

# DOMBAH: Where the Hills Rest



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**Photographs:** Daryl Khyriem/NESFAS

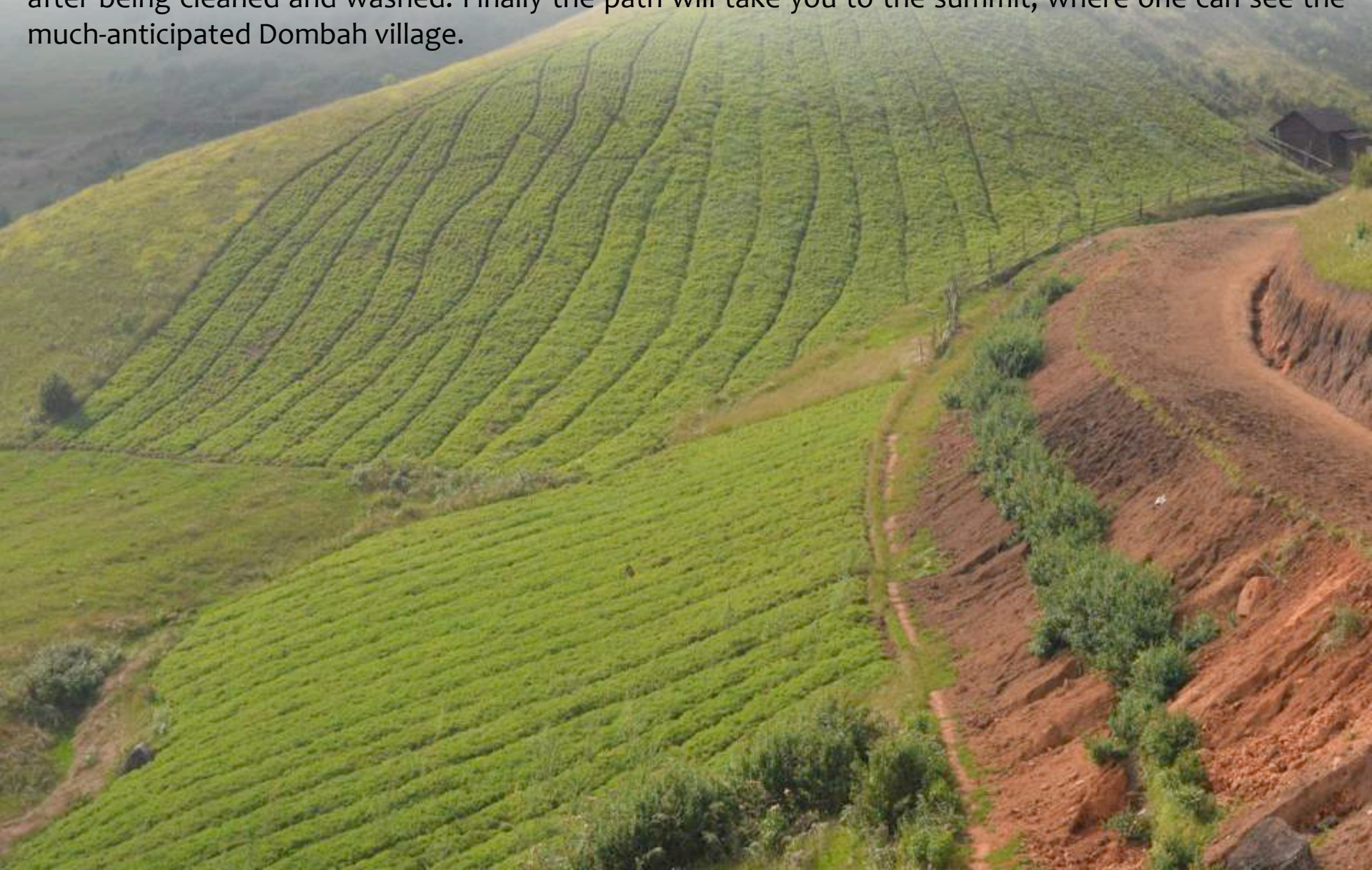
Dombah village lies tucked between Mawthadaraishan Peak and Kyllang Mountain, and is a world of its own. Framed by undulating hills and endless green valleys, this is “a view of heaven itself,” according to Kong Theidoris Rapsang, a teacher in the lower primary school of Dombah.



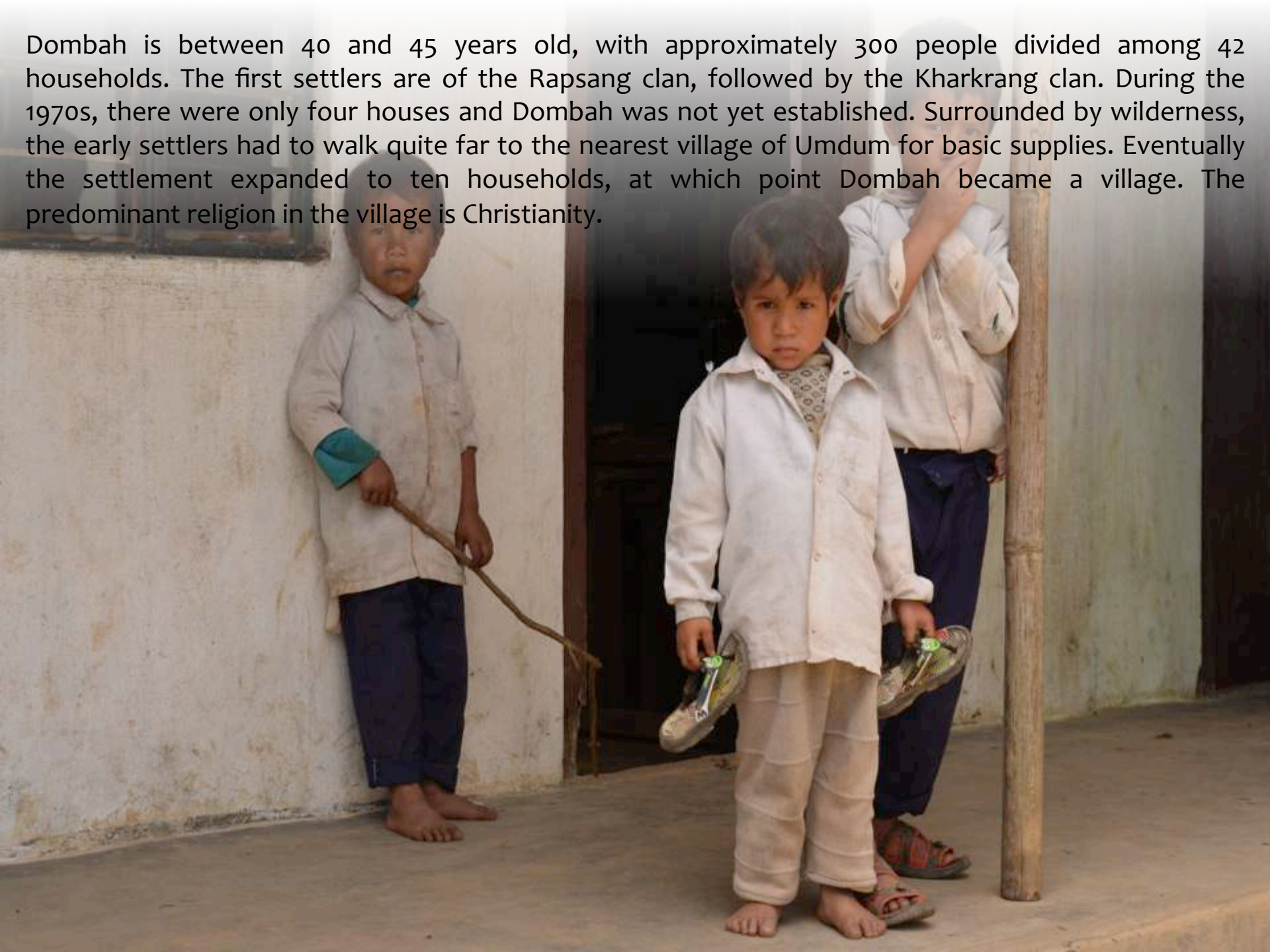
Dombah means *lum uba heh* in Khasi or “big mountain”, as any visit here will make evident. Traveling to the village, after many twists and turns, the road widens to reveal a beautiful valley. On the left, the Kynshi River glitters and winds through the valley, crisscrossing the smooth hills, passing through a bridge and then disappearing behind the green slopes.



The start of the hiking journey to Dombah is marked by crossing a small bridge over a stream, followed by a 30-minute strenuous but beautiful climb up the hillside. Along the path, one can see patches of yam and *sohphlang* (*Flemingia vestita*) fields. Sohphlang is a nitrogen-fixing tuber that is eaten raw after being cleaned and washed. Finally the path will take you to the summit, where one can see the much-anticipated Dombah village.



Dombah is between 40 and 45 years old, with approximately 300 people divided among 42 households. The first settlers are of the Rapsang clan, followed by the Kharkrang clan. During the 1970s, there were only four houses and Dombah was not yet established. Surrounded by wilderness, the early settlers had to walk quite far to the nearest village of Umdum for basic supplies. Eventually the settlement expanded to ten households, at which point Dombah became a village. The predominant religion in the village is Christianity.



From the hills of Dombah, Miss Rapsang explains that one can see the outlines of the Himalayas, the Brahmaputra Bridge, and on a clear day, even the gorgeous Brahmaputra River. Other than the beautiful view, Dombah is well known for sohphlang. The pink flowers and green leaves of the plant carpet most of the fields in Dombah. The village also produces a medicinal juice from the *sohphi* fruit, a regional fruit that is either sweet or sour, depending on the variety. Corn, yam and sweet potato are also harvested in Dombah according to the seasons.




Mawthadraishan Peak, located 10 km from Dombah, is a must-see for anyone near Dombah. A unique feature of the peak is a depression at the top with about seven or eight fish ponds of considerable size. The summit offers a panoramic view of the plains of Assam, and on clear days, the distant Himalayas. The districts of Garo Hills, Khasi Hills and part of Bangladesh are part of the panoramic views of Mawthadraishan Peak.



## What to expect on a trip to Dombah:

- Local songs and tales (*Phawar*) accompanied by traditional instruments
- Visit to farms and the school garden
- Display of agricultural tools and seeds
- Traditional dance
- Local food

For those planning to visit Dombah, evenings in November become very chilly (around 17° C), and warm clothes are advised.



**WHERE:** Village Dombah, Mawthadraishan, West Khasi Hills District, Meghalaya

**DISTANCE:** 73 km from Shillong by car

**TRAVEL TIME:** 2 hours each way by car, 30 minutes walking

**HIGHLIGHT:** The unparalleled view

**BE PREPARED FOR:** A strenuous walk including steep ascents and descents. Not suitable for people with heart conditions or asthma.