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MIKIR OF ASSAM**

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FOREWORD

The Constitution lays down that “the State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interest of the weaker sections of the people and in particular of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation”.

To assist States in fulfilling their responsibility in this regard, the 1961 Census provided a series of special tabulations of the social and economic data on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

The lists of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are notified by the President under the Constitution and the Parliament is empowered to include in or exclude from the lists, any caste or tribe. During the Census operations, the enumerators frequently face the problem of identifying the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. In the President's notification, though in some cases, the names of the sub-castes and sub-tribes and synonyms are given, there are many cases where such names have not been provided in the list. The Census enumerators, therefore, require guidance about the acceptance or rejection of claims that they come across during the operations of some communities to be treated as sub-castes or sub-tribes of the notified Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes. For this purpose, the Census Organisation has thought it wise to undertake detailed ethnographic studies in respect of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes of India. This is also in conformity with the past Census tradition of presenting authentic ethnographic account of Indian communities.

For conducting the ethnographic studies, a number of ancillary operations are undertaken by the Social Studies Unit of the Office of the Registrar General, India, as well as the staff of the Directors of Census Operations in the various States. These ancillary operations include : (1) compilation of available information on each Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and preparation of bibliography in respect of them; (2) preparation and interpretation of maps showing distribution of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes over time and space; and (3) special studies on cultural, technological and economic changes taking place among the various tribal communities.

Dr. B. K. Roy Burman, Deputy Registrar General, Social Studies Unit, assisted by Shri N. G. Nag, Officer on Special Duty and Shri A. M. Kurup, Research Officer is coordinating all these studies at the Central level. I avail of this opportunity to extend my warm thanks to all my colleagues who have undertaken various studies on different aspects of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes of India.

Shri A. K. Paul, Investigator, of the Office of the Director of Census Operations, Assam and Dr. P. D. Sharma, Investigator, of the Registrar General's Office, conducted the field investigations on Mikir of Assam and prepared the draft. Shri N. G. Nag and Dr. B. K. Roy Burman, edited the report.

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P R E F A C E

As an adjunct of 1961 Census, preparation of ethnographic monographs on a number of selected Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and ethnic groups with special status and ethnographic glossaries on all Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes have been taken up by the Census Organisation.

In India, the Census Organisation has a long tradition of undertaking ethnographic studies. Besides, there are certain reasons why, for its own operational purposes, it is necessary for the Census Organisation to take up such studies. During Census operation, the Census Organisation is required to make a complete enumeration of all the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the country. The ethnographic studies are required to establish the identity of the various communities including their segments. The social boundaries of various communities are not always rigid, they are in a state of flux. Ethnographic studies are required to keep track of these changes as well, otherwise comparison of consecutive Census figures would give altogether wrong picture in respect of them. There is another aspect of study in respect of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in which the Census Organisation as well as the welfare and planning agencies are interested—it is ethno-demography. In 1961 Census, separate tables were prepared in respect of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes on the following items :—

- (i) Industrial classification of persons at work and non-workers by sex,
- (ii) Age and marital status,
- (iii) Education,
- (iv) Religion,
- (v) Persons not at work classified by sex and type of activity for Scheduled Castes,
- (iv) Persons not at work classified by sex and type of activity for Scheduled Tribes,
- (vii) Mother tongue and bilingualism for Scheduled Tribes.

The data available in these tables are to be analysed in respect of each Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe, so that the historical and cultural factors responsible for the demographic pattern can be identified and the impact of the emergent demographic pattern on the social structure can be determined.

The insight gained by the Census Organisation, through ethnographic studies of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes will be useful for interpretation of the demographic pattern for the country as a whole. Recent studies show that in India, even now, it is difficult to correctly appreciate the various social and economic processes without reference to caste. On the other hand, in the interest of ultimate national goal, caste is not being recorded in Census, except in case of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The insight gained through ethno-demographic studies of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is, therefore, of invaluable help for Census.

At the same time, such study is very much useful for planning of development activities among the castes or tribes concerned. For instance, if the Census shows that great deal of diversification of occupation has taken place among the Parayans of Kerala, it is important for the planners to know whether the community consists of a number of disconnected segments or whether it means that a great deal of individual mobility is taking place where the main focus of community is other than traditional occupation. Again, when among the Bauris of Orissa, it is found that a very high proportion of the population is engaged in agricultural labour and next to them a high proportion is found in cultivation and also that there is considerable diversification of occupation, the following questions of sociological and practical importance arise :—

- (a) What is the historical relation between the agricultural labourers and the cultivators among the Bauris of Orissa ? The Census data suggests one of the two possible developments, namely, (1) bulk of the Bauris were cultivators and by a process of degeneration of their economy have become agricultural labourers, (2) on the other hand, it is also possible that the bulk of them were agricultural labourers and through a process of improvement of their economic condition, many of them have become cultivators.
- (b) The fact that a considerable diversification of occupation has taken place, suggests that the economy has not remained in a stagnant condition. Here, it is to be examined whether the diversification is the result of upward mobility or downward mobility or even horizontal mobility, and what is the actual process by which the diversification has taken place.

- (c) The social dimensions corresponding to the diversification in economic life have to be examined. It is also to be examined whether in spite of diversification of occupation, the ethos of a particular occupation, for instance agriculture, continues to be dominant. In that case, diversification might have created problems of adjustment in values and attitudes.

Instances can be multiplied, but it is not necessary. What have been stated above, are enough to bring out the significance of ethno-demographic studies for planners.

The above dimensions of ethno-demographic studies have evolved through stages. In 1960, at the instance of Shri Mitra, Registrar General of India, a questionnaire for collection of ethnographic data was circulated among the Census Superintendents. In October, 1961, the Handicrafts and Social Studies Unit was set up in the Office of the Registrar General of India to co-ordinate the ethnographic studies and a few other ancillary studies, like village surveys, handicrafts surveys. In December, 1961, a Study Camp was organised in Delhi, where the personnel engaged in ethnographic studies, handicrafts studies and other social investigations in the offices of the Census Superintendents, participated. In the Study Camp, it was considered that the ethnographic notes would mainly aim at making an objective assessment of the state of development of the different Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the context of the changes taking place in technology, economic organisation and total culture pattern of the country. It was further suggested that primary focus of the study should not be on the exotic elements of the cultures of the different castes and tribes. It should be on the efforts of the communities concerned, to adjust to the modern conditions of life. In the light of the above decisions of the Study Camp, rapid ethnographic studies have been carried on by the staff of the Superintendents of Census Operations as well as by the Handicrafts and Social Studies Unit of the Office of the Registrar General of India, in different parts of the country. These rapid surveys have brought out a number of methodological and operational problems. In May and June, 1966, two Ethnographic Study Camps were held at Kurseong and Hyderabad, where personnel from the Office of the Registrar General of India as well as from the Offices of Census Superintendents participated. In the Study Camp held at Kurseong, the Secretary, Tribal Welfare, West Bengal, and Director, Tribal Welfare, West Bengal, also participated. In these Study Camps, an integrated frame for preparation of ethnographic notes was discussed and adopted. A copy of the same may be seen at "Annexure". In addition to these studies in respect of each Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe separately, a number of subsidiary studies were undertaken by the Handicrafts and Social Studies Unit of the Office of the Registrar General of India, for gaining insight into a number of problems of general nature which have bearing on the different aspects of the lives of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes of the country. These subsidiary studies are as follows :—

1. Shifting cultivation in Santal Parganas of Bihar and Garo Hills of Assam.
2. Pattern of Rehabilitation of displaced tribals of Rourkela.
3. Socio-economic survey of the Scheduled areas of Rajasthan.
4. Socio-economic developments among the Hillmen of North-East India.
5. Social structure and cultural orientation of Christians converted from Scheduled Castes.
6. Traditional rights of scavenging as claimed by scavengers in urban areas.
7. Grouping of castes and tribes with reference to occupation and inter-group and intra-group comparative study on the basis of the data available in earlier censuses.
8. Social mobility movements among the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

On the basis of each of the subsidiary studies indicated above, a separate monograph is under preparation. It is also proposed to prepare separate monographs on a few Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and ethnic groups with special status in each State. Besides, ethnographic glossaries are proposed to be prepared in respect of all Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. For this purpose about one lakh references have been indexed.

The present report on Mikir is one of the monographs proposed to be brought out by the Census Organisation. Originally the field investigation and draft report was prepared by Shri A. K. Paul, Investigator of the Office of the Director of Census Operations, Assam. Later on detailed field investigation was done by Dr. P. D. Sharma with operational advice of Shri A. M. Kurup, Research Officer, Office of the Registrar General, India. While the specific focus of the study was defined and also the design of the investigation was provided by me, I made only minor editorial changes in the draft prepared by Dr. Sharma.

Shri H. L. Harit, Investigator (now Research Officer) who is looking after the compilation of information from published sources in respect of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and other special ethnic groups of India deserves mention.

Shri A. Mitra, Registrar General of India for 1961 Census, whose farsighted initiative is responsible for social investigations in a large number of fields including ethnography, deserves thanks of all students of Indology. I have been benefited not only by his inspiration, but also by his valuable suggestions in connection with the ethnographic studies, as well as the other studies, conducted by the Handicrafts and Social Studies Unit.

The tradition built by Shri Mitra, has been continued by Shri A. Chandra Sekhar, the present Registrar General of India. Under his guidance, the scope of the Social Studies by the Census Organisation has been further expanded. In spite of his other preoccupations, he has gone through the final drafts of the ethnographic notes and given a number of valuable suggestions. I avail of this opportunity to express my gratefulness to him.

B. K. ROY BURMAN

MIKIR OF ASSAM

Name, Identity, Origin and History

The Mikirs are one of the Scheduled Tribes of Assam according to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Lists, Modification Order, 1956.

While among the non-Mikirs they are more generally known Mikirs, by the name Mikir, they call themselves as *Karbi* or *Arleng*, of which the former term is more common in use. The Mikirs call the non-Mikirs, particularly the Dimasa Kacharis, Bodo Kacharis and Assamese as *Parok*. This has been derived from the Mikir word 'Parok-jangphong' (Parok=of the non-Mikirs, jangphong=fruit; that is fruit of the non-Mikirs, implying jackfruit). The etymological significance of the name 'Karbi' as the legend goes derives from the latter half of the word 'Thakarkabi', meaning offering of sacrifices at the beginning of worship of god, marriage ceremony, harvesting of crops and birth of a child, which is called 'Thakar Kibi'. The word ultimately got transformed into 'Karbi', thus, omitting "tha" and "ki".

There is another legend which tells us that once upon a time a "Mikir" man left a torch flame in his house when his wife asked him "Me askar chenghoi bi kangkok" meaning why he left the flame. These words some how got transformed into 'Karbi' and so the later generations were known as 'Karbi'.

According to Lyall (1908, pp. 4-5), *Arleng* properly means a Mikir man and not a man in general who would, according to him be called 'monit' or 'munit'. Further, according to him the etymological significance of the name *Arleng* came from the fact that their forefathers generally used to dwell on hill slopes and so they were known as *Arleng* or hill dwellers or hillmen.

According to Gemini Paul (1956, p. 152) the word 'Mikir' is a combination of 'Mikiri', meaning 'hill people'. But according to the Mikir this has been wrongly quoted by the author. Instead of *Mi-kiri* it should be *Meng-kiri* (Meng=cat; kiri= to search) and according to the Mikirs there is a legend behind this which is as follows :

Once long time back a few Mikirs were in search of a pet cat which they had lost in the jungle while they were hunting. They roamed through the jungle in search of the cat. During the search for the cat they met a non-Mikir person (could not say the community with certainty possibly Dimasa Kachari or Assamese) in the jungle. The non-Mikir asked the Mikirs what they were searching. The Mikirs who could not follow his language, only answered *Meng-kiri*, *Meng-kiri*, that is, searching for a cat, searching for a cat. Since then the Mikirs are known as *Meng-kiri* which later got transformed into Mikir by the non-Mikirs.

The Mikirs do not claim any relationship with any other tribe or community. According to Edward Stack (1908, pp. 4-5), the Mikirs belong undoubtedly to the great Tibeto-Burman stock, while Gemini Paul (1956), stated "though originally of Austric origin, probably of the latest migration, they are now overwhelmingly a mixture of the 'Austric' and 'Bodo' with the latter as the predominant strain". Sir George Grierson (1904-1928) classed them as intermediate between the Bodo and Western Nagas on linguistic grounds.

According to Dalton (1872, p. 54), "they were driven by Kacharies from what is called Tolaram's country between Nowgong and Kachar, and sought refuge in Jyntia, but not being satisfied with their reception, placed themselves under the Rajas of Assam, and have ever since peaceably occupied the hill country in which they are now settled. It is said they were disarmed or made to forswear the use of arms by the Assam Government, and this is assigned as the cause of their unwarlike disposition, which makes them good subjects, but exposes them to the attacks of their more warlike neighbours". The Tolaram's country implies the area under the rule of the Dimasa Kachari King whose General or 'Senapati' was Tularam, this has been opined by some of the Mikirs during the present investigation.

According to Lyall (c.f. Assam Census Report, 1881, pp. 78-81)..... "there are sufficient indications to warrant us in declaring Mikir to be the Kinsmen of Bodo rather than of Khasi.....On the whole, until we know more about the Naga dialects bordering on the Mikir country. I think we may conclude that this language is an outlier of the Bodo or Kachari group, though perhaps widely separated from the general stock than other member of family." Edward Stack (1908), claimed that the Mikirs belong to the great Tibeto-Burman stock, while Gemini Paul (1956), stated that "though of Austric origin, probably of the latest migration, they are now overwhelmingly a mixture of the 'Austric' and 'Bodo' with the latter as the predominant strain". According to Sir George Grierson (1904-28), Mikirs were classed on linguistic grounds as intermediate between Bodo and Western Nagas and Lyall (Census of Assam, 1881) supported the fact from linguistic grounds and classed them as kinsman of Bodo.

In Robinson's Account of Assam (cf. Assam Census Report, 1881, pp. 77-78) it is stated, "..... the Mikirs have a tradition that their ancestors originally came from the Jaintia Hills. Colonel Dalton's version of the legend is that they only went to Jaintia on their expulsion from Tolaram's country by the Kacharies, and that not being satisfied with their new quarters, they eventually placed themselves under the protection of the Rajas of Assam. The story that I

have been told of their first appearance in Assam is that being driven out of Jaintia hills into what is now the Nowgong district, they sent emissaries to claim protection from the Ahom governor of the province of Raha. These luckless persons being unable to make themselves understood were straight away buried alive in a tank which that officer was then engaged in excavating. The hostilities which ensued were concluded by an embassy to the king himself in Sibsagar, and the Mikir have been living peacefully ever since in the territory assigned them."

According to Pakrasi (1954), Arlengs or Mikirs have a vague idea that they are the progeny of Valmiki of Mahabharat. Sometime in the distant past, the ancestors of the present day Arlengs had settled on the eastern slopes of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, bordering on the Kopili river (Nihang). The following account collected by Pakrashi (1954) about the traditional story of Arleng or Mikir migration is very informative.

When descendants of Valmiki were living peacefully in Nihang, as the legend runs, they were troubled by occasional raids by Khasi invaders. Gradually they had to withdraw from their original settlements and moved into the Kingdom of some Kachari king of ancient Hirimbapur (present day Dimapur) and settled down as revenue payers (ryots) of the Kachari king. The common Kacharies as well as the king were naturally suspicious about these new settlers. In the pretext of 'testing' their intelligence the ministers and the king decided to give them adequate punishment. The king then proclaimed that all Arlengs of his kingdom should assemble before him. When they came to the court they were asked to straighten a buffalo horn without causing any damage to it. They were also told that if they failed, the king would seize their movable and immovable properties and that they would lose their 'status' of ryots. Apparently this task was impossible, but fortunately a group of friendly cowboys came to their help, and they could straighten the horn by applying liberally wax on it. By their amicable behaviour and unfailing allegiance to the king, the Mikirs won the friendship of the Kacharies, and gradually became the most favourite subjects of the Kachari king. But some of the court ministers could not tolerate the popularity and prosperity of the new settlers and they tried to convince the king that the Arlengs might dethrone him. The intrigues proved successful and the loyalty and industriousness of these settlers appeared to the king to be some subtle move to overthrow the Kachari rule. The Arlengs now tried to test the intelligence of the Kacharies and asked them to flatten a curved gourd. The king himself accepted the gourd, but in his attempts to straighten it, he broke the neck of the gourd, others also tried but failed. This convinced the king and the common Kacharies that the Arlengs were really intelligent. But a section of the ministers being jealous, tried to poison the ears of the king with fallacious allegations. They again appealed to the king

to test the intelligence of the Mikirs by asking them to make a garland of sand and paddy flowers, they also requested the king to take severe action against them, if they failed, so that they may not live in this kingdom.

The king then asked the Mikirs to get this thing done. They again sought the help of the cowboy and with amazing ingenuity the cowboy did what was impossible for the Mikirs. The king was so delighted with the garland that he at once proposed to hold a royal hunt to test the skill of the Arleng ryots. The party was not successful because no game was found. On his way back, the king however, found a tiger which he brought home.

The crafty ministers advised the king to feed the cub on cow's milk, but secret instructions were given by them to spread the false rumour that the king wanted the Mikirs to feed his tiger cub upon human milk. Men were accordingly, sent to collect milk from the Arleng women. The spell of torture and molestation that followed compelled the Arlengs to flee from the Kachari Kingdom and search for a new home-land where they could live in peace. When the king's men again visited the Arleng settlement for a fresh supply of milk, then a solitary and brave girl Rongpharpi who stayed behind in the village asked them inside the dark cottage one by one to collect the milk. As the king's men entered the dark cottage, came the axe from Rongpharpi and the man was severed in two. Thus many Kacharies lost their lives in the hand of the gallant girl Rongpharpi. The rest fled in panic to the kings.

On getting this information, the king with his troops followed the trail of the fleeing Arlengs in the deep jungles but the pursuit appeared to be fruitless. So the king sent spies who entered deep into the forest and came across the fugitive Arlengs, mixed and stayed with them. But one night, the Arlengs discovered that their Kachari 'friend' had disappeared. So immediately they moved forward towards remote forests and came to Barpani (near Chaparmukh railway junction) where a big river obstructed their path which they crossed and settled on a clearing reaching the bank. On getting this information the king moved to Barpani with his troops to punish the Arlengs.

The Kacharies tried to cross the river by a wooden bridge, but when the king's men reached the middle, the bridge collapsed drowning a good many of them. The Arlengs thanked God for the rout of their enemies. The king then gave up the pursuit because he came to believe that God was protecting the Arlengs.

One night Rongpharpi dreamt that God was asking her to come and visit his kingdom, next morning, Rongpharpi found a white elephant hitherto unknown to the Arlengs, and was besieged herself with

joy, for God had sent this elephant to show the path to his kingdom. Other Arlengs came and saw this miracle. They also found a big tiger roaming about in the clearing made by the white elephant. Rongpharpi then spoke about her dream and told the Arlengs that God had ordained that she should lead the Arlengs to his abode. So Rongpharpi trailed the foot prints of the tiger and the Arlengs followed her down the clearing in the jungle. During their trailing Rongpharpi chanced upon a full granary with a few beautiful huts nestling nearby, this she considered to be the kingdom of God, and the Arlengs settled down on the site. Years passed by and the Arlengs lived in peace and prosperity.

Meanwhile, Chintong, who lived in God's company fell in love with Rongpharpi and she too could not resist him. This made Arnamkethe angry with Chintong and Rongpharpi. She dreamt that God was very much displeased with her conduct and ordered her folk to leave his kingdom. The Arlengs had then to leave the kingdom of God. Chintong proposed marriage to her, Rongpharpi accepted him, and they lived as man and wife. The Arlengs too accepted this union in their society.

In time a boy was born to Chintong and was named Thong, who gradually grew up to a handsome youngman. But Arlengs could not enjoy their prosperity for long, because the Khasi and Jaintia people destroyed their houses and fields. When the Arlengs began to resist the invaders, the Khasi king proposed that the Arlengs should cooperate with the Khasi in clearing jungles and making roads. One evening the Khasi and the Arleng working parties assembled in a rest house; there the Khasi gang leader wished to count the Arlengs who were working. The counting was done by marking every tenth man on the forehead with a dao-blade. Thong came to learn about the incident and after taking blessings of his mother he appealed to the Arlengs to muster courage and fight-back.

The next time when the Khasis and the Arlengs again assembled in the rest house, the Khasis proposed that heads should be counted as before. Thong this time took the opportunity and suggested that the Arlengs should now take their turn in counting the Khasis. The Khasis agreed, and Thong now took the revenge, he began to chop off the head of every tenth man, and in a short time many Khasi heads were severed. Then the Khasis tried to run away, but the Arlengs pounced upon them and killed many of them.

When the king learnt of this, he became enraged and sent two of his best warriors to teach a lesson to Thong and the Arlengs. Thong fought gallantly and killed one, and gouged the eyes of the other and then sent the heads of the warriors back to the Khasi king.

To make peace, the Khasi king welcomed Thong to his court, where he felt proud and boasted that even wild elephants would be less than his match, what to speak of man. The Khasi king now proposed that Thong should demonstrate his might in a tug-of-war with thousand elephants. Thong accepted the challenge and when the elephants were brought, they raised their trunks and saluted the hero in respect and thus he won the challenge. The Khasis were amazed and they all immediately acclaimed him as a superhuman hero and warrior.

The Khasi king next time ordered his men to let loose venomous cobras upon him by surprise. When Thong found that he was about to be encircled by the snakes, he clamped his battle shields tight over the mouth of the pits and chopped off their fangs. So the Khasi king was finally convinced that, Thong was no ordinary mortal. So he declared before his people that he would adopt Thong as his eldest son in order to succeed him and ordered his subjects to pay respect to Thong as the eldest son of their king. Thong was greeted with cheers by the Khasis, except a few who could not feel happy over it.

When after sometime the Khasi king learnt that the Arlengs had suffered at the hands of the Kacharies, then he asked Thong to take out an expedition against the Kacharies.

Thong and his soldiers successfully subdued the Kacharies in due course. On their way back the Khasi soldiers encamped in a banana grove where some of them made a plot to kill Thong. They requested Thong to pluck a few mangoes, since they could not climb the tall trees. When Thong was innocently plucking mangoes unaware of such a plot, the plotters sent swarms of arrows and Thong who was unarmed, met his tragic end. His head was chopped off. The rebels told the king a fabricated story of a bandit falling upon them on their way home. The king immediately ordered them to fetch the severed head, which proved to be that of Thong, for Thong had a tooth set with gold.

This was a shock to the king, the common Khasis and the Arlengs. Thong's mother Rongpharpi was driven mad with grief. In revenge, the king ordered live crucifixion for those who murdered Thong. Thus Khasis and Arlengs lost their great friend and warrior whose memory lives for ever in their heart. From that day the Arlengs and Khasis lived together in peace until the Arlengs migrated, many years later to their present home.

The belief still exists among the Mikirs of today that they are the descendants of a great Raja called Thong Nokbe (not Phongnogbi as reported in the Census of Assam, 1891, p. 255). Nobody knows where this Raja came from but he was known to have married many women of the country where he finally settled in the far west and that his descendants

worked their way eastwards towards the present district of Cachar in Assam. This claim is perhaps true to the extent that some of the villages in the North Cachar Hills bear the names belonging to their language, indicating their former presence. They had once been settled in strength in North Cachar to the immediate north of the Barail range and had been in contact with the Angami, the Kaccha and the Kabui Nagas. Due to the oppression of the Kachari kings they migrated westwards to Jaintia Hills in search for protection from the Jaintia Raja, but while migrating to the Jaintia territory they were dissatisfied with the treatment meted-out to them by the Jaintia chiefs. They, therefore, resolved to move into Ahom territory and sent an emissary to the Ahom Governor at Raha (Nowgong) offering to place themselves under his protection. As their envoys could not make themselves understood, they were buried alive in a tank. The hostilities which thus ensued were concluded by an embassy to the king himself in Sibsagar. Since then the Mikris have been living peacefully in the territory assigned to them (Census of Assam, 1891).

Distribution and Population Trend

Regarding the geographical distribution of the Mikirs, Lyall (cf. Assam Census Report 1881, p. 78) stated that, in the isolated mountainous block which fills the triangle between the Brahmaputra on the north, the Dhansiri valley on the east, and Kopili and Kalang Valleys on the west, the characteristic elements of Mikir topographical nomenclature as *Lang*, river, water; *Langso*, small stream; *Inglong*, mountains *Long*, stone; *Rong*, village; *Sar*, chiefs; are found every where, as well as in the southern part, now inhabited by the Rengma Nagas, from the hills across the Dhansiri as in the northern portion included in the Nowgong district and more particularly as the Mikir Hills. They are also found in considerable numbers to the south of the Langkher valley, in the mountains now inhabited by Kukis, Kutcha Nagas (Kaccha Nagas) and Kacharies, as far south as the courses of the Jhiri and Jhinam. In the centre of North Cachar they are rare; but there is a considerable group of Mikir names again to the west of this tract about the head water of the Kopili and on the southern face of the hills north of Badarpur. Mikir terms also abound, mixed with Lalungs, on the northern face of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, and along the courses of the Kopili and Umkher rivers. Across the Brahmaputra the topographical nomenclature shows no trace of them, though there are a few recent colonies of them in Darrang.

“They are thus essentially a people of the lower hills and adjoining lowlands of the central portion of the range stretching from the Garo Hills to the Patkoi. Their neighbours are (1) Syntengs of Jaintia on the west; (2) Bodos or Kacharis on the south; and (3) Assamese on the north and east where the country is inhabited at all; and intermixed with them, are recent colonies of Kukis and Rengma Nagas and older

ones of Lalungs and Rengma Nagas and older ones of Lalungs and Hillkacharis.” (cf. Assam Census Report, 1881, p. 78).

The distribution of Mikirs as given by Robinson (cf. Assam Census Report, 1881, p. 78) is as follows: “.....their present seat is chiefly in the Mikir Hills, a low mountain tract in Nowgong, out off by the valleys of the Kopili and Dhansiri from the mountain range of the Naga Hills, but with a Naga population in its southern half, while large numbers again are to be found still in their original settlements along the foot of the Jaintia Hills both in Nowgong and Kamrup. A few communities have emigrated into Upper Assam and across the river into Darrang.”

As early as in 1891 and 1901 separate figures on the population of the Mikir tribe are available. Both in 1891 and in 1901 separate figures are available on the persons returned as Mikir and people returned as speaking Mikir language. It may, however, be noted that the two figures do not tally. The two sets of figures are given below :

Name of district	1891		1901	
	Mikir persons	Mikir speakers	Mikir persons	Mikir speakers
Kamrup . . .	13,595	12,193	10,593	8,026
Darrang . . .	2,362	2,362	2,814	3,108
Nowgong . . .	47,881	44,833	35,730	34,273
Sibsagar . . .	1,144	1,013	22,911	439
Lakhimpur . . .	..	21	..	1
Total . . .	64,982	60,422	72,048	45,847

Source :—Census of India 1901, Vol. IV, Part 1, pp. 29-31).

The following table shows the population of Mikirs in the State of Assam from 1901 to 1961.

Year	Total population	Males	Females
1901	87,335	44,256	43,079
1911	106,259	54,257	52,002
1921	111,629	57,383	54,246
1931	129,797	66,045	63,752
1941	149,746	77,108	72,638
1951	152,537	80,373	72,164
1961	121,082	62,827	58,255

The above table shows a sudden fall of the Mikir population in the 1961 Census. This may be due to the fact that during 1961 Census only those Mikirs residing in the four Autonomous Hill Districts of Assam were enumerated while those in the plain districts were accounted with the general population. According to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Lists Modification Order, 1956, notified under the Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, Notification No. SRO 2477A, dated 29th October, 1956 (Census of India 1961, Vol. I, Part V.A. (ii) p. (ii) the Scheduled Castes are regarded as such throughout the State of Assam, but the Scheduled Tribes are confined to certain Scheduled Areas within

the State. A Scheduled Tribe of the Autonomous District can be regarded as such anywhere within the four Autonomous Districts of Assam, but he cannot be regarded as a Scheduled Tribe if he goes outside the precincts of the Autonomous Districts. Thus, a Mikir residing in Sibsagar District cannot be regarded as a Scheduled Tribe.

The Arlengs or Mikirs according to the 1961 Census are found only in the hill areas of Assam, particularly in the United Mikir and North Cachar Hills and Khasi and Jaintia Hills districts, and an insignificant number of them are found in Garo Hills and Mizo Hills as evidenced from the table below :

State/District	Total population			Rural			Urban		
	Total population	Male	Female	Total population	Male	Female	Total population	Male	Female
Assam	121,082	62,827	58,255	120,953	62,730	58,223	129	97	32
Garo Hills	6	5	1	1	1	—	5	4	1
Khasi and Jaintia Hills.	4,188	2,296	1,892	4,133	2,253	1,880	55	43	12
United Mikir and North Cachar Hills.	116,887	60,525	56,362	116,818	60,475	56,343	69	50	19
Mizo Hills	1	1	..	1	1	..	..	..	..

(Source :—Census of India, 1961, Vol. III, Assam, Part V-A, pp. 187-205).

It is evidenced from the table that the Mikir population is predominantly concentrated in the rural areas of the United Mikir and North Cachar Hills District and in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills District. They are also found in great number in their original settlement along the foot of the Jaintia Hills, as has already been stated earlier, they had once settled in great strength in the Jaintia Hills but were driven

away from this area by the Jaintia Rajas. Possibly this may be the reason for the lesser concentration of the Mikirs in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills today.

The following table shows the Mikir population by sex and broad age groups according to 1961 Census. (Census of India, 1961, Vol. III, Assam, Part V-A, pp. 260-269).

Name of State/District	Total population			0-14 years		15-44 years		45+		Age not stated	
	Persons	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Assam	121,082	62,827	58,255	25,767	29,297	24,893	20,524	12,036	8,423	131	11
Garo Hills	6	5	1	2	..	3	1	—	—	..	..
United Khasi and Jaintia Hills	4,188	2,296	1,892	788	520	1,188	983	320	388	—	1
United Mikir and North Cachar Hills	116,887	60,525	56,362	24,977	28,777	23,701	19,540	11,716	8,035	131	10
Mizo Hills	1	1	..	..	..	1	..	..	..	..	..

The above table shows that in the state of Assam majority of the Mikir population is found in the age group of 0-14 years. This is also observed in the United Mikir and North Cachar Hills district, while in the United Khasi and Jaintia Hills district majority

population is found to be in the age group of 15-44 years. As the bulk of the population comes from the age-group of 0-14 years this may indicate that there is less infant mortality and when these children attain the marriageable age there is every likelihood

of the increase of the population in the future. The less number of the Mikir population in the age group 15-44 years may reflect, the premature death or migration of the Mikir population of the workable age, though nothing definitely can be stated, unless a detailed demographic study of the Mikir population is made.

Physical Characteristics

The following account of Lyall (1908, p. 4) throws some light on the physical characteristics of the Mikirs. "In features, the men resemble Assamese of the lower classes more than most of the Tibeto-Burman races. Their colour is light yellowish brown and the girls are after fair. The men are as tall as the majority of the hill races of Assam, Colonel L. A. Waddel's eighteen specimens averaging 1633 mm. or 5.354 feet in height, the tallest being 5.583 ft. and the shortest 5.108 ft. The average is noticeably higher than that of their neighbours, the Khasis. The average head measurements in those specimens were, length-181 mm; breadth-141 mm.' Cephalic index 77.9. The nose is broad at the base, and often flat, giving a nasal index of 85.1, and an orbitio nasal of 107.7. The facial hair is scanty, and only a thin moustache is worn. The front of the head is sometimes, but not generally shorn. The hair is gathered into a knot behind, which hangs over the nape of the neck. The body is muscular, and the men are capable of prolonged exertion."

Based on 18 Mikirs Waddel (1900) has found their mean stature to be 1633 mm, cephalic index 78.17 and nasal index 85.84. (Gupta and Dutta, 1962).

Pakrasi (1953) gives the following data of the anthropometric characters of Mikirs (100).

	Mean±	S.E.	S.D.
Stature(mm)	1592.2±	5.6	56.4
Cephalic Index	73.74±	0.33	3.32
Nasal Index	78.84±	0.84	8.36
Facial Index	83.86±	0.55	5.47

(Gupta & Dutta, 162, p. 9.)

The stature, cephalic index, nasal index and facial index distribution as given by Pakrasi (1953) are as follows. (The number of individuals studied by Pakrasi was 100).

Stature.	f	%
Very Short	5	5.00
Short	54	54.00

Below Medium	19	19.00
Medium	14	14.00
Above Medium	7	7.00
Tall	1	1.00
Cephalic Index	f	%
Hyperdolichocephal/Dolichocephal.	82	82.00
Mesocephal	17	17.00
Brachycephal	1	1.00
Nasal Index	f	%
Leptorrhine	20	20.00
Mesorrhine	60	60.00
Chamaerrhine	19	19.00
Hyperchamaerrhine	1	1.00
Facial Index	f	%
Hyperuryprosopic	20	20.00
Euryprosopic	32	32.00
Mesoprosopic	26	26.00
Leptoprosopic	16	16.00
Hyperuryprosopic	6	6.00

The above information on the physical characteristics of the Mikir shows that they are a short staturd, dolicocephalic people with mesorrhine nose.

Family, Clan, Kinship, and other Analogous Divisions

The Mikir family is normally nuclear in character consisting of husband, wife and unmarried children. Joint family with married children living along with their parents, is rarely found as according to their usual practice the married children usually set up a house of their own after marriage. However, many of them living near urban centres are found to have joint families which they ascribe to economic pressure. A nuclear family often consists of 4-6 members although very large families, with more than 8-9 members are not very unfrequent.

Generally, the eldest male member, by and large, the father is the sole authority in the family. In the absence of the father the eldest son, if an adult, shoulders the responsibility and takes full charge of the family. The mother is the mistress of the house next to the father and is much respected. Both men and women enjoy equal status in the family as well as in their society save for the inheritance of property where the son is the heir.

The Mikir society is patrilineal and the inheritance also follows the same line. On the death of the father, the eldest son, if unmarried, takes over the

responsibility of the family and also inherits the property; otherwise the responsibility of the family falls on the younger son. Generally the father divides and allots the property among his sons during his life time giving the eldest one the biggest share, as he has to take the sole responsibility after the death of his father. In case of difference of opinion between the parents and the eldest son, the younger son inherits the property and also shoulders the responsibility of the family after the death of the father. In case any dispute arises in this regard, it is referred to the *mei* (village durbar) whose decision over the matter is always taken as final by the parties concerned. Such cases are, however, rare and the sons are generally well satisfied with what they get according to the provisions of the will made by the father. In case the father does not have any male issue, his property passes to his male relatives, generally to his brothers, who divide and distribute the same equally among themselves but under no circumstances shall his daughters inherit their father's property. It is the duty of the sons or the male relatives to look after the well-being of the daughters of the deceased, as long as they are unmarried. Similarly, the wife of the deceased is also cared for as long as she stays a widow. If she remarries she automatically loses her claims. The laws of inheritance are governed according to the age-old customs and the community never dreams of seeking a change or upsetting the older order of the things.

As stated above daughters have no claim at all to the father's property, but they share the movable property of their mother, who distributes her property like clothes, ornaments, etc. equally among her daughters during her life time.

On the sub-divisions among the Mikirs Census of Assam, 1881 gives the following information.

"The Mikirs are divided into three tribes, namely, Chintong, Ronghang and Amri where of the first ranks higher than the third, because Amri excused itself from sending a man on the dangerous embassy to the Ahom king in Sibsagar, when a representative was required from each tribe. Hence Amri is excluded from sharing the liquor at a sacrifice, and is held in contempt by the western Mikirs especially. These latter are fourth tribe called Dumrali by the Mikirs and Tholua by the Assamese, and from the fact of their acting as interpreters to the embassy, we may presume that they had been settled in the Assam Valley for sometime. All four tribes, as it seems have the same divisions, a phoides, within each of which marriage is interdicted."

Allen (1905) does not subscribe to the views expressed above. According to him they are divided into four tribes Chintong, Ronghang, Amri and Dumrali and these tribes are again sub-divided into various exogamous groups.

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It may be mentioned that in both the earlier accounts the authors have taken the sub-groups as tribe, but actually they are the sub-groups of the parent tribe, which are distinguished on the basis of geographical areas. Generally, the hill Mikirs designate the plains Mikir (i.e., Mikirs staying in Nowgong, Kamrup, Darrang and Sibsagar) as Dumrali. While the plains Mikir call the hill Mikirs as Chintong and Ronghang but the distinction between Chintong and Ronghang could not be ascertained since the present day Mikirs (of N. C. Hills) are not very sure as to which geographical area represents Chintong and Ronghang. These divisions of the tribe based on the geographical areas were made centuries back, and the names of the divisions are simply running down through generations.

According to Pakrasi (1953) the Kurs are the exogamous groups of the Mikirs and sub-Kurs are the parts of the larger groups of Kurs. The sub-Kurs vary greatly in number under each principal Kur. According to him each sub-division or sub-Kur is distinguished by a special sub-name attached to the name of the original Kur, and there is no precise rule in adding a sub-name. Thus it is difficult to define sub-Kurs except as special sub-names attached to the names of Kurs. The Kurs can be identified through the sub-names or sub-Kurs attached to it.

Pakrasi (1953) has given a comparative account of the Kurs and sub-Kurs as collected by different investigators at different times. According to him the Mikirs have the following main exogamous groups of Kurs: E-jang, Timung, Ingti, Terang and Teron. The name of the sub-Kurs under the different Kurs as collected by the different authors such as Stack, Moore, Dundas and Pakrasi are given below: (cf. Pakrasi: 1953).

	STACK	MOORE	DUNDAS	PAKRASI
Kurs	Lekthe	E-jang	Inghi	E-Jang
Sub-Kurs	Hanse	Hanse	Hanse	Hansa
	Tutso	Tutso	Tutso	Tutso
	Bongrung	Bongrung	Bongrung	Bongrung
	Kramsa	Kramsa	Kramsa	Kramsa
		Rongpi	Rongpi	Rongpi
		Ronghang	Ronghang	Ronghang
		Lekthe	Lekthe	Lekthe
		Rongchchon	Inghi	Inghi
		Keap		Keap

Timung exogamous group

	STACK	MOORE	DUNDAS	PAKRASI
Kurs	Timung	Tunge	Timung	Timung

Sub-Kurs	Tokbi	Tokbi	Tokbi	Tokbi
	Sengnar	Timung-Senar	Chinthing-Sengar	Sengnar
	Rongphar	Timung-Rongphar	Rongphar	Rongphar
		Timung Kiling	Kiling	Kiling
		Timung-Phangchu	Phangchu	Fungchu
		Toktiphi	Rongpi	Tokchiki
		Timung	Timung Lindok	Timung
		Timung-Juiti	Meji (Dunbas)	Derrah
			Dera	
			Yachi	
			Longteroi	
			Pator	
			Phura	

Ingti exogamous group

	STACK	MOORE	DUNDAS	PAKRASI
Kurs	Ingti	Ni-e	Kathar	Ingti
Sub-Kurs	Taro	Taro	Taro	Taro
	Katar	Ingti	Ingti Kathar	Kathar
	Hensek	Ingleng	Hensek	Hensek
	Ingleng		Ingling (Hempi & Hemsu)	Ingleng
			Inglikiling	Kiling
			Ingti-chithong	
			Riso	
	STACK	MOORE	DUNDAS	PAKRASI
Kurs	Terang	Lo-e	Be	Tarang
	Be	Be	Lindok	Kro
Sub-Kurs	Kro	Kro	Kuru	Kro
	Ingjar	Ingjar	Terang	Ingjar
		Terang	Sergot	Terang
		Ingjai	Ronghang-kiling	Ingjai
	STACK	MOORE	DUNDAS	PAKRASI
Kurs		Krone-e	Teron	Teron

Sub-Kurs	..	Teron	Kiling	Teron
	..	Teron Kongkat	Kongkar	Kongkat
	..	Teron-langne	Langne	Langne
			Milik	Milik
			Meji	
			Mele	

Thus the Mikirs are divided into 5 main exogamous groups of Kurs (Pakrasi, 1953). It is evident from the list of the Kurs and sub-Kurs that the information regarding the sub-Kurs under the Kurs presents some difficulty. As E-jang exogamous group has been represented by Stack as *Lekthe*, which appears to be on the other hand as sub-Kurs of E-jang. Lyall stated that the *Lakthe* exogamous group is said to have been the military clan (cf. Pakrasi 1953) which could not be confirmed by Pakrasi. According to Lyall (cf. Pakrasi 1953) the people belonging to *Timung* exogamous group represented no special status like that of the *Lekthe* people.

Moore and Dundas referred to the *Ingti* exogamous group as *Ni-e* and *Kather* respectively.

According to Pakrasi (1953) *Ingti Kur* is the superior exogamous group according to the origin of all Kurs of the Mikir. According to Lyall (cf. Pakrasi 1953), *Ingti* is said to have been in former times the priestly class. The exogamous group *Terang* as stated by Stack and Pakrasi has been stated by Moore and Dundas as *Lo-e* and *Be* respectively. According to Stack, the *Terang* people claimed the dignity of the priestly clan but the informants of Pakrasi did not support the view of Stack, but they said on the other hand, that *Terang* might come next to *Ingti kur* in status among the Mikirs.

The absence of *Teron* exogamous group from Stack's report suggests that he might have taken *Teron* and *Tirang* to be the same.

Pakrasi (1953) gave the following explanation which might explain the difficulties underlying the precise enumeration of sub-Kurs or Kurs. As Mikirs are always on the look-out for virgin sites where new rotation of jhuming can be performed, the leader of a new settlement might adopt, as a mark of distinction, a new name as a suffix to the main Kur name which he and his family members and his followers might adopt. Thus this new community under a new head man might later on be distinguished from the other settlements by the new suffix adopted to the original *Kur* name. The name of the sub-Kur might in other wards have been adopted only as a mark of distinction, though retaining the full identity and alliance of the members of the newly formed sub-Kur with the corresponding Kur.

Each principal Kur is distinguished by a sub-Kur and the formation of any sub-Kur in no way interferes with the intrinsic relation between the main Kur and

sub-divisions. There is no precise rule in adding a sub-Kur, and these sub-names refer in most cases to a certain local individual or objects, e.g., Dera—a place name; Kiling—a river; Terang—bachelor's house; Patok—a village headman, etc. The members of the sub-Kurs never disregard one another, for they all belong to the same Kur irrespective of the apparent difference in the names of the sub-Kurs.

Shri Lamkam Teron (1966) in his book "Mikir Jana Jati" has given the list of Kurs and sub-Kurs as follows :—

	Sub-Kurs
I. Kur Teron	1. Kongat 2. Lange 3. Milik 4. Aai 5. Chirung aru 6. Trap
II. Kur-Inghi	Sub-Kurs
	1. Inghi 2. Rongpi 3. Ronghang 4. Hansey 5. Tiso 6. Rongpi chinthong 7. Rongpi amri 8. Rongpi ronghang 9. Rongpilindok 10. Rongpi meri 11. Ronghi 12. Rongchechon 13. Ronghanglindok 14. Rong-o 15. Lekth 16. Ke-ap 17. Kete 18. Kebong 19. Kelum 20. Durong 21. Tisorongphu 22. Tisorongling 23. Tisorongchitim 24. Tisorongche-cho 25. Tisomotho 26. Rongrung 27. Kramsa 28. Hangsey chinthong 29. Hangseynongpip-aru 30. Hanseylindok
III. Kur-Ingti	Sub-kurs
	1. Ingti kathar 2. Ingti hensek 3. Taro aro 4. Ingti kiling

IV. Kur-Terang

Sub-Kurs

1. Terang dili
2. Terang rongche-cho
3. Beydum
4. Beyke-et
5. Kro-aro
6. Beyke-ik

V. Kur-Timunge :

Sub-Kurs

1. Timung
2. Rongphar
3. Chinar
4. Tokbi
5. Phangcho
6. Kiling
7. Dera
8. Timungphura
9. Tok-tiki
10. Sinar meri
11. Sinar-potor
12. Phangcho-juiti
13. Phengcho langteroi
14. Nok bara
15. Muchophi
16. Kling rongphar
17. Rongphar phura
18. Sengnot
19. Timung rongpi
20. Tokbi dera
21. Timungkiling
22. Chalut senot
23. Kokbi chintkong
24. Tokbi ronghangaro
25. Rongpharonghang
26. Phangcho-ingnara
27. Singnar-nuchiki
28. Nongdu
29. Nonglada
30. Phangcho voraru

In the social organisation of the Mikirs each patrilineal-patrilocal group is exogamous. The Mikirs always give unquestionable importance to the principal Kurs at the time of marriage negotiation. Pakrasi (1953) subscribed to the remarks made by Stack that "the children are counted to their father's Kurs, and cannot marry within it. They may, however marry their first cousins on the mothers side, and indeed this appears to have been formerly the most usual match". There is no preference for any Kur in marriage save that the Kur must marry outside its own Kur. Formerly when the Mikirs lived in the Khasi hills, inter-marriage with Lalungs though permissible was not preferred and was looked down by the Mikir community.

If a Lalung boy marries a Mikir girl, then the children will get the title of the Mikir sub-Kur named after the mother, while, if a Mikir boy marries a

Lalung girl, the children will get the sub-Kur name of the Mikir father. Thus in both the cases the Mikir sub-Kur name will be retained by the children, presently such marriages are very rare. There is no particular association of Kurs with particular occupation, though the 'senar', a sub-Kur of Timung and the 'Malik' a sub-Kur of Teron generally practise blacksmithy, also there is no social or economic distinction among the Kurs. There is also no restriction as regards the taking of food among the Kurs and sub-Kurs.

Among the Mikirs the kinship terms express certain obligations, privileges, rights etc., and these terms are inherently dependent upon the very superstructure of the society. A study of the Mikir kinship terms clearly reveals certain traits, Lyall (cf. Pakrasi, 1953) noted the following facts.

(i) Most of the names are the same for both sexes and that the sexes are distinguished only by words, as *po* is the index for the males and *pi* for the females.

(ii) Again, the same word appears to be used in different sense, as *Ong* is maternal uncle but *Ong-so* is the wife's brother; *Osa* is both nephew (sister's son) and son-in-law. *Te* is sister but *tepi* is brother's wife. Similarly *Kor* is sister (or brother), *Korpi* is wife's sister; *Korpo* sister's husband and so on.

(iii) It will be observed that brothers and sisters and brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law use different forms of addresses when speaking of their relationship.

Pakrasi (1955) noted that among the Arlengs the kinship terms are distinguished with regards to seniority and juniority in age between the siblings.

(iv) In general usage, qualifying terms like *ik*, *mu* and *so* are very frequently used to express distinct sense of seniority or otherwise in age. These words mean elder, younger and little respectively in the kinship terms of the Mikirs.

(v) The female speaker always denotes her own brother *chekle* and sister as *te* in contrast to the *Kor* and *Kort* which are commonly used.

(vi) *Ingin-pi* denotes elder sister but this usage is allowed on the part of the male speaker only.

(vii) *Oso* and *Osopi* commonly denote a boy and a girl, yet they address the sons and daughters by the terms *Sopo* and *Sopi* respectively and, moreover, the speaker adds the generative prefix *ne* to *sopo* and *sopi* in order to emphasise his or her own sons and daughters. Among Mikirs *ne* means 'my' or 'our'.

Pakrasi (1955) did not attempt to examine to what extent socio-economic and psychological factors have acted upon the Mikir kinship system in building up the present structure and also how kinship terms are changing through contact with the Assamese speaking people.

Dwelling, Dress, Food, Ornaments, and Other Material Objects Distinctive of the Community

The Mikirs generally reside in clearing patches of the forests in the hills and their villages are always set up within easy reach of the plot, which they are actually cultivating. Villages are always kept apart from one another in isolated blocks for the convenience of cultivation. The main factors which determine the location of a Mikir village is the nearness to the cultivating plots and to the source of water. Even in a compact village the arrangement of houses are dispersed in such a manner so as to provide space for rearing of livestock and for the kitchen garden of each of the houses. There is no Kurwise or sub-Kurwise clustering of houses and they are built according to the convenience of the individual. Houses are generally large, and the shape of the house looks rectangular and the structure as a whole is raised about 3 or 4 feet from the ground, supported by stout wooden posts. The whole structure of the house including the side walls is made up of split bamboo finely woven and knitted together so firmly that no mud plastering of any sort is necessary. But now many well-to-do families, particularly those who are living in the urban areas have their houses mud plastered. The roof of the house has slopes on either side thatched with san-grass which is generally replaced after four or five years, when it gets rotten or damaged by natural forces. The floor of the house is covered with knitted bamboo strips which are fastened at each end to the posts which support the roof of the house. The inside of the house is dark, except for the scanty light that creeps in through the openings in the split bamboo wall. Generally there is no window or chimney, the main door and the tiny slits in the bamboo walls serve as a source of ventilation. Usually the house is divided lengthwise by a partition into two or three rooms with one portion on one side, these type of houses are usually observed in high hills. In the urban areas the 'L' pattern of the houses are preferred. The 'L' type of the house which is observed in urban areas consists of a room meant for outsiders or guests known as 'Kam' which is usually on the right hand side when one enters into it, (left hand side are also not very infrequent) and where the only door into the house leads on it and the other which is 'kut' is meant for the family.

The 'Kam' is further divided into two by a partition and the outer portion of the Kam opens to the open space in between the Kam and the Kut. The hearth is placed in the outer part of the Kam almost touching the wall. The household goods are also kept at the one corner of the Kam. In the 'kut' a kind of platform called 'tobung' is raised about two feet high above the floor and runs along the wall. The 'tobung' serves as a sleeping place for the members of the family. There is a fire place called 'mehip' made of three upright stones lying at the back of the 'kut' and by the side of the fire place there is another kind of platform called 'damtak' which is also attached to the wall, where the heads of the family, that

is the father and the mother sleep. In this room (kut) also stands a paddy receptacle (ingkro) made of bamboo. Behind the fire place (mehip) there is a place called 'dambuk' which is attached to the 'damtak' where the young and married girls sleep. The front porch is known as 'hongkup' in which are kept the loin loom, firewood, baskets, mortar, pestle, daos, etc.

Household goods are of simple variety meant for purpose of utility rather than for decoration. A block of wood is enough to serve as stool (inghoi) to sit on. There are baskets of various shapes and sizes and bearing different names for different uses. They are generally used as cupboards for storing paddy, clothes, ornaments and other articles of daily use. Bamboo joints, each with a node on one end, and an opening on the other are used for carrying water and also for keeping powdered chillies, salt, fat of animals, rice beer and other things. Utensils of brass and aluminium are also used. Vessels of brass, pitchers or kerosene tins are also used for storing water. Enamel plates and mugs are also among the utensils possessed by them. Below is given a list of the common household equipment which are usually observed in a Mikir house.

Equipment connected with economic pursuit

1. Krue (hoe for jhum).
2. Nopak (Dao).
3. Nahirangso (sickle).
4. Nakanti (Dao—differs from the former one in structure).
5. Song (war shield made of rhinoceros's skin).
6. Nok (war sword).
7. Thai (Bow and Arrow).
8. Sir (Hunting spear).
9. Paron (An implement for fishing made of bamboolike basket).
10. Choklet (Another implement for fishing made of bamboo)

Musical instruments

1. Cheng—Big drum
2. Chengbruk—very small size drum like Dambru.
3. Muri—Wooden flute.
4. Pangsi—Bamboo flute.

Household equipment

1. Hak (Basket made of bamboo for carrying paddy and other goods).
2. Khailum (Basket with cover for keeping valuables having two layers—upper made of cane and lower layer made of bamboo).
3. Linkhoi (wooden pot for milling sesame).
4. Lahgbong (Dried gourd used for keeping water).
5. Lomhar (wooden ladle small size).

6. Sobak (wooden ladle big size generally used for distribution of rice).
7. Anthong (wooden saucepan for keeping boiled rice).
8. Kindor (bamboo basket used for keeping rice at the time of worship).
9. Ington (Bamboo basket for keeping food-stuff).
10. Burupso (small cup like thing made of bamboo for keeping dried chilli).
11. Sae (An equipment made of bamboo like sieve, used for refining rice beer).
12. Harbong (small dried gourd for offering rice-beer).
13. Langpongsi (Bamboo pipe used for bringing water).
14. Long-jengpong (wooden paddy husking equipment along with its wooden stick).
15. Therang (Loin loom along with its accessories).

The dress of both males and females is simple. The males commonly put on a piece of cloth known as 'rikhong' which is wrapped round the loin. Sometime on their heads they wear turbans called 'poho'. Adult males also use a waist coat called 'choi', with a long fringe which covers the buttocks and comes round in front. An endi cloth called 'peingki' is also used by them during the clad season. Generally boys do not put on 'choi' or 'poho' but sometime put on 'rikong' along with shirt or with shirts and pants. In some cases adult males also use shirts, pants and coats, particularly those who are living near the urban centres. Those who are living in towns almost always wear European dress, which has become the fashion. Women put on a petticoat known as 'peni' which is fastened by a kind of belt round the waist, sometimes with an ornamental girdle of silver coins or usually adorned with figures of flowers woven on cloth called 'Wamkok' or in some cases with simply a belt made of cotton cloth. Another cloth known as 'pekok' or 'jiso' is used to cover the upper part of the body which is tied under the arms and drawn tight over the breast. Over and above these clothes, one or two pieces of cloth, 'jiso', are hung on either side of the shoulder covering the breast. The use of frocks, shirts or blouses is also not very uncommon among the young girls. The list of the textile articles which are common in use is given below :

Textile articles which are common in use

(a) For men :

1. Saihonthor—Artistic shirt of young men.
2. Soinangpo—Artistic shirt for the aged persons.
3. Rikong—Loin cloth
4. Kramsa—Turban
5. Jambeli—Indigenous bag made of Endi—a Mikir dress without this bag remains incomplete.

6. Pakharwang—Endi Chadar.
7. Rumpun—Artistic waist band used by the young men at the time of Chomangkan-death ceremony.

(b) *For Women :*

1. Wanpoe—Waist band.
2. Pinicamflack—Coloured cloth used like Mekhela.
3. Khanjari—Coloured and stripped Endi Chadar.
4. Dokherso—Endi Chadar used at the time of Chomangkan.
5. Jer-ek—Artistic cloth tied around the breast.

Women generally keep long hair, which is tied in a knot (chubi) behind the head. Males cut their hair short and seldom care to comb it. If at all they do they comb it flat. Sometime old men keep long hair and tie it in a knot at the back of the head just as in the case of women (chubi). Nails are trimmed with a knife and teeth are cleaned with a piece of jungle tree usually of Neem or Mango in the interior villages, but those who are living in the urban centre or not far away from the urban centres, use the modern paste or tooth powder for cleaning the teeth. Footwear is seldom used both among the males and the females, particularly in the villages away from the urban centres. The Mikirs who are living in the urban centres particularly those who are office goers use modern footwear.

On ceremonial occasions both males and females generally put on their traditional dress except in a few cases, especially among the youths who are much influenced by the urban ways of life. The priest (gursur), put on the common dress *i.e.*, 'rikong' and 'choi' in normal occasions, but on ceremonial occasions, he puts on a dress called 'rikong sale' meaning 'holi dress' rapped round the loin. He also puts on 'choi' on such occasions.

The Mikirs are very fond of ornaments. Women of post pubertal age and particularly, those who are married put on a characteristic silver ornament known as 'nohangpi'. The ornament is made of silver and consists of three parts, the central shaft, the front part and the rear part. The front and the rear-part of the ornament lies in front and behind the perforated ear lobe respectively. The ornament is a sort of cylindrical ringed structure with spiral ridges around it outside. The young girls wear 'Norik' which is much like 'nohangpi', but only it is small in size. It is made of silver and is inserted into the lobe of the ear. Grown up men particularly those who are living in the villages wear 'norik' or ear rings of gold and silver suspended from the lobes of the ear. Women also wear necklaces of lac beads known as 'lek' and threads of the necklaces made of silver. The 'lek' are of two types. *Lek pengkhra* where the thread of the silver is round, and *Lek ruve* where flat

plate of silver thread is used. Finger rings or 'urnam' and bracelets or 'roi' both of either gold or silver are worn by women irrespective of age, and the former, that is, *urnam*, is also worn by males in general. All these ornaments used by them are either obtained from the Khasi smiths, or they are purchased from the local markets. The use of either gold or silver ornaments depends mostly on the economic status of the household.

Ornaments which are commonly worn by the Mikir people*For men :*

1. Norik Ear-ring made of brass.
2. Pinsoroi Silver bracelet.
3. Lekrooa Very heavy necklace made of silver.
4. Lek-enji Very heavy necklace made of silver.

For women :

1. Nohangpi Very big ear-ring made of silver.
2. Rup-aroi Bracelet made of silver.
3. Lek-lo-so Necklace of small white beads.
4. Lek-siki Necklace of silver coins.

Tattoo or 'duk' is practised by grown up women only. After attaining puberty they usually draw a perpendicular line of indigo colour most generally along the middle of the forehead, down the nose to the upper lip and chin. This is done only to ward off the evil eye. No other part of the body is tattooed except the face.

Their staple food is rice and they eat all kinds of meat with the exception of beef and buffalo. Meat is taken either roasted or cooked, after it is thoroughly dried over the fire. Sometime meat is also dried in the sun. Dry fish is most preferable which they store in small baskets. The following are the common vegetables and fruits and spices which they usually take:—

Pumpkin	Benghom
Brinjal	Hepi
Potato	Phurui
Carrot	Mula
Tomato	Bokbok
Watermelon	Thoithe
Yam	Hon
Yoil seeds	Nempe
Chilli	Birik
Mustard	Hanjang

Sugarcane	Nok
Jackfruit	Jangphong
Mango	Tharve
Ginger	Hanso
Onion	Harsum keer

All the members of the family eat together in the same house. Meal is generally taken three times a day, in the morning, at the afternoon and in the evening. At every meal a small quantity of food is usually set aside as an offering (kathok) to the gods.

Rice beer or 'hor' is their favourite drink. There are three kinds of rice beer, namely 'arak', which is the strongest variety, 'thap' medium in strength and 'hor', which is mild and ideal for a common family drink. The latter one is their favourite drink and figures prominently in the observance of their ceremonies and festivals. Outsiders and strangers are also offered it for the sake of courtesy. Generally the adult males smoke in a small tobacco pipe (thenghpong). Tobacco in their tounge is known as *Duma*. Betelnut (kore) and Pan leaf (bikon) are consumed by both sexes.

The names of some of the Mikir musical instruments are also given below. These musical instruments are indigenous. The most important one is the drum which shows a variety of size and shape.

Cheng	big drum
Chengbruk	very small sized drum like Dambur.
Chengso-so	a musical instrument made of brass metal.
Muri	wooden flute.
Pangsi	bamboo flute.
Changchickli	big drum.
Thekelechang	small drum.
Achang	a kind of Bina.

The Mikirs generally record the end of the night with the cock's crow which they call 'wokuthoni' or 'wokuthothom' meaning the time between one to two or three times of cock's crow. When going on a journey, the time is generally recorded by the eating of a piece of betelnut which generally takes fifteen minutes for each piece. This is only in villages where watches are an uncommon sight among the villagers. Those who are living in the urban areas, particularly office goers are found to be having wrist watches. In interior villages, 'space' or 'adak', is referred as between the earth and the sky called, 'sining pen longle adak',

Generally short distances are expressed in terms of Tharlon (a bamboo pole, about 12' length) expressed as so many Tharlon. Long distance are indicated by the distance of a hill in sight,

'inglong isi-inglong' hini khelo. meaning
hill one hills two distance.

one hill or two hills. They also indicate the space by 'adak' as for example, "Sining pen longle adak" meaning the space between sky and the earth. Generally they measure the weight through the medium of 'hoton', a kind of basket 'hag' a big size basket and 'mantung' —a cloth bag which is prepared from Mikir bedsheet.

Environmental Sanitation, Hygienic Habits, Disease and Treatment

Houses in Mikir village are not compact, this is so because each house requires a large open space for the sheds for the domestic animals and for homestead gardens. Generally pigs, goats, poultry, and even buffaloes are kept either below the plinth of their 'Chang' houses which are very common in the Mikir villages, while in the urban areas the domestic animals are kept in place just adjacent to their houses. Owing to the keeping of their domestic animals very close to their houses, the areas surrounding the houses always remain very dirty and stinky and rubbish is thrown all around the house as there is no particular space outside the house for throwing the rubbish. Pigs and dogs act as scavengers although their own excreta make the whole atmosphere foul smelling but the people are used to such things and they seem to be none the more worried for it. Sanitation in the real sense of term is totally absent in the Mikir villages. There is no drainage system and foul water finds its way to the village streets and then it serves as a bathing pool for domesticated animals.

The common diseases are dysentery, *aczema*, constipation, malaria, boils and other skin diseases. Some of the Mikir names for the common diseases are as follows :—

Dysentery	pokpavi
Small pox	pi amir or arnum
Cholera	mavur or toman
General fever	phukeso

In the villages far away from the urban centres, they do not rely much on the modern medical facilities but on their indigenous medicinal herbs with which they treat all kinds of diseases. There is no particular medicineman but an old and experienced person or generally the priest gives medicine to the diseased persons. The villages near the urban centres are using the modern medicines; while in the interior villages where the facilities of the modern medicines are not available, they use the indigenous medicine and worship the god, thinking that the disease is

because the god is annoyed with them. After observing the symptom (Deuri) of the disease, the priest suggests the relatives of the diseased, whom to propitiate for the particular disease. Thus the illness of a person is taken to be the cause of evil spirits and the priest or *gurusur* is consulted. It is the *gurusur* who decides what sort of sacrifice should be performed to appease the spirits and also the number of animals or birds to be sacrificed. It is only when they fail to cure the disease by sacrifices to the spirits which they believe to have caused them, that they resort to the modern medicine. Even if the town is far away from the village, they have to go to the town to collect the medicine for the diseased person.

There is no lavatory or latrine and only the nearby jungle offers a good place for the evacuation of bowels where dogs and pigs would swarm for their food and serve as scavengers. The Mikirs, who are living in the urban areas are having lavatory or latrine at one corner of their house away from the main rooms. The village people do not care to clean their clothes and generally they do so only on festive occasions. Usually they put on the same clothes every day till it is in such a condition that it cannot be worn by the person any more due to its torn condition. They only wet their feet and face to soothe away their fatigue and weariness after coming from their hard days work in the fields. Cooking utensils and dishes are washed after every meal. Their houses are dark and one cannot see what is inside, unless he is accustomed to it. Doorways and in some cases window or the opening in the walls serve as sources of ventilation and as there is no chimney the smoke hovers like a cloud in the ceiling of the house until it is forced by the wind to come outside through some opening.

Language and Literacy

According to Lyall (1908) the language spoken by the Mikirs belongs to the great family of Indo-Chinese speech called 'Tibeto-Burman'. In the Linguistic Survey of India by Grierson (1904—1928) it is considered as a member of the Naga-Bodo subgroup in which it is classed together with Empeo—a kaccha Naga, and Kabui and Khoirao. He has also given a grammatical sketch of the Mikir language, which was the first published attempt to explain the facts and mechanism of the language.

Mikir has no script of its own. The first publication printed in it, a short catechism issued by a missionary press at Sibsagar in 1875, used the Assamese script. Since then, so far as is known the Roman alphabet has always been employed to express the sounds of the language. The Gospel History written in Roman alphabet entitled 'Birla Kema' (Glad Tidings), was published in 1904 by the American Baptist Mission Press. Their folk tales are lively and the themes have been appropriated and assimilated to the

social conditions of the Mikirs. It appears that during their sojourn in the Khasi hills, the Mikirs had assimilated much of their customs and manners. Not only dress and ornaments but the methods of divination and funeral ceremonies and memorial stones and also personal names have been borrowed from the Khasis. The Khasis have also contributed many words to their common speech, for example, the prefix 'ka' in women's names is manifestly taken from the Khasi usage. According to Lyall (cf. Report on the Census of Assam, 1881, p. 78) there are sufficient indications to declare Mikir to be the kinsman of Bodo rather than Khasi.

So far as literacy is concerned, the majority of the Mikirs are illiterate. The 1961 Census (Census of India, 1961, Assam; p. 282-302) reveals that out of the total population of 121,082 persons, 106,394 or 87.8 per cent are illiterate out of which 51,612 are males and 54,782 are females. The literates without any educational level account for 7,345 males and 2,746 females; 3,849 males and 721 females have primary or junior basic education and 21 males and 6 females have matriculation or higher secondary standard. When compared with the general education of the State as a whole, the percentage of literacy of the Mikirs is 27.4% and with the general education of the Scheduled Tribe as a whole the percentage of literacy of the Mikirs is 23.6%. A good percentage of educated and literate persons are met within the urban population, which speaks of better educational facilities in the urban areas.

Below is given a list of the Books published in Mikir language :

1. Achamab Akitap
2. Achamab Akitap
3. Kalakha Akitap
4. Haa-li
5. Brukachen
6. Adamchab
7. Cheb Rangtham
8. Karbi Ka'puchan
9. Chakarbi akur Akitap
10. Karbi lamkuru
11. Kacharha akitap
12. Char lamthe
13. Rong keche
14. Karbi Bhasar Chamu Parichaya
15. Mikir Jana Jati
16. Tam hidi
17. Kitap kuni

Economic Life

Land is one of the most important economic resources of the people, their livelihood depends mainly on cultivation. The lands may be classified into five categories as, land put to non-agricultural uses, barren and uncultivable land, cultivable land, cultivable waste land and land under forest.

The land put to non-agricultural uses include the area which is used for homestead purposes, playground, footpaths, etc., barren and uncultivable land signifies the land area which are unfit for cultivation; cultivable land means the land under cultivation; cultivable waste land signifies the land area which can be cultivated but is left fallow for the present time, and the land under forest indicates the area which is covered with jungle trees and which is not included in the net area cultivated. The pattern of land utilisation in Phongjangre village (a Mikir village in the United Mikir and North Cachar Hills district (cf. Village Survey Monographs 1961; Phongjangre Village) is as follows:—

Categories of lands	Area in (acres)	Percentage
1. Cultivable land	285	33.9
2. Land put to non-agricultural uses	100	11.8
3. Barren and uncultivable land	100	11.8
4. Cultivable waste land	100	11.8
5. Land under forest	258	30.7
TOTAL	843	100.0

The distribution of land in a village is governed by the Mikir Hills District (Jhuming) (Amendment) Regulation, 1966, passed by the Mikir Hills District Council. According to this regulation, jhum land is restricted to one particular area for a village which may be selected by the villagers in consultation with the 'Sarthe' or 'gaonbura' of a village. If any disagreement arises about selection of jhuming site among the villagers, the 'Sarthe' refers the case to the Executive Committee of the District Council and its decision in this respect is final. Individual plots within the selected area may be selected by the people themselves in consultation with their 'Sarthe'. The District Council reserves the right of disposing of the felled stuffs in jhum area in any manner it considers suitable without interfering with jhuming. The villagers shall be jointly or individually responsible for any damage to the areas not meant for jhuming. Jhum lands are generally marked by the owners with a boundary in the nature of a fence or drain or line and the 'Sarthe' of a village will see that such marking does not encroach up on other's land. There is no restriction as to the size of the land allotted to

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different individuals; it depends upon the ability or capacity of a family to cultivate. It may be noted that a person or the family loses its right of occupation and cultivation if it leaves the village or shifts to other village (or another 'hawar' or jurisdiction of another 'Sarthe') for the purpose of settling there permanently. In this case they have to consult with the 'Sarthe' of that 'hawar' or village where they want to reside to allot them land.

Forest lands are of two types: (1) Unclassed State Forest, from where the people have the right to cut trees either for construction purposes or for fuel and (2) Reserved Forest, where the people have no right to utilise the forest material. The evergreen forests are the home of various kinds of wild animals such as elephants, wild buffaloes, tigers, bears, deer etc. In Mikir Hills, the wild elephants are not uncommon and often they attack villages and sometimes damage the jhum fields. Snakes of various kinds, poisonous as well as non-poisonous, also abounds in the jungle. Rabbits are a great pests in the jhum fields and the villagers are always for the look out of the rabbit holes and always try to scare the rabbits. Monkeys often assail the jhum fields in company. Varieties of birds break the silence of the forests with their sweet melodies.

The forests are chiefly infested with different species of bamboo-*check*; cinnamon-*Thekiching*, Sonaru tree *Sonaru*; Sal tree-*Hai*; Plantain tree-*Phinu/Lothe*; Mango-*Tharve*; Jackfruit-*Jangphong* and many other trees valuable for timber. The wild plantain trees abound in the forest and form a ready source of food for elephants, monkeys and the like.

Demand in fire wood have resulted in wanton destruction of valuable forest growth. The United Mikir and North Cachar Hills District where the tribe under study is mostly found, contains within its fold, the reserve forests covering approximately an area of 641,353 acres (District Census Handbook, United Mikir and North Cachar Hills, 1961 Census, Assam, p. 20). With the exception of the area under Reserved Forest, the tract bears an extensive area of unclassified State Forests. This area is forest in name only, since unrestricted jhuming has virtually eaten up almost all the forest trees rendering the whole area covered with only bamboo and grass with a few scattered trees here and there. The forest reserves of the district are potentially very rich, which give a very good revenue to the district, particularly for the bamboo trees. Hence with a view to improving the indigenous species, a scheme for planting the bamboo trees has been undertaken in Bokajan area under the State Development Scheme in the year 1955. The species planted under such scheme are 'Wahing' (*Calamus Viminalis*) and 'tita' (*Calamus rotang*).

The secondary occupation of the Mikirs is the rearing of livestock. Poultry, goats and pigs are commonly reared either for their food and commercial

purposes or for ceremonial and sacrificial importance. Milch and draught cattle are kept for milk and for ploughing the fields respectively. Fishery is not as common as the rearing of livestock, because the climatic condition as well as the terrain does not suit the rearing of fishes.

The following table shows the working force (sex-wise) of the Mikir population and the industrial classification in both urban and rural areas (Census of India, 1961; Assam, Part V-A, pp. 178-179 and 200-201).

	Total		Total workers		WORKERS									
					As cultivator		As agricultural labourer		In Mining, quarrying, livestock, forestry, fishing, hunting, plantation, orchards and allied activities				At household industry	
	Persons	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	
Rural	120,953	62,730	58,223	37,260	34,790	36,221	29,457	182	77	13	1	272	5,177	
Urban	129	97	32	29	11	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
TOTAL	121,082	62,827	58,255	37,289	34,801	36,221	29,457	182	77	13	1	272	5,177	

	WORKERS													
	In manufacturing other than household industry		In construction		In trade and commerce		In transport, storage and communication		In other services		Non-workers			
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females		
1	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26		
Rural	25	..	6	..	34	9	2	..	505	69	25,470	23,433		
Urban	2	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	26	11	68	21
TOTAL	27	..	6	..	34	9	3	..	531	80	25,538	23,454		

It is evident from the table that the cultivators are the predominant group in the rural area, who constitute 54.2% of the total population and 91.1% of the total workers. The change in their traditional occupation, that is cultivation, is also evidenced from the table, where it is observed that 6,153 persons (both sexes) or 8.54% of the total workers, 72,090 who are engaged in works other than cultivation and agricultural labour. When the males and females are separately taken it was observed, that 886 or 2.37% males and 5267 or 15.13% females, constitute the number of workers apart from cultivator and agricultural

labourer, out of total of 37,289 male and 34,801 female workers respectively. Thus it is evident from the above figures that the percentage of the female workers is fairly high as compared to the males where workers apart from cultivator and agricultural labourer are considered. The number of non-workers in the rural areas are 48,903 persons or 40.38% of the total population or 67.8% of the total workers. Most of them are children of school going age. The workers in urban areas are skilled workers, other than cultivator and agricultural labourer.

The Mikirs practise both wet cultivation and jhuming. Those who reside in the hills generally take to jhuming and those in the plains follow wet cultivation. Selection of the jhuming site is done by the people themselves. The village headman has generally the sole authority over the village jurisdiction called 'hawar'. He convenes a meeting for discussion regarding selection of a jhuming site. After the decision taken regarding the jhuming site, the people cut the jungle and burn the trees for jhuming. It may be noted that one person loses his right of occupation or cultivation, along with his shifting to another village or another 'hawar' of a village headman. In this case the village headman can allot the land to another person who comes under his jurisdiction or to his village. Generally the people living in the hills set marks on their own plot by fencing the plot by bamboo strips. It is also observed that sometime the plots for cultivation of the individual households are scattered and there is no need of fencing the plots, and the clearing areas in the hills indicate the cultivable plot and the owner of the plot is also known, since an average village consists of 50 to 60 households. In selecting a particular site for jhuming the person informs the 'Sarthe' regarding the selection of his particular site. This is done only to save themselves from any controversy which later may arise for the site. The Mikirs living in the plains have acquired the knowledge of wet cultivation from the plains people. Though it is rare, it is worth mentioning that the Mikirs who have the experience of wet cultivation, do so in the hills where such cultivable land is available, particularly those who are residing in the slopes of the hills. Sometime encroachment up on others land may arise, where the plot is too big for the person to cultivate, though it is not very frequent; then in that case, the village durbar or 'Sarthe' will interfere and will allot him only such amount which he can cultivate. When the old plot is exhausted and the person wants to shift to a new plot for cultivation, then they have to get the permission of the village durbar. The village durbar seldom prohibits people to shift their cultivation site, as there is no scarcity of cultivable land in the hills. But it is not necessary to shift their habitation site along with the shifting of the jhuming site. Some temporary dwelling is reconstructed near the jhuming site, only to stay during the operational season, if the jhuming land is fairly at a distance.

Before a plot is put to cultivation, trees are felled and jungle is cleaned, this is done in December or January. The felled trees are allowed to dry till March when they are set on fire. Tillage and spreading of ash is done usually by human labour with the help of hoe. Paddy is then sown with the first rains, in April-May. The clearing, slashing, burning, tillage, sowing and harvesting are done by individual family and sometime with the help of daily wage labourers. No joint participation either on the basis of the village, clan or joint family is done except in

harvesting where friends and relatives extend their helping hands. Paddy, as is stated earlier, is sown broadcast in April or May, and is harvested in November-December. Other varieties as maize, millet, etc., are also sown along with paddy as side lines in holes so made for the purpose by hoes, in the first rains and gathered in the ensuing cold weather. The ears of paddy are cut with the help of a sickle. The sheaves, on getting dry, are collected and thrashed out on the spot by beating against a stone. Agricultural equipments are invariably of simple type and most of the people especially those who reside in the hills are quite ignorant of the use of artificial manures. To them dried and decomposed leaves and burnt up ash are the only manures providing fertility to the virgin soil. The important agricultural equipments are the following, *ku* (spade—which is bought from the market). The *dao* which is used in agricultural practices is of the *Nopak* type and the sickle is known as *Nokekrangso*—the blade of which is serrated, which is usually 1½' in length including the handle.

In plains who are practising wet cultivation keep the cultivable lands enclosed on all sides by mud walls about 8"—10" in height. If there is any stream nearby then channelisation from the river to the field may be done otherwise the field has to depend on the monsoon rains. In wet cultivation, the soil is made into a thick paste by means of a hoe or in some cases those who can afford use bullocks for ploughing. Weeding and transplantation are done generally by women. To protect the crops from wild animals and birds, effigies are made to stand in the middle or in a corner of the field. A watch house (hamtap) is also constructed in the field so that the owner or any one of his family may stay to watch the crops and to keep the animals and birds away from the field.

During the sowing and harvesting time some ceremonies in the form of dancing and singing are performed by boys and girls, while the elderly people hoe the soil and sow the seeds. The sowing dance is known as *Ramrongkekan* and is done with the accompaniment of drums. They also sow the seeds in a rhythmic way accompanied by the beating of drums and dancing.

Hacha is the dancing festival during the harvesting time, where boys and girls in their traditional dress dance.

The most important household industry among the Mikirs is weaving. The loin loom known as 'pethrang' is a simple tension loom. The spinning wheel by which cotton is spun into thread is known as 'mithongrang'. The loom is simple consisting of the warp of manageable length and breadth, and is usually fastened at one end of the wall while the other end of the warp is tied around the waist of

the weaver with a cane belt (thehu). No reed is used and the shed is effected by half-wealt process which is also operated by hand. The weft yarn is inserted in the shed through a bamboo tube (honthari langpong) and a bamboo or wooden string is used for beating up the weft. Weaving is done by women, which is a pride for them. The chief products of the loom are 'rikong' (a cloth used by men to wrap the loins), peinki (worn by women around the waist) etc. They generally dye their threads in blue, yellow and red colours. The black dyes are obtained from the juice of a certain plant called 'sibu', a yellow colour from a plant called 'Jantarlong' and that of red colour from a plant called 'Tamsir'. The designs generally preferred by them are stripes in various combination of colours. Generally the products of the loom are for their personal use. Below is given the names of some of the parts of the loin loom in Mikir terms.

Tholengpong	Bamboo pipe for helping the healds.
Hi-i	Healds.
Honki Chongbong	Bamboo or wooden stick used for drying Eri cocoon.
Ingthi	A reed of the loom.
Ponglang	Same as 'Tholengpong' but small in size.
Therang	Round bar of bamboo or wood.
Barlin	A flat and small rod of bamboo.

Mikir terms	Corresponding meaning
Thehu	A cane belt used on loin of weaver to fasten and tighten the loom.
Harpi	A piece of pointed and flat wooden or bamboo stick used as reed.
Thoning	A round bar of wood or bamboo on which threads of the loom are wrapped.
Honthari	A rod of bamboo on which tread is wound.
Honthari langpong	A bamboo tube in which 'Honthari' is kept.
Uwek	Small rods of bamboo.
Ule	Long rods of bamboo like Uwek'.
Takeri	A kind of bobbin.
Honlam	A bamboo or wooden stick on both sides of which small bar is fitted as 'cross' and threads are wrapped on it.
Sirki	A spool.

With the exception of weaving which is practised in every Mikir village, bamboo and cane works and blacksmithy are practised only in few villages and by those who know the art. These two household industries are done by males and the industries are taken up much for their personal use than for sale. Any male knowing the art of basketry makes bamboo or cane baskets of various kinds according to the use to which they are put. For example, baskets for carrying and storing paddy, for keeping clothes and ornaments, for storing food grains, etc., cane tables, chairs, *murah* (low stool) are also made by them, particularly those who are living in the urban areas. Blacksmithy is practised only by 'Senar' and 'Milik', the sub-clans of Timung and Teron respectively. They are the only sub-clans who are practising this industry traditionally and formerly no other people of any other clan or in interior village can practise this trade but presently there are no such restrictions on the clans possibly due to the economic factors, it has been reported that few people belonging to Ingthi clan have taken up blacksmithy, in the urban areas. It could not be ascertained during the investigation why only the Senar and Milik clans practised this industry in the former times and why not other clans. It seems that they are the only sub-Kurs who have specialized in this trade from time immemorial. But even when this is so there is no distinction among the clans either socially, economically or politically. The blacksmiths take to manufacturing knives and daos of various kinds, these are made out of discarded spades which are bought from the market at a cheaper price. They also collect old umbrella ribs which are utilized for the manufacture of needles and hooks for fishing. Ornaments which are fairly in good demand by the community such as girdles, bracelets, rings and ear-rings of either gold, silver are made by the Khasi smiths. But the people who are living in the urban areas buy ornaments from the local markets which are brought from the plains area. Sometime even in the interior

villages the ornaments of the plains are found since the people coming and going to the urban centres collect ornaments for others as well.

The pattern of income and expenditure of the Mikir village, Phongjangre, obtained during the course of the investigation has been given below :—

Main occupation	No. of households	Source of income	All households amount	Households with annual income										
				Rs. 300 and less		Rs. 301-600		Rs. 601-900		Rs. 901-1200		Rs. 1201 and above		
				Amo-unt	No.of house-holds	Amo-unt	No.of house-holds	Amo-unt	No.of house-holds	Amo-unt	No.of house-holds	Amo-unt	No.of house-holds	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	
			Rs.	Rs.		Rs.		Rs.		Rs.		Rs.		Rs.
Cultivation	58	Cultivation	33,287	2,370	8	15,720	32	8,717	12	3,830	4	2,650	2	
		1. Paddy	30,208											
		2. Cotton	1,995											
		3. Sesame	448											
		4. Maize	564											
		5. Other vegetables	72											

The only source of income of the whole village under discussion is cultivation. From the above table it will be seen that majority of the households are from the income group Rs. 301-600. There are 32 households in this income group. The next higher income group is Rs. 601-900 which includes 12 households of the village while there are only 2 households which receive the maximum income of Rs. 1,201 and above. The minimum income of Rs. 300 and less is received by only 2 households in the village. The income from other sources such as weaving, bamboo and cane works are practically nil and even if there is any, the amount is insignificant. During the slack season weaving and basketry are taken up by women and men respectively and are generally done for domestic purposes.

The above table shows the average annual expenditure of different income groups. It is evident from the above table that among the higher income groups, the expenditure is comparatively higher than that in the lower income groups. In other words, as the amount of income increases in successive groups, the

amount of expenditure also increases and vice versa. The average annual expenditure per household is Rs. 366.65 and which rather reflects a very low standard of living of the people.

Life Cycle

A traditionally oriented Mikir would believe that the birth of a child is in God's hand, barrenness of a woman is looked upon as God's displeasure over the couple and their matrimonial life may be terminated by the couple themselves, however, "there are cases where couple's have no issue yet they continue to live together happily till death tears them apart". Barrenness in women is believed to be caused by 'So-meme'. A man or woman may remarry after separation but if, again remarriage does not bear any issue, they are either again separated or content to live together if love prevails. Regarding miscarriage or still birth, it is believed that rites and ceremonies performed during marriage have not pleased the God, so they again perform, the same rites and ceremonies as is done during the marriage, after such incidents. The blood of the animal, either fowl or goat, which is

sacrificed depending upon the economic condition, is poured on a plantain leaf and offered to God, while its meat is taken by household and friends and relatives.

Male child is preferred by them though the female child also is received warmly and with great joy in the family. They believe that it depends on the will of God who may bestow on the family and sex he desires. Among the Mikirs no prenatal practice or ceremony is performed.

The delivery of the child takes place in the mother's own house with the help of the attendant (dhai). A pregnant woman is always treated with respect and is free from doing any heavy work. She is exempted from doing work in the field and also from carrying firewood and other such things. She can only clean the house and do her normal cooking work for the period of her pregnancy.

There is no professional 'dhai' or midwife in the village. Such work is performed by old and experienced women who are given a place of honour at the naming ceremony of the child (Osamenkeir). When the child is about to be born the expectant mother is made to lie on a mat on the floor and the attendant 'dhai' keeps watch over her. When everything is got ready for the delivery of the child, that is, a piece of cloth, sharp split bamboo, thread etc. When the child is born, the 'dhai' cuts off the naval cord with a sharp split bamboo and a piece of cloth is tied around it. The clothes used by women and also the instruments are washed, either by her husband or her close relatives like her sister or mother, after the delivery. The placenta is buried outside the house by the husband at a corner of the courtyard. There is no ceremonial segregation for the mother and the child. The mother remains in bed for only three or four days after birth, by that time she recovers enough to resume her normal avocation. On the day following the birth, friends and relatives flock to that house to greet both child and its mother. The naming ceremony of a child known as *Osamenkeir* is performed after a week or so according to the discretion of the parents and also depending upon their economic condition. In the case of a male child a cock is killed while in the case of a female one, hen is sacrificed as an offering to the god Hemphu. Neighbours and relatives from far and near are invited to the ceremony in which rice, meat and rice-beer (hor) are served to the guests. There is no hard and fast rule regarding the naming of a child. Names are given to a child according to the will and liking of the parents. Friends and relatives suggest names for the child which, if the parents like may retain for the child.

A Mikir child is suckled by its mother for about a year or so. On approaching the end of this period

or when the child is about six months old some rice which has been masticated by the mother, is given to the baby. When the child's teething period is over and all the teeth have come out, normal diet, *i.e.* that which adults take is given. The mother generally carries the child at her back even while she is at work. The child is allowed to crawl on the floor all by itself till it learns to stand.

Among Mikir there is no initiation ceremony. Those Mikirs who are educated and those who are living in the urban areas or those who are living near the urban centres take the help of the hospital during delivery and every thing goes according to the routine of the hospital.

Marriage

Monogamy is the rule among the Mikirs and polygamy though permissible is rare and no such case was recorded during the survey in the village Phong-jangre. Marriage within one's Kur is not permissible and they strictly follow the rules laid down by their traditional customs, cross-cousin marriage is generally preferred. Marriage outside the community is looked down by the society and the parents out of disgrace, may drive the boy or girl away from their home. Seduction is rare and if at all it occurs, the girl's parents have to give their girl away in marriage. Illegitimacy and adultery is very rare. The case of adultery is usually tried by the village 'durbar' or 'mei' and the guilty pair are tried publicly thus subjecting them to the jeers and scorn of the neighbours. They are released only after the fine imposed by the council is paid. The amount of the fine usually varies from Rs. 25 to 50, depending on the case and the decision of the mei. The accused is fined and the amount is given to the injured wife or husband. The husband of the erring wife may take her back but he may also refuse to do so even when they both have children and in such case, the children stay with the mother after separation. In such case the husband takes a gourd of rice beer and presents it to her parents and declares himself free, after which she has to return all presents given to her by the husband. After the divorce, both parties can remarry and the ceremony is usually performed in the same way as is done during first marriage.

The marriage between Teron and Ingti is not possible since they consider them to be of the same family but a boy of Mikir sub-Kur of Teron can marry an Ingti girl, this being the only exception since they do not regard this union as incestuous though such marriages are very rarely observed and the reason on the account for such restriction could not be ascertained apart from the above restriction any Kur can marry any other Kur other than its own.

The average age of marriage for the boys is between 20 to 25 years and for girls 14 to 20 years. The following table shows the age and marital status of

the Mikirs according to 1961 Census (Census of India: 1961: Assam, Part V-A, pp. 242-43).

TABLE

Age group	Total population			Never married		Married	
	Persons	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
All ages	121,082	62,827	58,255	33,372	32,780	27,311	21,776
0-14	55,064	25,767	29,297	25,736	29,187	..	101
15-44	45,417	24,893	20,524	7,369	3,513	16,660	16,243
45 & above	20,459	12,036	8,423	138	78	10,649	5,427
Age not stated	142	131	11	129	2	2	5

Age-group	Widowed		Divorced or separated		Unspecified status	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1	9	10	11	12	13	14
All ages	1,914	3,384	137	248	93	67
0-14 . . . . .	..	1	..	4	31	4
15-44	724	591	96	127	44	50
45 & above	1,190	2,791	41	117	18	10
Age not stated . . . . .	..	1	..	..	..	3

The table shows that in the age-group 0-14 years, 101 females are found to be married, thus they are in the prescribed age limit for females while in the case of males none is found married in this age group. In the 0-14 years age-group which shows 101 females it does not give any clear indication whether the females belong to the later year or in the earlier years of this age-group so it is difficult to decipher whether child marriage is practised among them or not.

As a rule at the time of marriage negotiations both parties concerned keep in view the name of the principal Kur in making the decision. This is done so as to observe the strict rules of exogamy. The descent is patrilineal and marriage is patrilocal, that is the wife goes to stay with her husband after marriage away from her own parents.

If a young man fancies a girl he informs his parents who go to this girl's parents and propose the marriage of their son with their daughter, though such cases were not very frequent in the former time, which is also known as 'akejoi' type and which is now-a-days preferred by the Mikirs.

The other type of marriage is of 'akemen' type that is marriage by contract or agreement, where the husband stays in his father-in-law's house and works for him for one year or more and sometime even for life according to the term of agreement. Such type

of marriage is usually observed where the girl is an heiress or if she is the only daughter.

The boy's parents will go to the girl's parents house and propose the marriage of their son with their daughter. If the girl's parents agree to the proposal, the boy's parents, give a betrothal ring or bracelets to the girl. This is known as 'Suinkeba' or formal engagement. Sometime in lieu of the betrothal ring a bracelet, a gourd of rice beer is offered and if this is accepted the engagement is made. If one of the parties breaks the engagement, the village council (mei) has the power to fine the defaulting party. In the present day the fine usually ranges from Rs. 20 to 50. In the British days the fine was equivalent to 20 to 50 anna coins, when the fine is realised it goes to the injured party and the betrothal ring is returned to the boy's party. When the formal engagement is over then the day for marriage is fixed by both the parties according to their convenience. On the appointed day the parties prepare rice beer (hor) and husk some paddy to be served to the invited friends and relatives. If the bridegroom's party happens to pass through some villages on its way to the girl's house, the party has to give a gourd of rice beer to the village headman or Gaonbora through which it passes. When the party reaches the girl's house, one of its members hands over one gourd of rice beer to the girl's father. There is no particular person who

should carry the gourd of rice beer to the girl's house, but usually an old man of the boy's side carries the gourd to the girl's house. Initiated by the girl's father an argument then ensues on the point of the coming of the bridegroom and the offering of the rice beer on the occasion. The bridegroom's father would reply saying that he has brought his son to work for his (bride's father) daughter and hence this offer for marriage. The bride's father would answer back and say that his daughter is unworthy of the groom because she can neither weave nor do any household chore. Then the groom's party would reply we will teach her ourselves. Next the boy's father asks his wife to enquire of the girl whether she consents to marry the boy, for without her consent, the rice beer cannot be accepted. If the girl gives her consent, the rice beer is accepted and is drunk by both the fathers. It may be noted that even at this stage the girl can still back out from the marriage bargain, in which case she has to pay a fine (varying from Rs. 25-50) imposed by the 'mei' and further she has to return all the presents given to her. This argument which takes place at the evening or night symbolises the marriage ceremony for that night. Then the bride will proceed to prepare a bed for the bridegroom in the guest room (Kam), but if the groom feels embarrassed he may simply send one of his garments to be placed on the bridal bed as a symbol that he sleeps there. While on the next day morning a fowl or a goat (depending upon the economic condition of the girl's parents) is sacrificed by the girl's party to the god Hemphu. This is known as Vurkematha and the sacrifice is done by an experienced man, a male relative of the girl's father usually his brother. This ceremony usually takes about an hour. On the plaintain leaf rice is kept at one side and when the animal is sacrificed the blood of the animal is collected and is kept on the same plaintain leaf on which rice has been kept. This is then offered to the god Hemphu and is placed outside the porch with the utterance of some chants. The ceremony is followed by a feast given by the bride's father at his residence. The meat of the animal sacrificed is eaten only by the couple while the friends and relatives are entertained with food and drink according to the ability of the girl's parents. After the feast the couple is pronounced as husband and wife. The parents of the girl may accompany her and they can stay at the groom's house and return after 8 days, and during their stay they are entertained with food and drink. The husband with his wife stays in his parent's house until they were able to set up a house of their own. If the marriage is of 'akemen' type that is marriage by contract or agreement, the husband stays in his father-in-law's house and work for him for one year or more and sometime even for life according to the term of agreement. The ceremonies in 'akemen' and 'akejoi' type of marriage do not differ in any way.

Remarriage of widow is allowed. Divorce can also be granted when the girl runs to her home after marriage and refuses to go back to her husband. In this case the husband takes a gourd of rice beer to her parents and gives it and declares himself free of

the matrimonial bond, after which the girl has to return all presents given to her by the husband. After the divorce both parties can remarry and the ceremony is performed in the same way as is done in the first marriage.

Death

The Mikirs believe that if a man does good deeds in this world, he may go safely to 'chom arong', dead man's paradise after his death, otherwise a man may again be born in this hard ridden world and he cannot have a place in paradise after death unless he lives an honest life.

The Mikirs do not normally bury the dead. Cremation is the usual method of disposing of the dead and it is done after performance of some ceremonies. The cremation ground is always outside the village. However, the body of a still-born child or a child who dies soon after birth, or a mother who dies during child birth is buried without any ceremony. Victims of smallpox or cholera are buried shortly after death, but the funeral rites for the deceased are performed later when the dead body or bones being dug up and cremated according to custom. This is done generally after a week or so according to the convenience of the deceased's relatives. In the case of a person killed by a tiger, the body or his clothes, if found, are buried at some distance from the village because the tiger is supposed to visit the burial place. Such a person even if he has done good deeds during his life time, cannot gain admittance to 'chom arong' or dead man's paradise unless elaborate funeral ceremonies are performed.

For natural deaths, the body is generally kept inside the house for one day after death, and if an elaborate ceremony is held the body may lie for as long as three to four days according to the convenience of the family of the deceased. The body lies in the 'kur' and members of the same Kur or clan, sit around the dead body, though it may be noted that there is no bar for member of other Kures to come and sit around the body. Generally only the close relatives of the deceased sit around the dead body. The members of the family cook and eat in the 'kam' (guest room). Friends and relatives clog to the deceased's house to console and sympathise the bereaved family and pay their last respect to the deceased person. The body is washed and clothed by the old men and women of the family as the case may be.

The bier (dola) for carrying the dead body is prepared by the young men of the village to the cremation ground. There is no particular Kur or sub-Kur or any relative of the deceased family is associated with the preparation of the *dola*. The bier is made of wood or bamboo for carrying the dead body during the preparation of the bier the men are entertained with 'hor' or rice beer by the relatives of the deceased. When every thing is ready, that is, when the body is washed and new clothes are put on, then the

body is kept on the bier and tied to it and the old clothes of the dead person are hung over a bamboo pole called *Jambuliathon*. The *Jambuliathon* is a specialized and decorated bamboo pole which cannot be made by any unauthorised person. Only the sub-Kur Langue of Teron Kur are authorised to prepare the pole by the Mikir society. The pole can be carried to the cremation ground by any relative or friend of the deceased. The bier as well as the pole is then taken in a procession to the cremation ground when the body is detached from the bier and placed on the funeral pyre. The platform (Thari) is a raised portion on the ground, done by means of earth and stone, over which are piled logs of wood for burning the body. The pyre is lit by a male relative of the mother's side. While the pyre is burning no body can weep except the professional weepers. They are the old women of the village irrespective of Kur or sub-Kur who usually mourn over the dead person saying couplets in praise of the dead person. When the dead body is thoroughly burnt, the mourning party (cherhe atcum) returns home to partake of the feast given by the family of the deceased. On the following day the house is washed and cleaned after which the life becomes normal. After the cremation of the deceased, a death anniversary known as 'Chomangan' is performed by the relatives of the deceased about a year or two later or more depending upon the economic condition of the family concerned. It is believed that by performing such ceremony, the dead man's spirit may go, safely to 'chom arong' and everything that has been observed after the death is performed again with all the rites and practices connected with it. This ceremony is generally performed by the mother's or father's brother or in the absence by any male relative from either the father's or mother's side. This ceremony generally lasts for three days and the family goes to mourning and feast is given to friends and relatives. On the first day of the ceremony, the relatives proceed to the 'theri' to pick up the charred bones of the dead person which are specially kept for this purpose and which are then wrapped inside a piece of white cloth. The wrapper containing the charred bones is then placed inside an effigy (arang) closely resembling the dead person which is specially prepared for the purpose. The effigy is made of sur-grass and bamboo. This dead man's figure 'arang' is then taken inside the 'kut' and laid on the 'palm' (bed). The mourning party (cherhe atcum) again goes into mourning as if the man has just died. Then young man from the village to the 'theri' to prepare a funeral pyre when the 'arang' is to be burnt. On the second day a 'doha' or dance ceremony is held in which young boys or girls are invited. The young boys under the leadership of one of them called 'duhuide' play with their drums and the girls under the leadership of one of the girls called 'ochepi' dance in the courtyard of the house of the deceased. The dancers (risomars) usually dance in pairs forming a circle, the girl's taking hold of the boy's coat while the boys catch hold of the girls from the belt (vankok). After this performance, the 'risomars' are given rice beer after which follows the sheild dance, where only

the men take part. The dance reaches a climax on the third day when the great dance 'kanpi' is performed. During this dance, one of the 'risomars' who is an expert dancer goes inside the kut and dance before the dead man's effigy. He dances there for about half an hour after which he returns to the party of the dancers. Just before sunset the 'arang' is taken out of the kut and is tied to the 'dola'. Meanwhile the maternal uncle or any other male relative from the deceased's mother's side who is known as 'nihu' kills a pair of fowls after going round the dancing group. If the deceased was a married person, then a male relative from the father's side who is called 'ingjir arlo' kills a goat. The cost of fowls and the goat killed by the respective persons is borne by the deceased's family. The heads of the animals killed are thrown to the 'risomars' who receive them as a mark of respect. The heads of the animals are then cooked and later eaten by them. The rest of the meat is kept to be feasted by those who remain after the burial. The 'arang' is then taken to 'theri' and all the people go in a procession. One of the 'risomars' carry the bamboo post 'Jambuliathon' stuck with the dead man's clothes walk in front keeping steps to the beating of the drums. Then follows a group of 'risomars' and the deceased's male relatives who carry the arang. Next come other relatives and friends. On arrival at the 'theri' the 'arang' is untied and placed on the funeral pyre. The pyre is lit by a male relative of the mother's side and at the same time the professional weepers (cherhe atcum) mourn over his death, recall his past life and pray to the gods (arnum atum), to guide the deceased on its way to 'chom arong' without hinderance on the journey. Then a dance follows where the risomars usually dance in pairs forming a circle the girls taking hold of the boys' coats while the boys catch hold of the girl's from the belt (Vankok). After the dance all return home. When the party reaches home, a feast is given by the members of the deceased's family in the deceased's house. On the following day the house is washed and cleaned and the life becomes normal.

The Christian Mikirs who are in fairly good number (12,443 persons in 1961 Census) belong to the Baptist Church and live their life according to the tenets of christianity. The ceremonies followed and performed by non-Christians whether in respect of birth, marriage or death are not followed and performed by Christian Section of the population.

Among Christian Mikirs in case of child birth though delivery may be performed by a local dhai as in case of non-Christians, no other ceremonies are performed. Baptism or the naming ceremony of the child according to the Christian rites are performed when the child is one month old or so. The child is taken to the church and there the pastor pronounces the name of the child already selected by the parents and blesses the child. The parents may give a feast at their house with rice and meat or tea to friends and relatives, so as to honour to baptism ceremony of their child.

Regarding marriage, the boys and girls have free choice to select their mate and when the boy and the girl have decided to marry, they inform their parents who settle the marriage negotiations. The boy's parents may go to the girl's parents and make an offer for marriage. If the girl's parents accept the offer, the marriage is fixed and settled. If the offer is rejected, the boy's parents will make an offer to another girl and marriage will be settled by mutual consent and agreement of both the parties. Before, marriage is to be finally settled, the boy accompanying his father and his relatives will go to the girl's house and there the pastor of the local church will make the formal engagement and fix the date of the marriage. The marriage ceremony is performed according to the Christian rites in the church by the pastor, who pronounces them as husband and wife, after both of them make an oath to live and to have each other "from now and for ever". The marriage ceremony is always marked by a big feast in the girl's house in which rice and pork are generally served to the invitees. On the following day the husband will take his newly wedded wife to his own house and there they start life as husband and wife.

As regards death among the Christian Mikirs, the corpse is not cremated but is buried instead. When a person dies, the church bell rings and thus announces the death of a person. The dead body may be inside the house for 2 or 3 days according to the wishes of the deceased's relatives, during this period neighbours, friends, and relatives come to the bereaved family to share their sorrows and to console and comfort them. The young men of the village prepare the coffin and dig the grave. The burial ceremony according to Christian rites generally takes place before the coffin is lowered down in the grave after that all who accompany the deceased's coffin to the grave will sing a hymn and say a prayer for the departed soul. A wooden cross is generally erected over the grave bearing the name and the date of birth and death of the deceased. In some cases stone inscriptions are erected over the grave.

Religion

The Mikirs believe in a number of gods collectively known to them as "arum atum" which are invoked and propitiated so that they may grant the village prosperity and happiness. These gods are worshipped in different ways at different time. Like the Khasis, the Mikirs have no idols, temples or shrines, but they believe in the form of a fetish locally known as 'bor' which are only pieces of stones by keeping which the people believe that they can become richer the easier way. There are a good number of gods who receive their names from the disease caused by them. Names of some of the gods who are known for their evil doings are as follows :

- Honi arnam . . . Leprosy, or if killed by tiger
 Peng for general health, cause fever

- Hemphu during child birth
 Dor eczema
 Chinthong and Lamki evil eye
 Chomangase infest hills and valleys

Cholera or smallpox are not named after any god. The people live in constant dread of these gods so they try to be in good terms with them by duly offering propitiations to them. The objects of nature such as the hills, the valleys, the trees, the streams and the rocks are manifested with evil spirits which cause disease to men and as a matter of fact these gods receive their names from the diseases caused by them. The Mikirs are in constant dread and fear of these gods and hence they try to pacify them by offering due propitiations to them. Name of some of the gods who are known for their good deeds are follows :

- Risoarnam for prosperity of young boys
 Ritarnam for cultivation before sowing any crop

However, among the gods, the one which is known as 'Barithe', the god of Heaven, is the most powerful and the dispenser of good and evil. He is propitiated with a pig and the whole village takes part during the ceremony. On this occasion the priest or *Kurusar* as he is called, selects a wide open place in the village where the animal is to be sacrificed. The blood of the animal is offered to 'Barithe' by the *Kurusar* and at the same time he prays to him to free the whole village from any disease and to grant them good health for the whole year. The gods which infest the hills and the valleys—*Chomengase* and *Peng*—which cause fever are propitiated by the sacrifice of a goat or fowl, these are propitiated by the individual family if and when they think that these gods are not pleased with them. When an epidemic disease like cholera breaks out, it is taken to be caused by 'ajoase' to whom propitiation must be made with a goat or pig. This god is also believed to infest the waters or streams.

An important ceremony known as 'rongker' is usually observed when an epidemic breaks out in the village which is believed to be caused by the god Ajoase. The expense of the ceremony will be borne by the families residing in the village, in cash and kind (rice) or either of it, depending upon the economic condition. In this ceremony the 'Kurusar' kills a pig, fowl or goat, at the outskirts of the village and the condition of the intestine tells the omen whether it is good or bad. While sacrificing a goat if the head is not severed from the trunk by one stroke then it is considered as a bad omen. In case of a fowl the head is severed and then it is left free and it flutters for some time in the air. While dying if its body falls on the left side then it is a bad omen while if it falls on the right side then it is considered to be a good omen. If the *Kurusar* finds a bad

omen then every household in the village devotes itself to prayer to the god 'ajoase' to have mercy on them and to avert the impending calamity. If, on the other hand, the omen is good then the blood of the slaughtered animal which is shed on a plantain leaf is offered to 'ajoase' and the meat of the slaughtered animal is cooked and eaten by the village elders in the Sarthe's (Gaonbora) courtyard.

No woman can observe the sacrificial ceremony and they are forbidden to eat the meat of the sacrificed animal as it is believed that the god will not be pleased to dine together with women. But whether the omen is good or bad, the whole community is prohibited from going to work and entry into or going out from the village is strictly forbidden. This prohibition lasts for a week or so until the calamity has died down. If by chance an outsider pays a visit to the village during the calamity, he will have to put up for the night in the village and may leave it only in the morning of the following day.

Illness or trouble of any kind is ascribed to 'Thengthon', the god of jungle and trees and a goat or pig or fowl is sacrificed depending upon the economic condition, for the propitiation of the god. Barrenness in women is believed to be caused by 'sosome' and fowl or a goat is propitiated to ensure fertility in women. There are besides quite a number of other gods the propitiation of which forms the main object of their worship. All the gods mentioned above are placated at the family level and each household may do so according to the nature of the disease or trouble caused by the particular god. The sun and the moon known to them as 'arni' and 'chiklo' respectively are looked upon as divines, and though no propitiation is made to them they receive due honour and respect. All the sacrifices to the gods are performed by the village priest 'Kurusar'. When the propitiation is to be done on the family level then the head of the family requests the 'Kurusar' to perform the sacrifice for the ceremony. The priest occupies a high and respectable position in the society and he is to lead a good and pious life. A person can become a Kurusar provided he is by experience well versed in the art and technique of sacrificial ceremonies. No particular Kur or sub-Kur is associated with 'Kurusar' and no ceremony is performed and no feast is given at the time of appointment of the priest. 'Kurusar' performs duties only when needs arise, and when he is requested to perform the sacrificial ceremony his services are rewarded with food and drink and in some cases with cash, the amount of which never exceeding Rs. 2.00. Sometimes a small village may not be having a Kurusar then in that case 'Kurusar' from the nearby village is summoned to serve and he is duly rewarded. It is the 'Kurusar' who decides what sort of illness the person has and what sacrifice should be performed to appease the gods responsible to the cause of illness, he also performs all the sacrifices connected with the festivals.

As has been stated earlier, the Mikirs believe that there is a place known as 'Chom arong' or dead

man's paradise where both men and women, rich or poor will go and stay after death. A person who is justified by his good deeds in his life while on earth can only go to 'Chom arong', while a man who dies leaving behind his evil deeds on this earth is bound to be reborn. The rebirth of a man is taken by them as a punishment for his evil deeds, for a reborn person has, again to suffer the hardship and troubles in this hard-ridden world.

The beliefs and practices of the peoples described in the foregoing pages belong to the non-Christian section of the Mikir population, while the Christian Mikirs who are fairly in good number (12,443 persons in 1961 Census) belong to the Baptist sect and live their life according to the tenets of Christianity.

Festivals

Of the festivals observed by the non-Christian the most important is known as 'Chojun' or harvest festival. It is usually performed once a year in late December or January after the harvest or once at least after 2 or 3 years according to the convenience. The festival is observed by each and every household and generally lasts for one day. This festival may be done also by the village as a whole, where every household of the village contributes cash and kind. Whether done individually or by the village as a whole the ceremonies held are not different in any way. On the appointed day the 'Kurusar' or the village priest takes a pig which is called 'pirthat-aphak' which has been specially kept for the purpose of sacrificing it to 'Thanarnam' or god of the locality, who is supposed to be the giver of good or bad harvest. The pig is usually killed outside the village. The spot where the pig is to be killed, there an altar called 'duran' is built by the 'Kurusar'. The blood of the sacrificed pig is collected on a plantain leaf and is placed on the 'duran' along with some cooked rice as an offering to 'Thanarnam'. The meat of the slaughtered animal is cooked and eaten by all those who accompany the 'Kurusar'. Another harvest festival observed by them is known as 'horbong-arnam-kepu'. This community festival is generally observed by two or more villages and only the village elders take part in it that is those who constitute the 'mei' or village durbars of the participating village. The festival is observed sometime in the month of January but that does not necessarily mean that all villages perform it at the same time. The place as well as the date of the festival is fixed by the members of the 'mei' of the participating village. This festival may even be performed after one or two years according to the convenience of the 'mei' or village durbars of the participant villages. The festival lasts only for one day. In this festival 'Barithe' or the god of heaven is invoked and propitiated. Fowls and pigs are killed by the 'Kurusar' or by an elderly person of the 'mei' in the courtyard or 'the kup' of the 'Sarthe' (Gaonbora). The blood of the slaughtered animals is collected in a wooden vessel called 'Anthong' and is offered to 'Barithe' as a token of respect. Two days before

the commencement of the festival, all the participating members gather at the house of the 'Sarthe' at night to prepare rice beer and to husk paddy. On the appointed day, the Kurusar performs the sacrifice of the animals after which the meat of the slaughtered animals is cooked and eaten by the participating members. Thus eating and drinking continues at the house of the 'Sarthe'. Sometime drinking reaches an excessive stage leading to petty drunken bouts but these are soon forgotten when the eating and drinking is over.

There is another festival known as Hachakkekan which is performed after the harvest in the month of January or February and is celebrated by the whole village as well as individually depending upon the economic condition of the individuals. The festival is more common among the hill Mikirs and is performed at night. In this festival the young boys of the village dance and sing in a circular form. The leader of the boys who are participating in the dance stands at the centre and sings, he is known as Lunse. The boys make a circle around Lunse and dance along with the rhythmic song of Lunse and move with a circular fashion performing different styles and movements of the hands and body. The songs are not accompanied by any musical instrument. Thus singing and dancing continues throughout the night till dawn comes, when the dancers get exhausted and retire. When the dancing is over, the villagers who collect to see the dancing return home and eat and drink and make merry.

Among the Christian Mikirs Sunday is a sacred day and everybody exempt from work on this day to attend church services. On this day the pastor or any elder of the church will preach from the Bible and utter prayers and hymns. Service is also held in the house and the same rules of preaching, prayers and songs are observed. X'mas and New Year are the two festivals observed by the Christians. X'mas is associated with the birth of Christ which is observed at the mid-night of the 24th December, the moment is announced by the beginning of the church bells at that time and the people come to attend the church service in which songs, prayers and hymns are performed. This is followed by merriment and feast. The New Year day is also celebrated with much merrymaking. On the night of 31st December just at 12 O'clock the church bell rings and thus announces the beginning of the New Year, which is welcomed with much merriment, and songs and prayers are held in the church and the pastor or a church elder delivers a sermon. The day is marked with joy and merriment and the church members, young and old have a dinner party of rice and pork, on a voluntary contribution either in cash or kind.

Leisure, Recreation and Childplay

Mikir men and women work together in their fields from morning till the sunset and relax themselves only after coming from the fields, they remove the fati-

gue of the day's work by sitting around the hearth snapping stories and gossiping about their fields and crops, and the prospects of the coming harvest. When they meet with friends and relatives the inevitable subject of crops always comes up for discussion among them apart from some family matters or other matters. Though they have to undergo through the rigours of nature which make their life hard yet their hearts are full with hope and joy and they are satisfied with what they have. Sometime they sing in chorus while working in the fields or sing simple melodies while thrashing the crops, which seems to dispel the fatigue and weariness from both body and mind. They are the children of the nature and find music in the wind, streams and woods which fill their mind with much delight.

Generally, boys and girls play not many a game, what they play are some of the modern games borrowed from outside that is from the plains people, generally learnt through their school mates. Hide and Seek is played by both boys and girls. In this game a seeker will search the party of the boys and girls who are hiding in some secret places and the one who is caught while hiding by the seeker, will play the part of seeker, thus in this way it goes on as long as the participants of this game want it. Football is a favourite game among the boys and sometime teams are formed among themselves for friendly match, sometime they take part in tournaments for a cup competition. Indoor games as carrom, ludo and cards are also played by both young and old. Those who have received some education, read newspapers, story books etc. or sometime listen to the radio or the transistor set if available, in a neighbour's house or if possessed by them. The housewives and elderly women are hard pressed with their household chores such as fetching water, cooking, cleaning and washing etc. and whatever little time they could spare spend in gossiping or visiting friends and relatives. The young men frequently go during their leisure time for shooting some wild games or fishing in the nearby ponds. The village young men particularly those who are staying in the interior village generally spend their leisure time in a bachelor's house called 'risomar terang' where they play their drums, dance and sing, discuss some problems which they come across in their day-to-day life and exchange their experiences.

Dancing takes place not only during their recreation period but also during their festivals and death ceremonies. Men and women of all ages who are able to dance join together in the dance with the accompaniment of drums and flutes.

Relation Among the Different Segments of the Community

It has been stated earlier that Mikir tribe as a whole is divided into four sections namely, Chintong, Ronghang, Amri and Dumrali and these are again sub-divided into various exogamous groups or Kurs which are further sub-divided into sub-Kurs which vary

greatly in number under each principal Kur which has been shown under the chapter on Family, Clan, Kinship and other Analogous divisions. The four sections of the Mikirs that is Chintong, Ronghang, Amri and Dumrali are the geographical divisions of the tribe. Thus Dumrali is the plains Mikirs while Chintong, Ronghang and Amri are the Hills Mikirs. The exact geographical division of Chintong, Ronghang and Amri is quite obscure.

Chintong, Ronghang, Amri and Dumrali are said to have their own traditional status or rank. It was said that Chintong and Ronghang rank higher than Amri socially, simply because of the fact that the Amris excused themselves from sending a representative on the fatal mission to the Ahom Raja in Raha when representative was required from each of the four divisions. Dumralis acted as interpreters to the embassy and were therefore allowed to have a share of the liquor whereas Amris were excluded from sharing the liquor since they excused themselves from sending a representative.

In the ancient times there might have been some social distinction among these groups as evidenced from the earlier account given but presently there is no social distinction among the Mikirs as to high and low classes and all the Kirs are socially equal. In former times, however, it was reported that each Kur occupied its traditional rank in society. Thus Inghi is said to have been the priestly clan; Terang was also the priestly clan but occupied a lower rank; Lekhe a sub-Kur of Inghi is said to have been the military clan. Timung and Teron represented the rest of the people.

Jealousy and suspicion occasionally arise among the Kirs and when there is a dispute on land between persons of two different Kirs, the members on each side would appear as partisans and sometime foment to discord. But generally such discords are temporary and are appeased by the members of the 'mei'.

Meetings are sometimes held between the members of the Kur in which the well being of the Kur is more concerned than the welfare of the community as a whole. The different Kirs come together and unite only in cases which affect the village or the whole community as such. The observance of religious rites and other ceremonies are performed in a spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation among the different Kirs.

The Christian and non-Christian sections of the population are living in perfect amity and there are no tensions among them. They help one another in times of need and work hand in hand in their fields. During festivals and other religious ceremonies they invite one another to the feast without any distinction. In short, the relation among the different segments of the community is healthy and cordial.

Inter-community Relationship

The Mikirs who are staying in the urban areas may engage the services of barbers and washermen, tailors, and shoe-makers from other communities, but the Mikirs who are far away from the urban centres never employ the services of such persons from other communities except their own. Untouchability is not found among the Mikirs and they do not forbid any one who belongs to another community to inter-dine with them or take water from the same well. Inter-marriage with communities other than their own, though not forbidden is not very much approved by the society. One such case has been found in Dokmoka, about 52 miles from Diphu where a Mikir boy has married a Boro Kachari girl and they are staying within the Mikir village and they have not been socially boycotted by the Mikirs.

The Mikirs who are living in the hills are more attached to their tribal ways of life than those living in the plains. The Mikirs who are living in the plains are surrounded by Assamese and Bengali neighbours and their long experience and steady contact with them has resulted in certain changes in their customs and manners as compared to the Hill Mikirs. Those Mikirs who are living in the hills have no prejudices with regard to food but the plains Mikirs would never eat the flesh of a cow or buffalo possibly these are the effects of contact with Assamese and Bengali neighbours. As early as 1891, Mr. Baker (Assam Census Report 1891) noticed a strong leaning amongst the Mikirs towards Hinduism. Their dress has also been influenced by their neighbours, so far as the Mikir males of the plains are considered, who have now-a-days substituted their loin cloth (rikong) for a dhoti and their waist-coat (choi) for a long shirt, while those in the hills retain much of their traditional dress. As regards occupation, a change from jhuming to wet cultivation is seen among those who live in the plains whereas those in the hills still attach greater importance to jhuming, since even if they are aware of it they are not in a position to follow the wet system due to condition of the terrain. Those Mikirs who are in the plains and near the urban centres are more in advance than their brethren in the hills, as regards education. This may not be due to the much educational facilities given to the plains men rather it may be the effect of their contact with the neighbouring communities, that is, Assamese and Bengalis, also another factor is the conservative outlook of the Hill Mikirs. Mikirs are rather reluctant to accept the change of their social milieu, while their brother in the plains are apt to adopt change according to the needs of the time.

Structure of Social Control, Prestige and Leadership

Much of the old customs of their social organisation splendidly survives even in the present day administrative change. The routine administration of each village is run by the village council known to them as 'mei'. Each council is presided over by a headman or gaonbora called 'Sarthe'. All adult males of the

village are member of the 'mei' known as Chakri. In 'mei' the number of Chakri are not limited and each one of them takes active part in the organisation of his village. The District Council recognises the functions and duties of the 'mei' and it does not interfere with the customary rights and privileges of the community and the right of selecting the 'Sarthe' from amongst them. The 'Sarthe' is usually selected by a consensus from amongst the village elders and as such he is generally one who has good standing in the community and also bears a good moral character. When a person is appointed as 'Sarthe', he gives a feast to his village and pigs and fowls are killed on the occasion. His tenure of office, a post which is honorary is not specified, but depends upon the villagers. If the villagers find the 'Sarthe' a good and efficient one, his services may be required for as long as he wishes to serve, sometime until death. But if he is unfit and incapable of discharging his duties, he is deprived of his Sartheship and another man is selected in his place. The District Council can only recognise the office of the 'Sarthe', but it cannot retain him or expel him otherwise or go against the will of the community.

It is the duty of the 'Sarthe' to summon the members (Chakri) of the 'mei' to a sitting and it is he, who puts forward proposals relating to the affairs of the village and the member to give their verdict. The Sarthe can only preside over the 'mei' but he cannot make any decision without the consent of the other members. Under the 'Sarthe' there are assistants called 'Sarso' (Assistant gaonbora) to help him in his duties and sometimes take over charge of his duties in the event of his illness or absence from the office. The 'mei' fixes the date of the festivals and appeal for voluntary contributions from the community and entrust every member with particular duty in connection with the festivals. When death occurs in the village, the 'mei' informs the whole village of the incident so that they can go and help the members of the house of the dead, till cremation is over. The 'mei' also tries to settle disputes regarding land, property, adultery, assault etc. It may impose fine on the defaulters. The fine varies with the nature of the case. It does not, however, exceed fifty rupees in any case. Disputes that cannot be settled by the 'mei' are referred to the District Council.

The 'mei' usually plays an important role in regulating the social, economic and religious life of the community, though its power has been somewhat curbed with the establishment of the District Council and all important matters like theft, murder, disputes over land or any property are now dealt with the above body. But the 'mei' still occupies an important place in the social organisation and still retains much of its traditional powers in deciding various matters affecting the community as a whole. It should be noted in this connection that some three or four or more villages usually unite together to constitute what is known as 'mei-pi' or a great council. This 'mei-pi' consists only of 'Sarthes' from respective villages and it is presided over by a head 'Sarthe' selected from among

themselves and who holds office for a period of one year and may be further reselected for another term depending upon the consensus of opinion of the Sarthes. Serious matters such as charges of adultery, attempts at life, theft, or menace of elephants or other wild animals in the neighbourhood are referred to the 'mei-pi' if the matters are affecting a number of villages. Matters which cannot be settled by 'mei' or 'mei-pi' are referred to the District Council.

The bachelor's hall or 'risomar terang' where young boys use to sleep at night is still found among the Mikirs in the interior villages of the high hills. Usually the 'Sarthe' or headman of the village instructs the bachelors of the village to construct a house where they can assemble and sleep at night. Such house is generally constructed by all the young boys of the village under the supervision of the 'Sarthe'. Membership to the 'risomar terang' is open to all young boys in the village irrespective of Kurs or sub-Kurs. Generally a boy after attaining ten years of age ceases to sleep with his parents at night and comes to sleep along with other youths in the bachelor's hall. As soon as a man gets married, he ceases to be a member of the 'risomar terang'. Other persons whether married or unmarried, who are not members of the 'risomar terang' are not allowed to enter the hall. The members of 'risomar terang' dance and sing with the accompaniment of the drums or flutes during festivals or even in ordinary days if they feel like. The elder boys help the younger ones to learn to play drums and flutes or dancing etc. The members of 'risomar terang' cooperate with one another in a spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation. Among the Mikirs there is no particular method of gaining leadership or prestige, it all depends upon the villagers to select their leader who is efficient and who is capable of discharging his duties and with whom the villagers have good faith. The villages which are near the urban centres, particularly where majority of the residents of the village are Christian, there the young boys of the village arrange a club where they spend their leisure time playing games. Thus in villages which are having the urban influence the 'risomar terang' is replaced by the modern club houses.

Social Reforms and Welfare

During the five year plans a number of community development blocks have been established covering almost every village in the state, there are also other organisations for social reforms and welfare, working among the Mikir community.

As early as 1949, the Mikir Welfare Centre, Sarihajan village (P. O. Bokajan, Sibsagar) started with some L. P. Schools, one M. V. School, one small free hostel and simple medical aid work under the administration of the Bharatiya Adimjati Sevak Sangh. The Assam Tribal Welfare Works organised some primary schools since 1939 in the villages of the Mikir hills areas. There are also Christian Missionary activity among the Mikirs, as a result there are now a few

thousands of Christian converts. The American Baptist Mission is still working among them in some parts of Nowgong District and Golaghat Sub-division. This was the condition existing before 1950. But still Christianity though it has had far reaching effects in the other hill districts of Assam has not made much progress among the Mikirs and few only of the total population are Christian converts.

Among the welfare agencies existing in the Mikir society worth mentioning are Mikir Seva Kendra, Karbi Jutang Amei, Karbi Lammet Amei, Srimanta Sankar Mission and the Opium Prohibition Organisation. Among these organisations, the Srimanta San-

kar Mission, the Mikir Seva Kendra and the Opium Prohibition Organisation serve the people for their welfare such as modern medical treatment and abolishing the opium consuming habits which is prevalent among the community. Some trained lady workers are also engaged by these institutions to teach the village people the methods of keeping the general health in 'modern hygienic' ways.

The Karbi Lammet Amei or Mikir Literary Committee established in 1967 and Karbi Jutang Amei or Mikir Cultural Association established in 1966 are serving the community for the development and uplift of Karbi literature and culture.

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ANNEXURE
FRAMEWORK FOR ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

I. Name, Identity, Origin and History

1. Name, synonym, sub-caste/sub-tribe as in President's Order and as in other published sources such as Census Reports, monographs etc. Grouping with other castes & tribes during various Censuses. Affinity with other castes and tribes according to recognised authorities.
2. Etymological significance of the name; names by which the community is referred to by (a) others and (b) itself.
3. Identification of the community by occupation or any other way of life.
4. Myths and legends connected with the origin and history of the community and its segments. Historical references and popular beliefs about history and migration of the community.

II. Distribution and Population Trend

1. Area where found; population and concentration in the State and outside. Physical aspects of the areas of concentration.
2. Numerical strength in 1961 and population variation from 1901-1961. Sex ratio, age-groups, and rural-urban distribution in 1961.

III. Physical Characteristics

1. Racial stock; appearance & affinity with other known communities.

IV. Family, Clan, Kinship and other Analogous Divisions

1. Family : size (observed & published), Types, residence after marriage, descent, lineage and its economic & religious function, and inheritance.
2. Clan/gotra and sub-clans : names, etymological meaning clustering of clans, belief and mythology about origin status among clans, clan and regulation of marriage (preference & prohibition) occupation and clan, clan and rituals, clan & food (restrictions, prescriptions etc.)
3. Others : Phratry, Dual organisation like moieties etc., as in 2 above.

V. Dwelling, Dress, Food, Ornament and Other Material Objects Distinctive of the Community

1. Settlement, Village site, location, settlement pattern (agglomerated, nucleated, dispersed, sprinkled, isolated, amorphous, star-shaped, horse-shoe-shaped, linear, rectangular, circular or ring-shaped etc.) and variations; regional pattern *vis-a-vis* pattern of the community.
2. Neighbourhood pattern on the basis of religion, castes (Caste Hindus, untouchables), tribes etc., with segregations, if any, and the basis thereof.
3. Dwelling unit, compound, entrance, source of water, the use of different parts of the house (latrine, cattle shed, isolation huts etc.). Shape (square, round, irregular etc.) storeys, nature of floor, plinth, wall, roofing, thatching ventilations and doors, materials used, decorations and embellishments; temporary structures.
4. Dress including head gear and foot wear—used ordinarily, on ceremonial occasions and special occasions & sex-wise and according to majority or minority. Dress of priests and office bearers; variations.
5. Ornaments.—use, material used, from where obtained; variations according to Sex and age.
6. Personal decoration; tattooing; mutilations (chipping of teeth, etc.); hair cutting; how done, purpose, attitude and variation according to sex and age.
7. Food & drink.—materials (staple and others), prescriptions and prohibitions, fuel, utensils and mode of preparation, practices connected with serving and taking of food; preservation of food and rituals, if any.
8. Equipment connected with economic pursuits, religion and ritual, how procured, material used, construction, manipulation and purpose.
9. Other household equipment. As above.
10. Equipment connected with recording of time, space and weight and their methods of use. As above.

VI. Environmental Sanitation, Hygienic Habits, Disease and Treatment

1. Environmental sanitation, settlement, disposal of night soil, garbage etc.

2. Hygienic habit: cleanliness of body, teeth, dress, houses, utensils etc.
3. Diseases: incidence, local names, interpretation of the causes; symptoms, diagnosis and cure—persons and methods involved.
4. Modern systems of medicine and attitude of the community towards it.

VII. Language & Literacy

1. Ancestral language: classification according to Grierson, persistence of ancestral language and literature.
2. Mother tongue, classification according to Grierson; bilingualism and multi-lingualism, regional language.
3. Information collected during 1961 on language and literature.
4. Education and literacy: (Ghotul, morung, etc.) Traditional and modern—attitude, information collected during 1961—literacy and levels of education.

VIII. Economic Life

1. Economic resources: Land, community land, individual ownership and types of land possessed and land utilization.
2. Forest wealth: right in the forest, forest utilization.
3. Fishery, Livestock and others.
4. Working force: Sexwise, Urban and rural variations and comparison of the same with the region.
5. Non workers.
6. Industrial classifications: details as collected in the field and compared with that of the 1961 figures (traditional occupation and changes in the pattern); Main and subsidiary occupations.
7. Forced labour, bonded labour, patron-client relationship (jajmani), mode of payment.
8. Seasonal migration connected with occupation: recruitment, formation of working groups.
9. Nomadic movement: cycle and occupational pattern.
10. Shifting cultivation: method, implements and equipment, produce, participation, cycle of rotation, measure to regulate shifting cultivation and its impact.
11. Terrace cultivation: as above.

12. Income & expenditure: Sources of income, extent, expenditure on food, clothing, house, education, social functions and others.
13. Other aspects of economic life.

IX. Life Cycle

A. Birth

1. Beliefs & practices connected with conception, barrenness, still birth, miscarriage, abortion, child death, regulation of sex, etc.
2. Pre-natal and natal practices: Residence, diet, work, taboos etc. delivery place, assistance, equipment used in delivery, position during delivery, severance of umbilical cord (who does and how done), disposal of placenta.
3. Post natal practices: Confinement and segregation, ceremonial pollution, diet for mother and child, rituals.
4. Protection and care of child and training.
5. Attitude towards birth of child: Preference about sex, preference about number, segregation of sex, etc.

B. Initiation Description

1. Initiation ceremony; descriptions.
2. Pre-marital sex relations within the community, outside the community, sanctions and taboos.

C. Marriage

1. Age at marriage for both sex; prohibited degrees of relationship, preferences, widow re-marriage (preference & taboos).
2. Civil status and social status.
3. Types of marriage: monogamy, polygamy (Polyandry and polygyny).
4. Selection of spouse: qualities valued (for bride and groom) mode of selection, procedure.
5. Modes of acquiring mate: By negotiation, force, intrusion, elopement, etc.
6. Terms of settlement: Payment of bride price, dowry service, exchange, adoption etc.
7. Ceremonies connected with marriage: details including who presides over the marriage and services of functional castes.
8. Statistical data as per 1961 Census.
9. Divorce: Reasons and procedure.

D. Death

1. Concept about death, measures to ensure future well being of the soul, measures to avert harm by the spirit.

2. Methods of disposal : burial, cremation, exposure, floating on water etc.
3. Preparations for disposal of dead, informing friends and relatives, treatment of the dead body, digging of pit etc. for disposal. How carried, who carry, who accompany, place of disposal, methods of disposal, norms and taboos.
4. Ceremonies connected with disposal.
5. Monuments : Death rites : details.
6. Tombs, megaliths, etc.
7. Pollution : duration, restrictions in work, food, dress, shaving, hair cropping, sex life etc., removal of pollution.
8. Mourning : mourners and duration.

X. Religion

1. Deities : supreme deity, benevolent deities, malevolent spirits, presiding deities of village and other aspects of life including occupation, clans, *gotras* etc.
2. Place of the deities in the regional pattern and Brahmanical and traditions.
3. Rituals and concepts connected with the pantheon.
4. Spots associated with the deities, pilgrim centres and methods of worship.
5. Religious functionaries.
6. Calendar of festivals and their observance.
7. Concept of soul, hell, haven, rebirth, transmigration and soul etc.
8. Sects and denominations : name, distribution, beliefs and practises etc.
9. Statistical information.

XI. Leisure, Recreation & Child Play

1. Use of leisure time : (male, female, children and adult) seasonal variation in leisure time.
2. Recreation their mode and extent, for males, females and children.
3. Leisure and recreation with reference to work.

XII. Relation among Different Segments of the Community

Recognised Segments—name, basis (territorial, ceremonial, social prestige, religion, sect,

education, age etc.) Inter-relationship among various segments, status of the segment, status of women.

XIII. Inter-community Relationship

1. Ceremonial relationship: service by Brahmins, traditional service by castes like barbers, washermen etc.
2. Pollution by touch or proximity to high Caste Hindus, use of well, admission to temple.
3. Secular relationship: model for other communities; dominance due to economic resources, political status, social status, etc.
4. Bridge role, buffer role, alliance and antagonism of the community.

XIV. Structure of Social Control, Prestige & Leadership

1. Social control : levels of Social control, community level, regional level, hereditary, special functionaries etc., social control by other agencies.
2. Mode of acquiring offices.
3. Control exercised by traditionally recognised leaders, functionaries of statutory bodies of the region, powerful individuals belonging to the community, etc., at the regional level and local level.
4. Relationship between spheres of social control and agencies of social control.
5. Leadership : for social change, for technological change, for political action and for other organised activities in the community level, regional level and local level.
6. Social prestige : Method of gaining social prestige (by performing ritual, merit of feast, associating with historical association etc.) symbols of social prestige.

XV. Social Reform & Welfare

1. Social reform movements: Intensity; reasons (for raising social status, establishing traditional norms, for westernisation etc.) history and import of the movements.
2. Social welfare : Agency, religious organisation, community as a whole, Government, official and non-official measures, role of the social welfare measures and impact.

XVI. References cited and other Bibliography