

THE TRIBES OF MEGHALAYA

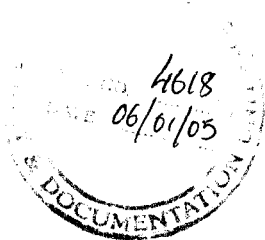
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Introduction

The researchers and the general public have been handicapped by the absence of comprehensive bibliographies. The literature on Meghalaya Tribes is found scattered in several publications. Hence the need of this bibliography which has been provided with Maps, Plates, Descriptions and Author Index. These features will enhance it's usefulness further.

The State of Meghalaya presents a most fertile field for the study of Anthropology and Sociology. Here we have different traditions, folklore, myths and legends as well as customs of different tribes which carry the traces of their ancient chronicle.

Meghalaya, literally the abode of clouds, is practically a new State formed out of the erstwhile State of Assam on 21st January, 1972. It is the homeland of three ancient hill-tribes of India : the *Khasis*, the *Jaintias* and the *Garos*. We all know that a 'tribe' is a collection of families bearing a common name, speaking a common dialect, occupying or professing to occupy a common territory and observing the rule of 'endogamy', a marriage rule which requires a person to marry within a given social group of which he is a member. The social life of the tribes in Meghalaya differs from region to region and tribe to tribe. Besides the Khasis, Jaintias and Garos, the tribe *Hajongs* of Garo Hills also inhabit this State with a few other communities.

Meghalaya is located in North Eastern India which lies between 25'47' North to 26'10' North latitudes and 89'45' East

to 92°47' East longitude. It covers an area of about 225,000 sq. kilometres. It is bounded in the North East and North West by Assam, and with South and South West by a separate nation now known as Bangladesh.

According to 1981 Census, Meghalaya has a population of 13,28,343 of which 6,79,519 are male and 6,48,824 females. In 1976, Govt. of Meghalaya divided this State into five districts : East Khasi Hills Dist. with its Headquarters at Shillong, West Khasi Hills Dist. with Headquarters at Nongstoin, East Garo Hills Dist. with Headquarters at Williamnagar, West Garo Hills Dist. with its Headquarters at Tura and Jaintia Hills Dist. with its Headquarters at Jowai.

Physiographically Meghalaya is dominated by a series of Plateaux collectively known as *Shillong Plateau*, renamed as *Meghalaya Plateau* whose rocks are crystalline rocks like granites and gneisses.

Percentage of literacy in Meghalaya is 33.35. Prior to the entry of migrants, the native population consisted totally of the *animist*. By mid nineteenth century the Christian Missionaries started entering the tribal dominated North Eastern region of India with the purpose of converting the native animist population to Christianity. Meghalaya is the second largest Christian dominated State of India.

Meghalaya districts have their '*District Councils*' under the provisions of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. These Councils look after local administration of primary education, forests and minor development schemes. The Chief Executive Member of this Council, with the help of other Executive Members manages the administrative work.

The tribal races are agriculturists. Principal agricultural crops are Rice, Cotton, Orange, Maize, Ginger, Potato, etc. There are two methods of cultivation of land : the *jhum* cultivation and *terraced* cultivation.

There is a long tradition of conducting anthropological research in India. At the initial stage, the tribal studies in

Meghalaya were undertaken mainly by the British Administrators, Foreign Missionaries and Travellers. British Administrators like Allen, Dalton, Gurdon, Gait, Hunter, Hutton, Playfair, Risley and others published their reports on the tribes of Meghalaya in the shape of Hand Books, Census Reports, District Gazetteers, Journals etc. The monographs : "*The Khasis*" by P.R.T. Gurdon and "*The Garos*" by A. Playfair are obviously the first basic-source and dependable books about the Khasis and the Garos. These books have been used by the later anthropologists as the baseline data for studying changes of culture and other aspects of these tribes.

There are several other excellent works by a good number of other scholars. Among them special mention may be made of Hamlet Bareh, J.K. Bose, Robbins Burling, U.R. von Ehrenfels, K.P. Chattopadhyay, S.K. Bhuyan, H.H. Godwin-Austen, Dewansingh, S. Rongmuthu, M.C. Goswami, D.N. Majumdar, C. Nakane and several others.

Anthropological research contributes to the general theory of Society and Culture as well as serves as an important branch of science. The main object of the author in compiling this bibliography is to assist the Scholars and Researchers to facilitate further researches on the tribes of Meghalaya so that, the Anthropologists, Historians, Sociologists, Geographers, Ethnologists, Archaeologists, Lawyers, Theologists, Psychologists as well as Librarians may be provided with a ready-reference tool able to answer their reference-queries without wastage of their precious time. They may judge from it, the volume of research work that has been done in different aspects of culture of the Meghalayan tribes relating to the economic, social, political, religious, linguistical and aesthetic conditions of their life. An individual researcher may opt for the research theme of his choice. Thus it indicates that large number of studies have been done on the tribal population of Meghalaya specially on the Khasis and the Garos. But, not much work has been done on the Hajongs and the Jaintias. Social, Cultural and Ethnographic research work appears to have received prominence. But there is lot of scope for conducting

research work on Physical Anthropology, Statistics and Demography relating to these tribal people.

A multi-disciplinary bibliography, the present volume takes account of all important writings on the Meghalayan Tribes of India both of the pre and post Independence period. A careful study of this bibliography will identify the important gaps in our knowledge of them. A large number of publications on these Tribes are papers published in journals or presented to various Seminars, Conferences etc. Publication like Monograph are not many in number.

For the preparation of this Bibliography, several old and new documents, records, periodicals, books etc. were consulted. However there were some publications having a bearing on the subject which could not be procured for verification due to a variety of factors. A few items collected from secondary sources may lack the full bibliographical details. These could not be helped and are deeply regretted. It is, also, possible that, some articles might have escaped my notice, and certain errors might have crept in which have not been detected by me, for which I seek the indulgence and forgiveness of my readers. I shall be grateful if such lacuna are pointed out to me so that these could be rectified in the next edition.

I have not found it necessary to give annotations in this Bibliography. A serious student will be benefitted if he reads the relevant original material himself. Cryptic annotations are rarely of much use. I had also access to several unpublished dissertations, research reports and papers of Seminars and Symposiums. The preparation of Bibliography is always an ongoing process. I had to decide at some point of time to fix a dividing line and stop adding entries. Otherwise it would have caused confusion. As a result of this, there may be omission of publications which have been brought out after Dec. 1984.

If this bibliography is found of some help to the Scholars that will give real satisfaction to me and I shall feel amply rewarded pains I have taken. I shall welcome suggestions, addi-

tional information and reactions from the readers to improve this in the next edition.

I am grateful to the Library, Anthropological Survey of India, Shillong and Library, Gauhati University, Gauhati. Finally, I must express my respectful gratitude to my mother Mrs. Malati Sen for her kind help and constant encouragement.

SIPRA SEN

Rehabari, Gauhati,

Meghalaya's tribal groups also maintain their matrilineal system, with property and names passed down from mother to daughter, and men moving in with their maternal in-laws after marriage. Welcome to Meghalaya. Separating the Assam valley from the plains of Bangladesh, hilly Meghalaya (the abode of clouds™) is a cool, pine-fresh mountain state set on dramatic horseshoes of rocky cliffs. Cherrapunjee and Mawsynram are among the wettest places on Earth; most of the rain falls between June and September, creating very impressive waterfalls and carving out some of Asia's longest caves.