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Revisiting Mizo Heroes



Mizo History Association
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The main objective of this journal is to function as a mode of information and guidance for the scholars, researchers and historians and to provide a medium of exchange of ideas in Mizo history.

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Editor

Rohmingmawii

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EDITORIAL

Mizo Historical Association (MHA) is one of the oldest and vibrant academic organizations in Mizoram. The establishment of the North East India History Association (NEIHA) in 1979 served as an eye-opener and encouragement to initiate the formation of a History Association to promote all sorts of historical inquiries in Mizoram. With this background, Mizo History Association was formed on September 23, 1980 in the office chamber of Darchhawna, the then Officer-on-Special Duty, NEHU, Mizoram Campus, along with few members of Mizo historians. The founder President was Prof. Darchhawna while Mr. Lalrimawia, the then Lecturer and Head of Department of History, Pachhunga University College, Aizawl was appointed as General Secretary. It was a good move initiated by the senior members and their persistence that Mizo History Association was born and is still alive and active. We owe them a lot.

The main objective of the association is the promotion and encouragement of the scientific study, systematic writing, analysis and research of the history of the Mizos, holding of conferences, seminars and symposiums connected with scholarly discussions for further publication of journals for wider readers and other works of the Association. The Association was registered with No. SR 1 of 1981 under the Society Registration Act XXI of 1860 on January 23, 1981. The members of MHA are composed of historians, researchers and scholars from various disciplines across the country. The first General election cum General Conference was held on October 25, 1980 at Mizoram State Library Hall, Aizawl. The first annual session was held at Aizawl Club between

June 18-19, 1981. Mr F. Malsawma, the then Education Minister, Mizoram (former Lecturer, Department of Political Science, Pachhunga University College) graced the occasion as the chief guest.

Ever since its inception in 1981, the MHA continued to conduct annual seminars/conferences based on various selected themes open to the Association members. The Executive Committee of MHA chose relevant topic for each year seminar. The theme covered in these annual seminars has been published for wider readers for scholars, students and general readers in a journal- *Historical Journal Mizoram* which has been a platform for those researching on Mizo history and society. Recently, Mizo history was introduced in the syllabus of Mizoram University first semester B.A (Bachelor of Arts). *Historical Journal Mizoram* serves good materials for students and researchers as their study material, and as a general information to anyone interested on the subject.

The last annual seminar was organized between 2nd-3rd December 2015 at Govt. Hrangbana College, Aizawl, Mizoram. A number of thinkers, researchers and students participated and presented research papers on the theme '*Revisiting Mizo customs and Ceremonies*'. The seminar was inaugurated by Mr. R. Romawia, Hon'ble Minister of Higher & Technical Education, Government of Mizoram. In his keynote address, the Minister emphasizes the importance of enlarging the scope of Mizo history to cover the history of various regional parts in Mizoram.

It is a proud moment for MHA as Prof JV Hluna, Head, Department of History and Vice Principal of Pachhunga University College, the Vice President (2015-2017) and founding figure of Mizo History Association was elected as President of the North East India History Association (NEIHA) XXXVII Session, 2016.

The editorial board would like to thank the Executive Committee Members for entrusting us with the privilege of editing

this volume. We also thank the researchers who contributed their research papers for this volume.

A special thanks go to ICHR, our main donor for their continuous support to MHA which enabled us to organise seminars and publish the Journal every year.

Some of the best selected papers presented in the last annual seminar was scrutinized and selected by the editorial board for the present volume. We are hoping that this journal will provide contributors a platform to share their experiences, researches and observations on Mizo history. We are also hoping that this journal will serve as a space for Mizo historians and scholars to practice, learn, discuss, problematize and think together on what is the Mizo history and culture we want to be writing collectively, and it is about the collective difference we all can make by doing so.

Customs and ceremonies are indeed a very important topic since every community in this world has their respective customs and ceremonies. It may differ from place to place and from one community to another community and they might also share certain elements as well. Some sociologists and anthropologists studied customs and ceremonies in relation to its function and structure while some of them see it as a mechanism to control social order in a community or societal lives. The Mizo since time immemorial has customs and ceremonies which was orally held and passed down from generation to generation. No one knows when and how did it evolve. We can only speculate that it evolved out of a particular historical, social and cultural situation. Elders, Chiefs and his council were the guardian of customs and ceremonies. They were not only responsible that customs and ceremonies were observed and respected by community members, but also handed down to future generations. Customs and ceremonies acted as a constitution for their everyday lives. It is also important to remember that customs and ceremonies are not static but changing from time to time and from place to place. The

essay presented in this journal focused mostly of indigenous customs and ceremonies of the Mizo.

Although, customs and ceremonies had been orally held in pre-colonial period, it was the colonialists and Christian missionaries who began the process of recording it. Particularly from the second half of 19th century, colonial writers and Christian missionaries began to collect sample of Mizo language and other cultural practices. A colonial surveyor Francis Buchanan (1762-1829) proposes customs and ceremonies especially religion and language being the marker of tribal identity in the North East India and Burma. His successors followed his trend including those who served in the 'Lushai Hills' like T.H Lewin, J.Shakespear, AG McCall and N.E Parry. The British officers at that time were ordered by higher authorities to collect sample of customs and ceremonies for three important reasons.

1. *Creating knowledge for administrative purpose:* To be able to rule effectively, the ruler must know the culture, history, attitude, social condition and customs and ceremonies of the ruled.
2. *Scholarly inquisitiveness:* Various scholarships (ethnography, folklore, anthropology etc.) were already developed in the 19th century Europe. These scholars need a place to testify their theoretical stand. Thus, people in oral culture become their subject of investigation. Some of the colonial administrators in Lushai Hills were members of scholarly organizations such as Asiatic Society of Bengal, Royal Geographical Society of London Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland and Folklore. J.Shakepear, R.G Woodthorpe, J.P Mills, N.E Parry, H.N.C Stevenson, McDonald, Tanner, Badley and A. Campbell contributes to many important journals in Britain.
3. *Entertaining the European audience:* The period between 18th century and 19th century was a period of European

adventurers to travel to different part of the world. Enormous amount of travel books and customs and ceremonies were produced. People were curious about stories of other continent including their culture, customs and traditions. The Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal (1803) requested all frontier British officers to write on 'strange' customs and ceremonies practiced by tribals in India.

When the British began to rule the Lushai Hills, they were perplexed that various types of customary laws existed almost in every villages. The British administrative system, on the other hand, was based on a centralized political system. Eventually, they considered Mizo customary law as 'disorder'. When N.E Parry took charge of Superintendent of Lushai Hills, he drafted a written form of Mizo Customary Law which was published in 1927. While drafting, N.E Parry consulted 60 Mizo chiefs mostly among Lusei Chiefs. Women, of course, were not among Parry's informants that probably will intrigue gender historians of Mizoram. The real question here is why N.E Parry, who represented the country which has no written constitution bother so much about compiling Mizo customary law? Will it serve the interest of the Mizo or the colonizers? Was it truly a Mizo customary law or colonial-Mizo customary law? We have no answers to these questions. One thing that is so certain is that Mizo customary laws was textualized to serve the colonial interest in two ways- first as a rule of law (cheap administrative systems to save financial burdens) whenever found necessary, secondly as an ethnographic text.

There are 15 essays contained in this journal which are written based on theoretical, conceptual as well as empirical findings. All of them are written by well known faculty members from different colleges and research scholars from Mizoram University. The articles covered various topics

including, religion, festivals, marriage system, weaving and arts, diseases, burial system, colonialism, forestry and artillery. We would like to remind the readers that this journal is by no means comprehensive or exhaustive on the history of Mizo customs' and ceremonies. Still we are hoping that the present journal could be a small direction in further research/debate on Mizo customs' and ceremonies.



BIOGRAPHY AS A SOURCE OF MIZO HISTORY

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The place of biography within the discipline of history has been debated by many historians over the decades. While literary critics have questioned the validity of biographical emphasis on the personal,¹ it is generally accepted that biography is the oldest and one of the most popular ways of writing about historical events. In her book *Biography and History*, Barbara Caine provides a clear case for the study and the importance of individual life history as a genre. She argues that biography is “the one best able to show the great importance of particular locations and circumstances and the multiple layers of historical change and experience”.² This paper does not intend to present a biographical sketch or case study of individual heroes “*Pasaltha*” in Mizo history. Rather, it attempts in brief, to highlight some ways in which the study of Mizo heroes can be useful as sources of history.

The life histories of heroes can be particularly illuminating for the study of movements, migrations, raids,

warfare, inter-clan relations, rivalries etc that existed during their times. Let me illustrate this from the story of *Pasaltha* Vanapa (named after his eldest son Vanchiaua, his real name was Thangzachhinga).³ Vanapa, born around 1785-90 AD⁴ belonged to the sub-clan of Chawngthu Vanchiau. Vanapa achieved his fame as the brave Mizo hero during the chieftainship of popular Sailo chiefs such as Lalsavunga, Vanhnuailiana and Lalkhama. His biography therefore, offers an insight into the world and lives of chieftainship in early Mizo society as well. Vanapa's family first settled at the village of Chief Lallula at Samthang Zopui. Around 1886, Lallula's grandson, Chief Lalsavunga moved to a village at Zawngtah from where he proceeded to Kelsih.

While settling in their new village, the Hualngo clans launched a sudden raid against the village of Lalsavunga, prompting retaliatory action at an opportune time. With his heroes such as Vanapa and others, chief Lalsavunga captured many of the Hualngo clans, placing them in different separate locations under different masters. The location, so named "*Hualngohmun*" exists till the present day. It was in this raid that Vanapa's name and fame emerged for the first time as Lalsavunga's citizen. In 1820, Lalsavunga shifted to Aizawl where the heroic deeds of the chief and his heroes Vanapa, Chawngduma, and Tawkthiala began to spread.

The role of Vanapa in a campaign waged against Zadeng chief in 1825 also sheds light on inter-clan relations that existed between Sailo and Zadeng during his time. Rivalry between the two clans apparently started when Zahau from the East captured Vuttaia, uncle of chief Lalsavunga. Zadeng's refusal to contribute to the ransom meant for the

rescue of Vuttaia resulted in hostility against them. The rivalry reached its peak when Lalsavunga became the chief of Aizawl. Vanapa successfully waged a campaign against Zadeng at Tuahzawl (West). To release their chief Ngura from Sailo captivity, the Zadengs sacrificed their most precious “*Siallam gong*” in addition to countless valuables and bells.

As was the common practice of the day, songs capturing the excitement upon victory in wars marked the occasion. Upon the capture of chief Ngura, the following song honoring the Sailo chief, while expressing contempt for Zadeng was chanted:

*“Highest among the Sailo chiefs was Lalsavunga,
Wearing an iron-wear, miserable is Zadeng’s sonny”.*

*“Seized like a fowl, my dear bonney, on the hands
of Lalsavunga, wouldn’t I look out high and far
as if standing on a tree-top”.⁵*

Studies into the biographies of individual Mizo heroes also enable historians to recollect stories of resistance against colonial rule in the larger colonial history. The establishment of British rule in the Lushai Hills had caused much resistance from the Mizo chiefs, particularly against the British policy of expansion, collection of revenue and imposition of forced labour. Among many, the case of *pasaltha* Hnawncheuva, whose ascendants were of Vanphawng sub-clan is illustrative of this point. Hnawncheuva lived at Ralvawng, the village of chief Vandula which was said to have been inhabited by many hunter heroes. Vandula’s wife was Ropuiliani, the Mizo chieftainess known for her fierce resistance against

the British rule. She reigned over Denlung village after the death of Dokhara, the son-in-law of Vandula who ruled over the village.⁶

On April 1897, the British government under Captain J.Shakespeare fortified Lungleh where many collections were demanded from the chiefs. Fed up with such demands, Ropuiliani was reported to have remarked “ I’ve had enough of this collector, Its time for a hero to settle the matter.”⁷ Ropuiliani and her son Lalthuama were eventually captured and imprisoned due to their intolerance and resistance of the British rule.

When a message from the Superintendent arrived, ordering the chief of Hnahthial village for provisions and food for troops along the Mat River, the chief found himself in a difficult position. Unwilling to comply yet daring not to refuse, he hatched upon the idea to kill the collector. Dokhara and others gestured Hnawncheuva to handle the matter. He then put a bullet on the collector’s chest. The incident infuriated the Superintendent. He dispatched a search against Hnawncheuva. On being captured, Hnawncheuva was questioned why he killed the Government collector. Exhibiting a great sense of loyalty to his chief and boldness against the adversary, Hnawncheuva’s reply to the Superintendent was firm: “I am a villager having a chief who sends orders which I have to comply with, I shall do the same to anyone who tries to collect tax from my chief”.⁸ As a consequence of his action, Hnawncheuva was deported for life imprisonment at Andaman where other Mizo prisoners were kept.

One can make similar observations in the life of *Pasaltha Khuangchera*. Born in 1850 at Lianphunga's village, Parvatui, he later moved to Kanghmun and Reiek village. Khuangchera is a reputed hero, celebrated for his bravery against enemies and wild beasts, and lauded for being selfless and self sacrificing qualities. During the second military expedition in the Lushai Hills, the Mizo from East and Western side attacked the British troops who were stationing at Changsil. Initially, Khuangchera did not participate in the attack as he was observing "*Naulaihrilh*", a certain off period taken after childbirth which was observed in early Mizo society. The chief was annoyed by the absence of Khuangchera in the attack. He then left for Changsil fort. In the attack that ensued, Ngurbawnga, the contemporary brave man was shot at his right thigh. Unable to move, Khuangchera carried him. Having no more gun powder to fire back the enemy, Khuangchera used his dao/spear to refuse surrender. He was shot after a while and died at the hands of the British soldiers at Changsil fort, a few kilometers from Sairang.⁹

In addition to the above illustrations, the study of individual or collective life stories of heroes also provides a means of gaining insight into the past social conditions and times in which they lived in. Heroes are generally associated with qualities or attributes that Mizo traditional society embraced in high esteem, such as heroism in hunting, gallantry in the face of the enemy, battles, altruism, courage, brevity, diligence, chivalry, humility etc. The spirit of "*Tlawmngaihna*", a term used to denote Mizo "code of morals"¹⁰, was a highly prized virtue that found expression in the lives of Mizo heroes or "*Pasaltha*". Kipgen defines *Pasaltha* as "a brave and manly person" who had shown his

integrity of character by deeds of “*Tlawmngaihna*”.¹¹ Such persons were revered not only in the *Zawlbuk*¹² but they were also respected by the chief and all others in the village. The credit and honour for such persons was symbolized by a special cup of *Zu* (rice beer) called ‘*Taima Zu No*’ or ‘*Huai zu no*’. The chiefs offered such cups of honour to *Pasaltha* on the occasion of special feasts. Rokhuma asserts that in its own sphere, this cup of honour was what the Victoria Cross was with the British soldiers.¹³

What these examples accentuate is the importance and use of biographical materials for the study of history. Narratives of individual life stories help in understanding personalities and events, thus paving the ground for the reconstruction of particular histories. Stories of heroes indeed throw light and offer a glimpse into their fascinating world. By looking at the context and the circumstances that shaped their lives, the study of heroes create the possibility of broadening our understanding of the interplay between the individual and social processes at work in order to produce a coherent historical picture.

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- 12 Male dormitory or bachelors’ quarters in traditional Mizo society.
- 13 Mangkhosat Kipgen, op.cit.



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THEORIZING THE CONCEPT OF MIZO HERO : AN INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVE

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In traditional Mizo society, there were many persons who were regarded as '*pasaltha*' or notable successful hunters who however could not exactly be referred to as a 'hero' in the true sense of modern expression. According to James Dokhuma, "The *pasaltha* is not only a skilled hunter but also one who is claimed to be famous for his prowess in taking heads of the enemies."¹ In fact, a *pasaltha* usually brought several captives may be less than ten. But this depends according to the bravery and strength of the *pasaltha* .

In the pre and colonial period, there may be numerous brave warriors who were not in the limelight or who may have been forgotten, or unrecognized by the society. Some of these brave warriors may not have been popular based on the traditional and modern concept of hero respectively.

There were also others who may not be considered to be brave but to be recognized as a *pasaltha*.

The Tribal Institute, Art & Culture Department, Government of Mizoram has listed more than twenty four 'Mizo Heroes' who were mostly active during the pre-colonial and up to the first decade of the colonial administration of the Mizo Hills.² The regarded Mizo heroes were mostly written by Mizo elders. In most of these writings, no distinctions were made in their description of the *pasaltha*, warrior and *tlawmngai* or *huaisen*. It may be observed that if not all, most writers simply made a *pasaltha* a hero and they somehow took into account such qualities which made him a dynamic person.

However, all *pasaltha* may not be regarded as heroes as they may not all have fulfilled the required qualities. Apart from the *pasaltha*, there were the *mihuaisen* (the brave), *tlawmngai* (or unselfish, perseverance, to endure patiently, to do whatever the circumstances arose, not to hesitate to do or help others, without compulsion and not impulsive) and *hratkhawkheng* (one who do not give up easily or one having the determination to fulfill his objectives by all means). The word '*hratkhawkheng*' has been used in *the Memoirs of Telela* to designate the *pasaltha* in Mizoram politics.³ The *Pasaltha* may also be called *ramvachal*. In this regard, opinion differed among Mizo authors. James Dokhuma stated that the *ramvachal* is also known as *pasaltha*, who usually went to hunt wild animals in the thick forest land.⁴ While others contested that the *ramvachal* is a person who could acquire forest produce for food.⁵ It can be noted that all the essential qualities required to

designate a man as a 'hero' are encompassed in the above mentioned terminologies. So if and when a man was successful in the chase he gradually became famous not only within the village but also beyond his neighbour's villages.

In the pre-colonial Mizo society, it was a common practice amongst parents that upon giving birth a baby boy, the said baby was usually blessed to be a 'great hunter and warrior'. If a woman gave birth to a boy, it was the custom for every households of the village to let every new born baby to hold a *chem* (a Mizo knife/dao). This was to show that the future world belongs to him and that he would also become resourceful to the society. The main objective was to kill as many wild animals and especially to kill as many enemies as possible and to bring home their heads. In this way he would be recognized as *mi huaissen* or brave and perhaps a 'hero'. He would become famous not only in the village but also in far off distance places.

V.L. Siamia, a prominent Mizo historian noted that a brave man is known for his contribution to the society such as "bravely protecting the households during war; ready to aid and help friends during elephant hunts; when the village faced unforeseen calamities especially death."⁶ He further stated that "a *pasaltha* is not only brave but would also persevere in bearing his wounds or tackle any unforeseen matters or danger, is soft in heart and never selfish."⁷

In the olden days, if a person was to be highly regarded he had to fulfill the *sechhun*, (a feast usually with a *sial* or

bison; spear the bison or to strike with a spear)⁸, *khuangchawi* (the name of a Mizo public feast given by a Chief and other well to do family of the village),⁹ *thangchhuah* (the title given to a man who had distinguished himself by killing a certain number of domesticated and wild animals and giving several feasts to the households of the village)¹⁰ and *zaudawh* (a feast which a common household could not fulfill, and after which according to custom had to build or erect a kind of belvedere outside one's house, wide and large extensive opening called *bahzar* - an enclosed verandah with a raised floor at the back of traditional Mizo house). Unless the household fulfilled such feast, they were not allowed to erect such platforms.¹¹ Therefore to be regarded in the society a person had to achieve not only societal fame during his life time but also had to at least one of the above mentioned feasts. Besides, a man should be healthy and strong and should have full determination to achieve the required feasts.

Further, it is to be noted that the position of the *pasaltha* was also closely connected with the Mizo religious belief- to go to *pialral* or to the abode of the death where their souls would rest. There were many steps to go to *pialral*, but all of them cannot not be dealt with or cited in this paper. The most common belief was that if a man could kill a person or his adversary it was strongly believed that the guardian of the *mithi khua* (abode of the death) named *Pu Pawla* (the guardian of the gate of *pialral*) would immediately allow him to pass the gate. It is also to be noted that the soul of the deceased would follow the concerned person who had killed him and he automatically became his servant in the spiritual world. Since this was the case the *mi huaisen* or brave and *mi- hratkhawkheng* or one who would never

surrender would always make an attempt to kill at least one or two persons during his life time. In this context, a person may not be necessarily be a *pasaltha* unless he killed a man or warrior during his life time. Also such a person may not be necessarily be a regarded as a hero.

It was strongly believed that if a person killed an enemy and chanted a *bawh hla* (the chant or cry raised by warriors after returning from a successful raid) three times over the body of the deceased and also performed the required ritual i.e., *aih* (*aih* or *ai*: to make sacrifice with domesticated animal and perform a ceremony for killing the enemies or foe during war or annihilation) he would certainly have gained spiritual benefit. It was also strongly believed that the slayer would be protected from evil and from any consequences during his life time.¹² Also this was done with a view to getting the spirit of the slain into the power of the slayer after death.¹³

If it was celebrated with a feast, then the person who had killed an enemy even after death would be welcomed in the spirit world by the spirit of whom he had killed to the abode of the death.¹⁴ Then the spirit of such person he had killed, as mentioned above, would become his servant and so forth in the *mitthi khua* (the abode of the spirit of the death). Here it may be noted as it was more or less to have access to the *pialral* where the souls of all the persons he had killed would welcome his soul with great pomp and reverence hence, he had to fulfill certain objectives for the prospects of after- life.

The Pawis, one of the tribes of the Mizos living in the south hills made frequent raids beyond the frontier and usually brought back slaves. Robuanga & Vanlalpara stated that these young slaves were killed during the *Sechhun - Khuangchhaw* day in order to show their prowess and greatness.¹⁵ If not killed on such occasion the younger slaves were killed along with the bison and their blood were sprinkled on the stone that was to be erected.¹⁶ They believed that by doing so the erected stone would last long.¹⁷ But as this killing was done in groups and not killed during war or fights against their adversaries such persons who killed slaves for such occasions may not be regarded as *huaisen* or brave or hero in the context of modern perception.

According to Jehova Malsawma (commonly known as J.Malsawma) "A person who killed women and children cannot be considered to be a brave man. He would not shift his stand or change his stand, but would bravely confront it. Bravery is more regarded than other designations."¹⁸ There are also other terms like *tawrawt* (having a strong aim, rough, cruelty or cruel aim), *luhlul* (obstinate, stubborn and unyielding) and *tuarchhel* (to be patient, uncomplaining, unyielding etc. no offensive but defensive), but such terms cannot separately or independently be designated under the term 'hero'. Perhaps they may be put under the term *huaisen* or brave.

Among Mizos, there were also persons who were designated *mi -hratkhawkheng* (one who would not give up or never surrender) or patriots, in a sense it is another way of saying *huaisen* or brave. Chalbuanga of South Vanlaiphai attempted to explain a definite meaning of the term

hratkhawkheng. According to him, it was something that was done (by a person) for a long process, but would not stop until he reaches the end; would not surrender easily; one who would subdue or defeat his enemy or the enemy (without fail); to be brave in front of the enemy or foe or wild animals.¹⁹ To be a *mi hratkhawkheng* one has to live till old age, always to be brave to confront his enemies or animals; a brave *pasaltha* or *tlawmngai* or one who consistently persevere may also be regarded as *mi hratkhawkheng*.²⁰ It is to be noted that *huaisen* and *hratkhawkheng* involved violence. Finally, *doral hma a zam ngai lo* (one who never retreated before an enemy or adversary especially during war) was also considered to be brave and possessing patriotic zeal.

On the other hand, a person who had killed many numbers of wild animals was also designated a *pasaltha* and welcomed in the *pialral* like those persons who had killed a man provided he had performed the required rituals called *ai* or *aih* (to make sacrifice over an animal killed in hunting or enemy killed in fighting) and perform a ceremony of rejoicing over a success. The belief was that all the spirits of the animals he had killed would also follow him to the abode of the dead or *pialral*. The *pasaltha* perhaps had already fulfilled all criteria or obligations that were required for a good hunter to go to *pialral*. Although he may not necessarily have killed his adversary, even then he may be regarded or called a 'hero' by the households of the village.

It is also to be noted that a person who was usually successful during the chase was believed to be blessed by the *lasi*. The *lasi* was a beautiful female spirit who looked

after all wild animals of the forest, and if blessed by such spirit a man could become a skilled hunter and never fail during the hunt. If a man was possessed with such blessings he could kill large number of wild animals during his life time and could go to *pialral* without any negative resistance from *Pu Pawla*.

There were also the *pasaltha* who were not necessarily brave during war, but showed their prowess in protecting the households of the village from wild beasts especially *sapui* or a tiger. Such person was famous for their outstanding performances and achievements during the hunt or trapping small or big wild animals. In relation to this, C. Lalaudinga has pointed out the several qualities possessed by Zampuimanga one of the most known *pasaltha* who successfully confronted and killed as many as thirteen tigers. Such dignified quality was a great boon or blessing for the village' and the 'households could live peacefully.'²¹ The *pasaltha* according to him was a man who was successful during the hunt, brave to confront ferocious wild animal and to whom the households of the village placed their trust.²² He further described the *pasaltha* to be a person having perseverance (*tlawmngai*) including the above mentioned qualities and hence he was to be above the common households of the village.²³ The author further mentioned that there were also others considered to be *mihuaisen* or the brave who could also confront wild beast but may not necessarily be called the *pasaltha*. All in all, persons who were able to confront wild beasts, brave in confronting the enemies and being *tlawmngai* in the society were considered to be more praiseworthy by the common households of the village.²⁴ As mentioned above, it would

be easy to designate a *pasaltha*, as being a hero. On the contrary the two designations (*pasaltha* and *tlawmngai*) combined together perhaps may be encompassed within the terminology 'hero'. Most Mizo authors made no distinction in such qualities and they commonly used a single word for such person - *pasaltha*.

Moreover, the status and position of the *mihuaisen* within the domain of the traditional head may be cited. The Mizo chief was an independent entity having his own administrative set up. However, in course of time, due to expansionist policies and other circumstances, quarrels often broke out between the Chiefs of neighboring villages.²⁵ Such quarrels that ensued would ultimately lead to war. During such encounters, brave warriors that were recognized by the society were usually in the lead. If the Chief was powerful he had many brave warriors who could also go beyond their normal duties up to the extent of sacrificing their lives for the households of the village and their Chief. The Chief also had his own influence in promoting the young men of the village for the prospects of their future. Individuals played their own role especially during such wars to prove their prowess against their enemies. Such persons were called '*mi huaisen*' or brave and were highly regarded in the society.

Not only in warfare, the *mi huaisen* (a brave man) was also highly regarded during hunting as he was usually successful during the chase, hence the households of the village acknowledged him as *pasaltha*. Such a person would be usually welcomed to settle in the Chief's village and he would be the most sought after person during wars and in

hunting. Under his presence the Chief's subjects would feel safe and at peace under the influence of such a brave person or *mi huaisen*.

Further the '*mi huaisen*' was usually given priority during social gatherings and other festivals held in the village. The Chief would privilege him during Zu drinking or on certain occasions when the young men of the village gathered leisurely after a successful war, raids or hunting.

It is to be noted that it was the Mizo custom to pay respect or honour the *pasaltha* during festivals or in the Chief's house. In fact, in any festivals and celebrations Zu played an important role in the society. Especially the *Zu No* or beer cup (usually horn of a bison) is more significant at the time and place where the young men of the village drinks together. The *Zu No* was usually a bigger size than the normal cup. In the olden days it was made from wood and bamboo or horn of a bison. Although the Chief was respected and honoured on the other hand the *pasaltha* was also highly regarded in the society. Therefore, none dare touch the *Zu No* unless the *pasaltha* touched it first or drinks it first. Usually if the *pasaltha* was in their midst, he would be the first to be offered the *Zu No*. When the absence of the *pasaltha* was guaranteed only then they would accept the *Zu No* from the Chief or the elders. Such was the honour given to the *pasaltha* that henceforth almost every young men of the village tried their level best to be a successful hunter during the chase. So the desire for most men was to be *pasaltha*, *huaisen*, *tlawmngai* especially to be called brave during encountering their foes.

Moreover, due to claiming of new settlements in specific areas, forest lands or territories or due to economic reason (claiming of *chi khur* or salt spring, khuaibu or beehive, etc. located in other chief's territory) quarrels would often ensue between two Chiefs which would ultimately led to war. Some Chiefs with their subjects were very aggressive and always attempted to catch their enemies unaware. In course of time, finding certain excuses to attack such villages, appropriate measures would be taken to annihilate the rival village. The brave warriors would take the lead fearlessly or courageously even at the cost of their life. If the raid, was successful they would go back triumphantly with the spoils of the along with several heads of the enemies. Such actions were often heard far and wide. Conversely, sometimes, such activities and prowess increased the degree of confrontation with new rivals which ultimately led to new wars or clan feuds. As confrontations increased, it also increased the number of the *mi huaisen* or the brave in the society.

It is to be noted that the nature of *tlawmngai* and *huaisen* is synonymous and can hardly be differentiated. This may be highlighted in the context of the surrounding environment of the Mizo hills which was covered with if not all by forest lands and infested by wild beasts or animals. These wild animals often disturbed the peace of the households by bringing misfortune to the village in the form of killing domesticated animals and even human beings. During emergencies such as this if and when someone shouted, *Sa a tla e"*, the first man to react would be the *tlawmngai*. (*Sa tla* mean a *sapui* or tiger is on the prowl near the village especially near domesticated animals, and this was a warning shout or cry to be heard by the *zawlbuk*

inmates and the households of the village. It is to be noted that in the olden days the young men of the village and even a married man of two children would sleep in the zawlbuk or young men's dormitory.* It is true that during emergency, or in the pretext of emergency, or in anticipation of any dangers lurking in their midst, the *mi tlawmngai* or a *pasaltha* or *mi huaissen* would always have a sleepless night. During such times, the *pasaltha* or *tlawmngai* or a brave hunter would react immediately upon hearing a warning shout or beating of the gongs and they would immediately run after the wild animals in order to recover the domesticated animals. In such case, the *tlawmngai* would be the first to light their torches that were kept nearby to be used during emergencies. Further, when someone died in the jungle or forest or nearby river due to natural injury, or killed or wounded by wild animals, or due to drowning, the *tlawmngai* was always in the lead to recover the body.

Apart from calamities or catastrophes, the villagers also sometimes experienced an inferno both in the village and while burning the *lo* (jhum). To subdue the inferno, one needs someone who was brave and *tlawmngai*. If such person came forward and bravely and courageously tried his best even at the cost of his life to reduce the inferno, henceforth, he may be regarded as *mi huaissen* or brave. However, it may be pointed out that such person may not necessarily be acknowledged as a hero, because acts of such as this was not related to confrontation with enemies as in raids and wars where he could bring home the heads of his adversaries.

Further, the pre-colonial and colonial period had experienced the occurrence of certain confrontations between the traditional head and the households of the village called '*Lal Sawi*'. This generally happened when the opinion of the common households differed from the traditional heads. In such instances, almost all the young men would be involved in annihilating the chief's house. In relation to this, a particular chief named Lalhlima Sailo is worth mentioning. He was the one of the very rare chiefs who had strongly confronted the common households without serious damage done to his rule.²⁶ Hence, by utilizing his wisdom, he had boldly confronted such annihilation even at the cost of his life. In this context, it may be noted that a chief may not necessarily be at the war front nor brought home heads of the enemy, but he was brave enough to confront his subjects who were directly trying to exploit traditional hierarchy and hence, he may be also regarded as a hero.

In fact, there were many individual heroes, some of which may not come to the notice or be acknowledged in the contemporary period although there were definitely some who were easily noticeable and regarded in the society. Therefore, a person may be regarded to be 'brave' but not necessarily considered as a hero.

According to Lalthanliana, "A brave man and the *pasaltha* may be placed on the same level".²⁷ However, both the term have its own distinctive aspects. In elaborating the status of the *pasaltha*, he further stated: "The *Pasaltha* is a brave man, not simply enabling the village and its inhabitants to feel safe but one who was imbued with Mizo

tlawngngaihna. “²⁸ Under the Luseis, Pawis, Maras, Paites, Hmars, Raltes and the Fanais, there were at least one *pasaltha* in almost every village that were under their suzerainty. Robuanga and Vanlalpara has described the *pasaltha* and stated:

“A man who could kill the enemy, a good hunter or successful in the chase, to be imbued with bravery, to be *Thangchhuah Pa* and had respect for the elders.”²⁹

Also, not to be a greedy person in terms food and drinks, to be expected to cross the strong current of a river during the rainy season, to have the knowledge to use bamboos for crossing the flooded river current.³⁰ Apart from the above mentioned aspects, if a man travels to distant lands to annihilate their enemies and brought home heads, of the enemy he was exceptionally regarded by the village households especially the women. The popularity of such an individual would greatly attract parents of the household who always welcomed such fearless a person for their son-in law. Even the Chief and the elders were proud enough to have such person in their midst and their expectations too would be very high.

Several reasons may be highlighted or underlined as to why a successful hunter alone may not be regarded as a hero such as in the context of rituals like *Kawngpui Siam* and *Lasi Zawl*. In the olden days, before the households of the village went for hunting, they usually made sacrifices to the forest spirit. It was mainly done to be blessed with wild animals during the chase. This was a ritual usually practiced to augur or foretell the fortune of the future especially during the hunt and for good harvest. The sacrifice made to the spirit is called *Kawngpui Siam*. For such sacrifices,

they killed a pig and a fowl. A priest, with few selected men, taking with them cooked pork, usually the meat of the young one or piglings and without exception *zu* (traditional rice beer) and then they proceeded towards the southern part of the village.³¹ In the process of such rituals –first ‘sand is strewn in it’ and smoothened on the road(usually footpath)and none was allowed to pass or go through that area.³² Two posts were usually erected on each side of this place and a cane was hung between them across the road.³³The priest then made religious incantation in an inaudible language calling all the various animals to come excepting a tiger. After the sacrifice was made, meal was eaten and returned to the village with high hopes and expectations. The next day, they went to see the neatly placed dust on the road and if some animals’ footprints was found it was a sign of success during the hunt, if not found the hunting party would be unsuccessful during the chase. Also, if some form of human foot print was found it was considered a good omen that the war party would be successful during raid or war.

The above rituals made it clear that the *pasaltha* may not necessarily be a hero, as hunting also solely depended on to a certain extent on the *Kawngpui Siam* where good and successful hunter often placed their trust on the required rituals for the same.

Moreover, a successful hunter may also be greatly influenced by the guardian called *lasi* usually believed to be a beautiful maiden. The *lasi* is believed to be a fabled creator of all animals and was regarded as the guardian spirit of the forest. Further the belief was that if the *lasi* fell

in love with a hunter the former would bless him with all good fortunes. It was this spirit who decided which animal was to be shot or disposed off. If a man was a *lasi zawl* or one who was looked upon as being possessed by such spirit, he could shoot and kill numerous wild animals. In fact a *lasi zawl* was one who received a sign in a dream from the *lasi* and thereby became a skilled hunter and would never fail during the chase.³⁴ However, if the *lasi* or guardian spirit in some ways was discontented or left the *pasaltha* from the good fortune endorsed by her then the latter could no longer be a successful hunter. Once such a prerogative was lost, a sacrifice called *lasi khal* had to be made. It was a sacrifice made to the *lasi* to restore the *pasaltha* his former good fortunes which was once received and enjoyed from the *lasi*. If the response was positive, the *pasaltha* regained his former skills and became once more a good and successful hunter. But if the sacrifice did not materialize in favour of the *pasaltha*, his former skill would be lost forever and he would never regain his great fortune. Hence, the households of the village would express that the man was no longer being possessed by the *lasi*. The *pasaltha* who however, denied by the *lasi* could no longer become a successful hunter.

Taking in view of the above mentioned explanation with special reference to the *pasaltha*, one may argue that the *pasaltha* may not necessarily be a hero, as his skill was fully dependent on the *Lasi* and *Kawngpui Siam*. Hence, the *pasaltha* who was once regarded a successful hunter during the chase may not be necessarily be regarded as hero, but a mere '*sa kap thei*' (one who was successful during the hunt or chase) based on rituals and *lasi zawl*. In this context, some

persons became *pasaltha* not because of their prowess or ability but blessing conferred upon them by the *lasi*.

However, contrary to the above mentioned aspect, in the context of Zampuimanga, no *lasi zawl* was noticed as compared to other *pasaltha* as his field of activity was solely in the forest -hunting the *sapui* or tiger. Zampuimanga was considered to be a successful *asaltha* as he would always be at the front in running after wounded tiger and was always successful in killing the tiger with his sword,³⁵ and for such achievement he surpassed all other *pasaltha*, perhaps he may be considered a hero. In this context, Hranghleia can also be cited. Hranghleia (1854 – 10/4/1942)³⁶ was also a successful hunter, a brave warrior may be regarded as one of the most popular *pasaltha* of the Mizos. He was famous as he had completed the two criteria that were to be fulfilled by any successful hunter namely in *lama thangchhuah* (a feast given by a man by killing several domesticated animals) and *ram lama thangchhuah* (a feast with several number of wild animals especially four legged wild animals).

Moreover, *tlawmngai* or *mi tlawmngai* alone could not be considered a hero. *Tlawmngai* means to be unselfish, perseverance, to endure patiently, to do whatever the circumstances arose, and not to hesitate to help others, etc. A man could also be *tlawmngai* in food and drinks (not greedy) or manual work or travelling to distant villages to do errands for certain emergencies. Although he could perform instantly of all the above mentioned tasks, he may not be a skilled hunter or warrior. Likewise, *mituarchhel* or those who could bear the brunt of their illness, wounds or

any other physical injury may not be *mi tlawmngai* or *huaisen* or brave or *Pasaltha*. This is the fact that such person could simply endure or bear his pain than others. But it would not be wrong to add *tuarchhel* and the *tlawmngai* for assessing a Mizo hero.

Siamhnuna stated that “*tlawmngaihna*, *huaisenna*, or bravery, *luhlulna* or stubbornness, *thuawih theihna* or to be obedient seems to be inborn that developed within an individual”.³⁷ However, for many, it was because of strong efforts or determination that they could achieve such designation.³⁸ Others still believed that it was not an inborn trait, but it could be because of the guidance of persons who inspired them so that they could become *mi huaisen* (brave) and *mitlawmngai*(perseverance) Also in the absence of such mentors, this inborn quality could be automatically lost forever.³⁹

Therefore, to be *huaisen* is the most likely parameter to designate or acknowledge a person to consider him a ‘hero’. Although a man may be brave in the forest, he may not necessarily be a successful hunter so as to bring home sufficient meat for the households. At the same time, while confronting his adversary a man may be very brave, but may not be able to bring home heads of the enemy to prove his bravery. As mentioned, a brave warrior was expected to bring heads of the enemy he had killed, and in doing so, he could prove to the households that he was *mihuaisen* or brave enough to kill his adversary or enemy. Thus, even though a man may not be successful in the chase but brought home the enemy heads, he could still be regarded or acknowledged by the community. The enemy heads brought home

generally proved that a man was skillful in war strategy and also brave enough to enter the villages of their enemies. Besides, in the olden days, if a person even clandestinely killed and took the enemy's head, he could be considered to be brave. But, in the context of the modern concept of a brave warrior, such persons cannot be regarded a brave man as he had caught his enemy unaware or without direct combat -battle.

Robuanga and P.C.Vanlalpara, while referring to a warrior and their activities stated:

"They made sudden and surprise attack on any person in the suburb of their adversary's village .They sometimes simply shot at a person who was sitting near the hearth, and then vanished into the thick jungle. Others were killed while they were about to collect firewood that were piled up at the front of the house. Sometimes in the silent night, they made a hole in the thatched roof of their adversary. They threw pebbles in order to verify the presence of someone in the master bed. After knowing that some persons were sleeping in the master bed, they then pierced (him or her) with their spears." ⁴⁰

This proved that the person concerned had no direct confrontation with his enemy. It may also be noted that such person either killed the weak and those who were sleeping quite unaware of the approaching enemies. Therefore, it may be suggested that simply killing the enemy may not be the best explanation to consider an individual or person as *mi huaissen* or hero. In the modernist view, such persons may not be considered brave as the context is

now no longer important to be acknowledged in the society. But in the traditional Mizo value system, they were regarded as brave and were highly regarded in the society.

In traditional Mizo society, the concept of a hero may encompass three significant words to designate an outstanding person in the village namely - *pasaltha*, *huaisen* and *tlawmngai*. The three terminologies made a person a 'hero', brave, skilled in hunting and the ability to persevere. For a Mizo, it would be a little awkward to place a person under a separate term. In fact, a Mizo hero would always be the one who fought bravely and defended the village and its households from their adversaries. The *mihuaisen* would be fearless and would never withdraw from both wild beasts and his foes.

However, there may be conflicting ideology in the usage of the three terminologies - *pasaltha*, *huaisen* and *tlawmngai*, therefore, it needs further explanation. Can a *pasaltha* be regarded as hero? Or can a hero be regarded as *pasaltha* or a *mihuaisen* or simply *mi tlawmngai*? These questions posed may have divergent explanations in the context of the person concerned.

A *pasaltha* was always considered to be brave, never ran from the *sapui* or wild beasts but he may not be necessarily be a successful hunter during the chase. If a *pasaltha* was always to be a village hero and defender of the village from wild beasts, he should be a brave warrior who could kill many enemies and bring home their heads. If necessary, he should sacrifice all his energies for the cause of the village community and was always ready to

annihilate the enemies of the village either alone or in small groups. However, a *pasaltha* may not necessarily be a leading man or brave warrior at the war front. Sometimes it may be more appropriate to label the *pasaltha* to be courageous and this is significant according to the activities and performed by such person.

It may be suggested that any man who possessed all the above mentioned qualities such as *mi tlawmngai*, *pasaltha*, *mi tuarchhel*, *mi huaissen*, *ramvachal*, *hratkhawkheng*, *rorum* or venturesome *hlau lo* or fearless and especially ‘*doral hma a zam ngai lo*’ (those who never surrendered before an enemy or foe or fearless) is to be considered as a hero. It is to be noted that no major distinction could be made in the above mentioned terminologies as these nomenclatures are closely related.

Most Mizo authors commonly used the term *pasaltha*, *huaissen*, *tlawmngai* interchangeably. In fact, all the three nomenclature are more or less synonymous. The word *pasaltha* is common in connection with hunting and sometimes may be a warrior too; *huaissen* is used in confronting wild animals and enemy respectively. *Tlawmngai* is something to do with perseverance, *tuarchhel* or having the patience to endure. The *pasaltha* and *huaissen* together make a hero but *tlawmngai* alone would not complete the full essential qualities of a hero and could not be acknowledged as hero. For those who do not clearly understand the real significance of such terminologies, it would be possible to misinterpret such of such terms as they are closely related. Sometimes they could terms of using consistently or separately be ‘equated and contrasted’ and

that also in the context of the nature and subject of operations .

In the context of the modernist views, the pre-colonial Mizos were not adequately imbued with human values and 'brute force' was common in dealing with their enemies. There was no moral values nor 'rule of law' in annihilating their enemies or foes. In this context, the Mizo worldview can be regarded to be completely different since their perception and concept of human value too was completely different from today's concept. But whatever rules they followed in their pursuance of fame and valour even if it contradicts modern values system, it was still the households who idealized their actions and made them heroes.

By looking into all the possible parameters, one can conclude that the *pasaltha* may be regarded as a Mizo hero as all such qualities mentioned above seems to be within the orbit of the person who was always successful during the chase and who brought home heads of the enemy. As there seems to be no specific term in Mizo language that may be commonly used to designate a person 'hero', hence the terminology '*pasaltha*' is the most suitable term in the old Mizo society to designate a person as a hero.

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MIZO HEROES IN THE POST-COLONIAL CONTEXT

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Who are heroes? How does a person become a hero? The recognition and celebration given to heroes as well as the criteria which qualifies a hero have undergone changes since the classical Greeks from which the term was derived. Heroes are ordinary people with challenged opportunities but achieved excellent victory. The concept of hero and heroism is open for debate and controversies for a long time because it is understood and contextualized culturally and historically.¹ The standard for heroism may vary depending on the time and place as the definition and understanding of heroes and heroism differed from time to time.

Concept of Hero

Originally, the term ‘hero’ comes from the ancient Greeks which literally mean “protector” or “defender”.² Heroes were considered as imbued with extraordinary qualities, and in the original meaning, such qualities were used to protect humankind from dangers, which, in ancient

Greek mythology, were monsters or various forms of adversaries. The mythological and legendary heroes were sometimes considered as demigod or of semi-divine origin, possessing superhuman power and strength that were destined for such greatness.³ These heroes were, however, mortals, but left behind immortal fame after they died, which sometimes earned them worship through songs, rituals and offerings.⁴ In the Greek concept, heroism was not necessarily attached with morality; the heroes sometimes acted against certain moral laws,⁵ nevertheless, they would be venerated for their extraordinary qualities.

A dictionary definition of the term 'hero' is more comprehensive than the original meaning. The Merriam Webster Dictionary⁶ defines 'hero' as "a mythological or legendary figure often of divine descent endowed with great strength or ability; an illustrious warrior; a person admired for achievements and noble qualities; one who shows great courage". It could also mean "the principal male character in a literary or dramatic work" or "the central figure in an event, period, or movement". It could also be used to refer to "an object of extreme admiration and devotion; an idol". While in the classical sense, hero tends to be a legend or an imaginary figure, this definition takes on the broad concept of hero.

In a series of lecture on 'Heroism and Hero Worship', Thomas Carlyle in the 1840s popularized the term 'hero worship' "by which he meant the high regard, entirely proper in his view, that ordinary people have for the great figures of their history."⁷ To him, it was the "Great Men" who have made history through their "exceptional human

achievement".⁸ He argues that the heroism in a person, which he considered as an essential property, will manifest in its own appropriate time, and refuted that times make the man.⁹ But he "suggests that the times in which one lives have some bearing on the type of hero who steps forward", and thus, he sees "the hero as divinity, prophet, poet, priest, man of letters, and king."¹⁰ However, Carlyle's 'hero-worship' is different from the contemporary usage as is the concept of 'hero' itself.

The criteria to define a popular hero used by Klapp¹¹ includes his fame which is indicated "by the news-space devoted to him, rumor or legend"; and "a person who is the object of hero-worship", that is, if he is "admitted, eulogized, acclaimed, or otherwise honoured by his society", "formally recognized or canonized", "commemorated" and who has "a following of devotees, 'fans' or hero-worshippers." The heroes are found to have a strong identification with the groups but distanced from the group members, both vertical and horizontal, and enjoys a symbolic status because the hero "is typically not a living member of the group", and also sacred or ritual status was given to him.¹²

Heroes enjoy high social attributes which they earned through their superior ability, achievement or sacrifice for the group. Courage, chivalry, martyrdom, self-sacrifice for the welfare and survival of the group are few examples. They enjoy social attribution on account of their personal qualities based on the value of the society or community of that time.

"One age's prophet is another age's playwright is another's king. A young person destined for greatness will find a proper avenue for its expression and travel

down it. What distinguished Muhammad and Samuel Johnson from their respective contemporaries was greatness or heroism. What distinguished them from each other was that the seventh century was ripe for a prophet, the eighteenth for a literary lion".¹³

Hero and his status are defined by the group with which a hero is attached to, and it is processed according to the value and need of that group. Thus, it may be said that heroism is a social construct which is bound by time and culture. As the society selected and celebrated the hero, they laid grounds for the emergence of the hero through his heroic act for the group in time of need, thereby setting a goal for others to achieve.

Not all the people who represent the societal values are, however, recognised, recorded or venerated by the community; therefore, many heroes remained unnamed and forgotten. It may be difficult to exactly outline why some were chosen while others were forgotten, but it is apparent that the process of hero making is selective as well as subjective.

Construction of Heroism and the Making of Heroes

Heroes are considered to be the role model of the society who upheld the ideal principles and standards of that group. They are celebrated because they possessed and lived (or they are believed to possess and live) the ideal values and principles of the society. As such, while the heroes had profound impact on the society, the society also contributed significantly in the making of heroes. In other words, as the society defines the essential and distinguishing attributes

as criterion for heroism, it represents the belief and values current at time, that is, the society chose to celebrate the qualities which it required for its existence. For example, in a more developed state, it may be the great statesman who is the hero while at a time when a society is challenged by perpetual war, the most celebrated attributes would be gallantry, self-sacrifice, etc. Some groups of tribes even bestowed religious sanction to their heroes, and hero-worship among many societies extended to even deification of the heroes, like in South India during the Sangam period.

It may be said that time and culture shapes our heroes. Gallantry, self-sacrifice, loyalty, etc. are generally the attributes of heroes among all societies especially in classical period; however, these are no longer the only attributes to heroes among the Generations X and Y, to whom pop singers or politicians may be more popular. Of course, the classical heroes are still admired and venerated but it is done so within its own context. Heroism, therefore, need to be contextualised and should be understood in its specific context.

The criteria for heroism often defines the limits of aspirations that a society nurtured. In the making of heroes, societies consciously or unconsciously make it evident the dimensions of characters they want to uphold for that society. In other words, we may say that the kind of heroes celebrated by the society reflects the standard of values and demand of that society. Sometimes, the society deliberately elevates certain persons as role models and makes them heroes to raise the aspirations of the people. Thus, in a way, the making of heroes defines the limits of the aspirations of the society and determines their ideals of life.

Imagining Mizo Heroes

The history of the Mizo is punctuated by great names of chiefs and brave men. In fact, the 'great men theory' was relevant in the earlier Mizo historical tradition, as it was the chiefs who formed the identity of the village while the village warriors were the protectors of the village to whom others owed their survival. In fact, the earlier Mizo historiography was dominated by the stories of 'great men'. In the oral tradition that passed from generation to generation, the stories of the brave warriors formed the main theme as it was closely entwined with how that community survived till that day. It was not only war with other villages or clans but also wild animals that challenged their survival. Thus, the brave warriors were the most celebrated citizens and they would be honoured in social gatherings by offering them the first glass of rice beer, called '*Huai No*'. It was the aspiration of all the young men in the village to receive the '*Huai No*'. Moreover, the brave hunters had a chance to go to *Pialral* after death which is an exclusive place of abode for the privileged groups of the society by fulfilling the requirement of *Ram lama Thangchhuah*. This religious sanction to the excellent performance of the warrior/hunter, however, did not have any role to play in hero-worship in traditional Mizo society, nor did it guarantee him the status of celebrated hero. Nevertheless, it ensured a personal gain for the heroes in the next world.

Among the brave young men, the real heroes were those who were *tlawmngai*, the epitome of social ethic of self-denial and selfless service to others. This continued to be the criterion for selecting heroes when oral tradition was translated into written form by the Tribal Research Centre (TRI), Government of Mizoram.

In *The Mizo Heroes* compiled by Tribal Research Institute, famous names of warriors are listed. It declares in its preface that the book “*aims to[sic] inculcate and popularise among the younger generation the life and true stories of the past Mizo braves, whom we call ‘Heroes’.*”¹⁴ It was also hoped that “...this book will *tell and renew the memories* of all those Mizo heroes whose valuable contributions to the Mizo society cannot be overemphasised.”¹⁵ It was clearly accepted that “the presence of a single person with exceptional courage in the village made the people live in peace and comfort.”¹⁶

In imagining Mizo heroes, the focus is generally to the *pasaltha* of the pre-colonial period which this book testified, the objective of remembering them being to show them as example to the younger generation. It was aimed to generate admiration among the younger generations of the “selfless-sacrifices offered by the heroes for the good of their fellow villagers.”¹⁷ The book is introduced by saying,

“From the life and activities of those heroes one will know how the Mizo of the past were governed by a *social ethic of Mizo moral code of conduct known as tlawmngaihna...It was these heroes who have pioneered and fostered these noble conduct[s] of our cultural heritage* which have been passed on to the present generation.”¹⁸

The Mizo heroes are also considered to be the bearer of the intangible cultural heritage, for which their veneration is often considered urgent all the more to preserve the cultural heritage of the community. Therefore, in making heroes, the legend was sometimes romanticised to arouse interest from the target groups.

However, a point to note here is that, while there are legendary figures in Mizo oral tradition, like Chhurbura, Zawlpala, Lalruanga, etc., these mythical and legendary figures did not form part of the contemporary hero imagination but are sorted in a different category. When it is about heroes, it meant the life really lived. This may be one reason why in the written record of Mizo heroes, the earliest dated was the early 19th century and not beyond, for the stories previously told must have been interpolated and translated into a myth or a legend since the stories passed on orally for centuries.

Apart from bravery, the earlier Mizo society also appreciated the art of singing and dancing, and they also celebrated composers; but these names never found a place in the book of heroes. Since the heroes constructed in the imagination of the Mizos essentially requires physical strength and activities, no women had a chance to be one, though there were famous composers like Pi Hmuaki, Darpawngi, etc. who are known well in history. In a way, the Mizo imagination of heroes in the earlier period is patriarchal-driven as in many other societies.

Heroes in Contemporary Mizo Society

It is obvious that the conventional imagination of heroes is different from the modern perception, and the criterion for heroism also underwent a change. In fact, the stage is also differently set for modern heroes, as the situation facing them have changed. Thus, the attributes for heroism has also changed. However, what remained true in principle is that society makes heroes; they made them according to the standard of values required for that

society, and that the process of hero-making is culture and time-bound.

In the earlier Mizo society, it was the chiefs and the *Pasaltha* (brave warriors) the courageous and brave hunters, and the *tlawmngai* young men who were recognised as heroes and were elevated as role models for others, whose stories have been repeatedly told through generations. In the modern Mizo society, it is the pioneers who are the most recognised individuals. Since these pioneers facilitated the transition from the so-called 'pre-modern' to 'modern' society, they are considered to be the key role-players in the development of the society through their knowledge and sacrifices. They are not necessarily of traditionally-privileged groups but are generally of self-made men. Among these, the earlier educated Mizo and the pastors stand tall. Many of these may not be decorated as heroes, but they are significant personalities who enjoyed admiration from the general masses.

In search of the popular personalities in the 20th century Mizo society, C. Vanlallawma compiles a book, *Tun Kum Za Chhunga Mizo Hnam Puipate (1894-1994)*¹⁹ which gives an exhaustive list of personalities whom he believed to have significant contribution to Mizo society. The list includes the colonial officers and European missionaries along with the names of Mizo pastors, the early educated Mizo and politicians. A '*Mizo Who's Who?*' (1994)²⁰ is also compiled by Joseph L. Ralte. Many other bibliographies of the pioneer in various fields have also come up. These are, in a way, a search for heroes of modern Mizo society.

As their field of excellence varied, many leaders emerged in modern times that can be considered as heroes.

The process of hero-making has undergone a change which shows the fact that the experience and value of the society has also changed. The heroes in modern times are the self-made men, or leaders who have excelled in their own way. Not only for their significant contributions for the society but also for their laudable character as they overcome the challenges of life, these heroes found their place among the great names. They are considered to be the role model, the source of inspiration to the younger generation.

There are other ways through which personalities are popularised, and this has more to do with the inborn talent of the individuals than the character. The event of various talent contests like Mizo Idol or Mizo Icon (singing contest), etc. and the emerging influence of media have brought to lime light talented artists who have enjoyed the status of 'celebrities'. To many, these are their role models, as it is the practice in other parts of the world and they are heavily influenced by their idols/icons, and it has impacted the emerging sense of value and ethics among the younger generation. This may not be consciously done by its organizers but it still promotes the emergence of idols/icons for the young people.

On the other hand, there is a conscious attempt to establish heroes who are believed to possess the desired qualities for the welfare and survival of the community. For Example, the *Vanglaini* Daily Newspaper group has instituted

a '**Mizo Award**', a lifetime achievement award to the person who is still alive and who have rendered valuable service to the society.²¹ '**Corrupt Lo ber Award**' (2014-15) is another award initiated by the Mizo Zirlai Pawl (Mizo students' union) which awarded the person who is not involved in corruption among the bureaucrats and the politicians.²² The constitution of these awards is obviously an effort to set the values of the people and arouse them of the individual's responsibility to the community when the yardstick was the contribution of individuals to the welfare of the society. It tries to acknowledge these people for their decent work and at the same time attempts to inculcate such values among others while trying to side-line others who are engaged in selfish ways and corruption. In other words, it may be said that a principle for heroism is being (re)defined to suit the present need of the society.

It is clear, therefore, that the concept of heroes has changed significantly through time and space. The excellent and extraordinary achievement, the selfless service, the personification of the principle of honesty and integrity, etc. are the attributes attached to modern heroes. Also, the process of celebrating heroes is not beyond political interest as there can be some groups who may try to capitalise the celebration of a hero over the other. Nevertheless, heroes were and still are enjoying considerable influence over the community that they are considered the 'harbinger of change'. As such, hero-making which is an ongoing process deserves a close scrutiny time and again if it is to serve the interest of the society as a whole.

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HERO AND GENDER : THE MIZO CONTEXT

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Who is a hero? A hero is a person whom we worship because of his extraordinary achievements. He is a person who, through his actions, proved himself special, as compared to other common people in the society. Wikipedia definition says that a hero (masculine) or heroine (feminine) is a person or main character of a literary work who, in the face of danger, combats adversity through impressive feats of ingenuity, bravery or strength, often sacrificing his or her own personal concerns for some greater good.¹ In studying this definition, one can conclude that a person's hero may differ from person to person, time to time and place to place. Some may refer to their role models as their heroes. Therefore, a doctor who saves the lives of many dying patients could be a hero, a selfless charity worker is also a hero, a dedicated teacher or in the case of Mizo society, the brave chief, who protects his people is a hero.

The primary approach of this paper is to study the Mizo hero. It will attempt to bring out the criteria in which the

earlier Mizo place a 'hero' and the reason as to why a gender critique came out in this context. It will try to explain that the gender bias of placing a Mizo hero is not solely because of the degraded position of the Mizo women but the values and conditions in which we regard 'heroes'.

The Mizo Hero

The understanding of 'hero' and the norms and criteria of placing a hero may differ according to the values maintained by a particular culture or society. This is also the case in Mizo society where it can be seen that we almost entirely consider only the Mizo *pasaltha* as Heroes as their roles in the society are more conspicuous than others. In fact, the Mizo definition of the term hero is generally "*the Mizo Braves*".² The very famous *pasaltha* like Khuangchera, Vanapa and other few names are still very much revered, remembered and held in high esteem. The very reason for choosing the theme of this seminar is also in urging historians to dig deeper and bring out the importance of these *pasaltha* to know them better as well as to remember and study the unknown *pasaltha* whose names may have died down into oblivion. It is an upright intention especially considering the role they played in the Mizo society and how the earlier Mizo society valued their position.

The value system governing a society decides the meaning of different concepts in a society. In attributing the *pasaltha* solely as "heroes by the Mizo, the value system plays a deep role. The most important value that the Mizo always maintained is that of *tlawmngaihna* or selflessness, taking care of others before self. This definition of *tlawmngaihna* fits in so well with the Wikipedia definition of 'hero', which explains hero as someone who puts others before self. The Mizo, therefore, had the tradition of wanting

to become that 'hero' or '*tlawmngai*' which always guarded and protected the community life. It is in the *pasaltha* that this spirit of *tlawmngaihna* is most seen. It may, perhaps, be because of this that even till today, when anyone talks of a Mizo hero, he always almost refers it exclusively to the *pasaltha*. Explanations given by writers for *tlawmngaihna* as 'altruism' or 'chivalry'³ also seemed to befitting synonyms in the category of 'hero'. Therefore, a *tlawmngai* person is in himself already heroic because he puts others before self.

The selfless acts and acts of bravery in safeguarding the interests of others was what comforted his fellow men in the village. The entire village revered, looked up to him and honoured him in times of festivals as well.

At the same time, while doing so and while writing and researching these figures, we tend to neglect and forget the many other aspects of history or historical forces connected with it.

The male bias

Hero is often gender biased. This is true not only in terms of Mizo but also throughout the world. It is, however, used as a neutral gender concept in which even the female counterparts as not referred to as "heroines" but 'heroes'.

Sometimes, the word 'heroine' is also used. However, hero is the term predominantly used and it is usually not used as a neutral gender as it always tends to have a strong male connotation. Hero is always the dominant character even when heroine is referred. Heroines do not play the main character but also exist as the female counterpart whose existence came only along the line of the male hero. Heroines are mentioned only as the one who survives behind the hero. As

compared to their male counterpart, their deeds, though as much heroic as the male lead, it is usually considered less value. They became the heroine mostly for the love of her man. Therefore, unlike the male, a further explanation is usually necessary to present her as a hero, that too of much lesser significance. Therefore, the level in which a woman could be perceived as a hero is always less than her male counterpart.

In understanding the meaning of the term and the Mizo placement of the 'heroes', it is fair enough to connote the *pasaltha* as heroes. However, the term tends to be a gender bias in some aspects. Even though the term 'hero' tends to be male bias universally, I am not trying to argue the gender biasness of the term but on the impossibility of placing the Mizo women in that category. This is basically because of the social norms and practices of the early Mizo society.

The very word '*pasaltha*' a connotation in which we place a Mizo 'hero' is already gender biased. Mizo do not have the term '*nupuiitha*' which would be the female version of the *pasaltha* or "heroine". The reason for not considering any Mizo women as a 'hero' may not only be because the Mizo society was a "patriarchal society" but also perhaps because of the concept and the category in which the Mizo hero is placed. It means the place in which the Mizo woman had nothing to do with the whole meaning of the term.

The Mizo have a very significant saying with regards to the Mizo women which rather collectively represents the Mizo women, "*hmeichhe finin tuikhur ral a kai lo*" meaning "the wisdom of a woman does not go beyond the waterpoint".⁴ This rather sums up the relevance of a woman in the society. The Mizo places a hero in terms of these categories. A commoner could become a hero with the

achievement of these three objectives- firstly, one who is extraordinary in times of war with the neighboring or far off villages; secondly, an excellent hunter; and lastly, a *thangchhuahpa*.

The phrase “*hmeichhe finin tuikhur ral a kai lo*” clearly applies to the first category. Women were considered to stay at home in times of war when female nurses or medical science was absent. Here, women had no role to play where she remains unnoticed. Even though it was her who looked after the family and the entire household, her role was unknown as it was not that of courage or dangerous. She had no role to play beyond the water point. That is where her entire entity ends. So, in point one, she is non-existent.

The second category of placing the Mizo hero as an excellent hunter is inconsiderate of a woman. A woman was not supposed to follow the hunt, be in group hunt or a single hunt. It is only in times of fishing in the rivers that a woman could accompany men.⁵ There might have been a skilled hunter or a wrestler among the women. However, the environment, the society and the treatment of women do not permit her to become one. A warrior or a hunter woman is considered unnatural, because she did not fit in or represent the feminine qualities that a woman is expected of. She is supposed to be brave, brave not in the forest or the hunt but brave to storm the difficulties and the harsh experience that a woman, in fact, a teenager has to face as a newlywed which continues throughout her life. Having said all these, she is still non-existent when we consider the Mizo ‘hero’ as she was confined to the chores which are not deemed ‘heroic’. She is supposed to plough the fields and collect the figs, carry water and cook, clean the house and mend the clothes. Her entire life is spent busy with chores that are considered ‘praiseworthy’ but not

‘heroic’. When women are praised at all, in history books as well, they are not praised for their individual deeds, but rather collectively. She neither had the chance nor opportunity to represent herself as a ‘hero’ even if she had the trait because all these were practiced and taught in the zawlbuk for boys which was restricted for the girls.

The last criteria by which the Mizo categorize ‘hero’ within the village may be that of a *thangchhuahpa*. An excellent hunter having killed specific number of animals could attain the position of a *thangchhuahpa*, another form of obtaining that position. A woman has no separate entity as a householder to become one as such. However, the wife of a ‘*thangchhuahpa*’ was referred to as a ‘*thangchhuahnu*’. Therefore, she could in a term be the female counterpart who became identified alongside or behind her husband. She could now enjoy some of the advantages of becoming a ‘*thangchhuahnu*’. This position, however, does not make her become the ‘hero’ because the central figure was that of her husband. In the process of becoming the said ‘*thangchhuah*’, especially that of ‘*in lama thangchhuah*’ where it could be earned by prosperity in terms of domesticated animals and be able to feed the entire village a number of times, the female counterpart might have played a much larger role where she takes care of domestic belongings. Even so, she earned the position as the ‘other’.

The condition in which the Mizo consider becoming a ‘hero’ is also possible for only men to attain because all the prerequisites of becoming the *pasaltha* (hero) were trained in a dormitory called zawlbuk. It was at the zawlbuk that young men received training to become useful members in the society. The young girls, on the other hand, never had the opportunity to receive such trainings as they were not

allowed to enter zawlbuk.⁶ The woman's domain was considered to be the home.⁷

The birth of a child and the blessings incurred upon by elders may be another example which explains the said argument. A male child is blessed to become a good hunter and a warrior. In other words, the qualities expected of a 'hero'. A female child is blessed to become a beautiful maiden; the feminine qualities expected of a girl child nothing that has connected with the 'hero' qualities. 'hero' is something that the Mizo attribute to the male members of the society. The greatness of a woman is measured in terms of her beauty and her backing of the male members of the family. They belong to men; they could be bought by a price.⁸ And further, she is still not considered great when she possesses these qualities. They are remembered in history or the folktales not for the qualities of her bravery or courage but as the lover of the Hero". She is always sidelined.

If they get mentioned in history at all, the way their story is told also differs from their male counterpart, they are generally portrayed as young and beautiful, their actions are presented partial in opposition to the history of a long heroic career for male heroes, underlying feelings that led to their heroic acts are underlined. We must not forget that heroes and heroines are part of a social construct, their history is told and changes throughout history to serve different purposes of memory, information according to varied social, political or religious developments.

It is true that no history can be written without the exceptional role played by individuals. When writing Mizo history as well, the role of these 'heroes' is very great. However, in writing so, exaggeration of individual subjects

in writing a history is something that needs to be avoided. We may have left something that is probably much more decisive than the role played by these individuals.

The Mizo hero, the esteemed position and the reverence in which the earlier Mizo regard them depicts a lot about the Mizo society. The fact that a commoner was deemed a 'hero' and it was he who earned the utmost respect in entire village and society displays the classless egalitarian society. The highest honor '*chawimawina nopui*' was awarded to the bravest and the most selfless among the men. Therefore, the qualities of a Mizo 'hero' and the application of the concept of 'hero' in the earlier Mizo society as almost solely '*pasaltha*' was fair and could be justified in all means considering the values and the societal structure.

This paper is not an argument to contest the Mizo considering and hero worshipping the *pasaltha*. They were, in fact, 'heroes'. However, it is to argue that elements to be considered are much more.

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MIZO HEROES AND THEIR ROLE IN THE SOCIETY

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In Mizo language, hero can be described as *pasaltha* in the true sense of the term. In fact, the word *pasaltha* signifies a much deeper meaning than just the word hero. The exact equivalent word of hero in Mizo is very difficult to find. In olden day, in Mizo society, in every village there were heroes/*pasaltha*. Mizo heroes used to kill many wild animals and defeated their enemies in wars which earned them respect and admiration in the community. In fact, hero could mean defending his fellow human beings from all dangers, might be from wild animals or enemies, etc. These heroes were adept in attacking their enemies and as such usually became victorious against their enemies. They had a zeal to serve the society in which they lived. These heroes earned the respect of the chiefs, elders and the community as a whole.

As a result of their great service to the community, in times of festivals, the Mizo heroes were first offered by the chiefs and elders of the village big mug of rice beer (*zu no pui*).

It is difficult to point out at what particular point of time the word hero/*pasaltha* has become popular among the forefathers of the Mizo. Amongst the first publications of books in Mizo, such as, T.H Lewin's *Progressive Colonial Exercise in the Lushai Dialect* 1974; *Vocabulary of the Lushai Language* 1897 by Sned Hutchinson; *Mizo Leh Vai Thawnthu* 1897 by Shakespeare, Zosaphari's book *Mizo Zir Tirh Bu* 1901, the word *pasatha*/hero was not mentioned. However, *Grammar and Dictionary of the Lushai Language*, 1898 compiled by Pu Buanga and Sap Upa, the word *pasaltha* was defined as bravery. Nevertheless, Mizo heroes/*pasaltha* were there in the Mizo society from time immemorial. But in Mizo, *pasaltha* was more than a hero or brave or fearless. Mizo *pasaltha* must defend defenceless, help the needy and remain in the frontline.¹

Mizo concept of hero is intertwined with *Pasaltha*. The word *pasaltha* was not confined only to bravery but it had a wide-ranging ramifications. *Pasaltha* means to be brave, heroic, stout-hearted, fearless, courageous, daring, warrior or hunter. Mizo heroes/*pasaltha* earned the respect of the chiefs, the nobles and the community as a whole because they were ready to sacrifice their lives for others.²

Heroes and their role

Pasaltha Khuangchera one of the greatest Mizo heroes who was gentle, brave and fearless and comforter of the people was a real *pasaltha*/hero. *Pasaltha* Khuangchera was

a reformer of the society where he lived. While he was the leader of youths of Parvatui village, he reformed the characters of the youths. There were no bigger youths who ill-treated younger ones in Parvatui village during Khuangchera's era. His whole life was a role model for the community.³ Khuangchera was so indispensable to the community where he lived that chief *Lianphunga* used to mention his name whenever he was in distress.

However, the word hero/ *pasaltha* may be interpreted differently by different writers. It is difficult to regard all the villains and brave-hearts as heroes/ *pasaltha*. Lamsuaka who was often called chief Lalbura's hero, who might have been very helpful for the protection of his chieftdom and who was fearless in all his deeds. Indeed, he was very popular in his time. It is said that chief Lalbura was very proud of him and named him *Chhakawm Keipui*, (*Tiger of the East*) To some, he was a hero but to other she was difficult to be remembered as *pasaltha* (*Mizo hero*) because of his heinous crimes. Lamsuaka did not set an example for others to emulate him in his sun set years.⁴

In the traditional Mizo society, *pasaltha* were held in high esteem. In the social gathering and functions, they occupied respectable positions. When they go out for a journey the Mizo heroes used to carry with them ladder bags with the lit made of the skin of tiger. These heroes were the comforters and strength of the chiefs and the community as a whole. The greatness of Mizo chiefs also largely depended upon the number of *pasaltha(s)* they possessed. It is stated that some heroes were wooed by chiefs to live in their domain. One of the strength points of

Mizo chief Lalsavunga was that he had many heroes/*pasaltha* within his chiefdom.⁵

It is to be noted that as Sailo chiefs and Lushai chiefs were moving westwards because they were afraid of the Pawi chiefs, along the way, they crossed river Tuirial and when they reached river Tlawng they began to possess guns. The great Sailo chief Lalsavunga sent his heroes/*pasaltha* to survey lands in the east and thought that it was necessary to check the further advance of Pawi chiefs moving towards the west. When chief Lalsavunga decided to push towards the east, he found the village of Siakzapaua located on the hill and was a well-built fort and considered a stumbling block to the progress of his chiefdom. Siakzapaua was a chief put forth by the Thado chiefs to stand against the Lushai chiefs. So, he attacked Siakzapaua's village. The attack of Siakzapaua village was led by chief Lalsavunga's hero Vanapa. Siakzapaua and his men were defeated and dispersed and henceforth never dared to challenge the supremacy of Chief Lalsavunga.⁶ In the year about 1840, Chief Lalsavunga and his men decided to push towards east but when they reached Darlawng hills he died and he was succeeded by his son Vanhnuailiana. Chief Lalsavunga had many heroes and these heroes added to the greatness of his son chief Lalsavunga.⁷ The Mizo *pasaltha* were the pillars of the community. It is said that Mizo hero Vanapa built his home at the outskirts of the village, helped the downtrodden and become their comforter and hero.⁸

The Mizo heroes were constrained to sacrifice their lives for the cause of the society and individual for a noble cause. They led the people and were not afraid to die for a noble

cause.⁹ Mizo heroes achieved social status not by elections but by their courageous deeds and sacrifices.¹⁰

Mizo *Pasaltha* were brave and responsible. They were also skilful hunters and protectors of the villagers. As such, they were very precious for the chiefs. In fact, the success of the Mizo chiefs was mainly depended upon the strength of heroes/*pasaltha* in their chiefdoms. During clan war period of the traditional Mizo society, Mizo heroes known as *pasaltha* occupied a very significant role. During this time, every clan rose in arm against each other for supremacy. People did not dare to go to the field alone, so at the entrance of the village, the villager would gather and wait for others. A story goes that at one village where *pasaltha* Zaphunga lived, people would wait for him at the entrance of the village to lead them to go to the field. At that point *pasaltha* Zaphunga would lead the people by carrying a long sword by his side. It is to be noted that, in the Mizo society, people did not feel safe to go to the jungle to hunt without *pasaltha*.¹¹

In olden days in Mizo society, hunting played an important role in the lives of the Mizo. In times of hunting, all able men would not be allowed to go at one time as the chief and the elders would demand some young men to stay back in the village to guard the village as some enemies might suddenly attack the village during that time. In the times of hunting, Mizo heroes respected their elders. When they saw a wild animal, if their elders were there, they let them shoot first. However, if there were no elders and if they were the first to see the wild animals, they would shoot them. It was the tradition of the Mizo to respect the elders.¹²

Lifestyles of Mizo heroes

Usually, Mizo heroes led a popular life in the society. Many of them were well built and physically fit. This was essential as hunting wild animals was one of the main goals among the heroes, apart from fighting enemies. However, more than their physical structure their mental strength and bravery that counted in the society. It is true that Mizo heroes had to be physically fit and mentally strong as they had to hunt and kill wild animals and also fight against the enemies in order to defend the villagers. For instance, Mizo hero Vawmkhaia was a well built and physically fit and a handsome guy. He was very competitive and wanted to outshine his peers and because of that, he possessed plenty of *mithuns* which were measurements of wealth in the Mizo society in those days. Vawmkhaia's father, Kaphranga was also Mizo hero who was one of the main defenders of the village of chief Nikuala. When Mizo heroes successfully defended their villages or defeated their enemies and saved the lives of their chiefs or elders, they were often rewarded in kind.¹³ Mizo heroes were very ambitious and never surrendered easily to their enemies. They always tried to be on the frontline, whether facing enemies or wild animal.¹⁴

In the war between different clans and tribes, the Mizo warrior or heroes after defeating their enemies they would bring the heads of their enemies which were killed. When the heroes returned to the village the whole villagers used to welcome them by performing various traditional dances and songs at the chief's palace. As the heads of their enemies were often carried home, Mizo in olden days were called the 'tribes of head hunters'. However, this theory has been countered by some modern Mizo historians.

Nikuala

Nikuala belonged to Zahau clan of Pawi tribe. He was born at the village of Rallang in Burma now in Myanmar. He was the son of Khawzalian, chief of Zahau. During his boyhood, along with his friends they went to hunt some birds in the forest. While they were going Nikuala was going along with them. Suddenly, his friends came back running, Then, Nikuala inquired them why they ran back. They told him to run back as fast as he could. But Nikuala refused to retreat, instead preferred to go forward. On the way, he saw a big copra stretching his hood wide. Nikuala with his sling shot dead the copra and brought home to the surprise of the chief, the elders, his friends and all the community. Nikuala grew up to be a fearless and skilful hunter. He shot eight bears and adept in pursuing injured wild animal which were the hallmarks of hero in those days. Nikuala was used to pursue the injured bear by himself. His fame reached the ears of chief Vanhnuailiana who invited him to his village. When they talked, chief Vanhnuailiana was so impressed by the brave deeds of Nikuala that he asked him to migrate in his chieftom and promised him the post of ambassador to Falam, Halkha Pawi and Sukte. Accordingly, Nikuala migrated to Tualte where Vanhnuailiana was chief and became like the adopted son of the chief. ¹⁵

Chief Vanhnuailiana gave a village at *Leisenhill* and accordingly Nikuala became chief of a village of hundred houses. After the death of chief Vanhnuailiana, his children moved towards the west. However, Nikuala did not move along with the sons of chief Vanhnuailiana and said that his master chief Vanhnuailiana promised him the land between river Tiau and river Tuipui if he could protect them

from enemies. Therefore, Nikuala shifted his village from Leisen to Leithum, and from Leithum to Vanzau, then from Vanzau to Tlaikuang and from there to Bungzung, and Bungzung became a village of five hundred houses. There was a land dispute between chief Nikuala and Sailuaia chief of Dawn. In the conflict, Fanai and Sailo chiefs supported chief Nikuala.¹⁶

Encountering the British

During the expedition of the British to the Lushai Hills, Mizo heroes played an important role in countering the British. In this context, mention must be made about Zakapa who belonged to Fanai chief. In February 1891, C.S Murray, the then District Commissioner toured the Southern Zone of Mizoram. He reached the village of Zakapa with an army of fifty, they lodged in the Zawlbuk where young men used to stay at night. Then C.S Murray demanded a lady for which one lady came forward. Then Murray demanded another lady, then Zakapa refused him and said that there were no ladies for him, then Murray pleaded the wife of Zakapa. Murray also threatened to torch his village if he could not comply with his request. Zakapa did not comply with the request of C.S. Murray. Then Murray threatened to burn the barn (building in which grain, hay etc were stored) of Zakapa which was located about two miles from the village. Murray along with 30 soldiers went to the store of Zakapa to burn them. In the meantime, Zakapa and his heroes went to ambush Murray and his soldiers who were returning. Murray's army who were from Zakapa's village tried to inform about the situation to Murray by means of mirror's communication. Zakapa and his men blocked the sun by shawl whenever they tried to communicate and

finally the heroes of Zakapa killed those soldiers who tried to communicate Murray. Then they surrounded the soldiers who were at the Zawlbuk and burnt the Zawlbuk. Some of them escaped leaving their garrisons behind. In the meanwhile, C.S. Murray and his army came back, while they returned Zakapa and his heroes ambushed them, CS Murray also narrowly escaped.¹⁷

J. Shakespear who was District Staff Officer came along with many army to catch Zakapa and his men. At Khuangthing, J. Shakespeare apprehended Zakapa. Zakapa explained the whole reasons why they shot C.S Murray and his men. Then J. Shakespeare told Zakapa to tell the same thing over and over again in the process of judgement. Finally, Zakapa won the case and as such, C.S Murray was dismissed from his post and J. Shakespeare became District Commissioner of Lunglei. Hence, Zakapa and his heroes bravely defended women and face their enemies squarely. Considering the significant role they played for the cause of society, certainly Zakapa and his men were heroes who defended their women and their land from the invaders.¹⁸

Conclusion

Mizo heroes were the pillars of Mizo society since time immemorial. Chief victories against their enemies were largely depended upon the strength of their heroes. Heroes were not fence sitters. They jumped into action immediately if the need arose. They became role model for the entire community. The whole community showed profound respect for the heroes. For that reason, many young men strived to become heroes. However, heroes, in general were not proud and arrogant. Sometimes, they could be very humble and did a lot of sacrificial services for the community.

Nevertheless, all Mizo heroes were brave and courageous. They were in the frontlines in times of wars and hunting wild animals. They had a zeal to serve and protect the community and became role model for the community where they lived. They were fearless men in the true sense of the term.

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CHALLENGING COLONIALISM – THE LIFE HISTORY OF ZAKAPA

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Introduction

Colonialism – its forms and content is one of the most interesting aspects in the study of history. This interest is further boosted by the fact that India occupies an important page in the history of colonialism. Under colonialism, the colonial society is in subordinate or subservient position to the metropolis. ‘Unequal exchange’ and ‘unilateral transfer of surpluses’ are the basic features of colonialism.

Another important feature of colonialism is the foreign political domination which plays a crucial role in the colonial structure. The British imperial expansion in India was completed in the 19th Century. This period coincided with the British conquest of northeast India including the Lushai Hills – presently known as Mizoram.

Subjugation of any forms is vehemently opposed by any social set-up. The process of colonial domination had been

hobbled at every turn. The quantum of these opposition are however subjective. Even a primitive tribal society gave their utmost sacrifice to defend their native land from imperialist exploitation. These forces that challenged colonialism in Mizoram is the theme of the paper. And, the theme focuses on the life history of Zakapa.

Mizoram and British Colonial Expansionism

In Mizoram, the British imperialism do faced surmountable opposition. The bare fact that fierce opposition to imperialism existed in a hilly frontier region needs a deeper inquiry. Due to the wisdom and sagacity of some Chiefs and recalcitrant nature of the tribe against any form of subjugation, several British intrusions instead of resulting in a conquest turned out to be a mere expedition.

In 1760, the Nawab of Bengal ceded Chittagong to Lord Robert Clive of the East India Company. In 1765, the British (read the East India Company) invaded the Districts of Cachar and Sylhet and thus heralding their first contact with the Zo people.

Having crushed the powerful rebellion against its rule in India in 1857, the British power was at its peak in the 1860s. The British administration took vagarious steps to consolidate their stronghold in their Indian empire. In pursuance of imperial expansionist policy aiming to extend their control even in the uncharted frontier lands lying between Bengal and Burma competent officers, both civil and military were sent out¹. It is known that the independent nature of the tribe and dynamic leadership offered by some Chiefs are hurdles in British colonial expansion.

The British authority as early as 1883 received reports of the Mizo attempt to 'raid' Cachar, a British protectorate². Troops had been deployed to strengthen security and the colonial frontier³. In spite of numerous precautions, serious security lapses continued for the British due to the daring acts of the hill tribes. This necessitated the expedition of 1888-89. The Government of India stated that, "the object of the expedition is essentially to prevent raiding"⁴. Another bigger expedition was again decided to be launched by the Government of India on 11 September 1889. This was the famed Chin-Lushai Expedition. Bengal, Burma and Assam all took part in this expedition. These expeditions had completely changed the history of Mizoram.

The imperial super-power had traversed many tortuous terrains. With their vast experience, geographical settings were mere obstacles when they entered Mizoram. The independent nature of the tribe cultivated through their 'little republic' was a greater hurdle. Many heroes rendered a wholehearted opposition to colonial subjugation. However, it is a sad story of history that their heroic deeds and maneuvers were not decently documented⁵.

Many village Chiefs had vehemently opposed the British tax collection and their fortification. Being fed up with the foreigner's demand the Chieftainship Ropuiliani remarked, "It is for *pasalthas* (braves/warriors) to settle the matter"⁶. Mizo braves like Hnawncheuva were a constant menace to the British and their 'collaborators'. In 1891, Hnawncheuva and Dokulha were deported to Andaman. In Andaman, Hnawncheuva was imprisoned for nineteen long years⁷.

By the 1890s, the British government had the intention to keep their hold over Mizoram. They moved troops and supply along the Tlawng River. They consequently fortified Changsil, which was near Sairang. The independent Chiefs were not in a position to accept a fortification within their territory. They hold firm to resist the intruders at every instances. It was in one of these resistances that several Mizo heroes including Ngurbawnga and Khuangchera laid down their precious life.

The Life History of Zakapa

The great Fanai Chief, Rorehlova fathered Aithangvunga and Aithangvunga, also known as Samtawia fathered Dokhama. Dokhama had four children viz., Zaduna, Lianchema, Zakapa and Pazika. Zakapa married Khuangthluaii. They had four children – Lalsuakpuii w/o Kapthiauva, Thanchhuma– former Chief of Sailulak, Ngurchhingi w/o Lalsailova– former Chief of Lungleng (S) and Thangseia.

This was the period of internecine war between the Chhim (North) and Hmar (South) (1860-61). The Fanai maintained their neutrality despite being invited by both the party. In an attempt to woo Tawlmhliahi, one of the southern Chief, Lalthuama joined her at Khawnglung. However, the Fanai were adamant in maintaining their neutrality. After their stay in Khawnglung for a longer period, the southerner begins to deride the Fanai. They scorned them by saying, “We no more needed your Godmother, Tawlmhliahi and your *Selûphan*, take them back.” This mockery angered the Fanais. They therefore had no other option but to side with the North. And this too was the

prominent cause of Khawnglung Rûn. Tawlmhliahi was the grandmother of Zakapa. It has to be recollected that after her husband, Aithangvunga demised Tawlhliahi ruled at Khawnglung⁸.

In an attempt to reduce the consequences of the lhingtam of 1880, the Fanai conjoined at Lêng. After the breakdown of the Lêng confederacy, Zakapa and his younger brother, Pazika moved to Khawhri. This was assumed to be in 1882. When they moved to Khawhri, Zakapa ruled over around 400 households⁹.

Zakapa, Chief of Khawhri was the organiser of the Revolt of 1891 in the Southern Hills of Mizoram. He was perhaps the only Mizo chief who turned his arms against the imperial power, even after being subjugated by superior military might. Zakapa was an able ruler who displayed a real concern for the welfare of his subjects. The areas under his controlled are economically self-sufficient. He is best known for his bravery, courage and military skill. He possessed the real character of an independent chief, unwilling to kowtow to the whims of an alien power.

Tributary Chiefs of Zakapa

The greatness of a Mizo chief is often measured in the number of *khawpêr* (tributary chiefs/villages) under his rule. And the historic greatness of Zakapa was shown by the tributary chiefs that were under him. These tributary chiefs highly respected Zakapa and were with him even in stormy days.

The four tributary chiefs or villages that were under Zakapa were:–

- i) Lalthuama, Chief of Aithur/Chawngdini.
Lalthuama was the son of Sailo Chief, Vandula;
- ii) Lalchhuma, Chief of Lungsum. He was the son of Patlaia, Chief of Thingsai;
- iii) Dokapa, Chief of Keltan;
- iv) and, the Chief of Bemtar.

Khawhri and its tributary villages enjoyed peace and security under the able Chieftainship of Zakapa. Even the venturous Pawi and Sailos did not dare to attack them. The fraternity showed by Zakapa and his brothers filled other chiefs with fear. It was during this period that the power of the Fanai reached its zenith.

Mizoram and the Second *Vailian*

The British expeditionary force of 1888-89 or the second *Vailian* involves 1150 British subjects. They were preceded in their movement by a Survey Party under the command of Lieutenant J.F. Stewart of the 1st Leister Regiment. The ferocious Mizo attacked the Survey Party. This resulted in the death of Stewart, two British policemen and a sepoy. The imperial authority vowed to avenge this incident at any cost. The British sent the 9th Bengal Infantry under the command of Colonel F.V. Tregear to achieve the goal. C.S. Murray was the Assistant Political Officer and John Shakespeare was the Intelligence Officer.

Murray and Shakespeare retained their position in the expeditionary force. The force included 200 from Madras Pioneer, 250 from the 2nd Bengal Infantry, 400 from the 2nd

Gurkha Rifles and 250 from the 2nd Bengal infantry. They were accompanied by numerous coolies who carry supplies. The team also had two mountain guns. The final thrust of the British military expansion in Mizoram was after their successful conduct of the second *Vailian*.

Zakapa and the British Imperialism

After the establishment of the British military supremacy in Mizoram, revolt broke in the Southern Hills of Mizoram. This revolt was centred in Khawhri. It was “a result of injudicious action on the part of Mr. Murray (Civil Police), who was on tour with an escort of Frontier Police”.¹⁰

The British administration levied tribute and labour from the Mizo chiefs. The supply of labour was essential for construction works, carrying of supplies, etc. The demand of labour which rather was ‘forced’ was quite contrary to the independent nature of the Mizos. The concept was completely foreign to their social and political ideas.

Being subjugated by the superior British military might, Zakapa already took an oath of fealty. However, the people were still restive and unsettled. The chief politely agreed to supply the labourers demanded by the imperialist power. Later, instances showed that the lack of foresight of some imperialist officer aggravated the situation.

The British entered Khawhri on 8 February, 1891. The Superintendent of Police, C.S. Murray, accompanied by 50 frontier police, signallers and others under the command of Mr. Taylor reached Khawhri from their Chhimtuipui base. They were in a convoy carrying rations, arms and

ammunition; and a large amount of Government's money (Rs.2000/-). Zakapa '*coolies*' were carrying the loads of the convoy and Murray had the idea of further transport with the help of Zakapa's labourers. The later promised to supply labourers on the day but on the same night left his village for Lalchhuma's village which was half-mile away. On 9 February 1891, Murray sent for Zakapa and Lalchhuma. However, both refused to show up.

Being furious, Murray accompanied by Taylor and the interpreter went to Lalchhuma's village the next day. They found the two while they are in a conference in a Zawlbuk. Murray in an unprotocol manner ordered the chiefs to leave the Zawlbuk. He warned Zakapa of burning down his granary if he did not obey the order. Zakapa uneasily swallowed the humiliation and ordered his men to leave the Zawlbuk. He and Murray exchanged a heated conversation. When Zakapa and Murray left the Zawlbuk, Zakapa's men shouted and ridiculed Murray. Zakapa was willing to supply labours to the imperialist but not women to satisfy the carnal desire of Murray and Taylor. Furious Murray returned to Khawhri. The gulf between the two had widened. Both now realised that some sort of means to settle their enmity was looming.

Proceedings of the Lieutenant Governor, Sir Alexander Mackenzie confirms the statement of L.W. Shakespeare stated above. It stated that Murray's disgraceful conduct through his interpreter, a demand for two Mizo girls for himself and Mr. Taylor, the Superintendent of Police was the principal cause of the outbreak. Murray headed the force that had entered Khawhri. He was so emphatic in his

immoral and unjust demand that he even threatened the chief. In case of non-compliance of his order, he would forcibly snatch away the '*Rani*' of Zakapa and the wives of other chiefs.

Zakapa could sense the insecurity of his own wife who was on a four month pregnancy for her second child. Therefore, it was necessary for the tribesmen of the South to stand united in order to save the honour of their *Lalnu* (Chieftainess).

According to oral reminiscence, when the immoral demand of Murray was disclosed to the villagers, all the girls in the village hurriedly fled to the nearby jungle hiding themselves with a view to save their chastity¹¹. The village elders, finding themselves in a helpless situation, approached Aisuaka requesting him if he could offer his mentally retarded daughter to the Whiteman. Aisuaka took his daughter and his wife by the same night and departed for Rawpui, about 30 km away from Khawhri. This reflected how every Mizo is ready to protect the honour of their womenfolk.

Preparation and Events of the Revolt

Zakapa was an outstanding military leader and a strategist. He was well prepared to face the enemy. He meticulously planned for the movement of his *pasalthas*. One group fully equipped with guns were entrusted under the command of Pazika, younger brother of Zakapa. This group was tasked to ambush the British if they were to burn the village granary. The second group armed with guns, spears, *chempui*, etc. were commanded by Zakapa himself. They were tasked to attacked the rest of the British forces

encamped in the village. Their other target was to burn the village zawlbuk which was occupied by the *Vais* (foreigners).

After returning from Lalchhuma's village Murray left Subadar Sangram Singh with 20 men in charge of the baggages, supplies and the British money. He ordered to keep the men from wandering about in the village. He gave no further orders to the Subadar¹². Having done this he along with Taylor and 30 policemen advanced to destroy the granary of Zakapa at place now known as *Buhkang Muai* (hillock where rice was on fire) which is about two miles away¹³. They reached the granary where they found 13 *chhek-in* or storage filled with rice and allied agricultural products. The drastic incident of burning of Zakapa's granaries occurred on 10 February 1891. This clearly portrayed the level of cruelty of the imperialist forces. They were not men of honour but decadent policemen who were even willing to destroy the hard-earned provisions of the whole village thereby cutting-off the neck of women and children too.

On their way back, Murray and his team were waylaid by Zakapa's *pasalthas*. The British advanced guards lost their lives from the casualty of heavy gunshot that they received from every corner. Murray had a near-death experienced and Taylor was severely injured. Zakapa's forces were in large number. They have enough guns and weapons; and were positioned in all strategic locations. The British forces retreated and dare not to try and advanced further. They fortunately find an escape route through the precipitous terrain of the stream Pa-awh. In the confluence of Pa-awh and Tuipui, the British forces reconnoitred. They found that they had lost six men, including two signallers. This is one

of the most severe set-back that was inflicted upon Murray in his whole career. The British forces managed to reach Chhimtuipui at dusk. They reached their Chhimtuipui base at 4 P.M. on 11 February, 1891.

The fate of the Subadar and the twenty Policemen with him was no better than that of Murray and his party. On seeing the smoke and flames of their granary, Zakapa and his fifty *pasalthas* were in fury against the intruders. The enraged Mizo warriors burnt the village Zawlbuk occupied by the imperialist force. Four policemen were killed and many were wounded. One policeman lost one of his arms in the fight and the Mizos nicknamed him '*Banbula*' (man with no arm)¹⁴. After his retirement from the service of the imperial authority Banbula settled in Khatla, Aizawl¹⁵.

The Subadar and others who managed to escape from Zakapa village and fled to Aithur, Dotawna's village. From there they proceed towards Chhimtuipui and reached the British base on 12 February, 1891. The rest of the policemen who sustained injury arrived at the British base on the next day.

***Pasalthas* of the Revolt**

Darpawnga popularly known as Pawngvîna was one of the most well-known Mizo *pasalthas*. He was also infamous for his ill-tempered nature.

When Zakapa and Murray had a heated conversation inside the Zawlbuk, the British policemen sense danger. They attempted to send SOS signal to Fort Tregear and Fort Lunglei with a mirror using sunlight. Pawngvîna blocked the sunrays

with his *puan* (cloth). The signaller shouted, “*Het sala! chikni teriama, bhenchod!!*”¹⁶ Disgusted by their temperament, Pawngvîna thundered, “I will make you my *bawi*. I will cut you to pieces; I will cut you to pieces!”

Pawngvîna was remembered for his valour, courage and bravery. He accompanied Zakapa in the storming of the Zawlbuk and killed one signaller with his spear.

Another outstanding *pasaltha* of the revolt of 1891 was Aichhunga. When the village Zawlbuk was attacked by the *pasalthas*, Aichhunga slept in the middle of the only path to the Zawlbuk. This path was also the only escape route for those policemen who were stuck inside the Zawlbuk. Aichhunga challenged the British policemen, “Whoever dares cross me, I will cut-off his head.” He later rightfully named his grandson as Râlkhama (one who block the movement of the enemy)¹⁷.

Another *pasaltha* of Khawhri during Zakapa Chieftianship was Chhingbula Renthlei. He was around 20 years of age during the revolt and was one of the youngest warriors. He once saw a tiger devouring a deer. He approached the scene and whispered to himself, “Move away and let me have my share”. The tiger retreated unwillingly with a mild roar. He slowly uttered, “Do not roar so often, I will leave when I get enough”. And, he left the scene after he collected enough meat and the tiger continued to devour whatever is left.

Chhingbula never left Khawhri. He died on 1 September, 1944 and was buried in Khawhri itself¹⁸.

Besides, there were many *pasalthas* who had made the supreme sacrifice for their motherland. They had given their utmost best to save their country from the clutches of the colonial control. It is a sad part of history that their lives were not recorded. Their suffering and sacrifice in challenging and opposing the most powerful but imperialistic nation of the day will always be invaluable as ever.

Consequences of the Revolt

Murray was immediately transferred and demoted for his outrageous and unpardonable acts by the imperial authority. Lalthhuma a subordinate Chief of Zakapa surrendered himself to the British on 23 February, 1891. His village was burned on 1 March, 1891. Dokapa, Kapchhunga and Liankhama who were also accomplices in the uprising were arrested. However, they were liberally treated for their later good conduct.

Zakapa fled for his life and became a homeless wanderer. He for a long period had escaped being captured by the British. The British forces under Hutchinson, who marched from Fort Tregear burnt his village on 2 March, 1891.

Captain J. Shakespeare who was stationed in Fort Lungleh was entrusted by the British authority to capture Zakapa. Zakapa was finally arrested at Khuangthing, the village of his elder brother – Zaduna. It was with tremendous hardship that J. Shakespeare captured his target. Zakapa was brought to the court of the Viceroy in Calcutta in the presence of the Chief Commissioner. In the Calcutta Court, Zakapa and Murray presented their case. J. Shakespeare played the role of an interpreter for Zakapa.

Two nights after the arrest of Zakapa, Zaduna was arrested after a 10 hour march by Captain Shakespeare and Lieutenant Drake across the Tiau river.¹⁹ Zakapa's life was spared for his spectacular bravery and patriotic nature. He and Zaduna were sentenced to five years' imprisonment and transported to the Andamans. However, they were released after two years and they did good service on their return. Murray lost the case and was stripped of his rank. He was court-martialled and disposed never to step again on the soil of Mizoram.

After his release from prison, Zakapa returned to Mizoram and moved to Sailulak where he became Chief until his death on 28 December 1914.

Zakapa's village, Khawhri was given to Lalchhuma, son of Patlaia. After the death of Lalchhuma in 1945, his son Liannawla succeeded him. Liannawla transferred his village from Lungsum to Zakapa's village proper. He ruled there as a Chief till the abolition of chieftainship in Mizoram.

Conclusion

In dealing with the tribesmen of different ethnic background living in the torturous hills, the British were successful in some areas using 'carrot and stick'. They first crushed them with their military might and grant them rewards for cooperating with them. However, to the surprise and dismay of the colonial power, these policies bear little fruits in the case of the frontier hill tribes.

The remarkable challenge rendered to British colonialism by 'modest' hill tribe is still to see the light of the day. It is

rather unknown to the wider world that the independent nature of the tribe and dynamic leadership offered by some Chiefs are hurdles in British colonial conquest. Zakapa exemplifies and embodied the Mizo vehement opposition to foreign domination. He symbolizes the Mizo readiness to give and sacrifice everything in order to uphold their ways of living.

The colonial authority might act inappropriately in several areas which they have colonized. But, Zakapa showed to them that this will not work in the case of the Mizo. It is known in the pages of history that, no alien authority had made such demand to the Mizo again. Zakapa personifies Mizo passion to safeguard their dignity and honour. The British themselves have learned from the repercussion of Murray's action. It was not with despotic show of power but with benevolent acts that the British had struggled to win back the heart of the Mizo.

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**Z. HENGMANG,
FOUNDER OF THE PAWI-LAKHER
REGIONAL COUNCIL (PLRC)
AND FATHER OF THE LAIS
OF MIZORAM**

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The building up of a strong nation can be unequivocally traced back to the selfless sacrifice of certain great personalities. Behind the success of every great country or nation, there lies the enormously patriotic contribution of influential leaders. In fact, the narration of American Independence would be incomplete without mentioning the unique efforts of George Washington. It should also be recollected that India was freed from 200 years domination of the Britishers due to mass freedom movement, which was shrewdly pioneered by Mahatma Gandhi. Likewise, the abolition of the most hated apartheid practice and establishment of full-fledged democracy in South Africa is solely identified as the personal achievement of Dr. Nelson Mandela. In the like manner as the above mentioned leaders have whole-heartedly contribute their maximum capacity

for their country and people, Z. Hengmang had also selflessly contributed his utmost potential for people of the Pawi-Lakher Region. Therefore, it is not an exaggeration to name him as 'Father of the Lais'. The qualitative trait which could be identified with Z. Hengmang is that he was quite conscious of his ethnic identity but he propagated the ethnic identity without any chauvinistic appeal or communalist agenda. Judging from his all-round contributions and achievements, he rightfully deserved the title and the younger generation of the people of Mizoram in general and the Sixth Schedule Area of Mizoram in particular should also be aware of his valuable contribution.

Zathang Hengmang was born on 20th December, 1926 at Sangau in the extreme south-east of Mizoram. He was from Zathang clan and Zathang clan is one of the prominent ruling clans of the Lai (Pawi) community. His father was Kiauling Zathang and his mother was Zingdawi. His father was a descendent of the ruling family of Halkha (Haka), Chin Hills, Myanmar. During the World War I, many Lai (Pawi) young men of Lushai Hills and Chin Hills were engaged in the Labour Corps which was opposed tooth and nails by the freedom loving Lais. Opposition to engagement as volunteers of Labour Corps was opposed in extreme form with armed struggle by some tribes of the Zo ethnic group in Manipur, Assam, Chin Hills and other parts of Burma (Myanmar). The military battle for opposition to Labour



Corps was known as Kuki Rebellion and Zou Gal in Manipur, Assam and some parts of Burma and the same resistance was also bravely organized by the Lai tribes of Chin Hills. Consequently, a group of Lai young men led by Kiauling Zathang ambushed British troops on the bank of Hnahchang River which is located between S. Vanlalphai and Darzo. The consequential effect was that Kiauling Zathang could no longer stay in Halkha due to arrest warrant of the British Authority. So, he found a safe haven in the Lai (Pawi) area of the Lushai Hills. However, the Circle Interpreter (C.I.) managed to bluff him and the Tuipang Police arrested him at Serkawr. He was imprisoned in Sylhet for four (4) years. After he was freed from jail, he passed away in 1929, at the time when his only son, Z. Hengmang was only two years old.¹

Z. Hengmang was left as an orphan with his mother and his two sisters. His mother was converted to Christianity and they became the first Christian family of Sangau. He began his primary education at Cheural village nearby Sangau. After that, Christian Missionary, H.W. Carter took him to Serkawr. He continued his studies in Serkawr from 1935 till 1941 and he passed out his Class VI examination in 1941. After that, he joined the army and served as clerk in the Assam Regiment. However, to quench his unending thirst for serving in Navy, he joined the Royal Indian Navy (R.I.N.) and passed out the training with 75% but his ill health compelled him to be relieved as Medical Board Pensioner.² He returned to Mizoram in 1945³ and served as Primary School Teacher in a Mission School at Muallianpui village in 1946. With the invitation of D.A. Penn, Sub-Divisional Officer (S.D.O.) of Lunglei, he joined

as Circle Interpreter (C.I.) and was posted in Sertlangpui village. From Sertlangpui, he was transferred to Lunglei and it was his posting in Lunglei, which prompted him to devotedly opt political career for the survival of his community.⁴

In 1947, government servants from the Pawi and Lakher community who were posted in Lunglei requested him to contest the Lushai Hills Advisory Council election from Phawngpui constituency. They urged him that he could shape the political destiny of the Pawi-Lakher Region by involving in active politics at the required critical period. As such, he resigned from the post of C.I. and joined active politics with firm determination. He set out for his maiden political journey in Phawngpui area and met elders at Sangau, Vawmbuk and Lungpher. Subsequently, a convention was convened at Lungpher and a political party with the name Chin Association was formed in 1946. Ultimately he became the President of the Chin Association and he was also selected to be Chin Association candidate from Phawngpui constituency in the Lushai Hills Advisory Council election. The Advisory Council election was held on 15th April, 1948 and Chin Association candidate, Z. Hengmang was declared elected by a huge margin. He had polled 881 votes whereas his opponent, Aithura from the Mizo Union could poll only 251 votes. Along with him, Vako was also declared elected from the Lakher Area.⁵ The number of members elected to the Lushai Hills Advisory Council was 36 and L.L. Peter, the Superintendent of the Lushai Hills was an ex-officio Chairman of the Advisory Council. The Advisory Council used to advise the Superintendent on various administrative problems and development of the District.⁶

The first meeting of the Lushai Hills Advisory Council was boycotted by both the two dominant political parties of the then Lushai Hills, namely, the Mizo Union (M.U.) and the United Mizo Freedom Organisation (U.M.F.O.) on different grounds. The M.U. boycotted it, as it did not approve the appointments of the Superintendent, L.L. Peter as Chairman in the elected body whereas the U.M.F.O. boycotted it as it favoured joining Burma. To solve the vexed boycott issue, Mr. Nari Rustumji, I.C.S., Adviser to the Governor of Assam visited Aizawl. Taking advantage of the arising political development, Z. Hengmang and Vako submitted a memorandum to Rustumji, demanding Regional Council for the Pawi and the Lakher tribes in the extreme south of Lushai Hills and he positively responded them. They also further took permission from the Superintendent for formation of a political party and the Superintendent duly assured them that the Government would take adequate measures for safeguarding the interest of the Pawis and the Lakhers. Then, politically conscious leaders of the Pawis and the Lakhers met at Lunglei under the initiative of Z. Hengmang and submitted another memorandum to the Governor asking for formation of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council. They also resolved to establish a political party as permitted by the Superintendent. Subsequently, an Assembly was convened at Lawngtlai on 25th October 1949, which was attended by three representatives from each village of the Pawi-Lakher Region. (The Pawi-Lakher region comprised of the geographical areas of the present Lawngtlai District and Siaha District of Mizoram). The Assembly unanimously resolved and established a political party known as Tribal Union which later on came to be popularly known as the Pawi-Lakher Tribal Union (P.L.T.U.) and Z. Hengmang

was unanimously elected as the first President of the party. The party also resolved to pursue the demand for Regional Council of the Pawis and the Lakhers which had been started earlier by Z. Hengmang and Vako.⁷

The demand for district and District Council had been raised by Mara chiefs during British period where some Lai chiefs from Circle No. 18 also participated. Unlike the northern part of Lushai Hills and Lunglei region of the south Lushai Hills, there was no such anti-chief feeling in the Pawi-Lakher region. In fact, there were no chiefs at all who were excessively arrogant to anger the people to spearhead the anti-chief movement in the Pawi-Lakher Region. Chiefs of the Pawi-Lakher Region were politically aware of the things, happening around them. The Mara chiefs were said to be politically awakened by Captain A.I. Bowman when he visited Serkawr in 1944. As advised by Bowman, Chhohmo who was the Chief of Serkawr called a meeting of the all the Lai and Mara chiefs of Circle No.18 on 4th January 1945 and it was attended by 22 chiefs. The chiefs unanimously adopted a resolution for demanding District Council and accordingly submitted a memorandum to the Additional Superintendent, Lunglei on 4th January 1945. The chiefs assembled again at Serkawr on 3rd November, 1945 and decided to pursue their demand. Accordingly, another memorandum was submitted to the Superintendent of Lushai Hills at Aizawl in December, 1945.⁸ Thus, the movement which was initiated earlier under the leadership of Chhohmo was continued from the platform of the PLTU and Chhohmo was also part of the movement even in the demand for regional council. However, the initiatives and responsibilities for the movement were largely entrusted

upon Z. Hengmang. Chhohmo and Vako were also members of the Lushai Hills Advisory Council and they collectively pursued the demand for regional council with z. Hengmang, however, the main responsibility and leadership was entrusted upon as President of the PLTU party.

In the meantime, the Lushai Hills Advisory Council was changed into Lushai Hills Advisory Committee after one year of its existence in 1949. It is a worth-noting feature that Z. Hengmang and Vako were still accommodated in the downsized Lushai Hills Advisory Committee. However, Chhohmo could no longer be accommodated because of downsizing of the chief quota in the membership of the Lushai Hills Advisory Committee. Yet, the contribution of Chhohmo was also significant because he was the one who initially spearheaded the political demand for the region in the form of district. The P.L.T.U., initiated by Z. Hengmang vigorously pursued the demand of Regional Council for the Pawis and the Lakhers, which was finally achieved in the form of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council (P.L.R.C.) in 1953. Besides being President of the P.L.T.U. and member of the Lushai Hills Advisory Committee, he was included in the six members Regional Advisory Council, established for demarcating the boundary between the P.L.R.C. and the Lushai Hills District Council. In his capacity as President of the P.L.T.U. and founder of the P.L.R.C., he tried his best possible efforts to include all Pawi (Lai) villages of the region in the P.L.R.C. but he was not successful due to undue influence of the Mizo Union in some Pawi villages and lack of ethnic identity consciousness among the Pawi community of such villages. As a result, Pawi villages, namely – Lungleng, Muallianpui, Lengpuitlang, South

Vanlaiphai, Darzo, Thingfal, Thlengang, South Tawipui, North Tawipui and Sairep were included in the Lushai Hills District Council.⁸

The first general election of the P.L.R.C. was held in 1953 for electing Member of the Regional Council (M.R.C.). The P.L.R.C. had 12 seats, out of which 9 were elected seats and 3 were nominated seats in the first term. As a mark of respect for his genius contribution and being a founder, Z. Hengmang was elected uncontested from Sangau constituency and was also unanimously elected as the first Chairman of the P.L.R.C.⁹ It should also be recollected that many important legislations and laws were passed during his Chairmanship and some of which are still enforced in the present Autonomous District councils of Mizoram particularly in the Lai Autonomous District Council.¹⁰

Z. Hengmang was also elected again in the second term general election of the P.L.R.C. in 1958 and he was again offered the Chairmanship. However, he declined the offer on condition that younger generation should be given chance for learning administrative skill.¹¹ In spite of its separate existence, the P.L.R.C. was represented in the Mizo District Council by two members. As such, Z. Hengmang was elected as Member of District Council (M.D.C.) from one of the Region constituencies¹² in 1962 and he was an M.D.C. in the Mizo District Council till 1970.¹³

After completion of his tenure as an M.D.C. in the Mizo District Council, Z. Hengmang, on retrospecting the evolution and functioning of the P.L.R.C., was quite satisfied with his Herculean contribution for the Pawi-Lakher Region.

So, he thought of living a retired life in his native village at Sangau. However, the P.L.R.C. authority had urged him to continuously utilize his experience and capacity for development of the region rather than living a quiet and retired life. So, he positively responded the request and joined as Assistant Revenue Officer (A.R.O.) in the P.L.R.C. in 1971. With the trifurcation of the P.L.R.C. into three Regional Councils, such as – Pawi Regional Council, Lakher Regional Council and Chakma Regional Council on 2nd April 1972, he was automatically placed in the Pawi Regional Council. The three Regional Councils were subsequently upgraded as full-fledged Autonomous District Council on 29th April, 1972 and Z. Hengmang was promoted to Gazetted Group A as Historical Research Officer (now Art and Culture Officer) in the Pawi Autonomous District Council (now Lai Autonomous District Council) in 1978¹⁴ and he retired in December, 1993. He was also a Church Elder in the United Pentecostal Church (UPC) of Mizoram and he was an Executive Member of Mizoram Ex-Councilors' Association till his death.¹⁵

Z. Hengmang was a far-sighted politician, a devout religious man, genealogist, historian, writer and a great statesman. He wrote eight books¹⁶ which happened to be important sources of documents for the L.A.D.C. and two other district councils of Mizoram till now. Even after his retirement from active politics and government service, he did not retire from social life and church activities. To integrate different clans and sub-tribes of the Pawi (Lai), Pawi (Lai) Union was established on 30th April, 1994 and he was elected as Secretary, in charge of Art and Culture of the Pawi (Lai) Union General Headquarters on 20th February, 1995.

As a result of the initiative taken by him, 840 clans and sub-tribes of Pawi (Lai) have been found out.¹⁷

As an ethnic conscious historian and statesman, he was really concerned about preservation of the Lai ethnic identity, culture and language. Therefore, thinking it as the right remedial measure for preservation of the Lai ethnic identity, he took a great initiative in the formation of the Lairam People's Party (LPP) as a political party in 1996¹⁸ and he remained in the L.P.P. as a Senior Adviser till his death in 2004. It is an evidentiary fact that Z. Hengmang was the real founder of the P.L.R.C. because the idea to demand for Regional Council was shrewdly spear-headed by him, which he also had mentioned in his speech as 'Founder of the PLRC' on 8th November, 2000 at Saiha during erection of a memorial stone in remembrance of the departed leaders.¹⁹ However, some people unknowingly believed Tlanguia from Bualpui 'Ng' as the founder of the PLRC. It should be recollected that that when the District Conference election was conducted under the initiative of MacDonald, Superintendent of the Lushai Hills in 1946, no one turned up for voting due to boycott of the District Conference election by the Mizo Union. At this critical juncture, Tlanguia happened to be in Lunglei. So, he casted his vote in favour of C.Zochhuma who was his host. It is a notable feature that Tlanguia was the only voter, casting his vote and the candidate whom he voted was also elected. Yet boycott of the Mizo Union turned the District Conference into a lame duck political institution and the District Conference could not do any work as a legislative body.²¹ After that, there was no involvement of Tlanguia in the political movement or demand for Regional Council.

Therefore, Tlanguia had no role at all in the formation and creation of the PLRC and the single vote casted by Tlanguia in the District Conference had no link at all with the birth of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council (PLRC). It is an undeniable fact to admit that some leaders of the Pawi-Lakher Company at Lunglei contributed constructive ideas for demand of the regional council, however, the leaders who practically spearheaded the movements were Z. Hengmang, Vako and Chhohmo and Z. Hengmang was in the fore front among them too. As a matter of fact, the contribution of these three prominent leaders should not be forgotten by the Pawi and Lakher people and Z. Hengmang deserved recognition within the Lai community.

Besides being founder of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council (PLRC), Z. Hengmang was really concerned about the ethnic preservation of the Lai community. As such, he used to publish his views for preservation of Lai language, custom and culture in Local dailies of Lawngtlai, such as, Lairam and Phawngpui Express etc. He enjoyed four different pensions, namely, Navy, MRC, MDC and Historical Research Officer. He lived a simple life and his truthfulness, honesty and integrity could be proved even in his retirement life. He passed away on 28th September, 2004 at Lawngtlai leaving behind his wife, sons, daughters, sons-in-law, daughters –in-law, grand-children and his beloved people. He was cremated with full District Council honour on 29th September, 2004 in the Lai Autonomous District Council (LADC) Complex and a general holiday was declared by the LADC on his funeral day. It is a good gesture on the part of the LADC authority that ‘Father of the Lai community of Mizoram’ was respected with full District Council honour.

In retrospect his virile contribution, achievement for the region and community as well as his exemplary life, he rightfully deserved to be honoured as ‘Father of the Lais of Mizoram’. The fourth edition of *‘Hmasawwnna Kailawn’*, a book published by the Lai Reformation Forum (LRF) was also dedicated to Z. Hengmang as ‘Father of the Lais’. It is a thought-provoking question to ponder whether the District Council at present, particularly, the Lai Autonomous District Council is functioning according to the vision and expectation of the founder. Despite serving in different key political posts with financial management power, Z. Hengmang could maintain his integrity and clean image throughout his life. So, the present District Council authority and political leaders have a lot to learn from the life-style, honesty, dedication, integrity, clean image and principle based simple life of Z. Hengmang.

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KALKHAMA : THE NATIONALIST

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In constructing the colonial account of the Mizo identity and integrity, few men were better worth mentioning than Kalkhama, an intelligent, diplomatic leader of the so called 'Western Lushai Chiefs'. He was the third son of Suakpuilala, one of the great chiefs of Sailo clan. His influence and leadership was evidently recognized early by the frontier British officers. He inherited sagacity and wisdom from his father Suakpuilala, who was nicknamed '*the Grand Old Man*' by the British. His father Suakpuilala was able to form a strong confederation of the chiefs of western Mizo hills as he had twelve sons, all of them occupied separate villages as 'Lal'.¹

Besides them, there were other petty chiefs under his influence. As such, they secured almost unchallengeable position by the other clans in the western Mizoram.

During the early colonial encounter, the British realized the status of supreme leader enjoyed by Suakpuilala among this group and thus followed the policy of appeasement with

him. Even though he was actively involved in raiding the British subjects in the Cachar frontier, he was able to make good relationship with the British officials. On 16th January 1871, he was able to secure '*Sanad*' with Sir John Ware Edgar, the then Deputy Commissioner of Cachar, which no Mizo Chiefs had ever negotiated with the British government.² But Suakpuilala did not live long, he died in 1880. Before his death, he expressed his dying wishes to his sons that no chief will destroy their confederation but the British. Therefore, good relationship must be maintained with the British even if he died.

The situation soon changed when various Mizo chiefs committed daring raids upon the frontiers. Consequently, the government resolved to occupy and annexed the whole area. In fact, it was the British settled policy to link up the annexed area of Assam, Chittagong, and Burma with good and safe road. Mizoram was lying in the middle, unsettled, blocking the communication between the settled areas. The British government took the matter more seriously and the task of annexation and pacification of the hills was soon underway by 1890.³ With the death of Suakpuilala, his ablest and intelligent son Kalkhama immediately took over the leadership. Even though he was not the eldest among all his brothers, he was the leading spirit of the western Mizo chiefs, who were mainly the descendants of Suakpuilala or their dependants.⁴ All of them ruled separate villages independently of one another. But they were all related by blood and linked together in some sort of confederacy.⁵ They consulted each other under the leadership of the eldest among them in matters relating to warfare, boundary disputes, and common welfare of the

people and so on. By this time, Kalkhama was the eldest among them and so was the leader of the whole western Chiefs.

To exact the imposition of colonial rule in Mizoram, British authority appointed Captain Herbert Browne as the Political Officer of the North Lushai Hills.⁶ Despite the fact that he was given proper instruction of how he should deal with the native people, he announced three serious unnecessary impositions upon the chiefs and the people, which were incompatible and foreign to the custom and usage of the Mizo. He announced the punishment of two Chiefs - Lianphunga and Zahrawka, alleged to have committed daring raid on Chengri Valley and deposed them from their chiefship for a term of four years with a banned of having a village of their own; he also announced that revenue and forced labour should be insisted from every house; the more serious announcement was that revenue should be collected from each family.⁷ Browne's persistence in this regard was surprising, not only for the Mizo chiefs but also to the Chief Commissioner, who had given him proper instructions of how he should deal with the people.

Embarrassed under the impositions made by the Political Officer and unhappy with the treatment of Lianphunga and Zahrawka, the western Mizo made up their minds to resist. Kalkhama, who took a leading part in the anti-British movement, was later to explain what drove him to desperation that he had lost his head and resolved to fight when he heard the revenue collection was to be started from Western people and they would not even be allowed liberty

to hunt in the jungle.⁸ Revenue collection of Re. 1 per house per year was not a small amount at this time as circulation of currency was not a common feature.

On 1 September 1890, under the guidance of Kalkhama, at his own Zawlbuk, they discussed the measures to be taken and resolved that the initiative should be taken by them as the war had to be declared. They believed that if the British government took them unaware a lot of property would be lost, while if they attacked the forts and killed the sepoys and coolie no more men would be sent up from Silchar.⁹ The responsibility of each chief were formally assigned: Kalkhama's men, hundred in number, with the same number of Thanghulha's, Liankunga's and ten of Tulera's were to watch Changsil; Lalhrima's men were to attack the coolies on the road, while the men of Thanruma and Sailianpuia were to keep a watch on Sairang.¹⁰

After duties were assigned and arrangements completed, each chief was asked to keep himself and his men in readiness to strike at any moment. It now remained to follow the movement of Captain Browne so as to determine when and where to attack. As Thanruma's village was nearest to Fort Aizawl, he was told to keep others informed about the movement of Captain Browne, and all others were to take every opportunity to obtain whatever information they could procure for the success of their endeavours.¹¹ Thanruma was able to pass on vital information about Browne and the garrison at Aizawl on 8 September 1890.¹² In the early morning of 9 September 1890, Captain Browne left Sairang for Changsil with one clerk, two followers, twenty five coolies, one *dufadar*, and four military police

constables. Meanwhile twenty three coolies and two constables were on their way from Aizawl for Sairang, and one *havildar*, six men, and four coolies were likewise returning to their headquarters at Aizawl.¹³ All three parties left their respective posts about the same time.

The Mizo warriors made simultaneous attacks on these three parties. They cut off all the communication between each party, so were unable to assist one another. Captain Browne was attacked by the men of Liankunga, Kalkhama, Tulera, and Khama. Liankunga's men fired the first shot at Browne, but it was Saithawma's gun that hit Browne. Browne along with one servant retreated and managed to reach Changsil post but soon fall dead of his injuries.¹⁴ Aizawl was also attacked in strength. All of them were apparently taken by surprise. Virtually no resistance was offered by the police.¹⁵ All communications was cut off between the Lushai Hills and Cachar and between Aizawl and Changsil.

Relief was therefore, not immediately forthcoming until Lieutenant Harry W. Cole, commanding the Changsil Fort, somehow managed to send a boat overnight to Jhalnachera at the foot hills to inform the Chief Commissioner of Assam about the death of Captain Browne and general outbreak.¹⁶ A relief column of frontier police under Lieutenant Tytler sent from Silchar on 12 September 1890 were also attacked killed Lt. Swinton, a *sepoy*, and a *manji*. Somehow they reached Changsil and relieved the Fort on 28 September.¹⁷

Robert McCabe, who had distinguished himself in suppressing the Ao Nagas, was appointed to succeed Captain Browne on 26 September 1890.¹⁸ He overran one village after

another. But Kalkhama, held on defiantly: he constructed formidable stockades on the approach to his village from Changsil, the direction from which he anticipated McCabe's attack.¹⁹ Thus McCabe resorted to extreme violence, burning houses and dispersing the inhabitants, slaughtering livestock and destroying grain, to enforce obedience to British authority. Extensive destruction of villages compelled the people to seek shelter in the jungle where they were still pursued by British troops, and even their temporary shelters with all their belongings destroyed. In these circumstances Kalkhama realised the futility of further opposing the British.²⁰

McCabe was fully aware that Kalkhama was the acknowledged successor of Suakpuilala and the head of the western Lushais. He, therefore, sought to use Kalkhama's influence in inducing the remaining Western Lushai chiefs to surrender. Subsequently, the chiefs submitted to the authority one by one. Following their submission, McCabe placed the chiefs on trial. A number of them, admitting their guilt, had brought in some guns at the time of their submission. They were made to surrender more as a fine. Of these, Liankunga, Lalhrima, Hrangkhupa, Lalluaia and Lalsavuta were considered too young to be held personally responsible for the late rising; whereas Tulera, Thawmpawnga, Hmingthanga and Thatliana, were completely under the control of Kalkhama and Sailianpuia.²¹

McCabe, therefore, realised that he had only to deal with Kalkhama, Lianphunga, Sailianpuia, and Thanghulha, as independent agents controlling the actions of the whole of the Western Lushais. It was these four that required stern

action to be taken against them. But equally important was the need of at least one leading or powerful chief to collect the disintegrated unit of the Western Lushai families. He, therefore, left Sailianpuia out in order to utilise his power in controlling the people.²² As regards the uprising Sailianpuia had relatively a better record than the other four, though his men had taken part in the looting of the Changsil Bazar.

On the other hand, Kalkhama, Lianphunga, and Thanghulha were undoubtedly actively involved in that rising. Kalkhama was certainly its leading spirit and all the details of the plan for offensive measures took shape under his guidance in his *zawlbuk*. Lianphunga was a man of equally strong personal character, able, energetic, and quite capable of holding his own in any tribal community.²³ Thanghulha was of a turbulent nature and he was the one chief who alone led his men in the attack, for seven days, on Aijal and Changsil forts and on Captain Browne's party.²⁴ He was the son of Suakpuilala's brother Runphunga, and Kalkhama's camp follower. He never bore good will towards the British. In view of these facts, McCabe decided to deport chiefs Kalkhama, Lianphunga, and Thanghulha. The three were sent under escort to Tezpur on the 13 January 1891.²⁵ The other chiefs were let off after they agreed to the demands to surrender guns and to supply the required number of punitive labour.²⁶ Kalkhama and Lianphunga died in the jail while Thanghulha was later released. The rumour was that Kalkhama and Lianphunga committed suicide in the jail. There is no way to know for sure if they took their own lives though that was how it was reported,⁷ which is very doubtful.

Whatever may be the case, these brave chiefs dared to defy the invaders and as a result lost their position and even their lives. To the Mizos, they will always be the heroes.

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LIFE HISTORY OF TONGLHU (1830-1920)

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Introduction

Biography is an account of some one's life written by someone else and considered as a literary genre. Biographical writing is a very specific form of research. It takes the lives of individuals as its subjects. It concentrates on constructing and reconstructing personal histories and places them within their social, political and historical context so as to explore and assess the influences on an individual's life. Biographical study can be a simple chronological account of an individual's and sometimes take an in-depth analysis and enquiry to trace and explain the actions; choices, motivations and failure. It takes many forms such as published works on famous individuals to simple epitaphs on memorial stones. Its relevancy in socio-political, economy, culture and environment is not secondary. According to Robert Davies, biography writing begins with early years, social background of the family, professional background, the person's influential mentors, advantage and disadvantage of the economic position of

one's background, one's early mistakes etc. Constantin Symonolewiz, argues that

. . . biographical materials are useful for the study of history in general and the history of any immigrant society is in the first place a history not of institutions of particular groups, but individuals and their ways of social and economic adjustment to the new conditions.¹

In the absence of contemporary accounts life history finds difficulty. Generally, biography writing in Manipur and Northeast India confines to famous people - Kings, freedom fighters, artist and the life history of many more do not get due space, which could have different but positive implications in the society. Traditionally, narrating the life of heroes and great hero was a major component of educating the younger generations. This paper argues that the life history of tribal chiefs is having direct bearing with socio-economic and political history and the study on it will bridge a wide gap and fill up the loopholes created by papers and researches carried out so far.

History of Modern Manipur edited by Laldena while dealing about the Manipur frontier claims that the trouble created by the Kuki and Angami tribes were the greatest problem encountered by Manipur during Johnstone's tenure as Political Agent. The work specifically mentioned that in 1877 a group of Kukis attacked the border area of Manipur and killed many Manipuris. Again in 1879, at the instigation of the Samjok Raja, Tongu (Tonglhu) the leader of Chassad Kuki declared that they were no longer under the control of the King of Manipur. Though the rebellion was controlled

in time, it again flares up in 1880.² L. Chandramani's work, *The Boundaries of Manipur* dedicated his last chapter i.e. V (five) to the Chassad Frontiers. The work also claims that when Political Agent of Manipur established relation with the Chassad Chief, he was murder by a high official of Maharaja Chandrakirti Singh. However, he does not mention in which year such treacherous assassination took place and latter in 1879 December Tonglhu, Chief of Chassad declared himself independent of Manipur.³ Alexander Mackenzie's work, *The North East Frontier of India*, claims that the tribe of Chassad had been recently brought itself to notice and no mention of Kuki could be traced to any correspondence previous to 1878. It discusses the aggressions of the Chassad Kuki, the arrest of Manipuri sepoys by them; raids on Chingsaw and reproduced the accounts of Chassad incorporated on the survey report that Johnstone has made on the Chassad.⁴ Paokhohang Haokip's work *Khanglui-Khangthah Lakawi La* (Old and New Folk Songs) Imphal, 1997 is a collection of Traditional Songs on various themes. The work is dedicated to three types of folk songs each in part I and II and a folksong in part III that are having direct bearing with the Chassad chief. Interestingly, the oral songs depict the ups and downs of the Chassad chief and some of these folksongs centre on Tonglhu and his mother. The constraint of oral traditions of course is the lack of Chronology.⁵

Interestingly, most of the works mentioned above do not refer the Manipuri Chronicles where mentionof the Chassad chiefs, particularly Tonglhu and his Father Nehlam has been mentioned in connection with their revolt. Nepram Bihari, *The Cheitharol Kumbaba, The Royal Chronicle of Manipur*,

(Bihari, 2012: 242) L. Joychandra Singh, *The Lost Kingdom, Royal Chronicle of Manipur*, (1995: 156) L.Ibungohal Singh & Ningthem Khelchandra Singh's "*Cheitharol kumpaba*" (1989: 328) clearly mentioned the raids carried out by the Chassad to Lamkang and Haikang in 1852; the operations carried out by the Manipuri Rajas against the Chassad, the assassination of the Chassad chief by the Manipuri Raja on the 11 October 1855 at Chairel near Sugunu in the South of Manipur valley and the Manipuri Rajas and Chassad chief, relations can be seen. Mention of the Chassad in the Manipuri Royal Chronicle can be considered authentic for it was the only written contemporary accounts. The mentioned of Chassad chiefs particularly Nehlam and his son occurred almost regular soon they started waging war against the neighboring tribes and rebelled against the Manipuri Rajas. A study on such historical personality of the colonial regimes in Manipur is yet to come out in the field of academic.

Early life

In the absence of written account of their own, it is indeed difficult to establish a historical biography of an individual's life. Yet the oral tradition of the ethnic group, archival materials and select secondary works though scanty gives some clue. The genealogical tree of the Chassad reveals that he was the son of Nehlam, whose progenitor can be traced back to Songthu. His maternal line age cannot be ascertained as of now but oral traditions point out that he was born to Nehlam and Mangchin. A folk song compiled by Paokhohang Haokip reveals that Tonglhu and his mother Mangchin were among the captives following the attack on Chassad village at *Thengbung*.⁶ He had two brothers - Jamkhopao and Jamkhotong but how many sisters does he

have remains untraced as their family tree is always silent about the female. But popular folk song reflects the beauty and sobriety of two sisters, Chinting and Chinkhoneng as the daughters of Chassad chief and one of them got married to Tonglhu's contemporary man, Senpu, who belonged to his clans' men as well. This shows that the duo that figure in a popular traditional song could have been the sisters or daughter of Tonglhu.

During his early life, Tonglhu had to encounter two important events that shaped his destination. First, Tonglhu lost his father on 11 October 1855 at Chairel near Sugunu.⁷ Political Agent McCulloch for the first time established relations with Chassad and on certain occasions, Tonglhu's father was invited and under Political Agent's safe conduct, he went to the latter's office but was assassinated by the son-in-law of Maharaja Chandrakirti Singh due to jealousy in the Manipuri Royal palace. Second, the Sooktes, who were old and formidable foes of Manipur frequently attacked on the Manipur Southern frontier and in one of the attacked he himself and his mother Mangchin too were among the captives. Alexander Mackenzie claims that 'the Sookties, are old and formidable foes of Manipur, who made a series of raids during Nur Singh's (Nara Singh) time (1834-50) and taken possession of Mombee (Lonpi village), one principle village of Chassad in the Manipur south and Heeroway within the territory of Manipur. In 1856, they attacked on a hill village in Manipur and Maharaja resolved to send expedition in 1857; and in April 1859, they had carried out two serious aggressions, one at a Hankeep (Haokip) village near Sugunu, and the second one at Saitol.⁸ The number of casualty and location of Chassad village in the attack on

Haokip village indicated above could have been what the Chassad had taken down in their oral tradition popularly called *Chassad Kulgam*. In the skirmishes, the Sooktes burnt down all the houses besides leaving 15 headless trunks at the spot and taking 45 men, women and children for slaves. The oral traditions taken down in the form of folk songs compiled by Paokhohang Haokip, give us a clue that the Chassad had composed folksongs to spread the news and attracted the clan members of Mangvung to bail out Tonglhu and his mother Mangchin from the clutches of enemy tribe; the mother of Tonglhu being Mangvung's clan. Local traditions and folk songs composed over the tragedy of Sookte's raids clearly indicate that he and his two brothers were still bachelor by that time and the song composed by Lhingneng who latter on become the spouse of one of the Chassad chiefs mention how Tonglhu and his mother Mangchin were taken as captive by the enemy tribe.⁹ The death of his uncle Jamkithang and the killing or kidnapping of El-lang was perhaps one of the greatest setbacks for Tonglhu. In this regard, it can be conjectured that had he was a married man, the folksong composed over such tragic incidents might have mention his wife if survived from the gruesome attack, the later could have composed a song. Thus, the absence of such memories, that could have come out from the family members simply shows that Tonglhu was perhaps bachelor prior to the "Chassad Kulgam" or "Lhanggal" (Southerner War). Yet the event was perhaps another trial for Tonglhu after his father was assassinated. Indeed, his early life was trapped between two warring communities - Kamhow Sooktes from the Chin Hills and the Manpuri Rajas on the one hand. Perhaps for this reason he must have mobilized his people to establish a strong and

powerful chieftains to protect himself and his subjects from the two warring communities which we shall see in the following.

Who was Tonglhu's wife is unclear to us in the absence of contemporary account. In our enquiry, Lhaikhotin claims that Tonglhu got married with Chinkhonem but she could not accurately tell us the girls' clan and family background.¹⁰ If we look back the days he and his mother were in the hands of his enemy tribe, perhaps he might have married a girl from his maternal uncle for he and his mother gets redemption from enemy after his maternal families bails them out. In this case, what Lhaikhotin has conveyed and suggested to us could hold some ground.

Tonglhu was a dynamic chief. To protect his chieftdom and people from both the South Sooktes and North or Manipuri Rajas was perhaps the greatest challenges after two important events stated above. He tackled the challenges during his chieftainship by integrating his clansmen in to Manipur Hills. The Oral traditions maintained that he was able to mobilise to increases his subjects. The folk songs though full of prejudice indicates the increase of his subjects. It run as followed:

*"Lhanga vaimang hungkithang, Khovaipei,
Kakhosat khoson jounang nati me ;(2)
Satkho golnou thinghel jan kapeng".*

F/T:

Oh! You the King of Southern village, Khovaipei,
Will you be able to conquer my village,(2)
My village is populated like bunds of trees.

The historical developments following his father's death and frequent attack by the Kamhow tribes of Chin Hills, suggested that Tonglhu has shifted his villages from *Thenbung* range, near Sugunu towards the Manipur eastern part leading them to settle at the present Chassad villages' sites in Manipur, leaving behind many of his clansmen in the Manipur Southwest. Interestingly E.W Dun's work *Gazetteer of Manipur* also counted 700 household of Tonglhu's villages.¹¹

It is apparent that to establish a strong village and powerful ethnic group to meet the geo-political crisis and challenges, Tonglhu had to either sue for peace with the Manipuri Raja and or forge alliances with others to counter Manipuri Raja. The following folksong is reproduced here to assess the attitudes and mentality of Tonglhu's family background. Paokhohang Haokip opines it to be composed during the time of Thangkhup or Khupjam.¹² It runs as followed:

*Amilaaija Milengchan, Kibol ing;
Gunli Laaija.. Sumbuhpin Katouve;*

*Gunli Laaija.. Sumbuhpin Katouve;
Thangvan... Dongnol... Kulsamnun Kibol ling.*

*Kolni sotin... Somsel...dong Kot hong ing,
Haocha Mangcheng Kakhella..che umlou*

*Kolkeija Lang..Jammangpu kitin te
Sum le Seltho Thomangpu Kitinte.¹³*

F/T:

Being King in the society,
 Like big python reigning the River
 Like Python reigning the River,
 Administer, like the Queen of Hades
 Each day, I open my *Mithun* gate;
 All the rich men do not own, what I do
 My swiftness is like tiger in the cliff
 Like Millionaire and owner of hundreds of *Mithun* (gayal)

The first ballad or songs remind us of tribal pride and perhaps on hearing, such prejudice and insolent chorus, the Sooktes/Poittes have attacked the Chassad villages or it was composed after Tonglhu was able to mobilize his subjects. Otherwise, it can be construed that after his father's raids over the neighbouring villages mention above, proudness filled the heart of the author, composition of such chorus insulted their enemies leading to attack of Chassad and the second song is also depiction of tribal egos. The author compared his or her chiefs with powerful king; king of reptiles, who reign in the water, and queen of Hades (the village of death), thought himself or herself as the richest and compared with the fastest animal known to them and the most wealthy men. The author, might be exaggerated yet, if we look into contemporary records, the songs seems to be composed during the Chieftainship of Nehlam or Tonglhu, who had successfully waged war against neighbouring tribes. The information collected by Johnstone, during his enquiry on the plundered made by Tonglhu after he established alliance with Sumjok Raja may be reproduced to authenticate the information on the life of Tonglhu.

“At that time, Colonel McCulloch, the political agent, had direct political charge of most of the Kookies in Manipur. He had by a large expenditure of his private means and great tact, generosity, and kindness won over and settled down the early Kuki migrants, and Raja Nur Singh had wisely assigned to him their entire management. It might be expected, jealousy sprung up in the minds of many of the Manipuri officials, an effort was made to obstruct his arrangements. On a certain occasion, when the chief of the tribe, the father of the present Chief Tounghoo (Tonglhu), was coming to Colonel McCulloch by his invitation and under safe conduct, he was murdered by a high Manipuri official, the brother in-law of the present Raja. This abominable act, as might be expected, alienated the Chassads; and though they settled, as I have said, near the valley, they never appear to have been satisfied with their lot, and always complained the suppression of the Manipuris. In the end 1877, the Chassads with their tributary offshoots, Choomeyang (Thomjang), Chungle (Changlei), Moonoye (Molnoi), Komeyang (Kamjang), &c., began to move and determined to leave Manipur altogether. Choomeyang (Thomjang) apparently went first and crossing the Ungoching Range began to settle down in Burmese territory. The other villages began to follow suit, but, together with Choomeyang were told by the Sumjok Tsaubwa to settle in their present place, he adding significantly, “. . . if Manipur objects, I will protect you”. This is the story told by the Kookies themselves and corroborated by careful enquiries.¹⁴

According to Johnstone, the Chassad left Manipur South and move towards the Manipur foothills of the

Manipur eastern and thence to the present settlement in 1877 and some of his villages pushed towards as far as the Somra tract. Local historians like Chandramani Singh and other claims that, by 1862 Chassad settled in the foothills and the plains of Manipur but the Meitei chiefs do not want them to do so. As such Nehlam Kuki was murdered before he founded a powerful Kingdom. This conjecture is rejected by the events recorded in the Manipuri Chronicles. It maintained that Nehlam was assassinated on 11 October 1855¹⁵ and their mobility towards the eastern Hills leading to the present settlement was solely under Tonglhu's leadership. Local historians perhaps conjecture without consulting the Manipuri Chronicle, which is the only written contemporary account. In 1878, under Tonglhu's leadership 30 Chassad men arrested 6 Manipuri sepoys and Kabow men at Kongal Thana, to exchange with their subjects kept in the Manipuri prison. After 9 days of arrest they were taken to Sumjok Raja of Burma and were detained for another 26 days and after restoring their arms with them, they were taken to Yangngangpokpi, thana and handed over to a Manipuri Subedar along with a letter address to Major Thangal to affect the released of their men who were taken prisoner.¹⁶ The arrest of Manipuri sepoys might have been one of the fallout of Tonglhu's alliance with Sumjok Raja. On 17th February, the Chassad along with 5 Chattik Tangkhuls, waged war against Chingsao village, and killed about 45 and took away 3 people as captives. The event compelled the British to ascertain in which territory did lay the village of the Chassad Kuki. After an enquiry Johnstone proved that it belonged to the Maharaja of Manipur, and thence both the Colonial

administrator and Manipuri Raja were determined to destroy the Chassad.¹⁷

Perhaps, after series of plunder from the tribes of further south, the Sookties-Kamhows and Poites on the one hand and repeated expeditions from the Manipuri king, without much options the Chassad Chief Tonglhu wanted to remain under the Sumjok Raja. However, the territory they inhabit included the Tangkhuls as well. With such intention, they believed that once the powerful village, Chingsaw was attacked the Manipur eastern, (present Ukhru district) could have been merged to the Sumjok Raja, and all the Chassad villages would automatically come under him. Secondly, the Chassad Kukis might have lived together under a single umbrella and could mobilize themselves for protection from the constant tribal conflicts. If we retrospect the events in Manipur, many times, the Burmese waged war against the Manipur, and at one point of time, they were able to conquer even Assam. Perhaps, Tonglhu was seeking a more powerful king for his chieftdom's security. In his report to A.C Lyll Government of India, Secretary Foreign Department, C.J. Lyall, Officiating Secretary to Chief Commissioner of Assam stated that,

“... the recent events show that these surmises were not without foundation. The attack on Chingsow was made on the morning of the 19th February last, 20 men and boys, and 25 women and girls, were killed and a man, a woman and a girl were carried off as slave. It is supposed that Chingsow, which is a long way north of Kubo valley, was selected for attack being a powerful village; the punishment which

would induce all other Tangkhul or Lahupa villages to transfer themselves peaceably.”¹⁸

Chandramani Singh speculates that Tonglhu, chief of Chassad declared himself to be independent of Manipur at the instigation of Sumjok Raja in 1879 December end.¹⁹ V.V. Rao, T.S. Gangte and Ksh. Bimola Devi's work *A Century of Government and Politics in North east India Vol. IV: Manipur* defines the term 'Insurgency' as a very comprehensive that includes action against invaders not by conventional means and also an action against an establish Government and differentiated from Revolution and Rebellion.²⁰ The work included the disputes over Manipuri throne and trouble posed to the Manipuri Kings by the tribal like Sukte or Kamhou, the Lushai and the Chassad as the foundation for the emergence of insurgency in Manipur. V.V. Rao stated that there was no insurgency during the period 1891 to 1917 until the Anglo-Kuki War broke out in 1917.²¹ Mention of Chassad in the work is none other than Tonglhu's revolt against the establish government in 1878-1880. The arguments that Tonglhu had revolt against the Meitei King as a revenged for his father's assassination seems to be true yet, a deeper investigation reveals that politics of supremacy, the question of surviving and security always compelled the weak to forge political alliance with the weak to form a more powerful body or look forward to a powerful King or men to save them from the clutches of others. The Tonglhu's relation with Sumjok was no doubt a historic event. The attacked of Chingsaw was indeed the follow up of his declaration to merge his territory with the Sumjok Raja. Perhaps the idea of having or establishment of political alliance with some other political entity can be seen from

his ideology or the idea of having enemy alliance with enemy's enemy can be seen. Indeed, his historic declaration was suppressed by the Manipuri Raja after taking the opinion and assistants from the British India. Chandrakirti Singh had suppressed Tonglhu and the latter did not succeed in putting Kuki villages and some Tangkhul villages under Sumjok Raja but the spirits of getting rid off from the clutches of more powerful and more populous ethnic groups did not altogether vanish away and it resurfaced among the different ethnic groups living on the Manipur frontiers. The expeditions and plunders carried out by the Manipuri Rajas and Colonial administrator in a way can figure out the magnitude of tribal revolt. The Colonial terms 'Raid' used to mark the war waged by the marginalized communities for their survival and the term 'Expedition' to mark the war waged by the Government or Colonial administrators against the marginalized communities always projected or highlight the negative perspective of the marginal community, and sidelined the negatives and bias of the Government and or more powerful entity.

However, if we look into the Manipuri Chronicles, the relations between the Manipuri Kings and Tonglhu, was not bad altogether. Sometimes they carried out join plunders and even share the war booty. In one instances in 1862, Manipuri Maharaja sent Tonglhu and other Khongsais and paid Rs. 100 to the Chassad for carrying out the plunder.²² In 1878 Taibangjamba along with 60 sepoys, went to Chassad expedition for there was report that the Chassad made an attempt to attack Khonglo. Following the attack on Chingsaw, Wahengba Major arrived with 2 guns and 1000 muskets from Silchar, and in December 1888, the Manipuri

prince, Senapati, Sagolhanjaba, Maisnam Major, and Chongtha Major set out to Chassad expeditions, alongwith 1000 sepoys²³ and returned on 4th January, almost a month later. The Manipuri troops seized a gong, a tusk and Rs. 800 Tonglhu's possession and all the captives made by the latter were released.²⁴ Tonglhu was arrested and taken to the Maharaja. The Manipuri Maharaja gave Tonglhu, a Silk coat and sends him to his village and in the following year, in 1889 the latter also offered a hide of rhinoceros to the Maharajas.²⁵ The gifts and presentation between Tonglhu, the Chassad Chief and the Manipuri Raja, M. Surchandra Singh indeed became a historic events and memoirs between the hill and valley and continues till Maharaja Bhudachandra signed merger agreement to the Indian Union on 21 September 1949.²⁶ According to V. Lunghnema and other local historians, Tonglhu received tributes from the neighbouring tribes. Perhaps tributes could have been a return for lending protections to weaker and inferior villages during threats and taxes paid to him by his subjects. Oral traditions which are current among his tribes and others asserted that, whenever he went to Imphal, at the Royal Palace, he used palanquin for his journey and his loyal subjects and attendants always stood behind him.

Later part of his life

Tonglhu had provided shelter and protection to the Manipuri Raja and his party in later part of his life, following a false promised made to the latter by Moirang Tolchou. In 1891, after the British forces defeated the Manipuri forces at Khongjom, the Maharaja, the Jubaraja, the senapati, Shamuhanjaba, Jilla ngamba, Chingakhanba Nongthonba,, Maisna Luwang Ningthou, and Chongtha Ayapurel, major

with 200 men escaped to Chassad via Porompat. Moirang Tolchou subedar had promised to guide the Maharaja and team up to Khaki (China) and after an agreement was reached, the Maharaja gives him about three thousand *sels* (Rupees) but the former (Moirang Tolchou) disappeared and was not able to trace by Maharaja and party.²⁷ William Shaw maintained that Sana Koireng a Meitei King once fled to Tonglhu seeking protection following the Manipuri War of 1891.²⁸ He also maintained that the later could not give protection. Contrary to the Shaw, local tradition and Manipur Chronicle mention how the Manipuri king and party had took shelter at Chassad following Moirang Tolchou's betrayed. Stated that Tonglhu had given protection and shelter to the Manipuri Raja and party at the time when they were cheated and betrayed by Moirang Tolchou. As a chief, he tried his best to preserved and protect his territory and forest resources. In one instances on the 23rd September, 1895, Tonglhu came to Political Agent's office and lodged complain against Moirang Tonjao, raising objection to the carriage of Teak Timbers for the residency and accordingly, Political Agent (Bara Saheb) called Moirang Tonjao and took up Tonglhu's case. Tonglhu was put jail and his followers were ordered to bring up timbers to Chassad.²⁹ As a chief, he acted as an advocate for their subjects and clansmen. The complaint he lodges also suggested that he was bold and still strong until 1895.

V. Lunghnema's *Mizo Chanchin* draws the year 1897 to be the end of his chieftainship. Contrary to this speculation, archival sources claims that by 1915 he invited Lhukhomang @ Pache to be his successors when there was none to succeed him after his own son had died. In his confidential letter

D.O. No. 5.C.to B.C. Allen's special officer (Shillong, dated 17th March 1917), H.W. Cole stated that Lhukhomang chief of Chassad has lived most of his life in independent territory (Somra Tract) but succeeded his uncle Tonglhu about two years ago.³⁰ A ballad composed by Lhukhomang in Kohima Jail in 1919, quoted in Tarun Goswami's Kuki Life and Lore however suggested that Tonglhu was far away from prisoners and do not indicated his death. The ballad runs as followed:

*"Upalhun le Tonglhu la vengin la?
Mitin kaina mahui mang gahdong tan,
Mitin kaina, Kahui mang dong jongle chun
Mitin pen na Aisante kitinte."*³¹

Free Translation:

The two old and elder Palhun and Tonglhu are now
in distant place;
You make even ask the chief administrators of all the
people (Kohima)
Even if you asked them he would also reply that if is
the chief of Aisan.

The ballads indicate that Tonglhu was still alive till the end of the Anglo-Kuki War. Perhaps he was too old to shoulder the Chassad chieftainship and installed Lhukhomang as chief at Chassad in 1915. It is not possible to bring out a concrete date of his last days, in the absence of authentic sources. The death of one of his cousin Sempu of Somra Tract, a lesser Chassad chief in importance who died during the Anglo-Kuki War, has been recorded and so far no record on his death can be seen. This suggests that he must have died after the Anglo-Kuki War in about 1920.

No doubt further research could explore on concrete date for it. The Colonial administration no doubt appreciated on the mode of transferring chieftainship without any hurdles and did not disturb amongst his successors. We can certainly draw to a conclusion that he invited his legal successors and died at home peacefully, though we are not able to give the precise date and time bracket shown here is only tentative.

Conclusion

Tonglhu descended from Shongthu. Many of his ancestors were full of egos and pride. His father was born and brought up in the present Northern Lushai hills and following the death of Lalsavunga and his allied Lushai Chiefs move towards further North Lushai Hills, now called Phaileng and thence to *Thengbung*. Following the death of his father and the frequent attacks and raids carried out by the Kamhow Sooktes from the Chin Hills, Tonglhu was able to raise his household by integrating his clansmen. This hold true if we look from the population disperses after they left North Lushai Hills from 1830 onwards if archival sources are correct. The descendants of the Chassad chiefs were mostly found in Manipur and were not in Assam and Nagaland to a great extent. Integrating his clansmen was perhaps his strength to withstand his enemies and sometimes earn respect from the Manipuri Rajas. Whenever, the Manipuri Rajas needed shelter, the Chassad and other Kuki chiefs gave protection. The information available to us suggests that Tonglhu had a tough time in adjusting himself with the geo-political situation of his time. To overcome the threats, he forged alliance with Sumjok Raja and started his *pan Kuki movement* by suppressing Chingsaw. However,

the combined force of British India and Manipuri sepoys easily suppressed his revolution or insurgency movement by looting Rs. 800 from Tonglhu's possession, gongs and all other wealth that enables him to mobilize his people.

The life of Tonglhu also depicts the dynamic relations between the hill and valley during the colonial period. The Manipuri Rajas and Tonglhu often jointly carried out plunders and shared the war booty. The relations between the Manipuri kings and the Tonglhu reveal that for some time the latter became the fiefs or feudatory chiefs under the protection of the former following "*Chassad-Kulgam*" and on failure of his pan-Kuki movement. Tonglhu continued his father's policy of expansion, but due to constraint posed by the Manipuri King, he was determined to revolt against the latter after having alliance with Sumjok Raja. As such, he declared himself independent of Manipur by end of December 1879 and waged war against Chingsaw with the intention that the news of which would convince others to join the Chassad in integrating with the Sumjok Raja of Burma where many Kukis and Tangkhuls were living there. Though Tonglhu had given up his movement, the idea of integrating inhabited areas on the basis of ethnic affinity resurface after a century with the formation of insurgency group in the Manipur Eastern part. It is a social problem to be addressed by the state and non-state actors.

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SAIZAHAWLA

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The concept of hero was first found in classical literature. It is the main or revered character in heroic epic poetry celebrated through ancient legends of a people; often striving for military conquest and living by a continually flawed personal honor code. In the traditional society, a hero is a person, who is not necessarily born with superpowers or 'special powers' but one who conveys the qualities/good actions of a hero: courage, strength, humility, perseverance and tolerance and often sacrificing his own personal concerns for some greater good.

Saizahawla- A young man

Saizahawla is a well-known Mizo hero. There are different opinions on Saizahawla's place of birth. Some are of the opinion that he was born at Zawngin village while others are of the opinion that he was born at Kawlkuhl. However, there was much opinion that Saizahawla was born and spent much of his time at Khawruhlian village,¹ under the chiefship of Pawibawiha² (the village claimed themselves

to be 1000 houses, R.B. McCabe wrote that the village consist of 712 houses and 3460 people). His father is Chalpua Hmar and his mother is Tuahpuii Hmar. He married Thangzingpuii, who is said to be a woman of patience and beauty.³ From the documents and records of the Expeditionary Force (1871-72, 1889-1890), it appears that Saizahawla was born not later than 1860. It was believed by some writers that he was born during the North-South conflict, i.e between the years 1856-1859.⁴ Therefore, writers tell the year 1858 as his birth year.⁵

Since he was a child, his uniqueness was seen in his extraordinary physical strength. He was so big that his ribs could not be counted as it was all joined together; when he learnt to stand grabbing support as a child, he was able to seize the hair of a dog licking him and threw it on the floor.⁶ According to Liangkhaia, Saizahawla was one the most famous *pasaltha*⁷ during the East- West conflict (1877-1880), and also during the war with the *Hmar* (1887-1890).⁸

Saizahawla grew up to a healthy and strong youth, but he hid his strength until he attained the age of maturity. This is said to be because strong persons were afraid of being bewitched by the witchcrafts. It was believed that persons who are strong than ordinary people were often targeted by the witches.⁹ This shows that the Mizo celebrated physical strength. When he attained the age of a family man and just before he got married only that he showed himself at *Zawlbuk* ¹⁰. He became the champion of wrestling at *Zawlbuk* and the chief, Pawibawiha used him as his right-hand man in his tours.¹¹ Apart from his strength, Saizahawla was popular for his modesty and fun-loving nature. Due to his

love of jokes, at certain times, people took him to have mental problems.

Saizahawla – *Pasaltha*

The war with the Hmar was between 1887- 1890 when Saizahawla was in Khawruhlian. Some Hmar men from the boundary of Manipur attacked the village, killed a man named Ngurdailova and took his head. The villagers chased them but could not catch him. Saizahawla was not willing to return, he pursued and secretly followed the attackers and reached the Hmar region. On the way, after passing the Parvachawm village, he saw a man from Leisenzo village that was busy cutting trees for a jhum. He could easily shot the Hmar attackers but if he acted right away, the sound of the gun would be heard by the youth who worked on the other side of the jungle. Cleverly, he shot the man just when the latter fell the tree down, the sound of which to overshadow the exploding gun-fire. However, the youth from the other side heard it and when he asked what he shoot, he answered that he shot a tiger. Saizahawla knew that if he returned to his village immediately, he would be chased and therefore, he hid near the Leisenzo village with the head. However, the youth ultimately found out the fact and spread to the villagers. The villagers searched and chased but could not catch him. This is because it was already dusk and Saizahawla, himself was among the searchers; he spoke and understood Hmar language, and used to tell the searchers a wrong direction. Escaping from the villagers and hit throughout the night, he went back to his village Khawruhlian at dawn with the head of his victim. He spent three nights on his way home. One night, a tiger came and had him as prey; he kept his severed head between his thigh

and sat all night long, and that the head was beginning to stink and he felt headache in the morning.¹²

When he reached his village, Saizahawla was accorded a warm welcome by the whole village. The mother of Ngurdailova spread a new *pawnpui*¹³ for him to sit on. His neck was full of *arkeziak*¹⁴ and the chief's wife Rohlupuii honoured him by tying *thihna*¹⁵ around his neck, and this is believed to be the greatest honour received by an outstanding and extraordinary hero.¹⁶ The chief honoured him in such a way that he allowed him to choose the jhum before the rest of the villagers¹⁷ and also allowed him to construct a house wherever he wanted.¹⁸

Again during the war with the Hmar, he went out for campaign to attack the Hmar with his two friends Khawzathanga leh Ekchhetea and reached Pherzawl village. Saizahawla let his friends stay at the outskirts of the village and stealthily entered the zawlbuk and slept among the men. He secretly took the best three guns, poured water into the rest and gave one gun each to his friends. When they were about to reach their village, the two friends suggested that they would tell the villagers that due to distance they could not bring their victims' heads and got only their guns and that their chief was always ready to prepare and organize *muallam*¹⁹. The two friends made a condition if anyone smuggled out their secrets, he would be penalized with a mithun. Saizahawla remained silent and the two friends took as he agreed. When they reached the village, *muallam* was about to begin but Saizahawla refused to participate, saying that he was ashamed to perform *muallam* without killing an enemy and the two friends were really embarrassed.

When the two friends asked for a mithun for splitting out the secret, he simply said that he had already gave them a gun.²⁰ This clearly shows that Saizahawla was a man of dignity, who loves truth.

The East and West conflict (1877-1880) was waged between the descendants of Lalsavunga and the combined Vuta and Manga's descendants.²¹ Being a fight between brothers, they compromised that no hit and run tactics would be resorted to but direct confrontation.²² At this time, with his friend Vungtawia, they vowed not to be the first to retreat during a seize of the wounded tiger. When Saizahawla unfolded his clothing, Vungtawia told that he was retreating by one step. Being branded by his friend as having retreated, he decided to raid Hmawngkawn on his own without Vungtawia. When he reached Hmawngkawn, he opened fire at the fortified hut and shouting at them to shoot him as he was not a run and hit attacker. The villagers fight back and pursued him but he fooled them by leading them to another direction.²³

Before settling at Khawruhlian in 1885, Pawihbawiha settled at Selam and Sesawng in 1872. During the Lushai Expedition of 1871-1872, there was an open fire between the Cachar Column under Edgar and Pawihbawiha at Selam on 25th January 1872, where Saizahawla played a great role. However, Selam was occupied by the British on 2nd February, 1872.²⁴

Following the Second Lushai Expedition of 1889-1890, the British began to fortify their settlements at Aizawl and Changsil and this was detested by the Mizo. During the

campaign of this Expeditionary Force, the Mizo prepared themselves to stage an ambush at Changsil. The descendants of Lalsavunga, including Pawihbawiha fought against the British. Saizahawla, being a *pasaltha* of Pawihbawiha participated in the resistance of the British; he cracked a joke saying that he was afraid of the troops with their slanting hats and that they used to lay down the moment they were fired upon. He laid near the root of a tree and would not open fire. When they massacred all the men, he ran towards the boat, captured two guns and gave one to his friend Lalzika.²⁵

Once a tiger roamed following the course of Tuivawl river and the three friends probed for crabs with torches. When Saizahawla heard of this, he himself went after it. When the tiger was within a striking range, he threw his torch on to the face of the tiger. The tiger was quiet from that night on. When the people identified the spot, they noticed the footprint of the tiger on the sand was crushed with pieces of Saizahawla's torch.²⁶

Once a huge buffalo and a big tiger were fighting which resulted to the death of buffalo. Saizahawla reached the spot first, he cornered the tiger and thrusting the tiger to the ground with the tip of his gun at its throat he shot the tiger dead.²⁷

Saizahawla – In Service of the Village

Other than being a *pasaltha*, Saizahawla occupied an important position in the society at Khawruhlian. He was an important member of the chief's council. He was the priest of the village. In performing his duty as a priest, he is always ready with the materials and stuffs for sacrifices. His

uniqueness in this is that, he never attended a sacrifice for the sick when he was called by a mature member of the village but when he was called by children with sign languages, he would immediately go without making any excuses even in the midst of his work. So, whenever a sacrifice is needed for a sick person, people would send children to call him.²⁸ This also shows the importance of children in the traditional society. He is said to be well acquainted with medicinal plants and this greatly helped him in performing this duty.²⁹

At the same time, Saizahawla was the blacksmith of the village and he used to make and mend agricultural implements and war weapons for the villagers. It was in his mending of tools that his strength was being bragged about. He used to be assisted by some children and whenever the children were amazed by his strength and uttered ‘Wow! He really hit it hard,’ Responding the children, ‘Wow, wow, wow!’ Saizahawla would hit the iron harder than before. Continuously responding with the children, he hit the iron so hard that the almost finished weapons needed mending all over again. It was in this sense that his wife even said that he acted childish than even the children.³⁰

Saizahawla – A Famous Strong Man

Since long time ago, there was a big *Chawilung*³¹ in front of the zawlbuk at Khawruhlian; it was so big that no one made an effort to lift it. At one instance, Saizahawla used it as a shot put for three continuous nights. When he was told that the stone was a *Chawilung*, he acted as if he could not lift the stone. Another similar incident happened at the village of *Chawilung* after the war of 1877-1880 between

the West and the East; Saizahawla lifted and threw the big stone which was placed in front of the Chawilung zawlbuk. When he was told that it was the *Chawilung* of the village, he again acted as if he could not lift it.³² Though this shows the strength of Saizahawla, at the same time, it also shows that he was deeply imbibed with the spirit of *Tlawmngaihna*³³.

The chief of Khawruhlian, Pawihbawiha was once about to toss a gun before the *Khuangchawi* feast. The young men whispered to themselves, "Saizahawla would surely get it. Let's try to snatch it from him by forcing him down with all our bodyweight, and we shall all share the ownership of the gun".³⁴ They selected the ten strongest men from among the village of 1000 houses but they could not beat him and the gun fell into Saizahawla's hand.³⁵

One incident which made Saizahawla famous in wrestling was when he wrestled with a group of young men from Zawlnghak, a village of 1000 houses. The wrestling went on the whole night, and one by one, Saizahawla defeated them and the youth of Zawlnghak even claimed that he is not a human.³⁶

Once there was an incident at Aizawl; Saizahawla and his friend went to Aizawl and at the same time Thanhranga, a Pawi, from the village of Chumte was in Aizawl to collect commodities. They met at *Vai*³⁷ Hrangkima store, presently, *Buangthanga dawr* (store). Noticing their big body size, Hrangkima felt like watching them wrestle against each other. He gave them an iron rod and said "Hold on to this rod at both ends and try to snatch. It will belong to the one

who can snatch it". They then, both exerted their strength trying to snatch the rod. After a while, Saizahawla said, "Pal, we are drawn, lets break it into two in the middle". Thanhranga answered "Let's try once more", and the pull continued. Saizahawla won by holding only with his left hand.³⁸

When Queen Victoria died in 1891, the then Superintendent³⁹ summoned all the Mizo chiefs together at Aizawl. On that occasion, the Superintendent tossed a rod of stone breaker, Saizahawla and a southern hero struggled against each other to own the rod. Time had passed before Saizahawla exerted his most, but after sometime, he won and acquired the rod.⁴⁰

The Superintendent summoned seventy chiefs at Aizawl in honour of the coronation of King Edward VII in 1901. He arranged a tug of war between the Mizo chiefs and the strong Punjabis. Among the Punjabi, there was a strong man called *Vai* Saizahawla, who constructed a bridge over the Tuirial river. When Saizahawla relaxed a bit, the Mizo fell forward, and when he was told that they were about to cross the line, the Punjabis fell towards them, and when the Mizo were about to win with the strength of Saizahawla, Manding Putara (Lt. Col. Lock) stopped the game.⁴¹

Saizahawla moved to Seling from Khawruhlian. While he was at Seling, he once carried a quintal of rice with cucumbers on the top. Two Assam Rifles men tried to snatch the cucumber. In anger, Saizahawla lifted them with his arms and hold them and continued to walk just like the way he walked before. Again, at Seling, he met a group of men about thirty in number, trying to pull a log up to the

road from down below. They asked Saizahawla to help them who pulled it up all by himself.⁴²

Conclusion

It seems that Saizahawla spent his last days at Seling and worked at PWD Bangalow as a house keeper and cleaner. The year of his death is believed to be around 1910. His tombstone is still standing at Seling Lungsen site. It was speculated that he met his death having been poisoned by the Hmar. It was speculated that his actions on Hmar made them resentful and they always tried to retaliate. Saizahawla got three sons named Thanama, Thanseia, Thansanga and one daughter, Lalzawni. Thanzama died at the age of 14 and Thansanga is handicapped due to a cyclone; however the latter had a son named Saidawla, whose descendants presently settled at Vairengte. Thanseia had seven children and his descendants settled at Tuikual, Aizawl.⁴³

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- 11 HRK Lalbiakliana , op cit., p.77.
- 12 ibid., pp.79,80; K. Zawla, op.cit., pp. 272,273; *The Mizo Heroes*, op cit., pp.32,33; KC Vanlalruata, op.cit.,pp. 89,90.
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CH. CHHUNGA : A TYPICAL MIZO POLITICAL LEADER

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There are many politicians in the world. Some are trained politicians and some are born politicians. Ch.Chhunga was one of the born politicians the Mizo have. He was the first Chief Minister of Mizoram, born on 12nd November 1922 at Tlabung (Demagiri). He was the one and only son of Pu C.L.Thianga and Pi Vanthangpuui. His birth name was Chalchhunga. He started his schooling from Kolasib and completed his Lower Primary in 1934 from Aizawl. Again he completed his Middle English from Aizawl Boy's M.E School. In 1938, he went to Shillong to continue for his high School and studied up to Cl. X at St. Anthony's High School. While studying Cl.X, the II world War broke out. Before completing his Cl. X, he joined Royal Indian Navy as Wireless Operator in July 1941 without informing his parents. When his parents learnt that their son had joined the Royal Indian Navy, they were not happy and asked him to leave. Being a very obedient child, he tried every means to leave it and went back to his parent but the British

Officers did not permit him. However, he played one trick and always failed in the exams. At last, he was allowed to leave the Royal Indian Navy. In 1942, he once again joined St. Anthony's School and completed his matric in 1943.

The first time he tasted politics was in 1944 when he, along with H.Vanthuama and his tribal friends at St. Anthony's College founded the 'Hill Students' Union' to help the hill people. From this time onwards, he got interested in politics, and whenever he came for holidays, he visited the nook and corner of Mizoram and talked about politics.

Formation of Mizo Union

To relief the people from the burden of the chiefs and impressed labour (*phutluihkuli*), R.Vanlawma approached the then Superintendent of the Lushai Hills, A.R.Macdonald to give permission to form a political party on 9th April, 1946 which the Superintendent readily gave it. Thus, the first political party in Mizoram was formed under the name of "Mizo Common People Union". Later, it was changed to "Mizo Commoners Union". However, many of them thought that they were not included. Then, it was later changed to "Mizo Union". As the main policy of the Mizo Union was to abolish chieftainship and impressed labour, most of the Mizos were ready to follow its leaders. The Union has their slogan "Mizo Union.... For My Country". Even during that time, R.C.Chhunga (as he was then known) and his friend, H.Vanthuamawere very interested and wanted to join the Union. However, since his father wanted him to continue his study, R.C.Chhunga did not join the Union but his friend joined it. Thus, R.C.Chhunga did not directly involve in the

beginning of Mizo Union politics. The Union had its first General Assembly at Aizawl Boy's M.E. School on 26th May, 1946. The followings were the elected leaders:

President	: Pu Pachhunga
Vice President	: Pu Lalhema
General Secretary	: Pu R. Vanlawma
Asst. Secretary	: Pu Lalbuaia
Fin. Secretary	: Pu Lalhmingthanga
Treasurer	: Pu Thanga

Being very interested in politics, R.C. Chhunga and his friend, H. Vanthuana could not clear I.A. Exam. Then in 1948, he married Lalrothangi and had 11 children (4 male and 7 female). Taking the word "Chal" from his father's name, all his children's names also begin with "Chal".

Due to Politics, Ch. Chhunga has to change his style of writing his name from 'R.C. Chhunga' or 'Chalchhunga' to 'Ch. Chhunga' ('R' stands for Ralte clan).

In the Mizo Union General Assembly in 1951, Ch. Chhunga was elected as the President of the Mizo Union. There are many instances in which we find the peculiar character of Ch. Chhunga which made him a peculiar/typical leader among the Mizos.

Election of 1952 and 1957

The first time in which we see the peculiarity of Ch. Chhunga was in the election of 1952. On 4th January 1952, election to the Mizo District Council Member was held. In this election, the Union High Command selected Ch. Chhunga to contest from N. Vanlaiphai Constituency

which was considered to be the strong hold of the Union. However, being the President of the Union, he did not agree and preferred to contest from Aizawl-Lunglei Constituency against Pachhunga of Dawrpui locality, an UMFO candidate which was considered to be the stronghold of UMFO. He said that being a person from the locality of Dawrpui, he will contest against Pachhunga, a rich businessman and respected by others from the same locality and if they considered N. Vanlaiphai as a stronghold of the Union, it should be given to other. As expected, in the election, he was defeated by Pachhunga by just a few votes (860-787). In this election, the Union won the election in 17 Constituencies out of the 18 Constituencies where elections were held.

The peculiar leadership of Ch.Chhungawas once again seen in the election of 1957 in which he contested against Pachhunga even though he knew that he will not be winning the election. This shows his typical leadership in which, being the leader of the Party, have to take the challenge to contest the election though they will not win. This is against the leaders of the present political party who are looking only for the stronghold of the party. Not only that, contesting elections in more than one constituency was very peculiar. Even though he was not elected as Mizo District Council member, in the next Mizo Union Assembly held at Aizawl Boy's M.E. School from 26-29 February 1952, he was once again elected as the President of the Union. Some even said that from the time of the beginning of District Council in 1952, he was the President of the Union till 1971. However, this was not true. R. Thanhkira was the president from 29th October, 1953 to 19th October, 1955, H.K.Bawichhuaka became the President in Sept. 1962 till

he handed-over once again to Ch Chhunga. From that time onward, till Ch. Saprawnga was elected as the Mizo Union President on 1st October, 1971, Ch. Chhunga was elected as the President of the Union in all the elections. In the election of 1957 and 1962, Ch. Chhunga did not win the elections. Ch. Saprawnga was the CEM in the Mizo District MDC elections.

Bye-election of 1952

A bye-election was to be held in 1952 as R. Thanhlira resigned from his membership as a result of his nomination to Member of Parliament. In this bye-election, opposition party did not make any candidate. It is for sure that any candidate from Mizo Union will be elected. The nomination committee selected Mizo Union President, Ch. Chhunga to be the candidate. As Ch. Chhunga was in Silchar for his BA exam during that time, Lalbuaia also filed nomination to prevent if something happened. Lalbuaia was to withdraw his candidature once the nomination of Ch. Chhunga was scrutinized. The nomination of Ch. Chhunga was filed by Lalbuaia, his agent. But according to law, nomination was to be submitted by the candidate himself or his proposer or seconder. So, the candidature of Ch. Chhunga was rejected. Lalbuaia was declared as MLA uncontested. When Ch. Chhunga returned to Aizawl, Lalbuaia requested Ch. Chhunga that he will resign and let Ch. Chhunga contest in the bye-election. However, Ch. Chhunga did not agree. Even when Lalbuaia tried to write his resignation, Ch. Chhunga said that even if he resigned, he will not contest the election.

Election of 1970

In the election of 1970, Ch. Chhunga was elected as member of District Council. However, in the election, Mizo

Union did not get majority and Congress formed the government with Zalawma as the CEM. However, the government formed by Zalawma did not last for long. On 17th January 1971, F.C. Nghina became the CEM. On March 18, 1971, Zalawma and his group supported the MU and formed the government under United Mizo Parliamentary Party with Ch. Chhunga as the CEM and Zalawma as the Deputy CEM.

The first thing Ch. Chhunga did when he became the CEM was to have a direct, face to face talk with the MNF to have peace. For this, he along with Zalawma went to Longkor in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). He sent C. Chawngkunga, Lalmuankima and Thanhkira Hrahsel as emissary in advance. Since East Pakistan is fighting for independence during that time, he cannot meet the MNF leaders. But he met with the MNF volunteers and he returned.

Another important thing about Ch. Chhunga was that even though he, along with other members of Mizo Union demanded for Mizo state before 1963, he realized that after MNF had declared independence in 1966, what the Mizo could achieve the highest was statehood. He was of the opinion that the MNF will not get independence. He also realized that one day or the other, the MNF will come over-ground from underground. If the Mizo Union had already achieved statehood, what would be the achievement of the MNF? So, instead of demanding for statehood, he persuaded the Mizo Union members to go for Union Territory status in the Mizo Union General Assembly in September, 1971. On 21st January, 1972, Mizo District was elevated to Union Territory. The then Indian Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi

inaugurated the Union Territory of Mizo District at SipaiLammual, Aizawl. The name 'Mizo District' was changed to Mizoram.

First Legislative Assembly Election

The first Legislative Assembly election of Union Territory of Mizoram was held on 18th April 1972. There were 30 MLA seats and 3 nominated seats. In the election, Mizo Union won 21 seats, Congress Party won 6 seats and Independent candidates won 3 seats. The three independent MLA were Hiphei, Sapliana and K.Sangchhuma who supported the Mizo Union. As seen from the results of the election, it is clear that the Mizo Union can form the government. At this juncture, the peculiar character of Ch. Chhunga was seen again. Ch. Saprawnga, being Mizo Union President and CEM for very long time, and being elected in all the Mizo District Council elections, was proposed by Ch. Chhunga to be the Chief Minister. But Ch. Saprawnga did not agree and instead proposed Ch. Chhunga to be the Chief Minister. Being the man who always supported others from behind, he was the most capable to lead the party. At last, Ch. Chhunga became the first Chief Minister of Union Territory of Mizoram on 3rd May, 1972. Ch. Saprawnga became the first Protem Speaker.

Mizo Union under Ch. Chhunga

Thinking for the future, Ch. Chhunga proposed for merger of the Mizo Union with the Congress in their General Assembly on 2nd November, 1973. All the members did not agree. However, the Mizo Union, founded in 1946 merged with the Indian National Congress on 23rd January, 1974 in spite of the opposition made by some of the Mizo Union

MLA including R.Dotinaia, R.D.Sangkhuma and C. Chawngkunga. They remained in the Opposition bench till the end of Ch. Chhunga ministry in 1977.

From the aforesaid discussion, it is clear that Ch.Chhunga was a peculiar Mizo political leader who even sacrificed many opportunities for others. Unlike the present political leaders who fought for their own glory and advantages, Ch.Chhunga kept others first and himself only second.

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PASALTHA CHAWMA: THE (UN)FORGOTTEN HERO

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In Mizo traditional society, *pasaltha*¹ occupied an important and reputable position by dint of their talent and ability exclusively in terms of warfare and hunting. There were many famous *pasaltha* who were well known amongst the Mizo community as a whole till day. Meanwhile, due to limited sources and lesser attention in the writing of Mizo historical narratives, there could also be least known Mizo *pasaltha* who too did achieve great success and played important roles for their chiefs and for their villages. As the famous George Orwell rightly highlighted, “History is written by the winners”,² marginalization of historical accounts can be seen in the history of Mizo heroes and warriors as well. Out of numerous forgotten *pasaltha*, the story of Chawma, a warrior in Bengkhuaia’s village, who was said to have killed James Winchester and captured his young daughter Mary Winchester (Zoluti), can also be accounted in Mizo historical narrative.

Chawma- A Pasaltha

Pasaltha Chawma’s real name was Chhungchungnunga; he was given a nickname Chemchawma due to his good

physical body structure, and his fellow villagers called him in short form, Chawma. When the Chief Bengkhuaia and his ally raided Cachar district on January 23, 1871, Chawma was said to be one of the bravest warriors. On that raid at Alexandrapur's tea garden, Chawma killed James Winchester, a planter in the tea garden and taken his young daughter Mary Winchester (Zoluti) as a captive. T.H. Lewin mentioned about this incident:

"They [The Lushai/Lusei] had committed a series of forays of the most aggravated character in the neighbouring district of Cachar, killing several Europeans, and carrying off Mary Winchester, the little daughter of a planter, with many other British native subjects, into captivity."³

This raid was not a very common event in the history of Mizoram when the chiefs assembled together to fight a common enemy because though the Mizo chiefs, who were independent and sovereign chiefs, were fighting against each other, they rarely made a confederation to fight against a common enemy. But this happened when the Western Mizo chiefs fought against the British in 1870.⁴ It is said that when the raiding party returned to their village, some of his fellow hunters wanted to depose Mary Winchester on the way perhaps because taking a girl child was burdensome to them. But Chawma, being a childless father, rejected the pressure from his fellow men; instead he gave protection to the young slave girl and safely brought her to their village. Even when they reached their village, he kept the young girl Mary Winchester (who was given a Mizo name, 'Zoluti') in his home for quite some time but he later surrendered her to the Chief Bengkhuaia for a good reason. Pi Rozingi, the

grandniece of Chawma who died at the age of 100 years in 2002 A.D at Sialsuk, said that as Zoluti was having white skin and white hairs, Chawma considered that it was not good for him to keep her. Thus, after keeping the girl in Kawlri for a while, Chawma brought her to Bengkhuaia's house at Sailam. She remained a captive in Bengkhuaia's house till the British army expedition team took her back in 1871.⁵

On a less serious tone, after killing James Winchester, Chawma took away James Winchester's wristwatch but he did not know what it exactly was. When they reached a safer place, he took it out from his pocket, checked it out and listened the ticking sound of the watch. As he never seen such kind of device before, he thought that it might be some tool for witchcraft or some bad omen. He did not like to keep it and threw it away to Tlawng river. When later he saw the British Army personnel wearing such kind of watch, he realized that it was a wristwatch and he greatly regretted on losing such valuable item.

When the Mizos heard a rumour that the British government sent 'punitive' expedition (The Lushai Expedition 1871-72) to the Lushai hills and punished many of the chiefs responsible for the raids, Chawma and his family were also apprehensive of the reaction from the British. Keeping in mind the awful risk for Chawma's life, his wife's nephew Khumawna⁶ was willing to show sympathy by daring to take all the responsibilities for his uncle Chawma. He told his uncle Chawma, "The British may kill or imprison you; if they do so, my auntie would be too lonesome since you have no children. I have seven kids, and they will do fine without me. So, I will take the responsibility of killing

James Winchester and for capturing Mary Winchester. I will sacrifice my life for you.” Then, Khumawna owned up the responsibility and was known then as the killer of James Winchester and captivator of Mary Winchester.

Being a killer of a British subject, and for capturing Mary Winchester, Chawma’s life was not secure after the British conquest. As such, he lived a secluded life, and his stories are also buried even during his lifetime. It is said that he was living a secreted life, and refused to reveal his real identity to remain alive. Thus, very little is known about him after the Mizo chiefs were subdued by the British. It is said that he died of *ngawr natna* (tuberculosis) at the age of 90 on May 7, 1915 at Kawlri. As he was a childless father, he died under the safe arms of his brother’s step-daughter Thanghnuaii (W/o. Dolenga). He was buried at *tianghran thlan* (which was considered an exclusive grave dug for warrior and heroes). The descendants of his relatives tried to find out his tombstone at the abandoned Kawlri village but they failed. Later years, Chawma’s memorial tombstone was re-erected beside Thangnuaii’s tomb at the graveyard of Sialsuk village by his relatives.

On Hero - A Paradigm Shift

The intervention of British colonial administration in the frontier region particularly in the non-state space in the then Lushai Hills largely changed the community perception of hero in many ways. In the traditional Mizo society, being a hero or warrior was highly regarded and everyone desired to achieve that status as it promised privileges both in the physical world and in the world to come. But the execution of state administration in the Lushai Hills drastically changed

the perception of hero as the traditional heroes were now considered as 'criminal' and 'unlawful persons' by the colonial government. As the abled native rulers and their warriors often paid heavy prices in their misdeeds under the colonial administration, tagging a person as a hero or a warrior could not longer enjoy the previous privileges. Especially for the family and relatives of *Pasaltha* Chawma, being a traditional hero became a heavy burden for their existence. To worsen the situation, there was a theatre play in 1931 at Aijal (Aizawl) where the raids of Alexandrapur tea garden by Bengkhuaia and the killing of James Winchester and hostage of Mary Winchester by the warriors was shown. While watching the play, the then Superintendent of the Lushai Hills A.G McCall got irritated and called off the show abruptly. He then furiously asked, "Who was the killer of the white man (*Sap*)? Where does he live?" The audience replied him that the culprit was Chawma from abandoned Kawlri village and nobody lived there anymore, even Chawma's whereabouts could not be known. McCall then declared, "Nobody from the descendants of Chawma will be given government jobs from now on."

Under the colonial administration, the situation for warrior like Chawma was growing worse and misfortunes befell on him and his relatives. For many years Chawma's near relatives did not dare to apply government jobs as they feared that McCall's words might affect them. To avoid maltreatment from the government and the public, some of Chawma's relative also migrated to Burma from Lushai Hills. Soon after the show at Aijal Theater, Chawma's brother's step-daughter Thanghnuaii was informed by their village chief to vacate their house as he wanted to construct a new

house in the same plot. It was an indirect assault to Thanghnuaii for her relationship with Chawma, and she and her families were compelled to migrate reluctantly to Sialsuk village.

Even after her demise, Thanghnuaii's descendants continued to keep the secret, and the spear (*Fei*) and a short sword (*Kawlhnam/Chempui*) of Chawma that he used for killing James Winchester also continued to be the hidden possession of the family. As their families were facing many hardships in the previous times, they were never likely to reveal that they were still preserving Chawma's weapons. It is only after many years passed that Chawma's spear and short sword are publicly revealed by his grandchildren that are still safely kept. For the record, Chawma's weapons are presently preserved by his grand son-in-law Mr. H. Lalngilneia, Kulikawn, Aizawl.

The Hero turned Victim

As mentioned earlier, *pasaltha* enjoyed a privilege position in every village in the Mizo traditional society. Killing enemies and carrying off slaves were the utmost wishes of every male member of the society. If a male member in the society did not kill animals or carried off human heads, he could not attain reputed position among his peers and could not attain *pialral* in his life after death. Their daring spirits comforted their village against enemies and wild animals. Even for the chiefs having fearless *pasaltha* was a thing to be proud off and much needed. For the *pasaltha* himself killing or taking captive of their enemy was a good opportunity for attaining the high status in the physical world as well as in life after death. When the British

colonial government started their penetration in the then Lushai Hills, *Pasaltha* Chawma became a victim for being a hero or a warrior; for him such events became a mere nightmare. Because of colonial intervention in his land, he could no longer avail privileges that he was entitled in the traditional society.

Based on the life story of *Pasaltha* Chawma, we could surmise that the position of a hero in the traditional Mizo society has undergone change; in fact, it was deeply downscaled by the colonial intervention. In some discourses, British colonialism was stressed as a blessing for the isolated tribes as they brought forward modernity and scientific advancements. It may be right in some aspect, but for the heroes of the Mizo, it is a total disaster. It can be related with the renowned Rudyard Kipling's poem – 'the white man's burden'⁷ because their heroic actions and activities now turned them to be criminals and offenders.

In conclusion, it can be said that *Pasaltha* Chawma tried his best to protect his land and hunting ground of the Mizo chiefs against the intruders. In traditional Mizo society, there was a kind of a division of labour- some are blacksmith, some are healer, etc.; for *pasaltha*, their duty was to protect their villages and land from the intruders. Likewise, *Pasaltha* Chawma also did his role faithfully for his chief and the entire community. Daring to sacrifice his life, he attacked the enemies and captured little girl as per their normal practice, and spared his life. He did all such daring actions for the protection of his native land from the enemies. For him, showing his bravery was the fulfillment of his highest responsibility for being a warrior of Chief Bengkhuaia and his village.

The question that remains here is that even in modern nation state the recipients of the military gallantry medals are mostly the persons who killed their enemies or sacrificed their lives in the warzone; and why should traditional heroes be labeled as criminals and habitually being marginalized from the mainstream historical accounts.



Chawma's spear (Fei) and short sword (Kawllnam/Chempui) that he used in killing James Winchester, it is preserved by Mr. H. Lalngilneia, Kulikawn, Aizawl.

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UNSUNG HERO SAIZEMA

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The Mizo have many great and brave people who have not yet been acknowledged or appreciated for their different contributions in different fields. One such person was Saizema, the son of a brave man/pasaltha Chawngbawla. For many reasons, this great personality has not been given the respect and appreciation which is long overdue to him. The modesty and humility of his descendants could be one of the many reasons.

Saizema's father Chawngbawla, the great warrior or *pasaltha* is well known in Mizo history but his descendants have remained unknown. It is often so even in cases of many other great men. With colonization, warring was curtailed and hunting prohibited. The brave warriors and hunters had fewer chance to display their valour.

It is the duty and responsibility of the better equipped generation of today to record and authenticate the important marks that have been made and left on our land by our ancestors.

Chawngbawla belonged to Seipui village near Lunglei. The Chief of village entrusted the security and defence of the village in his hands. He was known as Seipuia Kulhpui (The great fort of Seipui). Chawngbawla on his part was trustworthy and he rightfully earned his fame as a brave warrior or *pasaltha* of the southern side of Mizoram by defeating the northern warriors and killed their leader Nghatebaka¹. Though Chawngbawla was known better as a warrior than a brave hunter, his extraordinary encounters with wild animals caused him to name his children Saizema, Saitawna, Vawmthanga, Lianchenga, Zachuiai and Saihlingi, all after his valour in hunting. His granddaughter was also named Saichhingpuii. He was most popularly known as Saizema pa, father of Saizema.²²

Saizema, following his father was also a brave and humble man (mi tlawmngai). Though he was never given the title of *pasaltha*, the story of his life and death says it all. His daughter Saichhingpuii had related the story of her father to her own children which was recorded in 1964. Saizema was a brave man and the chief of Lunglawn village where he lived, respected and entrusted him the safeguarding of his village by giving him a plot of land at the outskirts (khaw dai) near the entrance of the village. His house served the purpose of a sentry post. Just like his father, Saizema was the pillar of refuge for his people.

Then a time came when the Christian missionaries came with the Gospel. Saizema and his family embraced Christianity. The chief of Lunglawn village in 1900 was Lalchhunga and he was very much against Christianity. Saizema soon lost the favour of the chief. He and his family

were looked down upon (*endawng*) and were forced to pay double amount of taxes *Fathang*(*annual tax*). Saizema's family had to pay six tins of rice whereas an ordinary family needed to pay only three tins of rice. They also had to give the best of their poultry when others had to give the ordinary one as per the demand of the chief on being visited by government officials.

When Saizema got sick with no one to help his family in his sickness, he soon died. The chief asked the village crier to announce that no one was permitted to enter Saizema's house against the existing tradition. He had nobody to dig his grave. His wife Thangtei alone was left with the deceased. Travelers from Tlabung seeing the situation conveyed the incident to the Christians in Sethlun. Christians from Sethlun came in the evening and buried Saizema outside the village. The chief continued to persecute Thangtei and her children who fled to Zotlang village.

A man who was once revered and looked up to for refuge and security was now betrayed and forgotten. His family was tormented and persecuted. His sacrifice and contribution for the village was no longer remembered.

Thangtei who fled to Zotlang with her children would often join the Christian gatherings at Sethlun on Sundays.

The pioneer missionaries F. W. Savidge and J. H. Lorrain sympathised with this grieved family and helped much with the bringing up of the children. The Christians of Sethlun erected a tombstone for Saizema. His epitaph reads- 'Saizema, Pathian ring, 1907', (Saizema, Believer of God,

1907). It was recently that this great man was brought back home to Lunglawn by the youth of the village. His remains now rest at the church courtyard at Lunglawn.

Saizema was a braveheart who served his people and would have remained faithful till the end only if his people had let him. But he bravely chose to win favour in the eyes of God than in the eyes of his chief. The persecution that had been inflicted on Saizema and his family did not go in vain. The God they believed has continued to bless his descendants.

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