

PRE FACE

This volume of the District Gazetteer of the Khasi Hills is the first to be brought out by the Government of Meghalaya. Originally, preparation of the gazetteer was conceived as part of a larger project that was to have included the United Khasi & Jaintia Hills as a district of Assam. The bifurcation of the State of Assam in 1970 undid much of the work already done, since with the creation of the new State of Meghalaya the project had to undergo a major change, new districts being created, initially three - the Jaintia Hills, the Khasi Hills, and the Garo Hills Districts. The latter two were subsequently bifurcated into two Districts each. It was logical that the project should now be directed towards preparing a gazetteer for each of the three original districts of Meghalaya. A start was made with the creation of a Gazetteer Cell in the Directorate of Public Instruction in July 1979. In the following year, the Compilers, who would form the backbone of the Cell and be responsible for the collection of all available data, were appointed. In the beginning their work was done under the guidance of senior Officers of the Directorate — Miss. Marion D. Pugh, Special Officer in charge of Historical and Antiquarian Studies (also Librarian and Curator of the Museum), and Dr. S.K. Chattopadhyay, Deputy Director of Public Instruction. In spite of their already heavy commitments to their substantive posts, these two officers devoted much of their time and energy to laying the groundwork of all future activities. The creation of the post of State Editor, District Gazetteers, in 1981 relieved them of the additional burden.

The three original Compilers, Smt. R. Wankhar, Smt. K.R. Marak and Shri. R. Rynjah, joined their posts in 1980 and all through the period preceding the appointment of the Editor they, with the Research Assistant, Shri. T. Lyngdoh, collected a mass of data on the Khasi Hills from official and other sources. They were ably backed by staff of three—the office Assistant (the late Shri J. Pakyntein), the Steno-cum-typist (Smt. Hamutal Kharkongor) and the typist (Smt. L. Pariat). By the time the Editor joined the post in August 1981, enough material had been collected to work with.

As State Editor I felt that it was up to our small team to go ahead with the job at full steam and produce this gazetteer, which would be the first one to be brought out after the Gazetteer edited by B.C. Allen almost eighty years earlier, in 1905. The nineteen chapters visualized in the District Gazetteer scheme were shared among us. Unfortunately, Shri. Rynjah resigned within a few months to take up a new post, and the distribution of work

had to be reviewed. Notwithstanding these problems, the work went on at an admirable pace, everyone taking up his or her responsibility as a personal challenge. The first draft was ready by 1983 and after necessary additions or alterations, the fair draft was submitted to the concerned departments of the Government of India, for their approval. By 1984, approval had been obtained from every one of them.

I must acknowledge my feelings of deep personal satisfaction with the unsparing work of the Compilers and the subordinate staff without whose devotion the work could not have been completed in so short a time.

At the same time, there is a sense of disappointment at the delay in getting the compilation out in print. Several adverse circumstances contributed to the delay - the expiry of my term of appointment and changes in the administrative set up, and perhaps more materially, my insistence that I be allowed to supervise the publication of the Gazetteer in an honorary capacity. Meanwhile, my joining the University set back the schedule by three years, and when I returned I felt that the approved draft needed to be retyped completely and so more time was lost.

Negotiations with printing houses also took time finalize but these were eventually sorted out.

This then is the result of the work done by the Cell and our offer to the interested public. It would be presumptuous to suggest that the publication is free of blemishes; it is not, nor would I take shelter behind the excuse of "natural human fallibility" the public will naturally expect to see something that will satisfy their expectations. Whatever blemishes this compilation may show I readily accept as my own responsibility. At the same time I would request that the views of research scholars and other interested readers be communicated to the Gazetteer Cell, presently a part of the Directorate of Arts and Culture. Gazetteer work is a continuing process and constructive suggestions will certainly help in eliminating these flaws in later editions.

I would be failing in my duty if I did not also acknowledge my gratitude to my departmental superiors, notably Shri J.M. Phira, IAS who as D.P.I. and Special Secretary to the Government of Meghalaya, in the Department of Education never failed to support and encourage me in the execution of this job. I must also express my sense of obligation to the Advisory Board which, under the chairmanship of then Chief Secretary the late Shri J. C. Nampui, IAS, patiently went through several drafts before giving their final approval.

Dated Shillong:
26th August 1991

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Meghalaya.