

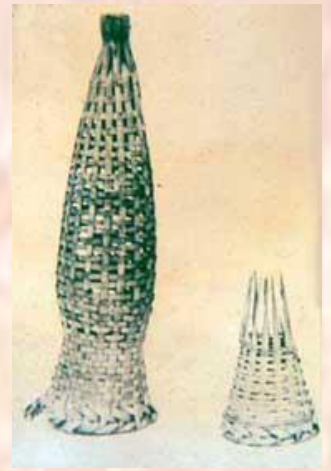
Crafts of Meghalaya



Meghalaya is a Sanskrit word meaning "the abode of cloud". Capital of Meghalaya, **Shillong** is also known as the 'Scotland of the East'. The three hills surrounding the state are **Garo**, **Khasi** and **Jaintia**. This state is rich in flora and fauna, of the 17,000 species of orchids in the world, around **3000** varieties are found in Meghalaya. The three ancient hill tribes- Khasi, Garo and Jaintia tribes have a rich cultural heritage. The important crafts of the Khasi and the Jaintia districts include weaving, wood-carving, cane and bamboo work, carpet and silk weaving, making of musical instruments, jewellery, pineapple fiber articles etc. The popular crafts of the Garos are weaving, cane and bamboo work including **poker work** in which designs are burnt into the bamboo with a red-hot pointed rod, wood carving, jewellery making of clay toys and dolls, musical instruments etc. Markets such as **Police bazar**, **Bara bazar** and **Laitumkhrak** etc are known for selling handicrafts.

Bamboo and Cane work

There are amazing cane mats, winnowing fans, caps, '**kurup**' or umbrellas, stools, baskets etc. The Khasi tribals weave mats, stools, baskets, chairs, attractive hat covered with cloth etc are made of cane along with domestic knives, utensils, '**Khasi trap**' used for catching rain water fish and guns with extracted iron ore. Khasi people are very fond of baskets such as **Khasi pig basket**, **Khasi fruit basket**, **Khasi shallo basket**, **small Khasi storage basket**, **coiled cane containers** etc. The Jaintias make beautiful **fishing traps** out of bamboo. A cane mat called '**Tlieng**' and, '**knup**' or Khasi rain shield, baskets such as '**meghum khoks**' and '**thugis**' are very common. The **hanging cane bridges** over the streams also show the craftsmanship of the Khasis and Jaintias.



Weaving...



Hand weaving an ancient craft of the tribals of Meghalaya, has been passed on from generation to generation exclusively done by the **women**. The Garo tribe weaves '**Dakmanda**', a material used for making dresses along with bed covers, table covers and so on. These garments have depictions of beautiful flowers and butterflies in various colour combinations. Khasis and Jaintias also weave cloth. A special kind of silk produced in Meghalaya is called **endi silk** and **Sonidan** is an important centre for weaving endi silk. The **Hajong** tribe relatively a smaller tribe use back-strap or loin-looms and the garos also use frame-looms. The '**Tapmohkhlieh**' or head-shawl is also worn by knotting both ends behind the neck.

What are the threats faced by cane and bamboo workers and textile weavers?





Costumes...



The Khasi woman wears a dress called **jainsem** which flows till the ankles along with a blouse and a cotton cloth on one shoulder. On formal occasions, a long piece of Assam muga silk called '**ka jainsem dhara**' is worn, which hangs loose below the knees and pinned at the shoulders. The jaintia's dress is also similar to that of khasi women but with '**Kyrshah**', a checkered cloth tied round the head during harvesting.

Jewellery ...



The jewellery include ornaments such as '**Kynjri Ksiar**' made of 24 carat gold, '**Paila**' a string of thick red coral beads usually worn by the Khasis and the Jaintias and '**Rigitok**' a thin fluted stems of glass strung by fine thread worn by Garo women are quite common.

Draw a traditional costume and ornament of Meghalaya



GENERAL ORNAMENTS WORN BY FEMALES:

- **Coronet-Ka pangngiat** - a crown in pure gold or silver.
- **Wahdong** - round earrings of pure gold.
- **Siar Kynthei** – earring looping down usually made of pure gold.
- **Lakyrheng** – earlobes made of gold.
- **Ki tad ki mahu** - bracelets of gold.
- **Khadu syngkha** - bracelets of gold.
- **Shah ryndand** - necklace of gold.
- **Kynjri tabah** - bands of silver worn from the neck.
- **Kanupad** - coral beads and water pearls.

MALE ORNAMENTS: Kynjari-silver chains, coral beads, wristlets in pure gold, Siar shynrang-earring of gold, a sword belt in silver, quiver of silver etc.

TRADITIONAL ORNAMENTS OF GAROS

- **Nadirong** - a small brass ring worn both by men and women.
- **Nadongbi** or **Otongga** - a brass ring worn in the ear.
- **Ripok**- A special kind of necklace is made of long barrel-shaped beads of cornelian or red glass. They are also made of brass or silver.
- **Nataspi** - a string of beads ending in a semi-circular piece of brass, silver or crystal worn on upper part of the ear.

Musical instruments ...



Musical instruments are used in dance, singing, demonstrations and devotional performances. Common instruments are mouth organ, tobacco pipe, flute, cup violin, tribal weapons etc are made of cane and bamboo. Garo use different kinds of drums, bamboo and horn wind instruments, gongs, cymbals etc such as **Ksing lum**, a drum beaten to signal the beginning of the dance. Common ones are **Dama**, a long and narrow drum, **Kram**, a larger drum, **Nagra**, a large drum consisting of earthenware pot, a sacred possession for the **Nokma** tribals, the two kinds of Garo trumpet **Adil** and **Singga**, flutes of Garo made of bamboos only, **Otokra**, a big bamboo flute, **Illongma**, a small bamboo flute, **Bangsi**, a much smaller flute than others, **Imbingi**, a flute made out of bamboo, **Gongmina** or Jew`s Harps made of bamboo, **Rangs** or **Gongs** are brass or metal plates or basin used by the Garos during the dances and festivals, two kinds of cymbals used by the Garos are **Kakwa** and **Nenggilsis** etc.

ACCORDING TO POPULAR BELIEFS...

The drum named **Kram** may not be taken out of the owner`s house except for important occasions, because it is believed by the Garos that some misfortune may fall on the owner. There is a similar belief among the Garos for the **Nagra** drum of **Nokmas**. Before the cremation, a dead **Nokma** tribal is laid out on rows of the gongs.

Engravings ...

In Jaintia and Garo villages, there are **engravings of men and animals** on the house walls. One prominent engraving is near **Jowai** featuring a lover and his beloved. The non- Christian Garos erect **memorials for the dead** on the wooden posts with shape, form and facial resemblance of the dead person.

Name your favourite Meghalaya Craft and why?

