

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In Chapter I, I have discussed the problem, survey of literature, methods, objectives etc. A description of the village is given in Chapter II. We find that the entire population of the village are migrants.

The traditional Marngar society is described in Chapter III. It is characterised by barter system and shifting cultivation in the field of economy. Regarding their beliefs and values, they worshipped many gods and goddesses such as the Jomai pyrthat, 'Lei Duwan etc. Traditionally, the Marngars mostly had a joint family system. Marriage by mutual consent and elopement were practised by them earlier too. Some of their festivals like Lukhmi are related to the Assamese culture. The ceremony performed in the market place are very similar to that of the Jaintias. Descent and the erection of monoliths are similar to that of the Khasis. All this shows the mixed culture of the villagers. They have also clan and village deities.

Changes in this village are discussed in Chapter IV. Significant change is seen to have been brought about by the Christian and non-Christian missionaries who have inculcated new ideas and culture through the establishment of educational institution. This has led them to change their dress, food habits, etc. too. Change in religion has also been noticed. Majority of them have changed to Christianity and some of them have changed to Hinduism. Clan names have changed too as they have been living here for a long time. More nuclear families have sprung up now. Marriage by mutual consent and elopement are still practised by them. But in the case of elopment, a fine has to be paid to the Village Council if such a case occurs. Change in the descent of some clans has also occurred in which they now trace their descent from the mother's side.

Traditionally, egg and fowls were used mainly for the purpose of divination and sacrifice. But now people practise poultry farming mostly for commercial purpose.

The males are usually found engaged in ploughing and other much heavier works, whereas the females

are seen doing household chores. However, there is no strict division of labour based on sex or age as is prevalent in the Hindu societies.

The market is a cultural centre, an important place for meeting the relatives and friends. Again it is also from the market place that they gather information about political situation, social, economic and cultural happening. Market provides a social link between the different villages. It is a great pleasure or excitement for the people to go to market on the main market day. There are certain rites which are still performed in the market, which is locally known as Knia Iew.

Sale and purchase of land was not known to them as most of it was a clan land, locally known as Ri Raid. The villagers had the right to build house and cultivate only. Thus the land would not be used by an outsider who did not belong to the village.

There is also a clan division of work especially during any ceremony or festivals to propitiate their village deities.

The Syiem and the Binong clan members are

the first to customarily till the soil of the Ri Raid followed by the Damlong clan according to their custom and other remaining clans.

The community land or Ri Raid is a land where every member of the community has a right to occupy a part for his or her use. But if the land is left unutilised for three consecutive years it reverts to Ri Raid and any other member of the village may be given that plot. In the case of Ri Raid, sale and purchase of land do not occur even today.

The availability of faster means of communication has led to a greater mobility and independence. The older generation people were used to covering long distance on foot but the younger generation villagers like to avail of transport facilities even for short distance.

It is seen that a large section have now changed into Christianity, while some of them have changed into Hinduism. These religions have brought about many changes in their rites and ceremonies too. Even the law of inheritance and succession seems to have changed from matrilineal to collateral system.

Though some of them have become Hindu or Christian, the village council has a standing rule that they have to perform all the rites and rituals about the village deities. This has resulted in a cosmopolitan outlook of the villagers.

The main reason why the people have changed into Christianity or Hinduism is that they cannot afford to procure all the essential things for their rites and rituals.

Another factor of change is the spread of education through schools which have been set up by the Hindu and Christian missions.

Marriage by mutual consent and elopement are common among the Marngar. Sacrifices are also made by some clans for their household deity at the time of their marriage ceremony. They also make sacrifices for the new couple so that no harm or illness would occur.

There are two types of death ceremony i.e., the Borkam and the Kámrit. The Borkam ceremony was performed only for the people with high status and power for seven days. The Kamrit ceremony was held

for four days and for the layman only.

The rite known as Ka Rongkoh Lyngdoh was performed to please the evil spirit, so that it would not bring any harm to them. But now this rite has disappeared for a long time.

There is a change in the attitude towards child-birth too. In former days old and experienced woman from the neighbourhood attended the delivery cases. But now dispensaries and public health centres have been set up in the village. Therefore the villagers go there at the time of child birth.

Food habits have also changed. Earlier they ate phan khlaw (wild potato) but now they eat rice. Eating of beef was permitted earlier but now some of them have given up eating of beef due to the influence of the Hindu religion. This is true of the Binong, Damlong, Majhong and the Diri clans. These clans said to be low caste status, who had migrated from Assam (erstwhile Jaintiapur). Being the first settlers of this village, they now own land which has elevated their social status to a much higher degree. But those who have migrated from other parts of Meghalaya still

eat meat (beef) as most of them are proselytised Christians.

It is also reported that drinking of alcohol was not known to them before but now this habit has crept in. The spirit is distilled for home consumption as well as for sale.

In addition to earthen vessels, bamboo and gourd containers were used earlier to store water and grain. Vessels made of aluminium, copper and brass are rather new. Today even glass and metal containers are used. We also see that gourd containers are still used as water jars by some of the villagers who are poor. Bamboo spoons are also still used.

Previously, the males used to wear a loin cloth known as Palong Gamsha and Langtih Gamsha. They even wore a turban or Kharsola and a shirt. On the other hand, females wore a cloth known as Mikhli which they wrapped around the body from the armpit to the ankle. Besides these, they wore a piece of white cloth covering their shoulders. Earrings were worn by both men and women and these were made of dry wood. But at present there has been a change regarding the way

of dressing. Males dress in western style. Even women are now following the western way of dressing. Further, earrings are rarely worn today by the males.

Electricity is one of the important changes in the village. With the coming of electricity it has made their life easier as they do not have to depend on kerosene for lamps. But till now only about 50 per cent of the houses in the village have got electricity. The other 50 per cent still depend on kerosene for their lamps.

Further, the villagers today have sewing machine, television, radio, tape recorder, machines for weaving and spinning clothes and thread etc. Out of 300 households, 256 households, i.e., 85 per cent of the households are having at least one of these items.

It may be concluded that the Marngars have undergone significant changes during the last hundred years or so. Though many features of their past have continued in spirit they have changed in content. Above all, the people's values and ethos towards their past are apparently buried in their efforts of evolving a new identity severed from their past.