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Historical Journal Mizoram

Volume - VII

Mizo History Association

November - 2006

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

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Editorial

As already reported in 2005 issue of the journal, the Mizo History Association completed 25 years of its formation on 23 September, 2005 and the event was commemorated by organising a two-day seminar on 14-15 October. On the first day of the seminar, it was reported in great details what the Association had completed during the last 25 years. In this issue the information as noted below may be highlighted again for a record.

The membership of the Association is steadily increasing and now the Association has 122 members. A person who pays Rs. 50/- is enrolled as a member and is also considered as life member and he is entitled a copy of the journal free of cost. The Association hold annual conference-cum-seminar on regular basis and so far, to be precise, 89 research papers have been presented and discussed. In 2005 seminar 12 papers were read and discussed. Another area where the Association has engaged itself is the publication of a journal entitled *Historical Journal Mizoram*. It is an annual journal. So far, 101 research papers have been published, including papers not read in the seminars. To make its silver jubilee year, the Association also published a book entitled *A Modern History of Mizoram* edited by Dr. Sangkima and published by Spectrum publisher, Delhi. The price of the book is Rs. 360/- and the Association purchased 500 copies at 30% discount. Another publication is intended to bring out in the very near future.

With these limited activities, the Association is moving forward to make more contributions for the people and the society of Mizoram.

The Editorial Board would like to express its sincere thanks to all those who have been involved with the Association for its success. The Association also would like to say its gratefulness to the staff of St. Joseph's Press, Tlangnuam, Aizawl, for not failing us to have copies of the journal in time. The Editorial Board wishes them a happy and prosperous life.

Dated Aizawl,
20th November, 2006

Sangkima
EDITOR.

MARA MARRIAGE SYSTEM

Dr. Chawngkhuma Chawngthu.

The Maras are ethnic group of people who inhabit the south eastern part of Mizoram. Based on their socio-linguistic distinctiveness the Maras are different from their neighbouring tribes. The Maras are well known by their neighbouring tribe because of their marriage system, which is very complex and associated with certain rules and procedures.

The institution of marriage occupies an important place in Mara society. It is the backbone of Mara society and a very necessary part of their social system. Basically, the Mara marriage is a civil social contract with mutual consent between man and woman not only for sexual enjoyment and legalized procreation, but also for the establishment of wider social relationship.¹ Among the Maras, marriage is treated as a permanent nature unless dissolved by divorce. Right from its inception, the Mara marriage is based on “purchase system”. Marriage could not be arranged unless the bride price is paid. Among the Maras, marriage is considered an essential obligation to be fulfilled by both man and woman for fecundity. One was disdained and looked down upon unless a marriage vow has been fulfilled.²

The Mara marriage system, by and large, falls under the so-called subtype of elementary marital exchange, “generalized exchange” which is known as “Alliance Theory”.³ Marriage within certain relatives is prohibited, but marriage with other relatives may be prescribed or preferred. In this system two kinds of cousins are distinguished, marriage being prohibited between those who are children of siblings of the same sex “parallel cousin”⁴ while it is prescribed between children of siblings of opposite sex “cross cousin.”

Among the Maras, marriage within certain relatives like sister and brother is prohibited, as the children would not prosper. Children of the same father but by different mothers may not marry,

but children of the same mother by different fathers may marry. The children of a brother and sister may and do marry if the sister's child is a son, and the brother's child a daughter. Thus, they prescribed preferential marriage between children of siblings of the opposite sex. The most preferential marriage among the Maras is with the mother's brother's daughter, as it keeps the maternal avuncular relationship in the same line.⁵

Thus, the prescriptive (asymmetrical, matrilateral) cross-cousin marriage has been found among the Maras. The establishment of an afinal relationship, in this way, involves corporate decent group in a connection that lasts over time, though not indefinitely. In the Mara marriage, the social relation between wife-givers and wife's-takers are asymmetrical. Obligations in the relationship between wife-taker and wife-giver are related to inferior and superior positions, respectively. The marriage price is a very costly and complicated affair involving certain specialized categories, like the brides kin group and her mother's brother, real of classificatory. Not only this, prestations of many kinds are repeatedly due to the man of wife-giving lineages, not only at recurrent crisis rites, but also on a certain other occasions. Wife-taker also has obligations to provide assistance in the form of rice-beer and food when the wife-giver performs one of the major feasts. Male wife-giver must be addressed in a respectful manner here. Above all, a woman's family has alien on her offspring by virtue either of her irrevocable membership in her natal lineages or of the enduring relationship between the lineages established by the marriage.⁶

There is a deep social gulf between the higher and the lower class. Noble birth is very highly esteemed as the amount of a girl's marriage price theoretically depends on her clan, and thereby the rate of a girl's marriage price belonging to high clan considerably higher than the rate of a girl's marriage price who belong to a lower clan. The great aim of every Mara is, therefore, to rise his status in the society by marrying a girl from a higher clan than his own, as thereby he gains the protection of his wife's relatively powerful and

influential relations, Although a man can never change his clan, he can claim a higher marriage price for his daughter than the rate of his clan, provided that: if his grandmother, his mother or his wife belonged to a higher clan than his own. In this way the marriage price of a girl is of very high and complicated affair.⁷ However, the marriage payments are not a simple return for a wife and/or right over the offspring she will bear. Rather they are earnest money indicative of further payments to come. The payment of bride-wealth, in a sense is not for marriage as such but for the right to an alliance with the wife-giver and his agnates. This alliance relationship, however, if it endures, must be formally and symbolically expressed and reaffirmed from time to time. In this way marriage payments are continuing to run in the same direction.⁸

This alliance is not reciprocal in a simple sense in terms of substantial and other benefits passing between the two parties, but the system of interdependence and corporate relationship does exhibit reciprocity. Women have great value and their children continue one's lineage. Furthermore, a powerful ally is a protector and enhances safety of one's own daughters.

As a rule, the Mara marriage system involves preferential marriage between groups larger than the conjugal family, and these groups do not exchange with each other directly in pairs, the arrangement is circular. The groups involved in the marriage "ring" or "circle" may be called a lineage cluster maintains cyclical connubial relation over several successive generations. This cluster consists of a small group of minor lineage segments. Its core is a set of segments collaterally related as agnates, but it includes a number of segments not so related to this core. These segments are not all of the same major or even maximal lineage.⁹

Although the marriage price of a girl is of very costly and complicated affair among the Maras, clans-men & near relations are helping each other by contributing towards the marriage prices. The payments are always paid on installment basis. It can be

extended throughout the whole lifetime of the husband. If the husband could not pay the whole amount during his lifetime, the eldest son would take the debts, and if the eldest son could not pay during his generation, it falls on his grandson and so on.¹⁰

In the traditional period, man usually marries between the ages of twenty and twenty five and woman after twenty. This reasonable marriage age is due large to the fact that Mara always want to marry into higher clan if possible so that it is by no means easy to find a suitable bride, and partly to the high rate of marriage price which renders it necessary for man's relative to save up years before they can afford to bring him a wife.¹¹

Traditionally, the Maras are monogamous. The prevalent form of marriage among them is monogamy. As a rule, a Mara has one legitimate wife known as *Nobei*. Although chiefs and wealthy men always have concubine known as *Notho*. The status of a concubine in the society is much lower than the status of a legitimate wife. According to the custom, the concubine's son is not entitled to inherit the father's property if the father has legitimate heir. In all cases, where more than one wife is kept, they always live in separate huts, each being visited in turn from time to time.¹²

On the basis of its nature, the traditional Mara marriage system may be divided into two types, namely, arranged marriage and elopement.

Arranged Marriage :

This type of marriage is socially and customarily recognized among the Maras. In this type, the marriage between man and woman takes place with the mutual consent of both the two parents concerned. The parents have done the selection of partner and the marriage is customarily arranged in accordance with the traditional customary rules and procedures.

Besides these, all the necessary arrangements relating to marriage are properly done by the parents through intermediary known as *Lyuchapa*. This type of marriage is popularly practised by the common people. Usually this marriage takes place with usual pomp and grandour among the Maras as it keeps the customary rules and procedures intact.¹³

Elopement

This marriage is socially and customarily unrecognized among the Maras. In this type, the marriage between man and woman takes place without the mutual consent of both the two parents concerned. The selection of partner has been the main business of the couple. If a young man elopes with a girl, the couple flees to another village hiding from the girl's parents. However, according to custom the man must pay the atonement price known as *Hmiatla* to the girl's parents, which varies from 10 to 30 rupees. This sum is not payable if the girl afterwards leaves her husband. When the *Hmiatla* is being paid, the marriage is regularized under the custom. After that usual ceremony is performed and customary price is also paid. Marriage by elopement is not common among the Maras.¹⁴

On the basis of social rank, the traditional Mara marriage system may be classified into three classes, namely, the chief marriage, the child marriage and the ordinary marriage.

The Chief's Marriage

As the chief occupies highest social status in Mara society, the marriage of chief is highly esteemed by the people. It is the highest class of marriage system among the Maras.

As a custom, there are slight variations in the procedures of the chief's marriage from the procedures followed in other marriages. The marriage price of a girl belonging to chiefly clans is comparatively higher and more complicated than those of the lower clans. The chiefs prefer to take their wives from village other than

their own as thereby they acquire influence in other village and so indirectly improve their position of influence. When a chief asks for a hand of another chief's daughter for his son, he employs a *Macha* or *Elder* as intermediary known as *Lyuchapa*. When making a marriage proposal, the chief used a gong as a present known as *Thuaso*, which has been given as gift for the girl's house as a sign of proposal. If the marriage is agreed upon, the *Okia* (main price) is paid at once before the usual ceremonies called *Ahmakia* have been performed. Then the bride's parents kill a mithun or pig, and the bridegroom's parents must paid the amount of *Okia* whatever amount it may be. This is called *Okiasan*.¹⁵

Child Marriage

One of the distinctive features of the traditional Mara marriage system is the adoption of child marriage. The child marriage is usually practised by the high class people. There are main two reasons for which child marriage is practised:

- (1) For parents of a boy it is to ensure a girl for good clan for their son at a tender age.
- (2) The girl is less likely to be deflowered by some one other than her husband before she gets married.

The child marriage has been practised in three different ways-

- (1) Between a boy and a girl below the age of puberty,
- (2) Between a boy child and a girl who reach puberty and
- (3) Between a girl child and a young man who have reached puberty. Of the above three ways, the marriage between the two children of about the same age is commonly practised among the Maras.

When such a child marriage takes place, as a custom, the boy's parents take the initiative by sending a female relation to the girl's parents to propose the marriage with their daughter. If the

proposal is accepted by the parents, the boy's parents send a male envoy to the girl's house with a present of *Pumtek* bead which is to be worn by the girl as an earring.

After that the boy's parents sent an intermediary known as *Lyuchapa* to the girl's parents with another present of *doa* known as *Thuaso*. If the girl's parents have lucky dreams, the match is settled down and the price is fixed. After settling down the marriage price, the girl's children are treated as betrothed. The two families thus wait until the boy and the girl attained puberty. If the boy afterwards breaks of the engagement, he must pay the main price (*Okia*) to the girl's parents, and if the girl refused to sleep with her husband, the whole price paid be returned to the boy's parents and she is considered to have divorced her husband.¹⁶

Ordinary Marriage

Ordinary Marriage is the most common form of marriage. This marriage involves courtship, selection of partner, marriage proposal and marriage negotiation.

Courtship

The first step in the ordinary marriage is courtship. As the Mara society is permissive society, it is tolerant of free mixing of young boys and girls. No penalties are inflicted when young men and girls are sleeping together under the same roof. According to the Mara custom, young men known as *Satlia* used to sleep in the girl's house as a part of courtship. This custom is known as *Laipho*. A young man who is courting a girl goes off about 6 or 7 p.m at night to the girl's house and sometime a young man plays Jew's Harp, made of bamboo and string, and serenades the girls. The suitor always spends his day with the a girl helping each other in their works and exchange tobacco and nicotine water, and at night the suitor sleeps on the floor on the girl's house. In this way the man is diligently courting the girl and making advances to her, and the girl also had an opportunity of judging if her suitor if likely to make her a good husband or not. The Maras are, however, secretive about their love affairs and never say a word whatsoever.¹⁷

Selection of Partner. In the traditional period, the selection of partner, as a rule, has been made by the parents. In selecting the partner for their children the parents are very careful and fastidious. The main consideration in the process of selection is on health ground and physical deformity. Another important criteria in the process of selection is the social status and background of the potential candidate. Thus family background is a significant factor in the selection of partner. In the olden days, partners are almost always chosen within the endogamous kin group excluding certain categories of very close kin members. As such, inter-marriage with another tribes has been less common among them.¹⁸

Marriage Proposal. One of the distinctive features of Mara marriage system is the practice of marriage proposal. It is very important as it opens the way for negotiation and settlement. As a rule, the boy's parents initiate marriage proposal. When initiating the proposal, the boy's parents sent a female relation as emissary to the girl's parents to convey the marriage proposal. If the proposal is welcomed, the boy's parents appoint an intermediary known as *Lyuchapa*, who will bring a gift in the form of a *doa* to the girl's parents. This gift is known as *Thuaso* performing the function of an engagement ring. The boy and the girl are then treated as 'betrothed'. Then the girl's parents would have a lucky dream to accept such a marriage proposal. The lucky dreams are: Gun, Doa, Clear water, Necklace etc and if the dreams are not lucky, the girl's parents should turn down the marriage proposal. The unlucky dreams are: about wild animal that had been shot or killed by tiger, a dead snake or any kind of stealing of pig, fowl etc.¹⁹

Marriage Negotiation. It is the final round in the process of marriage. As a rule, marriage negotiation is done in the house of a girl's parents. After accepting the marriage proposal, the girl's parents would kill a pig and prepare a simple feast as a token of acceptance of the marriage proposal. Then, the girl's parents invited the suitor and *lyuchopa* to have a discussion on the marriage negotiation. The main discussion on the negotiation is on the amount

and type of bride price. As soon as they come to certain definite agreement, the wedding day is fixed according to the convenience of both the two parties concerned. The proper marriage ritual is thus finalized by the payment of the *Okia*.²⁰

Marriage Rites And Ceremonies. The traditional Mara marriage system is associated with certain rites and ceremonies. These rites and ceremonies have been performed in accordance with traditional customary rules and procedures. In the traditional period, the Mara marriage rituals were very complicated and were linked with sacrificial offerings to both the evil and good spirits. They also used to celebrate marriage ceremony with a special feast by killing a large number of pigs, and the feast has always been arranged on 'gift - exchanged' system. The marriage ceremony was celebrated by consuming a large quantity of alcoholic drink (rice beer). They usually observe three days for celebrating the marriage ceremony.²¹

The Marriage Price. The Mara marriage price is a most complicated affair, and consists of several parts, each part in turn has a number of subsidiary prices attached to it.

The rate of the bride prices are fixed in terms of animal or household goods such as, cow mithun, bull mithun, fowl, gun, gong, brass pot, earthen pot, bead, doa etc. Different items of household goods and animals are given as bride price and series of gift-giving by the bridegroom to the various relations of the bride, both on the paternal and maternal side. The normal bride price consists of the following items such as, the *okia*, the *lokhyu*, the *chawchyu*, the *nochyu*, the *nohchyu* the *puma* and a number of subsidiary prices.²²

The Okia. The *Okia* is the main price. It is the basis of all other prices. Where the *Okia* is high, the other prices are proportionately high, and if the *Okia* is low the other prices are proportionately low. It is payable to bride's father and if the father is dead it is payable to the bride's eldest brother. The rate of *Okia* varies from village to village. The price of *Okia* is to be paid on the marriage day.

Laokhyu. Lokhyu is the share of bride's Pupa. It is payable to the bride's maternal uncle (Pupa) and it should be paid on the marriage day.

Chawchyu. This means the brother's price. Chawchyu is the share of bride's eldest brother. It is payable to the bride's brother and is to be paid on the marriage day.

Nochyu. This means the mother's price. It is payable to the bride's mother's living sister. However, if the parents have divorced and the mother separated from her husband, this price will go to the mother. If the bride's mother sister was dead, it is payable to her son. This price is to be paid on the marriage day.

Nohchyu. The *Nohchyu* means the aunt's price, and is payable to the bride's eldest paternal aunt. This is also to be paid on the marriage day.

Pum. Puma is the price payable to the bride pupa, who is her maternal uncle. The rate at which puma is payable depends on the rate of *Okia*, and if the *Okia* is 60 rupees the rate of puma is also 60 rupees.

However, the pupa does not as a rule claim the puma on the marriage day, but he usually waits till the couples have settled down as man and wife.

When the puma has been paid, the pupa must give the bride an embroidered skirt and a white cloth. The gift is called *Ngiateu*.

It is however obligatory on the part of those who receive the above bride-price distribution, as a custom to offer a pig for the marriage feast. No bride price may be paid unless such customary obligation is fulfilled.²³

Subsidiary price

The subsidiary prices are of many natures and may be distributed by the bride's parents to the various relations of both paternal and maternal sides as a guarantee for the bride's future help. The subsidiary prices are as follows:

1. *Seipihra* which is a portion of price given in lieu of cow - mithun
2. *Seicheihra* which is a portion of price given in lieu of bull-mithun.
3. *Rahohra* is a price which is payable in lieu of brass basin.
4. *Meitheihra* which is a price payable in lieu of a gun.
5. *Dawkhohra* is a price payable in lieu of gong.
6. *Chiamie* is a price payable in lieu of trumpet.
7. *Dawhra* is a price payable in lieu of brass pot.
8. *Keima* is the price payable to the male friend of the man who received the *Okia*.
9. *Sawhla* this means the child's share, and is payable to the child of person who gets the *Seiphihra*.
10. *Seihra* is a price payable in lieu of slave.
11. *Raipihra* is a price payable in lieu of beer-pot.

Besides the above marriage prices, there are still another minor marriage prices among the Maras, namely, the *Ahlas* and the *Tini*.

The *Ahlas* consists of several minor prices which are payable to the chief, elder, the cooks, beer makers, Water carriers etc. who have participated in the marriage ceremonial function.

The *Tini* consists of several minor prices which are payable to the bride's paternal aunt on the marriage day.

The Mara custom, in relation to the bride price, subsidiary prices, the *Ahlas* and *Tini*, however, varies from village to village. No hard and fast rules have been imposed upon the items of bride

price, subsidiary prices etc., and in most cases, it depends on the capability and status of the concerned persons-bride and bridegroom. The ordinary marriage price among the ruling clans and common clans are shown in Table I & II.

TABLE-I*

Tile bride price among the ruling clan in the traditional period in terms of animals or household goods and its cash equivalence.

Sl.No	Name of Price	Name of Animals/Houshold Goods	Amount (Rs)
1.	Okia (Main price)	Two mithun and one slave.	150.00
2.	Nochyu	Cow mithun or gun	60.00
3.	Nohchyu	One mithun or gun	50.00
4.	Chawchyu	One mithun	50.00
5.	Seiphihra	Cow mithun	50.00
6.	Seicheihra	Bull mithun	50.00
7.	Nohla	Beer pot (Racha)	10.00
8.	Sawhla	Brass pot (4 Spanan)	2.00
9.	Keima	Beer pot (Racha)	5.00
10.	Lao-khyu	Beer pot (Racha)	5.00
11.	Raipihra	Beer pot (Racha)	10.00
12.	Awruabuana	One mithun or gun	50.00
	Sisazi		
13.	(a) A lai-pa	A 'sisa' bead	10.00
	(b) Au-thei-pa	A 'sisa' bead	20.00
	(c) A seihnai-pa	Beer pot (Racha)	50.00
	Total		572.00

* **Sources :** *Lorrain 1951 p.63. Lorrain 1911 in Lushai Kuki Clans by Shakespear 1988 (Re-print) p.216.*

TABLE - II*

The Bride price among the common people in the traditional period in terms of animals or household goods and its cash equivalence.

Sl.No	Name of Price	Name of Animals/ Household Goods	Amount (Rs)
1.	Okia (Main price)	Gong (7spans), gun or one mithun	20.00
2	Nochyu	Gun, gong or one mithun	20.00
3	N ohchyu	Gun or gong	20.00
4	Chawchyu	Gong (7spans) or gun	20.00
5	Seiphihra	Gong (7 spans)	20.00
6	Seiheihra	Gong (7spans) or gun	20.00
7	NoWa	Brass pot (4 spans)	2.00
8	Sawhla	Full grown hen	1.00
9	Kaima	Brass pot (4 spans)	2.00
10	Lao-khyu	Brass pot (4 spans)	5.00
11	Raipihra	Brass pot (4 spans)	2.00
12	Raipihra	Brass pot (4 spans)	5.00
13	Sisazi		
	(d) A lai-pa	Brass pot (5 spans)	
	(e) Au-thei-pa	A 'sisa' bead	5.00
	(f) A seihnai-pa	Beer pot (4 spans)	10.00
			2.00
	Total		154.00

* Sources : Lorrain 1951 p.63. Lorrain 1911 in *Lushai Kuki Clans* by Shakespear 1988 (Re-print) p.216.

Note :

The Puma is not included in the above Tables because the Puma is never paid in the marriage day, but wait for a long time. The rate of Puma depends on the rate of Okia and if the rate of Okia is 150 rupees the rate of Puma is also 150 rupees.

It must be remembered that though the prices are shown in the table in terms of rupees, the bulk of the marriage price is always

paid in kind, cash forming only a small portion of payments made: however, each article used for payment of marriage price has a fixed formal value. Marriage prices are practically never paid in full at the time of wedding, for the simple reason that nobody has enough material goods, animals, household goods and cash to pay at the time of marriage. Primary amount will be paid on the wedding day and the balance is to be paid in easy instalments and twenty years or more may elapse before a marriage price is paid in full.²⁵

Impact of Christianity

With the impact of Christianity, certain changes have been appearing in the Mara society in the first part of 20th century. Owing to the Christian proselytisation, the Mara marriage system has undergone changes in the form of compromise between the indigenous pattern and Christian value. Now the Maras have practised a combination of Christian marriage and indigenous marriage system with traces of traditional custom observable in a Christian Church marriage.²⁶

However, many indigenous practices have been abolished, while retaining certain elements and many new things have been added. In the indigenous system, the Maras used to practise the chief's marriage; the child marriage and the slave marriage. But now the above marriage practices have been disappearing among the Maras. In the olden days, the Maras used to perform marriage ceremony with a series of rites and offering of sacrifices to both the evil and good spirits. But now the above all practices have been done away with among them. Nowadays marriages are conducted in the Church by the Pastor helped by the elders within the purview of the Church's doctrine. In the olden days, the Maras used to consume a large quantity of alcoholic drink (rice beer) on the marriage day and they used to celebrate marriage ceremony with a special feast by killing a number of pigs. But now all such indigenous practices have been modified. The modern wedding is characterised by new items such as wedding dresses of western style and giving of presents.²⁷

However, it is important to note here that, the Maras still retain by choice their traditional marriage rule of preferential cross-cousing marriage and some other traditional custom relating to marriage such as form of marriage proposal, marriage negotiation and bride price.

The present Mara marriage institution is still associated with the issue of bride price. No major change has been made in regard to the traditional system of bride price. However the amount of bride price is comparatively higher than what it was in the traditional period. The amount of bride price continues to be fixed in terms of animals or household goods such as, cow mithun, bull mithun, Gun, gong, dekchi, pot etc. A number of household items especially cooking pots and dekchi were given as bride price. No fixation has been made on the rate of bride price, and the rate of bride price varies from village to village and individual capability. Table III shows the present bride price among the Mara.

TABLE - III*

The Ordinary Items of bride price in tile modern period with its household goods and its cash equivalence.

Sl.No	Name of Price	Name of Animals/ Household Goods	Amount (Rs)
1.	Okia (Main price)	12 Spans of Dekchi	500.00
2	Lao-khyu	10 Spans of pot	200.00
3	Chawchyu	10 Spans of pot	200.00
4	Nochyu	10 Spans of pot	200.00
5	Nohchyu	10 Spans of pot	200.00
6	Puma	12 Spans of dekchi	500.00
7	Seipihra	10 Spans of pot	200.00
8	Seicheihra	10 Spans of pot	150.00
9	Meitheihra	10 Spans of pot	200.00
10	Dawkhohra	10 Spans of pot	200.00
11	Rahohra	10 Spans of pot	100.00
12	Chiamie	10 Spans of pot	100.00
		TOTAL	2750.00

* **Sources:** *K.Pakhai Ex.MRC, B.Leisa CS, Sacho Chozah Teacher, VL. Chhawna Ex.MDC and S.Zamawnga Teacher.*

Though the prices have 'been shown as rupees in the above Table, the bulk of bride price has been paid in kind, especially household goods such as dekchi, pot etc. and only small portion of bride price has been paid in cash. Thus the actual value of bride price in terms of rupees may come to about Rs.20000 - 30000.

Nowadays, certain controversial problems arise on the issues of bride price. For instance, the ordinary rate of *Okia*, as shown in the above Table III is 500 rupees, and usually 12 spans of dekchi has been taken as the price of *Okia* by the prevailing convention. But the actual price of 12 spans of dekchi in the market not less than 3000 rupees. In this way the actual expenditure for the bride price is very high and the bridegroom spent more than 20000 rupees. Nowadays, the main leading Church of Maraland, **Evangelical Church of Maraland (ECM)** is trying to solve this problem. However, the Maras, conservative as they have been, could not abandon the age-old traditional practices of bride price system. But the payment of bride price can be done on the basis of installments, and it can be extended for a period of more than 20 years.

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MIZO HISTORY ASSOCIATION

Dr. Lalrinmawia

In view of the socio-economic and political development witnessed in Mizoram in the later sixties and seventies, it was felt necessary to improve and reconstruct the study and writing of Mizo History on the basis of scientific study, analysis and research. The establishment of North-East History Association in 1979 has served as an eye opener and encouragement on the part of Mizo historians to initiate an association on Mizo history. They were convinced that wrong and vested interest interpretation of History is very harmful and therefore it needs very careful handling since it involves the vital question of national integrity and of communal and racial sentiments of the people. With this end in view, Mizo History Association was formed on the 23rd September 1980 in the Office Chamber of Darchhawna, Officer-On-Special Duty, North-Eastern Hill University, Mizoram Campus, by an august body of a few members of Mizo historians. The founder President was Darchhawna while the founder General Secretary was Lalrimawia, Lecturer & Head, department of History, Pachhunga University College, Aizawl.

The main object 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 symposium connected with the said history and publication of the proceedings, journals and other works of Association.

The General Secretary got the Association registered under the Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860 on the 23rd January 1981. The first General Election-cum-General Conference of the Association was held on the 25th October, 1980 at Mizoram State Library Hall, Aizawl. The following members attended the Conference.

- | | | |
|---------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| 1) Darchhawna | 2) Lalrimawia | 3) John V.Hluna |
| 4) J.H.Pahlira | 5) B.Sangkhum | 6) Lalrinawma |
| 7) Zochungnunga | 8) Sangkima | 9) Lianrema (L) |
| 10) R.S.Rosangluaia | 11) Ngurbiaka | 12) Rothanga |

The following persons were elected to the office bearers of the Association:

- President** : Darchhawna, OSD, NEHU Mizoram Campus.
General-Secretary : Lalrimawia, Lecturer & Head, Pachhunga University College.
Vice-Presidents : J.V.Hluna, Lecturer, Pachhunga University College.
Lalrinawma, Lecturer, Hrangbana College.
Joint Secretary : R.S.Rosangluaia, Dist. Research Officer.
Treasurer : B.Sangkhumi, Lecturer, Pachhunga University College.

The meeting resolved that registration of the Association would be taken up by the General Secretary. It also resolved that a seminar be held sometime in the second week of March, 1981 on the history of the Mizos in pre-British period. The following persons were requested to present seminar papers with topics as shown against their names:

1. Lalrimawia & Sangkima : *Pre-historic and historic migration of the Mizo to their present habitat.*
2. B.Sangkhumi & J.V.Huna : *Pre-British Social organization and Bawi customs among the Mizos.*
3. Lalrinawma & Lianrema : *Causes of intertribal feuds and raids to the neighbouring States.*

The first Annual Session of the Association was held at Aizawl Club on 18th and 19th June, 1981. The Chief Guest was F.Malsawma, Education Minister, Mizoram and former Lecturer of Political Science, Pachhunga University College. Darchhawna, Chairman of the session delivered an inaugural speech while Lalrimawia gave away a keynote address. The first session began from 11 :30 A.M to 1 :30 P.M and it was chaired by Thanglawra, Principal, Mizoram Institute of Education. Lalrimawia and Sangkima

presented a paper on “Pre-historic and historic migration of the Mizo to their present habitat”.

The second session started from 1:30 P.M to 3:00 P.M and it was chaired by Hranthanga (L), Jt. Director of Education. The third session began from 3:15 P.M to 4:30 P.M and Rokamlova, Principal, Aizawl College was the Chairman. B.Sangkhumi and J.V.Hluna presented a paper on “Pre-British social organization” and “Bawi custom among the Mizos” respectively. On 19th June, the first session started from 10:00 A.M to 12:30 P.M and it was chaired by F.Lallura, OSD, State Institute of Education (later called SCERT). Lalrinawma and Lianrema (L) presented a paper on ‘Intertribal feuds and raids to the neighbouring States’.

From 1:00 P.M to 3:00 P.M there was discussion on “Zawlbuk and its implications in Mizo Society” and “Role of Women in Mizo society before Christianity”. There was business session from 3:30 P.M to 4:30 P.M. On 18th June, the rapporteurs were Lalruanga, Lecturer, Mizo Department, Aizawl College, J.H.Pahlira, Lecturer of History, P.U College and RS. Rosangluaia, Museum Curator. On 19th June, the rapporteurs were Zochungnunga, Lecturer of History, Aizawl College, J.H.Pahlira and J.V.Hluna.

The following persons were present in the session of 18th June, 1981:

- 1) Sangkima
- 2) Zochungnunga
- 3) J.H.Pahlira
- 4) K.Zawla(L)
- 5) Sainghinglova
- 6) K.Ngura
- 7) Ngurliana S.A Officer retired
- 8) Sainghinga(L), Pensioner
- 9) H.Lalliana(L),DEO,
- 10) Ngurbiaka, Dist. Gazetted Officer
- 11) B.Sangkhuma, Research Investigator.

- 12) Vanlalnghenga, Research Investigator
- 13) Sangliana
- 14) C.Lalzamlova
- 15) H.K.Bawichhuaka, Ex-C.E.M
- 16) Ranga (L)
- 17) Lalrinawma
- 18) Khawlozama, Lecturer
- 19) James Dokhuma, Padma Shree
- 20) V.L.Fimate, Translator
- 21) J.V.Hluna
- 22) Lalrimawia
- 23) F.Malsawma
- 24) Nundanga
- 25) R.Lalrawna, A.P.O
- 26) V.L. Siama (L), Retired Headmaster
- 27) Ch. Saprawnga (L), Ex-C.E.M
- 28) C.Laitanga, S.R.O
- 29) Thandanga, Youth Co-ordinator
- 30) Chhungdenga
- 31) Lalrinawma
- 32) R.S. Rosangluaia
- 33) H.L. Malsawma, Lecturer of Mizo, P.U. College
- 34) Lalthuama Sailo, SBI
- 35) Hranthanga, JDE
- 36) B.Sanghnuna, Director, Rehab.
- 37) Lalruanga, Vice-Principal, Aizawl College
- 38) H.Kailuaia, Instructor, JDE and
- 39) C.Laltanpuui, Instructor, IMF
- 40) Sapchhunga, Ex-SI of Police
- 41) Lalchungnunga, Lecturer of Pol.Sc., Aizawl College

With the initiative of the General Secretary, Lalrimawia, who happened to be the Editor-cum-Publisher, the first volume of 'Historical Journal of Mizoram' (A quarterly study of trends and events) was published in 1982. The articles published in the first volume were

- 1) The writing of History by Lalrimawia
- 2) Mizo History Association Seminar findings and recommendations.
- 3) Socio-Economic changes in Mizoram (1872-1927) by Dr. Subas Chatterjee
- 4) North Eastern Council by V.Venkata Rao.
- 5) British Policy to the education of the Lushais upto 1947 by Lalrimawia.

The first volume was followed by the second, third and fourth volume, and after that it was discontinued for several years due to transfer of the Editor Lalrimawia at Lunglei Govt. College as Vice-Principal. It was however, renewed in 1992 by the new General Secretary Sangkima.

Among the humanities subjects in Mizoram colleges, Mizo History Association is the first Association, and it is completing its 25th year on 23rd September 2005. The Association had passed through a number of ups and downs, wears and tears during all these years. In spite of all problems and difficulties, it could somehow survive and pull on and reached the present position. Credits go to the present General Secretary Dr. Sangkima. Let us hope and pray that the Association will prosper and steadfastly move along to fully achieve its aims and objectives in the years to come.

THE FOUNDATIONS OF MIZO CULTURE

Dr. Sangkima

According to E.B. Taylor, culture is possessed by man alone. As human beings living in a society, Mizo have their own culture based on a firm foundations. Old as the people themselves, the culture has been handed down from one generation to another. Since culture is a complex whole, the subject-matter being investigated here also appears to be complex and difficult to apprehend. Therefore, the attempt made in this paper to examine the different aspects of the foundations of Mizo culture is a general study with a historical approach. But, before proceeding any further, it may be good to discuss in brief the concept of culture so that we may conceive the idea of the foundation better.

The Concept of Culture

Volumes have been written on culture and definitions and many more volumes will be written. This means that no comprehensive conclusion will never ever be reached on culture. As culture is a complex phenomenon it cannot be understood easily by describing it or its various elements. Thus, in order to comprehend the subject-matter by understanding the concept of culture the views of a few experts on culture may be quoted below.

According to Henry Pratt Fairchild :

Culture includes not only such items as language, tools-making, industry, art, science, law, government, morals and religions but also the material instruments or artifacts in which cultural achievement are embodied and by which intellectual cultural features are given practical effect, such as building, tools, machine, communication devices, art objects, etc. ¹

As no human groups have ever been known that did not have language, traditions, customs and institutions cultural is the universal, distinctive characteristic of human societies.

The culture of a society in the simplest way is the way of life which its people follow. Thus, Hunt puts it:

The culture of a society includes everything in the lives of its members which is human origin, that is everything which they learn through their direct or indirect contacts with other people. It includes the customary ways of behaving in everyday life; religious beliefs; moral standards; the way in which family life is organised; the methods used to provide food and shelter; language; government and forms of artistic expression.²

E.B. Taylor defines Culture as :

... that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.³

Alfred K.Kroaber and Clyde Kluckhohn, after considering about 164 definitions of culture, come to the conclusion that:

Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture system may, on the one hand, be considered a products of action, on the other as conditioning elements of further action.⁴

Thus, culture once established, has a life of its own which flows down through time from one generation to another. It is the most highly developed means of promoting the continuity of life in a society of a complex world.

The Foundations

In the light of the views of the experts thus expressed above, the elements which constitute the foundations of a culture in a society may be understood. In his **Culture and Religion**, Basil Pohlong, having considered in great details about culture has classified the foundations of a culture into empirical foundation,

value foundation and social foundation. ⁵ Thus, on the basis of these classifications and the concept of culture as given by the anthropologists quoted above, the foundations of Mizo culture may also be classified into empirical foundation, value foundation and social foundation. These may be elaborated further as follows :

Empirical Foundation

The Mizo are said to have originated from the East because their legend and myth which are 'important elements in the cultural background of a people,'⁶ point to it. Therefore, in order to understand the empirical foundation of Mizo culture, the origin of the culture may be searched there for legend, myth, tradition, custom and religion are essential core of culture. Thus, scholars have classified the whole human race into three broad races as the *Caucasoid*, the *Negroid* and the *Mongoloid* ⁷ and thus the European white, the African black and the Asiatic yellow formed the groups, respectively. Skin colour, lip contours, hair form, pigmentation and body proportions are important traits in classifying races.⁸

Mongoloid is the term used to designate one of the hypothetical major racial stocks of mankind and is applied widely to most people of Asia and other parts of the world whose racial characteristics are found similar with those of the Mongoloid stocks like the American Indians. Mizo belong to the Mongoloid race because they are said to have fulfilled all the morphological characteristics of the Mongoloid as summarised by Bowles:

Straight; coarse black hair; dark brown eyes; sparse beard; complete and sharp fold of the eyelid across the inner canthus and a tendency towards a medial downward slant of the palpebral opening; a frontal and lateral projection of the malars; shovelling or inner scalloping of the incisors; light tawny or yellowish skin colour; and rocen-headedness.⁹

According to Herskovits, the so-called yellow, brown and red races are all Mongoloid, and they should never have been separated. So race is a principal division of mankind marked by physical characteristics that breed true.

Ethnologically, Mizo belong to the Tibeto-Burman family¹¹ and they also speak the Tibeto-Burman language¹². The home of these peoples is not known but somewhere between Kansu in China and Burma is believed to be the earliest known home.

Traditionally, Chhinlung is claimed to be the original home of the Mizo and it might have been somewhere in South-West China¹³. From there they migrated to the South and came upto the present Mizoram.

While in Burma, now Myanmar, the Mizo had formed themselves into a homogenous group of varying clans thereby settling down at various places. There they had developed their culture into different dimensions. Chieftainship was instituted as a single source of authority in the society¹⁴. The village officials¹⁵ appointed by the chief, himself assisted him in his day to day administration. The economic life of the people was also developed by adopting a method of cultivation of 'slash and burn' technically known as 'shifting cultivation'¹⁶. The system is still in practice. *Zawlbuk*, bachelors' dormitory, which fostered and nurtured a pure and uncorrupted life in the society, is said to be originated in China where 'Long Houses and Communal Houses' were found¹⁷. From there the Tibeto-Burman peoples brought it down to different places in South - East Asia¹⁸. *Bawi* and *sal*¹⁹ were the other social institutions wherein the Mizo culture found its expression. A person who surrendered himself for protection to the chief for any reason was a *bawi* and in return he lost his freedom of action.²⁰ In the same way, a person who was captured in times of war or inter-clan feuds thus possessed by his captor was a *sal* (slave).²¹ Both of them could buy their freedom by paying a big ransoms.

Religion, understood as a system of belief in something which human beings consider to be beyond their powers, is considered as an important factor in a society. Therefore, the religion of the Mizo in the early period was one of the corner-stones of the Mizo culture. Legend says that the Mizo began their religion with a simple chant as “*pi biak in lo chhang ang che, pu biak in lo chhang ang che*”²² meaning ‘answer me whom our forefathers worshipped’. The central theme of the religion was two in nature: Firstly, they offered sacrifices by killing animals with intent to satisfy the evil spirits who caused sickness and misfortunes to man.²³ Secondly, they worshipped God whom they believed Him as the Creator of universe and the source of everything²⁴. They also believed in the existence of life after death. *Mithikhua* and *Pialral* were the two places of abodes.

Kut, a Mizo word for ‘festival’ or ‘feast’ an essential core of culture, is said to be one of the fundamental bases of the foundation of Mizo culture. It is said to have originated from *Thlanrawkpa*, a Mizo legendary originator of feast. There is evidence that *Kut* was observed by the people when they had been in Burma²⁵. *Chapchar Kut*, *Pawl Kut* and *Mim Kut*, were the most important festivals. The first two were celebrated on the occasion with gaiety but the last one was the feast connected with death and therefore it lacked certain elements of a festival.

Thus, the social and cultural life of the people had already attained a high degree of maturity in one form or other and all the systems that had been developed there in Burma or elsewhere were brought down by the people themselves to present Mizoram.

Value Foundation

By value foundation, the behaviour or function pattern of the individuals is said to be understood and judged. Therefore, in this section, native moral codes like *tlawmngaihna*, moral and spiritual values etc. will be discussed. As a matter of fact, every culture has certain values and ideals which may not find full expression in real life.

The most important foundation of Mizo culture is to be found in what is called *tlawmngaihna*, the word which has no exact equivalent in English. It is the Mizo ideal of manhood of unwritten moral code. As noted before, *Zawlbuk* was the source from which *tlawmngaihna* emanated. A man is said to have *tlawmngaihna* when he becomes unselfish, zealous, courteous, kind, considerate, intrepid, industrious, persevering etc. In the past the people considered *tlawmngaihna* as the most precious thing a man could ever achieve in his life time.

Thus, it is deeply rooted in the Mizo society and the attempt to be recognized as *tlawmngai* thus reigned the hearts of everyone in the society. Parry thus remarks: "*Tlawmngaihna*, therefore, deserves every encouragement as if it were allowed to fall into desuetude it would be most detrimental to the whole of the tribe"²⁶.

The man who was picked up as the most *tlawmngai* in the village was honoured by offering him award called ' *Tlawmngai No*'²⁷ at a felicitation function organised by the chief. Since the award was esteemed as so precious, it was compared with that of the British **Victoria Cross**.²⁸ The spirit of *tlawmngaihna* is still in force but not as before. The voluntary organization called Young Mizo Association(YMA) is trying its best to keep the spirit alive in the society.

The '*Tlawmngai No*' was meant for man alone. But the behaviour pattern of young women was also measured and judged as they did to men in the society. Though the society did not make any special award to women as they did to men the most *tlawmngai women* was also identified and recognised her as the most *tlawmngai* women in the village. This indicates that there was a healthy moral competitions even among women in the society. This was popularly known in the society as '*Nulate tlawmngaihna*',²⁹

Equality among all walks of life was another area where the people enjoyed an ideal life in the society. Since the livelihood of the Mizo community wholly depended on agriculture based cultivation,

success in life rested on intensive manual labour. Therefore, it was the custom for the girls to have a male working partner called *lawmpa*³⁰. The idea behind this partnership was that the girl who was physically weaker would get a better earning through the services of her male partner. The system was more meaningful to widows who needed more support from men in the society.

Respect for elders in the society was the order of the day. This was the central theme of the social life of the common men because parents had already inculcated the value to their children at home especially at meal time. So, meal time was the time when parents instructed their children about morality, values, civic sense, and manners³¹. Thus, from home the children learnt to obey their elders.

The treatment of a dead body and its burial was another area where the spirit of *tlawmngaihna* was to be seen. When a man got drowned the dead body was to be searched and the search should continue for seven days. But when the period was over, the family should perform necessary rites to mark the end of the search period. The social practice is still kept alive in the society.

Again, the treatment of the dead body of the chief and his family members was another gruelling job which badly required the participations of every adult member of the society. The dead body was generally decomposed by means of fire which was known in Mizo as '*kuangur*'. Normally it took more than three months. During that long period every adult member of the society should participate in the vigil.

In early Mizo society, like other societies every where in the world, poor and needy people in the village were helped on need base. This was done mainly through community services. If a man fell sick in the cultivating season, his fellow villagers had to weed the field for him. A traveller, likewise, was entitled to food and lodging free for a night. No one should refuse to give the hospitality to the

strangers. If a house was burnt down it was the duty of the whole village to help the victim to rebuild the house. Same was the case when a whole village was burnt down the neighbouring villages would help to rebuild the village. In Mizoram this moral code and value is survived and continued by a social organization called Young Mizo Association(YMA). As a matter of fact, YMA is the backbone of the Mizo society and it is very instrumental in doing good work to the needy in the society³². Now, social services done in the society is being done in the name of YMA which has branches in almost every village in the whole of Mizoram. In the village where YMA branch is not established the social organization of the same nature is to be found in doing the same good job.

Social Foundation

Here, attempt is made to delineate the aspects of the society in the forms of family, succession, inheritance etc. .

The Mizo society, like' most tribal societies, is patrilineal wherein the father, as head of family, exercises arbitrary power. On his death the power thus evolves to appropriate person who, like the father, will exercise the same nature of power. The children belong to the father and the mother has no nothing to do with the lineage. Even the right to inheritance is reserved for paternal descent. Therefore, the lineage is traced through the line of a male descendant only.

In early days, virile men seized power and held it until they were overpowered by stronger ones. Sometimes, even the sons quarrelled amongst themselves over the succession. However, in course of time, chieftainship became hereditary³³ and it became a rule that the eldest son succeeded his father. Only the rightful sons in order of seniority of age should succeed the father. The succession might have been given to the *sons of concubine* (hmeifa) in case the sons of the rightful wife were absent. Even if the son of a concubine was not available, the illegitimate son (sawn) might also claim the heirship. In case of non-availability of sons, the succession might also go to the brother of the deceased father.

Regarding inheritance, the fundamental rule was that only sons had every right to inherit property. The youngest son would inherit the father's property³⁴. According to custom, neither daughter nor wife could inherit the property. As a matter of fact, it was the duty of the father upon his death bed to set the house in order so as to avoid confusion among the would-beclaimants. Therefore, there were instances where wives succeeded their husband-chiefs as chieftainesses. However, women stepped in only when circumstances compelled them to do³⁵. Therefore, if the father had a number of sons, the youngest son (fatlum) had a rightful claim for patrimony. But in real practice, the father divided his property equally amongst his sons. The youngest son was considered as legitimate heir because, by custom, he was assigned to look after his parents in their old age and had to live with them.

Like the succession, the concubine's sons and illegitimates also could have their shares in the inheritance, however, subject to the absence of rightful heirs. Again, it was the prerogative of the father to disinherit any son³⁶. He could dispose of his property even during his life time and whatever the decision he made, that was final.

As noted above, the chance of the daughters to succession and inheritance was very bleak because they had a chance only when none was available on the male line. But, today, the case is not as before. Though the custom remains the same, however, with the mentality of the people being changed in the society, now women also enjoy almost equal opportunity in matters relating to succession and inheritance with their male counterparts. The trend in this direction is that many parents now allow their daughters to have equal share with their sons. There may now be some parents who have given more properties to their daughters than their sons.

Concluding Remarks

Now, the study may be concluded by making a few observations and clarifications on some of the ideas already presented above. This is quite necessary because some of the remarks already made on certain points need further clarifications.

In the first place, the paper is not an attempt to define or redefine culture but to understand the elements of Mizo culture on the basis of the definitions of culture as given by the experts as quoted above. In the second place, now having understood the concept of culture as defined by the experts the attempt has been made to enquire whether a culture has any foundation or not. The enquiry has revealed that the culture of every society has its own foundations. In the third place, on the basis of the findings made above, the foundations of Mizo culture have been classified as empirical foundation, value foundation and social foundation. This classification is made on the study made by some experts.

Therefore, it may be noted further that all the conclusions reached in this paper are not final; they are liable to alteration if a more convincing findings are made.

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KHAWNBOWL UPA IN EARLY MIZO SOCIETY

- *Malsawmliana*

The traditional institutions of chieftainship and the council of Elders (Upa) in Mizo society were influenced by geographical phenomena to a great extent.¹ Geographical factors played a vital role in the process of migration and resettlement and even in terms of security. These aspects finally emerged into a specific pattern of administration i.e. chieftainship, at the village level. In village administration, the chief administered all the matters concerning the village with the help of his council of elders (Khawnbawl Upa). The administration of the chief depended upon the ability and foresight of his elders. The Khawnbawl Upa were the most important village officials. They were followed by *zalen*, *ramhual*, *hautla*,² *tlangau*, *thirdeng*, *puithiam*, *sadawt*, *khawchhiar* and *zirtirtu*.³

Meaning and Types of Upa :

The word 'Upa' literally means 'Elder'. There were two types of **Upa** in the Mizo society viz. **Khawnbawl Upa** and **Val Upa**. The **Khawnbawl Upa** were members of the Chief's council and were appointed by the chief, whereas **Val Upa** were ordinary citizens between the ages of 35-45. They were not elected.

It is clearly believed that the existence of **Upa** (particularly **Khawnbawl Upa**) ran parallel with that of the institution of chieftainship in Mizo society. For example, we are aware that the Hnamte clan approached Zahmuaka to be their chief due to the death of their leader, Thlanpiala, but he refused. Later, under the pressure meted by his wife Lawileri, Zahmuaka accepted the offer and became a chief in Seipui khur.⁴ Then he was regarded to be the first Lusei chief and subsequently as ancestor of the chiefs of the Lusei clan.⁵ It is also stated that since Zahmuaka came into the picture, the leadership system ceased to exist and new leadership appeared in the form of chieftainship in Mizo society.⁹ The acceptance of chieftainship by Zahmuaka in Seipui Khur can be

traced back to the late 17th century, AD.⁷ Therefore, in case of the Lusei clan, the chiefs began to appoint the **Khawnbawl Upa** in order to assist him in village administration since the late 17th century, AD.

However, as chieftainship became hereditary, a chief was succeeded by the eldest or youngest son. The post Upa was not hereditary in nature, but in some cases, it was rendered made hereditary according to the favours received from the chiefs. For instance, Vanapa was conferred hereditary eldership by the Sailo chief Vanhnuailiana, the chief of Champhai.⁸

As the appointment of Upa was not permanent and time bound, they were liable to be dismissed by the chief if they were found incompetent and unfit.

Mode of Selection

The **Khawnbawl Upa** were appointed by the Chief in order to assist him in terms village administration. The composition of **Khawnbawl Upa** or the Chief's Council varied in number in every village. They were appointed according to the size and population of the village. Most of them were relatives of the chiefs and his favorites,⁹ whom he regarded as wise or as well-wishers.¹⁰ Besides, the Upa or elders were selected from amongst persons who were influential, intelligent as well as well-informed and broad minded. The expertise of knowledge of the Upa helped the Chiefs for the smooth functioning of the administration.¹¹ However in some villages, the chiefs attempted to appoint Upa from the different clan in the village as far as it was possible.¹² Sometimes, the chief also appointed **Thangchhuahpa**, who fulfilled a criteria for inhabiting the **Pialral** (paradise) after his death. This was done by killing the required animals, to become a member in his council. Among the **Upa** or the Council, the 'Upa Min'¹³ or the most senior and influential acted as legal adviser to the chief (or head of the Elders)¹⁴ and he would share the glory of his chief. He was supposed to take over the charge of administration when the chief was absent or on

tour. Though they enjoyed privileges and held office during the pleasure of the chief, they could be dismissed at any time by the chief.

With regards to the **Val Upa**, they were not appointed or elected at any level of the community, but chosen and recognised by villagers. There could be only one Val Upa in a village. His main task was to maintain discipline among the youth. He dealt with important matters which were not a matter of concern for the chief's council.

Privileges, Responsibilities and Functions

The responsibilities and function of the **Khawnbawl Upa** were multifarious.¹⁵ As stated earlier, the **Khawnbawl Upa** was the member of the chief's council which decided all matters of village administration with the chief as its head. Even though the chief was theoretically the fountainhead of all power, he could seldom afford to ignore the council of the Upa¹⁶ He could never present a case without consulting his Upa. If the council were presented cases related to the chief or his relatives, the case was tried by the council of Khawnbawl Upa alone¹⁷ and he would voluntarily withdraw from the deliberation of the case, and he would seldom interfere with the findings of the elders. Even any of the elders would do the same if their relatives were involved in the case. The chief and his council were guided by the prevailing customs of the society in dealing with such cases. So, the **Khawnbawl Upa** were expected to be experts in terms of customary laws of the Mizo. Whenever the council was met, it was customary for the guilty to feed and give drinks to the council. All disputes were heard and disposed of in the house of the chief. The rule of the council of elders was generally fair.

The life of the early Mizo society was simple. They lived a nomadic life, which required a new site of settlement after a decade. The selection of a new site was carefully undertaken by a group of four or five villagers led by the **Khawnbawl Upa** despatched by the

chief. So, with the supervision of the **Upa**, a new site would finally be selected. Therefore, it must be noted that the **Upa** were responsible for the selection of a new site for villages, wherein the source of water would be deemed and healthy for human consumption.

In accordance with Mizo customs barring the chief, no one was allowed to stay in the chief's house for the night as a guest. The **Khawnbawl Upa** would instead serve as a host for the royal guests. Besides, the **Upas** would sometimes serve as a the chiefs caterer, supplying meat and other varied dishes. They were very loyal to the chief. They also accompanied the chief or his son when on tour and assisted him in dialogue with other chiefs in time of peace and war. Sometimes they were sent for settlement of disputes to other villages.

Distribution of jhum land at the beginning of the year became an important functions of the council of elders as they assisted the Chief in distribution of jhum land and would ensure that customary dues like **Fathang**¹⁸ etc. to the chief were paid in time by the villagers. Although the **Upas** (who were mostly categorised as **Zalen**) were exempted from payment of **Fathang**, they supplied some amount of paddy from their granary to the chief for distribution amongst the villagers in distress. In some villages, there are two types of **Zalen**, the one who paid **Fathang** to the chief but enjoy all the privileges of **Zalen** and the one who were exempted from payment of **Fathang**.¹⁹ A lot of mutual help would be given in a village if a man was sick or had been sent out on cooly work for the government. The chief and his **Upas** generally arranged for his field to be looked after by other villagers. They also helped in the supervision of the construction of **Zawlbuk** and the chief's house. Along with these, they rendered relief and rehabilitation on the villagers in distress.

The chief and his council(Upa) also fixed the date on which the three important major festivals of the Mizo ie. **Chapchar Kut**,

Mlm Kut and **Pawl Kut** were to be celebrated. These were festivals celebrated once in every year.

The Council was also consulted by the Chief in making decision in times of war. The **Khawnbawl Upa** gave their advice to the chief for decision making. When they were attacked by the enemy, the safety and security of the Chief and his family were put on the hands of his council member. So, the **Khawnbawl Upa** were expected to sacrifice their life for their chief and his family.

The privileges of the **Khawnbawl Upa** in the early Mizo society cannot be measured as they were the favorites of the chiefs. They were included in the category of **Zalen** by which they would select a plot of land for cultivation before it was distributed to the villagers. They were free (zalen) to select a house site after the Chiefs. But in some villages, the **Khawnbawl Upa** were not entitled to choose land for cultivation.²⁰ Generally, the house of the Chief was located at the centre of the village and it was surrounded by the **Khawnbawl Upa**, in the area called **Mualveng**. They were sometimes known as **Mualkil Upa**. So it became more suitable and convenient for the chief to consult his elders at any time even at night time. The **Khawnbawl Upa** were exempted from the payment of **Fathang** (paddy dues) to the chief²¹ and sometimes entitled to **Sachhiah** (animal dues).²² Besides, they were also exempted from coolie labour for the government (after the advent of the British in the Lushai hills) as they were recognised as accredited assistants of the chief in village administration.²³ In some villages, the **Zalen** were also exempted from paying **Fathang** to the chief.²⁴

One important task of the council of elders was to fix the price at which the paddy was to be sold and none could sell at a rate higher than the fixed rate.²⁵

Being the foremost village officials of importance in the early Mizo society, the **Khawnbawl Upa** were also proud of their status and privileges in the society and it was often intolerable to the commoners.

Role of Khawnbawl Upa as related to the solidarity of the society

The **Khawnbawl Upa** played a crucial role in the village administration by forming the chief's council and by assisting the chief in all administrative matters. Although all decisions were taken in the name of the chief, in the actual sense it was done only under the advice and supervision of the **Khawnbawl Upa**. The **Upa** acted as a driving force or steering wheel of the chief in implementing decisions. In the meanwhile, it is also said that a strong chief decision would have the support of his **Upas** whereas a weak chief would have to go along the decision of his even if he himself held contrary views.²⁶ Sometimes, they also acted as a link or mediator between the chief and the subjects. They also played a key role in strengthening the solidarity of the society. They maintained in the process, aspects of good relations with the neighbouring villages. The strength of the council of **Khawnbawl Upa**, depended upon the size and population of the villages. This denotes that the **Upa** were thought to be representative of the general public in the chief's council. The chiefs also appointed his council member from different clans in his village as far as it was possible, and this reveals that different clans were well represented in the council. Therefore, the **Khawnbawl Upa** were the actual representatives of the people in the council.

Also the **Upa** acted as the eyes and ears of the chief as they dealt with the villagers in every respect. They also had to survey the entire community in order to identify the poorer sections who are in need of upliftment. The chief would then take necessary action for the upliftment of such people. So all these actions of the **Upa** would pave the way for the solidarity of the society.

Besides, the Chief and his Councils were responsible for maintaining peace, security and normalcy in village's life. When there was a quarrel between the neighbours, it was a task of the council to settle the problems and to restore cordial relationship between

each other. Sometimes the Chief and his council also heard the **problem** which was faced by the general public and tried to solve them as far as possible. In this way, the chief and his council maintained a good relationship with the common people which resulted the solidarity of the society in the village.

The **Khawnbawl Upa** also played a crucial role for economic prosperity of the village. They had inspired and encouraged the people to produce more and more agricultural products ie. rice in every year. Sometimes, the chief and his council walked down through the street and counseled the people who were not engaged in works **due** to unacceptable causes. So, it was a matter of embarrassment and humiliation for such people and immediately went for work in **the** very next day. Therefore, under the guidance of such diligent and cooperated Chief and his council, the villages produced a good number of agricultural products at the end of the year.

Conclusion

When the Mizo Union Party, the first political party in Mizoram, was formed in 1946, it became the first business of the party to **make** changes in administration including abolition of special **privileges** enjoyed by the **Ramhual** and **Zalen** in the society, and the abolition of traditional chieftainship.²⁷

Therefore, the traditional institution of the Mizo ie. Chieftainship, was finally abolished by the Assam Lushai Hills District (Acquisition of Chief's Right) Act, 1954²⁸ in 1954. The Lushai Hills District (Village Council) Act, 1953 was passed and **enacted** subsequently in order to establish the institution of **Village Council** to help in the administration of village affairs.²⁹ With the **abolition** of chieftainship, the **Khawnbawl Upa** automatically lost their significance and privileges in the society.

The paper attempts to include the highlights of the general **condition**, status and the privileges of the **Khawnbawl Upa** in the early Mizo society.

The paper also denotes that a group of intelligent and broadminded men, had a marked presence in Mizo society, so much so that they remained well-wishers of the chief. Therefore, we can assume that a social stratification based upon activities and not upon professions, was prevalent in early Mizo society. For instance, the **Khawnbawl Upa** and the **Ramhual** were given privileges to choose the site for jhumming before it was open to the public. Also the **Khawnbawl Upa** had been given privileges to choose a house site next to the chief, the general public were rendered next of importance to them, while the poor citizens were allotted a site in the corner of the village. It also reveals, the importance of the **Upa** in the society. They were the eyes and ears of the chief and they administered over the village in the absence of the chief. They dealt with the welfare of the subjects. Needless to say, the **Khawnbawl Upa** became the first official in the village and also played a crucial role in the maintenance of solidarity and cordial relationships both within the parameters of their society and even beyond.

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ANALYSING PEACE PROCESS AND THE CHALLENGES OF DEVELOPMENT IN MIZORAM

Dr. J.V.Hluna

In order to understand the governance in Mizoram after 1986 settlement, it is necessary to analyse the process of the negotiation between the Government of India and the Mizo National Front (MNF) which brought about the so-called Peace Accord of 1986. As early as 1975, Laldenga, President of the underground MNF wrote to the Prime Minister of India, Smt. Indira Gandhi, specifically mentioning that he was ready to discuss the restoration of peace and normalcy in Mizoram within the constitution of India. Laldenga said that since 1973, his officials had met the Indian officials to discuss the question or restoration of peace and normalcy in Mizoram for an ultimate settlement of political problems. In pursuance of those discussions he wrote a letter to the Prime Minister mentioning therein about his willingness to discuss the solution of the problem within the constitution of India.¹

To start with, Laldenga came out of Pakistan at 'grave personal risk' and met Mr. Singhal, the Prime Minister's representative, at Geneva where the two had lengthy discussions regarding the various implications of the problem following this.

In his personal letter to the then Prime Minister of India, Smt. Indira Gandhi, carried by Mr. Singhal, Laldenga said that he had no doubt in his mind that the solution of the Mizoram political problem could be solved within the constitution of India. He assured the Prime Minister that there would be no constitutional problem in finding out the desired settlement. So long as the Mizo social, cultural and religious traditions and customs were found special safeguards, Laldenga believed that some 'minor administrative adjustments' would suffice his desired political talks.²

First July Accord

At Laldenga's demand the Govt. of India gathered MNF leaders from their Arakan hideout and took them to Cologne in Germany where Laldenga waited for them. Those leaders were the Vice-President Tlangchhuaka, Cabinet Minister Chawngzuala, Army Chief Biakchhunga and the Cabinet Secretary Lalhleia. For curious reasons, he said that he could not tell them straight away that he had already agreed to discuss the solution of the problem within the constitution of India. After deliberations over several rounds on the issue of settlement within the constitution, Tlangchhuaka and the others returned to New Delhi before Christmas, 1975. On January 2nd, 1976, Laldenga and his family entered India and the negotiation for settlement began.³

A delegation of the underground Mizo National Front Party led by its President, Laldenga and comprising of Tlangchhuaka, Chawngzuala, Biakchhunga, Biakvela, Zoramthanga and Rualchhina had a series of discussion with Shri S.I.Khurana, Union Home Secretary, Shri S.K.Chhibber, Leut. Governor of Mizoram and Shri M.L. Kampani, Joint Secretary (North East) representing the government of India. On 1st July 1976 an agreement was made in which 1) The MNF acknowledged that Mizoram is an integral part of India and conveyed to the Government of India their resolve to accept a settlement of all problems in Mizoram within the framework of the Constitution of India. 2) In order to bring about a climate of understanding and an atmosphere of peace and tranquility in Mizoram at the earliest, the delegation agreed to abjure violence and suspend all activities. In furtherance of the above objectives, the underground delegation agreed to collect all underground personnel with their arms and ammunition inside mutually agreed camps within one month after their establishment and also agreed to hand over arms and ammunition to the Government of India.

- 3) The Government of India also decided to suspend operations, thereafter by security forces. Such suspension, however, would not apply to operations against underground personnel attempting to cross international border and to the maintenance of law and order.**
- 4) It was agreed to continue the talks further.'**

The MNF leaders who were in the Arakan Hills were brought to Calcutta. The Calcutta convention of the underground leaders held from 24th March to 1st April, 1976 gave Laldenga a clear mandate to negotiate with the Government. However, the MNF activities were some what confused and they did not come up to hand over their arms. Hence there was no progress in implementation of the agreement. While the government wanted the surrender of arms by the MNF to proceed political settlement, the MNF wanted it to be the other way round.

In October 1976, the security forces resumed counter insurgency operations which had been stopped earlier in March to facilitate the Peace Settlement.

At the same time, the Indian National Congress, which then held power, both at the centre and the Union Territory of Mizoram was evidently intent on casting in on Laldenga's thirst for power and his revolutionary fatigue. Simultaneously there was a strong and widespread yearning for peace in the minds of the entire Mizo populace.

The Mizoram Congress led by Lal Thanhawla steadily gained popularity by exploiting the public yearning for peace. They formed a steering Committee comprising all like-minded political parties on the peace issue.

Visit of the President

On 6th February, 1979, the then President of India, Neelam Sanjiva Reddy visited Aizawl. He was the first President of the country to do so. He laid the foundation of the Aizawl Water

Supply Augmentation Scheme. Some of the issues of topical interest like the freedom of Religion Act of Arunachal Pradesh, introduction of the new scheme of Civil Services Examination by UPSC, influx of Bangladesh Chakmas, job opportunities for Mizo youths, settlement of the Mizoram- Assam boundary as per 1875, Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation were discussed by Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP) leaders with the President. Apart from this the MZP in their Memorandum demanded the inclusion of Inner Line Regulation in the 9th Schedule and inclusion of Mizo language in the 8th Schedule of Indian Constitution.⁴

The new scheme of UPSC Examination requiring a pass in Hindi as compulsory was resented by people throughout the North East in general and the MZP in particular, who strongly agitated against this at the time of the President's visit. The scheme put some difficulties in the way of the tribal students successfully competing in these examinations which they had been doing so far, as under the scheme, they could not offer English as one of the languages. The Mizos were also agitated over the periodic, and particularly the recent influx of Chakmas into Mizoram from Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh. It was reported that about 25,000 Bangladesh Chakmas had entered Mizoram.⁵ The Mizos were apprehensive that if the influx continued the indigenous people would become a minority as happened in Tripura. They expected Laldenga to do away with this when peace settlement was finalized. On recruitment examinations, the UPSC relaxed its rules and exempted the candidates from the North Eastern Region from compulsory appearance in the language examinations. This was done as promised by President Sanjiva Reddy to the MZP during his Aizawl visit and hailed as a welcome gesture in Mizoram.

Suggestion on the line of Assam Accord

In the fourth Assembly Election, 1984, the major issue was the question of peace settlement. The Congress leader, Lal Thanhawla promised to bring peace settlement at all costs and won the

election, allegedly with the help of the underground MNF. The new Congress Government came to power on 5th May 1984. Coming back to India from London to resume talks at the behest of the Church leaders, Laldenga arrived in New Delhi on 29th October 1984. On arrival he said. "I have come back as an Indian to solve our (Mizoram) problem and take my place as an Indian politics"⁶. Prolonged negotiations caused, frustration in the MNF. When the talks were resumed in 1986, it was simultaneously continued on two parallel lines- the government and the political party. Laldenga invited suggestion for the settlement of Mizo problems through his Army Chief Tawnluia when the latter visited Aizawl to collect such suggestions. One Political Party suggested the solutions of the Mizo problems on the line of Assam Accord. Assam Accord which had been signed by the then Prime Minister Rajiv Ganndhi with ASSU leaders in the early hour of the 15th August 1985 included the solutions of foreigners issue, Assam Accord said (1) For purpose of detection and deletion of foreigners, 1.1.1966 shall be the base date and year (2) All persons who came to Assam prior to 1.1.1966, including those amongst them whose names appeared on the electoral rolls used in 1967 elections, shall be regularized, (3) Foreigners who came to Assam after 1.1.1966 (inclusive) and upto March 24, 1971 shall be detected in accordance with the provisions of the Foreigners Act, 1946 and Foreigners (Tribunal) Oder, 1964 (4) Name of Foreigners so detected will he deleted from the electoral rolls in force. Such persons will be required to register themselves before the Registration Officers of the respective districts in accordance with the provisions of the Registration of Foreigners Act. 1939 and the Registration of Foreigners Rules. 1939. (5) For this purpose, Government of India will undertake suitable strengthening of the governmental machinery, (6) On the expiry of a period of ten year following the date of detection the names of all such persons which have been detected from the electoral rolls shall be restored. (7) All persons who were expelled earlier, but have since re-entered illegally into Assam, shall be expelled. (8) Foreigners who came to Assam on or after March 25, 1971 shall contineu to be detected, deleted and

expelled in accordance with law. Immediate and practical steps shall be taken to expel such foreigners. Along with the written suggestions addressed to MNF President, the said Party enclosed a copy of Assam Accord published by the Directorate of Advertising and Visual Publicity, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India on August, 1985 which printed 60,000 copies at New Delhi. Apart from Foreigners issue, an economic development “the (Central) Government take this opportunity to review their commitment for the speedy all round economic development of Assam, so as to improve the standard of living of the people. Special emphasis will be placed on Education and Science Technology through establishment of national institutions. In order to accelerate the industrial and educational development, the Government of India have agreed :

(a) To establish an oil refinery in Assam. Government will render all possible assistance in terms of institutional and Bank Finance to facilitate the establishment of a refinery in the Private Sector.

(b) Central Government will render full assistance to the State Government in their efforts to re-open

i) Ashok Paper Mill

ii) Jute Mills.

(c) An I.I.T. will be set up in Assam.

The Party also suggested that Bairabi Hydro Electrical project, National Highway 54, Lengpui Airport, Bairabi Railhead and Railway Project, Greater Aizawl Water Supply Scheme Phase-II and water supply scheme in other towns and Central University be made by Central Government for the state of Mizoram as the same sort of development schemes were already mentioned one year ahead in the case of Assam Accord. It further suggested that the 1875 Mizoram border be made as the new Mizoram State border. On 25th June 1986 the Congress (I) Vice-President, Arjun Singh and Laldenga signed a political agreement in New Delhi, in the presence of Lal Thanhawla, the then Chief Minister of Mizoram.

This was concerned with the sharing of power by the two parties- the Congress (I) and the MNF. In order to enable a smooth and orderly transaction, the Congress (I) and the MNF headed by Laldenga agreed to form a coalition government. On a date agreed to between Laldenga and the government of India, Lal Thanhawla, the Congress (I) Chief Minister would submit his resignation and Laldenga would be elected the leader of the government of Mizoram and would be sworn in as the Chief Minister there.

Memorandum of Settlement, 1986

On 27th June, the normal life in Aizawl was totally crippled by a 24-hour Bandh called by the Students Joint Action Committee - an umbrella organization of different anti-Congress (I) Students' Unions, demanding immediate signing of the Mizoram Accord.

On 30th June 1986 Laldenga amended the constitution of the MNF making it of a political party. As a party, it gave up violence as a method to be adopted. There were hectic activities. Lal Thanhawla met the Prime Minister and the Home Minister. There were last minute discussions on the nature of amnesty and withdrawal of pending criminal cases. The Mizoram Accord was signed at 9:30 p.m. by which the MNF agreed to end all underground activities and return to civil life with a view to restoring peace and normalcy in Mizoram.

The Central Government would take steps for the resettlement and rehabilitation of underground MNF personnel coming overground. The Mizoram Union Territory was to be conferred statehood. Notwithstanding anything contained in the Constitution, no Act of Parliament in respect of-

- a) Religious or social practices of the Mizos.
- b) Mizo Customary Law and Procedure.

Provided that nothing in this clause shall apply to any central act in force in Mizoram immediately before the appointed day.⁷

The UT boundary was confirmed as the state boundary for Mizoram quite contrary to the wish of the Mizo people, demonstrating Laldenga's haste and keenness to seize power. Another unfortunate evidence of the agreement was his readiness to surrender "land resources" which was clearly guaranteed as belonging to the Naga people as per the Constitution.⁸ The 1875 boundary was considered to be the first and the authentic boundary between Assam and Mizoram.

On the question of foreign national issue, Mizoram's case was concerned with the influx of Chakmas. The Assam Accord of 1985 says - Foreigners who came to Assam on or after March 25, 1971 shall continue to be detected, deleted and expelled in accordance with the law. Immediate and practical steps shall be taken to expel such foreigners.⁹ The Mizo Accord, on the other hand, was silent on this point, again indicating that Laldenga, in his haste to seize power, was ignoring the wishes of the Mizo people. Other issues like the inclusion or Inner Line Regulation in the 9th Schedule and inclusion of Mizo language in the 8th Schedule of Indian Constitution did not figure in the Mizo Peace Accord.

The Peace Accord was thus signed under the aforementioned circumstances. In accordance with the agreement between the Indian National Congress (I) and the MNF, Lal Thanhawla stepped down and Laldenga was sworn in as the Chief Minister of Mizoram under a colourful shamiana at Raj Niwas on 21st August, 1986. Lal Thanhawla was appointed Deputy Chief Minister.

After being sworn in Laldenga said that he would lay emphasis on weeding out corruption. He would launch a programme of social reconstruction through a sustained educational campaign to cleanse Mizo society of the cancer of corruption. A section of the society had been corrupted by the infusion of large sums of money in the name of development funds. As regards the rehabilitation of the MNF returnees he said that he would request the Central to send a team of experts to Mizoram for the formulation of proper

rehabilitation schemes. Some would be rehabilitated in armed forces like the Assam Rifles, Mizoram Armed Police and the Army. On the grouping of villages, he said that such village would now be dismantled as these were the legacy of a very unholy past. The villager would be allowed to return to their old village sites.

In the first Mizoram State Assembly election held on 16th February 1987, out of the total 40 seats the MNF won 25 seats, Congress (I) 13 and P.C 2 seats. On 18th February 1987, Laldenga was elected as leader of the Legislature Party and was sworn in as Chief Minister. After being duly elected to Office, Laldenga could not focus on his earlier promises, and instead faltered in the steps he took. For instance, instead of pursuing the Bairabi Hydro-Electrical Project as originally planned, he tried to convert it into a multipurpose project which required fresh investigations and thereby resulted in avoidable delay. At the same time his administration was beset with all sorts of corruption and infighting among his own followers. The division within his own party, (particularly between the so called 'Vangvatkai' and 'Kai lo') was exploited by the INC, eventually resulting in a split and the subsequent dissolution of the Legislative Assembly. On 7th September 1988 President's rule was imposed.

After a spell of President's Rule for nearly 5 months, a general election was held in 21st January 1989 and the Congress and MNF (D) alliance came to power with Lal Thanhawla as the Chief Minister. The Congress again won Elections in 1993 in collaboration with the MPC. In 1998, the MNF concluded an above mentioned Ministries, the coalition with the MPC was short-lived, therefore the MPC cannot be said to have had any decisive role in the governance of Mizoram except for the period 1979-1984, in which it was the sole ruling party.

Conclusions

As can be seen above it is clear that neither the Congress nor the MNF had worked out a proper perspective plan for the long term development of Mizoram, Most of the projects completed

by them were done on an adhoc basis. Far from attempting to fulfill the wishes and dreams of the people, they appear to be bent upon clinging to power by whatever means they can muster and employ.

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THE REFLECTIONS ON THE MIZO ECONOMY (1870-1947)

Dr. Lalngurliana Sailo

The history of the Mizo from the time of the British annexation of south Cachar and Chittagong Hill Tracts was subjected to various changes. The interest of a tribe, which hitherto was an independent political entity, came in collision with those of the British. The Mizo economy was sustained by jhum cultivation¹ and supported by ancillary activities like: hunting and gathering, exchange of goods within the village and sometimes with friendly neighbouring villages, petty trade, usually conducted through barter, and raids and plunders, which were carried out against their enemy and most importantly on the residents of the plains. While the first, i.e. *Jhumming* received a fairly good treatment in many works on the Mizo society from the colonial era to the present, they however tend to ignore or overlook the other two: exchange of goods and raids as important aspects of the Mizo economy. In this paper attempt will be made on how the Mizo economy was sustained through these important activities.

Jhumming

Agriculture was the principal occupation of the Mizos.² Except a few people, who lived on contributions of rice given to them in exchange for services rendered by them to the community, the entire population was involved in cultivation.³ The practice of shifting agriculture rendered a rather rapid exhaustion of cultivable land in the area surrounding the settlement prompting the villagers to move to another site where fertile lands were available for cultivation. In some cases it led to constant relocation of the village site where fertile lands are easily available.

Shifting cultivation was the mainstay of the traditional Mizo economy.⁴ The form of cultivation practiced by the Mizo was known as *Jhumming* and comprised various stages. There was the original

cutting down of bamboo or tree jungle, its burning, the sowing of seeds, weeding, and eventual harvesting.⁵ The selection of the day of burning was a matter of considerable skill. All the male villagers turned out with sticks and knives to guard the fire lines so that uncut forest might escape mutilation. McCall was highly impressed by this practice, which he aptly commented, "The Lushais in this, as in many other respects, deserved commendation for their good sense in genuinely seeking to avoid unnecessary damage to what was their life-blood."⁶

In May, the villagers, male and female, turn out to sow the rice seeds up and down the hill-sides, choosing a period when rain is imminent or falling. The seedling work was done by dibbling shallow holes with *daos* and dropping into each a few seeds. Between June and October, fields of growing rice were thoroughly weeded three or four times. The weeding work was conducted in the manner of agricultural work partnership. However, this kind work partnership was a small one—compare to the magnitude of the labour force during the seeding work and comprised generally only unmarried young men and women.⁷

On this Nunthara asserted that, "It was, and still is, a reciprocal give and take form of agricultural work. Young men and women paired themselves in such a way that the agricultural work would be performed reciprocally on two or more plots of land at alternate days."⁸ The women figure predominantly in this arduous but essential need.⁹

The Mizo society highly valued this agricultural work partnership and many folk songs were composed, recalling the youthful days along these lines. To many young people who were freed from the burden of family responsibility, the main attraction to agricultural work was this work-partnership.¹⁰ As such, agriculture appeared to have a sort of romantic attachment to every Mizo. It had been observed that a lot of social interaction had taken place during agricultural work and at agricultural land, which were

Climate in nature and the work partnership was a kind of perfect co-operation.¹¹

After cutting the *jhums* the Lushais celebrated *Chapchar kut*, the festival of the year with week-long feasting and drinking. Before this, the *Kawngpui siam* sacrifice was held to ensure good crops and bring luck in hunting.¹² Around June, the *Fano dawi* ceremony was performed to appease the spirits to bestow good crops and prevent excessive mosquitoes. *Pawl kut*, which was a kind of thanksgiving festival, took place immediately after the harvest was gathered, and feasting could last a week or as long as there was enough rice beer to go around.¹³

At the end of the year, during November and December the harvest season arrived, the reaping after months of Nature's vagaries. There may have been droughts strangling the growth of the rice ears, insects eating secretly at the roots of the shoots, untimely winds, which can lay fields of promising rice in low fertility, and an easy prey to covetous rats. Due to this reason famine in Mizoram is a common occurrence. Repeated famines breaks out in Mizoram due to the sudden appearance of hordes of rats following the flowering of bamboo. Famine happened in 1861, 1881, 1911, and the last one occurred in 1959, in which many people perished.¹⁴

Jhuming continued to be the mainstay of the Mizo economy during the whole period of British rule in Mizoram. *Jhuming* was restricted only in few forest reserves. Within the Inner Line Reserve *Jhuming* was regulated and confined to areas where bamboo forest existed. Within the town reserves at Aizawl, Lunglei, and Champhai, it was strictly banned.¹⁵ *Riverine* and roadside reserves were also not open for *jhuming*. So long as it did not threaten timber prospects, *jhuming* was endured. Elsewhere, Chiefs sensibly controlled most *jhuming*.¹⁶ The rapid regeneration of vegetation prevented the government from being unduly concerned about the environmental implication of the practice.

Thus, people continued to *jhum* the slopes much as they had for generations, the only difference being that there was no longer the option of relocating the village due to restriction imposed by the British authority. There was a fixed area suited for cultivation, portions of which were *jhumed* in rotation in successive cycles. Such a system was already practiced by the Maras, but was a new proposition to the Lushais. By the 1940s, the people began to feel the pressure of sedentary settlements and a growing population. A relative degree of freedom in cultivation was a growing desire because *jhumming* continued to be the sole avenue for survival in Mizoram. The Lushai Hills Chiefs' Conference in 1941 articulated concern on this issue. The resolution of the Conference called for abolition of riverine reserves, as this land was suited for cultivation of crops for export such as cotton and also demanded that they should be allowed to clear land adjoining government roads as the people were facing a shortage of *jhum* land.¹⁷

Jhumming was the backbone of the society, the sole source of survival, and around this activity were intertwined their customs, culture, measures of time, quantities and distances. The agricultural work was also closely interwoven with their religious belief system.

Hunting

Apart from yielding a variety of useful products, such as building materials, medicines, dyes, fuel wood, vegetables and fruits, forests were the stage for hunting. Prowess in hunting commanded deep respect, and ensured admission to *Pialral*, the Mizo paradise after death. Before undertaking any hunting expedition a sacrifice, *lasikhal* was offered to the spirit *lasi* who owned all wild animals. A successful hunt or raiding expedition was followed by another ceremonial performance, giving the ghost of the performer over the ghost of the animal or human while entering paradise. The best hunter among the young men was honoured with a special cup of rice beer when the hunting party returned, and also at certain public ceremonies thereafter.¹⁸

Raids

Wars and raids formed an integral part of the Mizo economy, though they were not always committed for economic gains only. Sometimes it was due to the desire to acquire more lands on the part of the Chiefs. The various branches of the ruling Sailo family were frequently at war, the cause almost invariably being a dispute over land. About 1856 the War of the North and the South broke out, which lasted about three years. The belligerents were the descendants of Lallula, from the North and Cherri's family from the South. The bone of contention was the *Piler* hills.¹⁹ The war between the Eastern Lushai and the Western Lushais in the 1870s was the direct outcome of a quarrel between two chiefs over a certain territory *for jhum* land.²⁰

But the main motive behind many of the raids committed by the Mizos on their neighbour in the plains as well as in the hill was to obtain slave and valuable items or articles, such as gongs, brass plates, etc.²¹ Captives in the raids and wars, called *sal* were the personal property of the captors who were sometimes released on the payment of ransom.²² They were frequently used for the exchange of guns at the rate of two muskets for a slave four and a half feet high.²³ It was mentioned in an official report that one of the great Mizo chiefs, "Suakpuilala seems to employ a good number of *Pois* * as sepoy and their tribe is the chief receiver of stolen goods in the way of slaves in the whole Lushai Country... and the price of a young female slave is three guns".²⁴ They also utilized the labour of the *Sals* for all forms of work and particularly in the agricultural work. As a rule, only children and marriageable women were taken captive, and the latter were sometimes disposed of in marriage, the price of which was claimed by their captors.²⁵

It can be inferred that *Sals* or slaves were important economic assets for they provided their owners or captors wealth and economic stability through their labour and payment of ransom on their release. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Mizos indulged in frequent raids upon the plains to procure *Sals* and to

obtain other materials such as salt, gongs, utensils, guns and ammunition (powder, flint, sulphur or saltpetre, and iron which were not commonly found in their land. In the Mizo society the practice of raid and plunder went side by side with trade activities to procure these articles.

Trade

The different clans of the Mizos were constantly at war with each other, which usually involved raids on the enemy villages provoking bitter enmity.²⁶ There were few friendly villages with which they maintained peaceful co-existence. As such the level of inter-village contact was very low.²⁷ This was coupled by the almost non-existence of transport facilities. The routes connecting villages and the plains were only bridle paths, which were hardly maintained due to incessant inter-village wars. As a result there was minimal contact between villages.²⁸

However, this did not altogether prevent the occasional visits paid to their neighbouring villages and the frontier markets in the plains to procure essential articles. The Mizos used to frequent the frontier markets, like Kassalong, Rangamati, and Demagiri in Chittagong Hill Tracts,²⁹ Paletwa in Arakan Hills, Sylhet, Tipperah and Cachar to obtain essential goods such as salt, gongs utensils, guns ammunition (powder, flint, sulphur or saltpetre, iron). However, towards the close of 1870s the adoption of the policy of conciliation with the Mizo on the part of the British led to the opening of trade marts or bazaars inside Mizoram,³⁰ Sonai market on the *Tuirial* or Sonai river, *Changsil* formerly called Bepari bazaar on the *Tlawng* or Dhaleswari river and the Tipaimukh Bazaar on the *Tuivai* or Tipaimukh River.³¹ The first two were spoken of before the Expedition of 1871-1872.³² Another Bazaar at *Tlabung* or Demagiri was also started in 1873 as an outcome of the recommendation of Colonel Lewin, who was the Deputy Commissioner of Chittagong Hills Tracts at that time.³³ These bazaars were set up partly as an attempt to induce the Mizos to enter into peaceful activities and also used as means to obtain information on the Mizo Chiefs, their movement and inclinations.

Rubber was the most valuable item of trade for the Mizos prior to the British annexation of their country in 1890. Till the 1880s it was said that the Mizos had nothing but rubber to give in exchange for imported goods, though they were beginning to grow a little cotton for export.³⁴ In 1873, an official report mentioned, "At the bazaars in the Lushai country, Bepari Bazar (Changsil), and Lushai Hat (Sonai), a trade is carried on in India-rubber and wax from the Lushais for cornelian and glass beads, cloth, brass and iron pots (to cook their pig's food in, they will not use them for their own), axe-heads, daos, &c."³⁵ Transaction in these markets was mostly carried on through barter and the Mizo used to exchange rubber, ivory, cotton, etc., for salt, iron, dao, tobacco etc.³⁶

In the initial period the Mizos were not aware of the market value of rubber. This fact was borne by the report of the Deputy Commissioner of Cachar, which mentioned, "the traders bought the rubber at an average price of Rs. 27 a maund, and sold it again in Silchar at Rs. 50 or Rs. 60."³⁷ In course of time the Mizos realized the commercial value of rubber and by the beginning of 1880s Mizos in bigger numbers began to take down their rubber for sale directly to the plain markets, such as Lakhipur, Hailakandi, Silchar, etc.³⁸ This was confirmed by an official that, "The Lushais are gradually visiting the plains in greater numbers, and this naturally tends to diminish the profits of the local traders."³⁹ Even when the traders complained this to the Deputy Commissioner of Cachar, the Mizos readily agreed to sell their rubber at the bazaars inside Mizoram, provided that the same price was paid for it as in Lakhipur.⁴⁰

In the history of these bazaars extortion by the local chiefs in whose territory the bazaars were established featured frequently. The Mizo chiefs demanded rent in cash and in salt from every shopkeeper, which varied from mart to mart.⁴¹ However, the Chiefs also showed their willingness to protect the bazaars from any hostile activities and also maintained them because the bazaars were the sources of their income in terms of money and other essential commodities, such as salt, tobacco and utensils. They, therefore,

readily answered to the demands for guards or construction of shops in the bazaars.⁴² Moreover, the Chiefs were held responsible for any acts of petty oppression committed towards the British subject by the followers of the Chiefs.⁴³ This acted as a useful deterrent against errand Chiefs, for default and extortion was promptly met with reprisals.⁴⁴ However, by the beginning of the 1890s trade in rubber was virtually abandoned in Lushai Hills as most of the rubber trees were decimated due to excessive tapping.⁴⁵

The trade in tea-seed was reported for the first time in 1885, which was mainly collected from the Rengte Hills.⁴⁶ In the 1890s the trade in tea-seed was still going on but the British officials were apprehensive of the fact that it would not last for long if the method of plucking the seed employed by the Mizos was allowed to continue in which the trees were simply cut down.⁴⁷ A lease was granted to Mr. R.G. Sisson, a tea planter from Cachar for plucking and exports of tea-seed in the Lushai Hills, which, however, was abandoned after a year due to the same reason.⁴⁸ An official report in 1896, thus, declared that the trade in tea seed was a total failure.⁴⁹

Commercial production of raw cotton among the Mizos started in the 1870s, which, however was in a low degree.⁵⁰ Soon, the Mizo realized the potential of cotton as a profitable trade item and started its cultivation in a more concentrated manner. Cotton was grown in the *Jhum* along with paddy and other crops as subsidiary crop. Thus, by 1892 they produced cotton in greater quantity for export, which was usually sold to the Bengali merchants at Changsil.⁵¹

By 1920's, cotton production was considerably enhanced. The main cotton growing areas during this time were, the riverside valleys of Tuiruang, Tuirial, Tlawng, Tut, and Teirei.⁵² Cotton was exported to Cachar via these rivers.⁵³ In the cotton forecast of Assam Province, Lushai Hills stood second after the Garo Hills in the size of area of acreage in cotton cultivation.⁵⁴ In 1925 many

villages west of Aizawl had experienced a good cotton harvest totaling 1102 maunds.⁵⁵

On the initiative of Major McCall, the Superintendent of Lushai Hills (1932-1942), the Lushai Hills Cottage Industry was launched in March 1936.⁵⁶ The main trust of this industry was to utilize the spare time of the women folks to do weaving and it should not be treated as a full time job.⁵⁷ It aimed to foster the traditional weaving skills of the Mizo women so as to enable them to generate additional income in this Hills where money in circulation were few.⁵⁸

The principal item of production was cotton rug or blanket. Apart from this the Lushai Hills Cottage Industry also manufactured neat moneybags, cane work, luncheon mats, ladies' handbags, aprons, coloured rugs as well as the white and many other articles.⁵⁹ By 1937 around 50 young ladies were already trained for this job.⁶⁰ However, the outbreak of the War in 1942 and the resultant unavailability of the particular dye, the Germany indanthrene dye, completely ruined the effort of McCall.

Import and Exports

The principal imports in Mizoram during the early days of the British rule were cotton and woolen yarns, salt, brass utensils, steel, etc., piece-goods, chewing-tobacco, daos, umbrellas, cloth, kerosene oil, matches, iron pans, enameled cups and glasses and beads.⁶¹ However, over the years there was a steady increase of imports into the Lushai Hills that was mainly attributed due to the extended use of imported goods by the Mizos in place of locally made goods.⁶²

The exports were very limited. A fairly considerable amount of forest produce (timber, bamboos, and canes) were cut by foreigners * and exported from the hills.⁶³ In the South Lushai Hills export was primarily conducted from Demagiri via the Karaphuli river into the Chittagong Division. A sizable portion of this export from the South Lushai Hills was forest produce.⁶⁴

In the North Lushai Hills, Changsil, Sairang and Tipaimukh were the main centre of trade, where exportation of certain items of trade were done principally by the Bengali and Manipuri traders from Cachar.⁶⁵ The bulk of the export from the North Lushai Hills was also made up by forest produce, mainly, timber, bamboo and cane.⁶⁶

The fulcrum of people's life in the Lushai Hills before their contact with the British was *jhumming* and it continued to be so on the eve of the latter's departure. It was such a deep-rooted economic practice with no viable substitute that it endured the test of time, which however, was economically and ecologically destructive. There were no other avenues through which the Mizos could sustain their economy other than shifting cultivation. Efforts by the British authority to introduce terrace cultivation failed due to lack of interest on the part of the people and also due to lack of valleys with running streams.⁶⁷ Even in the field of trade in forest produce the Mizos could not stand against the well-established and lobby of the inhabitants of Cachar and Chittagong the charge for extraction of forest produce in the Lushai Hills fell under the charge of the DFOs of Cachar and Chittagong respectively. Moreover, the Mizos due to their long years of insulation through the Inner Line Regulation prevented them from taking any role in such trade. With no source of capital and abysmal business skills, the Mizos were unable to gain a foothold in the commercial forest transactions in their own district.⁶⁸

The level of trade activities was not sophisticated and the volume involved was also small. Yet, it served its purpose for a community whose wants were limited and simple. At the same time it provided them their essential needs, such as salt, iron, utensils etc. With the passage of time there was an increasing multiplication of their needs, which could only be obtained from the markets. As such the importance of market and trade assumed a new dimension that is to cater to the needs of the Mizo community, which at the beginning was started as a means to maintain friendly relations and to acquire information on them.

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THE EMPIRE OF TEA AND THE GLOBALIZATION OF THE NORTH EAST : MIZORAM

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The expansion of the Europeans in Asia in the 17th and 18th centuries and the growth of British maritime dominance, and the rivalries of the East India Companies were destined to keep Asia under the control of western imperialists. In fact, the 18th century witnessed a series of violent oscillations to the fortunes of the colonial empires. England emerged from the protracted wars of the mid-century as a world power rivalled only by France in size and affluence of her empire. Especially after the treaty of Utrecht 1713 which ended the Spanish Succession of war (1665-1713) there was a shift in the selection of commercial centres for empire-building. Among the distinctive features were- 'a shift in emphasis, after mid-century, from private to national aspects of colonization, the relative abundance of capital for overseas investment, and the increasingly bitter agitation against imperialism itself'.¹

In fact, from the first decade of the 19th century imperialism showed its ugly influence in the north east of India devouring the traditional economy and introducing exploitative nature of colonialism. The imperialist relations with the Chinese gradually weaned away, this was due to the discovery of the tea plant in the north east, followed by the opium war and the discovery of oil in the mid 19th century. All these developments had made the capitalists of Europe to turn their ravenous eyes on the resources of the north east. Hence from the end of the first decade of the 19th century the British imperialists shifted their target from China to the North East of India.

The people living in the eastern frontiers were imperfectly known to Europeans until the middle of the 18th century. To the imperialist Burma was the land of -three regions, Arakan, Pegu and Ava (Upper Burma). From the 1530s and 1660s these areas harboured the Portuguese merchants, mercenaries and pirates.

However, the conquest of Chittagong (now in Bangladesh) in 1666 by the Mughal Viceroy of Bengal, Shaista Khan ended the political and naval power of the Portuguese.² As a result, the eastern seas, especially after the Peace of Utrecht were singularly free from the consequences of tensions among European powers. Hence this opening was a great opportunity for English merchants and traders to establish themselves in these areas. Further, due to certain inevitable circumstances war broke out between the Burmese and the English Company and it ended with the annexation of lower Burma in 1826. As a consequent of this outcome the colonialists soon came into contact with the Mizo. Their encounter with the tribe was mainly due to the discovery of tea and the extension of the its cultivation in Mizoram.

The opening of Chinese ports by the Manchu Emperor K'anhsi (K'ang-hsi 1661-1722) in 1685 took place just at the time when a sustained demand for tea was developing in Europe.³ But the Dutch were unfortunate as their early contacts with China had nearly always been indirect. The English Company hence engrossed the lion's share of the trade and the monopoly of China's tea was controlled by the English.* As an outcome of this development, the first tea had reached England in 1664. Then in 1668 the first proposal was made from Surat (India) for direct trade in tea between London and China. This was followed by an effective regular trade from 1670s between the East India Company and China.⁴

The three decades of European peace after 1713 saw not only the establishment of a firm foundation, the tea trade for Europeans at Canton, but also saw the development of European trade with Asia all over the east seas. Especially the English East India Company's trade with Bengal increased during these decades. There was a steady growth of British power in Bengal between 1713 and 1744. But the European rivalries continued in India in which the English came out victorious and had completely gained control of the monopoly of trade in the east. From the middle of the eighteenth century the East India Company began to taste

their victory on the Indian states. After the battle of Plassy in 1757 and the Paris treaty in 1763, which ended the Seven Years war the English had permanently restored their monopoly over the trade in India.

Between 1754 and 1784, the growth of British power in Asia was more dramatic in land than in sea. The Company's trade with China was indeed the most striking development in the history of the East India Company's trade during these decades. From 1783-84 the foundation had been laid in the English Company's-China Trade. Holden Fuber stated, 'The key to all these developments lies in the ever rising European demand for tea from 1750 onward'.⁵ From 1783 the British had earned virtual power in the eastern seas, a chance to expand her trade unchecked. All these activities were supported by the phenomenal increase of the East India Company's tea trade with China. All these progress had been extensive long before the discovery of the tea plant in the north east. In fact it was the opium war of 1839-40 between the British and China shutting off the tea trade that had eventually sparked off tea cultivation in the North east of India.

In India, tea was first discovered between 1821 and 1824. The discovery of indigenous tea in the north east is generally considered to be the originator of tea enterprise in India and this had led to the belief that tea would grow in this country. It was believed that 'the districts in which the finest tea is produced in China, lie between the 25th & 33rd degrees of latitudes and in Assam, the ranges in which it has been discovered are between the 27th and 28th parallels, or almost centrally situated within those limits, which experience has proved the most favourable to the development of the plant'.⁶ The tea leaf was first introduced into Europe by the Dutch East India Company in the early part of the seventeenth century. As stated above, it was not until the year 1664, that a small quantity was carried to England.⁷ Therefore with such a steadily increasing demand, in which Britain's capital and industry could produce a tea capable of competing with the produce of China

was inevitable in the European markets. In fact, the birth of the tea industry was marked by the discovery of indigenous tea plants in the north east in 1823 by Robert Bruce. Robert Bruce with the help of a Singpho chief first discovered the plant in Upper Assam Robert Bruce who first came into the North East with a large consignment of goods, was also the first British merchant who had proceeded so far beyond the eastern frontier of India. The north east was then occupied by the Burmese.⁸ After the Anglo-Burmese War (1824-1826) more concentration was given on the indigenous tea growing wild in the North Eastern Region of India. By 1832, the subject of tea was brought to the notice of the Governor-General of Bengal by Bruce. Lord William Bentinck the then Governor-General immediately deputed captain Jenkins to report upon the resources of the country. Two years later, a Committee was appointed by the Governor General for affecting the tea plant in the Company's gardens and Gordon was appointed as its Secretary, and he was to enquire into the possibility of 'profitable cultivation' of tea in the North east. The Tea Committee soon received communications from captain Jenkins and Lieutenant Charlton, proving beyond all doubt that the tea shrub is indigenous in Assam.⁹ As a result the first tea estate was started and established at Chabua in 1837.¹⁰

The discovery of tea in the north east had greatly attracted the capitalists of England and the white traders of India. Prior to the discovery of the tea plant in the north east, China was the sole country which had exported tea to Europe. In the beginning the East India Company had the monopoly of production of tea. Once a Charter was given to private Companies to manufacture and market the products, communication and transports were developed. One may assert that the tea industry received momentum when the East India Company in 1833 lost trading monopoly of China. By the end of 1837, Bruce enabled to submit to the tea Committee a consignment of 46 boxes of Assam tea. Hence the first importation of 'British tea' ** made its appearance to the English markets.¹¹ The first parcels of tea from the north east

were highly approved of on their arrival in England. Soon valuable reports upon peculiarities of the north East region and the results of a number of experiments in the culture of the indigenous plant, were published at intervals between 1837 and 1840. The White capitalists shifted their centres of tea- trade from China to the north east of India and they now had to compete with China. It is noted that 'The East India Company having thus acted the part of pioneers, landed over their experimental plantations and establishments to the new Company succeeded in producing a tea superior to any imported into this country from China.'¹² Therefore exports of tea from China fell from 1880 onwards and seven years later, in some provinces four-fifth of the tea hills were already lying untended. Hence, the whole of the Chinese economy was now ruined.¹³

The discovery of the tea plant and the protracted development in its plantation caused the penetration of European capitalists into the North Eastern region and twenty or thirty tea gardens of large extent were now being firmed. Early in 1839, the Bengal Tea Association was formed in Calcutta.¹⁴ A few weeks later the Assam Company was formed at England in February 1839, with a capital of 500,000 pounds. The management was vested in a Committee of Directors chosen by the Bengal Branch of the Association.¹⁵ By the end of 1846 the tea plantations covered nearly 200 acres; in 1848 it was further extended reaching to an extent of 1000 acres.¹⁶ The first Company was first incorporated in India as a rupee concern, and only in 1865 as a sterling Company in London. In March 1840 the Sibsagar plantations of the East India Company were sold to the Assam Tea Company rent-free for ten years. After a few years, all its remainings were disposed off to private enterprises. This clearly indicates the capitalistic nature of the white colonists. The heavy expenditure on tea cultivation and its manufacturing was so effectively reduced that all fear of competition with China was virtually removed. By 1859 there were as many as fifty- one tea gardens in Assam owned by private individuals or firms.¹⁷ The first auction of tea was held in London in 1861. As a consequent of this development on 18th May, 1881 the

India Tea Association (at Jorhat) with its headquarters in Calcutta, as a forum for commodity interests, and the Indian Tea Planters Association were set up at Jalpaiguri in 1918¹⁸ respectively. The establishment of steam communication between Calcutta and Guwahati in 1847 provided both the Assam Company and persons engaged in commercial pursuits had greatly opened improved facilities for the transit of commercial goods and other produce to and fro.¹⁹

The tea empire soon had a significant effect on the border areas of Mizoram. Due to the White planters more lands were cultivated to further invest their capital. In the Cachar the first tea plantation was started in May 1856 at Burrahangur (Barsangare) south Cachar.²⁰ It was reported that there were about a million acres calculated for their cultivation in the Cachar District, each acre's full bearing was supported to yield 200 lbs. tea.²¹ Between 1862-67 the cultivation of tea were started in the Chittagong and Chutianagar.²² Ultimately the tea cultivation was extended in many areas. The industry was now placed in a firmer foundation. It was therefore evident that the cultivation of the tea plant could surely have attracted tribe in whose land the extension of tea cultivation had been undertaken.

Moreover, the discovery of oil in 1829 along the Dihing river²³ surely gave impetus to imperialism for further extension of empire and exploitation of North East resources. A Survey party later found oil coming out on the bank of Namchik river.²⁴ The first oil was drilled at Digboi successfully, and hence oil was discovered in 1890. As a result the Assam Oil Company (AOC) was formed in 1891. The Burma Oil Company (BOC) took over the management of the fields in 1921 and their operation was continued till independence.²⁵ In fact, the British had made every use of the sea port, ferry, riverports etc. for communications and carrying goods. As a result the colonists started improved methods in communications and transportation. It was due to the discovery of the tea plant, oil and the railroad construction from the early 1850s added by the exploitative nature of the white imperialist that the north east

into contact with the colonists. Their individual interests and the desire to invest their capital and the extension of the tea cultivation obviously had greater impact on the Mizo. It soon led to the globalization of Mizoram and its inhabitants. Within a few years the White imperialists had the task of sending several expeditions to the hills. Through these developments, the north eastern areas were now exposed to the outside world and the globalization of the region had a far reaching impact on tribe.

Up to the middle of the 18th century contact with the Mizo were few and vague. But the power of imperialism could not be checked for all time. In 1760 Mir Kasim ceded Chittagong to Lord Clive of the East India Company.²⁶ As an outcome of this development, trade was opened up with some of the neighbouring tribes of the Mizo hills. On the Chittagong-Mizoram border areas extensive internal changes were experienced, which had greatly influenced the course of Mizo-British relations. But due to frequent raids made at the border areas, the British Raj was forced to constitute the Chittagong hill Tracts-district in 1860. This was done to protect their tea gardens extended to Sylhet and other areas lying within the so called 'welled settled' territories.

The discovery of tea and the establishment of the Assam Company on 14th February 1839²⁷ and the subsequent extension of the tea cultivation in Mizo country ultimately led to the annexation of Mizoram. As the empire of tea extended beyond the limits of the colonists, it was challenged by the Mizo with great resistance against imperialism. A series of raids were made and the most serious was the killing of the White planters in 1870 at Alexanderpur tea garden. *** In this encounter the Mizo captured a five year old white girl and also a number of British subjects. The British Raj, with the pressure of the Planters started the policy of 'conciliation' and 'mutual relation' through trade with tribe. Apart from this, agreements were made with some of the Mizo chiefs and bazaars were also opened at several points including the capital, Aizawl. Unknown before to both the Asians and the Europeans, the Mizo

were now exposed to the outside civilization through trade. But 'peaceful intercourse' were not always successful, therefore the imperialist opted for the conquest of the whole hills. As a result by 1890, a Political Officer was stationed in the North Hills.²⁸ The next year the south hills constituted a British district under the Assistant Superintendent of Bengal Police.²⁹ After the consolidation of the whole hills Mizoram finally came under colonial rule in 1898.

The first globalization**** of Mizoram may be noted when in 1917, (during the 1st world war) 210 Mizo youngmen were sent to France under the name the 27th Lushai Labour Corps headed by Lieutenant Colonel Playfair. The next year, another 30 joined the 8th Bearer Corps and went to Mesopotamia. During World War II many youngmen and young girls joined the British Army, Indian Army, Indian Air force, Auxiliary nurse, and even the (British) King Commission.³⁰ Also, due to the fear of the Japanese invasion of Mizoram from Burma, in almost every village a voluntary force called 'Pasaltha' (heroic and courageous, fearless and to brave etc.) was organized under the District Total Defence Scheme.³¹ This shows that Mizoram had not went unnoticed by western countries.

Further, in order to give sufficient exports to outside the hills, improved transports were undertaken from 1900 onwards. The historic intercourse with the outside world enabled the new administration to open more roads and improve communication. From the early 1930s, efforts were made to export manufactured goods and production. Between 1936-37, the colonial rulers of Mizoram started the first cottage industry in Aizawl. The chief markets were Shillong, Calcutta Bombay and the Cachar plains of Assam.³² Liangkhaia adumbrated that, the Mizo blankets which were made under the cottage industry were traded not only in India but also exported to 'America, Australia, and New Zealand.'³³

Though the commercialization of handicrafts and the products of cottage industry were not based on a large scale, the money capital as the medium of exchange rested on the traditional

operation of buying and selling-barter. The progress of trade indeed led to more exposure with the outside civilization and globalization. The commercial trade and the transactions through the white European-currency or capital was indeed the effect of the tea empire in the north east of India.

Imperialism brought Christianity in 1891. The faith was introduced in 1894 under the London Baptist Mission³⁴ and the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist in 1897 respectively. Since then, the missionaries established Christianity permanently in the hills. In 1905 the pioneer missionary of the south hills formed the Lakher Pioneer Mission at London.³⁵ The Mission published a quarterly newspaper which were widely circulated in England.³⁶ The Lakher Pioneer Mission was operated from 23, Puney Common, London, South Welsh. In Mizoram the news letter was circulated through South Mizoram via Chittagong, East Bengal. Through the Mission's quarterly newspaper Mizoram was modernized and earned great popularity in the west. During the II world war, the south hills became a military operational area.³⁷ The mission enterprise had established educational institutions in the hills. In fact under colonial rule institutions were fast developing, but not higher education. Through education many Mizo youngmen began to form new ideas and liberal concepts of other countries. They dreamed of the future state of Mizoram. Surprisingly, in 1945, Lalzuithanga of Kulikawn, wrote a Drama entitled 'Mizoram in 1990'. The theme was based on the future development of modern science and technology- electricity, motor vehicle and bank- which would be widely used and be available by the end of the 20th century.³⁸ Moreover, as an outcome of these developments, in 1955 a Survey of suitable site for airfield (landing grounds) was undertaken in Mizoram by the Civil Aviation Directorate of Assam.³⁹

The educated elites were greatly influenced by the national movement of India, and Gandhi's Satyagraha. Taking advantage of the political movement of the India and world on 9 April 1946 the Mizo Union was founded,⁴⁰ followed by the Mizo Freedom Organisation in 1947.⁴¹ But the latter was incorporated with the

Eastern India Tribal Union in 1957. As political movements and organizations were fast developing, the imperialists were greatly concerned about the activities of the Communist at their border areas and in Mizoram.⁴² It may be noted that once the Mizo were exposed to other civilization, the socialist ideas of Asia had its effect on the tiny land of the globe. Therefore, on October 28, 1961 a new political party called the Mizo National Front was founded which also propagated 'complete independence.'⁴³ The MNF fought for freedom based on socialistic thought and ideas. It was to internationalize the movement based on the theory of 'nationalism'⁴⁴. Through an armed revolution against the Indian Union, gradually the Mizo were internationally known.

As more and more Mizo joined service in other countries, political development within the country became fully active. Mizo women did not remain dormant under their daily household chores. By 1952 four women members of the Women Union namely Hmingliani, President, Thankimi, General Secretary and Varziki, member of the Northern hills and Mrs. Challiana, President, the Women's Union South Lushai Hills Branch, were recommended to represent the women in the District Council election.⁴⁵ It was to represent and safeguard the special interests of the women of Mizoram. In fact most of these developments owed much to the discovery of tea and its extension in the north eastern region of India.

Thus it was due to the Empire of Tea generated under imperialism that Mizoram was annexed. The Mizo somehow had to welcome modernity. It was through this that education and new ideas had enlightened the tribal minds. Though the Mizo welcomed the forces of the so called 'modern culture' or modernity, they somehow could not uplift their social and economic entity. They did not realize that globalization does not care for such entity but cares only to do away with tradition by introducing new lines of concept. Undoubtedly, the younger generations welcomed the globalization of their villages but seemed to be more attracted to acculturation.

Moreover, they were not concerned with the continuous existence of ethical norms or practices. But this is debatable. However, if globalization does not care for religion, culture and customs there could be no identification of society in the world itself.

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- * The use of tea as a drink began to spread under the T'ang dynasty (618-907).By the end of the eight century tea was mostly grown in Anhwei,Chekiang, Fukien and Szechwan.
- ** Since Upper Assam and the other neighbouring Districts or region were not yet under Colonial rule it would not be proper to justify as 'British tea'.
- *** By the 1920s the Alexander Tea Estate was incorporated with Loharband Tea Garden (Katlicherra) in the Hailakandhi District, Assam.
- ****Globalization is the process whereby individual lives and local communities are affected by economic and cultural forces that operate world-wide.

ZU THROUGH THE AGES

Dr. Samuel Vanlalhlanga

In recent times the Mizoram Liquor Total Prohibition Act has once again managed to resurface as a burning topic in Mizo society with coverage not only being given by the print media but also active debates taking place on television. It is apparent therefore that the opinion on the issue is divided and despite the finality of the Act, it is clear that the matter will not die down easily. The topic of *Zu* and its use however is not a modern phenomenon and if one looks through the records carefully it is clear that serious debates on the issue have taken place. What I hope to do in this paper therefore is to give a brief review of the history of this debate and the issues surrounding it. The first part of this paper attempts to briefly define *Zu*. The second part tries to explore the Christian missionaries and their offspring, the early Mizo Church's views and stands on *Zu*. The next section is about the ideas and opinions of the British Officials in Mizoram and the non-Christian Mizos on *Zu*. This part also briefly scrutinizes contradictions made by the administrators themselves in their opinions on *Zu* and its consequences. Fourthly, the politicization of *Zu* in Mizoram and pressures given by the Church on the issue are looked into. In addition I hope to further contribute to this debate by giving my opinion in the conclusion as to why the issue of *Zu* is such an important matter in Mizo society.

I

Zu is a colloquial name given to beer or any fermented liquor, or fermented grain ready for converting into beer by adding water.¹ Foreign made liquor and any other alcoholic drinks are also considered as *Zu*. Even before foreign made liquor or any other type of hard drinks was introduced among the Mizos, different kinds of *Zu* were very common and played a very important role in traditional Mizo society. *Zu pui*, *Zu fang* and *Rak Zu* were the three important *Zu* among the Mizos in early days. Of these, *Zu pui* was the most popular and common drink while *Zu fang* and *Rak*

Zu were never drunk in public - *Zu fang*, being drunk within the family and *Rak Zu*, consumed only by the chiefs and elders.² Every family prepared their own beer from the rice they harvested and this portion constituted a considerable part of the family rice basket in every home.

Tin Zu is another type of *Zu* introduced among the Mizos by the wives of Nepali military personnel, who had come along with the British officers, sometime in 1911³. It was given the name *Tin Zu* because it was brewed in kerosene or ghee tins. It was made of husked rice without the chaff and fermented for three or four days. It was used mainly for commercial purpose by illicit liquor sellers and had become very common.

Foreign made liquor became common in the late sixties. Till the first half of the sixties, foreign made liquor was hardly consumed by common drinkers due to its high price and limited supply. Since the sellers could make huge profit from it, they started importing foreign made liquor from the neighbouring districts and states where it was legal to sell.

As it was an integral part of the Mizo culture, there were strict norms for *Zu* drinking. Young men and women were discouraged from *Zu* consumption and barring a few exceptional cases, children were not allowed to drink *Zu*. Only men of certain age group were allowed or expected to drink although there is no evidence that women were barred from drinking. "...*Zu* was never a daily item of diet for the ordinary home, it having been rather the mark of some real festa [sic]. The chief and more well-to-do people would drink it daily, usually to excess, but amid a very natural conviviality."⁴ It is said that *Zu* was drunk by an ordinary man only on certain occasions and appointed times. Though they could drink it as much as they liked in such occasions, yet none of them ever drank excessively to lose his self control.⁵ There were also penalties for those that caused trouble due to intoxication. For this reason hardly anybody ever got drunk and even if they did, did not dare to create trouble for the community.

II

When the Christian Missionaries first came to Mizoram, they held rather liberal views on *Zu* drinking. Although they were total abstainers themselves they were not at all anxious to compel their converts to follow their example⁶. But they later changed their view and branded *Zu* as “one of the curses of this land.”⁷ They felt that Mizos were not capable of controlling themselves when they drank. The missionaries made their feelings known to the administrators as well as their Mizo converts. This had immensely changed the views of Mizo converts on *Zu*. Indeed, one of the most important criteria to become a Christian became the rejection of the consumption of *Zu*. The missionaries’ view on *Zu* in the case of Mizo society was given strength by the lack of any strong opposing viewpoint. This gives the impression that the observation of the missionaries was accurate. However, despite this, *Zu* was never completely abandoned in Mizo society.

Rev. Edwin Rolands, a Welsh missionary, in his report says “...for two or three days the large village was given to drunkenness; old women and old men would mutter in drunken accents,... I was struck by the way the Lushais are addicted to drink; everything is made the occasion for drinking,...the return from a journey, a death, a marriage, a piece of work completed, etc.; the chiefs, because they have more time, seem to be rather worse than the villagers. The people are steeped in drink, superstition, ignorance and carnality.”⁸

The Baptist missionaries, working in South Mizoram also felt that “the Lushais do not know what moderation is where rice beer is concerned, and the only course open for the converts is to abstain from it altogether.”⁹

The missionaries thus opined

...to be temperate in the matter of strong drink was out of the question for them (Mizos). A single horn of the liquor always led to another and yet another, and almost invariably ended in intoxication. That indeed is the only object a Lushai has in view when he drinks. The associations of strong drink in Lushai are all utterly opposed to a holy Christian life. At a beer drink all the

vilest passions of the people are let lose, obscene songs and jests abound, and it is unthinkable that any follower of Jesus could join such a company and still keep his garment unspotted by the world.¹⁰

The missionaries with the consent of the new Mizo Christians, seeing evils of drunkenness, decided for a complete prohibition and made it a must to abandon strong drinks by all Mizos who wished to join Christian community. Drinking rice beer was the one temptation many new converts found difficult to resist and slide back to the old life.¹¹ The early Mizo church made the rule so strict that "if you as much as lick your fingers dipped in rice beer, you are liable to excommunication."¹² There was an instance in which a man and his wife from Khawngbawk village, after becoming Christians, named their new born little child *Zubani*.¹³

III

On the other hand, many British officers in Mizoram, right from McCabe, who was reported to be incompetent to carry out his duty due to his continued drinking habit,¹⁴ never tried to give up drinking. Shakespear, a very competent officer, who served in Mizoram for twelve years,¹⁵ talked about his enjoyment of *Zu* in the following words:

What a joy it was when one came panting up the last bit and found at the top in a shady corner, the chief and his upas, awaiting one with chung's of *Zu* and fresh cut bamboo cups out of which to drink it, while one discussed various matters. And then the pleasant evenings in the chief's house, seated on a rolled up puanpui, listening to the gossip and the jokes while *Zu* passes round.¹⁶

By going to the extent of saying *Zu* as the healthiest drink, he strongly disagreed with the Christian Missionaries and the early Mizo Christians, who discouraged *Zu* in Mizo society. In the same tone as he talked about his enjoyment of *Zu* drinking, his disapproval to abstinence was stated thus:

I am afraid I could never get reconciled to a teetotal Lushai language. I do remember one terribly dull evening spent with a

Christian chief, his Christian wife and one Christian upa. I went to bed very early that evening.¹⁷

It was also said that once a British officer and Lalburha, chief of Chhawrtui competed each other to be quicker in drinking Mizo *Zu* from a very big cup. Lalburha was beaten and had to contribute a large pot of rice beer for their consumption.¹⁸ Except McCabe, no other British officer was reported to have been unable to carryout his duty because of drinking.

However, the judgement made by the British ruling class that the Mizos could regulate themselves in the matter of *Zu* and they were not drunkards seems to be too simple a conclusion. Shakespear contradicts himself when he mentioned that "... it (*Zu*) has not the exciting effect which the drink brewed from maize and millet seems to have on the eastern tribes, among whom violent crimes, committed during drinking bouts, are very common."¹⁹ If whom he referred to as 'eastern tribes' are the eastern Lushais (descendants of Lalphunga and Vanhnuailiana); then the Lushais were not free from 'crimes, committed during drinking bouts.' Even if the 'eastern tribes' are not the eastern Lushais, the Mizos did brew their *Zu* from maize, millet and edible bean. This means that they were subjected to the same effects. A.G. Mc Call, another superintendent of the Lushai Hills, while talking about the big amount of insanity among the Mizos, felt that "*Zu* might have been suspected of affecting pregnant mothers through their own over-indulgence or through rough manhandling by drunken husbands"²⁰ though he immediately mentioned that "...*Zu* drinking has diminished so much under the influence of mission teaching... this can probably be ruled out."²¹ This points to the fact that there had been cases of over-indulgence in *Zu* drinking and cases of 'manhandling by drunken husbands' which were confirmed by the missonary's account.²²

It is also said that quarrel always broke out among those who took part in Sakhi *Zu* and Se *Zu* drinking. Only those who had performed 'Sakhi ai' ceremony or Sechhun and Khuangchawi, or

claimed to have performed the 'ai' ceremonies could participate. Quarrel always broke out on whether the person who claimed to have performed any of the ceremonies mentioned was really true or not.²³ This probably would have led to untoward incidents several times over. Nonetheless, due to its condemnation by the society at large, there was no mention of any drunkard, crime or tottering in the street. Besides, if a man absented himself from working or weeding his jhum due to intoxication or a hangover, the elders would summon and reprimand him severely.²⁴

After some locals were employed in the government jobs, many Mizo government servants working as clerks, circle interpreters, peons, etc., who could afford to buy drinks were found drunk in public and in the offices quite often.²⁵ Initially, they were more careful and never got drunk during office hours. But during the last phase of the British rule, due to their prestige as government servants and having upper hand over the common men, many of them indulged in drinking. Thus, the traditional good manners of the Mizos in drinking *Zu*, though marred by several loopholes as mentioned above, further lost their grip with the emergence of the small time government servants. Since they got their monthly pay regularly, this new group of people could afford to get *Zu* anytime they wanted. This dire example set by government servants multiplied indulgence in *Zu* drinking among the Mizos. This naturally increased liquor manufacture for commercial purpose.

The British administrators, who had all along justified the free flow of *Zu* among the Mizos also came to realize their mistakes. Major A.G. McCall, the then superintendent, in "The District Cover (of Lushai Hills)" issued an order which came into force on 7th November, 1938.

The practice of conveying ordinary *Zu* from one village to another anywhere within the 5 miles radius of Aijal for any purpose whatsoever is prohibited and contravention of this order is punishable except in the case of one bottle for personal consumption only.²⁶

The general peace of the community was also disturbed by the free flow of *Zu*, especially in Aizawl, the district headquarters. The need to encourage temperance, which had been advocated by the Christian missionaries all through, was thus recognized by the administrators as well. In the same order, the superintendent continues:

The owners of houses in which any breach of the peace arises as a result of drunken brawls will be held personally liable and chiefs who have permitted such kind of affairs without taking step to hold the party concerned responsible will themselves be held to be liable... the above orders are passed for the purpose of preserving the general peace of the community and to emphasis the need for temperance and moderation.²⁷

However, the same order goes on to say that there was no prohibition on brewing *Zu* for one's own personal consumption.

Though there were still a good number of persons, especially among the government servants who indulged in *Zu* drinking. The superintendent's order together with the church's condemnation resulted in decreasing *Zu* indulgence among the youth.

IV

The order issued by McCall that placed restrictions on strong drinks was the only order made by the government in Mizoram till 1973. The Superintendent's order, though decreased *Zu* indulgence among young people was not successful among other sections of the Mizos due to partiality shown towards government servants. Petty government officials, who indulged in *Zu* drinking in and out of their offices, were immune to punishment. The special privilege given to this group of people led others into this 'disease'. This was so because, the common men who had the same thirst as these government servants for *Zu* envied them and aped them in doing so.

When Mautam famine hit Mizoram in late 1950s to early 60s, the relief supply vehicle drivers who came to Mizoram used to indulge themselves in *Zu* drinking. The young Mizos by emulating

their heroes started taking up drinking habit. Another factor that contributed to the growth of *Zu* indulgence in Mizo society was the village grouping carried forward by the Indian security forces in Mizoram during 1967 - '70 to curb the insurgency problem. This policy brought different villagers from different places together. The jhumland, the mainstay of their economy became too distant for them to get time to work there. This caused them heightened economic problems that led many families to illicit *Zu* selling. The first Union Territory government, was thus compelled to issue temporary permit for the sale of *Zu*. Mizo Union, the then ruling political party granted permission for selling of *Zu* to a few persons in 1973.

Granting of *Zu* selling permission increased the amount of *Zu* related problems in the society. To this end, different social and voluntary organizations came up against *Zu* and its related nuisances. It is also important to note that with the limited temporary permit, the illegal sale of *Zu* in Mizoram was also increasing which resulted into drunkards staggering along the streets even in broad daylight. This happened mostly in Aizawl, the capital town; other towns and villages followed. For non drinkers in general and for women in particular, it became difficult to move freely about the streets for fear of drunkards after dusk. Juvenile delinquency, a problem hardly heard of in the traditional Mizo society, began to spring up during this period. Parents became restless and uneasy lest their children indulge in *Zu* drinking.

The Mizo National Front, which was gradually losing its grip in the Mizo society came up against this 'social problem' and 'prohibited' selling of *Zu* and drunkards roaming about the streets. This was largely successful due to the MNF's strict vigil with arms. Parents enthusiastically supported this 'prohibition' of *Zu*, by the MNF. Moral support was given by social and other voluntary organizations. MNF regained its lost public support due to its stand against *Zu* and other social evils like corruption etc.

Meanwhile, the first UT government, initially the Mizo Union party and later the Congress, was not able to repeal the temporary permit it had given for the sale of foreign made liquor. A good number of government officials at that time were not free from *Zu* abuse. The aping of western culture along with the flow of monetary funds, changed the life style of many high officials including some politicians in the forefront. The church, that had not raised its voice against *Zu* for a very long period was alarmed by all these changes.

In 1976, the highest decision making body of the Presbyterian church, the Synod, resolved to request Mizoram UT government to scrap the permits for the sale of *ZU*.²⁸ On the other hand, the Synod also discussed how to deal with the sellers, manufacturers and those who were habituated in *Zu* drinking.²⁹ Towards the attainment of temperance, the Salvation Army and the Seventh Day Adventist in Mizoram also took steps within their own congregations. To become full member of the Salvation Army, one had to take a vow not to indulge in any kind of intoxicating drink, drug, etc. without the prescription of authorized and qualified medical practitioner. A known drinker cannot be enrolled as a soldier of the Salvation Army. If a full member of the Salvation Army started drinking, his/her name would be struck off from the soldier's roll and entered in the backsliders' roll. It also observed one Sunday in a year to preach the evil and bad effects of drinking. This day is known as "Anti Drinking Sunday".³⁰ The Seventh Day Adventist, in its fight against drinking formed a society known as the National Temperance Society of India. A drinker, a seller or a manufacturer of *Zu* could not become a full member of the Seventh Day Adventist Church. If a member takes up drinking and still continues after repeated attempts to persuade him/her to give up, he/she would be excommunicated by the church. Annual temperance contest is being organized by the Seventh Day Adventist Church. Competitions on speech against drinking and drawing pictures depicting the distasteful results of drinking, are conducted in different schools. Pamphlets against drinking are also distributed.

Church members are encouraged to help voluntary organizations and government agencies in their efforts for the abstinence and total prohibition.³¹

However, the Churches, though strong in their outward fight against drinking, did not show much practical delivery among their members towards total avoidance. Barring few cases during its nascent period there is hardly any record of members being excommunicated by the Presbyterian Church even though the rule lists such.³²

One of the reasons for the People's Conference party's victory in the 1978 Assembly Elections could have been the liberal attitude of the earlier Mizo Union/Congress government towards *Zu*. As the temporary permit for selling of *Zu* had been invalidated, the new People's Conference party did not renew it. The party, in its second term in the government, continued to prohibit the selling of *Zu*. In spite of this, the number of drinkers still reached a very high figure. Regarding this, the Presbyterian Church reminded its members that the local church committee could exclude them from the membership list.

On 3rd May, 1984, the Congress took over the government of the Union territory of Mizoram from the People's Conference party. It gave permits to a few individuals for the sale of *Zu*. This act of the government greatly surprised the churches in Mizoram. The Presbyterian Church voiced its opinion by saying that they would disown members who indulged in selling of *Zu*. The Church also insisted that the sale of *Zu* should be regulated by not increasing the number of permit holders as well as insisting that present holders should not be allowed to get extensions beyond the initial time limit. The church also viewed that the Excise Act should be maneuvered in the direction of *Zu* prohibition rather than the issuing of selling permits.³³ It brought up this case with the government through a letter and also by personally meeting with the chief minister on 25th July, 1986 in this regard. The government

neither reacted nor gave a reply to the church's letter.³⁴ As there was no immediate upshot, the church discussed the matter again in the next Synod. In 1987, it was decided that the Synod must take up the matter with the government more fervently.³⁵ Members were instructed not to manufacture, sell or drink *Zu*.³⁶ Their intentions and resolutions were made public through the press. Regardless of all these struggles, the problem was never solved and with that Mizoram entered into a new political phase. It was granted statehood while the difference of opinion on *Zu* still continues.

A big challenge that the MNF government faced, when it came to power, was the problem of *Zu*, which was left unsettled by the earlier governments. Permission for selling of foreign made liquor, which was given to few individuals in 1985 expired on 31 st March, 1988. Immediately after the new government was formed, the Baptist Church of Mizoram voiced its concern about the selling license of *Zu* and urged the Lunglei District Church Leaders Committee to pursue the cancellation of *Zu* selling permit.³⁷ At the initiative of Lunglei District Church Leaders Committee, awareness campaigns and mass prayers against liquor selling permits were held in every church within Lunglei district. Before the government took any substantial step in this regard, leaders of the Presbyterian Church met the chief minister on 5th April, 1988. They submitted a 'letter of appeal' to the chief minister in which mention was made about the view and position of the church on *Zu*. In the same letter, the church pointed out its regret towards the granting of licenses for the sale of *Zu* to some individual by the Excise Act. It argued that the government, instead of giving licenses to some individuals can prohibit the sale of *Zu* by the same Act and appealed to the chief minister to act accordingly. In the same letter, the Chief Minister was asked not to grant any new license nor renew the licenses that had already existed. Laldenga gave an assurance to the Church leaders that consultation on the matter would be held with different Church leaders, social organizations, voluntary groups and intellectuals within the month of May of the same year. He further assured them that renewal of the existing licenses or granting of new

license will not be made before the consultations and “right after the final decision is made, the government will inform you in writing”.³⁸

No action on the matter was taken nor was a consultation held. Instead, the Chief Minister was supposed to have later advised the Church leader not to interfere in the Government matter as the government never interfered in the church.³⁹ In his speech Laldenga also said that ‘Zu’, in itself was neither good nor bad, it was just a commodity (*‘thil’*).⁴⁰ In the month of June the same year, the leaders of the Presbyterian Church were not entertained by the Chief Minister when they sought to meet him on the same subject.⁴¹ The Synod Executive Committee meeting which was held during 22nd to 25th June 1988 pointed out its disappointment at the apathy of the Chief Minister and decided to call a joint meeting of different Church denominations in Mizoram, on the issue of *Zu* permit. At the joint meeting the Synod Executive Committee decided to propose a procession and hunger strike against the Licensing of the selling of *Zu*. It also decided on the holding of prayer meetings throughout Mizoram against *Zu* and its negative effects.

Thirty thousand copies of a Circular against the manufacturing, selling and drinking of *Zu* were made by the committee and were distributed throughout the state.⁴² Zoramthanga, Laldenga’s second in command in the Ministry, apparently attempting to soothe their grievances called the Church leaders to his Chamber and tried to convince them on the Excise Act as a better option than the Prohibition Act. The Church went ahead with its plans. Posters in protest against *Zu* and its negative consequences were displayed in different parts of Aizawl. Prayer meetings were held throughout Mizoram on the night of 28th August, 1988. Incidentally, around the same time eight MNF legislators withdrew their support to the government on 31st August. This badly shook the MNF government and President’s rule was declared on 7th September, 1988. During the President’s rule, no new licenses were granted nor were the existing licenses renewed.

The coalition government of Congress (I) and MNF (D) was formed after four months of President's rule. Lalthanhawla became the Chief Minister. On the other hand the Church enhanced its fight against *Zu* and its related issues. The Social Front Committee of the Presbyterian Church felt the necessity of the Prohibition Act in the state and this was endorsed by the Synod executive committee. The church's stand on this was brought to the notice of the new Chief Minister, Lalthanhawla, by its executive committee.⁴³ The Chief Minister promised them that a serious discussion in this regard should be held between the churches and the government.⁴⁴ The Social Front committee of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church Synod in its research finding, which was carried out in 1990 mentioned that every youth with drug problem had tasted *Zu* before getting into drug addiction.⁴⁵ In 1991, the Chief Minister had been reminded of the need of 'Total Liquor Prohibition' in Mizoram several times. The Mizoram Church Leaders Committee also tried to educate the general public by issuing pamphlets in which the negative effects of *Zu* and other intoxicants have been mentioned. In 1991, the Mizoram Churches Leaders Committee widened its campaign against the same by issuing pamphlets, making posters, broadcasting it on the Radio and also forming a special committee, which was later called Social Action Committee. In 1992, the Synod executive committee made known to every unit of the church how to go about the total prohibition. The Synod executive committee, during the year 1993, reminded the Chief Minister its desire for Total Prohibition Act twice. Without much progress on the issue of *Zu* Mizoram faced another assembly election in which the Congress (I) with its ally Mizoram Janata Dal formed the government, which was later transformed into a Congress government.

Even during this ministry the church persistently voiced its concern about 'Total Prohibition'. The Synod executive committee requested the government to inform them of how they were planning to go about it. However, the government did not comply with this. The Synod officers met Lalsangzuala, the then acting Chief

Minister on the issue on 28th July, 1994. At the same time, leaders of the Mizoram Churches also reiterated their advocacy of 'Total Prohibition' of ZU.⁴⁶ However, the Synod Executive Committee could not progress as much as was expected and pointed out its exasperation in its meeting.⁴⁷ The Committee reported its initiatives towards Total Prohibition and its thoughts on the issue to the 1994 Synod meeting. The Synod again authorized the Executive Committee to pursue the matter as it feels necessary. In the month of August, 1995, the Chief Minister was once again reminded about the church's stand and its demand for Total Prohibition.

After such a long struggle by the church leaders, Mizoram Legislative Assembly, in its 1995 winter session passed the bill of Mizoram Liquor Total Prohibition. This came to be known as 'Mizoram Liquor Total Prohibition Act, 1995'. In 1996, the state government in this regard made 'Mizoram Liquor Total Prohibition Rules, 1996'. In the meantime, Mizoram Churches Leaders Committee pointed out its support and keenness to stand by the government in every possible way concerning total prohibition.⁴⁸ On 20th February, 1997 the Mizoram Government made the "Mizoram Liquor Total Prohibition Act" effective throughout Mizoram except Mara, Lai and Chakma Autonomous Districts. After the implementation of this "Act", the church leaders were always informed about and participated in reviewing its progress. Mizoram Churches Leaders Committee circulated pamphlet and issued a press statement in support of the Act and urged their members to help towards its success.⁴⁹

V

In the above sections I have briefly reviewed the historical context of the Zu debate in Mizoram. However the issues at stake are not merely that of whether one should prohibit or not prohibit the prevalence of alcohol. It involves the context of where Mizos get their morality and sense of ethics from. Moreover considering the opposition of the Church to alcohol there are also larger theological issues at stake. Finally the issue also reflects the state of

Mizo society and the way they intend to solve social problems amongst themselves.

Adoption of Christianity comes along with cultural pulls. As regards to alcohol, different trends prevail in different parts of the Christian world. Christians were totally prohibited from drinking during the Victorian era in Great Britain. The prohibition we have now in Mizoram seems to be the residue of the Victorian era. For the last fifteen years the use of alcohol has gained acceptability among the Christians in some parts of the west, including England and Wales. However, acceptability or non-acceptability of alcoholic drinks differs from society to society within the Christian world. It therefore appears that the prohibition or non-prohibition is dependent on a particular cultural context. For instance, the call to temperance in Victorian England was the result of the Industrial Revolution wherein there was a large scale migration to the cities with disgraceful working conditions and workers often took to alcohol to ease their sufferings. Thus, the avoidance of alcohol was encouraged by the Church only from the 19th century. However, the same was not the case in the rest of Europe. Such an attitude to alcohol filtered in the mindset of the missionaries and it reflected on those whom they Christianised. Thus, for instance wherever German missionaries went there was not a blanket prohibition on alcohol in comparison to areas where missionaries from Calvinistic tradition established themselves. In saying this, what I want to stress is that there is a certain relativity in the adoption of Christianity depending on a cultural context and this is no doubt what it should be in order to make the faith relevant. However, we need to look into the scripture carefully in order to verify the basis of Mizo belief in the sinfulness of alcohol. From the above paper, it is apparent that the Mizos' view on alcohol have been greatly conditioned by missionary mentality which in turn was influenced by the moral code of Victorian England. Scripturally, it may not be incorrect to say that alcohol and its use has not been prohibited. It has often been pointed out by others that what the Bible prohibits is drunkenness or excessive use of alcohol. Therefore, the question for Mizo society is

not the sinfulness of alcohol by itself (because as already stated, the Scripture clearly does not prohibit its use) but whether Prohibition should be enforced in order to prevent drunkenness. And this is where the antiprohibitionists come in as they believe that they should not pay the price for those who indulge in drunkenness. In other words moderate drinkers should not be punished for the weakness of hard drinkers.

One cannot at this point, indulge in a long winded theological debate but it appears that the God of the Bible allows for freedom of choice and is mindful of the choice that a person can make. In other words, he has given free will to the mankind. Freewill operates only when there is choice as is evident in the presence of the forbidden fruit in the garden of Eden.

The Mizo abhorrence of alcohol can stem from various reasons. We have already seen the conditioning of the missionaries. While this continues, in contemporary times Prohibition could be the means of having leverage over people whom they are supposed to 'shepherd'. It could also be the result of the inability to see larger issue at stake and the unwillingness to dirty one's own hands. The resort to drunkenness or what has been termed as binge drinking in the west reflects various social disorders most importantly the shakiness of the family as a social unit. Most hard drinkers or alcoholics generally emerged from families that are broken or have a shaky foundation. Thus, rather than address the issue of the family, we resort to easier methods such as the call for prohibition. This can only be in the nature of providing topical treatment rather than address in the core of the illness.

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ECONOMIC CONDITION OF THE PRIVILEGED GROUP OF PEOPLE IN TRADITIONAL MIZO SOCIETY.

- Dr. Vanlalringa Bawitlung.

Introduction:

The traditional Mizo society was economically backward and primitive. Their economy was mostly agrarian based on Jhum cultivation which is also known as 'Shifting Cultivation' and it was characterized as fire farming or slash and burnt farming.¹ It was indeed a wasteful and difficult practice of cultivation. The primitive method of cultivation could not generate surplus production to the extent that could bring economic affluence in the real sense of the terms. In fact, traditional economy was basically a barter economy supporting itself on the exchange of goods and services. Agriculture was the main occupation and hence their economy revolved round agriculture and its allied activities. There were no shop-keepers, and except the blacksmith, no craftsmen, each household was capable of existing on its own labour.² Scarcity of food was a common occurrence in traditional society due to raids and hunting.³ It seems that frequent migration and their unsettled nature also conditioned their economy to a considerable extent that they possessed only easily moveable properties. Being a nomadic people, immovable properties had little value for them that wealth was judged in terms of moveable properties such as rice, guns, gongs, mithuns, ornaments etc. In fact, as they needed less so had they possessed limited properties which were of easily moveable only.

Rise of the Privileged Group:

It is difficult to say with certainty how and when this Privileged group of people emerged in traditional Mizo society. It appears that along with the emergence of the institution of chieftainship arose a certain group of people who enjoyed some privileges by virtue of their position or near blood relationship with the chief or by dint of their ability or services. These people formed the privileged group in traditional Mizo society.⁴ The gap between

the privileged and the non-privileged seems to have been rather narrow in some aspects. In fact, the gap should not have been too wide as in the case of the societies where real economic affluence has been achieved and the people have been able to maintain a class society. The gap however seems to have been wider in some areas as instances were found where the non-privileged boys advances towards the privileged girls were not tolerated by the latter parents. Theoretically intermarriage between the privileged and the non-privileged was not prohibited but it seems that marriage within the groups was the normal and generally accepted practice. This privileged group seems to have been the chief's own creation with a view to maintaining the village administration as well as to do favour to his near relatives.

The chief needed men of respectable standing to help him in his administration of the village. So he selected these people from his subjects. 'These people were called *Upa*. According to B.B.Goswami, these *Upa* were mainly drawn from the *Chawngthzu* clan in Lusei society.⁵ Sangkima however maintains that these people were drawn from different clans in the village and held their position as long as they enjoyed the chief's pleasure.⁶ It appears from these contradicting views that they did not follow the same system as system differed from village to village in the selection of *Upa*. These people were exempted from normal payment of paddy due called *fathang*. The chief also declared his near relatives as *Zalen* {Freemen} who were exempted from payment of *fathang*. It thus appears that lineage also became an important factor to become a privileged one. These *Zalen* were required to help the chief whenever necessary. This in fact, is natural for it is a general practice for all races to help near relatives in times of necessity. The chief also selected some villagers who had higher workforce than the ordinary people to be *Ramhual*. These people were required to pay higher *fathang* for their first choice of jhumland. The amount of paddy due to be submitted by them entirely depended upon the chief's requirement. The *Puithiam* {Village Priest} the *Thirdeng* {Blacksmith} and the *Tlangau* {Village-crier} enjoyed the

privilege of receiving paddy due from the common people. The economic condition of this privileged people therefore was relatively better off than those of the common people.⁷

Economy of the Privileged People

Agriculture : Cultivation had been practiced since pre-historic time. Agriculture was the backbone of the economy, but since the primitive form of Jhum cultivation required a great deal of labour; manpower became an important factor for higher production.⁸ It is said that paddy was cultivated only when they settled in *Lentlang* {the present Chin Hills of Myanmar}. Paddy, millet and arumbulb were the main staple food. Maize, yam, sweet potato etc were also grown. Cotton was grown in small quantity along with other local crops. Tobacco is said to be indigenously grown for home consumption as men and women smoked.⁹ Those families having higher workforce generally produced more and if they maintained such a record of high productivity they would be selected for *Ramhual*. By becoming *Ramhual*, they could enjoy the privilege of selecting jhum-land prior to the common masses. Their first choice of jhumland guaranteed profitable returns. So even if they were required to pay higher *fathang* they could still be affluent in traditional society. This position however could not be achieved easily for the common people because productivity did not come to everyone. *Upa* were also given priority in selecting jhumland and they used to be exempted from *fathang* if not by virtue of their position as *Upa* but as *Zalen* for the chief used to declared them as *Zalen*. Here it is important to note that in a society where raids and wars were order of the day, the first choice of jhumland would count considerably for their cultivation used to get hampered because of raids and wars. The people who enjoyed the privilege of the first choice of jhumland could have a safer cultivation. This points to the fact that the privileged group enjoyed advantageous position in terms of agricultural production as compared to the common masses. Because, they enjoyed the privilege of getting fertile as well as safe jhumlands. Moreover, apart from the chief, *Puithiam*, *Thirdeng*

and *Tlangau* enjoyed the privilege of receiving some amount of paddy due from the common people. Custom differed in different villages as regards the amount of *fathang*. It was purely a matter of local arrangement.¹⁰ The *Thirdeng* also received a small portion of meat from animal killed by a villager. From our discussion above, it can be clearly seen that the economic condition of the privileged group was fairly better off than those of the common people in terms of agricultural products. Even if their agricultural product did not come up to the level of the common people's production they could still acquire higher amount of paddy with their privilege of receiving *fathang*.

Domesticated Animals : Domesticated animals played an important role in traditional Mizo economy. Of domesticated animals, mithun played the most significant role as it was the biggest as well as the most valued animal. The wealth of a man was also judged in terms of mithun. It was also the main medium of exchange. It formed the principal marriage price and was also used for exchange of the captives and other invaluable properties. Being the biggest domesticated animals, it was popularly used for big feast.¹¹ Therefore, a man who could slaughter as many mithun as the number required for holding *Khuangchawi* could enjoy an esteemed social and religious status. This position could be achieved by the economically affluent people only. Almost all other esteemed status which had religious implications like the *Thangchhuah*, *Zawhzazo* etc. could only be achieved by the people who were able to make feast by killing all domesticated animals for the whole population of the village. As mithun were not usually domesticated by the common people, those people who had mithun and rice with certain quantity for making feast were none other than the privileged people. The chief fully aware of the importance of mithun in the traditional society prohibited the export of mithun. So any villager who sold or exposed of his mithun to another village had to pay a due to the chief.¹² The other domesticated animals like pig, goat, dog etc. did not seem to play any significant role in traditional society because these animals were domesticated precisely by every household.

Treasurer : There are certain properties which were considered as treasures, those were guns, gongs, ornaments such as necklaces, bracelets, hairpins etc. These properties originally did not belong to them but believed to have been obtained from the Burmese at the time when they settled in the Kabaw valley.¹³ These properties became invaluable after they settled in present habitat as they were not easily obtained in the present settlement.¹⁴ The chief had the right to confiscate any of his subject's invaluable property and the common people seem to have been the victims of the chief's excesses in this regard. Even if they happened to acquire these treasures they could hardly make use of them for fear of confiscation. This is clearly reflected in the folktale called *Liandovate Unau*. The folktale tells that the two orphaned brothers namely *Liandova* and *Tuaisiala* were amongst the hunters who killed a big python spotted by *Tuaisiala*. But when the python's meat was distributed amongst the hunters, *Liandova* and *Tuaisiala* were not given their share of any proper meat but the stomach simply because they were orphans. As a matter of fact, being an orphan was a curse in the traditional society, because the people looked down upon them. But luck favoured the two brothers, when they were preparing the python's stomach, they found a good quantity of treasures including gongs, ornaments of different variety inside the python's stomach. It was later learnt that the python happened to be the one who had killed and swallowed a prosperous merchant by name *Singaia* with his merchandised goods. The two brothers however dared not expose their treasures for fear of confiscation. This folktale points to the fact that becoming affluent in traditional Mizo society would be quite difficult for the common people. Even if they chanced upon such a fortune, they could be snatched and left empty handed. They did not enjoy the right to property in traditional society. So they would wear only cheap necklace and other ornaments on festive occasions even if they possessed invaluable ornaments. This was done to show to the chief and other privileged people that they did not possess invaluable properties other than what they were wearing, otherwise if their invaluable properties came to the knowledge of the chief and the privileged people they would easily loose to them.

It appears therefore that treasures in traditional society did belong to the privileged group and the non-privileged people were not deemed to be affluent. Thus the chief in particular, became the wealthiest man due to his many privileges even amongst the privileged people. Affluence in the traditional society was no doubt monopolized by the privileged group. With their privileges, they were in a position to maintain a fairly better off status as compared to the common masses.¹⁵ Thus prior to the British advent, the chiefs and some others (the privileged people) were able to sell their treasures for the sake of food owing to economic hard-pressed brought about by famine in 1881-82.¹⁶

Conclusion

Besides the privileged people there were some people who achieved respectable position by dint of their talent and ability in warfare and hunting. They were called *Pasaltha*. These people although occupied an important and respectable position however did not enjoy any privilege. Thus they were not able to come up to the level of the privileged group of people in terms of economic affluence.

It appears therefore that all the privileged people in one way or the other maintained good rapport with the chief and as a matter of fact many of them were his kinsmen. They owed their position to the chief and enjoyed their privileges so long as they acquired the chief's pleasure.

On the other hand, the economic condition of the people as a whole was based on the subsistence level of self-sufficient economy. The common masses paid *fathang* not only to the chief but also to the other privileged people like *Puithiam*, *Thirdeng*, *Tlangau* etc. They also had to bear all the expenses of the chief and his *Upa* for the administration of the village. Moreover, they were required to pay all other dues/taxes like *Chichhiah* (Salt due) *Sachhiah* (Animal due/Meat due) *Khuaichhiah* (Bee/Honey due)

etc. The economic condition of the people other than the privileged group was indeed unstable and to become affluence was almost impossible for the chief had authority over their possessions even their own life.

Of the privileged people, the chief in particular had many privileges. It seems that he owned all invaluable things within his jurisdiction. He had a share in all valuable things his subjects could afford to possess. His privilege of keeping bawi and sal was also quite beneficial in terms of economic prosperity in traditional society. It may also be important to note that in a war-torn societies like the Mizos, the chief's house was constructed in the centre of the village so as to have a better defense from external dangers. The chief's house was usually surrounded by the privileged people so that they used to refer them as '*Mualkil Upa*' or '*Mual eng hmuphak*' to stress their importance and position in the society.

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CONVERSION TO CHRISTIANITY AMONG THE MIZOS: A REVIEW OF THE SOCIOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Dr. Joy Pari Pachuau

Mizoram today is the only state in India that can claim to be predominantly Christian with over 80% of the population professing to be Christian. This is a very high percentage especially in comparison to the national average of about 2%.¹ Though exact figures are not available, it would probably not be incorrect to say that all ethnic Mizos in Mizoram, at some point in their lives have professed Christianity to be their religion.² The non-Christian population within the state therefore largely comprises of immigrants from neighbouring countries and other states.

If the numbers that attend church services are any indication, it can be said that the faith is vibrant and the practice of Christianity has more than a little significance in the collective life of the people. Sunday schools (conducted by the church), which admit members from the age of four upwards are divided into broad age groups and prove to be extremely popular judging from the attendance. At one church I visited in the capital city of Aizawl last summer the attendance through August 2004 was over 70%³ in a church where the membership was almost 3000. The Sunday school, however, is only one among the many services on any given Sunday, though it is by far the most popular. There are afternoon and evening services, besides youth and other activities for children that take place between the other 'main' services. The church, as part of its normal activities, also holds at least four meetings during the week with differing objectives and target groups besides the 'revival campaigns' that are organised every now and then. Considering the number of meetings that take place, various authors have commented that the church is not only a place of spiritual renewal but it also forms the focal point of socio-cultural activities. This is even more apparent when Mizos, for various

reasons move out of the state. Mizo welfare associations and Christian fellowships immediately spring up in towns and cities where even a handful Mizos live and very often at least some of the committee members of these associations are identical.⁴

Christianity and its institution, the Church draws the people together, uniting them and giving them a sense of cohesion. Despite the rise of several new denominations in recent times and frictions arising from this, the essential unity that Christianity provides is not lost. The reach of the Church today continues to be greater than ever with the many roles it has assigned for itself in trying to give a comprehensive interpretation of the Bible. For instance the topics for discussion in the Wednesday evening services of the Presbyterian church of Mizoram in 1993 included themes like materialism and its impact on society, the role of money, the need for diligence in one's work etc. Thus basing itself on the social aspects of Christian teaching, the Church's attempt is to influence its members in areas that are strictly not spiritual. Christian rationale through the institution of the Church is therefore pervasive in the explanation of social issues and other problems that is concomitant with modernity.

In other words, what I would like to state here is that the Mizos have come to identify themselves with Christianity in such a way that their political and religious identity can almost be considered contingent on each other. In this paper I would like to look into the reasons why this has become so. The issue is closely related to conversion studies - the manner in which people around the world have accepted non-indigenous beliefs and adopted it for themselves. This brings us to an important concept brought out by James and Johnson (1988) who have highlighted the need to engage with what they term "vernacular Christianity", the result of people's engagement with Christian knowledge and practice at a local level. This approach according to them disengages Christianity from a western paradigm, which usually includes a comparison with its western roots and the focus on the dichotomy

between the western and the colonised world. They therefore seek to focus on the way “Christianity has been experienced, apprehended in ‘native’ terms” outside of institutions that authorise it, to show that there can be “subtle variations in the apprehension of truth” (James and Johnson 1988: 2-3). Closely associated with such a concept that seeks to understand local forms of adoption of a world religion is the idea of syncretism, generally regarded as the outcome of the interaction between two forms of belief. When seen in this manner, syncretism has had negative connotations especially to students of religion as it is considered a deviant of what is considered’ and understood as pure implying thereby its inauthenticity. However, anthropologists do not live under the illusion of the existence of pure cultures and Shaw and Stewart (1994) believe that it is important to direct the enquiry around the process involved in the discourse around syncretism. And this includes the entire gamut of agency, power and resistance in the context of which religious interaction takes place. Very often such studies concentrate on internal structures that facilitate conversion; at the same time there is a need to look into the role of individuals at syncretic and even ‘anti-syncretic’ activities. In other words the study should involve the practical conditions under which syncretism takes place, the human agency that is involved, as well as the politics of the intervention.

Taking such issues into consideration, the focus of this paper thus is to look at why Christianity has come to be so successful with the Mizos or in other words why the faith is such an intrinsic part of Mizo identity. Issues related to this question include the nature and manner in which the Christian message was propagated, questions related to the conversion experience and the links with pre-Christian beliefs. It also encompasses the nature of the Christianity that is practised as well as the colonial context in which the message was proclaimed.

The Arrival of Missionaries

Soon after the military expeditions into the Lushai Hills or Mizoram and after a semblance of colonial order and authority were

imposed, the Welsh Presbyterian Mission in the Khasi-Jaintia Hills in present-day Meghalaya sent the first missionary, Revd. William Williams to explore the region in 1891. Considering the political turmoil in the district he stayed there only for a few weeks. Other attempts by other missions followed, but a permanent mission station (Welsh Presbyterian or Calvinistic Methodists) could be established only in 1898. Later, missionaries supported by the Baptist Mission Society of London joined the Presbyterians and an amicable zone of influence was carved out following the already existing administrative division. The Baptists set up their headquarters in the south at Serkawn near Lunglei while the Presbyterians had their base at Mission Veng near Aizawl in the north.

These were the two main missionary agencies that operated in the state and most of the conversions to Christianity among the Mizos can be attributed to them. The missionaries of the two agencies cooperated and consulted with each other so that there were no major differences between the two churches. Consequently it could also be said that the Christian experience was more or less homogenous throughout the state. Foreign missionary presence lasted for less than a hundred years, with the last of the missionaries leaving in the late sixties when insurgency overtook the state.

The response to Christianity was overwhelming. In 1901, rough estimates would calculate the percentage of Christians at 0.08% of the total population. By 1911, 3.1% proclaimed themselves to be Christians and this increased to 28% by the next decade. There are no figures available for 1931, but by 1941 63.26% of the population considered themselves Christian with a marginal increase to 67.06% percent by 1951 (Nunthara 1996: 30; Hminga 1987: 347-349).³ By the 1960s it was a well-recognized fact that all those who considered themselves Mizo were Christian, though the state continued to have a substantial non-Mizo non-Christian population.

The Colonial Context and its Implications

Conversion to Christianity occurred in Mizoram in the context of the colonial encounter like in most places around the world. This has led to studies concentrating on the nexus between colonialism and missionaries, the implication often being that each contributed substantially to the perpetuation of the other. For instance, John Burton (1985) attributes the intransigence of the people and the lack of converts to Christianity in Nilotic Sudan to the disunited front that the church and state showed. In so doing he emphasizes the contribution that the colonial state could have made for the propagation of the faith.

Jean and John Comaroff (1986) on the other hand write of the more imperceptible ways in which missionaries, by being participants (though often unconsciously) of the modernistic enterprise were in fact aiding the colonising process. Their main argument is that while the missions, in their case among the Tswana in South Africa may not have directly involved themselves in the politics of colonialism, their influence "... in such things as aesthetics and religion, built form and bodily presentation, medical knowledge and the mundane habits of everyday life" led to a "subtle colonization... of indigenous modes of perception and practice", which in turn contributed to the building of the colonial infrastructure and incorporating them to the capitalist world economy (Comaroff and Comaroff 1986: 1-2). Thus whether the nature of the relationship between the church and the states is regarded as surreptitious co-operation as in the case of the Comaroffs or whether the relationship is seen as more direct, this aspect deserves more attention.

In India it was official policy not to aid the propagation of Christianity, yet in the specific case of the Lushai Hills it is clear that the district authorities did not discourage it. There were instances when the missionaries complained that the administrative officer could have been more lenient and times when the missionaries directly opposed the colonial authorities, but more often than not it was the

political administrator's sympathy toward the missionary endeavour that they reported. Colonial officers would also sometimes interfere in spiritual matters when it was felt that the peace in the district was affected especially in times of revival (Mendus 1939: 30). On another occasion we hear of an administrator facilitating dialogue between the two mission bodies to come to a consensus over the translation of biblical concepts.⁶

Conversion in the context of colonialism has also been attributed to the material benefits that one could acquire as a result of associating with the powerful. These benefits might take the form of immediate material needs or the provision of jobs that education and increasing bureaucratization made room for. The evidence for such claims can be seen in the fact that very often the powerful in the traditional social structure, especially the chiefs were usually the last to convert as they believed they had more to lose than to gain. And missionaries often noted that the fervour for education amongst the Mizos was increased by the realization of the possibility of non-manual work as a result of it. Yet, the extent of Mizo identification with Christianity belies purely utilitarian purposes as the reason for conversion. It can also be argued that the colonial establishment was not really large in Mizoram; the possibilities of government employment were really miniscule so that the lure that modernity posed could not actually be the criteria for conversion. Besides it was found that a large number of the more capable students opted for Christian work, (which paid less) rather than posts in the colonial administration.

The above however is not to deny the impact of colonialism to conversion, but merely to say that the influence was indirect. One of the reasons for Mizo identification with Christianity can be attributed to the breakdown in traditional structures that followed the introduction of British administration proving also the efficacy of the latter and all that it was seen to represent. The inefficacy of the power of the several chiefs who ruled in the Lushai Hills in the face of superior firepower was everywhere acknowledged. Despite the

fact that the chiefs were allowed to remain in power their authority had also been compromised with the colonial authorities preventing raids and fixing their territorial boundaries. With political defeat, the efficacy of their beliefs was easily questioned, considering that one was contingent on the other for the Mizo. It followed that the religion that came along with the new political system was superior to the one that they practised. This comes across clearly in the fact that for the Mizo the distinction between the state and the propagators of Christianity was not easily recognizable. Both were identified by the term *sap* (foreigner/white man); thus the religion that came with the white man was seen to be an extension of his military superiority, and thereby efficacious. Thus the adoption of Christianity can be seen to be due to the vacuum created as a result of the break in traditional powers of authority. It was easy under such circumstances for Christianity to take a hold.

It should however be borne in mind that the acceptance of neither colonial rule nor Christianity was as simple as it may appear to be. Colonisation of the Lushai Hills was the result of several expeditions between 1843-1890 and thus occupation was not without armed resistance. Opposition also took other forms. For instance, native caricatures of the foreigner did the rounds such as *sap a* (crazy foreigner) or *sap vakvai* (crazy wandering foreigner). Opposition to Christianity usually supported and hosted by chiefs, in the form of *puma zai* (the singing of *puma*) was also a cause for great concern to many Christians.

Social Structure As An Argument For Identification With Christianity

In her work on the Akha highlanders of Burma and Thailand, Kammerer (1990) speaks of the “indigenous cultural forms and categories” that facilitated conversion to Christianity. From a situation in which Akha conversion (in Burma) was negligible between 1869 and 1909, at the time of writing roughly a fifth to a third of Akha were Christian in approximately 200 villages. Missionaries attributed the lack of conversions in the earlier period

to the more complex *zah*. (glossed as “religion” by them) that the Akha possessed, as the chief reason for the lack of conversion. However according to Kammerer, when one understands *zah*. as a “cognitive structure” or a body of knowledge that has “pragmatic functions” as well as a “folk model”, one can understand why the Akha first responded negatively and then positively to the Christian message. The Akha recognized each ethnic group as having a distinct *zah*. Thus they believed that their identity was intrinsically associated with their own *zah*- and therefore could not accept the *zah* of others. The adoption of Christianity became possible in a situation when there was a loosening of this association and thus the possibility of associating Christianity with their identity in the same way as the *zah*- was associated with their Akha identity. Consequently Kammerer prefers to call this move “displacement” rather than conversion. One need not go into the details of her argument; but the importance of her work is in highlighting those aspects of social structure that facilitate or prevent conversions. The focus of her work is therefore to look at internal concepts that promote conversion (Kammerer 1990: 277-287).

In the case of the Mizos too, the structural organization and belief patterns in society need to be examined in order to come to an understanding of why conversions occurred in such large numbers. The underlying assumption is that a society that traditionally acknowledges fluidity in group affiliation and recognizes a set of similar categories in the new form of belief, affiliation for them becomes easier because continuities are recognized rather than disjunctions. Unlike the Akha, the Mizos were an amalgamation of various tribes. These included largely the Lushai, the Ralte, Paite, and the Pawi. Each tribe had its own *sakhua* (nowadays almost always translated as religion), but originally a sort of tribe spirit that had to be propitiated through sacrifices. It was said that one did not worship the *sakhua*, rather one made use of it (Dokhuma 1992: 24). *Sakhua* was regarded as the one that could cause everything including death and was said to rule over them (Dala 1905: 13). There was a distinct identification of a tribe with a particular *sakhua*,

and the more similar the rituals performed the closer the sense of affinity to that tribe. Given that it was the *sakhua* that gave an individual/tribe his/her/its identity, it is not surprising then that one could change one's tribe (i.e. one could *sa phun*) by adopting the *sakhua* of the particular tribe that one wanted to be incorporated into. Thus tribal affiliations and identities were fluid, not watertight.

Two developments can be said to have followed as a result of the recognition of this mobility between tribes and the guardian spirit. First the possibility of the development of a new identity, that of the Mizo (with Lushai predominance) as a result of the colonial occupation was made easier by an indigenous system that recognized the process. Similarly the adoption of a new religion was a concomitant part of that process. To put it differently, colonial occupation initiated a process of reformulation of an identity in which the adoption of a new religion seemed only natural. To be sure, this acceptance, was however, not in the nature of a one-way traffic; serious negotiation on the part of the Mizos in the practice of Christianity made it much easier for them to identify themselves with the new religion.

Once one recognizes the fact that a changing identity was not in anyway new to traditional Mizo social formation, it is also important to understand that there were within the indigenous belief system elements that made the acceptance of Christianity much more plausible.

Mizo notions of the supernatural were structured around a belief in beings that affected personal fates and destinies as well as those that affected the general course of nature. Those that affected individual lives (*huai*) were feared and to be propitiated more than those that were considered distant, both physically and in terms of roles that they performed. *Huai* inhabited the non-human world in and around the village. They were present in high mountains, springs, trees, precipices, large rocks etc. Those on land were called by the generic term *ram huai*, while those on water were called *tui huai*.

“Men were always on guard against them. They were easily offended if a man trespassed on their domain. A man would realize that he had given some offense to some spirit and would need to make formal amends, for they could cause illness and even death” (Lloyd 1991: 9). According to Hminga the “*ram huai* was believed to have coveted the properties of men and therefore wanted to take their lives and were thought to have the power of capturing their souls” (Hminga 1963: 35). Shakespear (1981) says that there were at least fifteen dominant *huai* that were believed to inhabit the land.

While the *huai*, whether those on land or on water, were generally considered malevolent because of the personal harm that they caused, there was also a belief in more benign beings that brought about natural phenomena. There was thus a belief in good spirits as well as in a distant supreme deity. Among these there was *khua* nu or “mother of *khua*”, who was the source of all blessings, *pu vana* or “grandfather heaven”, who caused lightning and thunder, *vanchung nula* or “maiden in the heavens above” who caused rain (Hminga 1963: 29-30, Dokhuma 1992: 28). The one who created the universe was *pathian* but unlike all the other spiritual and heavenly actors he was seen to be unconcerned about human affairs (Shakespear 1988: 61). *Khua vang*, from amongst the ‘heavenly’ category was the one concerned with human beings in a direct sort of way. According to Shakespear, “A Lushai will say ‘my *khuavang* is bad’, if things go wrong with him; he will also tell you that you are his *khuavang* meaning that his fate rests with you” (Shakespear 1988: 61). Thus the same name was attributed to anyone who was seen as being able to protect. Judging from the names of these beings, they were physically associated with the skies beyond the immediate surroundings of the Mizo and thus their influence was not as direct as those of the *huai*. There was also another ambivalent category, the *lasi*, considered female, residing in precipices and in the deep jungles, and usually considered as helping hunters in their chase.

The supernatural world was mediated through sacrifices mainly with domesticated animals and birds and the priest associated with the sacrifice was called either the *puithiam* or *sadawt*. Shakespear lists eight types of sacrifice depending on the being to which they were dedicated as well as the purpose of the sacrifice.⁷

Another area of traditional belief that should be mentioned in order to understand the points at which the missionaries intervened was in the entire sphere of the after-life. When a person died it was termed *hnuk chat*, *hnuk* being an imaginary cord, while *chat* described the snapping or the breaking of the life-cord (Hminga 1963: 66). *Thlarau*, derived from *thla* or shadow described the essence of a person, that which travelled when a person died or when his/her life-cord snapped. After death it was everyone's desire to enter *pialral* ("the land beyond the river *pial*"), a veritable land of plenty. But to reach *pialral* it was necessary to go through *mithi khua* ("settlement of the dead"). *Mithi khua*, however, could be reached only if one passed through a lake called the *rih*. Interestingly, this lake corresponded to an actual lake that the Mizos thought they had crossed before arriving at the present location where they are situated. So the land of their origins was also considered a land they went back too once they died. After passing through the lake, the road led to a hill called *hring lang tlang* ("hill overlooking the world of the living"). From the top of the hill, the travelling spirit looked back and saw very clearly the world he had left behind. But he had to continue his journey, looking back now and then until he came to a clear mountain stream on the backs of which bloomed beautiful flowers. The stream was called *lung loh tui* ("heartless pool") and the flowers *hawi lo par* ("flower of no return"). The spirit plucked the *hawi lo par*, and the desire to go back disappeared. He drank from the *lung loh tui* and all fond memories of his past life would fade away. He could then proceed safely to *mithi khua*, but Pu Pawl a, who was supposed to have been the first man to be born and thus the first man to die was believed to have his house at the entrance to the road to *mithi khua*.

No one could **pass unnoticed** by his house, for there was a stone that **rocked in front of it every time** someone tried to pass it. He then came out with a **mighty bow** in his hand and clay pellets shooting everyone. Only **certain categories** of people could pass by him without being shot at: **first** those who had earned the coveted *thangchhuah* title, which was obtained either by being successful in the hunt and **killing certain kinds of animals** or hosting a certain number of feasts; **second** those who had died a *hlamzuih* death i.e. those who had died **before they were a year old** and finally men who had **cohabited with at least three women**. Pu Pawla was also said to have **always targeted women**, since they could not accomplish **any of the three criteria** except in the case of *hlamzuih* (Hminga 1963: 67-69; Shakespear 1988: 62-65).

The **above brief description** of Mizo belief clearly indicates a similarity in **categories** between traditional faith and Christianity, and the missionaries **capitalized on this**. Acceptance of the Christian faith became **easier not only because** of the recognition of familiar categories but **also the ability** of the missionaries to adapt and make the gospel **relevant to them**. For instance, Savidge and Lorrain noted that when **Christ was presented** as a saviour of sins, the Christian message **did not appeal to the people**. However, when the emphasis was shifted to **Christ as a liberator** from the clutches of malevolent spirits, “**as the Vanquisher of the Devil** - as the one who had bound the ‘strong man’ **and taken away** from him all his armour wherein he trusted...” **the message struck** a chord in the minds of the people (Hminga 1987: 57).

Concepts of the **after life** were also easily recognizable for the Mizo. *Pial ral* and the *mithi khua* already contained nascent concepts of **heaven and hell**. According to Revd. Zathanga, the first Christian message **he heard preached** was by D.E. Jones in 1899, the message **including an exhortation** to “Believe in *Pathian*, Jehovah and **worship him**, then you don’t need to sacrifice to the demons any more. **Even when you die** you shall go to *pial ral*” (Hminga: 1987: 62). *Pial ral* continues to be a poetic form of

saying “heaven” along with *van ram* (literally “country in the sky”). It is interesting to note that hell *hrem hmun* literally “place of punishment” had to be invented. Moreover, one notices that the Mizo creator being was adopted to represent the Christian God, and his distance and relative anonymity was removed by revealing him through the concept of the Christian triune God.

Furthermore the missionaries often remarked that the traditional Mizo moral code of *tlawmngaihna* closely approximated to Christian notions of charity, which in a sense brought in continuities instead of a disjuncture with the past - the underlying assumption being that people are not always comfortable with change and are more comfortable with the familiar, which makes adoption easier. Thus identical categories, presented and perhaps experienced as more efficacious, were reasons enough to want to convert.

The Practice of the Faith And Identity

Identification with Christianity also came about because of the possibility and facility that the Mizos had in engaging with the religion institutionally as well as in its practice. The missionaries were always careful to take into consideration the opinion of the local Christians as well as those who had achieved the status of being leaders in the church. Therefore not only was the concept of relevance at work but also an early recognition that the faith was theirs, rather than an imposition from the outside.

This was aided by the great strides that were made in the fields of literacy and education and the employment of educated people in the propagation of the faith. There were in any case never many missionaries. The Mizos, it appears were extremely receptive to formal education. Mission education was given a great impetus when, in 1904, the Governor of Assam, Sir Barnfield Fuller visited the Lushai Hills, and impressed by the work of the mission he entrusted all matters of education into its hands. This must have had

important consequences since grants were now received from the government by a usually financially strapped mission for the running of the schools, which could now be extended to other villages. Students who trained in these schools became teachers in other villages and on many occasions were important messengers of the faith.⁸

Thus with missionaries fully engaged in the task of education, including Christian education, it was not long before the local people took up the leadership in the church. The first ordained minister of the Presbyterian mission was Revd. Chhuahkhama, ordained as early as 1913, while in the Baptist mission it was in 1914 that the first minister (Chuaftera) was ordained, less than two decades after the missionaries had established themselves. The Welsh missionaries also adopted the system of presbyteries for the Mizos, a form of organization that was particular to Presbyterianism, which encouraged lay leadership. They found that the democratic and egalitarian nature of the presbyteries was particularly suited to the nature of the people.⁹ For instance the first presbytery meeting was held in 1910 and there were three elected members from the mission station church besides the missionaries. The secretary of this first presbytery meeting was a Mizo. Because of the success in giving the leadership of the church to the locals the Baptist church also moved away from its traditional church organization and established presbyteries.

Besides ordained ministers, there were several ways in which lay people could contribute to the expansion of church membership. Lay evangelists who received some theological training did much to propagate the faith, and there were many who took up the task. It was said of Khuma, the first convert that "there were very few villages in Mizoram that he did not visit in his evangelistic tours. To every person he met on the way he extended an invitation to follow Jesus. In every village he visited, he went from house to house inviting people to believe in the Lord Jesus" (Saiaithanga 1976: 50). Thus there were many paid and unpaid, trained and untrained evangelists, itinerant preachers, Bible women

etc., who took it upon themselves to proclaim what they believed to be true. Funds for their salaries came from local collections, which could never have been much. A unique fund arose for paying the Bible women. This came to be called the *buhfai tham* or the “handful of rice offering”. Each household would keep aside a handful of rice before a meal was cooked; this was later collected by women volunteers and the proceeds paid to the Bible women (Saiithanga 1976: 33). Missionary activity was not only relegated to the Mizos in the Lushai Hills district, but soon enough Mizos took upon themselves the task of evangelizing the neighbouring tribes. In 1910 three boys were said to have gone to neighbouring Manipur, by 1911 there was a Mizo missionary in Tripura and by 1913 another in Haflong in Assam (Nengzakhup 2000: 5). Thus it was an identification with the faith that made people feel responsible for its propagation.

Mizo Rationale for Conversion

Soon after his arrival in Mizoram in 1921, Enoch Lewis Mendus in his diary wrote down the reasons given by certain Mizo men for why they had converted. He wrote,

...In examining into the grounds of their belief, one of them a boy from the border of Lushai and belonging to a different tribe said that the reason for his original belief was that if he obeyed God, God would give him health and satisfy his longings, this he said was an experience shared by the heathen, the reason for his belief at present he said was the hope that he would in heaven share the glory of Christ. The second gives as ground of his initial belief the mere fact that as a boy his day school teacher wrote his name down as a Christian; but the ground of his present belief was the knowledge that Christ had redeemed him. The third admitted that his first reason for believing was the fear of Hell, but that his present reason was the love of God as revealed in Christ which he had discovered through the reading of God's word and hearing it preached. Just at that time we met some Lushais coming in single file in the opposite direction. Having discovered that they were Christians I asked one of them the

reason for his **belief** and without the slightest hesitation he gave me this reply, "Jesus had redeemed us, and so our life's purpose is to please him." His answer was **clinched** too by an emphatic particle, which is difficult to translate; it conveys the suggestion of faint surprise that such a question should be asked.

The above observation by Mendus shows us that there were several circumstances under which the Mizo converted other than the usual belief that it was some sort of satisfaction of a felt spiritual need. However, with teaching the divide was definitely being closed. While individuals could give testimony to a personal belief in Christ, many Mizos would **recognize** the turning over to Christianity in large numbers to four major revivals that occurred in 1906, 1913, 1918-19 and 1930. Revivals continue to be an important aspect in the life of the church in Mizoram. Each of the first four revivals that occurred was **said to have a different emphasis**. While during the first (considered an offshoot of the Welsh revival of 1904-05) there was a general conviction and confession of sin, the second revival focused on **Christ's second coming**, the third focused on the sufferings of the cross. The fourth on the other hand was said to have caused *taksa chetna* or "bodily contortions". The revivals seemed to **have had a deep effect** on the people, leading to the strengthening of the faith of the believers, while drawing many to the fold. **Strangely enough**, while in the initial phases of missionary activity it was **seen that Mizo could not respond to Christ as the Saviour of sins, they responded to this message** in the 1906 revival. Thus these revivals are not only seen as leading to a numerical growth but also **periods of spiritual renewal** in which the Christian doctrine was further **engrained in the minds** of the people.

The revivals were also occasions for innovation and indigenization. **After the revival in 1918**, the traditional Mizo drum came to be **used for the first time** in church worship. Prior to this, the missionaries regarded the traditional drum as an instrument of pagan feasts that should not be adopted in Christian worship. There were serious **discussions on its use**, but from this time on, the

arguments of the 'native' Christians held sway and it came to be a permanent feature in church worship.

The missionaries did not always welcome the revivals and at times even aroused their suspicion. There were occasions when belief was not in the control of the missionaries and as they often came from a more conservative background, they worried at its manifestations as well as its theological implications. Gwen Mendus commented,

But a new and strange element entered into the last revival [1918-1919]... and it has taken all sorts of extreme forms, such as "speaking with tongues" (some say such things as "one! two! three! right about turn!" knowing no English and thinking they are under the influence of the spirit!), healing, raising the dead even (so they claim!), women given symbolical birth to Christ, all sorts of weird dancing and bodily contortions in the services, many of the gestures having some symbolical meaning which they attach to them and so on.¹¹

Similarly Mendus in his report for 1938 stated that the revival was the greatest threat that the church had faced and he was even fearful of a split in the church. His main reservation was the spiritualization of the Christian faith, (which he also recognized as something which should not be too alien to a Celt, being more mystical) wherein most people believed that God was speaking to them directly in opposition to the dictates of the church (Mendus 1939: 30).

Forms of Opposition

The above narrative may lead one to think that there was no opposition to the adoption of Christianity. Resistance came from the chiefs, who if not physically harming the converts would impose heavy fines on them or even evict them from the village. On the other hand there were others who felt that they were too old to convert and that the new religion was for the young (Mendus n.d: 54). It is possible that they associated the practice of Christianity with education, meetings in churches and such changes, and they

considered themselves too old to start afresh or learn something new. Major opposition to the new faith, however, arose in 1908 in the form of a movement that encompassed the whole country. The movement was associated with the singing of some couplets, which usually had the refrain *puma* at the end of each line. It was not so much the words of the song that mattered, for they were more or less frivolous exchanges, but the fact that the singing was accompanied by drinking and dancing in which the entire village would end up in a state of drunken reverie. A contemporary observer wrote, "there has never been any composition as popular as the *puma* songs and there will never be any to replace them. It is sung by children, the youth and the old, men and women alike... any one who considers himself a human being in Mizoram sings them!" (Hrangdawla 1911: 94). Big village feasts were held to provide the setting for the singing, which was said to have begun at a place called Ratu in north Mizoram. New couplets were composed as it spread to other villages and it became extremely difficult for Christians to preach. It caught the imagination of the people and many reverted to the old faith. The movement had religious overtones and true to its opposition to Christianity its adherents claimed that

... all who acclaimed its advent would be exempted from offering sacrifices to demons, and that the dreaded spirits in future be appeased if such votaries merely offered, when ill, a few hair or feathers instead of the usual sacrifices of animals and birds.¹²

Chiefs who in any case opposed Christianity made good use of the movement and encouraged it by playing host to the feasting and revelry: Mizos, it was said, had responded greatly to Welsh hymns and in this light it is not surprising that the opposition took the form of singing. However, this form of opposition died down by 1912, when a bamboo famine struck the district in 1911 and feasting was no longer possible (Saiaithanga 1976: 24). It is significant that it was not concerted action by the missionaries that led to its disappearance but rather an external agency, thus showing

that the missionaries were quite powerless in the face of such an opposition.

This essay began with a brief survey of the ways in which Christianity has come to be an important part of contemporary Mizo identity and society. I have tried to show that closely related with conversion and why people convert are notions of why the new religion became acceptable. In the case of the Mizos Christianity did not contradict with their traditional concepts, though it did oppose traditional beliefs. Missionary ingenuity as far as making the gospel relevant as well as integrating local leadership into the church hierarchy greatly contributed to participation and identification with the religion. Acceptance of Christianity also coincided with a political reformulation, the formation of the Mizo identity, which in a sense necessitated the adoption of a new 'tribe-spirit' or *sakhua*. All this, of course, happened in the context of colonialism and one cannot deny the fact that the seeming order and power that colonialism seemed to represent including the missionaries, who also represented that civilization, were important allurements. Although the path to conversion was not without impediments, traditional resources whether in terms of material or a formalised dissent, could not assert themselves and in the end Christianity could not be ignored. For the most part, however, the people were happy to associate themselves with the new religion and as a chief commented in 1911, he was happy that a lot of progress had been made due to the "work of the government and God, besides the efforts made by the Sailo rulers and local progressive individuals". One of the areas or progress, he believed, was the manner in which Mizos were rallying together around the faith, cognizant of their new identity not only as Mizos but also as Mizo Christians. Prior to the arrival of the government and the missionaries, he went on to say, the Mizos were constantly raiding each other and denying themselves of peace. He attributed the formation of the Mizo identity, which was Christian to the peace that was brought about by the government (Laisailova 1926: 179-183).

Notes and References

1. The 2001 census does not give figures with regard to religious affiliation. Figures according to the 1991 census: Hindus: 82%; Muslims 12.2%; Christians 2.34%; Sikhs 1.94%; Buddhists: 0.76% and Jains: 0.46%. This report is not inclusive of the state of Jammu and Kashmir where census was not held (Pachau 2002: 29).
2. According to the figures available percentage of Christians in the state according to the 1961 general census was 86.64%; 1971: 86.09%; 1981:83.71% (Pachau 2002: 78).
3. The weekly figures were as follows: 29/08/04: 71.31 %; 22/08/04: 72.08%; 15/08/04: 73.66%; 8/08/04:74.47%.
4. I was informed that in Mumbai, except for the treasurer, the committee membership of the Mumbai Mizo Association and the Bombay Mizo Christian Fellowship is identical for the current year. Matters pertaining to both committees are' often discussed in the same meeting.
5. Estimates are calculated from figures available of the number of Christians in the North and the South and the total population of the district. The 1901 figures of the number of Christians from the south was unavailable, so the 1902 figures were collated instead. Similarly for the 1951 figure, the total population for that year was taken into consideration, while the number of Christians for the north used is the 1950 figures while that of the south is the 1949 figures (Hringa 1987: 347-350).
6. An interesting incident was narrated by Shakespear, the superintendent (1898-1899; 1900-03; 1904-05) of a meeting he convened for the missionaries from the north and the south so that they could hold discussions jointly on how they were to translate certain biblical concepts. One of the words in question was 'soul', which the missionaries wanted to translate to a made-up word, namely *Mihring bul* [literally 'shoot/root/origin of man'] the argument being that the soul

was the essential part of a man just as the root was of a tree. Not being able to come to a conclusion the district superintendent called for some local people to find out what they understood by the term. They came to the conclusion that “the root is what a tree springs from, so *mihring bul* must mean his father! *Mihring bul* was eventually dropped and instead *thlarau*, from *thla/shadow* and *rau/spirit* was adopted” (British Library, Mss E361/5).

7. The categories according to Shakespear include 1) sacrifice to *sakhua* (guardian spirit of the clan / tribe); 2) *khal* sacrifice to the *huai* supposed to frequent the village and houses; 3) *daibawl* : sacrifice to *huai* that resided in the wild, the jungle, streams, mountains etc.;4) sacrifices in times of illness; 5) sacrifices to cure barrenness in women; 6) *nao hri*, this was a once in a life-time sacrifice; 7) sacrifices connected with hunting and killing; 8) sacrifices connected with the *jhum*/swidden cultivation (Shakespear 1988: 69-70).
8. The missions for their part can be said to have performed an exemplary task. They set up primary schools everywhere using locals as teachers. By 1915, there were 50 Lower Primary Schools, two Upper Primary and one Middle English School, while in the south there were seven Lower Primary and one Upper Primary and Middle English School. In 1909, six from the north Mission School had passed the Middle English exam. Primary education was thus greatly stressed by the missionaries and it is no wonder that Mizoram soon came to have one of the highest literacy rates in the country.
9. CMA 27353 E.L. Mendus.
10. CMA HZI/3/46 E.L. Mendus.
11. CMA 27354 E. L. Mendus.
12. *The Annual Report of BMS on Mizoram, 1901-1938* (1993: 48).

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MIZO CHANCHINA HRIAT DAN PHIR ZIR CHIANNA

B. Lalthangliana

Tun tum chu Mizo chanchin (history)-a hmun pawimawh tak tak luahtu chi li zir chian kan tum dawn a. Hengte hi khua leh khua inhruai pawhna leh a then phei chu boruak so sang ang reng tak neite a ni hlawm a. Mahse thudik ni ngei awmte kan vawrh chhuah a tul tlat a. A chhan chu thangtharten hriatna dik an rochun a, an chhawm nun zel a pawimawh em em a. Chu thudik chu hailang turin tam leh tam lohah emaw, neihnun leh neihnun lohah emaw a innghat lo va, thinlung lama thudik ngainat leh ngainat lohah leh diknaa din duh leh duh lohah a innghat ber zawk.

Hetianga Mizo chanchin hriat dan phir a lo awm hi thil mak a ni lem lo. Bible ramah Isua nena inkaihnawih hmun te pawh hetiang hian hmun hrang hrang a awm. Isua thlan nia sawi pahnih Baptisma a channa hmun pahnih, Isua pian zana beramputen beram an venna hmun pahnih. Marin van tirhkoh inlar a hmuhna hmun pahnih, Hmel danglamna tlang hmun thum. Zion tlang hmun thum, Isua thihna ata a thawhleh hnua Emau khaw kawnga a kal a, zanriah a kilna Emau khaw li a awm thu taima taka zirtu Revd. Chuauthuarna'n min hrilh a, a bengvar thlak hle.¹

Hengte kan en hian Mizo chanchin hriat dan phir a lo awm ve hi a mak lem lova. Mahse mahni khua a nih vang emaw, mahni khaw ram a nih vang emaw lam dah thain, rilru tluang leh ngil takin 'Thudik' hailan in tum teh ang. Tu tluang mah tai lo leh tu pawl mah sawi lovin tarlan kan tum ang a. Amaherawhchu, 'Thudik' hailan kan tum avanga tute sawi lovin tarlan kan tum vanga tute pawl emaw kan lo sawi palh chuan ngaihdam kan dil lawk a. Chu chu kan tum reng vang ni lovin, 'thudik' hmuh tuma kan chhuinaah kan pumpelth theih ngang loh vang a nihzia min lo hriatpui ka ngen nghal bawk e.

1. KHUANGCHERA (? 1845- ?1890) THIH DAN :

Mizo chanchin ziaktu hmasa Pastor Vanchhunga te, V.L Siama te leh R. Vanlawma te chuan an ziak lo va. Rev. Liangkhaia'n tawi deuh a ziak na a, a thih dan a sawi tel lo. K. Zawla'n a ziak kimchang deuh a, a ngaihnaawm viau mai.

“...Vanlian Changsila inkulh Chhak leh Thlangin an kah lai khan Khuangcheran ‘Naulaihrilh’ a serh avangin a tel ve thei lova. An Lalpa Sailianpuian Khuangchera in awm a hmuh chuan, ‘Chhuan ang he hu a lo nih lohzia’ lam kaw thei thut thutin thu a va sawi a. Khuangchera tlawmngai chu naulaihrilh tawp hun chuan amahin Vai kap turin a liam ve ta a. Midang beidawng chu an lo haw zung zung a, “Kah mi an ni tawh lo, thih a hlauhawm em mai, kir leh mai rawh, thih hlau lo kah mi chauh a ni,” an ti a. Khuangchera chuan, “Thih hlau lo kah mi a nih chuan ka kah mi a nih chu” a ti a, a kal lui a; Ngurbawngan a zui ve ta a.

Khuangchera te pahnih chuan thing bul thlar an phen a, Changsil kulh chu an kap ta a. Sipai pawhin tihngaihna an hre lo va, a tawpah ruangchaicheh an thlak ta a. Ngurbawnga malpui an kah tliahsak ta a. Khuangchera chuan a thianpa chu a pua a, chu chu sipai pakhatin a va bawhzui a, Khuangchera chuan a lo kap thlu a. Mahse silai hlo a nei ta lo tih an hriat veleh sipai pakhatin a va pawm chawt a, chemin a kut a lo thelsak leh a, an kap thlu ta a. Hei hi October 1890 AD a ni a...an that ta a ni...²

Lungleng lal Khamliana (1864-1945) ziak hi han chhiar ve thung teh ... Rei lo te chhungin phaitual sipai an lo thleng phut mai a, a kap turin Tlawng ral thlang lam mi Hrangkhupa, Hmunpui khua inah kan inkhawm a, kei pawh ka tel a. Hrangkhupa ina ro kan rel a, chhim lama kan awm laiin sipai ropui chanchin lo hre tawh ka ni a, ‘I kap lovang u, kap mah ila engmah a tangkai lo vang,’ ka ti a. Mi thenkhatin, ‘Anni pawh an lo thleng a, mi rap a ni, keini pawh kan zuk thleng ang a, kan rap ve tur a ni,’ an ti a.

A kap turin kan kal ta a. Hmunpui khuaa kan kal chhuk chu dar chhemthei (Darbin)-in mi lo hmu a lo ni a, kan awmna lam pang Tlawng kama mi lo chang a, kan zuk kal a, kan thlenin, “Sipai hi eng zat pawh that ila, kan ngam chuang hlei lovang a, silai hlo pawh ka thun lo vang, heti hian muang leiin ka awm anga, a duhin kap ula, ka hnena awm duh awm rawh u,’ ka ti a.

“Tin, a kap turin mi thenkhat an kal a, tin lo fing khat china emaw a then kan lo awm a. Tin, a kap turho chuan Tlawng lui an thlen hmian sipai mi lo changtute hmaa mi lo chang tih hre lovin, muang takin an zuk lut a, a hmasaah **Ngurbawnga leh Khuangchera** chu an lo kap hlum ta mai a, **Chhunpuithanga** a malpui khinghnih, a banrek a, a kutzungte musepin an kap hliam a, ka hnena an rawn hruai a, kei chuan, ‘A tawk ta, i hawng tawh ang,’ ka ti a, Hmunpui panin tlai lam dar 4 laia emaw an kalpui ta a.

“Tin, mi thenkhat erawh chuan Ngurbawnga leh Khuangchera ruang lak tumin an rawn nileng a, nimahsela an thei ta lova, a zan a zanin Hmunpui khua an lo thleng leh vek a, a tuka mahni khua lam theuh panin kan hawng ta a...”³

He thuziak pahnihte hi ngun taka kan zir chuan, K. Zawla hian kum 1964 velah a ziak a, chu chu a thlen hun atanga kum 74 vel a ni a, tin, he inkahnaah hian a tel ve lo, Khamliana erawh chuan a thlen atanga kum 26-ah a ziak a, amah ngei a tel ve nghe nghe. K. Zawla hian Ngurbawnga hi a malpuiah an kah thiahsakin a sawi na a, Khamliana chuan Khuangchera nen an kap hlum nghalin a ziak a, an ruang ve ve pawh nilengin lak an tum na a, an hlawhchham thu min hrilh thung. Tin, a malpui, a banrek leh a kutzungtea hliam tuar Chhunpuithanga hming hi K. Zawla hian a sawi lang ve lo.

History zir mite chuan, mi rintlak lem loh leh thudik thup tum an nih loh chuan a hun lai mi, thil thlenga tel ve ngeite sawi hi an pawm ber a. Chutiang bawh chuan Lungleng lal, a hun laia mi rintlak leh lehkhaw pawh a thium hmasa pathumte zinga tel Khamliana ziak hi pawmawm berin a lang.

**2. VANA PA (? 1794-? 1871) THLAN AWMNA : TUITHOH LUI
KAM NGE ZAWLNHAK RAM ?**

Mizo Pasaltha zinga vawiin thlenga thu sawi ring ber tih theih hial, sa leh rala hmingthang bera sawi tling, lal upa fing leh rorel thiam, ramchhuah leh chhuahvahnaa tlawmngai ber leh taima chungchuang, hotu nih tling em em, thuhnu dawn thiam leh pa fing bera sawi thin, remna siamtu, mi chawimawi thiam tak, a hun hmasa lama pa thinchhe em em, a insiamthat hnua pa nunnem, thinnel leh zaidam hmingthang lo ni ta Vana Pa (Thangzachhinga) chanchin hi ziak hmasate zingah Rev. Liangkhaia te, K. Zawla te leh V.L. Siama ten tlem deuh an ziak na a, a thih dan leh a thlan awmna hi an ziak hauh lo hi a mak ang reng hle.

A chhan ni awm chu, heng kan mi hmasaten an lakkhawm hun, kum 1960 hnua lamah pawh khan Vana Pa thih dan leh a thlan chungchangah hian thu mumal deuh, bulfuk deuh taka sawi thei an awm lo emaw, hria intite sawi dan a taitam lutuk a, han ziak fak hleih theih a ni lo emaw a ni mai thei. A pian kum leh thih kum pawh hi hriat a har hle a, lal a belh thinte leh a rualpuite chanchin atanga chhutin, ni thei awm bera lang kan han dah chhin a. Tin, a thih atanga kum 130 chuang daihah zirchian kan han tum a ni a, tih sual hlauhawm viau mah se Mizote tan Vana Pa hi a pawimawhin a hum luah hi a zau em avangin kan han chai dawn a ni.

Vana Pa thlan awmna nia sawi "Tuithoh lui kam" leh 'Zawlnhak ram' te hi Art & Culture Officer-te pawhin, a hmuna chengte nen an chhui tawh. An Report tlangpui chu a tawi thei angin sawi hmasa ila.

Zawlnhak ram hi Rabung khaw ram a ni a. C. Laitanga, chutih laia Deputy Director, Art & Culture chu ni 7 June 1992 khan thian thenkhatte leh Vana Pa thlan Sub-committee, Rabung Branch YMA te nen hma an la ta a.

Lalluti, February 1992-ah kum 103 mi nia thi ta an interview-na Cassettes, Biakzama, B.A., B. Ed, Headmaster, Rabung High School lo record chu innghah nan a hmang ber a. Lalluti hi Vana Pa farmu Chawngzakhawli unau a ni nghe nghe.

Vanhnuailiana fapa pangate zinga a upa ber dawttu Liankhama chuan Kelkang Diltlang (Hnahlan bul,) Lungfai, Tualcheng, Bakawk, Tualbung, Vangte, Bualpui te a zuan hnuin Zawlinghakah a kai leh a. Vana Pa hian Liankhama hi a tawiwam zel a, Zawlinghakah hian a putar tawh hle a. Heta a chen lai hian Vana Pa chu kum 90 vel niin a thi ta a ni, tih hi C. Laitanga report dan chu a ni a.⁴

Hnahlan (North Diltlang) ram **'Tuithoh lui kama'** Vana Pa thlan nia sawi an dap dan leh an laih thu lo sawi ve leh ila.

Art & Culture Department-a Officer Lalchualova leh C. Lalruatfela te chu Tuithoh lui kama, Vana Pa thlan nia sawi en Chiang tur leh an laihnaa tel turin ni 19 Oct. 2004 Khan Hnahlan khuaah an kal a. Ni 20 Oct. 2004-ah Hnahlan Branch YMA hruaitute nen, mi 25 lai chuan Tuithoh lui kama Vana Pa thlan nia sawi chu an pan ta a ni.

Tuithoh lui kama Vana Pa thlan nia sawi an chhui dan chu, a tirah chuan Ngopa Branch YMA hotute chhui hmasak a ni a. An va tlawh a, a hnuah lehkha thawnin nia an hriat dan te an hrih a. Ngopa khuaa upa Khawvelthanga te, J.C.Dailova te, V.Thangkhuna te leh Vawkruala te an kawmna chu Cassette-ah thunin Hnahlan Branch YMA an thawn a.

Hemi hnu hian Hnahlan Branch YMA hotute chuan an khuaa hmanlai thil hria upa Ralngena te, Saichama te leh Vanlalngina te an kawm ve leh a, Tuithoh lui kama mi chu Vana Pa thlan ngei nia an hriat thu an sawi bakah upa thenkhat chuan Rabung khuain Vana Pa thlan nia an sawi chu an lai Liankhama kuang dahna hmun niin an sawi nghe nghe.

Tichuan ni 20 Oct. 2004 (Thawhle)-ah chuan, Tuithoh lui kama Vana Pa thlan nia sawi chu an lai ta a, a tawi zawngin; Lungdawh chu a dung feet 18, a vang feet 8 vel a ni a. A chung berah lung pheh tha tak tak pah a ni a, arsi ek a kai that hlawm a. Lungphun lian ber chu mum deuh, kil li nei a ni a, pa 20 vel zawn

zawh tawka a ni a, pakhat dang chu lung phek hlai ang reng tak, pa 15 vel zawn zawh tawka rit a ni thung. Heng lung phun sir vei lamah hian lung tê deuh paruk lai phun tlar a ni a. Tun hma chuan a sir ding lamah lung tê deuh, fit khat vel lawr pahnih a awm thin an ti.

Thlan chu an lai ta a, lung phah hnuai, lung phun kiang lnuaiiah chuan lung phek phah leh a lo ni a. chumi hnuai lei chu a lo hnip ta hle a, lei vung tla, han laiha hnip si tih a hriat hle. Fit khat vela thuk laiha a nih hnu chuan 'bellei' chang vak lo leh ruahtuin a chiah hnip tawh ni awm tak 'lei sen' a lo awm leh a, lei kawrawng a lo lang a. Chumi hnuaiiah chuan 'lu ruh' dahna ni awm tak lei kawrawng hmuh a ni leh a, Leirawhchan ang deuha sen hlawm leh thil lem ang deuh, ruh deuh si laiha chhuah a ni leh bawk. Lei kawrawng chhung chu a bel a, lei mum hil hel, tê tak tê tê leh a hmuar ni awm tak te hmuh a ni bawk. Thisen emaw, ruh chhunga thling niawm takte hmuh a ni a, chungte chu chema han kar phawhin a dip nawi sam hle.

He lungdawha thlan lai tak hi 'thlan khamphei' a ni a, a dung feet 6 leh a chanve vela sei, a vang feet 4 vela zau a ni a. Mihring phumna ngei nia an hriat hnu chuan fel takin an chhilh leh thlap a, lungphun pawh a hmaa mi ang chiahin an tung leh thlap a ni.⁵

Hmanlai chuan pi pute khan sarthi , a bik takin sakei seha thite chu khaw chhungah an zawn lut ngai lova, khaw chhungah an phum ngai hek lo. thlan khampheii an lai thin. Tin, mihrang thlan emaw, mihrang lung emaw phe chu lung pakhat chauh an phun ngai lova, an sa kah tamzia lantir tur leh an Pasalthatzia puanzar nan, lung dang te deuh eng emaw zat an phun tel thin tih hriat a tha awm e.

C. Laitanga Report-ah hian Vana Pa thlan nia an sawi hi, an laiha thu a tarlang tel lo. Hnahlan Branch YMA report hi chu a kimchang ang reng hle, Mahse an report ziaak ve ve atang ngawt hi chuan 'Vana Pa Thlan a ni ngei' tia pawm mai erawh a la awlai chuang lo.

Chalkhuma'n ni 25 March 1926-ah Dimphai leileta a chen laiin hetiang hian a lo ziaak a, "...Hemi Saithuama ram Diltlang ngeiiah hian putar takin a thi ta, a thih lai hi ngaihruatin 1870 a ni ang. Lalbura

runa Bawhsap lo thlen hmain a ni. Chawnehhima Lalbura sawrkarin an hrem 1872 hma deuh hlek a ni. Kumkhuain a hming a dai lo vang a, mi reng reng Vana Pa ang hi an vang hle a ni...”⁶

A ziaktu Chalkhuma (1902-1958) hi Tualcheng khua a ni a. A pa Sappuithanga (1873-1958) hi Vai tawng leh Sap tawng thiam, Rahsi hna te pawh thawk tawh, Manding Sap phalnaa Dimphaiah leilet siama lai a ni nghe nghe. A hun laia parawn kai tak a ni a. Chalkhuma hian a pa hnen atanga a thudawnte hmanga ziak a ni a, pawmtlak tura ngaih theih a ni awm e.

Hetianga ngun taka kan chhui a, kan zir chian hnuin, Mizo Pasaltha hmingthang Vana Pa “Thlan” hi Hnahlan (N. Diltlang) rama ‘Tuithoh lui kamah a ni’ ti ila, pawma nuam ber awm e.

3. SANG SARIH KHAWPUI : SELESIH NGE DUNGTLANG?:

Tun hma deuh chuan, “Selesih Sang Sarih” ti leh “Dungtlang Sang Thum” tia sawi thin a ni a. Mahse kan hriat dan a soal loh chuan, kum 1978 vel atang khan “Dungtlang Sang Sarih” tia sawi a lo awm ta a, kum 1990-ah phei chuan Dungtlang sang sarih lung phun a lo ni ta hial a. Chuvangin zir chian a lo ngai ta a ni.

“Selesih 7000” chungchang hi Mizo history ziaktute zinga hmasa ber Rev. Liangkhaia (1884-1979) chuan tihian a lo ziak a. “...Pawiral an hlauh avangin awmkhawm zai an rei a, Pukawlha khua, Selesih khuaah an awm khawm ta vek mai a, in 7000 an tling an tih chu.... Chu Selesih khua chu Mizorama khawpui ding chhuak nasa ber leh lian ber a ni. Chu khawpui hu chuan a vela mite chu a hip a, an hmelmate pawhin an dek ngam mang lova. Mizoram siamthatna bul a lo ni ta.

“Selesih khua chu an tamzia mai chu, ‘Thuro thlawk lai te pawh hi an au thla tawp thei mai,’ tih te leh, ‘Feh kal hmasain chirhdiak khup thlenga an dai te pawh hi a hnukung chu vaivut hul phiang chungah an kal zel a ni,’ ti tein Mizo upain uar takin an sawi thin...”⁷

V.L Siama te,⁸ R. Vanlawma⁹ te pawhin an ziak a, Rev. Liangkhaia hian bu dangah pawh chiang deuh takin a ziak

bawk.¹⁰ Pastor Vanchhunga pawhin a ziak ve a, mahse ‘Sang sarih’ tih a telh lo.¹¹ K. Zawla pawhin ‘Selesiha lal pasarih infinkhawm’ thu a sawi na a, ‘Sang sarih’ thu erawh a sawi lo thung.¹² Lalmama (1902-1959) chuan, “... khawlian an sawi zinga a lian zual leh an sawi lar ber pakhat chu Selesih khua a ni. A khua a tam vang chauh pawh ni lovin Mizo rama khawpui ding hmasa ber a nih avangin an sawi larin a hmingthang bik niin a lang... Pu Kawlha khua a ni a, in sang sarih a ni an ti...” tiin a ziak.¹³

Hetiang hian ziaaktu hmasate khan pi pute titi leh thukhawchang atanga lakhawmin ‘Selesih Sang Sarih’ chanchin hi an lo sawi deuh vek hlawm tih kan hmu.

“Dungtlang Sang Sarih” tih hi kan hriat dan a dik chuan. Hrangthiauvan a ziak hmasa ber a, “... Lianchhiari leh Chawngfianga hi Mizo nula leh tlangval inhmangaihte zingah pawh a lar pawl an ni a. An hming pawh a thang hle a ni. Dungtlang sang sarih khuaa Thangluah veng a awm an ni a. An hun lai hi A.D. 1780 vel a ni...”¹⁴ Hmun dangah vawihnih a ziak bawk.

Dungtlang khawtlangin kum 1990-a ‘Dungtlang Sang Sarih’ lung an phun khan tiemin hriat a hlawn zual ta a. An lehkhah chhuahah hetiang hian an ziak a. “... Dungtlang khua hi kum 1750 vela din tan a ni a. A dintu, dungtlang lalpa chu Vanhnuaitanga, Thangluah (Lianchhiari pa) a ni. Zawi zawiin an pung zel a, kum 1775 velah chuan in 7,000 lai an tling chho ta a ni. Kum 1785 velah a teh darh niin a chhut theih... Kum khat chu Chapchar kut an hmang nuam hle a ni awm e, ‘Favang thleng rawkin an hmang’ tiin an sawi thin.’ ‘an khaw chungah thuro thlawk pawh an au thla tawp mai’ an ti bawk. Chu bakah, ‘Fein kal hmasain ngalrek thlenga chirh diak an dai pawh. feh kal hnuhnung chuan an pal khu sat sat a ni,’ an ti.

Dungtlang sang sarih hun lai hian hla tam tak an phuah a. chungzinga mi chu :-

Dungtlang 7,000 laiah.

Daripan sakhming chhai e.

Lau lau taka aw e, tih leh a dangte tarian a ni...¹⁵

I lengte hi chhinchhiah hmasa ila. Hrangthiau van 'Lianchhiari leh Chawnglianga thawnthu' a ziahnaah 'Dungtlang sang sarih' tih a telh kher na a. Mizo thawnthu lakhawmtu hmasa P.S.Dahrawka (1964) te, K.Zawla (1964) te chuan an telh ve lo.

Tin, 'feh kal hmasa diak dai... a hnunngin an pal khu sat sat' tih thu te, 'Thuro thlawk auh thlak thu' te hi Rev. Liangkhaia¹⁶ te, V.L.Siama¹⁷ te leh Lalmama¹⁸ te lo ziak tawh nen thuhmun a ni a. Hla kan tarlan pawh kha Pastor Vanchhunga sawi :

*Thahdo arsi zat laia,
Dari pa'n sakhming chhal e,
Lau lau taka aw e.*

tih nen an inhnaih hle.¹⁹ Chapchar kût hman rei pawh hi Chawngtui khaw hlui chanchin nen a dang chuang lo.

Rev. Liangkhaia chuan, "... Palianho thlangtla kha Dungtlangah khian an awmkhawm rih a, chumi laia mite chu Pu Buara te, Huliana te, Bulpuia te an ni. Chumi hnuah Paihte Sianthuama hovin an rawn belh a. 3,000 lai an tling an ti." tiin a ziak a.²⁰ K.Zawla pawhin "Lianchhiari, Chuahang Dungtlang in 3,000 khaw lal zinga lal pakhat fanu a ni a." a lo ti ve a.²¹ Lalmama pawhin, "... Hemi lo chu Dungtlangah Pu Buara hovin 3,000 laiin an awm tih sawi a ni bawk," tiin a lo chhinchhiah a.²²

Kum 1990 bul lama Dungtlang 7,000 lungphun hawn a nih dawn khan a buaipuituten 'dungtlang sangsarih chanchin' phok 8 vel an chhuah a, chu chuan *Preservation of Cultural Heritage committee*, Aizawl district beng a thleng a. Ni 7 December 1979-ah Aizawl D.C. Chamber-a meeting an neih chuan Dungtlang Sang sarih awma sawi leh hun te ngun taka zir a, thil awmzia Chiang zawka chhuichhuak turin 'Study Group' a siam a. chungte chu : Dr.J.V.I Iluna (Convenar), Pu R. Vanlawma, Dr.Sangkima leh B. Lalthangliana te an ni.

A tul anga an inhmuhho thin hnuin phok 4 laia ziakin *Aizawl District Preservation of Cultural Heritage committee*-ah an theh lut ta a, an hmuhchhuah ang chu Committee pawhin a pawm thlap a. Ni 28 December 1989-a an thehluh zinga pawimawh zual laite chu hetiang hi a ni a.

“...Mizo hnam zinga a tam ber leh Sailo lal hnuiaia awmte chuan kum 1700 A.D. vela Tiau an kan a... Pu Buara hian Sailoho thlangtlak hma fea thlangtla niin upaten an sawi a. ‘dungtlang sangthum’ khua a din a, an lalte chu Pu Buara, Bualpuia leh Huliaana te an ni a. Thlang lam panin an tawlh thla zel a. tuna Bangladesh thlengin an chhuak a. Mizo upate kum sawinaah pawh. ‘Pu Buara run kum’ tiin hun rei lam bithliah nan an hmang ve fo.

Mizo khawpui lian hmasa ber ‘Selesih Sang Sarih’ chu Pawih ral hlaah avangin Sailo lallo infinkhawmin tuna Zawlseih leh Khawbung ramah hian kum 1847 velah an din a. An lalte chu Pu Kawlha, Darpuiliana, Darliankuala, Rohnaa, Lalchera, Thangphunga leh Lalsailova te an ni.

Pastor Vanchhunga chuan, “Lianchhiari pa... awmna Muallung Kangfing hi hmanlai hming a ni. Pu Kawlha chuan a ko thla a. ‘Dawi sa kilpui theih i ni a, Chawrhmunah tuna Khawbung ram -Blt) hian veng tlem te hi ho ve ang che a ti’ an ti. Selesih bul Chawrhmunah chuan chhawlbukin an awm a... “ tiin a ziak a. ²³ Tin, Selesih darh hnu hian Dungtlangah a chho va, veng hrang nei ve mai chuan khaw lian tak a dinin a rinawm lo.

Selesih hnuah chuan Zopuih kum 1750 vel khan Lalula`n khua a din a, a ropui hle a, in 500 lai a tling a. Thlanrawnho a rawt chiam nghe nghe. An rawn er leh hlauvin mi dang zawng zawng chuan thlang an tla ta vek a, Lalula chu hnu daltu a nihzia Chai hlaah kan hmu, kum 1767 velah khan thlang a tla ve ta.

Heng hnuah hian hlawm lian taka Zoram rawn lut an awm tawh lova, Halkha te, Zahau te leh Pawite pawhin sawi tham meuh chuan Tiau an kan tawh lo, Hualngote a hnu deuhah an lut na a, an

tam lo hrim hrim a. Sang sarikh khusiam tur tham an awm theiin a lang lo.

Hengte avanghian ‘Dungtlang kum 1750 vela din... kum 1775 vela in 7,000 tling... Kum 1785 vela teh darh ta...’ anga sawi hi Mizo history pumpui nen a inmil thei lova, a inkalh tlat a. Kan pawm thei lo a ni.

“Selesih sang sarikh” tih leh dungtlang sang thum; tih hi pawm a nuam ber a, a dik hmel bawk a, a hun nen pawh a inrem a. Mizo history pumpui nen a inhmeh thlap bawk a. Tun hma atanga sikul zirlaia hman thin leh sawi dan kumkhua “*Traditionally Accepted*” a ni, tiin.²⁴

Heng pawmdan hi ziaktu hmasa Rev. Liangkhaia (1926), V.L. Siama (1953), Pastor Vanchhunga (1955), Lalmama 1957, K. Zawla (1964), R. Vanlawma (1966) ten a bua an lo chhuah, uluk taka an lo chhuite nen pawh a inhnerem thlap a. Anniho hi miten ngil leh tuang taka rilru an put lai, hnam bil thil ngaihtuahnain mite a chimbuaia hmaa chhuitute an ni a, chuvangin an thu ziate hi a pawmawm bik a. Hengte zawng zawng ngun taka zira kan thlir kutal vel hnuhian, ‘Selesih Sang Sarikh’ tih leh, “Dungtlang Sang Thum” tih hi a pawmnaawm ber e, kan ti ve a ni.

Tin, zau zawk leh ngun leh zuala kan zir hnuin, ‘Dungtlang sang thum’ din hun hi kum 1670-1680 A. D. vel, ‘Selesih sang sarikh’ din hun hi kum 1740-1750 vel, Dungtlanga Lianchhiari pa lal hun leh Lianchhiari vanglai hi kum 1760 A.D. velah dah ila pawm a hahdamin a inhmeh tawk viau awm e.

4. FIARA TUI AWMNA: FARKAWN RAM NGE VAPHAI RAM?:

Mizote lung tileng leh rilru fan riau ‘Fiara Tui awmna sawi dan hrang awm ngai lo kha kum 1905 vel atang khan sawi dan phir a awm tan a, mahse a ring lem lo a, a dai leh deuh mai a. Kum 1962 vel atang khan sawi dan phir a dang a lo piang leh ta a, hei hi chu a thawm a lian deuh a, waviin thlenghian hnuhma a nei zui a. Chuvangin Sawi chian a lo ngai ta a ni. A chinchhuak deuh tak, mahse sei lem lo. tawi kim deuh siin chhui chian i lo tum teh ang.

a) Sawi dan phir 1-na : Khawbung leh Farkawn hian ramriah buaina an nei deuh a. Chumi chingfel tur chuan chutih laia Bawrsap Tarmita (J. Shakespear) chu a hmun ngeiah kalin a enfiah a. Chutih lai chuan 'Samthang' khua hi a la awm rih lo.²⁵ * A hun hi khawihah mah chhinchhiaha kan hmuh zawh loh avangin, kan hre thei lo na a, thil awmdan leh a boruak kan thlirin kum 1904 -05 vel a ni mai thei.

Khawbung lal leh Farkawn lal te chuan an khaw ram inrina chu 'Fiara tuiah' an ti ve ve a, chuvangin a lan theihna tlang atanga en Chiang turin Bawrsap Tarmita hoin an kal ta a. An thlirhona tur tlang an thlenin Tarmita chuan, "Khawi hi nge Fiara tui lui chu?" a han ti a.

Farkawn lal upa Kimchawnga chu a tawng hmasa a, an lal ram zauh theih dan tur ngaihtuah ran chungin Farkawn leh tun hnu deuha din Samthang khaw inkar ramri lui chu kawkin, "Hei hi fiara tui chu a ni," a ti a.

Khawbung lal upa chu a kawhtir ve leh a, upa min Avunga chuan, an lal ram zauh theih dan tur chu hre rengin tuna Lamsial lui hi, "Fiara tui lui a ni e," tiin a kawk ve thunga.

Bawrsap chuan a sawi hmasa zawk tawng chu pawmin "Zalhva lui dungah Fira tuiah Tan tlangah" tiin ramri chu a ziak ta a. Tun thleng hian Farkawn leh Khawbung (Samthang) inkar ramri atan hman hlen a ni ta a. Farkawn lal upa Kimchawnga kawh lui hi "Fiara tui tak a ni e" tihna lam ni lovin, ramri kham laia an tih Fiara tui chawp mai mai a ni a. A hnu zelah pawh tuman he lui hi 'Fiara tui' an ti leh tawh ngai lova, mahse a hnu zelah awmzia a nei lem lova, huhang an nei bawk hek lo.²⁶

b) Sawi Dan Phir 2-na : Kum 1962 khan H.K.Bawichhuaka chu MDC-a a tlinna Khawbung bial fangin a zin a, chutih lai chuan District Council Chairman a ni a. Tan kham sir atanga luang chhuak, Saṭawṭ tlang bul ṭhuta awm lui tui a thal chu

Aizawlah a hawn a, a thiante hnenah, “Hei hi Fiara tui a nih hi, in rawh u,” a ti a, an in ta hlawm a.

A hnu deuhah Ch. Saprawnga, chutih laia CEM chu a han zin ve leh a, Vaphai a tlawh a, an lo lawm hle a. Mi thentkatin Tan hnung larna Mausang lui chu ‘Fiara tui’ tiin an lo kawhlmuh a, a thal a. a hawn ta a. Aizawl a thlen chuan a thiante hnenah, ‘Pu Bawichhuaka Fiara tui tih kha a dik lo va, hei zawk hi a ni e.’ tiin a inur ve leh a. Heta tang hian ‘Fiara tui sawi dan phir2-na chu a lo chhuak ta a ni.

C) FIARA TUI DIK TAK CHU KHAWIAH NGE?

Fiara tui chungchang hi hla hluiah hetiang hian kan hmu ta:

*Fiara tui hman chun Kilin a chawi
Lamsial kawt daiah a luang reng e,*

*Fiara tui tling fim reng e,
Lamsial zalengin va dawn rawh u.*

*Han dawn leh nuam ing e zotui thiang te kha,
Lamsial kawt daiah luang Fiara tui thiang ngei kha. (Nilen zai)*

*Lamsial kawt daiah chuan zotui thiang a luang,
Ka lungdi Dorngovi sakruang a bual nan e. (Nilen zai)*

*Fiara tui Darngovi bualna,
Chim lohten lungdi ngai iang e.*

*Tuiah tui namen ka chawi ngai lo,
Tana luang chhuak Fiara tui ka chawi ngai e.*

*Chhakah turni lo chhuak,
Fiara tui leh kan run a chhun,
Tlailta a eng riai e.*

Heta lang Chiang tak chu, ‘Fiara tui hi Tan atangin a luang chhuak’ tih leh ‘Lamsial kawr daiah a luang zel’ tih hi a ni. Tan tlang chu a lar bawk a, kan hre theuh a, “Lamsial hi khawi lai nge ni ang” tih kan fiah a tul ta.

Farkawn ram chung, Ṭan tlang chhim chhak lam hawi hret, tlak denga sawi theih lai hi Lamsial chuan a huam a. He lai velah hian Lamsial puk te, Lamsial kham te leh Lamsial tui te a awm hlawm. A chung lam te, Ṭan tlang bul lam Saṭawk tlang bul thlengin a huam a ni.

Ṭan tlang chhim lam, tlak deng sir ding lama Lamsial Puk-ah hian tun hma chuan mihring ruh ro ṭhahnem tak a awm ṭhin a. A ṭhen chu kum 1975 khan Research Institute Cell, Archeological Department, Bombay-ah an thawn a, an lo exam a, kum 1650 vela mite ruh niin an ring.

Kum 1960 hma lama sawi ngai loh, Mausang lui hnar chu ‘Fiara tui’ ti a sawi a ni ta a, Vaphai lam sawi dan rinchan tur kan nei lo a, mi dang sawi lo tarlang mai ila.

Hrangthiauva, Leithum chuan “... Tlem lai deuh khan Khama (Pu Lalrokhama, Vaphai) a lo kal a, ‘Ka pa, Fiara tui hi Farkawn rama mi saw ni lovin, Mausang lui hnara mi zawk hi niin a lang a. Nang, thu hlui leh chinchang hria i ni a, ‘a ni’ i tih chu ‘a ni’ ang a, ‘a ni lo’ i tih chu ‘a ni lo’ mai dawn a, min lo ṭanpui ta che arawn ti a, Kei chuan, ‘Eka fapa, chutiingin keini pafain Mizoram thil pawimawh leh hmun dikte kan lo sawh sawn mai chuan a fel thei nang’ ka lo ti a. Beidawngin a haw leh ta,” tiin Sawichhunga hnenah May 1965 khan a sawi. Hetiang thu baw hi Hrangthiauva hian C. Laitanga, Jt. Director, Art & Culture hnenah pawh a lo hrilh ve ṭhin tih Laia hian a sawi ṭhin.

Ni 21 April 1982 khan Lianngura, DAO (E) hovin Lalrokhama nawr angin Vaphai lama ‘Fiara tui’ an tih chu an en a, zanah Lalrokhama inah an inkawm nghal a. K. Lalsiamliana AEO, Vaphai, Zaidanga. Demonstrator leh Lalrokhama. in neitupa te an ni hlawm a. Chuta Lalrokhama ti ti chu hetiang hi a ni a.

“... Fiara tui... tihah hian Farkawna mi hi a upa zawk a, mahse hei hi Fiara tui dik tak a ni ang em tiin ka ngaihtuah a, Farkawnah ka va kal a, upaho ka zawt a. ‘A tak tak zawk chu hemi piah

(hmar lam) -ah hian a awm a, mahse chu chu tuman an hmu rih lo' an ti a... Saṭawm (Burma awm) khuaah ka han kal a, upa pakhat hi ka zawt a, a lo hre hle mai a, a hla thu lamin min lo hrilhfiat a... Fiara tui hi tuna Farkawn rama mi ni lo hi a awm ka ring tlat a. Vawiina in han en tak kha a ni thei mai awm mang e, tiin tlangvalho nen kan hai ta a... Lungpui keh karah tui a lo chhuak a... an sirah ka lo thu reng a, 'hei hi Fiara tui a ni thei meuh dawn em ni aw? A tui awm danah hian, Lungpui khi kara tui han chik chhuak ngawt mai chu, tuikhur a ni thei lo vang a' tiin ka ngaihtuah a. Chutih lai la la chuan tlangvalin a sirah chuan a han hawh a, 'hei thenel' a ti a, lung thil dup deuh chu a chhun fuh a, 'a hei tuikhur a ni thei mai ang e' tiin a chhun ta zel a. Chutia chhuna a han hai tak zelah chuan, a sira lung keh kak kara lo chik chhuak pawh chu a reh ta der a. Kha tuikhur kha thenelin a hnawh pin avangin tui chu luanna hre lovin lung keh karah chuan a lo irh chhuak a ni a. Tichuan tuikhur ni awm takah chuan tui a lo tling ta a. He tui pawh hi tuivamit a ni a, hnar nei lovin lei hnuai lam aṭanga lo irh chho a ni a. Tichuan an han tifai zo va. 'lungin a chhin a, a bo ta hmiah mai a. Chutih lai chuan tuna a awmna thlang hret khi a khur a ni a, kan siam zau ta a ni.

Tuna mi khi"Fiara tui dik tak "a ni phe chu ka ti hauh lo a, miin*Fiara tui chuh ang dawn dawna min sawi hi a dik lo reng reng a. A dik tak awma rin kan hmuh theih si loh takah chuan, hla thute nen han mil pawhin hei hian a ang thei deuh ber ang e, kan timai chauh a nia, hei hi fiara tui dik tak a ni e, pawh kan ti reng reng lo...' a ti a ni.²⁷

Hengte hi Vaphai lamin 'Fiara tui' nia an hriat ṭobul leh lo zikchhuah dan mi dang ziak kan hmuh theih chu a ni a, anmahni kutchhuak ngei awm thei sela a duhawm khawp mai. He Fiara tui nia sawi an hai hun hi kum 1965 vel a ni awm e,

Amaherawhchu, Aizawl College Adventure Club hovin hei hi 'Fiara Tui' Tia ni 10 January 1984-a Lung meuh an phun tak hial avangin boruak a so sang ta viau a, Farkawn leh Vaphai khawp inkar boruak pawh a lo ṭha ta vak lo a ni.

Farkawn lal Rozika leh Vaphai lal Mitinliana ten ramri an siam dawnin , Mitinliana chuan “Khuavang ri kham sa a awm alawm, Saṭawk aṭanga luang chhuak Fiara tui lui hi ni rawh se,” tiin kum 1896 hma khan a lo sawi tawh a.

Saphovin ‘Tlamsamho’ hmanga Mizo ram map an siam ‘survey of India’ mapah chuan ‘Fiara tui’ chu Saṭawk aṭanga luang chhuakin, chhim chhak hret hawia luang thla a, Mizoram leh Burma inrina Ṭiau lui finin an dah.

C. Thangṭhuama, Khawbung VCP hmasa ber chuan, “Tun thleng hian Khawbung leh Samtlang khuate chuan Lamsial daia Fiara tuiin Zalhva lui a finna lai chu Fiara tui chhuah an la ti zel a... A hmun ngeia kal leh khaw hran hran upate be rawna ka hmuh chhuah dan a ni e. Chutichuan Fiara tui dik tak chu Farkawn rama Lamsial lui hi a ni... tiin a ziaik.”²⁸

Remsangpuii Pa (Rangliana), hmanlai thil hre tak chu B. Poonte, Rearch Officer D.C. Office, Aizawl ngen vanga Fiara tui dik tak zawng chhuak turin kum 1965 April-May khan khawchhak ramah a zin a. Khawbungah te Samthangah te, Vaphaiah te leh Farkawnah te riak zelin hmanlai thil hria upate a kawm zel a, “... Hla hlui deuha kan hmuh dan leh Fiara chanchin, thawnthua kan hriat dan aṭanga han chhuiin, Lamsial khua aṭanga chawi phak tur leh tuikhur ualau ni awm si lo chu, Ṭan tlang aṭanga chhim lama mi, mi tam berin ‘Fiara tui’ an lo tih ṭhin hi a dik berin pawm tlak niin ka ngai ta ber a ni. He thil hi Vaphai, Chawngtui Farkawn inkar kawnga mi khi a ni...” tiin thutawp a siam a ni.”²⁹

Thudik nia a hriatah chuan mi huat leh sawichhiat pawh dawn loa ziaik ṭhin R. Vanlawma pawhin, “... Tun hma zawng kha chuan Ṭan tlang chhim lama tlang siper Saṭawk tlang aṭanga lo chhuak, Farkawn aṭanga hla tehchiam lova sih dum saw Fiara tui tih fo a ni a... kei pawhin 1933 vela kan han hmuh Fiara tui pawh kha hemi bawh hi a ni a, hnialtu reng reng an awm lo...’ a ti a.”³⁰

Upa te chuan kum 1962 vel atanga Vaphai lamin "Fiara tui" hi Mizo thawnthu leh upate sawi thin dan nen te Mizo history nen te, Hla hlui nen te leh sawrkar Record (document) te nen pawh a inrem berin a hriat a. Chuvangin 'Fiara tui dik -ah pawm ila, a him ber ang e.

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I, Dr. Sangkima, Secretary, Mizo History Association hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

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