

CHAPTER II

THE VILLAGE

LOCATION

The Marngar village lies on the north of Meghalaya, in the Ri Bhoi District. The village is bounded on the north by Umden, on the south by Sohloit, on the east by Umsawnongbri, and on the west by Mawtnum.

At the entrance of the village there is one gate which is locally known as Ka Khyrdop. It is said that this gate was built in order to guard the village from diseases or calamities that might occur. Every year the villagers make a sacrifice of U Huleng (black monkey) at the gate. After the sacrifice is over, they bury the body of U Huleng under the gate whereas the head of it is left above the ground. After that, they go to each and every house and mock-beat the house so that the disease or illness that might occur in the village would not occur.

This village covers a vast area. It has six hamlets or Kyntoit. These are as follows:

1. Purangang

2. Borgang
3. Atgang
4. Sarikusi
5. Borchatchari, and
6. Lalungpam.

With the coming of Hindu and Christian missionaries, schools have been established. The District Council and Sankardev Mission established their schools in the same year, i.e., in 1959, while the Christian Missionary school was set up in 1975.

Monoliths can be seen in every nook and corner of the village. Some of these monoliths are erected for the purpose of holding Durbar Shnong or Local Assembly. Others are erected to commemorate the dead persons, which are erected by the rich people only. Such monoliths also made it possible for the people to use them as a resting place. Still other monoliths, which are in the central part of the village, are erected for the elders of the village to sit whenever there is any festival or any ceremony performed by the villagers.

The village is administered by the Syiem or

the Chief who is helped by his Myntri or minister. All the rules and regulations are enforced by the minister or Ki Myntri with the approval of U Syiem or the Chief.

The village is about 7 kilometres away from the main town of the Bhoi area, i.e., Nongpoh. It is well known for paddy and other crops like vegetables, bananas and broom stick which are grown there.

The village has a number of establishments belonging to the Department of Soil Conservation, Department of Sericulture, Department of Industry and the Department of Health.

there are four schools in the village, two of which are primary schools, one middle school, and the fourth one is a high school. The two primary schools are St. Jitas and the District Council Lower Primary school. Sankardev school is a middle school and St. Alfred is the high school.

HISTORY OF THE VILLAGE

Members of the clan called Binong are known to be the first settlers in the village. This clan is also known as Ket after its founder. According

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to a legend, this clan originated from the elder sister of Ket who had established a clan after migrating to Marngar. The word 'Binong' itself means the first settler. They did not have a chief so they went in search for U Syiem and found one in Gobja, the location of which is already mentioned.

The Damlong clan is believed to have originated from the younger sister of Ket. It is said that the younger sister gave birth to a child in Amlongjan (Raid Amlong, Khyrim Syiemship, in Ri Bhoi District). That is why the child born was named Damlong, which is considered as a corruption of the word Amlongjan. Therefore, the descendants of the younger sister of the Ket came to be known as the Damlong clan. The word 'Damlong' also means 'flood' and in the Marngar language, flood is called Amlongjan.

As time passed on they found that the village was not suitable for cultivation, so they migrated to Kyrdem which falls under the Ri Bhoi district itself. But they could not stay even there and migrated to Libri which was later known as Marngar. This may be taken to indicate that they were shifting cultivators.

The members of this clan found that it was not possible to do religious activities and to run the administration all by themselves. So the Chief or u Syiem searched for someone to help him. It was proposed that the Lyngdoh clan should be made to perform the scarificing duties to the goddess known as Ka Blei Lyngdoh. The Syiem went to Keling (Meghalaya) to bring a Lyngdoh for conducting the rites and rituals for this goddess. It is reported that the Lyngdoh also performed as a Myntri or minister of the chief. And a Lyngdoh could even become a chief if there was no one from the Syiem clan.

The chief or u Syiem also invited a member of the Baro clan of Nalsi village to come and settle in Marngar. (The Nalsi village is situated in Umden within the Ri Bhoi district). The reason for inviting him was that the Syiem needed the Baro because his people did not know how to perform the rites and rituals regarding what is known as the Domahi or Bihu. The Chief further elected from among the members of the Baro clan one Barka meaning a postman. Thus the Baro retained their traditional title as Baro, which must have been a corrupt word from Bodo.

At the very beginning, there were three primeval sisters who had come to settle in Marngar. Two of them had fled away to Iew Mawlong and Umden in the Ri Bhoi district itself, the third stayed back in Marngar and served as a maid servant of the Chief of Marngar. Later she got married to the Chief's son. It was after that that the Chief gave hear a new clan, i.e., Majhong.

The members of the Shilling clan came from Ranee Gudam which is in Diporbil, Assam. The cause of their migration to Marngar was the breaking out of a war between the War and the Jaintia. Simultaneously, a great earthquake occurred and all the people had to flee away. Houses were destroyed and soon the people migrated to different parts of Assam and at last reached Marngar. They started the journey from Ranee Gudam (Assam) to Keling (Meghalaya) then to Mawphrew of the Bhoi area and to Nulianpam of the same area near Marngar and reached Marngar after a very tiresome journey. In Keling, the Shillings met the members of the Marek (Marak of the Garos) and then proceeded together to Mawphrew but the Mareks ended their journey at Mawphrew. During their journey

they met members of the Sohkhwai and the Mokhai clans at Nulianpam and stayed there for some time. After a year or more the children of the Marek clan met the members of the Shilling clan and requested them to give some land. The Shillings agreed to that request. From the Shilling clan emerged a diviner and mediator who could perform the various rites and rituals for the deities that had been brought from Ranee Gudam. Then after some years, they again migrated to other places and met the members of Binong clan at Lalungkusi hamlet (Marngar).

After many years, these people were given the authority as the Pator, i.e., a minister while the Sohkhwai held the post of Karkun, i.e., a diviner. The members of both the Shilling and Sohkhwai clans went to the Chief to ask for some land on behalf of the Marek clan but the Chief refused. Thus the Marek clan has given a plot of land by the Shilling clan and the former promised to help the latter in any trouble. The Shilling clan agreed to their proposal and gave them a plains area, i.e., Wahdor Bhoi and even gave them a statue of god, i.e., Juphan Khaji so that they could worship him.

Then came the members of the Makdoh or Nonda clan, who had come with a hope that they would get some land from the Shilling clan. As they did not get any land from the Chief, the Shillings again gave a part of their land to the Nonda/Makdoh clan and that area was known as Majhor Bhoi and a statue of god, i.e., Juphan Pateng was also given. All these things were given to the Makdoh or Nonda clan as the latter had promised to help them in times of need. It appears that upto now these two clans, i.e., the Makdoh and the Marek have not broken their promises made by their ancestors and ancestress. Among the gods which the Shillings gave to the other clans, Juphan Bah the eldest of all gods, is still retained with them.

The members of the Makdoh/Nonda clan appear to be originally Khasis. The ancestor and ancestress of this clan were known as Ka San Makdoh and U Hurimon Ingti. The word Nonda is derived from the word Mynda who was one of the maternal uncles of the Nonda clan. According to some sources their ancestral place was in Jaintiapur, which indicate that some of the Marngars are of Pnar origin. After a long time they settled

down in Kyrdem (Ri Bhoi district). One legend says that there were three brothers and sisters in which San, the youngest sister, was loved by all of them and she never did any kind of work. One day, after they had finished their work, they started propitiating their gods by sacrificing a pig. The dinner was ready and everybody started spreading leaves so that they could have a good meal. But unfortunately, it so happened that no leaf was laid for the youngest daughter. Thus she was very much disappointed, her elder sister pleaded her forgiveness but she decided to leave. After two weeks' journey she reached Mawrong in Bhoi area. For twenty years she lived there but she was not satisfied till her marriage with U Hurimon Ingti after which she and her family members came and settled in Purangang hamlet (Marngar).

The original place of the Sohkhwai clan was a village called Sohkhwai in Meghalaya. According to a legend, this clan had only two sisters. They were orphans and they wandered from one place to another until they reached Marngar and settled there.

The Diri or Giri clan is believed to have emerged from the only daughter of the Syiem clan.

In their language they are called Diri but to some of the villagers they are Giri. This clan was, according to a legend, formed with the consent of the Syiem clan which gave a stone to the former for performing a sacrifice known as Bura Halur.

The members of the Bomba clan came from Odalguri in Assam. According to them, they came along with the members of the Damlong clan. Thus there is a friendly relation between these two clans. They are known as Har Giati - Kas Giati which means that they are ready to help each other in times of sorrow or joy.

The Pator clan is also known to have emerged from the Lyngdoh clan. Its members were the original inhabitants of Thamsing Patgan village in the Ri Bhoi district.

PEOPLE

In the past, the Marngars had migrated from different places and belonged to different communities like the Bodo, the Khasi, the Garo, the Mikir, and so on. But in the course of time they came to be identified as one of the sub-groups of the Khasi, viz., the Bhoi.

The population distribution of the 14 clans in this village is given below.

Table 1 - Population Distribution According to Clan.

Clan	% of Males	% of Females	Total Numbers	Total P. C.
Barka/Baro	2.4	3.2	73	6.1
Bomba	1.4	0.8	27	2.3
Binong	8.8	10.0	226	18.8
Damlong	7.1	6.2	161	13.4
Diri (Giri)	0.8	1.2	25	2.1
Lyngdoh	3.9	3.8	92	7.6
Marwet	3.6	4.9	103	8.5
Majhong	3.3	4.8	98	8.2
Marek	-	0.2	2	0.2
Nonda (Makdoh)	2.1	1.6	44	3.7
Pator	0.6	0.9	18	1.5
Shilling	2.1	1.8	47	3.9
Sohkhwai	9.0	7.2	195	17.2
Syiem	4.1	3.7	94	7.8
Total	49.6	50.4	1205	100.0

Source: Field work.

From the above table it is seen that the Binong clan has the highest percentage of population i.e., 18.8 followed by Sohkhwai (16.2) and the Damlong clan (13.4). The remaining clans have less than 10% only.

The table also shows that the percentage of females is higher than that of the males. Regarding male-female ratio, the Barka, Diri, Lyngdoh, Marwet, Majhong, Marek and the Pator clans have a higher percentage of females than that of the males.

In Table II below, age-group classification of the Marngars is given.

Table II - Age group classification of the Marngars.

Clan Names	0-15	16-30	31-45	46-60	61 +
Baro (Barka)	3.2	3.0	1.0	0.3	0.1
Binong	4.5	2.3	1.4	1.0	0.5
Bomba	1.0	0.4	0.2	0.1	0.1
Damlong	4.0	2.6	1.0	0.6	0.4
Diri	0.7	0.5	0.1	0.1	-
Lyngdoh	5.7	4.5	2.6	1.2	0.5
Marek	-	0.1	-	-	-
Majhong	6.7	3.6	1.9	1.5	0.5
Marwet	2.1	2.1	0.6	0.9	0.1
Nonda/Makdoh	-	0.2	0.1	0.1	-
Pator	0.4	0.4	-	0.1	0.1
Shilling	1.0	0.8	0.6	0.2	-
Sohkhwai	4.9	2.1	2.1	1.2	1.0
Syiem	8.5	6.6	1.6	1.5	0.6

Source: Field work.

From the above table it is seen that there is a high percentage of children between the age group of 0-15 years among the Syiem clan (8.5), whereas the Pator clan has only 0.4% in this age group. In the age group of 16 to 30 years, the Syiem has the highest percentage (6.6) followed by the Lyngdoh clan (4.5), Majhong (3.6) and the Marek has the lowest percentage (0.1). The age-group between 31 to 45 years shows that the Lyngdoh has the highest percentage (2.6), while the Marek and the Pator clans are absent in this age group. The table also reveals that the Syiem and Majhong clans have equal percentage (1.5) in the age group of 46-60 years which is the highest, whereas there is none in the age group from the Marek clan. Further, we can also see that the Lyngdoh and the Sohkhwai clans have an equal percentage in the age group of 46-60 years.

According to the age group of 61 and above, the Sohkhwai clan has the high percentage (1.0), the lowest percentage is found among the Baro or Barka, bomba, Marwet and Pator which have an equal percentage of (0.1) in this age group. There were none in this age group from the Diru, Marwet, Nonda or Makdoh and Shilling clans.

Educationally, only 3.1% of the people of this village have college education. Most children of the village cannot study beyond the local schools. For college education they have to go to Nongpoh or Shillong, which is not possible for every villager there. However, Table III shows that the illiterates constitute only 34.3 percentage.

Table III - Education in Marngar.

Educational categories	Frequency	Percentage
Illiterate	625	34.3
Primary Education	350	19.2
Secondary	354	19.4
College	57	3.1
Total	1825	100.00

Source: Field work.

Amongst the Marngars, both rich and poor eagerly want their children to be educated. Night schools have also been set up for the villagers. Such schools are primarily for those poor people who cannot afford to send their children to any school as they have to work as wage labourers during the day time.

Education is the most important contribution of the Christian as well as the non-Christian mis-

sionaries to the Marngars. With the opening up of schools some of them have become school teachers. Other occupations have also sprung up due to education. Majority of the people are now able to read and write and know other languages too. Further it is seen that the government has also come forward to help such schools set up by the various missionaries.

The Marngar house has the shape of an inverted 'U'. The houses are mostly (75.0%) thatched with the help of straw and wild grass though about a quarter of the houses were roofed with corrugated and galvanized iron sheets.

Each house has three rooms which include two bedrooms and a kitchen. The floor is daubed with a certain type of red mud. Construction of houses, harvesting of paddy and other such activities are performed together by the residents of the village. A person who refuses to participate in such activities may be fined by the village council and he may even be thrown out of the village.

Most of the villagers are cultivators, followed by government servants, businessmen, and so on. The table below shows the distribution of occupations in Marngar.

Table IV - Occupational distribution of the Marngars.

Clan	Cultiva- tors & Wage labour- ers	Khadi Villa- ge Indus- try	Office goers	Carpen- ters	Teacher	Busi- ness	Priests
Binong	8.6	0.1	1.3	-	0.2	0.3	0.2
Bomba	1.0	-	0.2	-	-	-	-
Baro	4.3	-	0.1	-	-	0.1	-
Damlong	7.2	0.2	0.6	0.1	-	-	-
Lyngdoh	13.5	-	1.2	-	0.1	0.7	-
Syiem	14.5	-	1.4	-	0.5	0.4	-
Sohkhwai	14.1	-	1.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Shilling	1.6	-	0.1	-	-	0.1	-
Makdoh	1.9	-	0.1	-	-	-	-
Marwet	6.0	-	0.2	-	-	-	-
Marek	0.1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Majhong	13.2	0.2	0.9	-	0.2	0.4	-
Pator	0.6	-	0.2	0.1	-	-	-
Giri	0.8	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	728	5	55	3	10	20	3

Source: Field work

14.5% of the Syiem clan members are cultivators and wage labourers. As most of them have paddy fields of their own they are engaged mostly in their own field though some of them work as wage labourers also. Both males and females are engaged as wage labourers. The females earn Rs. 30/- and the males Rs. 40/- per

day. The Sohkhwai clan comes next in this category. We also find that the Marek clan has the lowest percentage.

In the next category, i.e., office workers, we find that the Syiem clan has the highest percentage (1.4) followed by the Binongs. Further, there is absence of this category of people among the Diru and Marek clans.

In the category of business, we find both men and women engaged in it. But we find that majority of those doing business belong to the Lyngdoh clan.

We also find that the Binong clan has the largest number of priests followed by the Sohkhwai clan. This particular profession is carried out only by these two clans.
