

CHAPTER IV

Role of Karbi Middle Class in the Formation of Karbi Anglong District

The last part of the 19th and the early years of the 20th century was a period of resurgence in the Karbi society when the first generation of the educated middle class of the Karbis began to make its presence felt to the rest of the world. As a result of the effort of this first generation of enlightened sections of the Karbis, the tribe was able to secure the attention of the British colonial administration. As a direct outcome of this, a number of reports and notes began to be written and published on the Karbis and even a dictionary (A Dictionary of the Mikir Language by G.D. Walker) on the language of the tribe was published which went a long way in introducing the tribe to the rest of the world. An educated Karbi youth named, Sardoka Ingti, better known as Sardoka Perrian Kay, a P.U.(Pre University) from the Presidency College, Calcutta, who along with Edward Stack prepared valuable notes on the Karbis during 1884-86 which played an important role in introducing the tribe to the rest of the world. Those notes were later used liberally by Sir Charles Lyall to write his much acclaimed book 'The Mikirs' published in 1908. Apart from Sardoka, a number of other prominent Karbi personalities like, Thengkur Sing Ingti and his son Semson Sing Ingti, Khorsing Terang, Soi Soi Terang, Sarsing Teron Habe, Harsing Ingti Habe, Barelong Terang, Song Bey, Chatra Sing Teron, Chandra Sing Teron, Joysing Doloi, Dhoniram Rongpi and some of their other contemporaries began to emerge among the Karbis in pre-independence period. A close study into the life and activities of these first generation of the Karbi middle class make it clear that they had the vision to work for the betterment of the Karbis and unite the hitherto scattered Karbi inhabited areas into a single political entity in the form of a district of their own. The study has proved that because of the untiring effort, wise bargaining and efficient leadership of these personalities that the Karbis were able to secure a district of their own and also a District Council to manage their own affairs in the post-independence period.

IV.I. Historical Background of Karbi Anglong District:

The present Karbi Anglong district went through a phase of diverse administrative alterations before assuming its present form. The journey of the Karbis for a district of their own started way back 1884, when the 'Mikir Hills Tract' within the administrative boundary of the then Nowgong district was constituted by a notification under the Assam Frontier Tracts Regulations of 1880. The tract included the hill region where the Karbi population was most numerous. In 1893, a part of this was transferred to the then Sibsagar district. Later on adjoining district boundaries were slightly modified; as a result the 'Mikir Hills Tract' in 1913-1914, fell within the districts of Nowgong and Sibsagar. The Assam Frontier Tracts Regulations (Regulation 2) of 1880 enabled the British authorities to appoint Political Officers to look after "Any tract inhabited or frequented by barbarous or semi civilized tribes adjoining or within the borders of any of the districts included within the territories under the administration of the Chief Commissioner of Assam."¹ The Regulation empowered the Chief Commissioner to declare (with the previous sanction of the Governor General) from time to time, that any enactment in force in a frontier tract would cease to operate, but without affecting the criminal jurisdiction of any court over European British Subjects. Though originally the Regulation was meant for the '*barbarous and semi civilized tribes*' but later, the Assam Frontier Tracts Regulations (Regulation 3) of 1884 was issued by the Governor General to empower the extension of the Assam Frontier Tracts regulation of 1880 to the hills which, though not frontier tracts within the meaning of that Regulation, "*inhabited or frequented by barbarous or semi civilized tribes*" and it was extended to the Mikir Hills on 12 November 1884.² The rules for the administration of justice in the hill districts were also modified to introduce them in the hill tracts. Accordingly, the Mikir Hills Tract which was created as a frontier tract within the administered district of Nowgong(now Nagaon) got only criminal justice initially. It was only after the constitution of the Lieutenant Governor's Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam on 1st September 1905, a fresh set of rules covering civil justice in Mikir Hills was issued in 1906. Again, under the Government of India act of 1919,(based on Mantague-Chelmsford Report of 1918) the Mikir Hills Tract along with the other hill areas of Assam were designated as the 'Backward Tract.'³ The other hill areas which were declared as Backward Tracts along the Mikir Hills tract included, (1) The Garo Hills District (2) The British

portion of Khasi and Jaintia Hills district other than the Shillong Municipality and Cantonment (3) The North Cachar Hills (in Cachar district) (4) The Naga Hills district (5) The Lushi Hills district (6) Sadiya Frontier tract (7) The Balipara Frontier tract and (8) The Lakhimpur Frontier tract.

These backward tracts were of great significance as nowhere in India the contrast between the life and outlook of the people inhabiting in these tracts was so distinct and manifest from the people living in the plains. These tracts were governed as non regulation areas before the reforms of 1919 and were commonly subjected to special laws.⁴ These laws usually prescribed simple and elastic forms of judicial and administrative procedures. Although enactments of the central and provincial legislatures might be applied to these backward tracts, absolute discretion was vested in the executive of deciding whether or not such extension should take place. The Assam General Clauses Act of 1915 provided that no local Act would come in to force in the *Backward Tracts* unless expressly extended to them under the Scheduled District Act of 1874.⁵ Till 1935, the object of the Government policy in relation to the areas inhabited by the backward tribal population, including in the Mikir Hills tract had primarily been to give the tribal inhabitants of these areas security of land tenure, freedom of pursuit of their traditional means of livelihood and a reasonable exercise of their ancestral customs. The Government of India Act of 1935 divided the Backward Tracts in to 'Excluded' and 'Partially Excluded' areas . The North East Frontier (Sadiya, Balipara and Lakhimpur) Tracts, The Naga Hills District , the Lushai Hills District and the North Cachar Subdivision of Cachar District were specified as Excluded areas and the Gaor Hills District , The Mikir Hills Tract (within Nowgong and Sibsagar districts) and the British portion of Khasi and jaintia Hills District other than Shillong Municipality and Cantonment as Partially Excluded areas. The principle adopted in the selection of these areas was that where there was an enclave or a definite tract of country inhabited by a compact tribal population, it was classified as Excluded area. However, where the tribal population was mixed up with the rest of the communities and the tribals were substantial enough in numbers, the areas were classified as Partially Excluded. The former had been administered directly by the Governor and the elected Ministry had no jurisdiction over them, though finance and staff had to be made available from the province. The latter which

also included the Mikir Hills tract had elected representatives and the ministry was primarily responsible for the peace and good governance.⁶ It may be stated that presently, Karbi Anglong and NC Hills (now Dima Hasao) districts are the lone survivors of the Frontier Tracts of 1880 within the state of Assam. Nevertheless, when the autonomous district of Karbi Anglong (only Mikir Hills sub-division at the beginning) was formed in 1951, the Mikir Hills tract was kept as the major portion of it, to which certain other Karbi predominant areas of Jaintia Hills, Nowgong and Sibsagar were added.

IV.II. Government of India Act of 1935 and the Karbi Middle Class:

The Government of India Act of 1935 was a landmark event for the Karbi tribe as a whole, as the Act while recognizing the political rights of the Karbis for the first time provided an opportunity to the tribe to send a representative of its own to the provincial legislature. The Act can be termed as the facilitator for emergence of the Karbi politics in the real sense of the term. The Government announced that the Act of 1935 would come in to force on 1st April 1937. It provided an opportunity to the hitherto low profiled Karbi middle class to ventilate its political aspiration and test the political power along with the people of the plains of the then Assam. Political activities in the Mikir Hills tract got momentum as the Karbi middle class started to prepare itself for the election to the provincial legislature provided by the Act. However, the political activities under the Act of 1935 was confined to the middle class of the tribe alone and the common people were completely detached from it as the Act provided property qualification as the main basis of enfranchisement.⁷ Therefore, the franchise was confined only to the Mauzadars, Gaonburas, persons with at least education up to M.E. level and the leading personalities of the tribe who were paying tax to the government. In the entire Mikir Hills tract only 171 persons fulfilled the criteria to cast their vote to elect the first ever representative (MLA) of the tribe to the Provincial Legislature. Three persons contested the election for the lone reserved seat of the Mikir Hills tract to the provincial legislature. They are shown in the following table- (Table-34)

Table 34: Names of the persons contesting the first MLA election in 1937 from Mikir Hills Tract reserved seat

SL. No.	Name of the candidate	Party affiliation
1	Khorsing Terang,	Independent
2	Thengkur Sing Ingti	do
3	Mohoning Teron	do

Out of these three contestants, Khorsing Terang and Thengkur Sing Ingti were already renowned personalities among the Karbis who also represented the first generation of the Karbi middle class. Khorsing Terang was the Mauzadar of the Duardisa mauza of the then Mikir Hills tract and enjoyed considerable amount of influence among his fellow tribesman. On the other hand, Thengkur Sing Ingti, popularly known as Thengkur Pandit who worked as an interpreting clerk at the Golaghat SDO office had already earned reputation among the Karbis as an academician, a social reformer and a zealous evangelist. He helped the American Baptist missionaries to open a church and a school at the Tika Hills. His illustrious son Semson Sing Ingti is revered as the father of the Karbi nationality. The life and political contribution of both these renowned Karbi personalities will be studied later in this chapter. Nevertheless, the general election throughout the country under the new Act was held in February 1937. Out of the total 171 voters in the Mikir Hills tract, 128 voters exercised their franchise. In the election, Khorsing Terang emerged victorious by securing 53 votes and thus he earned the rare distinction of being the first MLA from the Karbis. The basic facts of this election are as follows: (Table-35)

Table 35: Basic facts about the first MLA election of 1937 in Mikir Hills Tract

Name of the constituency	Total Voters	Total votes polled	Pc. of votes polled
Mikir Hills Tract	171*	128	74.85%

**(The franchise was confined only to the Mauzadars, Gaonburas, persons with education up to M.E. level and the leading personalities of the tribe who were paying tax to the government)*

The results of the 1937 election are given below⁸ (Table-36)

Table 36: Results of the first MLA election of 1937 in Mikir Hills Tract

Sl.No.	Name of the candidate	Party affiliation	Total votes secured	Result
1	Khorsing Terang	INC	53	1 st MLA
2	Mohonsing Teron	Independent	Information not available	
3	Thengkur Sing Engti	Independent	Information not available	

As Khorsing Terang himself was a Mauzadar , he had strong influence among the gauburahs which went a long way in his being victorious. This was the beginning of the political career of a great Karbi political leader who dominated the Karbi politics in the subsequent years till his death in 1955. The second election of the Assam Legislative Assembly was supposed to be held in 1942 but was postponed due to ongoing Second World War at that time . The second election ultimately took place on 9 January 1945. During this time the number of voters in the Mikir Hills tract increased to 298. In this election, Khorsing Terang who was the incumbent MLA from the Mikir Hills tract reserved seat again contested the election on a Congress ticket. His opponents in the election were Semson Sing Ingti, one of earliest graduates from the Karbi community and Biren Teron who was the Mauzadar of the then Mikir mauza of Duar Amla and who later become the founder treasurer of the Karbi Adarbar, the first national organization of the tribe established in 1946. It is therefore clear that the triangular contest for the reserved seat of the Mikir Hills tract in the second general election was also confined among the middle class of the Karbis. In this election also Khorsing Ternag emerged as victorious by convincingly defeating his rivals. As an MLA he become so popular that he was known as ‘Member’ among his fellow Karbis during the rest of his life.

IV.III. Visit of Governor of Assam, Sir Robert Neil Reid to Mikir Hills Tract and the Response of the Karbi Middle Class to It:

One of the most historic event for the Karbi community of the Mikir Hills tract was the visit of the then Governor of Assam, Sir Robert Neil Reid to the area in the year 1940. It was a time when the Second World War was at its peak and the Governor of Assam was on a journey to Bokakhat through the Mikir Hills tract. His plan to travel through the Mikir Hills tract was actually to take a personal stock of the condition of the Karbis who were then living in a stage of utter deprivation. En-route to Bokakhat, the Governor of Assam spent 14 days in the Mikir Hills tract while passing through densely forested areas of Diphu, Mohongdijua and Malasi Pathar etc. of the then Mikir Hills tract.⁹The visit of the Governor to the Mikir Hills tract created great amount of enthusiasm among the leading personalities of the Karbis who realized the importance of meeting the Governor from a close proximity and familiarize him about the deplorable condition of the Karbis living in the hill tract. It in fact provided an opportunity to the Karbi middle class to make a representation to the Governor on behalf of the Karbi people with a view to acquaint him about the various grievances of the Karbis and urge him to take initiatives for the amelioration of the same. The lead in this regard was taken by Semson Sing Ingti, one of the earliest graduates from the Karbis community who was serving as an Inspector of Schools in the then Mikir Hills Tract of the then Nowgong district, Khorsing Terang, the MLA from the Mikir Hills tract and Song Bey, an interpreting clerk at the Golaghat SDO office. At the behest of these leading Karbi personalities, a temporary but beautiful and accomodable house with bamboos and straws was erected at Mohangdijua to enable the Governor to take rest for a few days and interact with the local populace. To commemorate with the occasion a public meeting was organized at Monhangdijua on 28th October 1940 to welcome and felicitate the Governor which was attended among others by Md. Jeherul Haque, the then SDO of Golaghat. In that particular meeting, a memorandum was also submitted to the Governor by the Karbis under the leadership of Semson Sing Ingti. It was a red letter day in the history of the Karbi people as for the first time in history of the tribe a representation was made to the Governor demanding the rights of the Karbis. To read out the contents of the memorandum in public, Jotson Bey, a B.A. 1st year student of Cotton College was specially brought to the place by the organizers of the meeting. The memorandum

while highlighting the plight of the Karbis living the hill tract requested the Governor to take initiatives for their amelioration. The memorandum submitted by the Karbis to the Governor while welcoming the Governor requested him to take initiative for the amelioration of the various grievances of the Karbis. The memorandum urged the Governor in the following words, “ Your Excellency, on this auspicious occasion, first of all, we the Mikirs who have been kept in perpetual subordination by their progressive neighbors beg to express our deep gratitude to Your Excellency for taking in for the first time a Mikir Representative In the Provincial Legislature an act which has not only received appreciation from the Mikir people but also worked as an incentive among the Mikir youths for improving the status of their tribe and we sincerely hope that however busily engaged Your Excellency might be with multifarious activities Your Excellency would be graciously pleased to bear in mind the deplorable condition of the Mikirs due to complete isolation in the jungle area of the hills and further be pleased to redress to their legitimate grievances as embodied in the memorial annexed herewith.”¹⁰

Semson Sing Ingti and Song Bey accompanied the Governor during his entire 14 days voyage through the Karbis inhabited areas of the Mikir Hills tract as the navigators and thereby had the opportunity of personally briefing the Governor about the deplorable conditions of the Karbis. Semson Sing Ingti’s command over the English language went a long way in convincing the Governor about the need of a separate district for the Karbis. The Governor was reportedly much impressed by the Chomangkan dance performed in his honour by the Karbi youths at Malasi Pathar. While bidding adieu to Semson Sing Ingti and Song Bey on the completion of his 14 days journey through the Kabri inhabited areas, the Governor said to had expressed his deep concern over the miserable condition of the Karbis and also expressed the need of granting a separate district to the Karbis in the near future.¹¹ The Governor also offered certain suggestions to Semson Sing Ingti in this regard and asked him to visit Delhi to pursue the demand for a separate district for the Karbis. It is thus clear that the formal demand for a separate district for the Karbis began to take shape among the Karbi middle class from the visit of the Governor of Assam to the Karbis inhabited areas of the hills in 1940.

IV.IV. Formation of Karbi Adarbar: A Karbi Middle Class Organisation:

Karbi Adarbar, the first national organization of the Karbis formed in 1946 played the most important role in inculcating a feeling a nationalism among the Karbis and also securing a district for the tribe. With a view to find out whether , the Karbi Adarbar was an organization formed by the Karbi middle class or not, we requested the sample respondents to answer whether the Karbi Adarbar , the first national organization of the Karbis was formed by the Karbi middle class or not. While replying this question, the majority of the sample respondents viewed that the Karbi Adarbar was an organization formed by the Karbi middle class. In this regard, out of the total 350 sample respondents, 270 (77.14 %) of them viewed that the Karbi Adarbar was formed by the Karbi middle class while the remaining 80 (22.86%) of the sample respondents replied in negative.

Thereafter, on the light of the information received from the sample respondents, we proceeded to study the situation behind the formation of the Karbi Adabr and found that it was really an organization formed by the first generation of the Karbi middle class.

Though the Karbi middle became politically active in the aftermath of the Government of India Act of 1935 itself, the Karbis still did not have any political or social organization which could bring them in to a single platform and speak for the socio-political rights of the tribe. It was found that towards the last part of the British regime in India, the Karbi middle class felt the urgent need of an organization for uniting the Karbis in to a single administrative unit who were then scattered in to different administrative regions. The Karbi middle class also felt the need of such an organization to claim their political rights. The Karbi middle class formally surfaced in the arena of the Karbi society and ventilated its political aspirations through the formation of the Karbi-Adarbar, the first national organization of the Karbis in the year 1946. The initiative in this regard was taken by Semson Sing Ingti, the first male graduate from the Karbi community, who was then serving as a Sub-Inspector of Schools in the then Mikir Hills Tract of the then Nowgong district and his father

Thengkur Sing Ingti. They were assisted by some other prominent educated Karbi personalities of the time which included, Khorsing Terang MLA, Song Bey, Barelong Terang, Bonglong Terang, Sarsing Teron Habe(chief), Harsing Ingti Habe and many others.

The Karbi Adarbar was the brain child of Semson Sing Ingti who right from his students days at Murari Chand College , Sylhet,(now in Bangladesh) cherished the dream of uniting the hitherto scattered Karbis in to a single administrative unit in the form of a district of their own. Later, while working as Sub- Inspector of schools in the Mikir Hills tract, Semson Sing Ingti had to travel through the isolated Karbi inhabited areas. He was moved by the backwardness and deprivation of the Karbis living in the hill tracts divided between the then Nowgong and Sibsagar districts and therefore felt urgent need of uniting the Karbis under a single geographical umbrella. It was during this time he felt the necessity of a socio-political organization of the Karbis which can put forward the demands and aspirations of the tribes to the authorities. With a view to completely devote to the cause of the Karbis, Semson Sing Ingti even resigned from his government service. The preliminary discussion for forming an organization of the Karbis was held at the Golaghat residence of Thengkur Sing Ingti in May 1945 which was attended apart from Thengkur Sing Ingti, by Semson Sing Ingti and Song Bey.¹² These three leading Karbi personalities of that period discussed the modalities of forming an organization of the Karbis including the name of the would be formed organization. A number of names came up for discussion but Thengkur Sing Ingti referring to the existence of Darbar (assembly) in the court of the legendary Karbi king Sot Richo suggested that the name of the organization should be Karbi Adarbar¹³ which was accepted by other two members present in the meeting . Perhaps, while naming the organization , the founding fathers of the Karbi Adarbar were influenced by the name of the Khasi National Darbar , the first national organization of the Khasis formed in 1923 with Olim Singh, the Raja of Khyrim as president and J.J.M.Nichols Roy , the doyen of Khasi middle class as the secretary. Nonetheless, after the preliminary discussion held at Thengkur Sing Ingti's house, Semson Sing Ingti started contacting the leading Karbis personalities of the time and explained to them the need of uniting the Karbis under an organized body of their own . His endeavors bore rich dividends as he received

warm response not only from the educated sections of the Karbis but even from the traditional leaders of the tribe like the Habes(traditional chiefs) Pinpos (traditional ministers) and the Sarthes (village headman) who enjoyed great influence among the common Karbis at that time. As Semson Sing Ingti had already earned the reputation among the Karbis as a man of rare intellect, he was extremely respected by his fellow tribesmen and this was enormously helpful in his convincing the Karbi leaders of the time about the need of forming an organization of their own. The prominent Karbi personalities of the time like, Khorsing Terang MLA, Song Bey, Biren Teron mauzadar, Moniram Langneh , Cingkang Terang mauzadar, Sarsing Teron Habe, Harsing Ingti Habe, Rev. Hondrawal Milik, Davidlong Enghi, Barelong Terang, Bonglong Terang etc. extended their full cooperation in this regard. Accordingly, in 1945 an informal meeting of the leading Karbi personalities was held at Kothalguri village (presently at Nagaon district) falling under the then Mikir mauza of Duarsalna. The meeting unanimously decided to form a national organization of the Karbis and also discussed in details about the different aspects of the proposed organization. In the meeting, it was decided to organize a mass meeting in May 1946. The Kathalguri meeting was followed by a grand mass convention (Darbar) of the Karbis at Havaipur situated around 9 k.m. South from Hojai of the present Nagaon district in 1946. A large number of the Karbis from Nowgong, Sibsagar, Dorrang and Lakhimpur besides the Pinpos(traditional ministers)Habes (traditional chiefs) of Ronghang, Chinthong and Amri and Karbi mauzadars from different parts of the then Assam attended the meeting to make it a grand success. The meeting was also attended by a large number of dignitaries, including, Robiram Khaund, the then Deputy Commissioner(DC) of Nagaon district, Bandhuram Kachari, Inspector of Schools and Mohesh Chandra Dev Goswami, Professor Nowgong College.¹⁴ The meeting was presided over by Mohesh Chandra Deva Goswami where the name of the organization as Karbi-Adarbar was adopted. The proposal in this regard was moved by Barelong Terang and the same was supported by Chandra Sing Teron.¹⁵

In the same meeting the first executive committee of the Karbi Adarbar was also formed with the following office bearers¹⁶ (Table- 37)

Table 37: Details of the first executive committee members of the Karbi Adarbar in 1946

Sl.No	Name	Address	Profession	Position held
1	Sarsing Teron, Habe	Hongkram	Traditional chieftain	President
2	Semson Sing Ingti	Golaghat	School Sub Inspector	Secretary
3	Harsing Ingti, Habe	Longree	Traditional chieftain	Asstt. Secretary
4	Biren Teron,	DuarAmla	Mauzadar	Treasurer
5	Moniram Langneh	Deithor	Mauzadar	Executive Member
6	Ching kang Terang	Kothalguri	Mauzadar	”
7	John Ingti Kathar	Borthoi	L.P. School teacher-	”
8	David Long Inghi	Panimur	Railway TTE	”
9	Song Bey	Golaghat	Interpreting clerk	”
10	Langtukso Ingti	Silimkhuwa	Gaonbura(village head)	”
11	Kat Tisso	Baghpani	Gaonbura	”
12	KhoyaSing Ronghang	Borneuria	Mauzadar	”
13	Thengklong Rongpi	Deithor	Mauzadar	”
14	Rev.HondrawalMilik	Putsari	Christian priest	”
15	Bonglong Terang	Dillai	Teacher /Karbi writer	”

Khorsing Terang , who at that time was the MLA from the Mikir Hills reserved seat and who was one of the main organizers of the Habaipur convention of the Karbi Adarbar was offered the position of the President of the newly formed body which he declined citing personal reasons . Later the presidentship of the organization was given to Sarsing Teron, Habe of Hongkram. Apart from the above mentioned leaders, a number of other younger leaders contributed immensely towards the formation of the Karbi-Adarbar and uniting the Karbi people under the banner of the organization in the subsequent years. They included, Soi Soi Terang and Langtuk Terang, both of whom were the step brothers of Khorsing Terang MLA, Chandra Sing Teron, the son of Sarsing Teron Habe the funder president of the organization, Chatra Sing Teron who was then active in the state politics as the general secretary of the All Assam Hills and Plains Tribal Students Sanmilan¹⁷ , Joy Sing Doloi, the son of Ching kang Terang mauzadar , one of the founder executive members of the organization, Nihang

Rongpher, Bareleng Terang and Dhaniram Rongpi who were the socially active educated Karbi youths of the time and many others . It was because of the untiring effort of the first generation of the Karbi middle class under the leadership of Semson Sing Ingti, the Karbis came to be united politically under the banner of the Karbi-Adarbar, the first national organization of the Karbis.

A close look in to the organizers and the founding members of the Karbi-Adarbar makes it amply clear that all of them sprang up either from the families of the Karbi mauzadars, or the traditional Karbi aristocrats like the Habes or the gaonburhas or from the Karbi evangelists and from the first generation educated intelligentsia of the tribe . It can therefore be concluded that the Karbi-Adarbar , the first national organization of the Karbis was an organization of the Karbi middle class

IV.V. Role of Karbi Adarbar in the Formation of a District for the Karbis:

The main purpose of the formation of the Karbi-Adarbar, an organization of the Karbi middle class was to push forward the demand for the creation of a separate district for the Karbis in an organized manner. It was a long cherished dream of Semson Sing Ingti, the guiding force behind the formation of the organization to unite the hitherto scattered Karbi tribes under a single political entity and bring socio-political and economic upliftment of the tribe without hampering their aged old traditions and culture. He conceptualized the goals and objectives for the Karbi people and chalked out a plan of action for the attainment of those objectives. His goals and the programmes which also became the official objectives of the Karbi Adarbar were as follows-

1. Consolidation of Karbi inhabited areas and demand creation of an autonomous district initially.
2. Preservation and protection of culture.
3. Representation of political arena through provision for reserved seats.
4. Prohibition of opium in the Mikir (now Karbi) society.
5. Economic and educational upliftment.

For the achievement of the above objectives, the organization undertook the following course of programmes ¹⁸:-

1. Organizing meetings by the members of the organization to identify specific tasks to be undertaken.
2. Holding annual session in different parts of the Karbi land and
3. Raising volunteers associated with the 'Karbi Adarbar' to create mass consciousness about socio-economic and educational developments.

With the formation of the Karbi Adarbar, the Karbi aspiration for a separate district of its own received the form of a systematic movement under the leadership of the first generation of the Karbi middle class. The leaders of the organization toured different Karbi inhabited areas of the then Assam with a view to organize the Karbi people and make them realize the importance of securing a district of their own. Apart from organizing the Karbi people and infusing a sense of nationalism among them, the Karbi Adarbar sent several delegations to Delhi to impress upon the Governor General for the creation of a district for the Karbis. All these Adarbar delegations to Delhi were led by Semson Sing Ingti, the most intelligent and the most eloquent of all the contemporary Karbi leaders of that time. It was a time when the country was passing through a critical juncture. The British rule in India was towards its fag end and preparations were on the way to grant complete independence to the Indians. The Constituent Assembly under the provisions of the Cabinet Mission Plan of 1946 was entrusted the responsibility of framing the new constitution of the would be independent India. The Karbi-Adarbar leaders well realized the significance of the time and the need of convincing the British authorities as well as the nationalist leaders of Assam about the creation of a separate district for the Karbis and ensuring constitutional safeguard for the tribe in the would be framed new constitution of independent India.

IV.V.I. Memorandum to Sir Andrew Claw:

As the sole mouthpiece of the Karbi people, the Karbi Adarbar submitted memorandum to the then Governor of Assam, Sir Andrew Claw who was on a visit to Lanka of the then Nowgong district in March 1947 urging him to ensure that the interests of the Karbis are taken in to account in the would be framed new constitution. Further the Karbi Adarbar memorandum requested the Governor to give recognition to the organization as the representative of the Karbi people . The memorandum viewed that, “the country is passing through a most critical time in the political history of India. Every minority community is fully alert of the situation and asserting their best for their own political safeguards. The Mikirs, as well have strongly organized themselves to voice their feelings through their only all Assam association called “Karbi A-Dorbar”. We humbly pray to Your Excellency to give recognition to the aforesaid association, so that in the matter of framing the coming Constitution of the country the association is consulted.”¹⁹

The memorandum demonstrated not only the political maturity and farsightedness of the Karbi Adarbar leaders but also their serious concern for the need of political safeguard for the Karbis in the to be framed new constitution of India. Moreover, the memorandum was helpful in establishing the Karbi- Adarbar as the lone legitimate mouthpiece of the Kabris to be consulted while making provisions for the Karbis in the new constitution of independent India.

IV.V.II. Karbi Adarbar and the Bordoloi Sub-Committee:

In pursuance of paragraph 20 of the Cabinet Mission statement of May 16, 1946, the an influential ‘Advisory Committee on the Rights of the Citizens, Minorities and Tribals and Excluded Areas’ was already set up by the Constituent Assembly on 24th January 1947 to make proposals for the administration of the tribal areas .The influential Advisory Committee in its turn set up three Sub-Committees to report and recommend on the issues relating to the tribal population of the country. One of these Sub-Committees constituted by the aforementioned Advisory Committee was The

North East Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded Areas Sub-Committee with Gopinath Bordoloi as the Chairman. The Sub-Committee was popularly known as the Bordoloi Sub-Committee. The other members of the Sub-Committee were , Rupnath Brahma (a Bodo), Reverend J.J.M. Nichols Roy (a Khasi),Aliba Imti (a Naga) and A.V. Thakkar(a social worker among central Indian tribe and the Chairman of the second Sub-Committee called, The Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas in the Provinces Other than Assam formed by the Advisory Committee.)²⁰ The Bordoloi Sub-Committee was to co-opt two members from each of the hill districts they visit and after through consultations with the tribal leaders suggest measures for safeguarding the interests of the hill tribes of the North East including the reorganization of the tribal areas. The Karbi-Adarbar leaders were well aware about it and they wanted them be consulted by the Sub- Committee so that the political aspirations of the Karbis receive proper recognition in the new constitution of India. The memorandum that was submitted by the leaders of the Adarbar to the Governor of Assam, Sir Andrew Claw was a reflection of this demand of the Karbi- Adarbar.

Immediately after its formation, the Bordoloi Sub-Committee embarked on the tasks that were assigned to it and started visiting the hill areas with a view to secure the opinion, suggestions and various demands of the tribal leaders. It visited Khasi hills, Naga Hills and Lushai hills and held consultations with the leaders of these areas. As far has the then Mikir Hills was concerned , the Sub- Committee held consultations with the Karbi Adarbar leaders at Dimapur inspection banglow on 18th May 1947. A number of Karbi Adarbar leaders including Song Bey, Barelong Terang, Soi Soi Terang, Chatra Sing Teron, Bonglong Terang etc. gave evidence before the Bordoloi Sub-Committee on that day.²¹ The Karbi Adarbar, as the sole representative of the Karbis also submitted a memorandum to the Bordoloi Sub-Committee on that particular day. In the memorandum, the Adarbar leaders demanded first, a separate district should be established so that all Karbis could be placed under a single administration. They suggested that the Karbi area of 4,174 square miles of the Partially Excluded area, the Karbi portion of the Nowgong (now Nagaon), Sibsagar plains, North Cachar Hills and the Khasi and Jayantia Hills should form the new district. A boundary commission should be set up immediately by the Assam Government to report on the areas which could conveniently be added to the then

existing Mikir Hills Partially excluded Area. In other words, all the hill areas inhabited by the Karbis which were contiguous to the then Mikir Hills Partially Excluded Area and which could conveniently be added to this area should be included in the proposed Mikir Hills district. They further demanded that even, if it is not geographically convenient to unite all the Karbi inhabited areas but if it is administratively convenient, these areas should be brought together. They however viewed that if any Karbi village was surrounded by the Khasi villages they should not be included. But the Mikir villages in the Khasi Hills contiguous to the Mikir Hills but which would not like to be a part of the Mikir Hills should not be compelled to join.

The memorandum also demanded that the Karbis of other areas which could not conveniently be added to the new district should be protected so far as their land problem, educational and social customs were concerned.

The Karbi Adarbar also demanded that the new district should form a part of Assam with autonomy so far as local matters were concerned. The Chin Hills Regulations should be enforced to protect the people from foreign exploitation. The Karbi language should be the language of the district. The district Officers should be specialists, qualified young Karbis should be recruited for Government services, if they were not available others might be recruited for a temporary period but they should know the Karbi language.

The memorandum also demanded that there should be a local council consisting of elected members at of one for every 5,000 persons. All the tribes inhabiting the district should be allotted seats in the local council in proportion to their population strength in the district. The members of the local council shall be elected on the basis of adult franchise and on separate electorate system. The local council should have a chairman and a vice chairman. It should have legislative, executive and judicial functions. It should decide all disputes relating to land and local customs. The Central and Provincial legislation could be introduced in the district only with the consent of

the local council. The local council alone shall have the power to permit outsiders to reside in the district. The powers of the local council might be increased or decreased by the Provincial legislature.

The Mikir Hills district should be represented in the Assam Legislative Assembly at the rate of one member for every fifty thousand population. The candidates must belong to the Mikir tribe or tribes living within the district. If the Provincial Legislature was bicameral the district should be represented by at least one member in it. As regards the representation of the Mikirs in the Central Legislature, they should be represented by rotation. Some seats should be reserved for the tribals in the Provincial cabinet in proportion to their population strength. But the tribal members in the Provincial Cabinet must be selected by the tribal members of the legislature. The Tribal Welfare Department in the Secretariat should be entrusted to the tribal member of the Cabinet.

As regards franchise, Mouzadars, village headmen, Pinpos, Habes, those who had passed the lower primary examination, the head of the each family paying house tax or land revenue, male or female, must be entitled to right to vote to the Provincial Legislative Assembly. For the Central Assembly, however the voting qualification would be different. Members of the Provincial Legislature and of the local council, Mauzadars and those who had passed middle school examination should have the right to vote. Thus the memorandum did not prescribe adult franchise. But in his evidence before the Bordoloi Sub-committee, Chatra Sing Teron, one of the most highly qualified members of the Karbi Adarbar advocated adult franchise.²²

As regards the administration of justice, the memorandum suggested that petty cases such as the thefts, land disputes, disputes involving social customs should be decided by village panchayats. Appeals against the decisions of the village panchayats might be taken to the Mauza panchayat and from there to the local council. Cases involving serious crimes should be taken to the ordinary criminal courts.

The Karbi Adarbar memorandum also recommended that education should be free and compulsory. Further, Mikir students should be admitted to the professional colleges. They should be given certain number of foreign scholarships. The medium of instruction should be in Mikir in the primary stage.

Dealing with social customs the memorandum suggested that they should be preserved at all costs but they might be modified by the local councils.

The memorandum suggested that all posts within the Mikir Hills district should be reserved to the Mikirs and a proportion of the provincial services also should be reserved for the Mikirs.

Dealing with the development of Agriculture, the memorandum suggested the introduction of cooperative farming.

As regards financing of the administration, the memorandum suggested that all revenues derived from the Mikir Hills district should be reserved for expenditure in the district. The demand was made because the total income of the district was 2.81 lakhs but the amount spent in the area was only Rs. 57, 000.²³

Finally, the memorandum said that there should be compulsory military training for all Mikirs .

Thus, the memorandum submitted by the Karbi Adarbar to the Bordoloi Sub-committee was a practical one. Unlike the Nagas and the Mizos (formerly Lushais) they did not demand interim government or the right to secession, they simply wanted they should be protected against external exploitation and therefore they demanded a district of their own and a local council to manage their own affairs. The Karbi Adarbar leaders again gave evidence before the Bordoloi Sub-committee at Lunding

and renewed their demands for a separate district and a district council for the Karbis. Later, the claim of the Karbi Adarbar as the sole legitimate representative of the Karbi people received due recognition when the Bordoloi Sub-committee co-opted the president and the secretary of the Karbi-Adarbar to represent the Mikir Hills.²⁴ When the Bordoloi Sub-committee was still busy in studying the different problems of the hill tribes of the North East and securing their opinion to ensure constitutional safeguards for them, the country got independence on 15th August 1947. The main demand of the Karbi Adarbar for the creation of a separate district for the Karbis who were till then scattered in to different administrative units received the attention of the then Premier of Assam, Gopinath Bordoloi who then by dint of his being the Chairman of the Sub-committee on the hill tribes of the North East India already had many interactions with the Karbi Adarbar leaders in this regard and was convinced by the arguments put forwarded by the Adarbar leaders in favour of creating a separate district for the Karbis . It was therefore decided that a district comprising of the different Karbi inhabited areas of the then Assam would be created for the Karbis and it would be amalgamated with the North Cachar sub- division of the then Cachar district as a single administrative district under the banner of the United Mikir and North Cachar Hills district. The move of the Government of Assam was the greatest achievement of the Karbi Adarbar which in fact was formed on this very basic question of forming a district for the Karbis of the then Assam who were till then divided in to the administrative districts of Nowgong, Sibsagar and the United Khasi Jaintia Hills districts and since they were in every body's territory, the Karbis were left to themselves as if they were of no body's concern.

IV.V.III. Karbi Adarbar and the District Boundary Commission:

With a view to facilitate the creation of a district for the Karbis , the Assam Government formed a boundary determination commission in 1948 to settle the boundary of the proposed district after due consultation with the concerned parties. Motiram Bora, the then Revenue Minister of Assam was appointed as the chairman of the commission while from the Karbi Adarbar side, Semson Sing Ingti, Khorsing Terang MLA, Sarsing Teron Habe and Song Bey were inducted in the committee as the members.²⁵ The first meeting of the boundary committee was held at Nowgong

Local Board office .Semson Sing Ingti, Khorsing Terang MLA, Song Bey and Davidlong Enghee attended the meeting as the representatives of the Karbi Adarbar and placed their demands for the areas to be included in the proposed district . The meeting of was also attended by C.S. Boath, the then Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO) of North Cachar Hills.

The second meeting of the boundary commission was held at Golaghat at the official residence of the SDO Golaghat which was also attended by the Karbi Adarbar leaders. During the course of the discussion, Motiram Bora, the chairman of the boundary commission reportedly tried to ignore the demand for a separate district of the Karbis by arguing that since the Mikir population are not much in numbers, their demand for a separate district cannot be entertained . He further viewed that as a feasible alternative arrangement, the tribe can only be granted a sub- division. As mark of protest against such attitude of the chairman of the boundary commission, the Karbi Adarbar leaders walked out of the meeting. This was followed by an emergent meeting of the Adarbar leaders at Mission compound Golaghat where it was decided to strengthen the demand for the creation of a district for the Karbis with a renewed vigor. The Karbi Adarbar leaders who were present in that meeting were, 1. Semson Sing Ingti, 2. Song Bey, 3. Rev. Hondrawal Milik, 4. Robi Rongpi and 5. Bogaram Terang. The meeting resolved to send a delegation of the Karbi Adarbar to meet the Governor of Assam at Shillong to place the demand for a separate hill district for the Karbis.

The boundary commission further had to confront various problems as a number of disputes surfaced regarding the villages to be included in the proposed district. While Karbi Adarbar leaders placed demands for the inclusion of the cultivable areas of Dolamara and Malasi Pathar bordering Golaghat and Punja Borpothar of Duaramla Mauza bordering Nowgong in the proposed district , Motiram Bora, the then revenue minister of Assam and the chairman of the boundary committee was not prepared to concede this demand . As a result of this deadlock, the boundary commission was not yet able to settle the boundary of the proposed district even after many sittings.

The third meeting of the boundary commission was scheduled to be held at Shillong to discuss the disputed matters and arrive at a mutually acceptable solution. However, the Karbi Adarbar leaders could not attend the meeting at Shillong due the sudden demise of Semson Sing Ingti, the tallest leader of the Adarbar and the guiding force of the organization on 28th February 1948. A telegraphic message was sent to the chairman of the boundary commission placing the demands of the Karbi Adarbar to include, Dolamara and Malasi Pothar of Duarbagori Mauza bordering Golaghat and Punja Borpothar of Duaramla Mauza bordering Nowgong to the proposed Mikir Hills district. The unrelenting efforts of the Karbi Adarbar for the creation of a district for the Karbis ultimately bore fruits when the Assam Government decided to announce the boundary of the Mikir Hills vide Notification No. TAD/R/31/50/151 dated 13.04.1951.²⁶ The United Mikir and North Cachar Hills district was finally created by the Assam Government vide Notification No. TAD/R/31/50/201 dated 3rd November, 1951 as per Clause 3 of the Assam United District of Mikir and North Cachar Hills (Administration) Regulation of 1951²⁷ and the district was formally inaugurated on 17th November 1951. The political region, so created was formed by combining the partially excluded areas of Nagaon and erstwhile Sivasagar (Mikir Hills Tract), Block-I and Block-II of United Khasi and Jaintia Hills District and North Cachar Hills (excluded area) Sub-Division of Cachar District. The present Karbi Anglong by then was a sub-division, namely, the Mikir Hills sub-division and Diphu, the current headquarter of the present Karbi Anglong district was selected as the headquarter of the United Mikir and North Cachar Hills district. Accordingly, C.S. Boath, who was at that time serving as the SDO of the North Cachar Sub-division of Cachar district was appointed as the first DC of the newly created district.

IV.VI. Karbi Adarbar and the Creation of the Mikir Hills District Council:

The North East Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded Areas Sub-Committee, popularly known as the Bordoloi Sub-Committee after threadbare discussion with the tribal leaders of the hill areas of the then Assam, including the Karbi Adarbar leaders submitted its report to the Advisory Committee of the Constituent Assembly that constituted Sub-Committee. It has already been found that when the Bordoloi Sub-Committee visited the Mikir Hills, the president and secretary of the Karbi Adarbar

were inducted in the Sub-committee as the co-opted members, while other Adarbar leaders gave evidence before the Sub-Committee. During their representation before the Sub-Committee, the Karbi Adarbar leaders strongly advocated the creation of a district council for the Karbis. The Bordoloi Sub-Committee report was submitted to the Advisory Committee on 28 July 1947. Meanwhile, the preparation of the draft constitution was progressing and the Advisory Committee recommended the incorporation of the Bordoloi Sub-committee recommendations along with the recommendations of the second Sub-Committee on the affairs of the tribals excluding Assam in the draft constitution pending discussion in the advisory committee. The final acceptance of the recommendations of the Bordoloi Sub-committee by the Advisory Committee took place on 24 February 1948²⁸ after which the reports of the Sub-Committees were formally placed in the Constituent Assembly, along with the draft constitution. After heated debates in the Constituent Assembly, the recommendations of the Bordoloi Sub-Committee were accepted by Constituent Assembly with minor modifications as a result of which the Schedule 6th was inserted in the Indian Constitution which provides the hill tribes of the North east India, including the Karbis an autonomous administration in the form of the District Councils.

The most notable thing about the Bordoloi Sub-Committee Report was that it sought to reconcile the hill people's demand for 'political autonomy' with the Assam government's drive to integrate them with the plains. It proposed the creation of district councils with a view to protect the hill people from invading plains people. As per the provisions of the 6th Schedule of the Constitution of the independent India under Article 244(2), total five district councils were vested to six hills tribes of the North East India in 1952, including to the Karbis in the form of the Mikir Hills District Council. The other districts councils that were created at that time included, the United Khasi and Jaintia Hills District Council, the Garo Hills District Council, the Lushi (Mizo) Hills District Council and the North Cachar Hills District Council. The scheme was conceived with a view to build up autonomous administration in the hill areas of Assam so that the tribal people including the Karbis could continue to follow their traditional way of life, preserving their customs, manners and cultures with such changes as they themselves might like to introduce. As for as the Mikir

Hills District Council was concerned, it was the direct result of the persistent demands of the Karbi-Adarbar since its formation in 1946 regarding the need of a district for the Karbis and special safeguard for the tribe and its eloquent presentation before the Bordoloi-Sub Committee regarding the special status for the Karbis. In the entire episode, the Karbi middle class organized under the banner of the Karbi Adarbar led from the front to secure a district of its own for Karbis and then to get a district council for the tribe under the 6th schedule of the constitution of the independent India.

IV.VII. Karbi Adarbar in the Tribal Advisory Council:

After the Indian constitution was brought in to force on 26th January 1950, the immediate formation of the District Councils in the hill districts was not possible as constituencies of district councils were yet to be delimited and elections were to be held in them. The government therefore decided to set up interim Tribal Advisory Councils in each of the hill districts and desired the participation of the tribal representatives in the administration of the areas, even during the interim period pending the formation of the District Councils. The Advisory Council had no statutory basis but they were treated as the provisional district councils. The advisory councils used to advise the District Superintendents / Deputy Commissioners on various administrative problems and development schemes of the district. By that time the modalities for the creation of the United Mikir and North Cachar Hills district was just completed and the government was yet to formally declare the formation of the district. However, as in other hill districts of the then Assam, the Government started initiative to set up a Tribal Advisory Council in the yet to be formed Mikir Hills sub division of the would be formed 'United Mikir and North Cachar Hills' district. As a part of this move, C.S. Boath, I.C.S. who was then officiating as the special officer for the about to be formed district attended the Karbi-Adarbar annual session held at Kuligaon of Borjan Mauza in the then Mikir Hills on 3rd January 1951. After serious consultations with the Karbi Adarbar leadership, C.S. Boath finalized the names of the Karbi Adarbar leaders to be included in the interim tribal Advisory Council for the Mikir Hills and the list was sent to the Governor of Assam, Shillong for his approval. Accordingly, the following Karbi Adarbar leaders

were included in the tribal Advisory Council for the Mikir Hills²⁹ which functioned as provisional District Council for Mikir Hills till a full fledged District Council was inaugurated in the year 1952:- (Table-38)

Table 38: List of the members of Provisional Mikir Hills District Council formed in 1951

Sl.No.	Names	Organisation represented
1	Khorsing Terang, MLA	Karbi Adarbar
2	Nihang Rongphar	do
3	Moniram Langneh	do
4	Barelong Terang	do
5	Sarsing Teron ,Habe	do
6	Harsing Ingti, Habe	do
7	Davidlong Inghee	do
8	Biren Teron, Mauzadar	do
9	John Ingti Kathar	do
10	Long Sing Tisso	do
11	Dharmeswar Engleng	do
12	Nihang Tokbi	do

The above Tribal Advisory Council functioned as the Provisional Council for the Mikir Hills from 1st April 1951 to 22nd June 1952, i.e. till an elected District Council assumed charge in Mikir Hills.

IV.VIII. Karbi Adarbar in the first Mikir Hills District Council:

The Mikir Hills District Council was initially allotted total 16 seats, out of which 12 members were to be elected and 4 members of the Council were to be nominated by the Governor. The first election for 12 constituencies to the Mikir Hills District Council was held in 1952 and on 23rd June 1952, the newly elected body of the Mikir Hills District Council(MHDC) formally took oath and assumed charge in an inaugural function held at Diphu which was attended by the then Chief Minister of Assam, Bishnuram Medhi. In that particular function, the Chief Minister of Assam formally inaugurated the newly constituted MHDC and therefore the foundation day of MHDC is accepted as the 23rd June 1952. In that inaugural meeting itself, Khorsing

Terang who was then representing the Mikir Hills reserved seat as MLA since 1937 and who was also one of the most influential leaders of the Karbi-Adarbar since its formation in 1946, was elected as the Chief Executive Member (CEM) of the first Mikir Hills District Council. The first Executive Committee (EC) of District Council led by Khorsing Terang also took charge on that day. In his EC Khorsing Terang inducted Harsing Ingti, Habe and his step brother Soi Soi Terang as the Executive Members (EM). Both of them were the influential leaders of the Karbi Adarbar and took lead in the movement for the creation of the Mikir Hills district and the District Council.

The Members of the District Council(MDC) of the first MHDC who took oath on 23rd June 1952 were as follows³⁰:- (Table-39)

Table 39: List of the elected MDCs of the first Mikir Hills District Council in 1952

Sl.No.	Name	Position held	Party affiliation
1	Khorsing Terang-	CEM	Karbi Adarbar
2	Soi Soi Terang –	EM	do
3	Harsing Ingti, Habe-	EM	do
4	Sar Sing Teron, Habe-	MDC	do
5	Nihang Rongphar-	MDC	do
6	Rev. Handrowal Milik-	MDC	do
7	Langtukso Ingti -	MDC	do
8	Nihang Tokbi-	MDC	do
9	Long Sing Tisso-	MDC	do
10	Chandra Ingti	MDC	do
12	Raidang Ingti-	MDC	Independent
13	Moniram Ingleng -	MDC	Karbi Adarbar
14	Harimal Bora -	MDC (Nominated)	do
15	Jonardan Pathak-	MDC (Nominated)	do
15	Lobsaran Maibangsa -	MDC (Nominated)	Do
16	Khayambe Rengma-	MDC (Nominated)	do

The dominance of Karbi Adabarbar in the first Mikir Hills District Council was very much evident as all the elected members of the District Council except Raidang Engti were the nominees of the organization. Khorsing Terang, the first CEM, who was also

the MLA from the Mikir Hills reserved seat at that time, was one of the main founders of the organization. After, the sudden demise of Semson Sing Ingti, the guiding force of the Karbi Adarbar in 1948, Khrosing Terang emerged as the most influential leader of the organization. Likewise, among the two EMs of Khrosing Terang's first EC, Harsing Engti Habe was one of the founder executive committee members of the Karbi Adarbar, while, another EM, Soi Soi Terang was one of the important founders of the Adarbar. Among the MDCs Sarsing Teron, Habe was the founder president of the Karbi Adarbar, while, Rev. Handrowal Milik and Langtukso Engti were the founder executive committee members of the organization. Another important MDC, Nihang Rongphar was the general secretary of the Karbi Adarbar from 1948-49. On the other hand, Nihang Tokbi and Long Sing Tisso were earlier the members of the Tribal Advisory Committee for the Mikir Hills before the formal constitution of the Mikir Hills District Council. They were appointed to the Tribal Advisory Committee of the district as they were the important leaders of the Karbi Adarbar. Even the nominated MDCs were also the members of the organization. For example, Janardan Pathak, the nominated MDC who was also elected as the first Deputy Chairman of the Mikir Hills District Council had his political background as an important leader of the Karbi Adarbar. It can therefore easily be said that the first Mikir Hills District Council was under the complete control of the Karbi Adarbar, the first national organization of the Karbis formed by the Karbi middle class.

It was the Karbi middle class that was actually in the helm of the affairs throughout the Karbi movement for the creation of a separate district for the Karbis and securing constitutional safeguard for the tribe in the form of the 6th Schedule of the Indian constitution which also provides for the District Council for the Karbis.

IV.IX. Important Karbi Middle Class Leaders and their Role in the Formation of the District:

The Karbi Adarbar surfaced in the arena of the Karbi society just on the eve of the independence of the country and with this, the Karbi nationalism also emerged. The organization was conceptualized, formed and led by the first generation of the Karbi

middle class who were in search of securing a distinct socio-political and economic identity for the Karbis. The Kabri Adarbar was completely a Karbi middle class organization. The family and professional background and political role of some of the most important Karb- Adarbar leaders will testify this fact:-

IV.IX.I. Thengkur Sing Ingti:

From our study it became clear that Thengkur Sing Ingti is the doyen of the Karbi middle class. The study has further proved that Thengkur Sing and all of his children were the harbinger of the Karbi middle class. It was with Thengkur Sing Ingti along with Sardoka Ingti, better known as Sardoka Perrian Kay, the Karbi middle class formally surfaced in the Karbi society. However, the contribution of Sardoka Perrin Kay was confined to the literary world alone and he could not venture in to the political world as he died in 1905 at a very young age. The contribution of Sardoka towards the Karbis has already been discussed in the previous chapter of this study.

Thengkur Sing Ingti was born at Tika Hills of the then Mikir Hills tract (present Karbi Anglong). His father Karabamon Ingti was one of the earliest Karbis to convert in to Christianity. Karabamon Ingti along with another Karbi, named, Tungkrung Timung after their conversion to Christianity travelled to the USA along with an American Baptist Missionary in 1885. While, Tungkrung stayed back and settled in the USA, Karabamon returned back to his native place at Tika Hills where his family was left behind.³¹ Realizing the importance of modern education for his children, Karabamon Ingti got his son Thengkur Sing admitted in to the missionary school at Nowgong (now Nagaon) and this appears as the beginning of the emergence of the middle class among the Karbis. When Thengkur Sing Ingti passed his class VII at Nowgong and joined class VIII he had already attained good command over the English language. As a result of his command over the English language, Thengkur Sing got appointment at Nowgong Court as a ‘Dubhashi’ (interpreting clerk). A ‘Dubhashi’ at that time did not mean only an interpreter, but was like a leader who knew more than one language, a diplomat and a good communicator. Soon, Thengkur Sing became a very popular ‘Dubhashi’ and was called as ‘Pandit’ (a learned person) by the people.

He was called Pandit, because, he assisted the Baptist Missionaries in writing a number of books in Karbi language and also imparted teaching in Missionary schools in Karbi inhabited areas. Even Sir Charles Lyall in his much acclaimed book 'The Mikirs' mentions Thengkur Sing Ingti's name as 'Thengkur pandit'³² During his stay at Nowgong, he got married to Madhuri Ruth Bezbarua, an Assamese Christian lady who later assumed the Karbi name as Kajir Timungpi. After his marriage, Thengkur Sing Ingti was transferred to Sibsagar and then to Golaghat. He decided to settle permanently at Golaghat solely to enable his children to get the best of the modern education available at that time. There were mission education institutions both for boys and girls at Golaghat which prompted Thengkur Sing to settle there. He had six children from the side of his wife Madhuri Ruth and all his children went on to be famous personalities and became the standard bearer of the first generation of the Karbi middle class. His first child, Junaki Sailabala Ingtipi was first Karbi girl to have passed matriculation from Lee Memorial High School, Calcutta with distinction in Mathematics and receiving a gold medal. She later served as the principal of Sion Jiyora College, Golaghat (Theological College). His second child, Semson Sing Ingti was the first male graduate from the Karbi community who completed his education from Murari Chand College, Sylhet (Presently in Bangladesh). Semson Sing Ingti is the founder of the present Karbi Anglong district and is worshipped by the Karbis as the father of the Karbi nationality. Lawrence Sing Ingti, the third child of Thengkur Sing Ingti was an IAS officer. He was the first Karbi IAS officer (nominated), the fourth son Ronald Ingti joined RAF as Radio Officer during the Second world war and later became an Additional Superintendent of Police in the post independence period, the fifth child, Pratap Sing Ingti retired as Chief Conservator of Forest, Meghalaya; Maya Ingtipi, the youngest in the family was a Special Officer, Social Welfare, Tribal Areas Department, Govt of Meghalaya and was a Noble Prize nominee in 2005

His contribution towards the Karbis:

Apart from his government service as an interpreting clerk, Thengkur Sing Ingti was closely associated with the missionary work. He helped Penn E. Moore and John Moses Carvell, the American Baptist Missionaries to establish a mission centre at

Tika Hills and also a school in the area. He also rendered his service as a teacher in the school established by the missionaries at Tika Hills. Later, he along with two other Karbis, namely, Sarbura Ingti and Mohendra Rongpi actively helped the Baptist missionaries to establish the first Karbi church at Tika hills in 1897.

For the purpose of spreading education among the Karbis, Thengkur Sing Ingti also helped the missionaries in publishing a number of books in Karbi language written in the Roman script. Some of the books written for this purpose included, 'Arelng Alam (Fifli Akitap)', A Karbi Premier, published by the American Baptist Mission Tika, 'Arelgn Kalakha Akitap', Karbi primary arithmetic by E.P. Moore and J.M. Carvell and some other books on Karbi language where Thengkur Sing Ingti helped the missionaries to a great extent. Moreover, Thengkur Sing Ingti, along with J.M. Carvell wrote the book in Karbi language entitled 'Arleng Alam Angbong Akitap' which was published by the Assam Secretariat Press Shillong in 1904.³³ Apart from this, he also wrote the Chapter on the Karbis in the much acclaimed 'Deodhai Akhom Buranji' edited by Surya Kumar Bhuyan.³⁴

Thengkur Sing Ingti was also aware of the need of the socio-economic and political upliftment of the Karbis. When the Government of India Act of 1935 made provision for the reservation of a seat for the Karbis in the provincial legislature for the first time in history, Thengkur Sing Ingti not only welcomed the move but took active part in the political process that followed. In the first ever election for the provincial legislature which took place in 1937, he contested against Khorsing Terang Mauzadar from the Mikir Hills Tract reserved seat but was defeated in the election by Khorsing Terang. Thengkur Sing Ingti was also one of the most important persons behind the formation of the Karbi Adarbar, the first national organization of the Karbis. He along with his son Semson Sing Ingti felt the urgent need of uniting the Karbi tribe under a single geographical umbrella and for this they felt the necessity of a socio-political organization of the Karbis which could put forward the demands and aspirations of the tribes to the authorities. The preliminary discussion for forming an organization of the Karbis was held at the Golaghat residence of Thengkur Sing Ingti in May 1945 which was attended apart from Thengkur Sing Ingti, by his son Semson Sing Ingti and

Song Bey. These three leading Karbi personalities of that period discussed the modalities of forming an organization of the Karbis including the name of the would be formed organization. The name 'Karbi Adarbar' was conceptualized by him. Though a number of names came up for discussion but Thengkur Sing Ingti referring to the existence of Darbar (assembly) in the court of the legendary Karbi king Sot Richo suggested that the name of the organization should be Karbi Adarbar which was accepted by other two members present in the meeting. Karbi Adarbar formally came in to being in 1946 and played the most important role in securing a district for the Karbis and also a district council for the tribe. Thengkur Sing Ingti lived long to see the materialization of his dream and the dream of his son Semson Sing Ingti in the form of creation of a district for the Karbis in 1951 and a district council in 1952. He died at the age of 100 years at a hospital in Guwahati.

The above discussion on the life and contribution of Thengkur Sing Ingti makes it quite clear that he was one of the destiny makers of the of the Karbi tribe . He represented the first generation of the Karbi middle class. All his children went on to become successful and famous in their respective fields and became the standard bearer of the Karbi middle class in the true sense of the term. In a way, the entire 'Ingti' family became the harbinger of the Karbi middle class.

IV.IX.II. Semson Sing Ingti:

Semson Sing Ingti, the illustrious son of an illustrious father, Thengkur Sing Ingti is the architect of the modern Karbi Anglong district and for this he is revered by the Karbis as the father of the Karbi nationality. It is found that he sacrificed his high ranked government service, his family and his very life for the cause of the upliftment of the Karbis and to give them recognition in the new constitutional order of independent India.

Semson Sing Ingti was born on 8th February 1910. He was the second child of the total six children of Thengkur Sing Ingti and Madhuri Ruth Bezbaruah. It is found

that there is controversy regarding Semson Sing Ingti's actual place of birth. According to some people, he was born at Tika Hills; while some others view that he was born at Golaghat of then Mikir Hills tract falling under then Sibsagar district. But according to Song Bey, who was one of the closest associates of Semson Sing Ingti and a close friend of the Ingti family, Semson Sing Ingti was born at Golaghat where his father Thengkur Sing Ingti migrated with the entire family in 1909³⁵. Considering Song Bey's close proximity with the 'Ingtis', it can be accepted that Semson Sing Ingti was born at Golaghat where his father Thengkur Sing Ingti was serving as an interpreting clerk in the SDO office. Semson Sing Ingti started his primary education at Golaghat Mission School where he received merit scholarship for the primary level. He passed his matriculation examination from Bezbarua High School, Golaghat in 1928 after which he was enrolled at the prestigious Cotton College from where he completed his IA. Later, he joined the famous Murari Chand College, Sylhet (presently in Bangladesh) and completed his graduation from the same college in 1933 and thus became the first male graduate from the Karbi community. In the year 1934 he was appointed as a Sub-Inspector of Schools for the then Mikir Hills tract of Nowgong district and with this he became the first Karbi person to be appointed in a high ranked government post. Semson Sing Ingti married Labangalata Barua, daughter of Joy Chandra Barua of Nowgong, Christian Patty in 1940 and was blessed with six children, four sons and two daughters. All the children of Semson Sing Ingti, rose to prominence in their respective fields. Pawan Sing Ingti, the first child of Semson Sing Ingti, an IAS officer of West Bengal cadre of 1966 has retired as a top bureaucrat of the West Bengal Government and is presently settled at Calcutta. Pawan Sing Ingti was the first Karbi to get through the competitive IAS examination and joined the administrative service. Pawan Sing has also the rare distinction of being the first Karbi to obtain a Master's degree (MA). Semson Sing Ingti's second son Lt. Dr. Tapan Sing Ingti was the Superintendent of the Diphu Civil Hospital and his third son Ajay Sing Ingti was a bank officer. Notably, Priyanka Ingti (Bose), the first Karbi woman to secure IAS directly also happens to be the granddaughter of Semson Sing Ingti. Priyanka, who is a Himachal Pradesh cadre of the IAS of 2004 batch is the daughter of Pawan Sing Ingti, the eldest son of Semson Sing Ingti who was the first Karbi to be directly recruited for IAS.

His role in Karbi Politics:

Right from his students' days at Murari Chand College, Sylhet, (now in Bangladesh) Semson Sing Engti had to vision of uniting the hitherto scattered Karbis in to a single administrative unit in the form of a district of their own. Later, while working as Sub- Inspector of schools in the Mikir Hills tract, Semson Sing Ingti had to travel through the isolated Karbi inhabited areas. He was moved by the backwardness and deprivation of the Karbis living in the hill tracts divided between the then Nowgong and Sibsagar districts and therefore felt urgent need of uniting the Karbis under a single political entity. It was during this time he felt the necessity of a socio-political organization of the Karbis which could put forward the demands and aspirations of the tribes to the authorities in a systematic manner. But he had to wait long for the creation of such an organization of the Karbis. However, individually he continued his efforts for the placing the grievances and aspirations of the Karbis whenever any such opportunity appeared. A great opportunity came before Karbis to place their grievances at the highest level for the first time in history when Sir Robert Neil Reid, the then Governor of Assam, embarked on a visit to the Mikir Hills tract in the year 1940. The Governor was on a journey to Bokakhat through the Mikir Hills tract. His plan to travel through the Mikir Hills tract was actually to take a personal stock of the condition of the Karbis who were then living in complete isolation. En-route to Bokakhat, the Governor spent 14 days in the Mikir Hills tract while passing through the densely forested areas of Diphu, Mohongdijua and Malasi Pathar etc. of the then Mikir Hills tract. Semson Sing Ingti who was still a government officer realized the importance of meeting the Governor and familiarize him about the deplorable condition of the Karbis living in the hill tract. He knew that it was a good opportunity to make a representation to the Governor on behalf of the Karbi people with a view to acquaint him about the various grievances of the Karbis and urge him to take initiatives for the amelioration of the same. Therefore, with the help of Khorsing Terang, the then MLA from the Mikir Hills tract and Song Bey, an interpreting clerk at the Golaghat SDO office, Semson Sing Ingti took initiative in this regard. With the active help of these leading Karbi personalities of that time, a beautiful and accomodable temporary house with bamboos and straws was erected at Mohangdijua to enable the Governor to take rest for a few days and interact with the local people. To commemorate with the occasion a public meeting was organized at Monhangdijua

on 28th October 1940 to welcome and felicitate the Governor which was attended among others by Md. Jeherul Haque, the then SDO of Golaghat. In that particular meeting, a memorandum was also submitted to the Governor by the Karbis under the leadership of Semson Sing Ingti. It was a red letter day in the history of the Karbi people as for the first time in history of the tribe a representation was made to a representative of the British government demanding the rights of the Karbis. The memorandum while highlighting the plight of the Karbis living the hill tract requested the Governor to take initiatives for their amelioration. Moreover, Semson Sing Ingti along with Song Bey accompanied the Governor during his entire 14 days voyage through the Karbis inhabited areas of the Mikir Hills tract as the navigators and thereby they had the opportunity of personally briefing the Governor about the conditions of the Karbis. Semson Sing Ingti's command over the English language proved helpful in convincing the Governor about the need of a separate district for the Karbis. While bidding adieu to Semson Sing Ingti and Song Bey on the completion of his 14 days journey through the Karbi inhabited areas, the Governor reportedly expressed his deep concern over the miserable condition of the Karbis and expressed the need of granting a separate district to the Karbis in the near future. The Governor also offered certain suggestions to Semson Sing Ingti in this regard and asked him to visit Delhi to pursue the demand for a separate district for the Karbis. Semson Sing Ingti resigned from his government job in 1941 with the sole aim of devoting himself completely towards the cause of the Karbis. His resignation from the service proved to be a big financial blow to his family but he seemed to be mentally prepared to endure all sorts of hardships in pursuit of his dream, i.e. creation of a separate district for the Karbis.

Semson Sing Ingti again led a delegation to Sir Andrew Claw who succeeded Sir Robert Neil Reid as the Governor of Assam when the latter visited to Dengaon of the Mikir Hills tract with his wife in the last part of January 1943. On this occasion Semson Sing Ingti and his colleagues submitted a memorandum to the Governor on behalf of the Karbi people demanding the creation of a separate district for the tribe. He again led a delegation to the same Governor when the latter visited Lanka on 1st march 1947 and also submitted a memorandum seeking recognition of the Karbi Adabrabr as the representative of the Karbi people. In the mean time, the second

election to the provincial legislature was held in Assam in 1945 and Semson Sing Ingti decided to contest the election. Actually, the second election of the Assam Legislative Assembly was supposed to be held in 1942 but was postponed due to ongoing Second World War at that time. The second election ultimately took place on 9th January 1945. In this election, Semson Sing Ingti unsuccessfully contested the election against Khorsing Terang who was the incumbent MLA from the Mikir Hills tract reserved seat and who contested the election on a Congress ticket. After this, he took initiative to form the first socio-political organization of the Karbis in the form of the Karbi Adarbar. The Karbi Adarbar actually was the brain child of Semson Sing Ingti. The preliminary discussion for forming an organization of the Karbis was held at the Golaghat residence of his father Thengkur Sing Ingti in May 1945 which was attended apart from him by his father Thengkur Sing Ingti, and Song Bey. After the preliminary discussion held at his fathers house, Semson Sing Ingti started contacting the leading Karbis personalities of the time and explained to them the need of uniting the Karbis under an organized body of their own. His endeavors bore rich dividends as he received warm response not only from the educated sections of the Karbis but even from the traditional leaders of the tribe like the Habes(traditional chiefs) Pinpos (traditional ministers) and the Sarthes(village headman) who enjoyed great influence among the common Karbis on that period. As Semson Sing Ingti had already earned the reputation among the Karbis as a man of rare intellect, he was extremely respected by his fellow tribesmen and this was helpful in his convincing the Karbi leaders of the time about the need of forming an organization of their own. The prominent Karbi personalities of the time extended their full cooperation in this regard. Accordingly, in 1945 an informal meeting of the leading Karbi personalities of that time was held at Kothalguri village (presently at Nagaon district) falling under the then Mikir mauza of Duarsalna. The meeting unanimously decided to form a national organization of the Karbis apart from discussing in details about the different aspects of proposed organization. In the meeting, it was decided to organize a mass meeting in May 1946. As a result, the Kathalguri meeting was followed by a grand mass convention (Darbar) of the Karbis at Havaipur, situated around 9 k.m. South from Hojai of the present Nagaon district in 1946. The meeting was presided over by Mohesh Chandra Deva Goswami, a professor of Nawgong College where the name of the organization as Karbi-Adarbar was adopted. The meeting elected Semson Sing Ingti as the founder secretary

of the organization while Sar Sing Teron Habe was elected as the president. The main purpose of the formation of the Karbi-Adarbar was to push forward the demand for the creation of a separate district for the Karbis in an organized manner. It was a long cherished dream of Semson Sing Ingti, the guiding force behind the formation of the organization to unite the hitherto scattered Karbis under a single political entity and bring socio-political and economic upliftment of the tribe without hampering their aged old traditions and culture. He conceptualized the goals and objectives for the Karbi people and chalked out a plan of action for the attainment of those objectives. His goals and the programmes became the official objectives of the Karbi Adarbar. In March in 1947 he led a delegation of the Karbis to New Delhi to meet the Governor General and the Indian nationalist leaders to press for the creation of a district for the Karbis and also a district council for the tribe.

In pursuance of the Cabinet Mission statement of May 1946 a sub-committee named, 'The North East Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded Areas Sub-Committee' was formed with Gopinath Bordoloi as the Chairman. The Sub-Committee was popularly known as the 'Bordoloi Sub-Committee'. The Bordoloi Sub-Committee was to co-opt two members from each of the hill districts they visit and after through consultations with the tribal leaders suggest measures for safeguarding the interests of the hill tribes of the North East including the reorganization of the tribal areas. From Mikir Hills tract the Bordoloi sub-committee co-opted the president and secretary of the Karbi-Adarbar. Therefore, Semson Sing Ingti being the secretary of the organization was inducted in the sub-committee for the Mikir Hills tract as the co-opted member. This went a long way in convincing the Bordoloi Sub-committee about need of including the Karbis under the Schedule Sixth of the constitution of independent India. Just after the independence of the country, Gopinath Bordoloi, the premiere of Assam decided to create a district for the Karbis as per the demands of the Karbi Adarbar and for this he constituted a boundary commission to demarcate the boundary of the would be created district. Semson Sing Ingti was inducted in the boundary commission as one of the most important members. Greatly satisfied with the outcome of his effort for the betterment of the Karbis, Semson Sing Ingti was busy in organizing the annual session of the Karbi Adarbar at Katumari near Nowgong in 1948 when he fell seriously ill. But despite his ill health he attended the boundary

commission meeting held at Nowgong. However, after coming back from the meeting his condition deteriorated and he breathed his last on 28th February 1948 at his Christian Patty residence of Nowgong at the young age of 38. He could not see his dream materialized during his life time as Karbi Anglong district was formally created in 1951,i.e. two years after his death.

Because of his selfless devotion for the upliftment of the Karbis and his efficient leadership for the creation of a district for the community, he is revered by his fellow tribesmen as the father of the Karbi Community.

IV.IX.III. Khorsing Terang:

From our study it was found that Khorsing Terang was the most successful and undisputed Karbi leader during his life time. He was the first Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) from the Mikr Hills Tract and the first Chief Executive Member (CEM) of the Mikir Hills District Council when it was formally created in 1952. As a man with rare leadership quality and shrewd political farsightedness, he was also one of the most important founders of the Karbi Adarbar, the first national organization of the Karbis which was formed in 1946, although he did not assume any portfolio of the organization during the initial years of its formation citing personal inconvenience. A symbol of the emerging Karbi middle class, Khorsing Terang was popularly known as ‘Member’ among his contemporaries. This was because of the fact that he was a Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) and also a Member of the then Mikir Hills District Council (MDC). He singlehandedly dominated the entire gamut of Karbi politics during the period of his brief lifetime.

Khorsing Terang was born in to an affluent family in 1906 at a village called Ronglongchor, Voteranglangso situated around 20 kms from Diphu, the present headquarter town of Karbi Anglong district. His father Longkam Terang was the Mauzadar of the then Mikir (now Karbi) mauza of ‘Duardisa’ and thereby enjoyed considerable amount of influence among the people of the area. As there was no

educational institution in the entire Mikir Hills tract during that period, Khorsing Terang's father sent him to Golaghat for education and enrolled him at Golaghat, Amulapatty Model M.V. school in 1917 where he studied up to class VII (7th standard). Khorsing Terang had to abandon his formal education at class VII and returned home to help his father in the running of the Mauza. After this he was married to Kare Rongpipi of Dimapur and from his first wife's side he had total five children. Khorsing Terang had to marry total five wives; of course each wife was married after the death of the previous ones. In other words, he never married a wife when the previous wife was still alive and he was blessed with total twelve (12) children, two sons and ten daughters from all his wives. After the death of his father the responsibility of managing his father's mauza came to Khorsing Terang and thus he was appointed as the Mauzadar of the Duardisa mauza. The responsibility of a mauzadar enabled Khorsing Terang to come in to contact with a large number of people and develop good rapport with them which helped immensely later in his political career.

His role in early Karbi Politics:

The first election to the Provincial Legislature for Assam as provided under the Government of India Act of 1935 was held in 1937. In that election Khorsing Terang, who was then officiating as a mauzadar contested the election and emerged as victorious by convincingly defeating his rivals Thengkur Sing Ingti and Men Sing Teron and thus became the first MLA from the Mikir Hills tract. This was the beginning of his uninterrupted tenure as the MLA from the Mikir Hills tract as thereafter he continued to be elected to the legislature for three consecutive terms from 1937 to 1952. When the district was granted a district council under the 6th Schedule of the constitution, Khorsing Terang was elected as the first CEM of the Mikir Hills District Council, a responsibility which he held till his death in 1955.

When the then Governor of Assam, Sir Robert Neil Reid visited the Mikir Hills tract in 1940, Khorsing Terang being the incumbent MLA from the area, was one of the main organizers of the felicitation programme organized in honour of the Governor at

Mohangdijua. On this occasion, Khorsing Terang along with Semson Sing Ingti and Song Bey submitted a memorandum to the Governor on behalf of the Karbi people highlighting the deplorable conditions of the Karbi people and urging him to take initiative for the amelioration of the same. Again, he was one of the most important members of the Karbi delegation which made a visit to Sir Andrew Claw who succeeded Sir Robert Neil Reid as the Governor of Assam when the Governor visited to Dengaon of the Mikir Hills tract with his wife in the last part of January 1943. On this occasion, Khorsing Terang along with Semson Sing Ingti and others Karbi leaders submitted a memorandum to the Governor on behalf of the Karbi people demanding the creation of a separate district for the tribe. Khorsing Terang was also the member of another delegation of the Karbi Adarbar leaders to the same Governor when the later visited Lanka on 1st march 1947 and submitted a memorandum seeking recognition of the Karbi Adabrabr as the representative of the Karbi people. He was also one of the most important founders of the Karbi Adarbar, the first national organization of the Karbis which was formed in 1946, although he did not assume any portfolio of the organization during the initial years of its formation citing personal inconvenience. He however rendered financial support to the Karbi Adarbar and remained one of the main sponsors of the organization rendering his full cooperation whenever required. Whenever, Semson Sing Ingti had to visit either Shillong or Delhi in pursuance of the Karbi demand for a separate district and special constitutional safeguards for the Karbis, Khorsing Terang was one of the main financiers of such a tour.³⁶ After the country's independence, he accepted the responsibility of the Karbi Adarbar as he was elected as the president of the organization in 1951. When the Bordoloi Sub-Committee visited the Mikir Hills tract to secure the opinion of the Karbis for the future constitutional set up of the country, Khorsing Terang being the sitting MLA from the Mikir Hills tract was inducted in the Sub-Committee as the co-opted member from the Mikir Hills tract. Here, he along with Semson Sing Ingti was able to convince the Bordoloi-Sub-Committee about the urgent need of special protection of the Karbis in the new constitution of the independent India. Semson Sing Ingti could not see the materialization of his vision as he expired in 1948, but Khorsing Terang saw the independence of the country and the formation of the district council for the Karbis. He wholeheartedly backed the proposal of the Sub-Committee of the Constituent Assembly. Moreover, when ultimately a district boundary commission was created to demarcate the boundary of

the would be created district for the Karbis , Khorsing Terlang along with the other prominent Karbi leaders were inducted in the commission to bring an amicable solution of the different boundary related issues with the bordering districts. In this commission also, Khrosing Terang along with the other Karbi leaders played a decisive role in demarcating the boundary of the present Karbri Anglong district. Even when the United Mikir and North Cachar Hills district was ultimately created on 17th November 1951, Khorsing Terang played the most important role in selecting Diphu as the headquarter of the newly created district.³⁷ Khorsing Terang was also appointed as one of the most important members of the Tribal Advisory Council for Mikir Hills formed in 1951 which worked as the provisional District Council for Mikir Hills till a full fledged elected District Council assumed charged on 23rd June 1952. In the mean time the election for the 12 seats of the first Mikir Hills District Council was held in 1952 and Khrosing Terang who was at that time the MLA from the Mikir Hills reserved seat contested the District Council election from Borjan-Sarupothar seat on a Karbi Adarbar ticket and was elected to the District Council as MDC. When the District Council was formally inaugurated by the then Chief Minister of Assam, Bimola Prosad Chaliha on 23rd June 1952, Khorsing Terang was chosen as the first CEM of the Mikir Hills District Council by the elected MDCs. As the first CEM he was instrumental in laying the foundation of the developmental activities of the newly created district for the Karbis. But before he could put the newly created District Council in to a firm footing, Khorsing Terang, the most powerful of that period expired prematurely on 28th November, 1955 at Shillong, the then capital of undivided Assam where he went to attend the winter session of the Assam Assembly. He died at Shillong Civil Hospital after fighting for life for seven days due to Typhoid and Pneumonia.

It is thus clear that Khorsing Terang emerged from the first generation of the Karbi middle class. He along with Semson Sing Ingti played the most important role in the creation of a district for the Karbis and also a district council for the tribe. Though Semson Sing Ingit did not live to see the fulfillment of his vision, Khorsing Terang had the privilege to lead the first Mikir Hills District Council as its first CEM and thereby led the newly created district towards a new direction.

IV.IX.IV. Nihang Rongphar:

Among the first generation of the Karbi political leaders who were able to carve out distinct places for themselves in the political arena of the of Karbi Anglong (earlier Mikir Hills) district, Nihang Rongphar was found to have occupied an important place. He was the first MLA from the West Mikir Hills reserved seat which was created in 1952 and also was the second CEM of the then Mikir Hills district council. He was also one of the main founders of the Karbi-Adarbar, the first national organization of the Karbis formed by the first generation of the Karbi middle class in 1946.

Nihang Rongphar was born in 1920 at a place called, 'Klobor' situated in the Western Part of the present Karbi Anglong district. His father Jobaram Rongphar was a man of modern outlook who realized the importance of modern education for his son. As there was no school in the vicinity, his father sent Nihang Rongphar to Jamunamukh (presently at Nagaon district of Assam) for education where he had his early schooling. He was later admitted to Nowgong(now Nagaon) Government High School from where he passed his matriculation in first division in 1939 after which he enrolled himself at Nowgong College from where he passed his IA examination. Later, he got himself enrolled at the prestigious Cotton College, Guwahati for higher education. At that time, he was one of the very few Karbi students who could go up to the college level of education as basic education and not to speak about higher education was still a far cry for a common Karbi. Nihang Rongphar appeared in B.A final examination from Cotton College in 1943 but he could not pass the exam and returned home without securing the university degree.

His role in Karbi Politics:

Nihang Rongphar was one of the founders of the Karbi Adarbar, the first national organization of the Karbis formed by the first generation of the Karbi middle class. It was a time when a new awakening among the educated sections of the Karbis started to take shape under the leadership of Semson Sing Ingti which ultimately culminated

in to the formation of the Karbi-Adarbar in 1946. As an educated Karbi youth of the time, Nihang Rongphar actively associated himself with the formation of the Karbi-Adarbar when it was formally constituted at a mass meeting at Havaipur, near Lanka in 1946. He soon emerged as one of the most promising leaders of the organization which was at that time spearheading the Karbi movement for the creation of a separate district for the tribe. His important position in the hierarchy of the Karbi Adarbar could be well realized from the fact that he was chosen as the Secretary of the organization in 1948 just after the sudden demise of Semson Sing Ingti, the founder secretary and the guiding force of the organization. This fact is a clear evidence of the confidence that the Karbi people had on the ability of Nihang Rongphar to lead them at the crucial situation arising in the aftermath of the sudden death of Semson Sing Ingti. Later, after the independence of the country, when the Tribal advisory Council was formed by the government for the hill areas including in the Mikir Hills, Nihang Rongphar was appointed as one of the most important members of the Tribal Advisory Council for Mikir Hills formed in 1951 which worked as the provisional District Council for Mikir Hills till a full fledged elected District Council assumed charge on 23rd June 1952. In the mean time, on the eve of the first general election to the Assam Legislative Assembly in the post independence period, two legislative constituencies, namely, West Mikir Hills and East Mikir Hills were created for the Mikir Hills sub division of the then United Mikir and N.C. Hills district. Earlier, the entire Mikir Hills tract was represented by a single legislative assembly constituency created as per the Government of India Act of 1935 and Khorsing Terang was representing the particular seat from its very inception. The first general election to the Assam Legislative Assembly in the post independence period was held on 27th March 1952 where Nihang Rongphar was given the Congress ticket for the newly created Mikir Hills West MLA constituency. He got elected to the Assembly from the same seat by defeating his nearest rival Riswel Teron (Independent)³⁸ and thus became the second MLA from the Karbi community after Khorsing Terang who was then elected to the legislature from the Mikir Hills East MLA constituency. At the same time he was also elected unopposed to the first Mikir Hills District Council on a Karbi Adarbar ticket and became an MDC. After the sudden demise of Khorsing Terang, the first CEM of the Mikir Hills District Council in 1955, Nihang Rongphar was elected as the CEM on 16th December 1955 and thus he became the second CEM of the of the Mikir Hills District Council, a

position which he held only for around six months as he was forced to resign from his post on 28th May 1956 following his differences with some of the MDCs. In the second election to the Mikir Hills District Council held in 1957, Nihang Rongphar was again elected to the District Council as MDC and was inducted as an Executive Member (EM) in the EC of CEM Chatra Sing Teron. But after Chatra Sing Teron's elevation as a Minister in Bishnuram Medhi's Cabinet, Nihang Rongphar was again elected as the CEM of the Mikir Hills District Council on 26th June 1957. However, this time again he was forced to resign from the post on 2nd December 1957 due to differences with Soi Soi Terang, one of the most powerful MDCs at that time. In the midst of all these political upheavals in his life, Nihang Rongphar suddenly expired in May 1958 at a very young age of 38, while he was still a member of the Mikir Hills District Council.

IV.IX.V. **Song Bey:**

Song Bey was one of the most prominent first generation of the Karbi leaders who contributed immensely towards the cause of his tribe without actually receiving much in return. A close associate of Semson Sing Ingti, the father of the Karbi nationalism, Song Bey was one of the prime figures behind the formation of the Karbi Adarbar, the first national organization of the Karbis formed by the Karbi middle class in 1946. However, despite his immense contribution towards the creation of a separate district for the Karbis he failed miserably in the electoral politics of the district which commenced just in the aftermath of the district creation.

Song Bey was born at Golaghat in 1905. His father Sar Bey expired when Song Bey was still very young. A self made man, Song Bey started his educational career at Golaghat Mission School where he studied up to class IX (9th standard) after which he had to abandon studies due to financial constraints. He got converted in to Christianity at Golaghat. He started his professional career as a compounder at the Golaghat dispensary. Later, he was appointed as a Dubhashi (interpreting clerk) at the Golaghat SDO office and during this period he came in close contact with Thengkur Sing Ingti and his son Semson Sing Ingti, both of whom later became harbingers of the

Renaissance in Karbi society. In 1937, Song Bey married Manai Timungpi of Sikari village in Bamoni Matholghat of Nowgong district and was blessed with seven children, three sons and four daughters. Song Bey lived a ripe life not only to see the birth of a district for the Karbis but also the transformation of the district from infancy to adulthood.

His role in Karbi Politics:

Song Bey was the right hand man of Semson Sing Ingti, the architect of the modern Karbi Anglong district and the father of the Karbi nationality. He along with Semson Sing Ingti played a leading role in submitting a memorandum to the then Governor of Assam, Sir Robert Neil Reid who undertook a visit to the Mikir Hills tract in 1940. Again, he was one of the most important members of the subsequent Karbi delegations which made visits to Sir Andrew Claw who succeeded Sir Robert Neil Reid as the Governor of Assam when the Governor visited Dengaon of the Mikir Hills tract with his wife in the last part of January 1943 and again Lanka of Nowgong district on 1st march 1947 and submitted a memorandums seeking special safeguards for the Karbis. In the formation of the Karbi Adarbar, Song Bey along with Semson Sing Ingit played the most crucial role. In fact the organization came in to being as a result of a serious discussions that took place among Thengkur Sing Ingti, his son Semson Sing Ingti and Song Bey at the Golaghat residence of Thengkur Sing Ingti in 1945.³⁹ When the organization was formally launched in a mass meeting at Havaipur in 1946, Song Bey became one of the founding executive committee members of the Karbi Adarbar and spearheaded the separate district movement for the Karbis. He was also one of the important members of the Karbi delegation that gave evidence before the Bordoloi Sub-Committee. He was appointed as a member of the boundary determination committee formed for demarcating the boundary of the district that was to be created for the Karbis. Even after the creation of the United Mikir and NC Hills district in 1951, Song Bey along with Khorsing Terang were instrumental in selecting Diphu as the headquarter of the newly created district.

In the first general election to the state legislature that took place after the independence of the country, Song Bey contested the election as an independent candidate from the Mikir Hills East MLA constituency against the sitting MLA and Indian National Congress (INC) candidate Khorsing Terang and was defeated in the election.⁴⁰ In 1953, Song Bey was elected as the president of the Karbi Adarbar, a position which he occupied till 1964. In the second general election to the Mikir Hills District Council held in 1957, he contested the election from Duar Bagori MDC constituency as a Karbi Adarbar candidate and was defeated in the hands of Raidang Ingti, an independent candidate. Likewise, in the third general election to the District Council, Song Bey again contested from the East Naga-Rengma MDC constituency and was defeated in the hands of Debendra Shyam, an independent candidate. It can therefore be said that despite his significant role in the formation of the Karbi Adarbar and in the creation of a district for the Karbis and a District Council for the tribe, he failed miserably in the electoral politics of the district. Perhaps, unlike the other leaders of his time he was not shrewd enough to fit himself in the competitive and sometimes dirty world of electoral politics. Song Bey died at his Diphu residence on 4th July 1988, at a ripe age of 83.

IV.IX.VI. **David Long Enghee:**

David Long Enghee was another Karbi middle class leader who played an important role in the formation of a district for the tribe. A strict disciplinarian and a man known for his English way of living, David Long Enghee was one of the founders of the Karbi Adarbar the first national organization of the Karbis which spearheaded the Karbi movement for a separate district for the tribe. He was the first person from the Karbi community to be appointed as a TTE in the Railway Department under the British Government.

David Long Enghee was born in 1901 at Jirikinding falling under the Hamren Sub-division of the present Karbi Anglong district. His father's name was Renghang Enghee who along with his entire family later migrated to another Karbi village called Longklam presently situated in the Dima Hasao district of Assam. When David Long

Enghee was still very young, he was taken to Haflong by one of his relatives and was placed at the house of the British SDO, Haflong as a domestic help. The kind British officer enrolled David Long in the Haflong Mission School where he studied up to class V(5th standard). The British SDO while leaving India in 1922 helped David Long Enghee to get a job in the Railway Department as a TTE, a job from which he ultimately resigned in 1933. After his resignation from the service, David Long Enghee went to Dawaki of the then Khasi and Jaintia Hills district for greener pasture where he got married with a Khasi girl named, Bilimai Khonglah. He later returned with his family to Panimur , presently in Dima Hasao district and started orange cultivation there. However, after the death of his wife he left Panimur and established a new village at Amreng, presently in Hamren sub- division of Karbi Anglong district. At Amreng, he again married a Bengali girl named, Nilavati Paul, the daughter of Subodh Chandra Paul, the sarkari gaonbura of Lumding.

His role in Karbi Politics:

David Long Enghee was one of the founders of the Karbi Adarbar formed in 1946. When the organization was formally launched in a mass meeting at Havaipur in 1946, David Long Enghee was elected as one of the founder executive members of the organization along with the other leading Karbi personalities of the time. He was one of the important members of the Karbi Adarbar delegation that submitted a memorandum to Sir Andrew Claw, the then Governor of Assam on 1st March 1947 at Lanka where the Governor was on an official visit. He was also one of the important members of the Karbi delegation that gave evidence before the Bordoloi Sub-Committee formed for studying the problems of the hill tribes of the North East India. He along with his other colleagues strongly put forward the Karbi demand for special safeguard for the tribe in the new constitutional order of the independent India. David Long Enghee was also appointed as a member of the boundary determination committee formed for demarcating the boundary of the district that was to be created for the Karbis. After the independence of the country, when the Tribal Advisory Council was constituted by the government for the hill areas including in the Mikir Hills, David Long Enghee being a prominent member of the Karbi Adarbar was appointed as one of the members of the Tribal Advisory Council for Mikir Hills

formed in 1951. However, after the formation of the Mikir Hills District Council, David Long Enghee was sidelined by the then Karbi Adarbar leadership and he was never given the party ticket during the subsequent elections in the district. When the hill state movement was launched in the district under the banner of the APHLC, David Long Enghee associated himself with the hill state movement and became a prominent leader of the APHLC in the district. In 1971, he unsuccessfully contested the district council election from the Amreng MDC constituency as an independent candidate. But despite set back in his political career in the aftermath of the creation of the district, he continued his social work for the development of the Karbis such as establishment of schools, development of road communication, health and sanitation etc. throughout his lifetime. He breathed his last on 23rd January 1993, at a very ripe age of 93 years.

IV.IX.VII. **Harsing Ingti ‘Habe’:**

Harsing Ingti ‘Habe’, the founder Assistant Secretary of the Karbi Adabarbar, the first national organization of the Karbis belonged to a family of ‘Habe’ or Karbi traditional chieftain. The traditional nobles and their family members were greatly respected and obeyed by the common Karbis of that time. In the Karbi traditional political system, the head of the ‘Havar’(Region) is called ‘Habe’. He is appointed by ‘Lindokpo’(traditional Karbi King) to carry out the social administration of the ‘Havar’ on his behalf. The ‘Habe’ is a person who is well conversant with the customary laws and is the interpreter and custodian of the customs and traditions of the Karbi tribe.⁴¹ It is thus clear that because his background of from a family of Karbi traditional chieftain, Harsing Ingti, Habe wielded immense respect and command over his fellow tribes of the time. Harsing Ingti was born in a family of traditional Karbi chieftain at Tika Hills presently in Hamren Sub-division of Karbi Anglong district. He had his early education at Tika Hills which at that time emerged as an education hub in the entire Mikir Hills tract due to the activities of the Baptist missionaries in the area.

His role in Karbi Politics:

Harsing Ingti 'Habe' was one of the most important founders of the Karbi Adarbar, the first national organization of the Karbis formed by the first generation of the Karbi middle class. He actively took part in the mass meeting which was organized at Kothalguri in 1945 to discuss the formation of a national organization of the Karbis. When Karbi Adarbar, the first national organization of the Karbis was formed in a meeting at Havaipur in 1946, Harsing Ingti was chosen as the founder Assistant Secretary of the organization. The founder secretary of the organization was Semson Sing Ingti, who is considered as the father of the Karbi nationalism. Harsing Ingti's election as the assistant of Semson Sing Ingti in the Karbi Adarbar signifies the clout he enjoyed among his contemporary Karbi nationalist leaders. As the Assistant Secretary of the organization, he extended his full cooperation to Semson Sing Ingti and other prominent leaders of the organization in the movement for the creation of a district for the Karbis. When the Bordoloi Sub-Committee was formed to suggest measures for the constitutional safeguards for the hill tribes of Assam, Harsing Ingti was an important part of the Karbi Adarbar delegation that gave evidence before the Sub-Committee. He along with his other colleagues strongly put forwarded the Karbi demand for special safeguards for the tribe in the new constitutional order of the independent India. After the independence of the country, when the Tribal advisory Council was constituted by the government for the hill areas including in the Mikir Hills, Harsing Ingti 'Habe' was appointed as one of the members of the Tribal Advisory Council for Mikir Hills formed in 1951 which worked as the provisional District Council for Mikir Hills till a full fledged elected District Council assumed charge. Later, when the first general election to the newly created Mikir Hills District Council was held in 1952, Harsing Ingti was elected to the District Council as an MDC on a Karbi Adarbar ticket and was inducted in first EC of the Mikir Hills District Council as EM under the leadership of CEM Khorsing Terang. Significantly, Khorsing Terang, the first CEM of the Mikir Hills District Council inducted only two MDCs, namely, Harsing Ingti and Soi Soi Terang as EMs in his first EC and Harsing Ingti was given the important portfolio of Education in the first EC. Again, in the second election to the Mikir Hills District Council held in 1957, Harsing Ingti was elected as MDC on a Karbi Adarbar ticket and was elected as the Deputy Chairman of the Mikir Hills District Council. When Nihang Rongphar, the then CEM was forced

to resign from his post by some dissatisfied MDCs, Harsing Ingti and Chatra Sing Teron emerged as the forerunner for the post of the CEM. But ultimately, Harsing Ingti withdrew from the race in favor of Chatra Sing Teron. He was a soft spoken person. Harsing Ingti breathed his last in 1969.

IV.X. Conclusion:

The above study has made it amply clear that the the Karbi Adarbar played the most important role in the formation of a separate district for the Karbis and securing a District Council for the tribe. The organization was formed by the first generation of the Karbi middle class as the family and professional background and the role of the founders of the Karbi Adarbar proves beyond doubt that they emerged from the Karbi Middle class. With the formation of the Karbi Adarbar, the Karbi aspiration for a separate district of its own received the form of a systematic movement under the leadership of the first generation of the Karbi middle class. Karbi-Adarbar, became the sole mouth piece of the Karbis in its bargaining with the Britishers and later with the Constituent Assembly for securing maximum political benefits for the Karbis. It was because of the efficient and farsighted leadership of the Karbi Adarbar, an organization of the Karbi middle class, the Karbis were bestowed not only with a district of their own but also a special protection under the 6th Schedule of the Indian Constitution. In the words of Dr. Dhrubajyoti Bora, the famous social scientist of Assam, “Karbi Adarbar a mainly nationalistic organization led by the middle class was able to unite the whole people and as a result the Karbi people won the right of autonomous administration in the form of a district and a District Council under the Sixth Schedule.”⁴² The observation has been found to be completely true in our study.

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