

**NMML  
OCCASIONAL PAPER**

**PERSPECTIVES IN INDIAN DEVELOPMENT**

**New Series**

**65**

*Representing the (Imagined) Majorities - Local Governance through the  
Autonomous District Councils: A Case Study of Meghalaya*

**Kavita N. Soreide**

Fellow, NMML



Nehru Memorial Museum and Library

2020

© Kavita N. Soreide 2020

All rights reserved. No portion of the contents may be reproduced in any form without the written permission of the author. The Occasional Paper should not be reported as representing the views of the NMML. The views expressed in this Occasional Paper are those of the author(s) and speakers and do not represent those of the NMML or NMML policy, or NMML staff, fellows, trustees, advisory groups, or any individual or organizations that provide support to the NMML Society nor are they endorsed by NMML. Occasional Papers describe research by the author(s) and are published to elicit comments and to further debate. Questions regarding the content of individual Occasional Papers should be directed to the authors, NMML will not be liable for any civil or criminal liability arising out of the statements made herein.

*Published by*

Nehru Memorial Museum and Library  
Teen Murti House  
New Delhi- 110011

E-mail: [director.nmml@gov.in](mailto:director.nmml@gov.in)

ISBN: 978-93-84793-31-9

## ***Representing the (Imagined) Majorities - Local Governance through the Autonomous District Councils: A Case Study of Meghalaya***

### **Abstract**

*The Sixth Schedule of the constitution applied in the case of tribal state of Meghalaya puts the three main tribes (amongst others in the Northeast of India) the Garo, Khasi and Jaintia under the jurisdiction of ethnic bodies called the Autonomous District Councils (ADCs)<sup>1</sup>. Through these bodies, the Sixth Schedule grants two sets of exclusive representation and governance rights to these tribal communities. The political contestations in Meghalaya today are in many ways connected also with the discontent around the institutions of ADCs. Exclusive representation rights for communities in Meghalaya (by the virtue of it being a tribal majority state) are skewed. The trajectory of state reorganization politics led to the ADCs in Meghalaya representing the majorities instead of minorities (often camouflaged ones) hence favouring an 'imagined majority', under the umbrella of group rights that structurally favours the few (such as men, traditional and new elite amongst the majority tribal group). Further, the governance provisions of ADCs are problematic since the original intention of ADCs promoting tribal local governance has an intrinsic anomaly of incoherence between legal governance regimes (Federal- provincial - ADCs) and the traditional tribal ones. This has consequences upon the logic and efficacy of these institutions.*

**Keywords:** Meghalaya, Sixth Schedule, Governance, Constitution, Autonomous District Councils

## Context

The ADCs as extended arms of a modern democratic state, work on the principle of territorial representation for the ethnic population in designated tribal areas. These are ethnically based tribal bodies for communities concentrated in pockets of the region forming small territorial majorities. The Indian state in its attempt to manage its heterogeneous minorities established special institutions under an asymmetric model of governance. The nature of representation granted under the ADC in the East Khasi Hills today, seems to favour but an imagined majority. The ADCs were expected to interact as ‘bridges of local governance’ between the state institutions of the formal positivistic legal regime and the tribal institutions rooted in the ‘para legal’ customary system. However the nature of representation within both these mechanisms—the tribal socio-political structures and the ADC structures—is found to be un/under-representative for minority<sup>2</sup> groups.

Traditional Khasi polity is neither egalitarian nor gender equal. While, women are kept out of the conventional tribal political bodies, the rights and privileges granted under the customary system in general are contingent upon the status and position of the individual within the hierarchical Khasi democracy. In case of land management for example, the customary system is prevalent. Intra-community class dynamics drive the commercial activities and interactions related to the village economy as well as manage the common village lands. (Misra 1979: 888-89). By the virtue of their common usage and occupancy rights, the most vulnerable and the poor depend upon common lands for subsistence and survival. Although common lands, these are not meant to be used by all residents of the village. Commoners can cultivate them after obtaining due permission from the village local bodies called *Dorbars*. Similarly, non-tribals or other tribals are not part of this extensive system of tribal socio-political hierarchy.

On the other hand, the ADCs in their capacity as state institutions rooted in modern-liberal principles of representation and protective discrimination fail to adequately represent minorities. Created with a purpose of protecting the rights of tribal minorities from surrounding mainland majorities; the minorities within such tribal majorities often remain outside the purview of benefits drawn from such legal provisions. In case of Khasi Hills, this is partly because in absence of any single powerful pan-Khasi identity (such as language or religion) the idea of an over-arching Khasi identity remains volatile (Nongbri 2010: 177). Recourse to an ‘imagined homogeneity’ is hence capable of disregarding thecontending socio-economic and political interests. The politics of majority representations simply mirrors such imperfections of an unequal dialogue within communities and politics and community. In the wake of forces of change brought by such factors as market forces, monetization of land, migration, education, development etc. ADCs are neither adequately representing the changing interests nor the ‘minority’ opinions. For example, in case of land management, the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council (KHADC) is empowered under the Sixth Schedule and other state legislations, to codify customary laws or prepare land records. Despite this, in face of strong public opposition, no significant success is achieved. Also gender justice has been challenged by a recent Bill passed by the KHADC, The Khasi Hills Autonomous District

## **Representing the (Imagined) Majorities - Local Governance through the Autonomous District Councils: A Case Study of Meghalaya**

(Khasi Social Custom of Lineage) (Second Amendment) Bill<sup>3</sup> 2018. This Bill is considered to be highly gender unjust and regressive by some sections of the civil society (*The Raiot Collective* 2018). Some argue that interfaces between modern state mechanisms (such as the ADC) and customary laws may lead to a regressive re-invention of customary laws negatively affecting the rights of women (Fernandes and Pereira NCW: 1). The under-representation of non-tribals and minority tribes in the ADCs is also a sustained issue which has not been redressed adequately.<sup>4</sup>

### **Objectives and Structure**

Part I and part II of the paper discuss the institutions. In part III, the discussion flows to the fissures in the premise of homogeneity in community identity, and its effects on the political discourses in the past and present. Part IV discusses the governance aspect under the ADCs through a discussion of their expected role as ‘bridges of interface’ between the state institutions and the ‘para legal’ tribal institutions. Part V is a case study of a modern and tribal hybrid institution legislated by the ADC for the Khasi Hills. The discussions around this bill helps to highlight the primary challenges to the efforts of giving statutory shape to the interactions between traditional and modern institutions of governance.

The fieldwork was done in and around the capital city of Shillong; thus the arguments, debates and opinions are primarily from the region. Khasi customary practices vary across the region, hence the article does not wish to generalize but aims to provide a narrative based on existing literature and author’s own field visits.

### **Introduction**

The Indian Constitution had formulated two special schedules to govern and protect the rights of its Scheduled Tribes in geographically defined areas namely, the Fifth and the Sixth Schedule. The Fifth Schedule covers some but not all of the tribal pockets in peninsular India<sup>5</sup>, and the Sixth Schedule applies to parts of North East India.<sup>6</sup> The Sixth Schedule is different from the Fifth Schedule because the former is more comprehensive in granting special representation and governance rights to the communities through the medium of Autonomous District Councils.

This was to protect these groups from the surrounding larger non-tribal majorities in certain regions of (provincial state of) Composite Assam. Soon afterwards, a reorganization of states led to creation of smaller tribal majority states out of Assam, including Meghalaya in 1972. Henceforth, Meghalaya’s state assembly has been pre dominated by the state’s three major tribes, the Khasi, Garo and Jaintias. ADCs as tiers of administration were meant to provide representation and governance rights to the minorities through positive discrimination. However, after the creation of Meghalaya state assembly, the ADCs as special representation and governance bodies continue to represent the same groups, which are now in majority.

The existing governance regime under the Sixth Schedule at the local level in the Khasi Hills is a combination of formal and informal institutions of governance. In the formal set-up, there is Khasi Autonomous District Council under the overarching state administration.<sup>7</sup> Parallel to these institutions, there is a comprehensive and deeply embedded regime of conventional bodies based upon a three-tiered Khasi polity. At the lowest level is the *Dorbar Shnong*, i.e., Village Council presided by the *Rangbah Shnong*, the headman. An intermediary body of *Dorbar Raid* is presided by an elected headman known as *Basar* or *Lyngdoh*, or *Sirdar*. The Khasi State Assembly, *Hima* is at the top and is presided by the *Syiem* equivalent of a king. Women and non-tribals are not part of the Khasi tribal political life.

## **Representation**

### **1. Gaps in Representation**

At a macro level, challenges of representation in Meghalaya need to be placed in the larger narrative of the socio-cultural gap between peninsular India and North East India that has historically been affected by a sense of alienation from the mainland/peninsular India (Chaube 2012). The Sixth Schedule was an attempt to represent some of the minorities in the ‘peripheries’ of a majoritarian state through providing exclusive rights to communities recognized under its set up. Statehood for Meghalaya and retention of the ADCs at the same time was a considered strategy of keeping the territorial peripheries roped into a federal hierarchy of Indian state. Although the constitutional objective of the ADCs was not merely representation but of autonomy and tribal governance as well; (political) representation purpose is important component of these bodies. The purpose of the ADCs representing the minorities within majorities should progressively extend to the camouflaged minorities too. These concerns are not unique to any single democratic institution, however in case of group rights based on an underlying premise of ‘exalted’ homogeneity, they are at a greater risk of being sidelined.<sup>8</sup>

To an extent tribal groups across India identify with the overarching ‘economic and political subordination and marginalization from the structures of power and influence’ (Nongbri 2001: 1899). A binary narrative of state and ‘peripheries’ can endanger a simplistic presumption about transcending homogeneity of tribal communities especially those in the tribal majority regions of India’s Northeast. The socio-cultural and political hierarchies within communities respond to a ‘*hierarchy of rights*’ that exists within state structures and legal regime (Menon 2007), to create contested ‘*hierarchies of decision making*’ which may result in uneven outcomes despite protective laws.

Thus, the dynamics between the protective provisions under the ADCs and the structures of marginalisation within communities under their purview are relevant. The trajectory of the ADC politics in the Khasi hills for example symbolizes the different fissures within the community. ADCs acting as governance-representation bodies face community contestations over and around themselves, where differing voices blame them for ineffectiveness, call them

## **Representing the (Imagined) Majorities - Local Governance through the Autonomous District Councils: A Case Study of Meghalaya**

redundant but at the same time contest for gaining political power and accessing state resources through them.

### **2. Representing the Tribal Majorities in a Majority State**

There is a gap that lies in representational aspects of ADCs in the history of their origin and those of the Sixth Schedule itself. One of the objectives of creating these structures were to help dissipate full-blown dissent or autonomy. The North East, after the Indian subcontinent's partition in 1947, at the departure of British imperialists witnessed altered strategic concerns for the new nation state of India. Meghalaya shared borders with a hostile East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), while concerns of self-rule and tribal autonomy weighed heavy on the state's democratic ideological commitments. The pressing but divergent concerns of assimilation versus integration were vociferously debated in the Constituent Assembly and a sort of 'middle course' was adopted in the form of Sixth Schedule. However, the long standing tribal structures were neither constitutionally roped in nor substantially 'suggested about' in the constitution. Instead, parallel formal structures of ADCs were created which were embedded in the federal hierarchy through introduction of party politics to their instrumentality.

The demand for a separate tribal provincial state of Meghalaya was also in a way the result of the perceived ineffectiveness and diminished autonomy of the ADCs in face of an alleged assimilative policy by the dominant majorities of Assam,<sup>9</sup> while being under the provincial governance of the state of Assam. The enactment of the North Eastern Areas (Reorganization) Act 1971, opened the way for the establishment of the state of Meghalaya in 1972. This resulted in bifurcation of the narrative around the Sixth Schedule. The logic of having a tribal majority state assembly *dominated* by the exact same three groups of Garos, Khasis and Jaintias which also continue to enjoy representation rights through the ADCs, is unique for Meghalaya under the Sixth Schedule. Instead, their continuance as institutions of representation exposes the political struggle for representation amongst differing interests within these 'imagined' majorities. The minorities such as the non-tribals, immigrants, other minority tribes and women do not enjoy adequate political representation. The consultation paper for empowering the Panchyati Raj Institutions submitted to the Commission to Review the working of the Indian Constitution also makes note of this situation:

There have been difference of opinion on the relevance of even the implementation of the 74<sup>th</sup> Amendment with regard to Nagar Palikas or Municipalities, applicable in the case of Meghalaya to the city of Shillong. Indeed, the clash between a "Constitutional" exigency and local views was most recently seen when elections could not be held to the Shillong Municipality because of the pressure from some political parties, student organizations and other non-government groups... A senior minister in the cabinet told a workshop that local people did not want elections to city administration... Yet, in the case of Shillong, the municipality has a history of decades of functioning with 11 elections.... Ideally, the government should consider the creation of non-tribal voters' constituencies, to be delimited not in geographical terms but only in the manner of a specific number of seats earmarked for the purpose in a people-proportionate manner. In such a situation, the non-tribals, for example, in the Khasi hills could vote for a non-tribal candidate in a non-tribal, non-geographical

## **Kavita N. Soreide**

constituency. If, however, for purposes of political exigency, it is not possible to create such constituencies, the Governor should be empowered to nominate a maximum of five and minimum of three non-tribal members. In such a case, the government may also consider increasing the strength of the ADC to either 35 or 33, as the case may be. Such a provision might help defuse the problem arising out of the political confrontation between tribals and non tribals, without jeopardizing the legitimate political aspirations for self -governance of the tribal population” (A Consultation paper on Empowering and Strengthening of Panchayati Raj Institutions/Autonomous District Councils/Traditional Tribal Governing institutions in North East India, National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution, 2001, 2.2.33 and 2.2.35).

The Sixth Schedule was created with an idea to allow the tribal people the right to govern themselves as per their own genius and inadvertently, legitimized the gender inequality embedded in customary practices. Traditionally, women are denied decision-making roles in local political institutions or organizations nor do they ordinarily hold political offices (Nongsiej 2018). Also, the provisions of 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Amendment Acts which introduced democratic grassroots institutions and secured one third reservation of seats for women are not extended to Meghalaya on the premise that the customary local governance institutions already exist there. More recently, there have been sporadic and half -hearted efforts to bring gender empowerment by the KHADC including the Village Administration Bill 2015, but they fall severely short of introducing any gender empowerment.<sup>10</sup>VAB shall be discussed later in this paper.

It is shown now that tribal communities like caste communities too are “differentiated and stratified by gender, geography, education, employment, piety, and many other social factors” (Moodie 2015: 5) and that assertions of distinctiveness and differences help groups within communities to assert their bargaining powers. Speaking about Khasis, Sharma (2004) makes a compelling argument by challenging the so called ‘age old’ Khasi tradition of Dorbar. She argues that ‘traditions’ and their ‘traditional institutions’ from a historical past are very hazy because of the extreme paucity of reliable historical evidence in this part of the country. Baruah (2013)too, opines that the Khasi tribal institution of Dorbars were originally small local autonomous units of Syiemship (Khasi kingship). The idea of a homogenous Khasi community was formulated not before the emergence of a ‘new elite’ who drew inspiration from their ‘new found’ identity in western education and professional lives. The creation of the Khasi national Dorbar in 1921 was an attempt in propagating a pan-Khasi identity that subsequently helped this group to gain advantages based on their ‘claims of difference’ (Baruah 2013).

In this narrative of skewed representations and under representations, it is important to note that ADCs since their inception did not universally enjoy the image of representing the true Khasi identity. Indeed, despite their numeric relevance for the minority Khasis within Composite Assam, the local ADC politics started on a contentious note as symbolized by the fact that the day of the inauguration of the first ADC in Meghalaya in 1952 was observed as a Black Flag Day. Historically, the Sixth Schedule and its structural output the ADCs, were



### **Representing the (Imagined) Majorities - Local Governance through the Autonomous District Councils: A Case Study of Meghalaya**

products of neither a unanimously agreed nor politically uncontested process. This brings us to our next segment that narrows down the narrative to a discussion of the Khasi politics around the inception of the Sixth Schedule.

#### 3. Fissures in the Khasi Identity

Under Colonial India, besides the British territories in the Khasi and the Jaintia Hills, there were 25 independent Khasi states<sup>11</sup> with a tribal chief (*Syiem*) at top each chosen through a time established practice of limited democracy in the Khasi society. Despite their political presence as stakeholders, these states were not involved in the process of Constitution making. The congress had not been active in Assam before Mahatma Gandhi's visit in 1921. "...Still it must be admitted that the unifying effect of the freedom movement had by -passed the tribal North East." (Prakash 2007). The Bordoloi Committee report,<sup>12</sup> that was instrumental in shaping the Sixth Schedule was silent about the future status and position of the 25 Khasi princely chiefdoms/states. This was done with an intention to replace the tribal councils and conferences by adding a territorial dimension to the tribal identity of the hill tribes (N. K. Dev 2004). Nichols Roy, a greatly revered Khasi and a member to the Committee was not a unanimous voice of the Khasis. The Khasi Hills states had refused to sign the Instrument of Merger.<sup>13</sup> They were put within Assam by an Act of State, namely, the promulgation of the Constitution of India as appeared in First Schedule to the Constitution of India (Chaube 2012: 84). Moreover, The Committee could not visit the Garo Hills District and Jowai sub division on account of bad weather and difficult communications.

The traditional chiefs thus, voiced dissatisfaction about the Sixth Schedule of having fallen short of meeting the aspirations of the people of *Ri-Hynniewtrep* land (comprising the present West Khasi Hills, East Khasi Hills, RiBhoi and Jaintia Hills). A sense of historic wrong felt by the tribal Khasi chiefs lay at the base of the Sixth Schedule and created an anomaly. At the same time, the traditional Khasi polity was itself neither egalitarian nor gender just (Soreide 2017, 2019; The Raiot collective 2018; Nongbri 2006; Roy 2018). These fissured identities are not unique to the Khasi Hills. There is a growing body of literature that challenges the homogeneous image and details the differences within different tribal communities (for example, Chandra 2015; Sundar 2016; Moodie 2015; Steur 2017). The disparities within tribal communities are along land ownerships, new and old elite, professional dissimilarities and other class differences (Oskarsson and Sareen 2019: 4). In the Khasi Hills, there are evidences from changing land ownership patterns such as high number of landless households (Socio Economic Census 2011) suggesting a fissured homogeneity which is camouflaged under the overarching claim of group rights.<sup>14</sup> The political contestations around governance for example, land governance in Meghalaya and the Khasi hills reflect these fissures.

The Sixth Schedule helped create new structures of opportunity for the educated to assert themselves beyond the hierarchies of a tribal order of society. A 'creamy layer' of the new elite emerged owing its political and socio-economic advancement to the opportunity

structure of the modern state and the special constitutional provisions of the Sixth Schedule (Baruah 2003, 2013).

This is not to suggest that identities today are simplistic, placed on the lines of rich or poor, tradition or modernity. For example, the experiences around land management in the Khasi hills are reflecting the cross cutting identities. While the symbol of power and identity is evident in land relations, the durability and permanence of land is undergoing changes in the face of development and modern market-economy dynamics especially in urban centres that are now acquiring a predominantly commercial significance. The landed, besides coming from the traditionally powerful clans also belong to ‘creamy layer’ of the new elite. Where on one hand, the economic interests of these landed classes overlap despite their social /clan differences; the political contestations between their institutions of power—the formal and informal—divide them. These contestations and overlaps challenge the homogeneity of community’s identity (Soreide 2017, 2019). The contest for political space and socio-economic power along community fault lines has weakened the social protective nature of tribal communities through increasing monetization and privatization of community land, aiding class formations and stratification. This is not only due to state land acquisition but also due to modern market engagements with tribal communities whether through private or state actors. Although the extent of change with regard to the dynamics of land is difficult to establish due to lack of land records, few question the trend. Interaction between formal and traditional institutions heightens due to these changes.

## **Governance**

### **1. From Administration to Governance**

The Sixth Schedule was in a way an expression of a unique combination of continuity and change in the governance and representation paradigm for the region. The British administration had left an administrative ‘gap’ based on a ‘dubious’ display of respect for ‘self- rule’ of the people<sup>15</sup>. In 1947, the partition of the sub-continent had raised territorial concerns for the Indian state given the porous and volatile borders creating a debate over the concerns of assimilation versus integration for Assam and its Hill districts (Stugliross 1999). There was a more assimilative view led by Rohini Kumar Chaudhari and Kuladhar Chaliha arguing for direct federal jurisdiction given the volatile borders of the region over arguments for provincial autonomy. Other leaders such as Nichols Roy and Gopinath Bordoloi promoted self-government. The idea of Autonomous District Councils emerged from these discourses and found majority acceptance<sup>16</sup> in the Constituent Assembly that constitutionalized it through the Sixth Schedule.

### **2. Current Gaps in Formal Governance Regime**

The gaps in current governance mechanisms lie as much within the legal formal institutional hierarchies as between the traditional and legal interactions for every day governance purposes. It may be said that the ADCs have been ineffective largely due to the insufficient

## **Representing the (Imagined) Majorities - Local Governance through the Autonomous District Councils: A Case Study of Meghalaya**

enabling circumstances since they lack legislative and financial autonomy. The following discussion on formal structures and their relationships followed by the nature of interaction between the traditional and ADC structures in the Khasi hills shall highlight this point.

There is an important difference between the Autonomous District Councils of Meghalaya and the other Sixth Schedule areas. In Meghalaya the provincial state is not merely an additional tier of administrative complexity, but is an overbearingly dominant political and administrative entity, which has eroded the self-rule principle behind the ADCs—the cornerstone of the Sixth Schedule philosophy. The provincial state through a special amendment 12 (a) to the constitution, has been granted overriding powers over the legislations of the ADCs. Similarly, unlike other regions under the Sixth Schedule, the office of Governor is bound by the advice of the state's council of ministers. All legislations from the ADCs need the governor's assent. This results in state control over all ADC legislations. The Commission to review the Constitution in its Consultation Paper (2001) observes:

It should be made mandatory for the Governor to pass legislation proposed by the Council, if he does not respond within six months. There have been cases in Meghalaya where proposals by a District Council have been held up for more than 10 years.

These constitutional variations within Sixth Schedule areas makes the ADCs in Meghalaya lack real powers despite them having legislative, executive and judicial organs. The lack of statutory support from the Constitution accentuates the informal, political and economic dependence of ADCs upon the ruling provincial governments.

The complex and antagonistic relation of the ADCs with the state government erode the control of the ADCs over the conventional tribal institutions in turn diluting latter's accountability towards them. This has a direct bearing upon socio-economic rights of vulnerable individuals and groups within the tribal community. Land regulation and control is one such every day governance task, which has ramifications from the inability and inertia of ADC governance. In 2005 a Bill on Allotment, Occupation, Use and Setting Apart of Land, was passed by the KHADC, which could initiate a process of land records and regulation in Meghalaya. The Bill did not get any response from the Governor. Similarly, rights of minority tribes, immigrants and non-tribals are not ensured in the local governance under the ADCs. For example, a non-tribal is required to pay taxes and fees to the local tribal bodies for some common tasks such as a fee for getting a 'no objection certificate' by a traditional office in order to start a business and in some cases, to rent a house (Kakoty 2014). In this way, the Dorbar Shnonghas a connection with the District Council without having a constitutional basis through recommending applications for granting of trading licenses to non-tribal traders. It mandates amongst other things, a recommendation by the village headman on the approval by the local Dorbar. (The United Khasi-Jaintia Hills District (Trading by non-tribals) regulation 1954, in its Regulation 3-A.)<sup>17</sup>

The requirement of the Sanad from the Syiem however seem to establish a connection with the District Council because the Syiem is appointed by the District Council under the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills Autonomous District (Appointment and Succession of Chiefs and Headmen) Act of 1959. This act, while defining the Headman says: Headman means a Myntri, a Siem Raid, a

## Kavita N. Soreide

Basan, a Lyndoh Raid, a Matabor, Elector, a Pator, a Sangot, a Sordar Shnong, Sordar Raid and Rangbah Shnong. (A Baruah : 14)

However, these provisions do not guarantee a legal basis for scrutiny or accountability of local Dorbars in their associations with the ADC. There have been attempts by the KHADC at democratising and streamlining the traditional grass root institutions through such measures as The Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council's Village Administration Bill, 2012. The bill is in a middle of a controversy, which we shall discuss later in the article.

Self-rule and tribal governance were the cornerstones for the Sixth Schedule. The Sub-Committee on Minority and Tribal Rights had observed:

The tribes had their own way of life with institutions like the tribal and village Panchayats (or councils), which were more than capable of administering village matters and personal disputes.

There was an underlying premise that certain tribal communities in India had a traditional legal system that was more than sufficient to deal with the complexities of tribal life (S. Dam 2006, quoting the committee: 302). In practice, today the politics within the ADC mechanisms prevent it from exercising real autonomy. The Sixth Schedule is viewed as an extension of state (federal and provincial) control over the border territories (S. Baruah 2004). Despite the innovativeness of decentralised power in the ADCs, the Sixth schedule, neither recognizes the de-facto traditional local bodies nor mandates panchayat bodies to provide legally embedded alternatives to effective and accountable grassroots governance. This results in ad hoc relationships of local governance between the tribal and modern institutions.

### 3. Ad-hoc nature of local governance

The Sixth Schedule single-handedly empowers the ADCs with the task of development and administration of the tribal people. The everyday governance is a convergence exercise between the legal and the para legal local institutions. An example of work symbiosis is found in urban Shillong under the city municipality region,<sup>18</sup>

The Dorbar Shnong Mission Compound falls under the purview of the Shillong Municipal Board and any matter related to civic amenities must be routed through the Shillong Municipal Board. While the board monitors and implements the construction work, The Dorbar Shnong executes it. Thus the work bills for civic work executed in the locality will not be passed by the Board unless the Rangbah Shnong certifies that the work is complete. (C. R. Lyngdoh 2016: 11)

Another example of convergence between the formal and informal governance regimes lies in the domain of tax legalities. Besides the multilayered revenue collection system by the state bodies, local Dorbars are known to collect their own taxes. In some parts of Shillong the Dorbars despite being para legal entities collect revenue for providing water to the localities where the municipal corporation water supply is not available. The Dorbars are not entitled to state taxes and are hence obliged to collect their own (Kakoti 2014).

Evidently, there are changes brought in by the modern state system and market economy to the tribal consciousness. This 'trend' is more visible in urban centers, where the tribal

## **Representing the (Imagined) Majorities - Local Governance through the Autonomous District Councils: A Case Study of Meghalaya**

institutions tend to be more 'elitised' and replicate the modern state and political systems' practices in local governance (A. Baruah 2004). Further traditional institutions also play a complimentary and a parallel role especially in urban areas by doubling up also as an 'arm of the modern state'. Dorbars performing such tasks as issuing the NOCs or kerosine permits is a new introduction to the conventional Khasi political system (A. Baruah (2013). In a way, through such replication(s) of the administrative practices of the modern Indian state, it is evident that traditional institutions are at least in the urban and commercialised centres and have metamorphosed into hybrid institutions of modernity and tradition treading the boundaries between the formal and the informal in everyday governance. However, due to lack of statutory laws to mandate such transcending engagements, there is wide scope for such institutions continuing to replicate also the inherent hierarchies and power dynamics. While traditional Khasi institutions of representation are based on limited direct democracy (only adult Khasi men attend and elect the assemblies) these are at the same time dominated by traditional clan elites. Modern Dorbars in this sense can provide new avenues for the western educated classes, who may not necessarily belong to the traditionally dominant clans, to usurp power and control from the traditional elite, hence setting in new elitisation of such Dorbars in urban areas. For example, in Laitumkhra in urban Shillong nowadays, only respectable retired government servant tend to be elected as heads unlike earlier times when "any riff raff" could. (A. Baruah 2013).

Despite these few modernizing effects in some of the urban Dorbars, the changes in the composition and working style of Dorbars remain largely cosmetic. In general, these bodies are neither democratic nor do they subscribe to parameters of accountability in the same sense as all modern organizations are obliged to. Their funding through the ADC also remain sporadic and non-uniform. Thus, the Dorbars in their current form cannot be preferred substitutes for local governance. The National Commission to Review the Working of the Indian Constitution (2001) makes suggestions for the state to take required "Measures towards self-governance through inclusion of the traditional systems of governance and reversing the years of marginalization and allotting specific roles and opportunities to these institutions".

The Indian state however has largely been shy of formalizing these interactions. The latest Bill for the 125<sup>th</sup> amendment bill, 2019 stipulating amendment to the Article 280 and the Sixth Schedule unfortunately bore the same point. (PRS India 2019). It specifically recommended devolution of financial resources to the ADCs as well as the village and municipal councils in the Sixth Schedule areas besides reserving at least one-third of seats for women in the village and municipal councils in the Sixth Schedule areas of Assam, Mizoram and Tripura. Meghalaya was kept out of the purview of the provision for elected village and municipal councils and one-third reservations for women unless it received the Governor's assent. Moreover, the ADCs in Garo and Khasi Districts were to have four nominated seats, atleast two of which for women and two for unrepresented tribes. Given that despite the significant presence of non tribal population in urban Shillong since the time of the British, no fixed representation was mandated for non- tribal people highlighted the policy gap.

## **Kavita N. Soreide**

“...Nurara Hazarika shows that with Shillong becoming the headquarters of the British administration in the region, the process of urbanization accelerated, and this greatly affected the demographic picture of the area. She says that migration changed the demographic composition of the urban population, and like other big towns and cities we find a multi-ethnic population in Shillong.” (Nurara Hazarika, *Urbanization in Meghalaya: A Socio-Historical Study*, Unpublished M.Phil. Diss., North Eastern Hill University, 1983, p 46 quoted by A. Baruah 2004: 9)

Constitutionalizing the traditional bodies can help formally channelize the conflict between the modern elite and the traditional aristocracy, thus embolden local autonomy. There have been some efforts at creation of legal democratic grassroots institutions that could work in tandem and parallel to the conventional institutions. However, this is not an easy exercise. The tribal institutions and offices of grassroots governance such as Dorbar and Dorbar Shnongs cannot be roped into the Sixth Schedule without radically changing their compositions and working styles. Such initiative would invariably entail as ‘interference’ by the modern state in the practices of conventional tribal institutions hence contrary to the spirit of the Sixth Schedule. While introducing modern democratic institutions of ADCs as parallel bodies in tribal communities, the Indian constitution did not lay down a road map for future convergence between the two. The haphazard pattern of interactions between modern and conventional bodies has created skewed representations and a culture of ad hoc local governance. The contested opinions surrounding the KHADC’s Village Administration Bill (VAB) mirror some of the contesting interests in the local ADC politics.

### **Contests around the way(s) forward: Village Administration Bill**

The Khasi Hills Autonomous District (Village Administration) Bill, passed on 1st July, 2014 suggests creation of democratically elected Village Development Councils. This bill was largely in response to the Draft Meghalaya Village Council Act of 2011, which was introduced by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India. However, the Draft Bill was jointly opposed by the three ADCs.<sup>19</sup> Subsequently the KHADC passed the VAB in 2015. The Bill proposes the creation of the Village Development Council comprising of a team of elected members from the village that will work parallel and with cooperation from the traditional village Dorbars. Every member of the village above the age of 18 shall elect the office bearers to the Village Development Council. The bill proposes to reserve certain posts and memberships for women. It also suggests against the participation by political parties to keep it closer to the grassroots. The bill was hailed as an innovative solution towards democratic participation of people at village levels including women who have so far been absent from Khasi tribal polity. The development councils were supposed to work alongside and in cooperation with the traditional councils. The VDCs were to be centrally funded bringing them at par with the other legal bodies of village governance in India. The bill however did not receive a reply from the Governor. The myriads of political controversies that surround this bill reflect the complexities of the local politics in the Khasi Hills.

Although the village council and Dorbar Shnong are both general bodies, the village councils were to have more democratic elements in them. However the VDC placed the council under

## **Representing the (Imagined) Majorities - Local Governance through the Autonomous District Councils: A Case Study of Meghalaya**

the Dorbar Shnong thus limiting the scope of the former. It was also criticized for having done merely cosmetic changes to bring in gender empowerment in local bodies through carrying ‘a conscious formulation of the Khasi masculine Khasi politics’ (Roy, 2018: 291). Speaking about it, a Khasi scholar considers it in constructive light since it “enable(s) the introduction of positive democratic elements in the tribal institutions if they want to avail the opportunities provided by the 73rd and the 74th Constitutional amendments” (Fabian Lyngdoh, 2013).

VAB was appreciated for granting legal status and empowering institutions of grassroots governance but was criticized for ignoring the village general assembly, the Dorbar Raid instead (Fabian Lyngdoh, 2015). VAB was criticized for restricting its scope to villages and ignoring the principle of democratic local governance in towns and Shillong city. (Peter A Dohkrut, 2015). It was not favoured by those who argue for the rights of non Khasis, minority tribes and the non- tribals. Besides, by mandating a residential certificate from non-Khasis, a prior approval from the chief and the District Council as well a N.O.C. for trading license and mortgage of land requiring prior approval of the chief made the Bill unpopular; according to some, it wrongly implied that ‘village land was the property of the chief’ (Fabian Lyngdoh, 2015). Similarly by empowering the office of Dorbar Shnong which is considered by some as an ‘illegal parallel authority’ (B L Lyngdoh, 2015.), VAB drew flak. It was also indis favour with the traditional bodies who argued that by making all residents above the age of 18 as members eligible to elect VDCs, it risked increase in the problem of influx (P. Upadhyaya and A.S. Upadhyaya 2014)<sup>20</sup>.

### **Conclusion**

The Sixth Schedule was an attempt at political accommodation by the state and an instrument of compromise by the conventional tribal institutions. The ‘constitutional silence’ over the conventional tribal polity was a moral gap in the self-rule principle of the Sixth Schedule. The relationship of the ADCs as a tier in formal structures makes their relationship with the state more streamlined but largely antagonistic. Popularly believed to be the training grounds for local politicians, the ADCs play second fiddle to the provincial government. The confusion due to this multiplicity of institutions and legal and tribal interpretations of law and conventions create opportunities for the powerful and marginalizes the vulnerable. As the ADCs function at the cusp of interactions between the modern and the tribal, unclear dichotomy of power and jurisdiction between the modern elite and traditional tribal hierarchies create various contestations. The goals of effective governance and tribal welfare are affected by this overlap.

Based on the above discussions and given the global rise in inequalities, the article posits that the inability of the ADCs to govern effectively does not necessarily make these structures fundamentally flawed since the potential of these bodies is not fully realized. The institutions are limited because of their political, economic and legislative over dependence upon the state government. For this reason they are restrictive in their capacity to reduce inequalities (old or

## **Kavita N. Soreide**

new). There is a need for making the ADCs more sensitive and empowered to tackle the changes within the community and the electorates they represent.

Today the ADCs in Meghalaya exist less for championing the cause of representation and more for the cause of local governance and tribal welfare. Unfortunately the working of legal and political pluralities in the state have led to a situation where the institutions that were put in place to strengthen the otherwise marginalized groups are reinforcing existing marginalization within communities. However, the theme of empowerment and rights under the Sixth Schedule does not end but begins with its civil and political provisions. Utilizing the potential of ADCs only as political mechanisms would be equivalent to turning the constitution's vision upside down.

### **Acknowledgement**

The author is grateful to the anonymous reviewer for making valuable comments and suggestions which have enriched the paper. The author wishes to thank the NMML editorial team for painstakingly editing the draft for making it suitable for publishing.



## Representing the (Imagined) Majorities - Local Governance through the Autonomous District Councils: A Case Study of Meghalaya

### Endnotes

---

<sup>1</sup>Which will now be called the Territorial Councils with increased seats and funds, if the proposed Bill by the Union Cabinet gets passed in the Parliament.

<sup>2</sup>The United Nations Minorities Declaration in its article 1 refers to minorities as based on national or ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identity, and provides that States should protect their existence. Although there is no internationally recognised definition of which groups constitute a ‘minority’ primarily because minority groups world over find themselves in very different situations. A minority group may or may not be a numerical minority, but importantly the requirement to be in a non-dominant position remains important.

<sup>3</sup>As per this Bill, if a Khasi woman marries a non Khasi man, she and her offspring would not be considered Khasi hence denying them the legal, social and economic privileges of Khasi community.

<sup>4</sup>The shortcomings in the 125<sup>th</sup> amendment Bill have been discussed in later segment.

<sup>5</sup>Even though the Scheduled areas are designated tribal majority areas, on average today, only 30% of the population in the Scheduled areas is tribal.

<sup>6</sup>The Sixth Schedule besides the state of Meghalaya applies to parts of Assam, Mizoram and Tripura. The Fifth Schedule applies to parts of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa and Rajasthan.

<sup>7</sup>Except the small municipal area in the Shillong European Ward region.

<sup>8</sup>There are two primary examples here, women and non-tribals. We know that the provisions of the PRI under the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> amendment granting special protective provisions for representing minorities or women do not apply in Meghalaya. And although non-tribals can vote for their respective ADCs, this is not without complications. “The District Councils in the Khasi Hills have a unique history: although not barred by law, non-tribals have rarely contested and won elections here. Here are charges that non-tribals are not encouraged to vote in these elections and that their names are frequently deleted from the rolls. The tribal and the non-tribal divide appears more acute here than in other Sixth Schedule areas.” *A Consultation paper on Empowering and Strengthening of Panchayati Raj Institutions/Autonomous District Councils/Traditional Tribal Governing institutions in North East India, National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution, 2001, 2.2.34.*

<sup>9</sup>The tribal communities of the hills viewed the linguistic policy of imposing Assamese as the official language as a threat to the traditional and cultural sensitivities. The Autonomous District Councils had grievances against the treatments meted out to them by state government of Assam which was above them in the matters of provisions of grants, approval of the legislative proposals and suppressions.

<sup>10</sup>Earlier in the year, the previous NDA government introduced a Bill to amend the Article 280 of the Sixth Schedule for devolution of more financial and administrative powers to the District Councils on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2019. These amendments besides various other things were to introduce reservations of at least one-third of seats for women in the village and municipal councils in the Sixth Schedule areas of Assam, Mizoram and Tripura which it was hoped would result in the empowerment of women.

Meghalaya however was kept out of the purview of the provision for elected village and municipal councils and the clause for one-third reservations for women. The Bill did not get approved but disclosed one of the strong reasons for existing policy gaps in the effective protection and promotion of the rights of women in Meghalaya.

<sup>11</sup>Although they were too small, even collectively, to get any representation in the Constituent Assembly, the Khasi hills were fairly advanced in their political awareness, had formed a Federation of Khasi states in 1934, and could be arguably regarded as ‘the most developed of the hill districts’ at the time with clear political ambition (Chaube 2012: 70-84).

<sup>12</sup>The Constituent Assembly of India had a special committee to look into the affairs of the minorities known as the Advisory Committee on the Rights of Citizens, Minorities and Tribal and Excluded Areas. The North East Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded Areas was a sub-committee under the Advisory Committee, chaired by Gopinath Bordoloi, the chief minister of Greater Assam.

<sup>13</sup>This stayed as an anomaly in the history of the regional politics in Meghalaya, as summarized by one Khasi scholar “The main reason for not signing the Merger (?) Agreement initially was that the rulers of the Khasi states were not Zamindars as they were not the owners of the land. They were merely elected heads but cannot claim any right of control over land. Source: Sujit Kumar Datta making a reference to R.S. Lyngdoh 1996: 25.

<sup>14</sup>Despite the growing inequalities and pauperization in land ownership patterns, there is no Land ceilings Act in Meghalaya because of the Sixth Schedule.

<sup>15</sup>The roots of this economic logic leading to creation of administrative asymmetry has been traced to the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation Act (1873). This helped to avoid any possible interferences by the ‘hill tribals’ in the tea gardens, oil installations or trading posts. (R. G. Lyngdoh 2014). Having been assigned the nomenclature of ‘Excluded and Partially Excluded areas’, the Northeast hills were excluded from direct administration due to a potent economic logic as well. “In July 1928, Simon Commission calculated the total annual deficit for hills administration at about 6.5 lacs...Neither the government nor the political parties of Assam were interested in tagging the hill districts with the constitutional government of Assam.” (Chaube 2012: 23-24.). The Sixth Schedule was ‘the easiest thing to do and has caused more problems than solutions.’ because the social engineering practiced by British to segregate the hill tribals from the rest of the people was never gotten rid off. ‘This has created more problems.’ (R.G. Lyngdoh 2014).

<sup>16</sup>The author is grateful to the anonymous reviewer for pointing out that the Sixth Schedule lacked in due attention, care and debates since the recommendations by the sub-committee were received late. Therefore, it could not be considered by the Constituent Assembly. The Drafting Committee itself considered the draft and was accepted by the Constituent Assembly.

<sup>17</sup>The author is grateful to the anonymous reviewer for pointing this out.

<sup>18</sup>It is important to note that the parts of Shillong city falling under the ward area are under the state government and are hence not under the KHADC.

## **Representing the (Imagined) Majorities - Local Governance through the Autonomous District Councils: A Case Study of Meghalaya**

---

<sup>19</sup>The Draft Bill was opposed by the ADCs on the grounds that it aimed to belittle the ADCs by challenging the prevailing traditional matrilineal customs and practices and disempowering effect upon the ADCs. (Roy 2018: 278).

<sup>20</sup>Hynniewtrep Youth Council (HYC) suggested the recall and amendments to the Bill by the KHADC on these grounds. Upadhyaya P. and Upadhyaya A.S. (2014).

## Bibliography

---

### Primary Source

Minority Rights International Standards and Guidance for Implementation (2010), United Nations Human Rights, office of the High Commissioner, New York Geneva: United Nations.

[https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/MinorityRights\\_en.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/MinorityRights_en.pdf)

[http://prsindia.org/sites/default/files/bill\\_files/Constitution%20%28125th%20Amendment%29%20Bill%2C%202019.pdf](http://prsindia.org/sites/default/files/bill_files/Constitution%20%28125th%20Amendment%29%20Bill%2C%202019.pdf) (last accessed 30 January 2020)

(i) The National Commission to Review the Working of the Indian Constitution (2001): “Consultation Paper on Empowering and strengthening of panchayati raj institutions/autonomous district councils/traditional tribal governing institutions in north east India.” New Delhi: Government Press.

(ii) Steering committee: *Dorbar Hima* Myllem, Shillong (February 2001) “Memorandum Seeking Recognition and Protection of the traditional institutions of the Khasi Race’ submitted to the National Commission (detailed above).

Socio Economic Census (2011), Government of India.

<https://secc.gov.in//statewiseLandOwnershipReport?reportType=Land%20Ownership> (last accessed 30 January 2020).

White paper on the Indian States Revised Edition (1950) Ministry of States, Govt. of India, New Delhi: Govt. Press.

### Interviews

Baruah, Apurba K. (Former Professor NEHU) Interview with author, Shillong, Field Notes April 2013.

Kakoti Sanjeeb (Professor Indian Institute of Management, Shillong), Interview, Field Notes May 2014.

Lyngdog Robert Garnett (Former Home Minister, Govt. of Meghalaya) Interview with author, Shillong, Field Notes May, 2014.

Mukhim Patricia (Journalist, Editor *The Shillong Times*), 2014.

### Secondary Sources

Baruah, Apurba K. *Tribal traditions and Crises of Governance in North east India, with special reference to Meghalaya*. Crisis States Research Centre working papers series 1 (22). London, UK: London School of Economics and Political Science. 2003.

<http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/id/eprint/28269> (last accessed 30 January 2020)

Baruah, Apurba K. *Ethnic Conflicts and Traditional Self Governing Institutions: A Study of Laitumkhra Dorbar*. Crisis States Research Centre, Working Papers Series 1 (39). London, UK: London School of Economics and Political Science, 2004.

<http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/28226/> (last accessed 30 January 2020)

## Representing the (Imagined) Majorities - Local Governance through the Autonomous District Councils: A Case Study of Meghalaya

---

Baruah, Sanjib. *Durable Disorder: Understanding the Politics of Northeast India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press. 2007.

———. *Beyond Counter-Insurgency: Breaking the Impasse in Northeast India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press. 2011.

Chandra U. “Rethinking Subaltern Resistance.” *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 45, 4 (2015): 563-573.

Chaube, S. K. *Hill Politics in Northeast India*, Third Edition, New Delhi: Orient Black Swan. 2012.

Dam, S. “Legal Systems as Cultural Rights: Rights Based Approach to Traditional Legal Systems Under The Indian Constitution.” *Indiana International & Comparative Law Review*, 16(2006).

Das, N. K. ed. *Exclusion, Discrimination and Stratification Tribes in Contemporary India*. Anthropological Survey of India. New Delhi: Rawat Publication. 2013.

Datta, Sujit Kumar. *Functioning of the Autonomous District Councils in Meghalaya*. New Delhi: Akansha Publishing House. 2002.

———. *Government and Politics in Meghalaya*. New Delhi: Sanchar Publishing House. 1996.

Dev, N. K. *Tradition and Modernity in Khasi Society*, Guwahati: Spectrum Publications. 2004.

Hussain, Monirul. *Interrogating Development State, Displacement and Popular Resistance in Northeast India*. New Delhi: Sage Publications. 2008.

Karlsson, B.G. and T. B Subba, eds. *Indigeneity in India*. London, New York, Bahrain: Kegan Paul. 2006.

Karlsson, B.G. *Unruly Hills: Nature and Nation in India's Northeast*. Delhi: Orient Black Swan. 2011.

———. *Contested Belonging: and Indigenous People's Struggle for Forest and Identity in Sun Himalayan Bengal*. Richmond Surrey: Curzon. 2000.

Lyngdoh, Charles Reuben, ed. *Revisiting Traditional Institutions in Khasi Jaintia Hills*. UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. 2016.

Menon, Ajit. “Engaging with the Law on Adivasi Rights.” *Economic and Political Weekly* 42, 24 (2007): 2239-2242.

Moodie M, *We were Adivasis*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 2015.

Nongbri, Tiplut. “Timber band in North East India: Effects on Livelihood and Gender.” *Economic and Political Weekly* 26, 21(2001): 1893-1900.

Oskarsson, P. and S. Sareen. “Adivasiness as Caste Expression and Land Rights Claim-Making in Central Eastern India”, *Journal of Contemporary Asia*. (2019)

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00472336.2019.1656277> (accessed on 14 February 2020).

---

Prakash, Ved. *Encyclopaedia of the North East India* 1. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers. 2007.

Roy, Animesh. "Discord in Matrilineality: Insight into the Khasi Society of Meghalaya." *Society and Culture in South Asia* 4, 2(2018): 278-297.

Sharma, Manorama. *Critically Assessing Traditions: The Case of Meghalaya*. Crisis States Research Centre working papers series 1, 52(2004). London, UK: Crisis States Research Centre, London School of Economics and Political Science.

<http://www.lse.ac.uk/internationalDevelopment/research/crisisStates/Publications/wpPhase1/wp52.aspx> (accessed on 23 November 2019)

Soreide, K. N. "Tribal Representation and Local Land Governance in the Khasi Hills of Meghalaya, India." *Forum for Development Studies*, DOI:10.1080/08039410.2019.1593238 Oslo: Routledge. Jul, 2019.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/08039410.2019.1593238>

———. "Mismanagement of Land in Meghalaya" *Economic and Political Weekly India*, Vol. 53, Issue No. 29, 21 (July, 2018). SSN (Print) - 0012-9976 | ISSN (Online) - 2349-8846.

———. *Tribal representation & local land governance in India: A case study from the Khasi Hills of Meghalaya*. Bergen: Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI Working Paper WP 2017:4) 26. 2017.

<https://www.cmi.no/publications/6243-tribal-representation-local-land-governance-in>

———. *Tribal Marginalization in India: Social Exclusion and Protective Law*. Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI Brief vol. 12 no. 4, 2nd edition) 4. 2013.

<https://www.cmi.no/publications/5024-tribal-marginalization-in-india>

Steur, L. *Indigenist Mobilization: Confronting Electoral Communism and Precarious Livelihoods in Post-reform Kerala*. New York: Berghahn Books. 2017.

Stuligross, David. "Autonomous Councils in North East India: Theory and Practice." *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 24, no.4 (Oct.-Dec. 1999): 497-525. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40644976>.

Sundar, N. *The Scheduled Tribes and their India: Politics, Identities, Policies, and Work*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press. 2016.

Thomas, Joshua C, ed. *Polity and Economy Agenda for Contemporary North East India*. Indian Council of Social Science Research – North Eastern Regional Centre, Shillong. New Delhi: Regency Publications. 2005.

Upadhyaya Priyankar and Anjoo Sharan Upadhyaya. "Traditional Institutions of Dispute Resolution in India: Experiences from Khasi and Garo Hills in Meghalaya." Berlin: Berghof Foundation. 2014.

[https://www.berghof-foundation.org/fileadmin/redaktion/Publications/Papers/India\\_CaseStudy\\_BF\\_Report\\_DSF.pdf](https://www.berghof-foundation.org/fileadmin/redaktion/Publications/Papers/India_CaseStudy_BF_Report_DSF.pdf) (accessed on September 2019).

Wahi, N, and A. Bhatia. "Understanding Land Acquisition Disputes in India." Centre for Policy Research. New Delhi. 2017. <http://cprindia.org/news/5978>.

## Newspaper and E-portals

Lyngdoh B.L., (2015), Letters to the editor, *The Shillong Times*, 8<sup>th</sup> January. <http://www.theshillongtimes.com/2015/01/08/khadcs-village-administration-bill/> (accessed on December 2019).

## Representing the (Imagined) Majorities - Local Governance through the Autonomous District Councils: A Case Study of Meghalaya

---

Dohkrut Peter A, (2015) Letters to the editor, *The Shillong Times*, 8<sup>th</sup> January. <http://www.theshillongtimes.com/2015/01/08/khadcs-village-administration-bill/> (accessed on December 2019).

Lyngdoh Fabian, (2015), A Critique of the KHADC (Village Administration) Bill, 2014, *The Shillong Times*, 9<sup>th</sup> January. <http://www.theshillongtimes.com/2015/01/09/a-critique-of-the-khadc-village-administration-bill-2014/> (accessed on December 2019).

Lyngdoh Fabian, (2013), Strengthening grass-roots institutions in Meghalaya, *Shillong Times*, 13<sup>th</sup> March. [www.theshillongtimes.com/2013/03/13/strengthening-grass-roots-institutions-in-meghalaya/](http://www.theshillongtimes.com/2013/03/13/strengthening-grass-roots-institutions-in-meghalaya/) (accessed on December 2019).

The Riot Collective (July 2018), Why the Second Amendment to 1997 Khasi Social Custom of Lineage Act is Untenable in Law <https://www.riiot.in/why-the-second-amendment-to-1997-khasi-social-custom-of-lineage-act-is-untenable-in-law/> (accessed on December 2019).