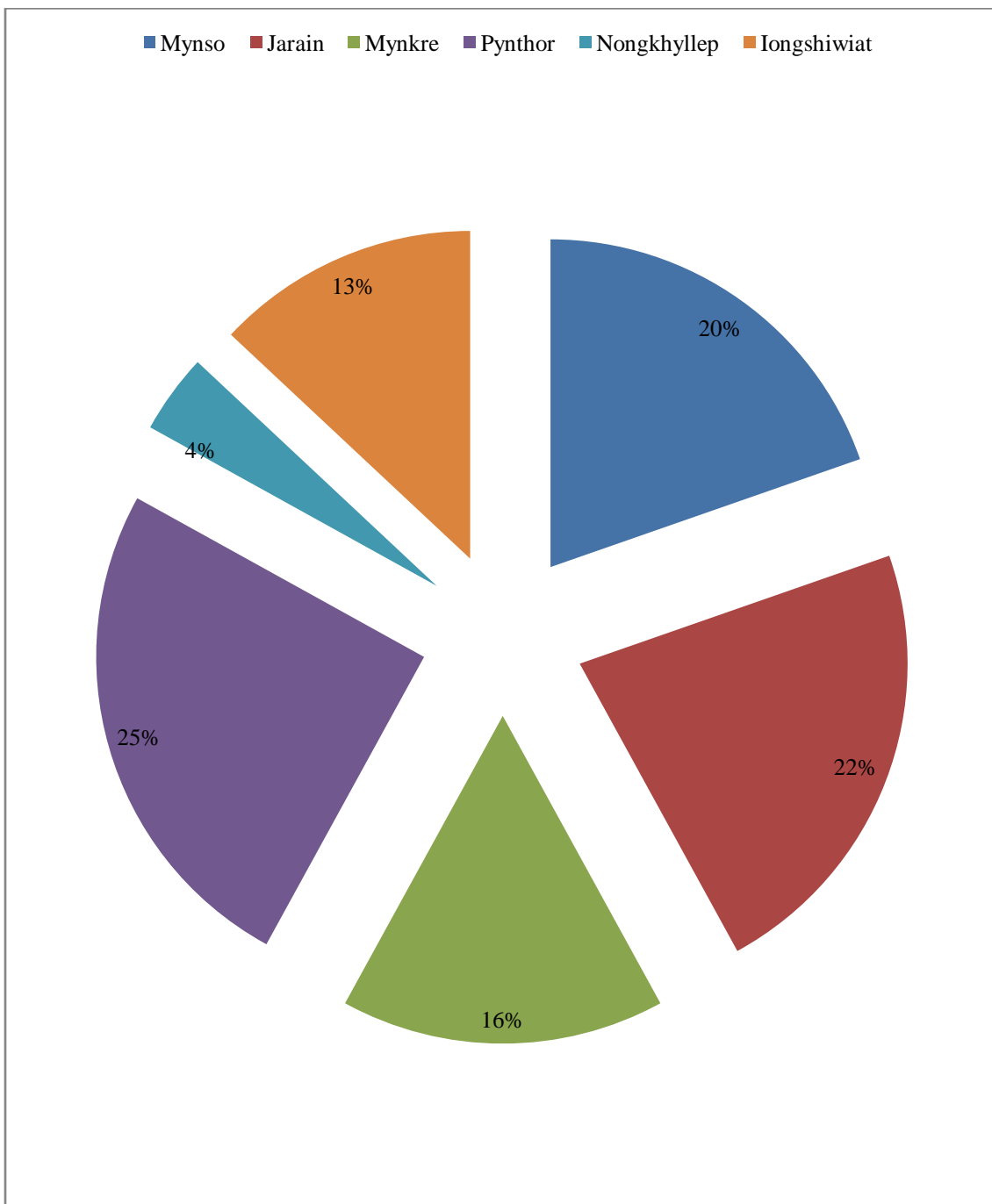


Figure 2.15

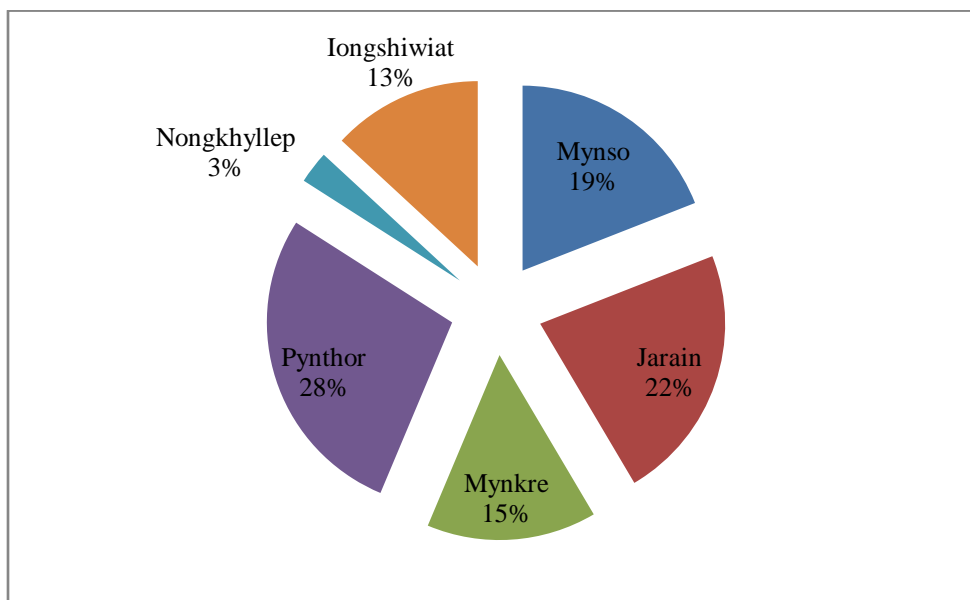
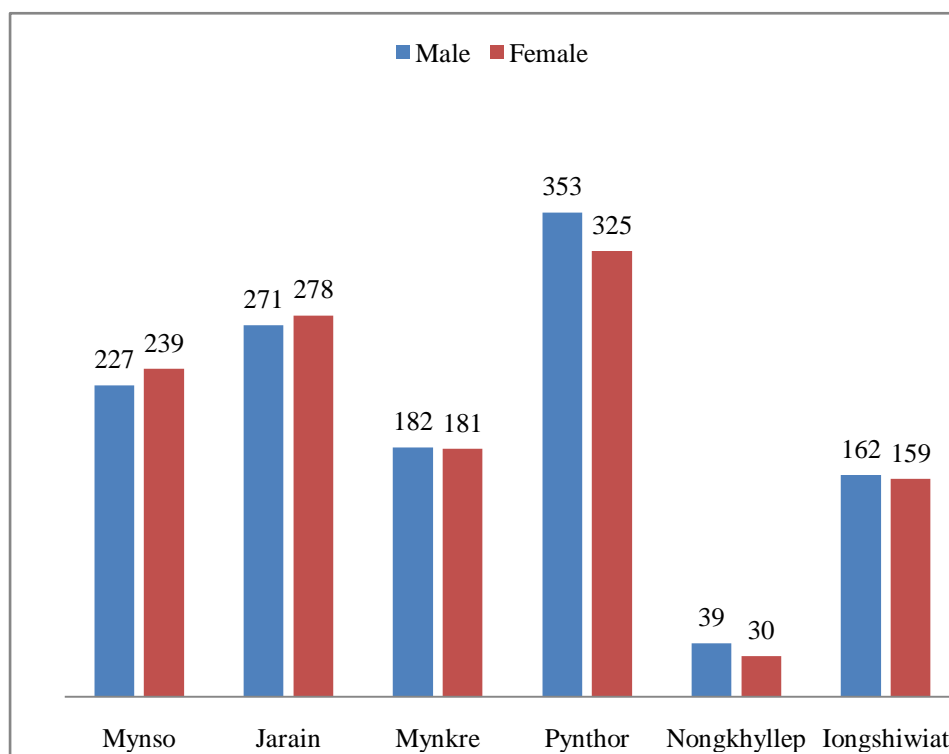
Village Wise Population Share

Figure 2.16

Village Wise Distribution of Sex

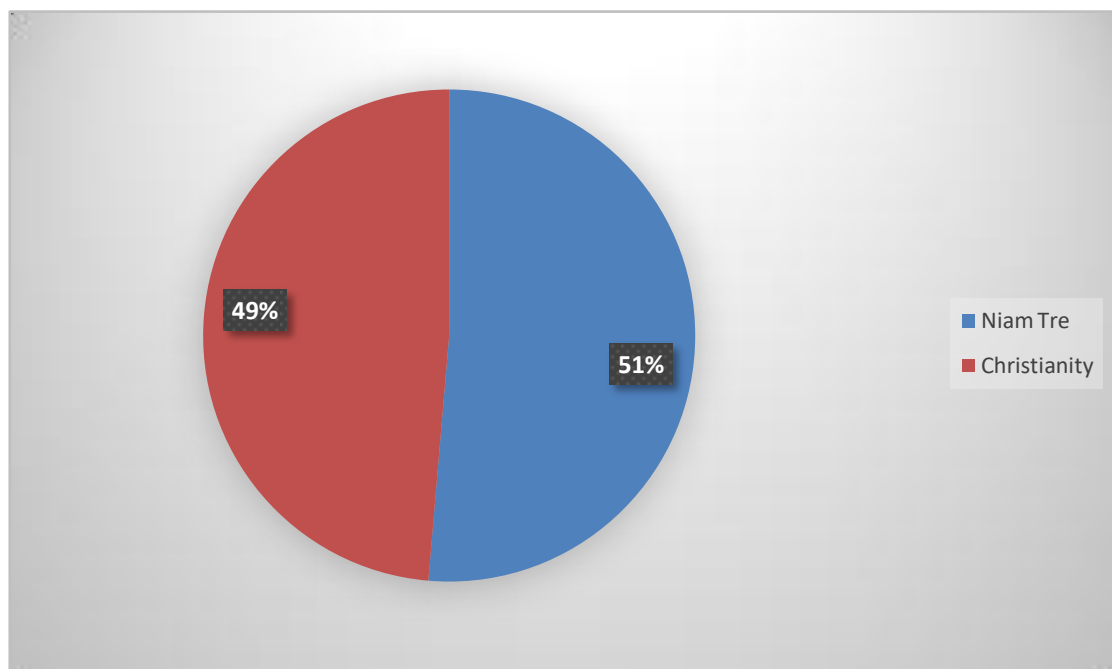
The table 2.27 and figure 2.13 depict the frequency of religious affiliation of the Pnar in terms of their traditional affiliation to the religion of *Niam Tre* and the adoption of Christianity equally shared by three villages each. In total 209 households belonging to Jarain, Pynthor and Nongkhyllap subscribe to *Niam Tre* religion, the aggregate population being 1296. On the other hand, three villages namely Mynso, Mynkre and Iongshiwiat have 198 households with an aggregate population of 1150 subscribing to Christianity of the Roman Catholic denomination. This leads one to understand that the studied villages comprise 51 per cent of *Niam Tre* followers and 49 per cent belonging to the faith of Christianity.

Table 2.28

Religious Affinity of the Population

Sl. No.	Religion	Village	Households	Total	Population	Total
1	<i>Niam Tre</i>	Jarain	91	209	549	1296
2		Pynthorsale	102		678	
3		Nongkhyllap	16		69	
4	Christianity	Mynso	80	198	466	1150
5		Mynkre	65		363	
6		Iongshiwiat	53		321	
Total				407		2446

Figure 2.17

Religious Affiliation

The table 2.28 and figure 2.14 depict the occupational pursuits of the villagers. It is evident from the table that a frequency of 1388 people representing 56.74 per cent of the total population of the six villages fall under the category of non-occupational group, referred to here as N. A. (not applicable) category, since this category is represented by infants, children, students, and both male and female aged population. The pie chart reflects about 15 per cent people are engaged in agricultural pursuits and 18 per cent people are engaged in labour work, both agricultural and industrial especially in the cement factory and coal mines. Women contribute a lot in the economic arena of the Pnar working hand in hand with the males. So only 5 per cent women have been seen as 'exclusive' homemaker. Only a marginal population of 3 per cent are involved in service sector, both in white collar jobs and otherwise, and only 2 per cent people are engaged in business, mostly of petty in nature. However, in all cases there have been a tendency of pursuing an occupation that fits within the ambit of the Pnar in the larger context of society, which in a way reflects strong sense of identity formation among them reflecting

a strong sense of ethnicity and group solidarity. This has helped the Pnar to build a society of their own with traditional affiliation and concomitant social relations.

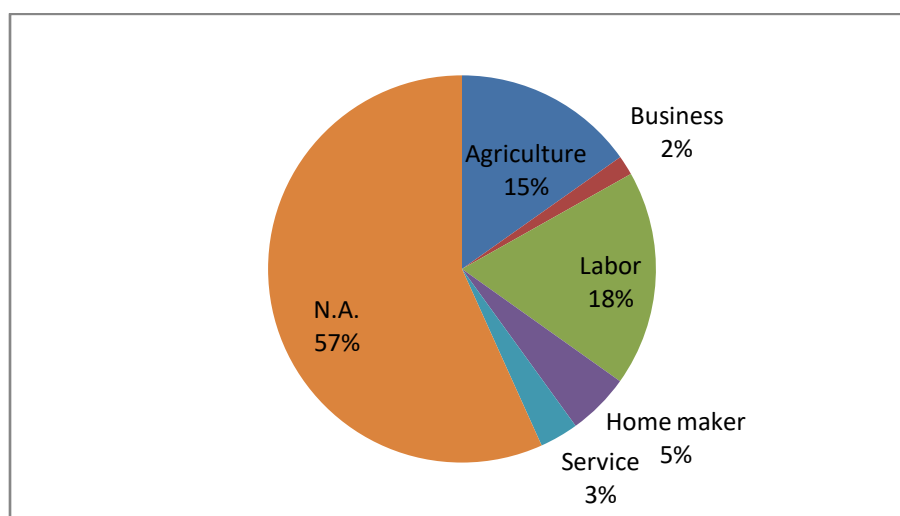
Table 2.29

Village Wise Distribution of Occupation

Sl. No.	Occupations	Mynso	Jarain	Mynkre	Pynt hor sale	Nongkhylllep	Iongshiwi at	Total
1	Agriculture	57	29	37	136	21	92	372
2	Business	04	25	07	04	00	00	40
3	Labor	115	134	56	130	03	02	440
4	Homemaker	06	29	14	20	07	51	127
5	Service	12	18	33	07	06	03	79
6	N.A.	272	314	216	381	32	173	1388
Total		466	549	363	678	69	321	2446

Figure 2.18

Distribution of Occupational Pursuits



The main intention of studying six villages that fall under two districts namely West Jaintia Hill district and East Jaintia Hill district located far from each other is to understand the nature and extent of identity formation and maintenance of ethnicity among the Pnar. Even at the face of social and cultural change, economic mobility and transformation and induction of development attributes at various degrees, it was seen that the Pnar though inhabiting at distant places are primarily bound to each other in terms of their ethnicity and Pnar identity despite the fact that there had been simultaneous practice of two different religions, one being their traditional religion of *Niam Tre* and the other being Christianity of the larger religious canopy. The economic attributes at varying levels of agriculture to labour and from service sector to trade and business could not create any dent in the proliferation of their religious practices which run parallel to each other and in the maintenance of their identity and ethnicity as the Pnar of Meghalaya.