

# Khasi Folklore

Khasi folklore can best be encountered through its oral literature, material culture, customs and performing arts. A story-telling people, the Khasi-Jaiñtia have a large stock of narratives they share while resting in the paddy fields, at home around the hearth, in buses and taxis (which are also shared), in community-based events and markets.



*An open market stall in Shillong*



*Agricultural workers take a break, Ri Bhoi*

A *myllung* or poet would sing a ballad, a *Lyngdoh* or priest would perform a sacred story, a storyteller would play the *muin*, a small musical instrument made of a piece of bamboo to add drama to her story, and the masked character called *jabulo* would visit houses to collect a fistful of rice grains to feed the needy.

Shillong, the capital of the state of Meghalaya in North-East India, bustles with city actions. Here story-telling is sustained through the media and the internet while music blares from CD shops. Communications take place in several languages and dialects, in shops selling branded clothes and in cinema halls, on crowded pavements and in churches, in offices and corner tea shops.

These places also generate their own folklore, showing a combination of Khasi-Jaiñtia and other cultures. This is reflected in performance. The Nongkrem dance, for example, is regarded as the most traditional of performances but there is no avoiding the touristy elements of the spectacle today. However, the same festival truly represents the tribe for many of its members, for instance in the way in which matriliney is presented in the dance, in the costume and jewelry worn by the dancers and the ceremonies associated with the *iing sad* or ceremonial house.



*A Khasi man collects rice dressed as Jabulo*



*Khasi women separating cotton from the seeds (ginning) accompanied by the Muin, a small bamboo instrument played with the mouth*



*The iing sad, a ceremonial house*

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