



# The Dolloi of Jowai Elaka.

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## Abstract

**Introduction:** Jaintia hills designated as the land of the Twelve Dollois as there exist 12 Elakas. With the creation of another 6 Elakas, today there are 18 Elakas in Jaintia hills which covers the twin districts of Jaintia Hills that is the West Jaintia Hills and the East Jaintia Hills districts. The Dolloi of Jowai Elaka is one of the traditional chief of Jaintia Hills. In the Pre-British period, the Dollois were sovereign rulers in their kingdom. Serious ramification was done to them on being annexed by the British during the Colonial era. Today, the Dollois were under the administrative competence of the District council.

**Methods:** The study adopts the Qualitative methods.

**Result:** The Dolloi who is the traditional chief was elected to take the reign of administration in an Elaka. As per customary practices, practiced and abided since time in memorial: the process for the election of the Dolloi was done by following the old age tradition where only the designated clans can offer their candidature for the post and following manhood suffrage. The clan mentioned was the Soo Kpoh, Khadarwyrnai, Le Kyllung and Talang-Lato. In the pre British era, the Dollois exercised tremendous roles in the administration of the Jaintia Hills. However, in the past power belong not just to them **but was also shared with the people**. So, the Dolloi exercised executive, political, judicial and religious functions. In running the administration of the Elaka, the Dolloi was assisted by the councilors or subordinate officials known as the Wasan. On being annexed to the British Empire, encroachment on these traditional practices increases tremendously, though not done away. However, the expectation that the attainment of independence would bring more respite of these traditional bodies was a distant dream. The provision of the Sixth Schedule means dilly dallying or is not fitting the theoretical aspect into practical perspective. The Dollois were treated as stipendiary officials only. Most of their powers have been stripped off by the Council. This led to strained relationship between the JHADC of the Dollois and has raised many an eyebrows on the relevance of the JHADC today.

**Conclusion:** This paper is an attempt to redraw the roadmap on the importance of the traditional political institution in Meghalaya. The Dolloi of Jowai Elaka will serve as an exemplary example on the Chapters which once were considered prolific in the history of the Jaintias but today treated as forgotten and of meager values. The old guards of tradition today have been left to fend for them.

**Key words:** Dolloi, Elaka , JHADC, Soo kpoh, Khadar Wyrnai, Jaintia hills.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Jaintias were believed to be migrated from Central Asia through West Asia till they reached their present abode.<sup>1</sup> A very well articulated view of the origin and migration of the Jaintia tribe was analysed by Lamare in his book “The Jaintias – studies in Society and Change”. The writer had stated that the book being the outcome of the long and tedious research, undertaken for a couple of years helps in throwing light on the lesser known facts about the Jaintias. Wherein, he had mentioned a number of theories regarding the origin and migration of the Jaintias as one of the many tribes of North East India. The writer had analyzed a number of theories and conclusions drawn by various researchers on the origin of this tribe. However, the writer dwells at length too on the oral traditions as the tribe have a very strong oral tradition which is being handed down to them then and now .

As per oral tradition, the Jaintias were believed to be the descendants of U 7 Wasa 7 Wasung , 7 trep 7 skum of indigenous belief, God known to them as ‘U Trekirot’, had bifurcated his kingdom of 16 huts where he amalgamated – 9 huts were set to remain in heaven and 7 were send to earth and to permanently settle and to struggle for his survival. Therefore, U 7 wasa U 7 wasung , U 7 trep 7 skum- thrives , prosper and progress in the universe – Known till today “ Ka Ri 7 wasa 7 Wasung 7 Trep 7 Sku”. However, the references were dubbed as myth, and were adhere by indigenous people embracing traditional faiths.



That oral tradition out rightly rejects the theory of evolution, is highly reflected in the beliefs that U Niaw Wasa which was a man directly created and sent by God to this earth.

Other theories found special mentions too.

References of the Jaintias, being as the second inhabitants, to have migrated to the north eastern region next to the Negrito race, was made by one theory, who, failed to ascertain the in places of origin or the reasons leading to the migration of these people.

Researches also made attempts to trace the origin of the Jaintias through the reference of the Puranas narrating the tales of the kingdom of Pragjyotisha by Naraka. The Kiratas was a collective name given to the tribes of the Khasis, Jaintias, Garos, Chutias, Tipperah, the Nagas, the Kacharis etc. It was reiterated that a fierce battle broke out between the king Naraka and the chief of the Kirata named Ghataka where the latter met with a crushing defeat and was beheaded and Naraka installed himself to the throne of Pragjyotisha. Many concluded that most of the Kirata groups were driven away after the war and fled eastward and some were pushed back to the hills. But the reference though drawn from the Puranic and Tantric literature too, failed to deliver the true picture about the origin and migration of the Jaintia with just one exception that they belonged to the collective names of the Kiratas.

Certain other conclusions were made from (L) Dr. B.Pakem's references about the Megaliths as that in many parts of jaintia hills like Sutnga and nartiang's monoliths classed as males and females menhirs or obelisks and dolmens. These megaliths were scattered and erected in huge numbers and some which were known as cromlechs or stone chambers.

However, an indication that the same day may be attributed to the presence of these megaliths in the unique designs stone bridge of Amvi and Syndai. Megaliths like stone jars at Saipung, stone figures at Dawki, stone carving at Jowai together all these can be termed as megaliths. Other maybe the title of flat tablestones of the cists with strong attachment to the existence of rituals associated with these tribes – "Menhirs- The Standing stones and Dolmens- The Flat table stones".

The writer, had revealed that due to the absence of academic studies, it is difficult to conclude, if the Pnar people or the Jaintia People had the megalithic culture of owning the structure likes of megalithic erections composing of the menhirs and dolmens and cists i.e box like structure

as most of these, have proofs of either existence and connectivity with religious practices in the Mediterranean countries, where burial practices were found to practice there.

However, one would agree that the Khasis and the Jaintias, have strong affinities, with indigenous religion, as the charred bones were again collected in the ossuary in a box like structure, doing management with the megalithic stones, suggesting that some elements of truth, maybe affiliated with the megalithic culture. Though there was the absence of the academic recordings yet the remnants of marks and traces of these Megaliths, had been supposed and accepted that the Jaintias were the builders of the megaliths found in their area. Oral tradition again, resurfaced that the Jaintias were the original settlers in the region and Prof. Pakem is of the opinion that the migration of the people, must have been somewhere around 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.

Other theories, indicates that the Jaintias have entered the present hills in batches, where as another theories suggest that some of the group has then origin from the Mekong river, Cambodia.

Certain others reached out their projection of the Jaintias to be the original inhabitants of a state in the Chinese region better known as 'T' Sirtiang or T-Sintien and subsequently came to be known as Synteng or Syntien.

Where as, P.R.T. Gordon, is a vague in his expression, as his findings were improper/ not authentic / and hence his theory which supports that the Jaintias were migrants from the north and mentions Sylhet as the terminary point of wanderings.

Other theories, that engulf critical acclaims, were the findings of Dr. Lalit P Pathak, an eminent which claimed that the origin of the Jaintia tribe was located from South Western Turkey.as per this findings, the line drawn was mainly based from the matrilineal nature practised by the Lukkan people of South west Anatolia. The connection was, the northern foreign invasion that was carried out in Anatolia and Greeks areas, leading to the massive immigration of the people. One of these was the Lukkan or Jaintias. Yet, the conclusion drawn were highly debatable,as it only added more to the already perplexing trouble about the origin and migration of the Jaintias.

By and large, one of the most widely spread view, where many scholars, adhered to was that, the Jaintias being the off. Shoot of the Mon Khmer race of south East Asia. Where, they had ascended from the hills down through the Assam valleys. They appear to be the descendants from



some of the earliest mongoloid immigrants into India who changed their language through contact with Austric speakers either in Myanmar or in the soil of India, in pre-historic time. It is likely that spread over a much wider tract probably over parts at least of the plain islands of Sylhet and Kamrup before they became finally confined to the hills.<sup>ii</sup>

Jaintia hills is famously known as the land of the 12 Dollois due to the presence of the 12 administrative provinces. With the passage of time more Elakas were created and hence led to the increase of the numbers to 18. Formerly Jaintia hills comprised of only one District known then as the Jaintia hills District and the head quarter was at Jowai. As the size of population increases the administrative inconveniences too grew by leaps and bounds causing lapses in between. This led to the creation of another new district in the eastern part of Jaintia hills named as East Jaintia hills District and the head quarter is officially placed at Khliehriat. Today there exist the twin districts in Jaintia hills known as East Jaintia Hills District and West Jaintia Hills District with Khliehriat and Jowai officially made as their head quarters respectively.

**Methods:** The study adopts the Qualitative methods.

## II. Results:-

During the Pre –British period Jowai as per the traditional religion known as KA NIAMTRE which means the traditional and original religion of the people was established by the four spiritual women ancestors named 1) Ka Bon 2)Ka Tein 3)Ka Wet 4)Ka Doh who as per legends were believed to be sent by the thunder God to settle and to mingle with the human beings in the lands of the 7 sheds and 7 huts (7 trep 7 skum) to live and to die with them. These spiritual women were the progeny of ki Soo kpoh Khat ar Wyrnai.

As this paper aimed at the projection of the traditional chief of Jowai Elaka, history mentions that the it was U Dong Synriang Paswet who was the son of Ka Beipun Wet one of the original clan from one of the women ancestor KA WET was designated as the first Dolloi of Jowai Elaka who was believed to have been given a divine and sacerdotal appointment by the Gods and goddesses. Further it was also mentioned that U Dong Synriang was given an official anointment and sanctify as per the commands of U Trekirot the maker and the creator. It was a customary practice since that period of time that only the sanctified clans who were the original settlers of Jowai town known in local terms as Ki Sookpoh Khatar Wyrnai the spiritual fraternity

but as per legends the members of Le Kyllung and Talang –Lato too along with another cluster of clans called Ka Piahrah can also contest. It was also a long time customary practice that only those who practiced and embraced the indigenous traditional religion known as Ka Niamtre residing within the proximity of Ka Rajj Jowai will be eligible to contest for the post of the Dolloi of Jowai Elaka. The kur Soo kpoh Khadar wyrnai comprises of these clans and sub clans. From the clan KA BON the following are the sub clans :-1.Pasubon .2 Rngad.3 Lipon . 4 Nikhla . 5 War. 6 Pakyntein. 7 Leinphoh . 8 Singphoh . 9 Niangphoh . 10 Katphoh . 11 Kynjing .12 Lakiang . 13 Blein .14 Lanong 15. Lywait . 16 Kma . 17 Lytan- Mutyen. 18 Paswet. 19 Nangbah . 20 Siangbood. 21 Syngkon 22 Langdoh.

From the clan LE KYLLUNG, the sub clans are :-

1. Rymbai
2. Najiar
3. Toi

From the clan Talang – Lato

1. Lato
2. Thma
3. Chynret

**Methods of Election:** the mode of election of the Dolloi of any Elaka was through Manhood Suffrage which implies that only adult male populations are eligible to exercise their franchise.

**Qualifications:** - to contest for the post of the Dolloi a candidate should be the one embracing the traditional indigenous religion called Ka Niamtre. 2. Should be from any of the designated clans 1. Soo kpoh khatar wyrnai 2. Le kyllung – Najiar –Toi – Rymbai . 3. Talang – Lato.

**Counting of votes:-** In the golden past, in the Kingdom of Ri-Jaintia Ri Dolloi the tradition of election of the Dolloi was very unique and the practice was done on rotation known as “in one twin basis” that is between the member from the clan of Sookpoh Khadarwyrnai and the clan of lekyllung. This tradition continues, uninterrupted. There was no controversy whatsoever and the system went smoothly among the deserving clans when their twin comes. It was the traditional indigenous practice that the counting of votes was not a paper work but by counting of heads and whoever gets the majority will be declared as the elected Dolloi.

**Term of Office:** - The indigenous practice that once a Dolloi is elected, he will hold the office for life.

## Confirmation and Ordination

It's the indigenous practice that a newly elected Dolloi needs confirmation to prove to the world that



this is true the following methods was followed and is still continue as a customary practices till today.

On being elected as the Dolloi from the three clans as mentioned above, the subordinate official of the Dolloi known in local language as the Wasan, will chalk out a program for the ceremony.

Firstly, the Langdoh will fix the date for confirmation, i.e., PYNSKHEM DOLLOI.

Secondly, the Pator, another councilor will have to inform the three Priests known as the LE LANGDOH- the Lyngdoh Chyrmang, the Lyngdoh Tuber, the Lyngdoh Ialong to be presented on that date.

**The ceremony:** - When the day arrive, the Dolloi in full traditional outfit shall go to the ancestral home of KA LANGDOH, to be accompanied by his relatives and friends

**Step 1:-** On reaching the house of the priest – KA IUNG LANGDOH RI BLAI the SANGOT PASWET who will be waiting in the court yard will catch the elected Dolloi and carry him before the Priest – U LANGDOH and the priestess KA LANGDOH at the Same time shouting “The DOLLOI” The DOLLOI”

**Step 2:-** On stepping at the Threshold of KA IUNG LANGDOH , U LANGDOH will hand over u TYLLI U KYNTIEN , a handful of betel leave and areca nut a symbolic act , which refer that the DOLLOI can now exercise the oath taking ceremony in front of the huge gathering a congregation before Man and God

The Priestess- KA LANGDOH will hand over KA YUSPONG KA PHALI KA RYNDIA TLEM – turban and a traditional shawl by placing the Ryndia tlem on the shoulder of the Dolloi. This act of gifting means awarding the Dolloi in the sanctified manner

**Step 3:-** the next step will be the role of KA LANGDOH who will be given to the The DOLLOI , a wooden staff ,signifying a symbol of authority which is called the “The DIEN SYNCHAR a symbolic gesture that the Dolloi will rule over the religion and the people. This is a swearing ceremony which is performed at the Shwar altar stone swearing altar . the ceremony was very impressive as the crowd presence in the event will be witnessing the intervening act in the Holistic approach between the DOLLOI and the LANGDOH the handing of the wooden staff was not just a customary practice but was remarkable as there will be accompaniment of words of wisdom, sacred instructon , inspiring words , to bless the Dolloi to motivate him as he step into the new echelon of his life, likewise the Dolloi too while receiving this wooden staff the Dolloi too , will swear infront

of the priestess and the elders of the Raij and Waheh Raij, ki Wasan and to the large gathering ,that he will faithfully carry out his duties and shoulder his responsibilities for the betterment and well being of everyone in his Elaka.

The Elaka Jowai comprises of 4 Langdoh :-

1. Langdoh Chyrmang
2. Langdoh Tuber
3. Langdoh Ialong
4. Langdoh Jowai

A Langdoh i.e., The Priest – each of these priests are to be responsible for the wellbeing and well fare of their own respective Raij. They have to work alongside the Dolloi in accomplishing the religious task as well as the general administrative affairs.

Powers of the Dolloi :- in the Golden Period the Jaintia Kingdom had a three tier system as follows:

1. The Syiem
2. The Dolloi
3. The Waheh chnong

The arrangement for administration was broadly classified between the Hills and Plains; The Plains Areas was mastered by the Syiem, where as the responsibility for the hill areas were left entirely in the hands and supervision of the Dolloi.

The Dolloi was chosen to lead the administration and to maintain the well being of the people. Though considered very powerful, power was also shared by the people and therefore he has no right to oppress or suppress his people

For matters of convenience and for smooth administration the hill portion of Jaintia Kingdom was bifurcated into various administrative units known as the Elaka. Each of which was still looked after by the Dolloi.

The Dolloi had certain executive, judicial, political and religious function to perform within their jurisdiction.

It may be noted that the Dollois were always assisted by his councilors known as the Wasan, in the exercise of his function. But any decision has also to be approved by the Dorbar Elaka.

Administration of the hills section of the Jaintia kingdom was left entirely under the surveillance of the Dolloi .

The syiem was to handle only matters of common interest like defense, communication and foreign affairs but in a very limited ways. The Dolloi were considered more powerful where they have the right to oust the Syiem from his power in case he caused displeasure or act in a ruthless manner against his peoples.



The Dolloi exercise judicial function too. All cases both simple and of serious nature like theft arson, looting, rape, murder, cattle stealing etc was handle by the Dolloi where he was made as judge and the Member of the Elaka Court as Jury Members

Religious function: - By Virtue of hid descent and being member of the original and the founding Clans of the Elaka, the Dolloi played a very significant role in the performance of the religious rites rituals. Behdeinkhlam festival being the traditional festival of the religious people of the Jaintia Hills cannot be carried out in the absence of the Dolloi. The mantle fell on his shoulder for completion of the ceremonies for the four days and three nights –which were the traditional weekdays of the peoples of the Elaka

#### **British Period:-**

In 1835, the territory of Jaintia was annexed the British first under the East India Company and later there was a shift of guard to the British crown

The immediate effect caused by this annexation was the abolishment of the office of the Syiem, but retained the office of the Dolloi, Pator, Waheh Chnong

Initially the british did not encroached into the traditional customary practices, of the Dolloi and Waheh Shnong and they were allowed to carry out their function as the subsequent head of their Elakas. In the subsequent years, the British change their mind and want to get them totally involved in the administrative affairs of Jaintia Hills.

During the colonial Era the following Changes took place:-

1. The term of office of Dolloi was drastically effected, instead of a lifelong office; it has been reduced to first three years, which obviously abrogates the customary practices of the indigenous peoples.
2. The colonial rule had a damaging exercise on the culture of traditional practices because never before as the practice of Nomination done to the Office of the Dolloi , the shift was made from election to nomination
3. Stricken rules were also imposed on the functioning of the Dolloi in respect of administration of both Hills and Plains Areas. That the Dolloi cannot remain absent from the station as practices before, the violation of which means a punishment in which the villages with the sanction of the Political Assistant Commission Should proceed to elect a common term meaning exercise full power in the Absence of the Dolloi

4. Positive effect making it compulsory for all the Dolloi to known the Knowledge of 3RS
5. Severe restriction imposed on civil and criminals power of the Chiefs with Jaintia hills being designated as the Jaintia Country, the British government want maximums control. On being verified that the villager were not satisfied with the orders and proceeding of their Village Chief drastic transformation was made on Civil and Criminal power of Dolloi

According to the Political Agent of the British Government, Captain Lister the present made in which petty cases are decided by the village authorities is the cause of vexation and annoyance to the peoples that the cruel ordeal are still enforced, the procedure should be reformed, the mode in which case are to be tried should be define and the power of the Dolloi should be indicated with prevision. The country is our ,and it is our duty to see that speedy Justice ,suited to the Humbles habits of the Peoples ,is administered and practices abhorrent to humanity are not allowed.

Hence, there was a complete overhauling of the power of the traditional chiefs, and which can rightly ascertain that with the advent of the British Administration in Jaintia Hills .The changes made on the civil criminal power was tremendous

#### **India's independence and the sixth Schedule to the constitution of India:**

When power was transfer from the British Crown to the India Government on the 15<sup>th</sup> August 1947, bulk of development take place at a fast paced, the making of the Indian constitution as per the provision of the of the cabinet mission plan 1946 constitution of the constituent assembly, etc. For tribal population of parts of NE India the Bordoloi Committee played and excellent role that led to the incorporation of SIXTH Schedule to the constitution of India in September 1949.

The sixth schedule to the constitution was a provision design purely for the tribal residing in the Hilly Areas residing in the NE India. The objective was to give face lift to the tribals through administration machinery known's as the District Council to provide a platform for Tribals , to exercise method of governance as per their own genius to improve their socio-economic perspective and to ensure that these tribals indigenous population be not Overpowered and swept away by the more advance population of the plain areas.



Meghalaya originally comprise of two District Council in 1952 these were united khasi jaintia hills autonomous district councils, and Garo Hills Autonomous district Council. Whereas the traditional institution of Meghalaya comprises of Syiem in Khasi Hills and Nokma in Garo hills

With the present of district council in parts of North east India, the expectation was the social customs, the tradition and culture be not just guarded but up gradation and empowerment to rise to the next echelon of the democratic society to be preserve ad their roots be strengthened, thus forming the tribal identity of the unique tribes of the Areas. However, the change made had lowly impacted the chief in more ways than one

The traditional chief in Jaintia Hills i.e., The Dolloi , The Sirdar, the Wahch Chnong are now given treatment beyond expectation.

Powers of the Dolloi of Jowai Elaka:-

1. General powers
2. Powers in relation to Market
3. Judicial powers
4. Religious powers

General Powers: the Dolloi being the head of the Elaka has been assign with the following powers:-

- a) Management:- the jurisdiction of the Elaka include the Boundary and the Cluster of the Village  
The main function of the Dolloi as the Head of The Elaka is the management of the boundaries as each Elaka comprises of the cluster of village guarding of maintaining the Borders, should be the preogative of the Dolloi , to avoid any conflict between the neighboring Elakas
- b) To create a uniform policy for strengthening the land holding system or traditional customary practices
- c) To maintain peace and tranquility in the Elaka , fostering harmonious relationship
- d) To safeguard forest, wildlife, lakes, rivers, mountains soils and sand.
- e) To regulate and manage the affair of the various Raij
- f) To chalk out plan and strategy for regulating the affairs and relationships of the Clans within the Raij.

2. The Traditional Markets being the sole possessing the traditional institution in any tribal belt area of the country, as it carries the image of the tribal indigenous Population. This speaks Volumes in case of Jowai Elaka.

The Dolloi of Jowai Elaka , has the sole responsibility of administering and super traditional

Market within his Elaka , except in Jowai Proper where the Iaw Niam And the Iaw Jowai falls under the Exclusive Control of the JHADC it may be noted that one of the primary source of income of the Dolloi was the tolls collected from the Markets. The initiative ktien by Dolloi in the past cannot be underestimated

One (L) Ram Lato was the one to established Ka Yaw Pynsin” the traditional market at Ummulong Village and one (L) Lalan Kynjin introduced the Tradional Markets at Lad Rymbai

Judicial powers:-as the Dolloi today falls under the administrative competence of the District Council the administration of justice was carried out by the courts under the Jaintia hills Autonomous District Council. as per paragraph 4 of the Sixth schedule to the constitution of India under the provisions of the United Khasi and Jaintia Hills District (administration of justice ) Rules ,1953 , constituted of the following classes of Courts:-

1. Village Courts
2. Subordinate District Courts.
3. District Council Court.

As this paper aimed at highlighting the powers of the Dolloi in today’s time his role in the village court may be defined as under:-

Village Courts: - the village courts are so constituted in order to cater to the well being of the tribals of the Elaka residing in Jaintia hills. This implies trial of suits and cases specifically between the tribals only. The Dolloi of the respective Elakas are to be the ones who will manage the village courts along with the other members elected by the Durbar Elaka. The village court is empowered to try civil cases and to award costs and compensations. In criminal cases it is empowered to impose a fine of Rs.50 only. Cases related with imprisonment cannot be tried by the village courts. It may be noted that the village courts tries suits and cases in accordance with the customary laws and practices of the village.

Religious powers: - the Dolloi is not just the head of his Elaka but he is also the religious head. All the religious festivities are carried out in the name of the Dolloi.this practice is remarkable on the occasion of the observation of the Behdeinkhlam festival held annually in the month of July. The festival is held to pay rich tribute to mother earth as the one who feeds and support humanity for survival. Also this festival literally means to drive away pest, pestilence, plague and all evils from the face of the earth which signifies the bondage shared between man and God as per the belief of the indigenous tribal population known as the Niamtre religion. All rites and rituals associated with the festival function under the full guidance and



supervision of the Dolloi. Known widely as the festival of 4 days and 3 nights, this festival kick start since the month of March marked as the first religious pronouncement in which the Dolloi takes the lead in a ritual known as KA KBAI MUKNOR which signifies the beginning of all rituals and ceremonies associated with the festival. again in the same month the ritual known as KA THOH LANGDOH shall be performed by the Langdoh along with the Dolloi. This ritual is to express gratitude and thankfulness to the mother earth as a mark of respect for the love she showered to human being and this is done before planting maize, cucumber and sesame seeds in the garden of the priest. As per customary practice the public can only start their planting activities after the ceremony is completed at Ka Yung Langdoh. the Dolloi and along with the elders of the Raij should be present so that the Puja can proceed smoothly. The next ceremony is known as the Niam Chat thoh. this has strong similarities with the previous one but here paddy is the speciality. The Niam knia Khang is performed in the month of June. this is done under the leadership of the Dolloi and accompanied by the councilors means the WASAN. the Dolloi will stand at the MOOKNOR which means a stone slab at Iawmusiang for making announcement for the performance of KA KNIA KHANG. for the completion of this ritual it is mandatory that all the sellers in the traditional market contribute to meet the expenses as this implies prosperity and well being of everyone. The rituals symbolizes the rich tributes paid to the guardian angels of Jowai town known locally as the Soo dwar Soo luti meaning the four paths and the four openings namely U Mooralong, U Moosniang, U Mootong and U Mookhai. And above all the Myntdu River termed as the River Queen the Environs of Jowai town. The Dolloi and his counterparts remained as the key participants till today.

The Behdeinkhlam festival is known as the festival of 4 days and 3 nights which imply that the observation is carried out on the traditional weekly days known as the PYNSIN, MULONG, MUSIANG and MUCHAI. The Dolloi of Jowai Elaka leads all the ceremonies linked with the festival. On the first day of the festival i.e the PYNSIN day the Dolloi will be fetched by the Wasan to see the KHNONG BLAI i.e. the sacred log of KA TEIN, KA WET, and KA DOH.

In the evening the feast known as KA BAM TYNGKONG will be held under the full supervision and leadership of the Dolloi to be participated by the elders of the eight clans (ki phra kur phra kmai). The second day is marked with

another ritual known as KA KNIA AITNAR in which all the proceedings are carried out under the guidance of the Dolloi. After this ceremony the Dolloi will give instructions to all the KMAI RAIJ comprising of many localities to fetch their sacred log KI DEIN KHLAM from their own respective location and carry the same towards Iawmusiang. All these Dein khlam will be made to rest there for one night. On the next day which is the Market day known as the Musiang all the Kmai Raij will assemble at Loompyrdi Iongpiah along with the traditional instrument known as Ka Bom and Ka Bhuri. After a sermon is delivered by the Dolloi along with elders from Ka Seinraij the Dolloi will then impart instructions for everyone to abide and follow. All the participants will then proceed to Iawmusiang dancing in the tune of the Bom and ka Bhuri but to abide with the customary practice of halting a while at the Biar Ka Blai. After this the entire group will move in unison dancing and stepping their foothold on all places where rites rituals and ceremonies used to be held. One of the distinctive role to be performed by the Dolloi on this Musiang Day is the offering of prayers to be carried out by the Dolloi before all the localities are to carry their Deinkhlam to their respective destinations. the ceremony is held at Pohsawiar. The Chilliangraij locality adjudged as an outstanding locality has been assigned with the task of bringing the KHNONG BLAI and station it at a spot specially designed to make it lie down. KA NGOOH KHNONG BLAI begins with the Elder i.e the KNI from the NIKHLA clan from ka khon RAIJ along with the Dolloi observing the rituals through prayers and uttering words of blessings. After the ceremony is over the all the localities will be instructed to lift their Deinkhlam to be taken to their respective localities.

The culmination day of the festival is known as the MUCHAI DAY. On the Muchai day which is the last day of the niam Behdeinkhlam early in the morning, the niam Bam Tyngkong will have to be completed at the house of the Priest. After this is completed, the Dalloi shall send Harns and Sangot (elders) to fetch the Loompyrdi to perform the Kyntin Khnong at iung Langdoh (house of Priest). After the Loompyrdi reaches, the Dalloi will give the Kiad Um (rice beer) to the Kni Loompyrdi to give the prayers for good health and prosperity and to give the blessings to the Raij and the Shnong all over. After Khyntin Khnong is completed the Dalloi will direct the Chutia to perform the puja at Tympiah Skoo. The Dalloi will go for the Bam Tyngkong (feast) at the house of the Kur Paswet (Paswet clan at Wah Synji), Syngkon clan at Um Thulum, Pakyntein clan at Lum Suwe,



Lato clan at Lulong and Paswet clan kper Chyrmang. After the Dalloi has completed the Bam Tyngkong(feast) at these five clans'houses, he will go the iung Langdoh(Priest house) to complete the Kynting Khnong iong waheh. After this the Dalloi will perform the Choh Thyndai and will also give the blessing by beating on the roof of the house of the Langdoh(Priest house). After the Choh Thyndai is completed the Dalloi will go together with the Wasan and Eight clans by carrying Dein Khlam ka Doh to AitNar. At Ait Nar the Dalloi will direct anyone of the locality of Kmai Rajj to bring the Rot (rath) to Ait Nar so that the Symbod Khnong ka Bon may be brought at Ait Nar. After this, all the Rot(rath) will be brought at Ait Nar and the Dalloi will direct the Chutia to perform the Knai Wah Bhang at the Khloo Langdoh. After all the rituals and Pujas the ceremonies at Ait Nar are over the Dalloi will direct the Langdoh(priest) and the Sangot to prepare their teams for playing the Dat La Wa Kor. At this Dat La Wa Kor, the Dalloi is the umpire of the match and he will announce the winning team after the match. All the materials for these annual ritual and Pujas are prepared at the iung Langdoh (Priest house) and when any Puja is performed, they will always have to come out from the iung Langdoh(Priest's house).

### III. Conclusion :-

The Jaintia hills Autonomous District Council designed for safeguarding the tribal rights of the Jaintia people was functioning as a separate council as per notification issued on the 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1964 by the then secretary of Tribal affairs Government of Assam i.e. Tribal Areas and Welfare and Backward classes Department Chapter 8 as per index of the New Rules known as the United Khasi and Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council Act of 1959, deals exclusively with the appointment of chiefs and Headman. This act made provisions for the election and appointment of Chiefs and Headmen, confirmation of Chiefs, dispute regarding election of Chiefs etc. With the new constitutional set up the expectation was that a vivid picture will be clearly drawn and that the tribal bodies will be seeing the light of the day .however it only proves otherwise.

To quote Lyngdoh in one of the paper published in 1994 “ forty years have passed and many changes have taken place in the working and functioning of the Autonomous District Councils. Many observations and suggestions have been made. A number of criticisms have been put forward against the working and effective functioning of these councils by scholars' politicians and common

people. some of the glaring criticisms are on the relevance of the District Councils today, inadequate provisions of the appointment and succession of Chiefs and Headmen Act , the State Government versus the District Council relationship , lack of fund in the council ,Council's departing from tradition ,mismanagement of the council ,demand for more autonomy , removing of Paragraph 12A and many others. A proper assessment of these views and criticisms would be of great importance and all these need to be examined thoroughly.”

This paper aimed at highlighting the richness of the heritage and culture as attributed to the Jaintias as one of the leading tribe in Meghalaya. The mode of appointment of the Dolloi, his confirmation and the traditional practice of anointment is a revelation of the traditional values that are inherent in the society today amidst the effects of modernity and the waves of change with the onset of Christianity in the land. However a question loomed large on the impact of the Autonomous District Council on the functioning of these traditional indigenous institutions today and the tribal institutions as the grass roots of Democracy.

**Comments and suggestions:** - the ADCs being the tribal oriented institutions which have been established to uplift and give protection to the tribals inhabited in the North eastern part of the country in relation to the preservation of their cultures and tradition and protecting their customary rights, their language, indigenous religion etc. The various acts introduced and enforced by the District Council under the Sixth schedule from time to time has served the tribal population in respect of Jaintia hills in both aspects i.e. positive and negative sides. It may be noted that in relation to the pattern and procedure of election and appointment or succession of Chiefs and headmen the impact on the tradition and the customary practices of the people in the area is tremendous. In respect of the Dollois as the traditional chiefs in Jaintia hills it may be suggested that as the situation is quite alarming these tribal bodies should rise up to the occasion and express their vigilance and consciousness on these impending changes. It may be therefore suggested that the Dollois needs to have an association that will chalk out programs and policies to strengthen their position and to uphold their values and to exert pressure on the state of affairs of the functioning of the JHADDC. Asserting their claims and voicing out their grievances should be categorically stated. That the District Council is still a relevant body cannot be ruled out but to sacrifice the traditional bodies at the





altar of the council demands a force to be reckoned with.

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