

P.R. GURDON

THE
KHASIS

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THE KHASIS

BY

MAJOR P. R. T. GURDON, I.A.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER EASTERN BENGAL AND ASSAM
COMMISSION, AND SUPERINTENDENT OF
ETHNOGRAPHY IN ASSAM.



WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

SIR CHARLES LYALL, K.C.S.I.

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PREFACE.

THIS book is an attempt to give a systematic account of the Khasi people, their manners and customs, their ethnological affinities, their laws and institutions, their religious beliefs, their folk-lore, their theories as to their origin, and their language.

This account would perhaps have assumed a more elaborate and ambitious form were it not that the author has been able to give to it only the scanty leisure of a busy district officer. He has been somewhat hampered by the fact that his work forms part of a series of official publications issued at the expense of the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, and that it had to be completed within a prescribed period of time.

The author gladly takes this opportunity to record his grateful thanks to many kind friends who have helped him either with actual contributions to his material, or with not less valued suggestions and criticisms. The arrangement of the subjects discussed is due to Sir Bampfylde Fuller, lately Lieutenant-Governor of the Province, whose kindly interest in the Khasis will long be remembered by them with affectionate gratitude. The Introduction is from the accomplished pen of Sir Charles Lyall, to whom the author is also indebted for much other help and encou-

agement. It is now many years since Sir Charles Lyall served in Assam, but his continued regard for the Khasi people bears eloquent testimony to the attractiveness of their character, and to the charm which the homely beauty of their native hills exercises over the minds of all who have had the good fortune to know them.

To Mr. N. L. Hallward thanks are due for the revision of the proof sheets, and to the Revd. H. P. Knapton for the large share he took in the preparation of the index. The section dealing with folk-lore could hardly have been written but for the generosity of the Revd. Doctor Roberts, of the Welsh Calvinistic Mission in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, in placing at the author's disposal his collection of the legends current among the people. Many others have helped, but the following names may be specially mentioned, viz.: Mr. J. B. Shadwell, Mr. S. E. Rita, the Revd. C. H. Jenkins, Mr. C. Shadwell, Mr. Dohory Ropmay, U Hormu Roy Diengdoh, U Rai Mohan Diengdoh, U Job Solomon, U Suttra Singh Bordoloi, U San Mawthoh, U Hajam Kishore Singh, U Nissor Singh, and U Sabor Roy.

A bibliography of the Khasis, which the author has attempted to make as complete as possible, has been added. The coloured plates, with one exception, viz., that taken from a sketch by the late Colonel Woodthorpe, have been reproduced from the pictures of Miss Eirene Scott-O'Connor (Mrs. Philip Rogers). The reproductions are the work of Messrs. W. Griggs and Sons, as are also the monochromes from photographs by Mrs. Muriel, Messrs. Ghosal Brothers, and

the author. Lastly, the author wishes to express his thanks to Srijut Jagat Chandra Goswami, his painstaking assistant, for his care in arranging the author's somewhat voluminous records, and for his work generally in connection with this monograph.

P. R. G.

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INTRODUCTION.

IN 1903 Sir Bampfylde Fuller, then Chief Commissioner of Assam, proposed and the Government of India sanctioned, the preparation of a series of monographs on the more important tribes and castes of the Province, of which this volume is the first. They were to be undertaken by writers who had had special and intimate experience of the races to be described, the accounts of earlier observers being at the same time studied and incorporated ; a uniform scheme of treatment was laid down which was to be adhered to in each monograph, and certain limits of size were prescribed.

Major Gurdon, the author of the following pages, who is also, as Superintendent of Ethnography in Assam, editor of the whole series, has enjoyed a long and close acquaintance with the Khasi race, whose institutions he has here undertaken to describe. Thoroughly familiar with their language, he has for three years been in charge as Deputy-Commissioner of the district where they dwell, continually moving among them, and visiting every part of the beautiful region which is called by their name. The administration of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills is an exceptionally interesting field of official responsibility. About half of the district, including the country around the capital, Shillong, is outside the limits of British India, consisting of a collection of small states in political relations, regulated by treaty, with the Government of India, which enjoy

almost complete autonomy in the management of their local affairs. In the remainder, called the Jaintia Hills, which became British in 1835, it has been the wise policy of the Government to maintain the indigenous system of administration through officers named *dolois*, who preside over large areas of country with very little interference. All the British portion of the hills is what is called a "Scheduled District" under Acts XIV and XV of 1874, and legislation which may be inappropriate to the conditions of the people can be, and is, excluded from operation within it. In these circumstances the administration is carried on in a manner well calculated to win the confidence and attachment of the people, who have to bear few of the burdens which press upon the population elsewhere, and, with the peace and protection guaranteed by British rule, are able to develop their institutions upon indigenous lines. It is now more than forty years since any military operations have been necessary within the hills, and the advance of the district in prosperity and civilization during the last half-century has been very striking.

The first contact between the British and the inhabitants of the Khasi Hills followed upon the acquisition by the East India Company, in consequence of the grant of the *Diwānī* of Bengal in 1765, of the district of Sylhet. The Khasis were our neighbours on the north of that district, and to the north-east was the State of Jaintia,* ruled over by a chief of Khasi lineage, whose capital, Jaintiapur, was situated in the plain between the Surma river and the hills. Along this frontier the Khasis, though not averse from trade, and in possession of the quarries which furnished the chief

* The previous history of the Khasi State of Jaintia, so far as it can be traced, will be found related in Mr. E. A. Gait's *History of Assam* (1906), pp. 263-262.

supply of lime to deltaic Bengal, were also known as troublesome marauders, whose raids were a terror to the inhabitants of the plains. Captain R. B. Pemberton, in his Report on the Eastern Frontier (1835), mentions* an attack on Jaintia by a force under Major Henniker in 1774, supposed to have been made in retaliation for aggression by the Raja in Sylhet; and Robert Lindsay, who was Resident and Collector of Sylhet about 1778, has an interesting account of the hill tribes and the Raja of Jaintia in the lively narrative embodied in the "Lives of the Lindsays." † Lindsay, who made a large fortune by working the lime quarries and thus converting into cash the millions of cowries in which the land-revenue of Sylhet was paid, appears to have imagined that the Khasis, whom he calls "a tribe of independent Tartars," were in direct relations with China, and imported thence the silk cloths ‡ which they brought down for sale in the Sylhet markets. A line of forts was established along the foot of the hills to hold the mountaineers in check, and a Regulation, No. 1 of 1799, was passed declaring freedom of trade between them and Sylhet, but prohibiting the supply to them of arms and ammunition, and forbidding any one to pass the Company's frontier towards the hills with arms in his hands.

The outbreak of the first Burma War, in 1824, brought us into closer relations with the Raja of Jaintia, and in April of that year Mr. David Scott, the Governor-General's Agent on the frontier, marched through his territory from Sylhet to Assam, emerging at Raha on the Kalang river, in what is now the Nowgong district. This was the first occasion on which

* P. 211.

† Vol. iii., p. 163, 177, &c.

‡ These cloths, which Lindsay calls "*moongadutties*," were really the produce of Assam, and were *dhutis* or waist-cloths of *muga* silk.

Europeans had entered the hill territory of the Khasi tribes, and the account of the march, quoted in Pemberton's Report,* is the earliest authentic information which we possess of the institutions of the Khasi race. Dr. Buchanan-Hamilton, who spent several years at the beginning of the 19th Century in collecting information regarding the people of Eastern India, during which he lived for some time at Goalpara in the Brahmaputra Valley, confused the Khasis with the Garos, and his descriptions apply only to the latter people. The name Garo, however, is still used by the inhabitants of Kamrup in speaking of their Khasi neighbours to the South, and Hamilton only followed the local usage. In 1826 Mr. David Scott, after the expulsion of the Burmese from Assam and the occupation of that province by the Company, entered the Khasi Hills in order to negotiate for the construction of a road through the territory of the Khasi *Siem* or Chief of Nongkhlāw, which should unite Sylhet with Gauhati. A treaty was concluded with the chief, and the construction of the road began. At Cherrapunji Mr. Scott built for himself a house on the plateau which, two years later, was acquired from the *Siem* by exchange for land in the plains, as the site of a sanitarium.† Everything seemed to promise well, when the peace was suddenly broken by an attack made, in April 1829, by the people of Nongkhlāw on the survey party engaged in laying out the road, resulting in the massacre of two British officers and between fifty and sixty natives. This led to a general confederacy of

* Pp. 218-220. It appears from p. 219 that Mr. Scott's report is responsible for the erroneous statement (often repeated) that the mountaineers "called by us Cossyaks, denominate themselves Khyee." This second name is in fact the pronunciation current in Sylhet of the word *Khāsi*, *k* being substituted for *s*, and should be written *Khāhi*.

† In Mr. Scott's time it was usual to speak of such a place as a "Sanatory."

most of the neighbouring chiefs to resist the British, and a long and harassing war, which was not brought to a close till 1833. Cherrapunji then became the headquarters of the Sylhet Light Infantry, whose commandant was placed in political charge of the district, including the former dominions in the hills of the Raja of Jaintia, which he voluntarily relinquished in 1835 on the confiscation of his territory in the plains.

Cherrapunji, celebrated as the place which has the greatest measured rainfall on the globe, became a popular station, and the discovery of coal there, and at several other places in the hills, attracted to it many visitors, some of whom published accounts of the country and people. The first detailed description was apparently that of the Rev. W. Lish, a Baptist missionary, which appeared in a missionary journal in 1838. In 1840 Capt. Fisher, an officer of the Survey Department, published in the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal * an account which showed that the leading characteristics of the Khasi race had already been apprehended; he mentions the prevalence of matriarchy or mother-kinship, notes the absence of polyandry, except in so far as its place was taken by facile divorce, describes the religion as a worship of gods of valleys and hills, draws attention to the system of augury used to ascertain the will of the gods, and gives an account of the remarkable megalithic monuments which everywhere stud the higher plateaus. He also recognizes the fact that the Khasis as a race are totally distinct from the neighbouring hill tribes. In 1841 Mr. W. Robinson, Inspector of Schools in Assam, included an account of the Khasis in a volume on that province which was printed at Calcutta. In 1844 Lieut.

* Vol. ix., pp. 633 sqq.

Yule (afterwards Sir Henry Yule) published in the *Journal of the Bengal Asiatic Society* * a much more detailed description of the hills and their inhabitants than had been given by Fisher. This formed the basis of many subsequent descriptions, the best known of which is the attractive account contained in the second volume of Sir Joseph Hooker's *Himalayan Journals* † published in London in 1854. Sir Joseph visited Cherrapunji in June 1850, and stayed in the hills until the middle of the following November.

Meanwhile the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Mission, originally located at Sylhet, had extended their operations to Cherrapunji, and in 1842 established a branch there. They applied themselves to the study of the Khasi language, for which, after a trial of the Bengali, they resolved to adopt the Roman character. Their system of expressing the sounds of Khasi has since that time continued in use, and after sixty years' prescription it would be difficult to make a change. Their Welsh nationality led them to use the vowel *y* for the obscure sound represented elsewhere in India by a short *a* (the *u* in the English *but*), and for the consonantal *y* to substitute the vowel *i*: *w* is also used as a vowel, but only in diphthongs (*āw*, *ew*, *iŵ*, *ow*); in other respects the system agrees fairly well with the standard adopted elsewhere. Primers for the study of the language were printed at Calcutta in 1846 and 1852, and in 1855 appeared the excellent "Introduction to the Khasia language, comprising a grammar, selections for reading, and a Khasi-English vocabulary," of the Rev. W. Pryse. There now exists a somewhat extensive literature in Khasi, both religious and secular. An exhaustive grammar, by the Rev. H. Roberts, was

* Vol. xiii., pp. 612 sqq.

† Pp. 272 sqq.

published in Trübner's series of "Simplified Grammars" in 1891, and there are dictionaries, English-Khasi (1875) and Khasi-English (1906), besides many other aids to the study of the language which need not be mentioned here. It is recognized by the Calcutta University as sufficiently cultivated to be offered for the examinations of that body. Two monthly periodicals are published in it at Shillong, to which place the headquarters of the district were removed from Cherrapunji in 1864, and which has been the permanent seat of the Assam Government since the Province was separated from Bengal in 1874.

The isolation of the Khasi race, in the midst of a great encircling population all of whom belong to the Tibeto-Burman stock, and the remarkable features presented by their language and institutions, soon attracted the attention of comparative philologists and ethnologists. An account of their researches will be found in Dr. Grierson's *Linguistic Survey of India*, vol. ii. Here it will be sufficient to mention the important work of Mr. J. R. Logan, who, in a series of papers published at Singapore between 1850 and 1857 in the *Journal of the Indian Archipelago* (of which he was the editor), demonstrated the relationship which exists between the Khasis and certain peoples of Further India, the chief representatives of whom are the Mōns or Talaings of Pegu and Tenasserim, the Khmērs of Cambodia, and the majority of the inhabitants of Annam. He was even able, through the means of vocabularies furnished to him by the late Bishop Bigandet, to discover the nearest kinsmen of the Khasis in the Palaungs, a tribe inhabiting one of the Shan States to the north-east of Mandalay on the middle Salween. With the progress of research it became apparent that the Mōn-Khmēr group of Indo-

China thus constituted, to which the Khasis belong, was in some way connected with the large linguistic family in the Indian Peninsula once called Kolarian, but now more generally known as *Mundā*, who inhabit the hilly region of Chutia Nagpur and parts of the Satpura range in the Central Provinces. Of these tribes the principal are the Santhāls, the Mundās, and the Korkus. In physical characters they differ greatly from the Indo-Chinese Khasis, but the points of resemblance in their languages and in some of their institutions cannot be denied; and the exact nature of the relation between them is as yet one of the unsolved problems of ethnology.

The work of Logan was carried further by Prof. Ernst Kuhn, of Munich, who in 1883 and 1889 published important contributions to our knowledge of the languages and peoples of Further India. More recently our acquaintance with the phonology of Khasi and its relatives has been still further advanced by the labours of Pater W. Schmidt, of Vienna, whose latest work, *Die Mon-Khmer Völker, ein Bindeglied zwischen Völkern Zentralasiens und Austronesiens* (Braunschweig, 1906), has established the relationship of Khasi not only to the Mōn-Khmēr languages, but also to Nicobarese and several dialects spoken by wild tribes in the Malay Peninsula.

There still remains much to be done before the speech of the Khasi nation can be considered to have been thoroughly investigated. In the *Linguistic Survey* four dialects are dealt with, the standard literary form, founded on the language of Cherrapunji, the *Pnār* or *Synteng*, of Jowai, the *Wār*, spoken in the valleys on the southern face of the hills, and the *Lyngngām*, spoken in the tract adjacent to the Garos on the west. Major Gurdōn (p. 203) mentions a fifth, that of Jirang

or Mynnār, spoken in the extreme north, and there may be others. A great desideratum for linguistic purposes is a more adequate method of recording sounds, and especially differences of tone, than that adopted for the standard speech, which though sufficient for practical purposes, does not accurately represent either the quantity or the quality of the vowels, and leaves something to be desired as regards the consonants (especially those only faintly sounded or suppressed). These things, no doubt, will come in time. The immense advance which has been made in education by the Khasis during the last half-century has enabled some among them to appreciate the interesting field for exploration and study which their own country and people afford; and there is reason to hope that with European guidance the work of record will progress by the agency of indigenous students.

It remains to summarize briefly the principal distinctive features of this vigorous and sturdy race, who have preserved their independence and their ancestral institutions through many centuries in the face of the attractions offered by the alien forms of culture around them.

In the first place, their social organization presents one of the most perfect examples still surviving of matriarchal institutions, carried out with a logic and thoroughness which, to those accustomed to regard the status and authority of the father as the foundation of society, are exceedingly remarkable. Not only is the mother the head and source, and only bond of union, of the family: in the most primitive part of the hills, the Synteng country, she is the only owner of real property, and through her alone is inheritance transmitted. The father has no kinship with his children, who belong to their mother's clan; what he earns goes

to his own matriarchal stock, and at his death his bones are deposited in the cromlech of his mother's kin. In Jowai he neither lives nor eats in his wife's house, but visits it only after dark (p. 76). In the veneration of ancestors, which is the foundation of the tribal piety, the primal ancestress (*Ka Iāwbei*) and her brother are the only persons regarded. The flat memorial stones set up to perpetuate the memory of the dead are called after the woman who represents the clan (*māw kynthei* p. 150), and the standing stones ranged behind them are dedicated to the male kinsmen on the mother's side.

In harmony with this scheme of ancestor worship, the other spirits to whom propitiation is offered are mainly female, though here male personages also figure (pp. 106—109). The powers of sickness and death are all female, and these are those most frequently worshipped (p. 107). The two protectors of the household are goddesses (p. 112), though with them is also revered the first father of the clan, *U Thāwlang*.

Priestesses assist at all sacrifices, and the male officiants are only their deputies (p. 121); in one important state, Khyrim, the High Priestess and actual head of the State is a woman, who combines in her person sacerdotal and regal functions (p. 70).

The Khàsi language, so far as known, is the only member of the Mōn-Khmēr family which possesses a grammatical gender, distinguishing all nouns as masculine and feminine; and here also the feminine nouns immensely preponderate (p. 206). The pronouns of the second (*mē, phā*) and third person (*ū, kā*) have separate forms for the sexes in the singular, but in the plural only one is used (*phī, kī*), and this is the plural form of the feminine singular.

It may perhaps be ascribed to the pre-eminence

accorded by the Khasis to the female sex that successive censuses have shown that the women of this race considerably exceed the men in number. According to the census of 1901, there are 1,118 females to every 1,000 male Khasis. This excess, however, is surpassed by that of the Lushais, 1,191 to 1,000, and it may possibly be due to the greater risks to life encountered by the men, who venture far into the plains as traders and porters, while the women stay at home. Habits of intemperance, which are confined to the male sex, may also explain a greater mortality among them.

It would be interesting to investigate the effect on reproduction of the system of matriarchy which governs Khasi family life. The increase of the race is very slow. In the census of 1891 there were enumerated only 117 children under 5 to every hundred married women between 15 and 40, and in 1901 this number fell to 108. It has been suggested that the independence of the wife, and the facilities which exist for divorce, lead to restrictions upon child-bearing, and thus keep the population stationary. The question might with advantage be examined at the census of 1911.

The next characteristic of the Khasis which marks them out for special notice is their method of divination for ascertaining the causes of misfortune and the remedies to be applied. All forms of animistic religion make it their chief business to avert the wrath of the gods, to which calamities of all kinds—sickness, storm, murrain, loss of harvest—are ascribed, by some kind of propitiation; and in this the Khasis are not singular. But it is somewhat surprising to find among them the identical method of *extispicium* which was in use among the Romans, as well as an analogous development in the shape of egg-breaking, fully described by Major Gurdon (p. 221), which seems to have been known to

diviners in ancient Hellas.* This method has (with much else in Khasi practice) been adopted by the former subjects of the Khasis, the Mikirs; but it does not appear to be prevalent among any other of the animistic tribes within the boundaries of India.

The third remarkable feature of Khasi usage is the custom, which prevails to this day, of setting up great memorials of rough stone, of the same style and character as the *menhirs* and *cromlechs* which are found in Western Europe, Northern Africa, and Western Asia. It is very surprising to a visitor, unprepared for the sight by previous information, to find himself on arrival at the plateau in the midst of great groups of standing and table stones exactly like those he may have seen in Brittany, the Channel Islands, the south of England, or the Western Isles. Unfortunately the great earthquake of June 1897 overthrew many of the finest of these megalithic monuments; but several still remain, and of these Major Gurdon has given an excellent description (pp. 144 sqq.), with an explanation of the different forms which they assume and the objects with which they are erected. Other races in India besides the Khasis set up stone memorials; but none, perhaps, to the same extent or with the same systematic purpose and arrangement.

In conclusion, I have only to commend this work to the consideration of all interested in the accurate and detailed description of primitive custom. I lived myself for many years among the Khasis, and endeavoured to find out what I could about them; but much of what Major Gurdon records is new to me, though the book generally agrees with what I was able

* Called *ψοσκηπία*: one of the lost books of the Orphic cycle was entitled *τὰ ψοσκηπικά*.

to gather of their institutions and characteristics. It is, I think, an excellent example of research, and well fitted to stand at the head of a series which may be expected to make an important contribution to the data of anthropology.

C. J. LYALL.

November, 1906.

THE KHASIS

SECTION I.

HABITAT.

THE Khasis reside in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills district of Assam. They number 176,614 souls, which total is made up of:—

Khasis	107,515
Syntengs	47,883
Christian Khasis	17,125
Khasis inhabiting other districts	4,091
	<hr/>
	176,614
	<hr/>

The Khasi and Jaintia Hills district is situated between 25° 1' and 26° 5' North Latitude, and between 90° 47' and 92° 52' East Longitude. It contains an area of 6,157 square miles, with a total population at the Census of 1901 of 202,250 souls. In addition to the Khasis there are some members of Bodo tribes inhabiting parts of the district.

The Lymngam tribe appears to have been reckoned in 1901 as Khasi, there being no separate record at the last Census of these people.

The district is split up into two divisions, the Khasi Hills proper and the Jaintia Hills. The Khasi Hills form the western portion of the district and the Jaintia Hills the eastern. The Khasis inhabit the Khasi Hills proper, and the Syntengs, or Pnars, the Jaintia Hills. The latter hills take their name from the Rajas of Jaintia, the former rulers of this part of the country, who had as their capital Jaintiapur, a place situated at the foot of the Jaintia Hills on the southern side, which now falls within the boundaries of the Sylhet

district. The Lynngams inhabit the western portion of the Khasi Hills proper. A line drawn north and south through the village of Nongstoin may be said to form their eastern boundary, and the Kamrup and Sylhet districts their northern and southern boundaries, respectively. The people known as *Bhois* in these hills, who are many of them really Mikirs, live in the low hills to the north and north-east of the district, the term "Bhoi" being a territorial name rather than tribal. The eastern boundary of the Lynngam country may be said to form their north-western boundary. The Wárs inhabit the precipitous slopes and deep valleys to the south of the district. Their country extends along the entire southern boundary of the district to the Jadukata, or Kenchi-iong, river where the Lynngam territory may be said to commence towards the south. There are some Hadem colonies in the extreme eastern portions of the Jaintia Hills. It is these colonies which are sometimes referred to by other writers as "Kuki Colonies." They are settlers from the North Cachar Sub-division of the Cachar district within recent years. It is possible that the title Hadem may have some connection with *Hidimba*, the ancient name for the North Cachar Hills.

APPEARANCE.

The colour of the Khasi skin may be described as being usually brown, varying from dark to a light yellowish brown, according to locality. The complexion of the people who inhabit the uplands is of a somewhat lighter shade, and many of the women, especially those who live at Nongkrem, Laitlyngkot, Mawphlang, and other villages of the surrounding high plateaux possess that pretty gipsy complexion that is seen in the South of Europe amongst the peasants. The people of Cherrapunji village are specially fair. The Syntengs of the Jaintia Hills are darker than the Khasi uplanders. The Wárs, who live in the low valleys are frequently more swarthy than the Khasis. The Bhois have the flabby-looking yellow skin of the Mikirs, and the Lynngams are darker than the Khasis. The Lynngams are probably the darkest complexioned people in the

hills, and if one met them in the plains one would not be able to distinguish them from the ordinary Kachari or Rabha. The nose in the Khasi is somewhat depressed, the nostrils being often large and prominent. The forehead is broad and the space between the eyes is often considerable. The skull may be said to be almost brachy-cephalic, the average cephalic index of 77 Khasi subjects, measured by Col. Waddell and Major Hare, I.M.S., being as high as 77·3 and 77·9, respectively. According to these data the Khasis are more brachy-cephalic than the Aryans, whose measurements appear in Crooke's tables, more brachy-cephalic than the 100 Mundas whose measurements appear in Risley's tables, more brachy-cephalic than the Dravidians, but less brachy-cephalic than the Burmans, whose measurements also appear in Crooke's tables. It would be interesting to compare some head measurements of Khasis with Japanese, but unfortunately the necessary data are not available in the case of the latter people. The Khasi head may be styled sub-brachy-cephalic. Eyes are of medium size, in colour black or brown. In the Jaintia Hills hazel eyes are not uncommon, especially amongst females. Eyelids are somewhat obliquely set, but not so acutely as in the Chinese and some other Mongols. Jaws frequently are prognathous, mouth large, with sometimes rather thick lips. Hair black, straight, and worn long, the hair of people who adopt the old style being caught up in a knot at the back. Some males cut the hair short with the exception of a single lock at the back, which is called *u niithrong* or *u niuh-' iawbei* (i.e. the grandmother's lock.) The forepart of the head is often shaven. It is quite the exception to see a beard, although the moustache is not infrequently worn. The Lynngams pull out the hairs of the moustache with the exception of a few hairs on either side of the upper lip.

PHYSICAL AND GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS.

The Khasis are usually short in stature, with bodies well nourished, and the males are extremely muscular. The trunk is long in proportion to the rest of the body, and broad at the waist; calves are very highly developed. The women when

young are comely, of a buxom type, and, like the men, with highly-developed calves, the latter always being considered a beauty. The children are frequently remarkably pretty. Khasis carry very heavy burdens, it being the custom for the cooly of the country to carry a maund, or 82 lbs. weight, or even more occasionally, on his back, the load being fixed by means of a cane band which is worn across the forehead; women carry almost as heavy loads as the men. The coolies, both male and female, commonly do the journey between Cherrapunji and Shillong, or between Shillong and Jowai, in one day, carrying the heavy loads above mentioned. Each of the above journeys is some thirty miles. They carry their great loads of rice and salt from Therria to Cherrapunji, an ascent of about 4,000 feet in some three to four miles, in the day. The Khasis are probably the best porters in the north of India, and have frequently been requisitioned for transport purposes on military expeditions.

The people are cheerful in disposition, and are light-hearted by nature, and, unlike the plains people, seem to thoroughly appreciate a joke. It is pleasant to hear on the road down to Theriaghat from Cherrapunji, in the early morning the whole hillside resounding with the scraps of song and peals of laughter of the coolies, as they run nimbly down the short cuts on their way to market. The women are specially cheerful, and pass the time of day and bandy jokes with passers-by with quite an absence of reserve. The Khasis are certainly more industrious than the Assamese, are generally good-tempered, but are occasionally prone to sudden outbursts of anger, accompanied by violence. They are fond of music, and rapidly learn the hymn tunes which are taught them by the Welsh missionaries. Khasis are devoted to their offspring, and the women make excellent nurses for European children, frequently becoming much attached to their little charges. The people, like the Japanese, are fond of nature. A Khasi loves a day out in the woods, where he thoroughly enjoys himself. If he does not go out shooting or fishing, he is content to sit still and contemplate nature. He has a separate name for each of the commoner birds and flowers. He also has names for many butterflies and moths. These are traits

which are not found usually in the people of India. He is not above manual labour, and even the Khasi clerk in the Government offices is quite ready to take his turn at the hoe in his potato garden. The men make excellent stonemasons and carpenters, and are ready to learn fancy carpentry and mechanical work. They are inveterate chewers of *supari* and the pan leaf (when they can get the latter), both men, women, and children; distances in the interior being often measured by the number of betel-nuts that are usually chewed on a journey. They are not addicted usually to the use of opium or other intoxicating drugs. They are, however, hard drinkers, and consume large quantities of spirit distilled from rice or millet. Rice beer is also manufactured. This is used not only as a beverage, but also for ceremonial purposes. Spirit drinking is confined more to the inhabitants of the high plateaux and to the people of the War country, the Bhois and Lynngams being content to partake of rice beer. The Mikirs who inhabit what is known as the "Bhoi" country, lying to the north of the district, consume a good deal of opium, but it must be remembered that they reside in a malarious *terai* country, and that the use of opium, or some other prophylactic, is probably beneficial as a preventive of fever. The Khasis, like other people of Indo-Chinese origin, are much addicted to gambling. The people, and especially those who inhabit the War country, are fond of litigation. Col. Bivar remarks, "As regards truthfulness the people do not excel, for they rarely speak the truth unless to suit their own interests." Col. Bivar might have confined this observation to the people who live in the larger centres of population, or who have been much in contact with the denizens of the plains. The inhabitants of the far interior are, as a rule, simple and straightforward people, and are quite as truthful and honest as peasants one meets in other countries. My impression is that the Khasis are not less truthful certainly than other Indian communities. McCosh, writing in 1837, speaks well of the Khasis. The following is his opinion of them:—"They are a powerful, athletic race of men, rather below the middle size, with a manliness of gait and demeanour. They are fond of their mountains, and look down with contempt upon the degenerate race of the

plains, jealous of their power, brave in action, and have an aversion to falsehood."

Khasis of the interior who have adopted Christianity are generally cleaner in their persons than the non-Christians, and their women dress better than the latter and have an air of self-respect about them. The houses in a Christian village are also far superior, especially where there are resident European missionaries. Khasis who have become Christians often take to religion with much earnestness (witness the recent religious revival in these hills, which is estimated by the Welsh missionaries to have added between 4,000 and 5,000 converts to Christianity), and are model Sabbatarians, it being a pleasing sight to see men, women, and children trooping to church on a Sunday dressed in their best, and with quite the Sunday expression on their faces one sees in England. It is a pleasure to hear the sound of the distant church bell on the hill side on a Sunday evening, soon to be succeeded by the beautiful Welsh hymn tunes which, when wafted across the valleys, carry one's thoughts far away. The Welsh missionaries have done, and continue to do, an immense amount of good amongst these people. It would be an evil day for the Khasis if anything should occur to arrest the progress of the mission work in the Khasi Hills.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION

The Khasis inhabit the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, although there are a few Khasi settlers in the neighbouring plains districts. The Census Report of 1901 gives the following figures of Khasi residents in the plains:—

Cachar	333
Sylhet	3,083
Goalpara	4
Kamrup	191
Darrang	10
Nowgong	2
Sibsagar	2
Lakhimpur	22
Lushai Hills	77
North Cachar	32
Naga Hills	52

Garo Hills	117
Manipur	69
	<hr/>
Total	<u>4,091*</u>

The following information regarding the general aspect of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills district, with some additions, is derived from Sir William Hunter's Statistical Account of Assam. The district consists almost entirely of hills, only a very small portion lying in the plains. The slope of the hills on the southern side is very steep until a table-land is met with at an elevation of about 4,000 feet at Cherrapunji. Higher up there is another plateau at Mawphlang. This is the highest portion of the hills, some villages being found at as high an elevation as close on 6,000 feet above sea level. Fifteen miles to the east of Mawphlang, and in the same range, is situated the civil station of Shillong, at an average elevation of about 4,900 feet. The elevation of the Shillong Peak, the highest hill in the district, is 6,450 feet above sea level. On the northern side of the hills are two plateaux, one between 1,000 and 2,000 feet below the level of Shillong, and another at an elevation of about 2,000 feet above sea level. In general features all these plateaux are much alike, and consist of a succession of undulating downs, broken here and there by the valleys of the larger hill streams. In the higher ranges, where the hills have been denuded of forest, the country is covered with short grass, which becomes longer and more rank in the lower elevations. This denudation of forest has been largely due to the wood being used by the Khasis for fuel for iron smelting in days gone by. The Government, however, has taken steps to protect the remaining forests from further spoliation. A remarkable feature is the presence of numerous sacred groves situated generally just below the brows of the hills. In these woods are to be found principally oak and rhododendron trees. The fir-tree (*Pinus Khasia*) is first met with on the road from Gauhati to Shillong, at Umsning, at an elevation of about 2,500 feet. In the neighbourhood of Shillong the fir grows profusely, but the finest fir-trees are to be seen

* The figures for Khasi population in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills district will be found under "Habitat."

in the Jowai sub-division. In the vicinity of Nongpoh is observed the beautiful *nahor* or *nageswar*, the iron-wood tree. The latter is also to be found on the southern slopes of the hills in the Jowai sub-division. There are some *sal* forests to the west and south of Nongpoh, where the *sal* trees are almost as large as those to be found in the Garo Hills. Between Shillong and Jowai there are forests of oak, the country being beautifully wooded. Chestnuts and birches are also fairly common. The low hills on the northern and western sides of the district are clad with dense forests of bamboo, of which there are many varieties. The Pandanus or screw-pine is to be met with on the southern slopes. Regarding the geological formation of the hills, I extract a few general remarks from the Physical and Political Geography of Assam. The Shillong plateau consists of a great mass of gneiss, bare on the northern border, where it is broken into hills, for the most part low and very irregular in outline, with numerous outliers in the Lower Assam Valley, even close up to the Himalayas. In the central region the gneiss is covered by transition or sub-metamorphic rocks, consisting of a strong band of quartzites overlying a mass of earthy schists. In the very centre of the range, where the table-land attains its highest elevation, great masses of intrusive diorite and granite occur; and the latter is found in dykes piercing the gneiss and sub-metamorphic series throughout the southern half of the boundary of the plains. To the south, in contact with the gneiss and sub-metamorphics is a great volcanic outburst of trap, which is stratified, and is brought to the surface with the general rise of elevation along the face of the hills between Shella and Theriaghat south of Cherrapunji. This has been described as the "Sylhet trap." South of the main axis of this metamorphic and volcanic mass are to be found strata of two well defined series: (1) the cretaceous, and (2) nummulitic. The cretaceous contains several important coalfields. The nummulitic series, which overlies the cretaceous, attains a thickness of 900 feet in the Theria river, consisting of alternating strata of compact limestones and sandstones. It is at the exposure of these rocks on their downward dip from the edge of the plateau that are situated the extensive limestone quarries of the Khasi Hills. There are numerous

limestone caves and underground water-courses on the southern face of the hills. This series contains coal-beds, e.g. the Cherra-field and that at Lakadong in the Jaintia Hills. Some description of the remarkable Kyllang Rock may not be out of place. Sir Joseph Hooker describes it as a dome of red granite, 5,400 feet above sea level, accessible from the north and east, but almost perpendicular to the southward where the slope is 80° for 600 feet. The elevation is said by Hooker to be 400 feet above the mean level of the surrounding ridges and 700 feet above the bottom of the valleys. The south or steepest side is encumbered with enormous detached blocks, while the north is clothed with forests containing red tree-rhododendrons and oaks. Hooker says that on its skirts grows a "white bushy rhododendron" which he found nowhere else. There is, however, a specimen of it now in the Shillong Lake garden. Numerous orchids are to be found in the Kyllang wood, notably a beautiful white one, called by the Khasis *u'tiw kyllang synrai*, which blooms in the autumn. The view from the top of the rock is very extensive, especially towards the north, where a magnificent panorama of the Himalayas is obtained in the autumn. The most remarkable phenomenon of any kind in the country is undoubtedly the enormous quantity of rain which falls at Cherrapunji.* Practically the whole of the rainfall occurs in the rains, i.e. from May to October. The remainder of the district is less rainy. The climate of the central plateau of the Shillong range is very salubrious, but the low hills in parts of the district are malarious. The effect of the different climates can at once be seen by examining the physique of the inhabitants. The Khasis who live in the high central plateaux are exceptionally healthy and strong, but those who live in the unhealthy "Bhoi country" to the north, and in the L ynngam portion to the west of the district, are often stunted and sickly. Not so, however, the Wárs who live on the southern slopes, for although their country is very hot at certain times of the year, it does not appear to be abnormally unhealthy except in certain

* The average rainfall at the Cherrapunji Police Station during the last twenty years, from figures obtained from the office of the Director of Land Records and Agriculture, has been 118 inches. The greatest rainfall registered in any one year during the period was in 1899, when it amounted to 641 inches.

villages, such as Shella, Borpunji, Umniuh, and in Narpuh in the Jaintia Hills.

ORIGIN.

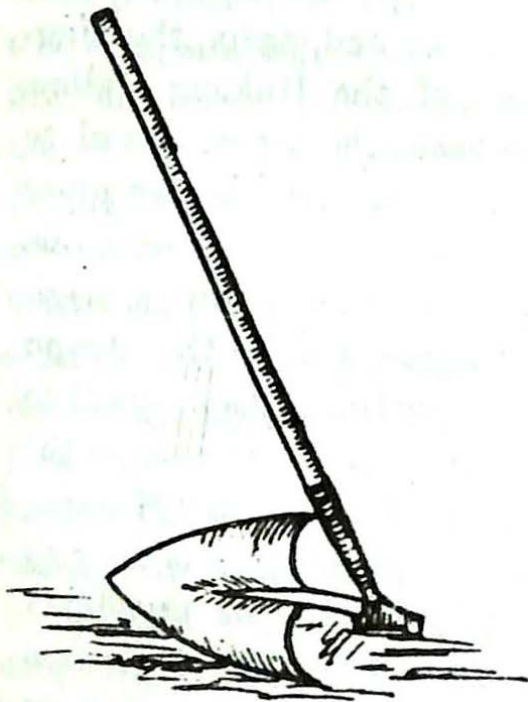
The origin of the Khasis is a very vexed question. Although it is probable that the Khasis have inhabited their present abode for at any rate a considerable period, there seems to be a fairly general belief amongst them that they originally came from elsewhere. The Rev. H. Roberts, in the introduction to his Khasi Grammar, states that "tradition, such as it is, connects them politically with the Burmese, to whose king they were up to a comparatively recent date rendering homage, by sending him an annual tribute in the shape of an axe, as an emblem merely of submission." Another tradition points out the north as the direction from which they migrated, and Sylhet as the terminus of their wanderings, from which they were ultimately driven back into their present hill fastnesses by a great flood, after a more or less peaceful occupation of that district. It was on the occasion of this great flood, the legend runs that the Khasi lost the art of writing, the Khasi losing his book whilst he was swimming at the time of this flood, whereas the Bengali managed to preserve his. Owing to the Khasis having possessed no written character before the advent of the Welsh missionaries, there are no histories as is the case with the Ahoms of the Assam Valley, and therefore no record of their journeys. Mr. Shadwell, the oldest living authority we have on the Khasis, and one who has been in close touch with the people for more than half a century, mentions a tradition amongst them that they originally came into Assam from Burma *via* the Patkoi range, having followed the route of one of the Burmese invasions. Mr. Shadwell has heard them mention the name Patkoi as a hill they met with on their journey. All this sort of thing is, however, inexpressibly vague. In the chapter dealing with "Affinities" have been given some reasons for supposing that the Khasis and other tribes of the Mon-Anam family, originally occupied a large portion of the Indian continent. Where the actual cradle of the Mon-Anam race was, is as

impossible to state, as it is to fix upon the exact tract of country from which the Aryans sprang. With reference to the Khasi branch of the Mon-Anam family, it would seem reasonable to suppose that if they are not the autochthons of a portion of the hills on the southern bank of the Brahmaputra, and if they migrated to Assam from some other country, it is not unlikely that they followed the direction of the different irruptions of foreign peoples into Assam of which we have authentic data. i.e. from south-east to north-west, as was the case with the Ahom invaders of Assam who invaded Assam from their settlements in the Shan States *via* the Patkoi range, the different Burmese invasions, the movements of the Khamtis and, again, the Singphos, from the country to the east of the Hukong Valley. Whether the first cousins of the Khasis, the Mons, moved to their present abode from China, whether they are the aborigines of the portion of Burma they at present occupy, or were one of the races "of Turanian origin" who, as Forbes thinks, originally occupied the valley of the Ganges before the Aryan invasion, must be left to others more qualified than myself to determine. Further, it is difficult to clear up the mystery of the survival, in an isolated position, of people like the Ho-Mundas, whose language and certain customs exhibit points of similarity with those of the Khasis, in close proximity to the Dravidian tribes and at a great distance from the Khasis, there being no people who exhibit similar characteristics inhabiting countries situated in between; but we can, I think, reasonably suppose that the Khasis are an offshoot of the Mon people of Further India in the light of the historical fact I have quoted, i.e. that the movements of races into Assam have usually, although not invariably, taken place from the east, and not from the west. The tendency for outside people to move into Assam from the east still continues.

AFFINITIES.

The late Mr. S. E. Peal, F.R.G.S., in an interesting and suggestive paper published in the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1896, drew attention to certain illustrations of

"singular shoulder-headed celts," found only in the Malay Peninsula till the year 1875, when they were also discovered in Chota Nagpur, and figured in the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal for June of that year. These "celts" are, as the name implies, ancient stone implements. Mr. Peal goes on to state the interesting fact that when he was at Ledo and Tikak, Naga villages, east of Makum, on the south-east frontier of the Lakhimpur district of Assam, in 1895, he found iron implements, miniature hoes, used by the Nagas, of a similar shape to the "shoulder-headed celts" which had been found in the Malay Peninsula and Chota Nagpur. Now the peculiarly shaped



Khasi hoe or *mo-khiw*, a sketch of which is given, with its far projecting shoulders, is merely an enlarged edition of the Naga hoe described by Peal, and may therefore be regarded as a modern representative in iron, although on an enlarged scale, of the "shoulder-headed celts." Another interesting point is that, according to Forbes, the Burmese name for these stone celts is *mo-gyo*. Now the Khasi name for the hoe is *mo-khiw*. The similarity

between the two words seems very strong. Forbes says the name *mo-gyo* in Burmese means "cloud or sky chain," which he interprets "thunderbolt," the popular belief there, as in other countries, being that these palæolithic implements fell from heaven. Although the Khasi name *mo-khiw* has no connection whatsoever with aerolites, it is a singular coincidence that the name for the Khasi hoe of the present day should almost exactly correspond with the Burmese name for the palæolithic implement found in Burma and the Malay Peninsula, and when it is remembered that these stone celts are of a different shape from that of the stone implements which have been found in India (with the exception of Chota Nagpur), there would seem to be some grounds for believing that the

Khasis are connected with people who inhabited the Malay Peninsula and Chota Nagpur at the time of the Stone Age.* That these people were what Logan calls the Mon-Anam, may possibly be the case. Mr. Peal goes on to state, "the discovery is interesting for other reasons, it possibly amounts to a demonstration that Logan (who it is believed was the first to draw attention to the points of resemblance between the languages of the Mon-Anam or Mon-Khmêr and those of the Mundas and the Khasis), was correct in assuming that at one time the Mon-Anam races and influence extended from the Vindyas all over the Ganges Basin, even over Assam, the northern border of the Ultra Indian Peninsula." Mr. Peal then remarks that the Eastern Nagas of the Tirap, Namstik, and Sonkap group "are strikingly like them (i.e. the Mon-Anam races), in many respects, the women being particularly robust, with pale colour and at times rosy cheeks." The interesting statement follows that the men wear the Khasi-Mikir sleeveless coat. Under the heading of dress this will be found described as a garment which leaves the neck and arms bare, with a fringe at the bottom and with a row of tassels across the chest, the coat being fastened by frogs in front. It is a garment of a distinctive character and cannot be mistaken; it used to be worn largely by the Khasis, and is still used extensively by the Syntengs and Lynngams and by the Mikirs, and that it should have been found amongst these Eastern Nagas is certainly remarkable. It is to be regretted that the investigations of the Ethnographical Survey, as at present conducted, have not extended to these Eastern Nagas, who inhabit tracts either outside British territory or in very remote places on its confines, so that we are at present unable to state whether any of these tribes possess other points of affinity, as

* It is interesting to compare the remarks of M. Aymonier in his volume iii of "Le Cambodge." He writes as follows:—"Mais en Indo-Chine on trouve, partout disseminé, ce que les indigènes, au Cambodge du moins, appellent, comme les peuples les plus éloignés du globe 'les traits de foudre.' Ce sont ici des haches de l'âge néolithique ou de la pierre polie, dont la plupart appartiennent au type répandu en toute la terre. D'autres de ces celtes, dits épaulés, parcequ'ils possèdent un talon d'une forme particulière, paraissent appartenir en propre à l'Indo-Chine et à la presqu'île dekkhanique. Ils fourniraient donc un premier indice, non négligeable, d'une communauté d'origine des populations primitives des deux péninsules, cis et trans gangétiques."

regards social customs, with the Khasis, but it will be noticed in the chapter dealing with memorial stones that some of the Naga tribes are in the habit of erecting monoliths somewhat similar in character to those of the Khasis, and that the Mikirs (who wear the Khasi sleeveless coat), erect memorial stones exactly similar to those of the Khasis. The evidence seems to suggest a theory that the Mon-Anam race, including of course the Khasis, occupied at one time a much larger area in the mountainous country to the south of the Brahmaputra in Assam than it does at present. Further references will be found to this point in the section dealing with memorial stones. The fact that the Ho-Mundas of Chota Nagpur also erect memorial stones and that they possess death customs very similar to those of the Khasis, has also been noticed in the same chapter. We have, therefore, the following points of similarity as regards customs between the Khasis on the one hand, certain Eastern Naga tribes, the Mikirs, and the ancient inhabitants of the Malay Peninsula on the other :—

(a) Peculiarly shaped hoe, i.e. the hoe with far projecting shoulders	{	1. Khasis. 2. Certain Eastern Naga tribes. 3. The ancient inhabitants of the Malay Peninsula. 4. The ancient inhabitants of Chota Nagpur (the Ho-Mundas?).
(b) Sleeveless coat	{	1. Khasis. 2. Mikirs. 3. Certain Eastern Naga tribes.
(c) Memorial stones	{	1. Khasis. 2. Mikirs. 3. Certain Eastern Naga tribes. 4. Ho-Mundas of Chota Nagpur.

I wish to draw no definite conclusions from the above facts, but they are certainly worth considering with reference to Logan's theory as stated by Peal; the theory being based on Logan's philological inquiries. Thanks to the labours of Grierson, Logan, and Kuhn in the linguistic field, we know that the languages of the Mon-Khmér group in Burma and the Malay Peninsula are intimately connected with Khasi. I say, intimately, advisedly, for not only are roots of words seen to be similar, but the order of the words in the sentence is found to be the same, indicating that both these people think in the same order when wishing to express themselves by speech.

There are also syntactical agreements. We may take it as finally proved by Dr. Grierson and Professor Kuhn that the Mon-Khmêr, Palaung, Wa, and Khasi languages are closely connected. In the section of the Monograph which deals with language some striking similarities between the languages of these tribes will be pointed out. We have not so far been able to discover social customs common to the Palaungs and the Khasis; this is probably due to the conversion of the Palaungs to Buddhism, the change in the religion of the people having possibly caused the abandonment of the primitive customs of the tribe. In a few years' time, if the progressive rate of conversions of Khasis to Christianity continues, probably the greater number of the Khasi social customs will have disappeared and others will have taken their place, so that it cannot be argued that because no manifest social customs can now be found common to the Khasis and the Palaungs, there is no connection between these two tribes. The strong linguistic affinity between these two peoples and the wild *Was* of Burma points to an intimate connection between all three in the past. As knowledge of the habits of the wild *Was* improves, it is quite possible that social customs of this tribe may be found to be held in common with the Khasis. With regard to social affinities it will be interesting to note the Palaung folk-tale of the origin of their Sawbwa, which is reproduced in Sir George Scott's Upper Burma Gazetteer. The Sawbwa, it is related, is descended from the Naga Princess Thusandi who lived in the *Nat* tank on the Mongok hills and who laid three eggs, from one of which was born the ancestor of the Palaung Sawbwa. Here we see how the Palaung regards the egg, and it is noteworthy that the Khasis lay great stress on its potency in divination for the purposes of religious sacrifices, and that at death it is placed on the stomach of the deceased and is afterwards broken at the funeral pyre. Amongst some of the tribes of the Malay Archipelago also the *Gaji-Guru* or medicine-man "can see from the yolk of an egg, broken whilst sacramentally counting from one to seven, from what illness a man is suffering and what has caused it." Here we have an almost exactly parallel case to the Khasi custom of egg-breaking.

In the Palaung folk-tale above referred to the importance of

the egg in the eyes of Palaung is demonstrated, and we know how the Khasi regards it. But the folk-tale is also important as suggesting that the ancient people of Pagan were originally serpent-worshippers, i.e. *Nágás*, and it is interesting to note that the Rumai or Palaung women of the present day "wear a dress which is like the skin of the Naga (snake)." Is it possible that the Khasi superstition of the *thlen*, or serpent demon, and its worship, an account of which will be found under the heading of "Human Sacrifices" in the Monograph, has anything to do with the ancient snake-worship of the people of Pagan, and also of the ancient inhabitants of Naga-Dwipa, and that amongst the wild *Was* the custom of head-hunting may have taken the place of the Khasi human sacrifices to the *thlen*?

Notwithstanding that Sir George Scott says the story has very Burman characteristics, the Palaung folk-tale is further interesting in that it speaks of the Sawbwa of the Palaungs being descended from a *princess*. This might be a suggestion of the matriarchate.

It can well be imagined how important a matter it is also, in the light of Grierson's and Kuhn's linguistic conclusions, to ascertain whether any of the Mon-Khmér people in Anam and Cambodia and neighbouring countries possess social customs in common with the Khasis. In case it may be possible for French and Siamese ethnologists in Further India to follow up these inquiries at some subsequent date, it may be stated that information regarding social customs is required with reference to the people who speak the following languages in Anam and Cambodia and Cochin China which belong to the Mon-Khmér group—*Suk, Stieng, Bahnar, Anamese, Khamen-Boran, Xong, Samre, Khmu, and Lamet*.

Notwithstanding our failure up till now to find any patent and direct social customs in common between the Khasis and the Palaungs, I am in hopes that we may yet discover some such affinities. Mr. Lewis, the Superintendent of Ethnography in Burma, states that there is no vestige of the matriarchal system among the Palaungs; but there is the folk-tale I have quoted above. In matters of succession, inheritance, &c., the Palaungs, Mr. Lewis, says, profess to follow the Shans, whose customs in this regard have a Buddhist basis. The Palaungs

are devout Buddhists, and, like the Burmans and Shans, bury their lay dead, whereas the Khasis invariably burn. There is nothing in the shape of memorial stones amongst the Palaungs. *Primâ facie* these appear to be points of differentiation between the Palaungs and the Khasis; but they should not, as has already been stated, be regarded as proof positive that the tribes are not connected, and it is possible that under the influence of Buddhism the Palaungs may have almost entirely abandoned their ancient customs, like the Christian Khasis.

Having noticed some similarities as regards birth customs, as described in Dr. Frazer's "Golden Bough," between the Khasis and certain inhabitants of the Dutch East Indies, I wrote to the Dutch authorities in Batavia requesting certain further information. My application was treated with the greatest courtesy, and I am indebted to the kindness of the President, his secretary, and Mr. C. M. Pleyte, Lecturer of Indonesian Ethnology at the Gymnasium of William III., at Batavia, for some interesting as well as valuable information. With reference to possible Malay influence in the countries inhabited by the people who speak the Mon-Khmêr group of languages in Further India, it was thought desirable to ascertain whether any of the people inhabiting the Dutch East Indies possessed anything in common with the Khasis, who also belong to the Mon-Khmêr group. There are, according to Mr. Pleyte, pure matriarchal customs to be found amongst the Minangkabe Malays inhabiting the Padang uplands and adjacent countries, in Sumatra, in Agam, the fifty Kotas, and Tanah Datar, more or less mixed with patriarchal institutions; they are equally followed by the tribes inhabiting parts of Korinchi and other places. The apparently strong survival of the matriarchate in parts of the island of Sumatra, as compared with this corresponding most characteristic feature of the Khasis, is a point for consideration. Mr. Pleyte goes on to state "regarding ancestor-worship, it may be said that this is found everywhere throughout the whole Archipelago; even the tribes that have already adopted Islam, venerate the spirits of their departed." The same might be said of some of the Khasis who have accepted Christianity, and much more of the Japanese. I would here refer the reader to the chapter on "Ancestor-worship." In the

Southern Moluccas the placenta is mixed with ashes, placed in a pot, and hung on a tree; a similar custom is observed in Mandeling, on the west coast of Sumatra. This is a custom universally observed amongst the Khasis at births. Teknomy to some extent prevails amongst some of these Malay tribes as with the Khasis. It will be seen from the above notes that there are some interesting points of affinity between the Khasis and some of the Malay tribes, and if we add that the Khasis are decidedly Malay in appearance, we cannot but wonder whether the Malays have any connection not only with the Mon-Khmer family, but also with the Khasis, with the Ho-Mundas, and with the Naga tribes mentioned by Mr. Peal in his interesting paper published in the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, already referred to. We will study the strong linguistic affinities between these peoples in the section which deals with language.

M. Aymonier in "Le Cambodge" mentions the matriarchate as having been prevalent apparently amongst the primitive races of Cambodia, and notes that the ancient Chinese writers spoke of Queens in Fou-nan (Cambodia). If the Khmers were the ancient people of Cambodia, here we have an important landmark in common between them and the Khasis. M. Aymonier goes on to speak of priestesses, and the Cambodian taboo, *tam* or *trenam*, which Mr. Lowis, the Superintendent of Ethnography in Burma, suggests may be akin to the Khasi *sang*.

DRESS.

Dress may be divided into two divisions, ancient and modern. It will be convenient to take the former division first. The Khasi males of the interior wear the sleeveless coat or *jymphong*, which is a garment leaving the neck and arms bare, with a fringe at the bottom, and with a row of tassels across the chest; it is fastened by frogs in front. This coat, however, may be said to be going out of fashion in the Khasi Hills, its place being taken by coats of European pattern in the more civilized centres and by all sorts of nondescript garments in the interior. The sleeveless coat, however, is still worn by many

Syntengs in the interior and by the Bhois and Lynngams. The men in the Khasi Hills wear a cap with ear-flaps. The elderly men, or other men when smartness is desired, wear a white turban, which is fairly large and is well tied on the head. Males in the Siemship of Nongstoin and in the North-Western corner of the district wear knitted worsted caps which are often of a red colour. These are sold at Nongstoin market at about 8 or 9 annas each. They are brought to Nongstoin by traders from the Synteng country, and from Shillong, where they are knitted generally by Synteng women. A small cloth is worn round the waist and between the legs, one end of which hangs down in front like a small apron. The Syntengs wear a somewhat differently shaped cap, having no ear-flaps and with a high-peaked crown. Both Khasi and Synteng caps are generally of black cloth, having, as often as not, a thick coating of grease. The old-fashioned Khasi female's dress, which is that worn by people of the cultivator class of the present day, is the following:—Next to the skin is worn a garment called *ka jympien*, which is a piece of cloth wound round the body and fastened at the loins with a kind of cloth belt, and which hangs down from the waist to the knee or a little above it. Over this is worn a long piece of cloth, sometimes of muga silk, called *ka jainsem*. This is not worn like the Assamese *mekhela* or Bengali *sari*, for it hangs loosely from the shoulders down to a little above the ankles, and is not caught in at the waist. In fact, Khasi women have no waist. It is kept in position by knotting it over both the shoulders. Over the *jainsem* another garment called *ka jain kup* is worn. This is thrown over the shoulders like a cloak, the two ends being knotted in front, it hangs loosely down the back and sides to the ankles. It is frequently of some gay colour, the fashion in Mawkhar and Cherrapunji being some pretty shade of French gray or maroon. Over the head and shoulders is worn a wrapper called *ka tap-moh-khlieh*. This, again, is frequently of some bright colour, but is often white. There is a fold in the *jainsem* which serves as a pocket for keeping odds and ends. Khasi women in cold weather wear gaiters which are often long stockings without feet, or, in the case of the poor, pieces of cloth wound round the legs like putties, or cloth gaiters. I have seen

women at Nongstoin wearing gaiters of leaves. It was explained to me that these were worn to keep off the leeches. The Khasi women might almost be said to be excessively clothed—they wear the cloak in such a way as to hide entirely the graceful contours of the figure. The women are infinitely more decently clothed than Bengali coolie women, for instance; but their dress cannot be described as becoming or graceful, although they show taste as regards the blending of colours in their different garments.

The dress of the Synteng women is a little different. With them the *jain khrywang* takes the place of the Khasi *jainsem*, and is worn by them in the following manner:—One of the two ends is passed under one armpit and its two corners are knotted on the opposite shoulder. The other end is then wound round the body and fastened at the waist, from which it hangs half way down the calf. Over this they wear a sort of apron, generally of *muga* silk. They have the cloak and the head-wrapper just the same as the Khasi women. The Synteng striped cloth may be observed in the picture of the Synteng girl in the plate. Khasi women on festive occasions, such as the annual Nongkrem puja, do not cover the head. The hair is then decked with jewellery or with flowers; but on all ordinary occasions Khasi women cover the head. Wár women, however, often have their heads uncovered.

Modern Dress.—The up-to-date Khasi male wears knickerbockers made by a tailor, stockings, and boots; also a tailor-made coat and waistcoat, a collar without a tie, and a cloth peaked cap. The young lady of fashion dons a chemise, also often a short coat of cloth or velvet, stockings, and smart shoes. Of course she wears the *jainsem* and cloak, but occasionally she may be seen without the latter when the weather is warm. It should be mentioned that the Khasi males are seldom seen without a haversack in which betel-nut, lime, and other odds and ends are kept; and the female has her purse, which, however, is not visible, being concealed within the folds of her lower garment. The haversack of the men is of cloth in the high plateau and in the Bhoi country, but it is of knitted fibre in the Wár country. The Syntengs have a cloth bag, which they call *ka muna*.

The Wár men dress very much the same as the neighbouring Sylheti Hindus. The Wár women, especially the Shella women, wear very pretty yellow and red checked and striped cloths. The cloak is not so frequently worn as amongst Khasis, except in cold weather. The Lynngam dress is very similar to that of the neighbouring Garos. The males wear the sleeveless coat, or *phong marong*, of cotton striped red and blue, red and white, or blue and white, fastened in the same manner as the Khasi coat and with tassels. A small cloth, generally red or blue, is tied between the legs, one end of it being allowed to hang down, as with the Khasis, like an apron in front. A round cap is commonly worn; but the elderly men and people of importance wear turbans. The females wear short cloths of cotton striped red and blue, the cloth reaching just above the knee, like the Garos; married women wear no upper clothing, except in winter, when a red or blue cotton cloth is thrown loosely across the shoulders. The women wear a profusion of blue bead necklaces and brass earrings like the Garos. Unmarried girls wear a cloth tightly tied round the figure, similar to that worn by the Kacharis. A bag of cloth for odds and ends is carried by the men slung across the shoulder. It should be mentioned that even in ancient times great people amongst the Khasis, like Siems, wore waist-cloths, and people of less consequence on great occasions, such as dances. The use of waist-cloths among the Khasis is on the increase, especially among those who live in Shillong and the neighbouring villages, and in Jowai and Cherrapunji.

TATTOOING.

None of the Khasis tattoo; the only people in the hills who tattoo are certain tribes of the Bhoi country which are really Mikir. These tattoo females on the forehead when they attain the age of puberty, a straight horizontal line being drawn from the parting of the hair down the forehead and nose. The line is one-eighth to one-quarter of an inch broad. The Lynngams occasionally tattoo a ring round the wrist of females.

JEWELLERY.

The Khasis, as a people, may be said to be fond of jewellery. The women are specially partial to gold and coral bead necklaces. The beads are round and large, and are usually unornamented with filigree or other work. The coral is imported from Calcutta. The gold bead is not solid, but a hollow sphere filled with lac. These necklaces are worn by men as well as women, especially on gala occasions. Some of the necklaces are comparatively valuable, e.g. that in the possession of the Mylliem Siem family. The gold and coral beads are prepared locally by Khasi as well as by foreign goldsmiths. The latter derive considerable profits from the trade. The Assam Census Report of 1901 shows 133 goldsmiths in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills district, but does not distinguish between Khasis and foreigners. There are Khasi goldsmiths to be found in Mawkhar, Cherrapunji, Mawlai, and other villages. Sylheti goldsmiths are, however, more largely employed than Khasi in Mawsynram and certain other places on the south side of the hills. In Mr. Henniker's monograph on "gold and silver wares of Assam" it is stated that the goldsmiths of Karimganj in Sylhet make specially for Khasis certain articles of jewellery, such as men's and women's earrings, &c. An article of jewellery which is believed to be peculiar to the Khasis is the silver or gold crown. This crown is worn by the young women at dances, such as the annual Nongkrem dance. An illustration of one will be seen by referring to the plate. These crowns are circlets of silver or gold ornamented with filigree work. There is a peak or, strictly speaking, a spike at the back, called *u'tiew-lasubon*, which stands up some six inches above the crown. There are long ropes or tassels of silver hanging from the crown down the back. Earrings are worn both by men and women. The former affect a pattern peculiar to themselves, viz. large gold pendants of a circular or oval shape. Women wear different patterns of earrings, according to locality. An ornament which I believe is also peculiar to the Khasis is the *rupa-tylli*, or silver collar. This is a broad flat silver collar which is allowed to hang down over the neck in front, and which is secured by a fastening behind.

Silver chains are worn by men as well as by women. The men wear them round the waist like a belt, and the women hang them round their necks, the chains being allowed to depend as low as the waist. Bracelets are worn by women; these are either of gold or of silver. The Lynngam males wear bead necklaces, the beads being sometimes of cornelian gathered from the beds of the local hill streams, and sometimes of glass obtained from the plains markets of Damra and Moiskhola. The cornelian necklaces are much prized by the Lynngams, and are called by them *'pieng blei*, or gods' necklaces. Like the Garos, the Lynngams wear as many brass earrings as possible, the lobes of the ears of the females being frequently greatly distended by their weight. These earrings are made out of brass wire obtained from the plains markets. The Lynngams wear silver armlets above the elbow and also on the wrists. It is only a man who has given a great feast who can wear silver armlets above the elbows. These armlets are taken off as a sign of mourning, but never on ordinary occasions. The Lynngams do not wear Khasi jewellery, but jewellery of a pattern to be seen in the Garo Hills. A distinctive feature of the Lynngam women is the very large number of blue bead necklaces they wear. They put on such a large number as to give them almost the appearance of wearing horse collars. These beads are obtained from the plains markets, and are of glass. Further detailed information regarding this subject can be obtained from Mr. Henniker's monograph, which contains a good plate illustrating the different articles of jewellery.

WEAPONS.

The weapons of the Khasis are swords, spears, bows and arrows, and a circular shield which was used formerly for purposes of defence. The swords are usually of wrought iron, occasionally of steel, and are forged in the local smithies. The Khasi sword is of considerable length, and possesses the peculiarity of not having a handle of different material from that which is used for the blade. In the Khasi sword the handle is never made of wood or bone, or

of anything except iron or steel, the result being that the sword is most awkward to hold, and could never have been of much use as a weapon of offence.

The same spear is used for thrusting and casting. The spear is not decorated with wool or hair like the spears of the Naga tribes, but it is nevertheless a serviceable weapon, and would be formidable in the hand of a resolute man at close quarters. The length of the spear is about $6\frac{1}{2}$ feet. The shaft is generally of bamboo, although sometimes of ordinary wood. The spear heads are forged in the local smithies.

The Khasi weapon *par excellence* is the bow. Although no 'Robin Hoods,' the Khasis are very fair archers, and they use the bow largely for hunting. The Khasi bow (*ka ryntieh*) is of bamboo, and is about 5 feet in height. The longest bow in use is said to be about the height of a man, the average height amongst the Khasis being about about 5 feet 2 inches to 5 feet 4 inches. The bowstring is of split bamboo, the bamboos that are used being *u spit*, *u shken*, and *u siej-lieh*.

The arrows (*ki khnam*) are of two kinds: (a) the barbed-headed (*ki pliang*), and (b) the plain-headed (*sop*). Both are made out of bamboo. The first kind is used for hunting, the latter for archery matches only. Archery may be styled the Khasi national game. A description of Khasi archery will be found under the heading "Games." The feathers of the following birds are used for arrows:—Vultures, geese, cranes, cormorants, and hornbills. Arrow-heads are made of iron or steel, and are forged locally. The distance a Khasi arrow will carry, shot from the ordinary bow by a man of medium strength, is 150 to 180 yards. The Khasi shield is circular in shape, of hide, and studded with brass or silver. In former days shields of rhinoceros hide are said to have been used, but nowadays buffalo skin is used. The shields would stop an arrow or turn aside a spear or sword thrust. The present-day shield is used merely for purposes of display.

Before the advent of the British into the hills the Khasis are said to have been acquainted with the art of manufacturing gunpowder, which was prepared in the neighbourhood of Mawsanram, Kynchi, and Cherra. The gunpowder used to be

manufactured of saltpetre, sulphur, and charcoal, the three ingredients being pounded together in a mortar. The Jaintia Rajas possessed cannon, two specimens of which are still to be seen at Jaintiapur. Their dimensions are as follows:—

Length, 9 feet; circumference in the middle, 3 feet 2 inches; diameter of the bore 3 inches. There are some old cannon also at Lyngkyrdem and at Kyndiar in the Khyrim State, of the same description as above. These cannon were captured from the Jaintia Raja by the Siem of Nongkrem. No specimens of the cannon ball used are unfortunately available. There are also small mortars, specimens of which are to be seen in the house of the Siem of Mylliem.

The weapons of the Syntengs are the same as those of the Khasis, although some of them are called by different names. At Nartiang I saw an old Khasi gun, which the people say was fired from the shoulder. I also saw a mortar of the same pattern as the one described amongst the Khasi weapons.

The Wár and Lynngam weapons are also the same, but with different names. The only weapons used by the Bhois (Mikirs) are the spear and bill-hook for cutting down jungle. Butler, writing of the Mikirs 1854, says, "Unlike any other hill tribes of whom we have any knowledge, the Mikirs seem devoid of anything approaching to a martial spirit. They are a quiet, industrious, race of cultivators, and the only weapons used by them are the spear and *da* hand-bill for cutting down jungle. It is said, after an attempt to revolt from the Assamese rule; they were made to forswear the use of arms, which is the cause of the present generation having no predilection for war."