

NEGOTIATING IDENTITY: BRU COMMUNITY IN POST-COLONIAL PERIOD

BY

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Submitted

in partial fulfilment of the requirement of the Degree of Master of Philosophy in  
Department of History of Mizoram University, Aizawl.

## DECLARATION

I, C.Lalrinchhani, do hereby declare that I am the sole author of this dissertation entitled, '**Negotiating Identity: Bru Community in Post-Colonial Mizoram,**' submitted to Mizoram University for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy**. And, that neither part of this dissertation nor the whole of the dissertation has been submitted for the award of a degree to any University or Institutions.

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

With all my heartfelt sense of appreciation and gratitude, i would like to thank my supervisor Dr.Kh.Pemjit Singh, who has been guiding me and patiently supervising my paper. His useful critiques and advice has been a great help in accomplishing my dissertation.

I take this opportunity to express my special thanks to the Head, Faculty Members and the Non-Teaching Staffs of the Department of History & Ethnography, Mizoram University for their endless support and help during the whole course of the present study.

I express my deep thanks to my only family for their moral and financial support and for accompanying me to places in times of data collection. I am also grateful to my relatives for providing me with the original portraits to meet my requirements.

I also extend my gratitude to all the staffs of Tripura States Archive; Tribal Research and Cultural Institute, Agartala; Aizawl Theological College, Durtlang; Mizoram State Archive; Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl; and staffs of Mamit DC for their hospitality and aid in acquiring documents.

My special thanks are extended to my supportive M.Phil colleagues with whom I have shared moments of deep anxiety but a big excitement as well.

To God be the Glory who blessed me with good health to complete my dissertation.

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**Statement on Anti-Plagiarism**

It is hereby certified that the M.Phil dissertation entitled “Negotiating Identity: Bru Community In Post-Colonial Mizoram”, is the result of Master of Philosophy research programme and have not taken recourse to any form of Plagiarism in any of the chapters of the dissertation, except for quotations from published sources which are clearly indicated and acknowledge as such.

The source material from works such as books, articles, interviews and internet sources are properly acknowledge and quotations and paraphrases are clearly indicated. This dissertation or any version of it has not been previously submitted to any university and the same has not yet been published.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

ADC	: Autonomous District Council
BD	: Bachelor of Divinity
BNLF	: Bru National Liberation Front
BNU	: Bru National Union
BADC	: Bru Autonomous District Council
BSA	: Bru Students' Association
CPD	: Centre for Peace and Development
MBSE	: Mizoram Board of School Education
MLA	: Member of Legislative Assembly
MSA	: Mizoram State Archives.
MSLC	: Middle School Leaving Certificate
MTH	: Master of Theology
MZP	: Mizo Zirlai Pawl
RSS	: Rashtrya Swayamsevak Sangh
RWA	: Riang Welfare Association
UPC	: United Pentecostal Church
YMA	: Young Mizo Association

## Chapter I

### Introduction

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Every beings and non-beings are being identified or represented in geopolitical space of nation-state than traditional understanding of geo-body space. Presently, on this planet earth, nothing can be laying without association with defined area. This is the reality happening in postcolonial world. In the process of fitting in under specific space, many unlucky communities settling on the fringes force not only fall apart, it is a must to develop a different identity, compromise cultural bonding, formation of new patriotic feeling. At present, there are hundreds of small communities in this world became 'stateless' due to unwillingness to accommodate o recognised them by new form of 'two nations' to give recognition.

According to Paul Brass, there are three ways of defining ethnic groups- in terms of objective attributes, concerning subjective feelings and concerning behaviour. An objective definition assumes that though no specific attribute is invariably associated with all ethnic categories, there must be some distinguishing cultural feature that clearly separates one group of people from another, whether that feature or features be language, territory, religion, colour, diet, dress or any of them.<sup>1</sup>

Ethnic identity is developed within a constructionalist landscape, where so-called ethnic identity could be found as situational, fluid and bargained by and through the context of group contacts.<sup>2</sup> Wimmer mentioned that ethnic identity construction involves the negotiation of ethnic boundaries, where the individual's label 'self' and 'others' in terms of their ethnic categories<sup>3</sup>. Zolberg and Woon (1999) distinguished among boundary-crossing, blurring and shifting as three possible outcomes of the negotiations between national majorities and immigrant minorities. This distinction is general and abstract enough to encompass strategies pursued by various types of

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<sup>1</sup>Paul.R.Brass, *Ethnic Groups and Ethnic Identity Formation*, Sage Publications India Pvt Ltd, New Delhi, 1991, p.18

<sup>2</sup> Bo Zhang, Peter Drujiven& Dirk Strijker (2018) *A Tale of Three Cities: Negotiating Ethnic Identity and Acculturation in Northwest China*, Journal of Cultural Geography, p, 44.

<sup>3</sup> Andreas Wimmer (2008) *Elementary Strategy of Ethnic Boundary Making*, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 31:6, 1025-1055, DOI: 10.1080/01419870801905612, p.1030

actors, and it uses single fundamental divisions: the changes in the topography of boundaries that is envisioned.<sup>4</sup> At the moment of cultural encounter, the arriving groups with alienated cultural backgrounds and receiving groups immediately would start renegotiating boundaries and redefine their identities, mainly with three factors-perceptions, affections, and behaviours.<sup>5</sup> Ethnic identity is also reflected in language, food preferences, and religious practices.<sup>6</sup> Anthony D Smith mentioned that in a distinctive shared culture, ethnic are differentiated by one or more elements of 'culture' which both help to bind members together and to separate them from outsiders. The most common shared and distinctive traits are those of language and religion; but customs, institutions, laws, folklore, architecture, dress, food, music and the arts, even colour and physique, may augment the differences or take their place.<sup>7</sup>

One noteworthy and most controversial issue which is now surrounding every country in the world today is immigration. It is said that immigration was perhaps not an issue of dispute between nations until the first two post-war decades over the world. Probably, this situation has dramatically changed since the last two decades or so. Immigration, now on a large scale, has resulted in a tremendous ethnic explosion amongst ethnic communities in different countries which leads to out of control of the ethnic problem everywhere in the world.<sup>8</sup>

In this regard, a very unhealthy climate is emerging in Europe. For the first time in post-war Europe, many far-right political parties are in the offing, and these parties are gaining alarming political momentum. In recent local elections all over Europe, these parties have won a significant number of seats and harp on one nation, one culture and even one common language. Their leaders say that if elected to power in their countries, they would shut the doors to immigrants and send them back to their countries of origin. If this is the emerging trend the future of Europe hangs in the balance and it is probably that in due course there would be a reiteration of what Hitler did to the Jews more than half a century ago.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Andreas Wimmer (2008), p.1030

<sup>5</sup> Bo Zhang, Peter Drujven and Dirk Strijker, p.45.

<sup>6</sup>Bo Zhang, Peter Drujven& Dirk Strijker, p.46.

<sup>7</sup> Anthony D smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, Blackwell Publishing, USA, 1987, p.26.

<sup>8</sup> Sangkima, 'Introduction', in Sangkima (ed), '*Cross-Border Migration ,Mizoram* ', Delhi, Shipra Publications, 2004, p.7

<sup>9</sup> Sangkima, pp,7&8

Likewise, India bounded by international borders on all sides, faced a tremendous problem with the illegal immigrants. The issue of illegal immigrants has also encompassed the whole North-East India consisting of eight states. This tribal community scattering maintaining their respective ethnic identities and religions. The area used to be known as Seven Sister states, namely Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Tripura. Recently Sikkim has also been included, and the States of North-East India now consisted of eight in number.

The geographical location of Mizoram is of considerable significance and forms an ideal field of geopolitical study. It has a long inter-state boundary with Assam (123 km), Tripura (66 km), and Manipur (95 km). Besides, Mizoram shares international borders, from two different sides, with Burma in the east and south (404 km) and Bangladesh in the west (306 km). This has divided the Mizo and their associated clans.<sup>10</sup> Because of these international borders, Mizoram has an enormous problem with immigrants, especially with the illegal immigrants. The people of India, Vol. XXXIII shows that there are 18 communities, fourteen scheduled caste, nine scheduled tribes and two other communities.<sup>11</sup>

These illegal immigrants have entered Mizoram for two significant factors: a) political, and b) economic.<sup>12</sup> Hence, immigrants may be termed as political refugees and economic migrants.

Accordingly, all the migrants of tribes took place for one or more of the following reasons:

- a) Due to epidemics like plague, famine or poor living conditions, and search for food and better living conditions.
- b) Due to tyranny and oppression of the rulers and chiefs. In this case, entire villages would not have migrated.
- c) Due to attack by powerful tribes or armies who are more powerful or better equipped.

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<sup>10</sup> S.N. Singh, '*Mizoram Historical, Geographical, Social Economic, Political and Administrative*', Delhi, K.M.Rai Mittal for Mittal Publications, 1994, p.5

<sup>11</sup> K.L. Pradhan, 'Settlement of Gorkhas,' in Sangkima (ed), *Cross-Border Migration Mizoram*, Delhi, Shipra Publications, 2004, p.55

<sup>12</sup> Sangkima, p.10

- d) To avoid annihilation by the invading hordes of another race or country.
- e) If better and more fertile lands for cultivation are available at other places.
- f) Religious persecution or persecution of particular tribe or clan and lack of freedom of worship.<sup>13</sup>

### 1.1. Bru tribe?

The Bru are a group of the tribe who have been settling in Tripura, Mizoram, Manipur, Cachar District of Assam and Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh. The largest concentration of these people is found in the state of Tripura. The Bru are one of the migrant communities who form a small minority community in Mizoram. The term 'Tuikuk' is the commonly known term by the Mizo community to identify the ethnic minority of Mizoram who identified themselves as Bru in the present. Some scholars opined that in ancient times the Bru were nomadic people.<sup>14</sup> In the course of their migration, they accumulated various titles of their community given by the tribes whom they encountered

Hence, in the course of their shifting from place to places, the people with whom they have a contact gave them different names. Thus the word Riang (Reang), Tuikuk and Bru happened to be commonly used by the non-Bru communities.

The word 'Riang' is a word or term used for the name of the tribe in old records and books. The Riang themselves do not know the meaning of this term, nor do they call themselves by this word.<sup>15</sup> The Riang call themselves 'Bru.'<sup>16</sup> The term Bru is recent and seems to have been used only in the closing years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, whereas other terms, like Tuikuk & Riang were more popularly used by others to identify them. The word Bru in Bru language, Kau Bru, means 'person' or 'human being'.<sup>17</sup> The term 'Bru' is probably originated from the term 'Bruha' who was,

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<sup>13</sup> Brigadier C.G. Verghese and R.L. Thanzawna, *A History of the Mizos* Volume-I, New Delhi, Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd, 1997, p.82

<sup>14</sup> T. Vanlaltlani, *A Study of Religious Identity Among the Bru of Mizoram*, Ashish Amos of Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, Delhi, 2007, p.46

<sup>15</sup> Lianhmingthanga and J.V. Hluna, 'Riang in Mizoram: Settlement and its Impact,' in Siamkima (ed.), *Cross-Border Migration Mizoram*, Shipra Publications, Delhi, 2004, p.32

<sup>16</sup> Lianhmingthanga, *Impact of Riang Settlement in Mizoram*, in Tribal Research Institute (ed.), *Seminar & Important Papers*, p.268.

<sup>17</sup> T. Vanlaltlani, p.46



according to their folktale, their ancestor and leader and who, during their westward movement, led them to their present settlement. The use of 'Bru' for calling the Riang has become common among the Mizo. This could be due to Christian Missionaries influences in writing, viz., in many missionary archival records, we found extensive use of the term Bru and Riang.<sup>18</sup>

Generally asking of the Bru living nearby as to preference for the use of any terms, Riang, Bru, Tuikuk the majority answers show their choice for the term Bru. They were registered as 'Reang', in the Government Community Register. They disliked to be called Tuikuk as it creates inferiority complex among them. They were designated as Bru in the Church Register in Mizoram and as Reang in Tripura Churches,<sup>19</sup> perhaps, as 'Riang' in the data highlights: the scheduled tribes of Tripura, Census of India 2001. Hence for all this reason, the word Riang/Reang, Bru, *Tuikuk* will be used as a common noun in interchangeable ways.

From all appearances there is no doubt that the Bru belongs to the Mongolian race, their physical features being rare hair on face and body, flat nose and face with prominent cheekbone, speaking a dialect of their own. According to Jagadish Gan Chowdhury, the Riang dialect belongs to the Bodo group of Tibeto-Burman family, but G.A. Grierson put the Riang language among the fourth group of Mon-Khmer family in which the language of the Khasis is one of them.<sup>20</sup>

Postcolonial period settlements of Bru tribe are found in Tripura, Manipur, Mizoram, Assam (mostly in Cachar District) and the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh. However, this community largest concentration is found in the state of Tripura near Mizoram state border. In Mizoram, the Bru is a minority community. Their settlements found only in the western belt of the State bordering Tripura, Cachar District of Assam and the Chittagong Hill Tract.<sup>21</sup>

The Bru(Riang) settled in Mizoram mainly are of two types – i) Dikhin(g) Riang and ii) Khondol Riang. As far as available sources telling that except minor differences in dialect and female dresses, other significant differences are not found.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Lianhmingthanga, J.V Hluna, p.33

<sup>19</sup> L.T. Hrangchal, *The Bru Crisis in a Nutshell*, Mizoram Police, Aizawl, 2002.

<sup>20</sup> Lianhmingthanga, p.268.

<sup>21</sup>Lianhmingthanga, J.V Hluna, p.32

<sup>22</sup>Lianhmingthanga, J.V Hluna, p.35

Tipera (now Tripura) are those who migrated from Bangladesh and Arakan, who are mainly residing in the Chakma District Council area and Lunglei District commonly known as ‘*Dikhing Tuikuk*’ by the Mizo.

The Bru have ruling clans such as Molshoy (Mualsui), Meska and Chawrkhi.<sup>23</sup>For some reasons, these three ruling clans accused others of plotting against them. As a punishment, they arrested and enslaved many people among the sub-clan and oppressed the rest of them severely. Later, all the ruling clans and their oppressed clans came to be known as Riang. Hence, the term Riang, used originally to refer to the three ruling families became applicable to the 12 clans of the community, viz., Molshoy, Mesha, Chawrkhi, Chawpleng, Apetto, Uairem, Tuimi, Raikchauh, Iakso, Nouhkham, Misa Panji and Iauh-tam Panji. As a result, the term Riang has become popular term even reflected in official records of Tripura state government.

R. Zolawma (B.D) clarified that:

*Once the Riang Panji (clan) happened to be a dominant panji over the whole community. It was told that the whole panji had subjugated other clans ruling over them for many years. By chance during such condition, others might have come into contact with the dominant panji and the right nomenclature of the whole community was known to them. In this way, other people must have recognised the Bru community as Riang and subsequently get recognition from the Government of India by the name.<sup>24</sup>*

## **1.2. Movement and Settlement-**

There are several views and observations regarding the movement and settlement of the Bru. And it is somewhat problematic to point out the exact period of the migration since it is still an on-going movement recently.

### ***1.2.1 Bru Settlement to Tripura and Mizoram -***

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<sup>23</sup>T.Vanlaltlani, p.45

<sup>24</sup>T.Vanlaltlani, p.46

According to legendary folktales, many people assumed that the original homeland of Bru community is Maiantlang(a hill) near Rangamati of Bangladesh. Whereas some scholars also claimed that the Bru originally came from Shan State (in Myanmar) a few centuries ago and then moved to Arakan Hills. From there, they moved to Maian *Tlang* a hilly place in defunct East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and thence migrated to Tripura during the 14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>25</sup>

The scale of migration from Bangladesh to India may never be fully known. Still, its impact is seen to be ‘severest on the ethnic, economic and ecological fabric of Northeast India and West Bengal’ leading to the coinage of the phrase ‘Bangladeshisation of India’. One such estimate notes: ‘The migration from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) to India has resulted in the creation of a sub-nation, the size of Australia within India. This population of between 12 and 17 million has moved illegally, without proper visas, passports or documents and it has settled in northeast India.’<sup>26</sup>

Khondol Parganas, those who migrated from South Tripura during the Second World War are commonly known as ‘Khondol *Tuikuk*’ by the Mizo. These Riang consisting of about 28 sub-clan are one among the 70 per cent residing in Mamit district.<sup>27</sup> The Riang movement was due to their uprising against the Tripura Maharaja that took place during the 1940s and their movement and settlement in Mizoram started around 1950s.<sup>28</sup>

Some believe from the folklores that the Riang formally settled in some parts of the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh under their King Kachhok but were in the course of time-driven out by the powerful Maghs (known as Mawk by the Mizo) and as a result they moved to the north to take shelter in Amarpur and Belonia Sub-Division in Tripura.<sup>29</sup>

According to the Riang traditional tale, they formerly settled in the hilly terrains to the south of Matamari River under the leadership of two brothers by name

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<sup>25</sup>A *Brief Account of Riangs in Mizoram*, Tribal Research Institute (TRI), Department of Education, Aizawl, 1986, p.1

<sup>26</sup> Deepak K. Singh, *Stateless in South Asia: Chakmas between Bangladesh and India*, The Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2010, p.77

<sup>27</sup>C. Chawngkunga, C. Dothansanga, *Mizorama Tuikuk (Reang/Bru) Chanchin*, Aizawl, p.3

<sup>28</sup>Lianhmingthanga, J.V Hluna, p.35.

<sup>29</sup> A *Brief Account of Riangs in Mizoram*, TRI, Aizawl, 1986, p.1

Kilay and Manglay, who were the Karbaris or managers on behalf of the Tippera Raja Udaigiri. This family claims a very early origin dating back to 600 B.C. In contrast, the then Raja who was the 93<sup>rd</sup> in descent from Biraraj, the founder of the dynasty dates from 1590 A.D. In the year 1512, the Tipperas were in the peak of their power and captured Chittagong from the Mughals<sup>30</sup> but were driven out by the Arakanese with the help of the Portuguese and their capital, Udaipur was plundered in 1587. After a long series of struggles, an area consisting of the mountainous region now called Tripura State was left to the hand of the Tripura Raja in 1838. The Riang who were loyal to the Raja moved to Tripura and settled there.<sup>31</sup>

According to the observation of G.A. Grierson, the original homeland of Tibeto-Burman language speakers is somewhere in North-West China, and from there they moved towards the Irrawaddy and the Chindwin and the last wave moved to the South-West and first occupied Garo Hills and then the state of Tripura.<sup>32</sup> Meanwhile, there is also another view that the Riang moved towards Myanmar, Arakan, Chittagong Hill Tracts and then Tripura. This is evidenced by the presence of Riang tribe in these places. From Tripura, some Riang moved towards the east crossing Jampui Hill areas and some of them reached the western regions of Mizoram and settled there, while others moved to the Cachar District of Assam.<sup>33</sup>

Some of Riang folktales are narrating their migration and settlement in present Tripura. According to a famous legendary folktale, amongst the Bruha (having leadership capability followed by the Bru) generations, there were two Chiefs, Sikong Kaiskau and Riang Kaiskau. Unfortunately, both have *jhum* farms sharing a boundary. On the fringe of Riang's field, there was a fully grown tree, and a bird's nest happened to be there on one of the branches of the tree which extended towards Sikhong's *jhum*. Now, there was a heated argument on who is the owner of the bird's nest. Their enmity grew and finally led to a bloody feud in which Sikong killed Riang. Then Sikong occupied Kaiskau's territory and his subjects and ruled for an extended period, and his

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<sup>30</sup> TRI, Aizawl, 1986,p.2

<sup>31</sup>TRI, Aizawl,p.3

<sup>32</sup> Lianhmingthanga, J.V Hluna, p.35

<sup>33</sup> Lianhmgthanga, J.V.Hluna, p.36

descendants became ruling clan. The Riang, therefore, planned to leave their village and migrate to other places.

It is accepted that the Riang moved from Bangladesh to Tripura during the earlier 20<sup>th</sup> century and settled there for many years and up till now the majority of the Riang tribes are found to be settling permanently in Tripura.

### ***1.2.2 Reasons behind their Settlement:***

Many people believed that the Riang came from Tripura to Mizoram because of the ill-treatment they faced in Tripura. According to research finding of the Tribal Research Institute (TRI), Aizawl, in the beginning, when they entered into Tripura, the Riang were not well treated by the then King/Raja of Tripura. Consequently, many of them were forced to flee into the deep forests not only in the hill areas of Tripura but also the adjoining areas of Mizoram.<sup>34</sup> Hence, due to these several incidents and reasons, some of the Bru/Riang might have entered Mizoram from the Chittagong Hill Tracts via Tripura<sup>35</sup> at different periods. Conceivably, besides, the rapid increase of the Riang population claimed by them indicates the entry of Riang into Mizoram might not only due to traumatic events of one period or another but a continuous movement till today.<sup>36</sup>

The 1950s onwards Riang movement and settlement in Mizoram was outcome of Riang Uprising of the 1940s against the Tripura Maharaja.<sup>37</sup> On 17 June 1954, Chief of Rengdil named Lalamanga asked permission to the Deputy Commissioner of Mamit District for the settlement of 12 Brus in his villages, and the Deputy Commissioner replied, “no further steps should be taken without prior permission on the settlement of Brus in his villages.”<sup>38</sup>

In another view, the reason for the movement might be due to inter-tribal feuds with Chakma or most probably due to the attraction of a vast unpopulated forest land

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<sup>34</sup> A Brief Account of Riangs In Mizoram, TRI, in T. Vanlaltlani, *A Study of Religious Identity Among the Bru of Mizoram*, Ashish Amos of Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, Delhi, 2007, p.46

<sup>35</sup> T. Vanlaltlani, p.60

<sup>36</sup> T. Vanlaltlani, p.62

<sup>37</sup> Lianhmingthaga, J.V.Hluna, p.35

<sup>38</sup> File no No. 2228 of 9.8.54, Deputy Commissioner Letter to Chief Lalamanga, Mizoram State Archives, Aizawl (MSA).

in Mizoram. Another cause for Dikkinh Riang migration from Chittagong is also believed to be the construction of Hydro-Electricity Dam at Karnifuli River which has brought a vast area of land underwater. Because of this many Chakma were also known to cross the border and settled in Arunachal Pradesh. In the case of the Riang, who were at that time small in number, they could somehow manage settlement along with the sparsely populated areas along the international border of Mizoram and Tripura with Bangladesh. This movement and settlement of the Riang in Mizoram started a few years before 1950 and continued in small hordes or numbers after that. The Dikkinh Riang are therefore said to have been settling in the areas of Tlabung and Persang Hill areas of Lunglei and Darlak village of Mamit District.<sup>39</sup>

The ongoing political, economic and religious changes emerging out of the whole Northeast Indian regions, did not leave even the Bru community of Mizoram untouched or unaffected.<sup>40</sup> The powerful colonialist, i.e. the British administration deserved to be mentioned as it is the primary agent of socio-cultural change in the tribal community life of Northeast India in general, and Mizoram, in particular. The effects are manifold: it opened the door for illegal immigrants to enter into Indian state administrative jobs and other important works; Christian missionaries started working; money economy was introduced; western dress was adopted; education was introduced; headhunting, slavery, and *Zawlbuk* (bachelors' dormitory) systems were abolished; roads and new forms of transport along with postal and other forms of communication were established; medical and health education were developed; different Christian church denominations sprang up; indigenous people started having exposures, going out from and coming into their respective native places with the purpose of education, trade and commerce, and a new life-style was adopted in various ways.<sup>41</sup>

An introduction of the money economy in Mizoram after British period had brought many non-Mizos for Government jobs (official and non-official), Christian mission work, trade and commerce, and other private business. This kind of entry of

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<sup>39</sup> Lianhmingthanga and J.V.Hluna, p.36.

<sup>40</sup> T.Vanlaltlani, p.143

<sup>41</sup> 'Editorial' *Aizawl Centenary 1990 Souvenir*, editorial page. in T.Vanlaltlani, p.104

non-indigenous people, including recent immigrants of Chakma and even the Bru resulted in a rapid increase of population in Mizoram<sup>42</sup> resulting to acculturation.

A historical account also provides a reason for the Bru desertion of Tripura and entry into Mizoram, which dates back to the period of Govinda Manikya in the 1660s. When Govinda was on the Royal throne of Tripura, his step-brother Chhatra Manikya, claimed the seat to the throne. Govinda left the throne and took refuge in the Bru village. But since he was not well received or treated by the Bru, Govinda became displeased. When Govinda regained the throne in c.1667, the Bru felt oppressed by the officials. Consequently, they took up arms and revolted against the king. But the king suppressed the revolt and arrested many Riang leaders ordering them to put to death. Perhaps, others of the Bru, fearful of further arrest and capital punishment, left Tripura and entered Mizoram through the bordering area between Tripura and Mizoram. If such is the case, the Bru entry to Mizoram might have taken place sometimes in the closing years of the 1660s,<sup>43</sup> where their population in Mizoram was only a fewer in number.

Another possible reason which leads to the Bru entry into Mizoram could be the effect of the Bru revolt led by Rantanmani. It is said that the Bru were peacefully settling down and were the sovereign rulers of Tripura for some time. After they lost their sovereignty, a time came when they raised a controversial revolt in the 1940s. This Bru revolt led by Ratanmani was against the oppressive rule of Maharaja Bir Bikram and his feudal chiefs. The reason for the Bru revolt was the Maharaja's demand for a higher house tax rate from the Bru community members than from the other Tripuris. Out of fear of persecution from Maharaja Bir Bikram, many Bru migrated from South Tripura towards the North Tripura and several families proceeded to enter into Mizoram and settled in the bordering areas such as Kanhmun, Zawlnuam, Borai, Zamuang, Kawrtethawveng, Kawrthah at Mamit District and other places where they are extensively found today.

Taking serious exception to this revolt, the Maharaja sent an expedition that resulted in the arrest and imprisonment of Ratanmani and hundreds of his followers. It is recorded that Ratanmani died of ill-treatment in jail in 1943, whereas all his

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<sup>42</sup> 'Editorial' Aizawl Centenary 1990 Souvenir, p.104

<sup>43</sup> T. Vanlaltlani, p.143 .

followers were released except a few-disciples of Ratanmani who were also killed. Consequently, many Bru families flew to Mizoram and continue living there today. The Tripura historians call this Bru revolt led by Ratanmani as ‘The Riang Unrest of 1942-1943’, and categorise it as one of the Tribal Uprisings, and socio-economic movement of the Riang. This possible cause, proved by the historical event in the early 1940s suggests the date of the most magnificent Bru entry into Mizoram to be sometime in the 1940s.<sup>44</sup>

Therefore, on a brief account of their migration, there could be of two main reasons causing the Bru to leave Tripura and to take refuge and shelter in Mizoram, one of which occurred during the periods of Maharaja Govinda Manikya, and the other during the reign of Maharaja Bir Bikram. Accordingly, some of the Riang would have entered Mizoram in the second half of 1660s, and many others seemed to enter the same state in the 1940s. Besides, the rapid increase of the Riang population claimed by themselves, indicates the entry of Bru into Mizoram might not only be caused by traumatic events of one period or another but a continuous movement till today.<sup>45</sup>

The Bru are a small minority community in Mizoram. No Census Report (Mizoram) shows any numerical representation, except the Census Report of 1971, that too gives us only the number of people who speak Riang language which being 9828. The absence of Riang people in the Census Report of 1951 and 1962 might be due to negligibility of their numerical strength for separate identity and inaccessibility of their dwelling places. The Census Report of Tripura, the homeland of the Riang tribe, shows their population strength from 1902.<sup>46</sup>

During the Census Report of 1971, the population of Mizoram is 3,32,000, which means that the percentage of the Bru population in Mizoram during the year 1971 is only 2.96 per cent. Mizoram population in the Census Report of 1991 is 6,89,756. The increasing population percentage of Mizoram between 1971 and 1991 is 107.83 per cent. Hence it is believed that the population of the Bru in Mizoram

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<sup>44</sup> T.Vanlaltlani, p.61

<sup>45</sup> T.Vanlaltlani, pp 61-62

<sup>46</sup> Lianhmingthanga, p.269



should be around 20,426.<sup>47</sup> Various Riang settlement in Mizoram is said to be Mamit District in the north-western part region consisting of 895 Riang family and 4834 family members, Kolasib District consisting of 306 family and 1371 population, Lawngtlai District consisting of 909 number of families and 5441 no of population and Lunglei District consisting of 642 no of families with 3151 no of population.<sup>48</sup>

C.L Rema stated the main reasons for the rapid increase in the number of Riang population;

- 1) Due to the unwary act of the Mizoram Government.
- 2) Due to the ignorance and disregard by the Mizoram Government.
- 3) Blessing for the politician in exchange for their votes after their enrolment.

And much more reasons could be added and is a necessary thing to look forward into it.<sup>49</sup> As far as their distribution in Mizoram is concerned the Riang as a whole live in 35 villages or Hamlet in Mizoram. As per latest record of the Synod Presbyterian Church Office, Aizawl there are 12 villages in the South and 23 villages in the North Mizoram which are purely inhabited by the Riang.<sup>50</sup> Besides these some Riang are also known to settle at some Mizo villages with the Mizo people.

### **1.2.3 Bru Presence and Settlement in Mizoram:**

Perhaps for all these reasons, the social customs and practices in Mizoram cannot stay the same as usual though they used to be unmixed with others tribe. The increase of population through the entry of non-indigenous communities and all its inputs along with permanent in dwellers' biological production break an isolation of the Bru living area and also attack the Bru endogamous community identity and their traditional socio-cultural practices severely.<sup>51</sup>

The Bru settlers in Mizoram as compared with the Chakma tribe, have never been so aggressive, nor were known to be very conscious of political or communal feeling in the past against the indigenous Mizo inhabitants. As such, there has not been any ill-feeling or such a problematic situation from them as a community on their entry

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<sup>47</sup> C.L. Rema, *Mizorama Tuikuk Te An Lo Luhdan, in Laisuih (Ram Leh Hnam Humhalh)*, M.C. Lalrinthanga, Aizawl, 2007, p.75.

<sup>48</sup> L.T.Hrangchal, pp 58-61

<sup>49</sup> C.L.Rem, p.76.

<sup>50</sup> Lianhmingthanga, p.271

<sup>51</sup> T.Vanlaltani, p.145

into Mizoram by the generic name the 'Riang'.<sup>52</sup> But as the time passed by, the increase of their population by biological and cross border movement processes, problems have come to surface for the people of Mizoram, and now the Riang issue is one of the headaches of the State Government of Mizoram.<sup>53</sup>

The presence of the Bru was not felt much during the year 1950s and 1960s. Several factors played a vital role for the constant influx of Bru to Mizoram, highlighting the only factors which we will not be dealing in our chapters:

**a) Economy:-**

The Bru of Tripura was facing problems of scantiness of suitable land for *jhum* cultivation. Meanwhile, the western belt of Mizoram bordering Tripura and Bangladesh, which is thinly populated with a green, dense and fertile forest has become an ideal grazing ground for Bru community who have been on movement in search of cultivable lands. Their willingness and easy availability at a marginally cheaper and lower rate encouraged the local Mizo to engage them as labourers. This led to the migration of more Bru to Mizoram. The pouring in of Central Fund from New Delhi to Mizoram during Union Territory period lured the Mizo to the prey of easy money thereby, creating for the Bru opportunity to come, work and settle in Mizoram.<sup>54</sup> As far as the Bru economy is concerned, agriculture by *jhum* cultivation is their main source of income and daily bread. However, a fertile land for *jhum* cultivation seems rare in time and that the Riang *jhum* produce has become very poor and self-sufficient in food production is no longer possible. Since the *jhum* cultivation requires a vast area of land for rotation, the less the cycle, the less fertility of the land with reduced productivity.<sup>55</sup> Now many of the Riang are found settling within and around the Tiger Wild Life Sanctuary at Dampa (Mamit District).

**b) Political Administration: -**

With a relatively large size of the population, the Bru have now played an essential role in Mizoram politics. The influx of the Bru in the western belt of Mizoram

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<sup>52</sup> Lianhmingthanga, J.V. Hluna, p.1

<sup>53</sup> Lianhmingthanga and J.V.Hluna, p.41

<sup>54</sup> L.T. Hrangchal, p.9

<sup>55</sup> Lianhmingthanga and J.V. Hluna, p.43

could be described as ‘a blessing’ for some individual politicians and political parties since they could constitute a vote-bank by garnering them to their support after enlisted them in the Electoral Rolls.<sup>56</sup>As such, the political parties in Mizoram run a race to win over the Riang propel for their votes. Not to speak of Village Council of the Riang themselves, two nominated seats of Members of Legislative Assembly were allotted to the Riang Community.<sup>57</sup> Hence, small hamlets transformed into big villages, which were gradually, became state recognised villages.

Due to the various factors discussed above, the number of Bru population in Mizoram has been tremendously increased during the seventies. Perhaps, their number swelled to more than thirty-three thousand in the Nineties, thereby changing the demographic situation in the western belt of Mizoram.

The Bru and the Mizo of Mizoram State have several experiences in common. The two communities belong to the Mongolian race; claim their historical origin in China, and speak different dialects of the Tibeto- Burman language of the great Sino-Tibetan linguistic family. Both communities have migrated from China to India during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and have some similar myths and folk-tales telling of their respective journeys and experiences.<sup>58</sup> Perhaps both groups have been living under the same umbrella of today’s Mizoram State political administration. But their local contact with each other in close village residing for several years have been affected by the continuous confrontations between them and witnessed by both. The Bru and the Mizo have been living together in the same State for an extended period. This necessity is an unavoidable interaction between the two communities in different aspects of human life.<sup>59</sup>

The Riang settlers in Mizoram have not been that aggressive, nor were known to be very conscious of political or communal feeling right from their migration against the indigenous Mizo inhabitants. As for these reasons, there have not been any ill-feelings or conflict from them as a community. Their entry into Mizoram by their generic name the ‘Riang’ too has no restriction. But as time passed by years over the

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<sup>56</sup> L.T. Hrangchal, p.9

<sup>57</sup> Lianhmingthanga and J.V Hluna, p.47

<sup>58</sup>T.Vanlatlani, p.162

<sup>59</sup> T.Vanlatlani,p.170

years, due to their increase in population by biological and cross border movement processes, problems have come on the ground for the people of Mizoram, and now the Riang issue is one among the biggest concern for the Government of Mizoram.

### **1.3. Review of Literature:**

There are some few works which frequently deal with the Bru/Riang inhabiting both Tripura and Mizoram. *The Reangs of Tripura, 1983*, by Jagadish Gan Chaudhuri is one of the most useful materials which have been providing me with a lot of knowledge regarding the Reang primitive cultures. The author completed his book based on his participation, observations, questionnaire, field survey etc. and hence gives an authentic record. Compiling in six chapters, Jagadish included the environment in which the Reang cultures operates, their socio-economic life like gathering, hunting, *Jhuming*, settlement pattern and housing, food and drinks, marriage and kinship, dress and ornaments etc., their religious beliefs and practices, animism, magic and worship of deities, their political administrations etc. On the contrary, amidst being the useful materials, other than concerning the Reang of Tripura, there is not much record or accounts supportive for the relevant topic regarding the Reang settling and migrating in Mizoram.

*A Brief Account of Riang in Mizoram, 1986* published by the Senior Research Officer Tribal Research Institute includes the study of the sub-tribes of Riang people including all their origin (according to their research), from where they have migrated to their present inhabitants, their village and their social life, traditions and their cultures. The authenticity of this book laid clearly on the fact that it is what the Research officer and Research Investigation found out during their surveying period, i.e. c.1984-1985 A.D.

*The Tribes of Tripura a Dissertation, second edition 1986*, by S.B.K Dev Varman deals with the different tribe of Tripura regarding their culture, customs, geographical habitat and their origin with the help of many statistical details. Most importantly, the author mentioned about the Riang socio-economic life briefly. It is quite an interesting handy book with few pages of each of the tribes of Tripura, hence for the junior readers fascinated in the life of the tribes of Tripura, it is quite an useful options.

*The Tribes of Mizoram a Dissertation, 1994* published by the Tribal Research Institute is a beneficial sources. It deals with the study of the socio-cultural life and their inhabitants of the different sub-tribes in Mizoram including the Lusei, Lai, Mara, Ranglong, Riang and the Chakma. It mainly deals with their inhabitants, their social life, their traditional practices, their political organisation and the book helps in understanding the history of the different sub tribes of Mizoram.

*Bru Hnam Zinga Rawngbawlna, Bru Hnam leh Chanchin Tha, 1998* written by Tirhkoh Thangzawna mentions the descendent of the Bru kings, about their cultivation or jhoom, their vestige and traces, the building of their houses, their favourite sort of victual, their nuptial to their religion. The author also mentions the coming of the Gospel tidings among the Bru/Riang – the two Missionaries and their followers. Noted should be that this is one among the missionaries records. Besides, the author has been concentrating towards a typical history and does not cover a vast portion.

*Customary Laws and Practices, Riangs of Tripura, 1998*, written by Dr.Bibhas Kanti Kilikdar is a book whose primary aim is to highlight the historical roots of customary laws of the Riang society. Here, Dr.Bibhas mentioned both the static and changing positions of the Riang customs from time to time and locates the factors which are possibly responsible for such scenario. He include from the historical background to customary laws and practices of marriage and divorce, birth, death, religious beliefs, property, economic life etc. most importantly, the author lay forth to view all his questionnaires, and the case studies he collected concerning with the Riang practices which is very interesting. Perhaps, confining only within the Riang of Tripura is not a quite satisfaction for a researcher who is dealing with the Riang inhabiting Mizoram as well.

*Insight into the Reangs, 1999* by R.K. Acharyya consisted of a detailed picture of the Reangs (Bru) economic activities and social custom and their traditions. This book is one of reliable sources for the relevant topic because the work done is all based on the primary data collected through survey and field works. The author has covered the unrevealed socio-economic problems of the Reangs, the effect of modernisation and the cultural changes. Dividing into seven chapters, R.K.Acharyya has done a great

job which he taught would help to enlighten the researchers, which in return would solve the Reangs socio-economic backward problems into a few aspects of their development. Besides, though being a helpful book for the readers who are aware of the Reang community, it does not support to a great help for my topic since it firmly confine with the Reangs inhabiting Tripura only.

*Cross-Border Migration Mizoram, 2004* edited by Sangkima deals with infiltration of foreigners to Mizoram. One of the article entitled “*Riang in Mizoram: Settlement and its Impact*” by Lianhmingthanga and J.V. Hluna focuses on the Bru nomenclature, the typical types of the people, their coming and settlement along with a clear table showing the Riang Settlement in Mizo villages. They also mentioned about the impact of the Bru settlement in terms of socio-economic, religion, politics etc. The authors pointed out the impact of the Riangs settlement in Mizoram based on the socio-economic, religion and political views. They also show a records extract from the report of Home Mission School under the Presbyterian Church i.e the number of students in the Middle and Primary Schools. Perhaps the record may not be accurate as no report has been received from some of the villages which they thought would possibly increase the percentage of Christian members.

*A Study of Religious Identity Among the Bru of Mizoram, 2007* written by T.Vanlaltlani presents information about the Bru origin and their history of migration till their settlement of Mizoram. She has mentioned a clear line of the deities whom the Bru believed to be Benevolent and Malevolent, besides their sacrifices, their Myths and their practices. This book also contains the changed that confronts the Bru and how the Bru response to it example in the terms of political, economic and religious matters. Most interestingly the book traces historic-political and religious interaction between the Riang and the Mizo.

*Mizorama Tuikuk (Reang/Bru) Chanchin, 2014* by C.Chawngkunga and C.Dothersanga briefly trace the migration pattern of the Riang of Mamit District, their inhabitants and the physical features of their surroundings. It mentioned the presence and the absence of the Riang families in different villages of Mamit District during the colonial and the post-colonial of the British Government. Their revolt against the Tripura king and their migration to Mizoram, how they started indulging in the Politics, the relationship between the Mizoram Government and their BNLFF (Bru

National Liberation Front) were all provided for the readers. It is such an exciting book and acknowledges me with different views and facts for my topic.

*Emerging Ethnic Boundaries, 1979* by Danielle Juteau Lee reviews in his introductory of the British and American sociological traditions and approaches to the questions of ethnicity, assimilation, integration, pluralism and equality. The pluralist solution Juteau Lee refers is merely the process whereby the ruling bourgeoisie establishes a relationship between society and the state, between the citizen and the 'state' form of his domination. He mentioned that cultural factors certainly must not be ignored in any attempt to understand ethnic relations.

*The Ethnic Phenomenon, 1981* by Pierre L. van den Berghe is a well-written text-monograph, consisting of twelve chapters. It can be approached in two ways- as the socio-biology of ethnicity or as a contribution to our understanding of ethnicity in spite of the author's biosocial orientation. This book is divided into three sections: a theoretical framework; substantive discussions of 'recurrent situations' in ethnic relations and apart on how ethnicity changes and related to other bases of solidarity. The author makes a persuasive case that ethnicity is both primordial and situational-instrumental.

*Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, 1983*, written by Benedict Anderson have brought nationalism to a whole new level with the most persuasive case for linking literacy and nationalism. Perhaps, the reader cannot ignore other factors like music, poetry, flags, uniforms, parades, monuments and historical commemorations. He mentioned that there are signs of national identities being eroded from both within and without. Provincial and dialectical communities, which needs to be re-created or re-emerged and seemingly meeting its gradual recreation naturally with the aid of print. This book is a must-read for people who tends to understand modern times and would as well be entertained by it.

*Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison, 1991* by Paul R. Brass defines an ethnic group in objective terms according to some cultural or religious markers. Here he examines ethnic and national identity, ethnic conflicts, and secessionist movements beyond cultures, targeting primarily on union of India and former Soviet Union. In due course of history, ethnic and identity crisis turned out one

of the most common natures of (collective) violence during the last 50-60 years. And ultimately in academic discourse, there are multiple debates on what new definition and structures of so called ethnic conflict and crisis would. Therefore, to do research on ethnicity and nationalism of trans-border small communities/tribes is very relevant and essential. Theoretical foundation of Paul Brass is grounded on two distinct premises – i) ethnicity and nationalism are not ‘givens’ but are social and political constructions and ii) ethnicity and nationalism are modern phenomena created by the activities of the modern centralising state. For Brass ethnicity or ethnic consciousness is designed as a result of struggles within groups over their definition and boundaries, of conflicts between groups, and struggles between state authorities and non-dominant groups.

*Tension and Conflict in North East India, 1995*, written by B.B. Kumar contains information about the stress and conflict happening in different parts of the North-East. The author mentioned about the language politics in the North-east, the genesis of the autonomy movements in Assam, Nagaland and the Naga Hills District. The author also stated that the main factors which brought socio-economic change in the tribal areas are modern education, Christianity, administration, monetary economy and urbanisation. He concluded that the tribal people by adopting western dress, Christianity, and the English language, they are getting westernised; though it is the westernisation without western technology.

*Ethnicity, 1996* John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith as editors compiled Ethnicity very likely for use as a potential textbook, appropriate for a course in either Sociology or Cultural Anthropology. In the introduction Hutchinson and Smith endeavour to articulate a working definition of ‘ethnicity’. They cite numerous authorities’ opinions of what constitutes a meaningful explanation of this term. Having established this working ambiguity, Hutchinson and Smith decide their book into eight general sections. These include ‘Ethnicity’, ‘Theories of Ethnicity’, ‘Ethnicity in History’, ‘Ethnicity in the Modern World’, ‘Ethnicity Conflict and Nationalism’, and finally ‘Transcending Ethnicity?’ In these sections, Hutchinson and Smith provide sixty-three selections from published works of seventy-three different authors. All of the selections are relatively brief-from one to nine pages at most.

*Ethnicity: Racism, Class and Culture, 1999* by Steve Fenton addresses African Americans in the United States, Indian and African minorities in urban Britain,



Malays, Chinese and Indians in Malaysia in its wide-ranging analysis of the dynamics of ethnicity. Fenton attempts to reunite ethnicity 'with economic and political', thereby highlighting the operation of 'class and power' in such relations 'contextualising ethnicity', economically and politically, the author tries to set out the 'stage on which ethnic dramas are played out'. Accordingly, he focuses on how ethnicity is 'organised and mobilised' within specific economic and political settings.

*Negotiating Identities States and Immigrants in France and Germany, 2002* by Riva Kastoryano (translated by Barbara Harshav) here Kastoryano argues that the states contribute directly and indirectly to the elaboration of immigrants' identity, in part by articulating the grounds on which their groups are granted legitimacy. As Riva shows in this book, neither religious nor national communities are stable, and immigration challenges the ability of state to control and integrate identities. The key factors in Kastoryano's study are French and Germany national characters and histories, their immigration histories and policies, and their political cultures and systems. Comparing these factors between the two nations helps to explain different experiences in identity negotiations. Her works adds an essential cultural and identity dimension missing from many such studies.

*Living at the Edge of Thai Society: The Karen in the Highlands of Northeast Thailand, 2003* edited by Delang, C is a formative book which focuses on the link between ethnicity and development, and it provides the reader a new information about a location and the ethnic group that face essential dilemmas. This book is a collection of nine chapters discussing different themes which is relevant to the Karen. Most exciting part, Part I deals with the negotiations of ethnicity. Where the authors traces in detail the changes in external representations of the Karen as part of the process of 'constructing marginality', from a traditional 'autonomy' and fluidity', under modern nationalism the Karen came to be seen as wild people of the forest following a period in which they were not so peripheral, but respected as guardians of the woods.

*Problems of Ethnicity in the North-East India, 2007* edited by B.B.Kumar is a collection of articles by fourteen contributors diving it into VI parts which focuses on the ethnicity and insurgency of the North-East, Ethno-identity in a democracy, the understanding and resolution of the ethnic conflicts, the issues of identity and governance of the North-east India etc. Some of the authors mentioned the need and

importance for the study of ethnicity since the ethnic conflicts had begun to flare up across the globe right from the nineties.

*Elementary Strategies of Ethnic Boundary Making, 2008* by Andreas Wimmer adopted Zolberg and Woon's (1999) threefold structure like boundary-crossing, blurring and shifting as the three possible outcomes of the negotiations between national majorities and minorities in the west. He mentioned that this distinction is general and abstract enough to encompass strategies pursued by various types of actors and it uses single fundamental divisions: the changes in the topography of boundaries that is envisioned. On the contrary, it is not exhaustive enough since excluding the way he adopted the threefold structure, and it is quite not a help out book for my writing.

*Stateless In South Asia- The Chakmas between Bangladesh and India, 2010* written by Deepak K.Singh familiarise the reader with the trajectory of becoming Stateless and refuge hood in South Asia from the lived experiences of the refugees themselves. This book reflected on two communities- the ethnic non-Bengali Buddhist Chakmas from the Chittagong Hill Tract as stateless refugees in the North-eastern Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh and the indigenous peoples of the country. Singh reflects that the Buddhist Chakmas constituted the single largest ethnic block of affected people who became landless, with their prime cultivable land submerged underwater. Though this book did not meet the needs for my writing, it as well link with my relevant topic in many conditions and provided me with many valuable sources.

*A Tale of Three Cities: Negotiating Ethnic Identity and Acculturation, 2017* in northwest China by Bo Zhang, Peter Drujven and Dirk Strijker examine how the negotiation of ethnic identity influences acculturation strategies in three cultural contexts by scrutinising the three operational aspects of ethnic identity- a) perceptions focusing on how do the actors perceive their own ethnic identity and other's ethnic identities, b)affections concentrate on how do the actors forge their affective bonds and attachment to their ethnic identities, c) behaviours studying on how do the actors act in their daily life and how the actors alter their practices in the different cultural context. Here they argue that the ethnic identity is negotiated at both the group and individual levels as a relation of dialectical unification concerning stability and

fluidity. They also emphasise that ethnic identity is also symbolically reflected in language, food preferences, and religious practices.

*Land Politics in Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh: Dynamics of Property, Identity and Authority, 2017* a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy by Fariba Alamgir main aim was to explore how land disputes in the Chittagong Hill Tracts are settled and the questions about the property, identity, authority and the state formation of the people or the tribes living in a frontier region. In his chapter 1, he has provided the readers that in Bangladesh, the colonial Government introduced a system of categorisation and state ownership of most hill lands, which deprived the hill people's property and access to forest and hill lands; and in his chapter 4, viewing the hill people of the Chittagong Hill Tract as nomads and their cultivation practices as primitives implies they have no land rights and that the land is empty. He also mentioned that Kaptai hydroelectric dam, constructed in Rangamati district of CHT, submerged 40 per cent of arable land and displaced 100,000 hill people, to support this statement; some Mizo writers have been working on the Riang settlement mentioning this for their migration too.

#### **1.4: Statement of the Problem:**

Plentiful secondary sources on the history of identity formation of different 'Mizo' clans, groups are available as many scholars have been working on this area since colonial times. Whereas writing history on Bru is still a neglected area probably because of many reasons like scholars were not interested in researching them, lack of sources, contesting identity politics, etc. Hence the primary aim of this work will be tracing the history of Bru, migration wave how they reach Mizoram, settlement, assimilation, and identity negotiations with other communities in Mizoram. And also gives stress on the Bru response to social, cultural, political and economic changes during post-colonial times, their current status of indigenous customs and traditions, whether the core of identity remain unchanged or not, reasons for their migration. Unlike so far published works on Bru, this proposed work will primarily focus on the use of reliable sources to avoid bias interpretation of the event as much as possible. To overcome problems and difficulties generally encountered by scholars working on Bru

due to unavailability of primary sources in Mizoram, to visit and collect sources on 'Reang' neighbouring state Tripura is a must business. In short, the research grey areas found in writing the history of Bru are very few published works, scattered primary sources, and consequently, a lot of questions on reliability and rationality of published works.

### **1.5 : Objectives:**

1. To trace the history of Bru settlement in (pre) postcolonial Mizoram.
2. To analyse Bru identity negotiations with other communities in postcolonial Mizoram focussing on social, cultural, linguistic patterns, religion.

### **1.6: Area of study:**

The study will focus on Bru community settlements in post-colonial Mizoram during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### **1.7 : Methodology:**

The research will be based on both primary and secondary sources with additional support of oral sources. Not only state archives (Mizoram State Archives, Tripura State Archives) other non-state institutional archives like churches archives will also be consulted. Historical study on the Bru community identity negotiations (political, social, cultural, religious and linguistic) with the larger community in post-colonial period is, apparently, a challenging task and the subject itself carries a hefty emotional charge more than rationality. Therefore, taking the safer side and at the same time maintaining historical objectivity is perhaps possible only through the means of narrating stories of two parties in parallel spheres. In the light of VirginiusXaxa's view on politics of tribal identity; Danielle J.Lee's theory on emerging ethnic boundaries; Bo Zhang's formula on ethnic identity formation and acculturation; Zolberg and Woon's threefold structure like boundary-crossing, blurring and shifting, after the sources collection and classification of collected sources are over streamlining a possible, applicable theory would be generated to have an unbiased narratives on Bru identity formation in post-colonial Mizoram. This proposed study will also analyse the historical process of assimilation, integration, shifting, acceptance, denial while negotiating between larger tribe/state and Bru minority community.

### **1.8: Chapterisation :**

### ***Chapter I: Introduction***

This chapter highlights the framework of the proposed research work with more explanation on the statement of problem, methodology, objectives and significance of the study. This chapter also looks into movement and settlement patterns of the Bru community in Indo-Bangladesh trans-border areas with particular reference to their post-independence settlement in Mizoram.

### ***Chapter II: Social and Cultural Negotiations of Bru in Post-Colonial Mizoram***

The primary focus of this chapter is the historical analysis of the transformation of Bru community's identity in post-colonial Mizoram by throwing more light on social, cultural, linguistic changes with larger population. Moreover, this chapter also tries to touch upon moulding their own identity through the self-negotiation process.

### ***Chapter III: Dynamics of Religion of Bru Community in Post-Colonial Mizoram***

This chapter attempt to examine the adoption of other religions in Bru society and its impact and their historical journey in trying to manage a separate 'Bru' identity through religion.

### ***Chapter IV: Conclusion***

This chapter summarizes and includes the final findings of the study.

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## Chapter II

### Social and Cultural Negotiations of Bru in Post-Colonial Mizoram

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#### 2.1 Introduction

Immigrations leads inevitably to heated discussions about how boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘them’ might be drawn or erased. *Negotiating Cultural Boundaries* provides a point of departure for a more general analysis of the cultural dimension of immigrant incorporation in contemporary capitalist democracies, which evokes as much heat in public debates as the economic impact of immigration but has received much less attention from social scientists.<sup>60</sup> Immigrants are almost always seen to be the bearers of an alien culture and, in that capacity, evoke conjectures regarding their

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<sup>60</sup> Aristide R. Zolberg and Long Litt Woon, *Why Islam is Like Spanish: Cultural Incorporation in Europe and the United States*, Sage Publications, Inc, 1999, p.5 (Hereafter cited as Zolberg and Woon)

putative impact on the receiving country's self-defined and prospective integrity. Negotiations on how to deal with cultural difference involve prickly questions like: How different can we afford to be, and how alike must we be? Negotiations about these matters in turn center on identity issues: who can become a member of society, and what are its conditions for membership? The process of incorporation can be thought of as the negotiations in which hosts and immigrants engage around these boundaries.<sup>61</sup>

Transmission of culture is a social process, not genetic. Whiting<sup>62</sup> observed, "where the transmission of culture a genetic process, it would be expedient to turn to the biologist for a basic theory of socialization". Davis<sup>63</sup> stated "Culture cannot be inherited genetically; the mere fact of birth can transmit none of it into a certain family, social class or race. All cultural behavior is learned behavior; each new human organism must learn it through the difficult processes of imitation, identification, competition, cooperation and other methods of social learning".

In this chapter, we will stress upon the historical analysis of the transformation of Bru community's identity in post-colonial Mizoram. Whereby, focusing on the most important and exciting part of the Bru's social, cultural and linguistic changes. Where the distinct patterns of negotiation between newcomers and hosts will be distinguished by applying Zolberg and Woon threefold structure:

1. Boundary crossing – without any change in the structure of the receiving society and leaving the distinction between insiders and outsiders unaffected.
2. Boundary blurring – one that affects the structure (i.e., the legal, social, and cultural boundaries) of the receiving society.
3. Boundary shifting – it implies a reconstruction of a group's identity, whereby the line differentiating members from non-members is relocated, either in the

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<sup>61</sup>Zolberg and Woon, p.8.

<sup>62</sup> Whiting, John W.M. (1951): *Becoming a Kwoma*, Yale University Press, New York, p. 171.

<sup>63</sup> Davis, Allision (1947): '*Socialization and Adult Personality*' Reading in Social Psychology, Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1947, p. 139.

direction of inclusion or exclusion. This is a more comprehensive process, which brings about a more fundamental redefinition of the situation.<sup>64</sup>

The ongoing political, economic and religious changes out of the whole Northeast Indian regions, did not leave even the Riang community of Mizoram untouched or unaffected.<sup>65</sup> In the context of social and cultural transmission the powerful colonialist, i.e. the British administration deserved to be mentioned as it is the ‘principal agent’ of socio-cultural change in the tribal community life of Northeast India in general, and Mizoram, in particular. The British Imperialist have brought about many changes, it abolished the traditional socio-political system based upon the autonomy of each village of Mizoram and introduced centralized political administration by making Aizawl, the administrative headquarters.<sup>66</sup> The effects are manifold: it opened an entry for alien people to hold executive power and other important works; a Christian mission was started; money economy was introduced; western culture was adopted; modern education was launched; whereas Mizo indigenous systems like headhunting, slavery(Boi), and *zawlbuk* (bachelors’ dormitory) were diluted; roads and new forms of transport along with postal and other forms of communication were established; medical and health education were developed; different Christian Church denominations sprang up; indigenous people started having exposures, going out from and coming into their respective places with the purpose of education, trade and commerce, and a new life-style was adopted in various ways.<sup>67</sup>

An introduction of money economy in Mizoram after British period had brought about many non-Mizo having to do with Government jobs, Christian Mission work, trade and commerce, and other private business. The era had come when both Europeans and Indians are to be found in Mizoram. This kind of entry of non-indigenous people, including recent immigrants of Chakma and even the Bru resulted

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<sup>64</sup> Zolberg and Woon, p.9

<sup>65</sup> T Vanlaltlani, p.143.

<sup>66</sup> ‘Editorial’ Aizawl Centenary 1990 Souvenir, in T.Vanlaltlani, *A Study of Religious Identity among the Bru of Mizoram*, Ashish Amos of Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, Delhi, 2007, p.143

<sup>67</sup> T.Vanlaltlani, p.144



in rapid increase of population in Mizoram<sup>68</sup> diluting further the ethnicity of the region.<sup>69</sup>

## **2.2 Bru Interaction with Mizo in General:**

The Bru and Mizo of Mizoram State have several similarities if analysis is done from anthropological perspectives. The two communities belong to the Mongoloid race who speak different dialects of the Tibeto-Burman language of the great Sino-Tibetan linguistic family. Both communities have migrated from China to India during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and have some similar myths and folk-tales telling of their respective journeys and experiences.<sup>70</sup> Possibly both communities living together in present Mizoram geopolitical space for an extended period. This necessitates an unavoidable interaction between the communities in different aspects of human life.<sup>71</sup>

The Bru settlers in Mizoram have not been that aggressive, nor were known to be very conscious of political or communal feeling right from their migration against the indigenous Mizo inhabitants. As for these reasons, there have not been any ill-feelings or conflict from them as a community. Their entry into Mizoram by their generic name the 'Riang' too have no restriction. But as time passed by years over years, due to their increase in population by biological and cross border movement processes, problems have come on to the ground for the people of Mizoram, and so the settlement of the Riang here has caused an undesirable effect creating major political and contentious issues in the State of Mizoram<sup>72</sup>.

## **2.3 Society and Culture of the Bru Community:**

The Bru live in groups of families and villages. The inter-family and inter-villages lived close to one another. Furthermore, the immediate neighbors of the Bru are the various tribes mostly belonging to the same ethnic standard and cultural

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<sup>68</sup> T.Vanlaltlani, p.143

<sup>69</sup> Hnam Damna (Daily Newspaper of Lunglei), Oct 4,6,7 & 9, 1997, pp 1 & 2, Lalthara, Ram Leh Hnam, pp 1-12, in T.Vanlaltlani, *A Study of Religious Identity among the Bru of Mizoram*.

<sup>70</sup> Lianhmingthanga, J.V. Hluna, p.1

<sup>71</sup> T.Vanlaltlani, p.162.

<sup>72</sup> Lianhmingthanga, J.V Hluna, p.52

attainment. Conceivably, the social environment plays as much important as natural environment in shaping one's culture.

### **2.3.1 Social Structure and Organization:**

The social structure of the Bru is organic, expanding in its phenomenal process of growth from the individual, which constitutes the nucleus of the family pattern, on mutual relationship of interdependence, to the tribe.<sup>73</sup> They have been referred to as a clan or a sept (subdivision of a clan) by some earlier administrations and anthropologists like that of Lewin (1869), Risley (1891), H.J.Reynolds, Hutchinson's (1909) etc.

Lewin wrote, 'There are four clans of the Tipperah tribe resident in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, as follows: the *Pooram*, the *Nowuttea*, the *Osuie* and the *Reang* (Bru). All come originally from Hill Tipperah.'<sup>74</sup>

Risley referred to a survey report by H.J.Reynolds and includes the Reang as one of the several septs of the Tipperah-tribe. The Tipperahs are described in a survey report by Mr.H.J.Reynolds as having noticeable Mongolian features, with flat faces and thick lips. They are of much the same stature as Bengalis, but their frames are far more muscular and solidly made<sup>75</sup>. Many of them are said to have fairer complexions scarcely darker than those of the brown European.

Hutchinson's comment is on the same line as that of Lewin and Risley. He further remarked that the Riang are undoubtedly of Kuki origin.<sup>76</sup> Perhaps, Jagadish in his writing once mentioned that he fail to understand why scholars like Lewin, Risley and Hutchinson referred the Riang community as a clan, when in general, their social structure are much larger than that of the clan and in contrary, consisted of all the essential features of a tribe.

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<sup>73</sup> Dr Bibhas Kanti Kilikdar, *Customary Laws and Practices, Riangs of Tripura*, Tribal Research & Cultural Institute (TRCI), Govt. of Tripura, Agartala, 1998, p.66.

<sup>74</sup> Lewin, Capt. T.H, *The Hill Tracts of Chittagong and the Dwellers therein*, in Jagadish Gan Choudhury, *The Reangs of Tripura*, TRC, Agartala, 2011, p.39.

<sup>75</sup> Jagadish Gan Choudhury, *The Reangs of Tripura*, TRCI, Agartala, 2011, p.39

<sup>76</sup> Jagadish Gan Choudhury, p.40

The Bru social structure can simply be placed in five strata: Individual – families – lineages – clan and the tribe, i.e. individual forming families, families forming lineages, lineages forming clans and clans forming the tribe.<sup>77</sup>

### **2.3.2 Family (*Noukhung*):**

Lewis Henry Morgan has observed that origin and growth of the family are embodied in the system of consanguinity and affinity, and in usages relating to marriage, through which, collectively, the family can be undoubtedly traced through several successive forms<sup>78</sup>.

Out of all the Bru social units, family is the closest one. Family called *Noukhung* is the smallest of all groups. It is the real working unit for all socio-economic activities. It is exogamous and patriarchal.<sup>79</sup> Henceforth, the inheritance of the property descends through the patrilineal line. But in making essential decisions on family matters, women played important role in their family.<sup>80</sup> Perhaps, the size, structure and type vary from family to family. The smallest unit of a family among the Bru consists of a man, his wife and their unmarried children which are known as nuclear family, although the joint family system also still exist among them. In joint families, the eldest male member is the authoritarian head.<sup>81</sup>

### **2.3.3 Lineages:**

In between family and clan, there is another division known as lineage, generally define as an extension of the family unit. The Bru called it *sandai*. The concept of *sandai* which was the very basis of the Bru kinship structure envisaged the formation of lineage group.<sup>82</sup> The bonding, thus, was a significant force in upholding the family solidarity. *Sandai* is a patriarchal and patrilineal. It is homogeneous in its

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<sup>77</sup> Bibhas Kanti Kilikdar, p.66

<sup>78</sup> Morgan Lewis Henry, Ancient Society, in Bibhas Kanti Kilikdar, *Customary Laws and Practices, Riangs of Tripura*, TRCI, Agartala., 1998, p.67

<sup>79</sup> Jagadish Gan Choudhury, p.43

<sup>80</sup> F.Lalchuanmawia, *History of Christianity among the Bru Community in Mizoram (1949-2007)*, Master of Theology thesis, Tamil Nadu Theological Seminary, Madurai, 2009, p.16

<sup>81</sup> R.K.Acharyya, *Insight into the Reangs*, TRCI, Agartala, 1999, p.61

<sup>82</sup> Bibhas Kanti Kilikdar, p.82

basic structure, with the increase in numbers or members within the *sandai* and their dispersion, *sandai* too is no longer an exogamous unit.<sup>83</sup>

#### 2.3.4 Clan:

The endogamous tribal unit of the Reang is distributed into several clans or groups which are known as *Dapha* or *Panji*. The clan structure, known as *panjiharo*, is again divided into two segments – *Molsoi* and *Meska* clans and from each of them, the other sub-clans (*haro* or *huda*) developed.<sup>84</sup> Bhabananda Mukherjee divided these two major clans into other sub-clans or groups:

<b>MOLSOI</b>	<b>MESKA</b>
(1) <i>Dalbong</i>	(1) <i>Rai Kachak</i>
(2) <i>Sagarai</i>	(2) <i>Charkhi</i>
(3) <i>Nowkham</i>	(3) <i>Musa</i>
(4) <i>Apeta</i>	(4) <i>Tuimuiafa</i>
(5) <i>Changpreng</i>	(5) <i>Wairen</i>
(6) <i>Yakstam</i>	(6) <i>Tamyakcha</i>

Perhaps, the Riang of Tripura do not admit the existence of the clans like *Dalbong* and *Sagarai*.<sup>85</sup> At present, the Yastam Panji also merged into some larger clan.<sup>86</sup>

Distinguished scholars like Lewin, Risley and Hutchinson, as mentioned earlier, referred the Riang community as a clan and not as a tribe. But, Jagadish, argued that the social structure of the Reang is much larger than that of a clan and indeed have

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<sup>83</sup> Jagadish Gan Choudhury, p.43

<sup>84</sup> Mukherjee, Bhabananda : *The Riang, Bulletin of the Department of Anthropology*, Vol VIII, No.1.1959, Calcutta, p.4

<sup>85</sup> In accordance with the field survey held by Bibhas for studying the customary laws of the Riangs of Tripura.

<sup>86</sup> R.K.Acharyya, p.63

all the essential features of a tribe.<sup>87</sup> Bibhas comment is on the same line with Jagadish. Though the Census Report of 1901 and the Bulletin of the Department of Anthropology on *The Riang* by Mukherjee (1970) have stated the clan names along with their meanings, the present researcher during his survey has found to his astonishment that the present-day Riang have minimal idea about the history of their clan, not to speak about the meanings of those clan names.<sup>88</sup>

The locality of the Bru settlement is not entirely free from the influence of the non-Bru, i.e. the Mizo, neighbours. Due to the interweave with other people, the Bru society and culture are apt to blend in and amalgamate in the culture and tradition of other people with whom they contacted. In their early days, the Bru lived by their primitive cultures, customary laws and practices etc. But now, under the impact and influence of outside forces, they seem to have lost some of the principal characteristics of the values and customs.

#### **2.4 Village and the People:**

The Riang usually live in separate hamlets at a distance from other castes and other communities, exclusively forming a hamlet of their own. A hamlet is called *kami*.<sup>89</sup> The Riang generally prefer the flat top of a hill of medium height out of the considerations of health and for their protections. Besides, their settlement is far from each other. Each village requires hills and forest around for producing and gathering foods. No boundary is strictly delineated.

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<sup>87</sup> Jagadish Gan Choudhury, p.40

<sup>88</sup> Bibhas Kanti Kilikdar, p.84.

<sup>89</sup> Jagadish Gan Chaudhury, p.35

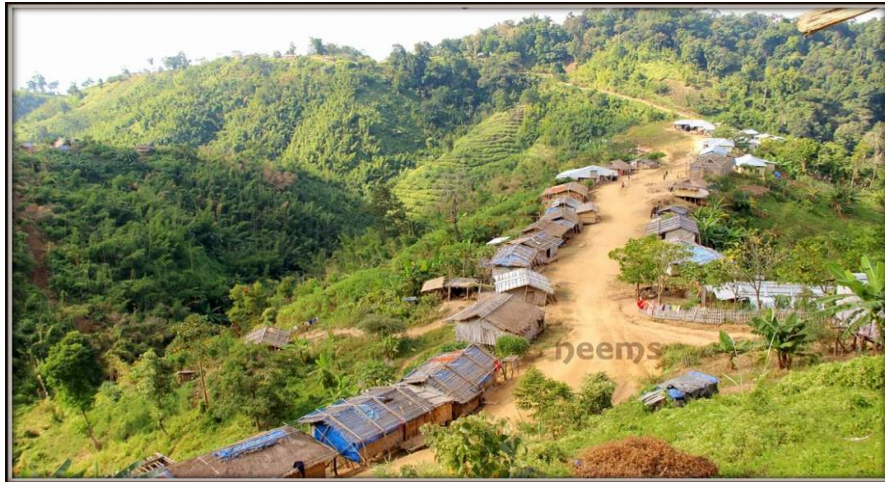


Figure (i): Typical Bru Village (Damdiai, Mamit District)

Selection of the site, however, is associated with some rituals. In analogy to *Jhuming*, house-building is headed by dream revelation. A lump of soil is brought from a suitable spot and kept below the pillow of the head of the family who sleeps alone at night. It is ominous to dream of thunder, lightning, fire, hailstorm, cyclone, and crowd, break down of a tree or a house and the life. It is not bad not to see anything in dream. Sri Joramani Reang of Kanthali Chhara in November 1979 left twice the sites he had tentatively selected.<sup>90</sup>

From all appearances, there is no doubt that the Riang belong to the Mongoloid race, their physical features being scanty hair on face and body, flat nose and face with prominent cheekbone. All anthropological studies on these people point to the Mongoloid character or tradition.

Another opinion offered by R.H Sneyed Hutchinson is that the Riang are the sub-caste of Tippera (Tipras) which, according to him, are of Kuki origin. Perhaps, there are certain similarities between the Riang and the Kuki (now Mizo) not only in physical appearance but also in languages.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Jagadish Gan Chaudhury, p.36

<sup>91</sup> R.H Sneyed Hutchinson, Chittagong Hill Tracts, in Sangkima, *Cross-Border Migration Mizoram*, Shipra Publications, Delhi, 2004, p.34

The Riang are laborious and hardworking people. Their strength in carrying head-load is also noteworthy. They are kind-hearted and straightforward. They show affectionate and have immense hospitality to their guest. No guest or visitors are given lousy treatment in the Riang house. The Riang are very good in basketry work. They have their artistic skill in designing and decorating works. They also have a particular talent in mat making too. Carpets made out of bamboo canes are commonly used by them as well as by the Mizo for drying paddy in the sun.<sup>92</sup> However, due to less demand and the average prices, one could only work as profession. They only make their articles on leisure time, usually when they are off from their daily *jhum wok*.



Figure (ii) : The laborious working Bru people.

## 2.5 The Social Institutions: Marriage

The Bru marriage is known as *Kailai*. Their ceremony is much simpler and more traditional as compare with those of the Tipra (Tripuri). The conventional marriage-rites of Tipras, Reang, Jamatia, Noatia and Uchai are very much alike; they differ in minor details only. Captain Lewin remarked that ‘great freedom of intercourse is allowed’ among the Puran Tipperahs, Noatias, Jamatias, Reangs and Uchais of the Chittagong Hill Tracts<sup>93</sup>. Before marriage, a boy, Lewin further remarked, ‘cohabits

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<sup>92</sup> TRI, Aizawl, p.22

<sup>93</sup> Lewin, Capt. T.H, The Hill Tracts of Chittagong and the dwellers therein, in Jagadish Gan Choudhury, *The Reangs Of Tripura*, Tribal Research & Cultural Institute, Govt of Tripura, Agartala, 2011, p.47

with lover whenever opportunity serves'. He illustrated this by narrating an incidence between a Reang boy and a girl.<sup>94</sup>

The Bru are endogamous in structure, and all types of cousin marriage are seen among them. However, they still prefer marriage within the clan or Sub-clan. Parallel cousin marriage is declining fast. Cross cousin marriage is very few owing to disintegration in joint families. Widows, widowers and divorcees are treated as unclean and they are de-barred from participating in social ceremonies or rituals. Perhaps, a widow can marry her husband's younger brother and similarly, a widower can marry his younger sister-in-law<sup>95</sup>. Widow and widower were also allowed to remarry but only in the case until the disposal of the bones of his\her deceased wife\husband is done.

Like the other tribal communities of Tripura and North-Eastern India, in the Reang community too the standard methods of acquiring mates are;

- i. Marriage by service (*Chamarai*)
- ii. Marriage by mutual consent (*Sanglaimi*)
- iii. Marriage by brideprice (*Dafabai Kaimi*)
- iv. Marriage by Love (*Kachuk Khalai Lalaimi*)
- v. Marriage by elopement (*Tooi Khami*)
- vi. Marriage by exchange (*Slailaimi*)
- vii. Marriage by capture (*Faingeke Kaimi*)

However, the society did not prefer wedding either by elopement, exchange or capture. Of all the methods and the system of marriage, the most common one is marriage by service which is known as *Chamarai Kami*, in which the prospective groom is required to stay in and serve the house of the bride for a few years, leading to temporary and sometimes permanent matrilocal residence<sup>96</sup>. It is the traditional custom in the tribal society to pay bride-price to the bride's father. The price could be

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<sup>94</sup> Lewin, Capt, T.H, 'Wild Race of South-eastern India, in Jagadish Gan Choudhury, *The Reangs Of Tripura*, Tribal Research & Cultural Institute, Agartala, 2011, p.46.

<sup>95</sup> R.K. Acharyya, '*Insight into the Reangs*', Tribal Research Institute, Govt. of Tripura Agartala, 1999, p.65

<sup>96</sup> Jagadish Gan Choudhury, p.49



paid either in kind or by rendering service to the bride's father's house by the future bridegroom. Perhaps, the period of service varies from community to community. As for the Bru society, it is three years at least. After completion of three consecutive years of service, he is entitled to start his married life after performing some rituals connected with the marriage ceremony.<sup>97</sup>

On the contrary, with the ongoing generation, the Bru of Mizoram can no longer live an entity within the ambit of their tradition. Their Socio-Cultural life has undergone drastic changes. Majority of them live in the Mizo villages where they have to cope with the standard and living style of the Mizo society and follow particular commitment and obligations to a great extent. Most of the Bru settling in Mizoram especially in the interior places are no longer that much remote.<sup>98</sup>

## 2.6: Festivals

Riang do not have festival of their origin except 'Buisu'.<sup>99</sup> *Buisu* or *Bawisu* is the only important annual festival of the Bru celebrated on April 13&14 of which, the first day is called Hari Buisu or smaller Buisu and, the second-day Buisuma or the real Buisu.<sup>100</sup> Youngsters have to greet older people with some gifts to get blessings from them in return. Everyone wants to visit others and conveys Buisu greetings. No quarrel and fighting ever takes place on Buisu occasions.<sup>101</sup> The whole village celebrates Buisu happily with sufficient quantity of food and drinks, watching and participating the cultural dances, listening to the playing of drums, select items of eats and new dress etc.

On the contrary, the interaction of the Riang Christian with the Mizo Christians and their mission has remarkable effects causing religious conversion of the Riang which we will be dealing with in the next chapter. The Riang in Mizoram have now been affected by the proselytizing activities of the Mizo Christians, particularly the

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<sup>97</sup> R.K.Acharyya,p.67

<sup>98</sup> Lianhmingthanga, J.V Hluna, Riang in Mizoram:Settlement and its Impact, in Sangkima, 'Cross-Border Migration Mizoram', Shipra Publications, Delhi, 2004, p.41

<sup>99</sup> *TRI,Aizawl*,p.70

<sup>100</sup> Zonunmawia, Bru Hnam.p.3 in T. Vanlaltlani, *A Study of Religious Identity among the Bru of Mizoram*, Ashish Amos of Indian Society for promoting Christian Knowledge, Delhi, 2007, p.138

<sup>101</sup> T.Vanlaltlani, p.138

Synod Presbyterian Church and the Zoram Baptist Church.<sup>102</sup> The Bru, as a result, professed themselves Christians, abandoning their many traditional religious demands and sacrifices. Their interaction with the Mizo Christian mission and its workers have been slowly neglecting and disregarding their traditional values and practices. The main reason behind these is because the westernized Mizo Christians judge and consider the Bru traditional values and practices as inadequate and unacceptable to Christian life.

## **2.7: Food and Drink:**

Generally, the Reang take three meals a day- first in the morning, second at noon and the third in the evening. Since they usually are farmers and cultivators, the mid-day meal is carried and taken in the field, while during the period of plough cultivation; the first meal is brought to the field and taken there.

The leading food of Bru is rice, just like the other north-eastern people. In the earlier days, green bamboo pipes were used as a cooking pots, especially for cooking their special curry called by the Mizo as '*vaipaden*' mixed with their favorite rotten fishes '*bermai*'. The Bru mostly are fond of fragmented foods and are likely to have them in their every meal. Unlike the Mizo, the Bru rarely use clay pot for cooking purposes. The Bru eat different kinds of meat, but unlike the Mizo, they never eat the flesh of cat and dog.<sup>103</sup> Besides, they have eaten various types of reptiles like lizards, snakes and among which python meat is highly esteemed.<sup>104</sup> The Bru have been given to drinking from generations. Their favorite drink is fermented beer brewed from rice. All people, men and women, boys and girls drink profusely. Liquor is brewed by womenfolk. It is believed that if a man brews, the liquor would lose its proper taste. By fermentation and distillation, liquor is prepared. Alcohol plays an important role even in their social life, where the weddings and funeral feasts are their occasions of drinking liquor in large quantities. Even deities are offered liquor.<sup>105</sup> On the contrary, every immoderate always have a negative impact likewise a sizeable part of their

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<sup>102</sup>TRI,Aizawl, p.30

<sup>103</sup> TRI, Aizawl, p.92.

<sup>104</sup> TRI, Aizawl, p.92.

<sup>105</sup> Jagadish Gan Chaudhury, p.38

paddy crop goes in making liquor causing scarcity of rice. Some get quarrel, some speak nonsense, loses control over their nerves and tongue, beat their wives and roll about half-naked on the floor under the influence of drink and many indulge in gambling and lose.<sup>106</sup>

Perhaps, after the entry of Mizoram, the TRI mentioned '*aurah*' as the main drink of the Bru, which is a local made liquor distilled by their indigenous method.<sup>107</sup> Almost every family extract liquor from rice and a particular kind of rice called '*maimi*' is preferred as more alcohol can be obtained from it. Hence, drinking plays a vital part in their socio-cultural life as no ceremonial occasions are spent without drinking. But in spite of their excessive indulgence in alcoholic drinks, regular drinkers or real addicts are rarely found amongst the Bru. This shows that in the Bru society, there is an existence of well-preserved discipline and code of moral conduct which every one of them is expected to abide.<sup>108</sup>

## **2.8 Dress and Ornaments:**

The traditional dresses of the Bru are straightforward and do not differ much from that of the other tribes of Tripura<sup>109</sup>. Unlike the other tribes in their neighboring areas, they are not accustomed to wearing shirt, coat and trousers till recently. The men's dresses consist of mainly a long and broad loin cloth which covers the upper part of the body, that is from neck to waist and *pawndri* which is a small piece of cloth worn mainly for wrapping the private part.<sup>110</sup>

The women wear a long piece of fabric for the lower part of the body known as Passra or Rignai which is woven by them with a black surface and a broad red and yellow borders on the two edges, and a short piece of cloth as breast garment (Ria) which is a long piece of fabric woven by them with beautiful embroideries. The Ria/Risa cloth appears to be superior to and more artistic than that of *rinai*. The Bru

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<sup>106</sup> Jagadish Gan Chaudhury, p.38.

<sup>107</sup> TRI Aizawl, p.93.

<sup>108</sup> TRI, Aizawl, p.94

<sup>109</sup> R.K Acharyya, p.18

<sup>110</sup> TRI Aizawl, p.43.

women were very fond of weaving who until recently used to weave at home different types of clothes for all the members of the family.

It is believed that in comparisons with the male folk, the Bru women are more sticking to their tradition in dresses, and most of them are still found to wear their typical traditional dresses. However, with the ongoing generation and with the experience of interrelating with the new society and people, the Bru women these days are now seen with blouses of mill product or even the latest fabric. According to R.K Acharyya observations, the Bru women are generally fond of personal fashion, where they give their extra in the hairdressing.<sup>111</sup> In the distant past, ornaments were made of locally available materials like wood, bamboo, tooth, horn or bone of wild animals and seeds of banana. Perhaps, after their cultural contact with the Bengalis, modern ornaments made of brass, silver, bell metal and gold have almost replaced the traditional ones.<sup>112</sup>

Virtually all their limbs and parts of the bodies are adorned with various kinds of ornaments. The most conspicuous of these are silver necklaces which they wear several times. There are different types of necklaces- *Chandra*, *Rangbanhsana*, *Masa Duli*, *Sarbu Thuh*, *Dana*, *Chaima* and *Tambui*.<sup>113</sup> However, the Bru ornaments differ in names according to the author. The ears of the Bru women also have several ornamental decorations, which is not a simple one. It consists of mainly three pieces of silver – Nabauh, Waphawm and Warih. In general, the Bru women pierce their ear with a big hole, unlike their neighboring people. They are very fond of big hoop and fancy earring rather than a normal one.

Their typical Bru bracelet is a long flat piece of silver which are bent and twisted like a spring. They called it ‘Yohsaw’ in their dialect and when put on it covers from the wrist to half of the bicep. Their women rarely wear other kinds of bracelet which is also made of silver. The Bru, both men and women are very fond of rings which are mostly ordinary and could be purchased from the market. Superior quality

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<sup>111</sup> R.K.Acharyya, p.18

<sup>112</sup> Jagadish Gan Chaudhury, p.60

<sup>113</sup> TRI, Aizawl, p.47

or costly metallic rings like gold etc. are rarely worn by them<sup>114</sup>. According to Acharyya, however nowadays they are not able to purchase these ornaments due to their poverty sometimes they are bound to sell these silver made ornaments at a meager price to the goldsmith during their crisis period, for which it is now ordinary scene that most of Bru women and young girl come to the market without wearing the ornaments though ornaments in the market attracts them very much.<sup>115</sup> And perhaps, due to the influence and interaction of outside cultures and lifestyles, Bru people have gradually given up their traditional dresses and could not have the special occasion on their own, for showing off their cultural and traditional dresses.

## **2.9 Customary Laws:**

The Bru internal affairs and disputes are settled according to their customary laws by their *Choudhuries* or *Kharbaries* with the Council of elders in their administrative unit, i.e. in each village. Amongst the Bru the most common cases are adultery and disputes between husband and wife. In case of adultery committed by a husband with a girl, at the time of trial, he is asked to decide whether he will marry the girl or continue to have his wife. The amount of fine he has to pay may vary according to his decision. If he wants to desert his wife he has to pay more fine, usually, for women Rs. 30 /- fine for punishment of this and Rs. 30 /- for man respectively. A widow or widower is also treated as committing adultery if he or she remarries before completion of funeral processes of her deceased's spouse.<sup>116</sup> Hence, they have to bear with the same punishment as of committing adultery.

Perhaps, due to less chances of free mixing for boys and girls, illegal pregnancy which the Bru called '*Samtoh*' is rare amongst them. In cases when the boy does not want to marry the girl who bears his child, he is inflicted a monetary fine of Rs. 60/- and a pig. A pig is always imposed as a fine because almost all families of the Bru rear or domesticate pig, and hence punishment of illegal pregnancy on a boy is hefty and is more than a double considering the amount of fine amongst the Mizo society. The fine for unlawful pregnancy is, therefore, more in the Bru than that of among the Mizo

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<sup>114</sup> TRI, Aizawl, p.48

<sup>115</sup> R.K.Acharyya, p.19

<sup>116</sup> TRI, Aizawl, p.p.72 & 73.

which is Rs 40/- in amount and the imposing of a pig as a fine is absent in the Mizo society. As compared with the present days, the sum of Rs 60/- appears to be a small amount but is a more considerable amount in the earlier days which an individual could hardly clear up. On addition, in today's materialistic world, everything has lost its average value and decreases in quality.

However, although the Bru belongs to a patriarchal society, many Bru wives behave out of the control of the families. And only severe cases like when the marriage bond of a couple is broken the matter is reported to Choudhury for trial.<sup>117</sup> On other situations when a wife deserts her husband at her wills, she divorces him. She has no right to claim and take her belongings. Moreover, she is accused and had to pay a fine of Rs. 60/-. This same cases is also known as 'Sumchhuah' by the Mizo according to which a wife has her freedom to leave her husband but the whole bride price that her husband has paid to her parents and relatives must be returned to him. On the contrary, the Bru wives have no liberty to leave her husband at will and those leaving their husbands are blamed and accused by the society.<sup>118</sup>

### **3.Linguistic:**

The Riang like other tribes in Tripura have their language. Their Language is probably known as 'Kau Bru'. The language spoken by the Riang belongs to the Sino-Tibetan Linguistic family and is akin to Bodo-Cacharis group. Nowadays, they have absorbed many Bengalee words in their dialects as a result of contact with the Bengalee neighbor's.<sup>119</sup>

Besides, Dr Jagadish mentioned *Kak bru* or *Kak barak* as the language spoken by the Reang. The appellation *Kak barak/ kok borok* is now used to include the dialects of the Tipra, Reang, Jamatia, Noatia Uchai, etc. Because all of them have a joint base.<sup>120</sup> *Kok borok* language has been scheduled as a tribal language by the President order

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<sup>117</sup> TRI, Aizawl, p.75.

<sup>118</sup> TRI, Aizawl, p.75

<sup>119</sup> R.K.Acharyya, p.20

<sup>120</sup> Jagadish Gan Chaudhury, p.11

published in the Gazetteer of India, Part II Section I dated 13<sup>th</sup> August 1960. Now it is one of the two official languages of Tripura.<sup>121</sup>

The dialect of the Riang is said to be very akin and close to the language of Kacharis and Bodo of Assam. Grierson put the Riang language among the fourth group of Mon-Khmer family in which the language of the Khasis is one of them. However, some opined that the Riang belong to Kher group of Mongoloid race as specific group of people who are very much like them are still living in Myanmar.<sup>122</sup>

The populaces who speak Sino-Tibetan language with its dialects spread to different land as they moved. It is found that China, Tibet, Myanmar, Assam, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Chittagong Hill Tracts and Northern Bengal have large concentrations of people who speak these linguistic groups.<sup>123</sup> Hence, as for all these observations of linguistic and ethnic affinity, we can say that the Bru are akin to the Tibeto-Burman tribes of Mongolian stock in the North East region whose historical origin was supposedly somewhere in the East, possibly China.

The extent of dialectical difference among the dialects of Kok *borok* is not as comprehensive as is found in the case of Bengali.<sup>124</sup> The phonic structure of the dialects of Kok Borok is almost identical; the grammatical structures are similar to each other. And the differences in their vocabularies are negligible. In his linguistic survey on North East India G.A Grierson put the dialect of Bru to belong to one group of the Mon-Khmer family. According to him, the Mon-Khmer family is classified into five groups. The Bru belongs to the four groups which consists Palaung spoken in Mandalay, and the language was Khamuk or Khmer, Le-met and Riang<sup>125</sup>. The term 'Bru' and 'Riang' are also found in Central and South Vietnam. For their linguistic

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<sup>121</sup> Pradip Nath Bhattacharjee, *Jamatias of Tripura*, Directorate of Research Department, Government of Tripura, 1983, p.6

<sup>122</sup> G.A.Grierson, *Language of North Eastern India – A Survey Vol-I*, Goual Offset Prints, Delhi, 1987, p.1

<sup>123</sup> Jagadish Gan Chaudhury, p.11

<sup>124</sup> Pradip Nath Bhattacharjee, *Jamatias of Tripura*, Directorate of Research Department, Government of Tripura, 1983, p.6

<sup>125</sup> Sipra Sen, *Tribes of Mizoram*, in Benny Lalmawia, *The Impact of Christian Missions on the Bru Society in Mamit District of Mizoram from 1949 to 2009*, Master of Theology Thesis, Senate Serampore College, 2012, p8.

affiliation, Thomas (1962) identified both Bru and Riang as belonging to Mon-Khmer family<sup>126</sup>. Perhaps no further information is obtained to prove that the Bru tribe in North East India, Bangladesh and Vietnam belong to the same racial stock. As far as the dialect of Bru is concerned, it is close and related to the dialect of various tribal groups of Tripura such as Debarma, Noatia, Jamatia and others. It is generally accepted that these *Kau Bru* of the *Kok borak* belongs to the Bodo linguistic group.

#### **4. Socio-cultural negotiations and transformation of the Bru in Post-Colonial Mizoram:**

With the ongoing generation, the Bru of Mizoram can no longer live a life within the ambit of their tradition. Their Socio-Cultural life has undergone drastic changes. Majority of them live in the Mizo villages where they have to cope with the standard and living style of the Mizo society and follow specific commitment and obligations to a great extent. Most of the Bru settling in Mizoram especially in the interior places are no longer that much remote.<sup>127</sup>

By Zolberg and Woon theory, both boundary crossing and boundary shifting involve an in-between phase, occasionally fraught with remarkable tension because it requires an 'unnatural act' - the transformation of strangers into members, of the not us into part of us'. Thus the speeding up of boundary crossing and shifting can provoke adverse reactions on the part of the hosts, leading to a crystallization of boundaries, the imposition of conditions that render crossing more difficult and blurring impossible, and perhaps even a redefinition of the host identity amounting to the shift boundary in a more particular direction. Alongside, some of the newcomers may react to increased boundary-crossing opportunities by resisting any identity change.<sup>128</sup>

As the Bru belong to a smaller community, there cannot be a strong influence of their socio-cultural way of life on the Mizo. Instead, there has been found the trend

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<sup>126</sup> Frank M. Lebar, *Ethnic Groups of South East Asia*, in Benny Lalmawia, *The Impact of Christian Missions on the Bru Society in Mamit District of Mizoram from 1949 to 2009*, Master of Theology Thesis, Senate Serampore College, 2012, p.8

<sup>127</sup> Lianhmingthanga, J.V. Hluna, Riang in Mizoram: Settlement and its Impact, in Sangkima, *Cross-Border Migration Mizoram*, Shipra Publications, Delhi, 2004, p.41

<sup>128</sup> Zolberg and Woon, p.9



of transformation of their socio-cultural and traditional way of life, because it is quite natural and as a rule, a more significant cultural group is always suppressive and is believed to have stronger influence over the smaller cultural group. Hence it seems like there is not much effects on the Mizo society so far as their socio-cultural traditional set up is concerned. Perhaps, the members of the two tribes living in close contact with one another have created various changes and effects on both sides. Presently due to the expansion of education and with the influence of modernity the ancient customs and culture of the Bru inhabiting Mizoram have undergone a lot of changes.

#### **4.1. Family:**

In the old marriage system of the Bru mentioned by Anugatamnai, the Bru women occupy a very high position in the family as well as in the society. They play an essential role in the management of the family affairs in the Bu society. Women not only manage the hearth but also look after piggery, poultry and all sorts of agricultural works. Despite all this importance, married women generally get only a small share of paternal property.<sup>129</sup>

Possibly, with the interaction of the Mizo society in their day to day living, the Bru now followed the pattern of the inheritance of the property practiced by the Mizo. In the olden days, if the husband dies, all the properties of the family are inherited by his brother or to the closest kin known as *Sandai*. However, it seems like after the entry of Christianity, his wife inherits the properties of the deceased man.

#### **4.2. Lineages:**

Between family and clan, there is another division known as lineages which is also called *Sandai* by the Bru. With the practiced of Christianity in the society of the Bru inhabiting Mizoram, *Sandai* (extension of the family unit which is patriarchal and patrilineal) is abolished.

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<sup>129</sup> Anugatamani Akhanda, *Marriage System of Tribal Societies of Tripura, (A Study Based on Major Tribes)*, Tribal Research Institute, Govt. of Tripura, Agartala, 1995.

### **4.3. Village and the people:**

In their ancient days, they live at a distance and do not live in close contact with their neighboring villages, isolating themselves as much as possible. The Bru after their entry to Mizoram, many of them live and settle in the Mizo villages, where it seems, in order to negotiate into the major society, they have to deal with the living style and manner of the Mizo community. Before, the Bru society was a communitarian, which confined to their respective villages. However, after the coming of Gospel, it brought them together as one community and they have to experience a collective solidarity removing the solitude of different villages, which we are dealing in the next chapter. In the earlier days, the Bru were afraid of each other, the southern Bru were fearful of the northern Bru, as they still practiced the used of black magic, witchcraft etc. Now, that after embracing Christianity and terminating their old belief system they are now free to move wherever they want and hence broken the dividing wall of fear. It also helps them to unite in stronger community.

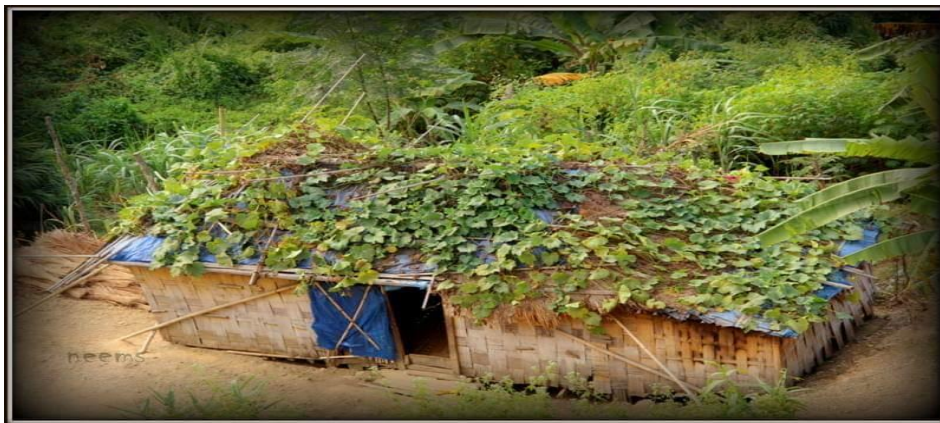


Figure (iii) : Typical Bru house of Mizoram.

### **4.4. Marriage System:**

As mentioned, the Bru were endogamous because they prevent themselves as far as possible from dilution, since, their tribe are still too weak in quantity. Perhaps, the members of the two tribes i.e. the Mizo and the Bru living in close contact with one another have created various changes and effects on both sides. Now there are many cases of inter-tribal marriages between the two tribes. Here one of the impacts

of the Bru settlement in Mizoram is that it has broadened the marriage market for Mizo boys and girls. In many cases of inter-tribal marriages, the offspring of the couple also follow suit. Thus, the effect of inter-tribal marriage causes diminishing process in terms of numerical strength of population on the Bru\Reang side while the process of population increase is there on the Mizo side.<sup>130</sup>

And as a result, with the changes of time, the Bru of Mizoram population also increases and changes take place in various social life. Marriage now is also not limited within the members of near relative or clan members. Many Riang boys and girls got married with members belonging to other tribes like Chakma, Mizo etc. Parallel cousin or cross-cousin marriages which were prevailing in the past have also gradually declining.

As they belong to a smaller community, there cannot be a strong influence of their socio-cultural way of life on the Mizo. Instead, there has been found the trend of transformation of their socio-cultural and traditional way of life, because it is quite natural and as a rule, a more significant cultural group is always suppressive and is believed to have stronger influence over the smaller cultural group. Hence it seems like there is not much effects on the Mizo society so far as their socio-cultural traditional set up is concerned. Perhaps, the members of the two tribes living in close contact with one another have created various changes and effects on both sides. Now there are many cases of inter-tribal marriages between the two tribes. Here one of the impacts of the Bru settlement in Mizoram is that it has broadened the marriage market for Mizo boys and girls. In many cases of inter-tribal marriages, the offspring of the couple also follow suit. Thus, the effect of inter-tribal marriage causes diminishing process in terms of numerical strength of population on the Bru\Reang side while the process of population increase is there on the Mizo side.<sup>131</sup>

The Bru have shared almost all similarity with the Tripuris in their marriage system. In general, the Bru of Mizoram, unlike the old norms, generally have two types of marriages:

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<sup>130</sup>Lianhmingthanga, J.V Hluna, pp.41- 42

<sup>131</sup>Lianhmingthanga, J.V. Hluna, pp.41-42

1) *Moiseng* – It is a system of marriage by giving a bride price.

2) *Chamarui* – It is a system of probationary marriage in which the groom stays among the bride's family for a fixed period<sup>132</sup>.

In the Mizo society, usually trustworthy persons known as 'Palai' are chosen for initiating and conveying the proposal for marriage and to talk about clandestine love affairs to both the parties. Likewise, when a boy attains a marriageable age, his parents look for a suitable girl and when one is located, a person so engaged for the purpose called 'Andra' goes to the girl's parents and initiates the proposal for marriage. The word 'Andra' means go-between and to do this task, they select a very trustworthy person<sup>133</sup>.

It is found that there are a lot of inter-marriage among the Mizo and the Bru, especially in the western parts of Mizoram. It might not be wrong to say that, in general, the Mizo girls marrying the Reang boys are much greater in number than those of the Reang women promised in marriage with the Mizo boys. And perhaps, being the dominant cultural group, it is observed that the Mizo women (i.e. the wife) play the prominent role in shaping their offspring identity.

For example, in the year 2001 a couple from Mamit, the western parts of Mizoram, consisting of a Bru husband and a Mizo wife followed one Mizo traditional system known as '*Saphun*<sup>134</sup>', where the Bru husband of Meska clan adopted his wife's family surname i.e. Hauhnar and completed the necessary protocol for such practices. So the father and his children got their surname from the mother, whom we haven't usually come across in Mizoram since the cultures involved here are patrilineal: i.e. the family is defined by the male bloodline. Now the original identities of the father and the children i.e. the Bru tribe became vague and as a result, the father's responsibilities of carrying on his identity of being a Bru and passing it on to his

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<sup>132</sup> *Riang Chanchin*, TRI, Aizawl, 1996, p.44

<sup>133</sup> TRI, Aizawl, p.50

<sup>134</sup> *Saphun* is a Mizo traditional system where a person, as an example, when a slave during a battle of Mizo villages, is being treated as one's own son/daughter and proclaims the religion and clan of his master as his, it is called *Saphun*. Perhaps a traditional system which has not been followed for the past 50 years has already perished itself and is not allowed to be simply revived after it.

children perishes with him. Today, they use the name of the Mizo tribe and clan as their surname where their original identity could not be recognized in terms of any record. Other than this, there also happened to be several cases where the Bru inhabiting in Tripura and other places of Mizoram did *Saphun* in the Mizo tribe, generally favouring the main clan, e.g. Sailo, Pachuau etc.<sup>135</sup> However, according to the Mizo traditional system, *Saphun* could only be practiced among Mizo or *Zo hnam*, and the other tribe are not bound within.<sup>136</sup>

On addition, in case of intermarriages between the Mizo tribe and the Bru tribe, they mostly followed the Mizo marriage system which took place in the Christian Churches and completed the necessary procedure by the Mizo code of behaviour. Such incident is witness in every corner of the district inhabited by the Bru especially in the Mamit District because it is predominantly populated by the tribal community like Mizos, Hmars, Paihtes, Chakmas, and Bru. According to the electoral roll, intensive survey revision 2005, the total number of households of the Bru in Mizoram is 12,253 and out of these, the Mamit District has 3,361 households of the Bru with a population of 20,166. It was found that the Bru people of Mizoram with a total population of above 80,000 have been permanently residing in the state of Mizoram.<sup>137</sup> Out of the total population of the Bru, 80 per cent of them lived in the western belt of the state consisting 120 villages in the Aizawl District, and the rest 20 per cent lived in Lunglei and Chhimituipui District ( presently Lawngtlai & Saiha ) consisting of 42 villages. In the past, the Mamit District was one of the sub-divisions of the Aizawl District.

#### **4.5. Festivals:**

According to writings and in general, it seems like the Bru have only one festivals of their origin which they called *Buisu*. Perhaps, with the entry of Christianity

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<sup>135</sup> Personal Interview with Vanramropuia on 15.10.2019.

<sup>136</sup> Saphun Chungchang Bawk– Mizo Archive, <https://www.google.com/amp/s/mizoarchive.wordpress.com/2016/11/03/saphun-chungchang-bawk/amp/>

<sup>137</sup> A memorandum of the Bru student's Association, Mizoram Camp, New Delhi submitted to the Election Commission of India , New Delhi, dated 09-02-1997, p.1

among the Bru of different villages in Mizoram, have now been affected by the proselytizing activities of the Mizo Christians particularly the Synod Presbyterian Church and the Zoram Baptist Church.<sup>138</sup> The Bru, as a result, professed themselves Christians, abandoning their many traditional religious demands and sacrifices. Their interaction with the Mizo Christian mission and its workers have been slowly neglecting and disregarding their traditional values and practices. For, instance, the Bru Christians were restricted to participate in the celebration of Buisu festival by the Mizo Christian workers as well as their representative local churches because it is considered as anti-Christian activity.<sup>139</sup> In order to negotiate and bound within the Mizo society; it seems like, they have to cease some of their ancient traditions.

#### **4.6. Food and Drinks:**

As mentioned, the Bru have been given to drinking from generations. Hence it is clear that drinking plays an important role in the Bru society, where their weddings and funeral feasts are their occasions of drinking liquor in large quantities. Even deities are offered liquor.<sup>140</sup>

Even after the entry of Mizoram, the TRI mentioned '*aurah*' as the main drink of the Bru, which is a local made liquor distilled by their indigenous method.<sup>141</sup> Almost every family distil liquor from rice and a particular kind of rice called '*Maimi*' is preferred as more liquor can be obtained from it. Hence, drinking plays an essential part in their socio-cultural life as no ceremonial occasions are spent without drinking. On the other side, drinking of *aurah* though played such important role in their social life in the past has now been almost completely replaced by the consumption of tea among the Christian Bru due to the prohibition made by the Christian missionaries as well as by the State Government.<sup>142</sup> Hence to cope and get along with the Mizo Christian, the Bru Christians converted have to gradually gave up their traditional ways of drinking.

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<sup>138</sup>TRI, Aizawl, p.30

<sup>139</sup> T. Vanlaltlani, p.185.

<sup>140</sup> Jagadish Gan Chaudhury, p.38

<sup>141</sup> TRI Aizawl, p.93.

<sup>142</sup> F. Lalchhuanmawia, p.18

#### **4.7. Dress and Ornaments:**

The Bru women are most fond of weaving where they used to weave at home different types of clothes for all the members of the family. Unlike the other tribes in their neighbouring areas, they are also not accustomed to wearing shirt, coat and trousers till recently. However, nowadays, with their interaction with the Mizo people, mill-made clothes with beautiful designs and embroideries are entering into the homes of the Bru.<sup>143</sup>

With the ongoing generation and with the experience of interrelating with the new society and people, the Bru women these days are now seen with blouses of mill product or even the latest fabric. Some of them are also seen wearing *Mizo puans* which make them quite similar with the Mizo ladies.<sup>144</sup> In general, the Bru Christian women inhabitant of Mizoram is most likely seen with *Mizo puan* and Mizo blouse when attending the churches. Many school girls have skirt and blouses as their daily wear and are no longer desire to wear their simple traditional dresses. Even the Bru men are seen wearing dhoti and kurta, and sometimes shirt, coat and trousers which were never worn by their ancestors in their ancient dress. It might not be wrong to say that all of these reasons are due to the influence of the Mizo people, especially the Mizo women with whom the Bru perceive them in their daily life.

#### **4.8. Customary Laws:**

The Bru internal affairs and disputes are settled according to their customary laws by their *Choudhuries* or *Kharbaries* with the Council of elders in their administrative unit, i.e. in each village. *Choudhuries* or *Khabaries* plays one of the most important role in maintaining their social lives in their indigenous culture. Perhaps with the entry of Christianity, internal affairs and dispute settled by their *Choudhuries* or *Kharbaries* are gradually abolished as the Village Council replaces the *Choudhuries*. Village Council are the trending practices of the Mizo society,

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<sup>143</sup> Jagadish Gan Chaudhury, p.60.

<sup>144</sup> TRI, Aizawl, p.45

wherein some villages with a mix population of both the Bru and the Mizo, e.g. Suarhliap (a villages in the district of Mamit) the Village Council are likely to be Mizo.

#### **4.9. Linguistics:**

Majority of the Bru are acquainted with Mizo languages, especially among the younger generations because the medium of instructions in School is Mizo since they followed the Mizoram Board of School Education. It seems like, to be received with approbation or to prevent from differentiation, the Bru students mostly are recorded by their Mizo name in the schools and college registration. Some of the younger generation of the Bru are even abstinence from using their language i.e. Kau Bru. On addition, since the Bru did not have alphabets on their own, the Bru Christians used Mizo Bible, hymns, songbook etc., because they have to cope with the Mizo Christians custom and their way of worshipping.

Though incorporation is an interactive process, involving both hosts and newcomers, the actors are not equal: since the negotiations take place in the host country, power relations are generally asymmetric in favor of the host majority, which naturally has the upper hand. In the cultural realm, host values and traditions are firmly implanted and benefit from institutional support, while the immigrant minorities, who may differ initially concerning a variety of cultural elements deemed significant by the hosts- notably, religion and language – are at best in a liminal situation concerning formal and informal membership in the host society, as well as institutional recognition.<sup>145</sup>

Likewise, the socio-cultural interaction between the dominant community and the tribal bring about considerable changes in the latter. The factors responsible for the Bru transformations are broadly of two types- a) Traditional and b) Modern.<sup>146</sup> The traditional of the major neighboring communities, have led to the Hindunisation, Sanskritisation and the tribe-caste continuum and so on. The modern processes include factors like Christianity, Urbanization, Industrialization, advanced education etc.

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<sup>145</sup> Zolberg and Woon, p.9

<sup>146</sup> R.K.Acharyya, p. 96



Urbanization, the penetration of modern economy, education and administrative machinery, democratic and concept of the welfare state have broken the stagnation and isolation in all parts of the country. These processes may be more specifically elaborated as

- i. The Development of communication within the tribal areas and with the outside world.
- ii. Introduction of monetized economy.
- iii. Spread of standard and modern Institution, including medical and administrative aids and
- iv. Introduction of advanced technology, to exploit of mineral, forest, power and other industrial resources.<sup>147</sup>

Though all these forces have brought about notable changes in the tribal areas, the rate of changes are however evidently differs in different points of the same time in the same culture continuum.

## **5.Conclusion :**

We now began to know how the Bru gradually negotiate their identity with the significant communities with whom they accompanied with, in their daily living. Whether it be major or minor, it is helpful here to make use of Zolberg and Woon's threefold structure – roughly similar with Bo Zhangs formula on ethnic identity, this might not perhaps, match perfectly with the Bru community but to a more substantial part share, a commoners since both the context are applied in the Asian minorities. Being the smaller and minority communities, the Bru could not have an impact in terms of socio-cultural, religions etc. towards the host communities. Hence, in many cases, it is quite natural for the Bru transformation of their social and traditional ways of life. The Bru society is experiencing a difference in the means and mode of production and livelihood. On the contrary, some of the Bru inhabiting in Mizoram is still trying to retain their traditional socio-cultural lives whenever possible. The pattern of the Bru house building and their household materials were more or less the same as

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<sup>147</sup> R.K.Acharyya, p.98

their primitive culture. Being not significantly affected by the mundane world, the Bru lives a modest and straightforward lifestyle. Though there is an intense pressure and effect of the host communities in their daily living, some of the Bru in spite of being swallowed up by the dominant communities can give a very active interactions and reactions.

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### **Chapter III**

#### **Dynamics of Religion of Bru Community in Post-Colonial Mizoram**

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## Introduction

The word 'religion' seems to have originated from the Latin word *religio* or *relligio*, which is supposed to have been originated from the Latin word *religio* or *relligio*, which is supposed to have been derived from '*relegere*' which means 'to gather together', 'to collect', or '*religere*' which means 'to fasten', 'to bind'.<sup>148</sup>

There are several scholars various definitions of 'religion'. For Emile Durkheim, religion is 'a unified system of beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them.'<sup>149</sup> Rudolf Otto has defined religion as 'the essence of religious awareness of awe, a unique blend of fear and fascination before divine'.<sup>150</sup> For E.B. Tylor, religion is 'the belief in spiritual beings'.<sup>151</sup> For Friedrich Schleiermacher, religion is 'feeling of absolute dependence'.<sup>152</sup> William James called it 'the enthusiastic temper of espousal'.<sup>153</sup> Max Muller stated, 'Religion consists in the perception of the infinite under such manifestations as can influence the moral character of man.'<sup>154</sup> Christopher Augustus Bixel Tirkey said, 'Religion is an attitude of mind, something that may be described in an ascending scale of spiritually as fear, awe, reverence, admiration and love of what is indescribably beautiful, good, and holy.'<sup>155</sup>

So far, there is no universally agreed definition on religion. Meaning and significance of any religion vary according to time, space and environment. Based on her understanding, experience and religious education, according to T. Vanlaltlani, 'religion is an unseen powerful force controlling over the life of a person or a

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<sup>148</sup> R.R.Marett, Religion, in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. XXIII, in T. Vanlaltlani, '*Tribal Religion: Mizo and Bru*, Mizo Theological Association with grant in aid of ETE-WCC, Aizawl, pp.2&3.

<sup>149</sup> Eric J. Sharpe, Comparative Religion: A History, in T. Vanlaltlani, '*Tribal Religion: Mizo and Bru*, Mizo Theological Association with grant in aid of ETE-WCC, Aizawl, p.3

<sup>150</sup> King, Religion in ER-12, in T. Vanlaltlani, '*Tribal Religion: Mizo and Bru*, Mizo Theological Association with grant in aid of ETE-WCC, Aizawl, p.3

<sup>151</sup> Vide Annemario De Waal Malefit, *Religion and Culture: An Introduction to the Anthropology of Religion*, London : The Macmillan Company, 1968, p.20

<sup>152</sup> King, Religion in ER-12, in T. Vanlaltlani, '*Tribal Religion: Mizo and Bru*, Mizo Theological Association with grant in aid of ETE-WCC, Aizawl, p.283

<sup>153</sup> King Religion in ER-12, p.283

<sup>154</sup> Marett, *Religion in Encyclopaedia of Religion*-23, p.62.

<sup>155</sup> Christopher Augustus Bixel Tirkey, *Religion-Primal Religions*, Delhi: ISPCCK, 1998, p.17

community's faith in such supernatural power-holder who may be called God, Sacred, Holy Other; *Pathian* or any other'.<sup>156</sup>

By the rising of major religions of the world, especially of the Western Christianity entering to different continents have somehow threatened the tribal culture. The culture, society and religions of the colonised countries were more or less influenced by Western Imperialism, Christian faith, philosophical thought and ideology. For instance, among various factors that made the tribal socio-cultural change inevitable in the hill areas of Northeast India, Christianity was the primary agency in the formation of a new cultural synthesis.<sup>157</sup>

### **3.1 Earlier Belief System of Bru:**

The traditional belief system of the Bru contains elements of animism, animatism, dream, divination, fertility cult, magic, polytheism, taboo, totemism and witchcraft.<sup>158</sup> Accordingly to Zolawma 'the religion of Bru contains elements of animism, dream interpretation, divination, fertility cult, magic, polytheism, taboo, totemism and witchcraft.'<sup>159</sup> They also assimilated many hindu religious practices from neighbouring Bengali hindu communities. One of the TRI, Aizawl research findings mentioned that the Bru as principal animists and their ceremonial and rituals are more or less the same with that of the Hindu practices.<sup>160</sup>

The Bru community has a strong belief in the existence of many deities and spirits who are believed to be actively involved in human affairs. The polytheistic element of Bru religion is affirmed and expressed by one of the Bru writers as follows:

Perhaps the Tribal Research & Cultural Institute of Tripura mentioned that the Bru came directly under the influence of Hinduism in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century and embraced Vaisnavism in good numbers. According to Acharyya, the influence of Lord

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<sup>156</sup> T. Vanlaltlani, '*Tribal Religion: Mizo and Bru*', Mizo Theological Association with grant in aid of ETE-WCC, Aizawl, p.4

<sup>157</sup> Frederick S. Downs, '*Christianity and Cultural Change in North East India*' in *Christian Faith and Multi-form Culture in India*, ed. Somen Das, Bangalore: UNC 1987, p.90

<sup>158</sup> Jagadish Gan Choudhury, '*The Reangs of Tripura*', TRCI, Agartala, 2011, p.68

<sup>159</sup>R. Zolawma, *The Mission of Baptist Church of Mizoram to the Bru Tribe in Mizoram*, An unpublished thesis Degree of Bachelor of Divinity, Serampore College (University), W.B.,1996, p.19

<sup>160</sup> TRI, Aizawl, p.30

Krishna on the Reang 'is tremendous'. The Vaisnavas among the Reang gave up eating meat and fish. Moreover, the Reang believe that Lord Shiva is their god, who used to be a tribal.<sup>161</sup>

The Bru firmly believe in the existence of human soul during the lifetime and after the death of a person. During one's lifetime, they conceive his soul remains within the body and after death, his soul leaves the body and ascends to heaven along with the smoke of a burning pyre.<sup>162</sup> The Bru believe that, if a man during his lifetime does good deeds, the soul after the death of man will attain a higher or better status and will also live with ease and comfort in the next world. On the contrary, the soul of an evil doer will be thrown into hell among the heap of excrement and then reincarnate into, like fowl or pig or dog.

### ***3.1.1 Animism & Animatism:***

Here animatisms means attribution of life, spirit or personality to physical objects or phenomena, animism which is a later phase of animatisms is somewhat sophisticated concept according to which natural objects are believed to have no life in themselves but thought to be abodes of spirits, gods and deceased persons.<sup>163</sup>

### ***3.1.2 Dream & Divination:***

The Bru have faith in dreams and divinations. They thought that their dreams play such a prominent role in shaping their future. The good dreams are kept secret while the bad dreams are disclosed so that they become ineffective. Divination is a mystical means of knowing beforehand the future of an attempt or of a marriage proposal or the cause of a danger, disease and the like.<sup>164</sup> They also normally believed that the main causes of disease is by the wrath of some malignant deities and spirits which can be cured only through propitiation.

### ***3.1.3 Totem & Taboo:***

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<sup>161</sup> 'A Land of Rich Ethnic Tapestry Tripura, A Pictorial Monograph on Tribes of Tripura', TRCI, Agartala, 2010, pp 30 & 31

<sup>162</sup> TRI, Aizawl, p.31

<sup>163</sup> Jagadish Gan Choudhury, p.68

<sup>164</sup> Jagadish Gan Choudhury, p.70

Totem could be anything but mostly animal from which the community draws its parental relationship. The totem animal is not killed and a period of mourning is observed on its death. Prohibition to kill totem and to eat the meat is called taboo,<sup>165</sup> i.e. forbidding.

#### **3.1.4 Witchcraft & Magic:**

The Bru have great belief in witches and ghosts. Witches are capable of sucking human blood and possess an old, worn-out, ugly person. The Bru sorcerers practise both types of magic- imitative and contagious. To harm an enemy, a magician is engaged and enemy's stool, hair, nail-pairings, urine, corner of clothe are collected. They also believed that the magician can cause a small bamboo spoke invisibly enter into an enemy's belly. It remains undigested for years together and ultimately he dies.<sup>166</sup>

#### **3.1.5 Polytheism:**

The Bru community believe in several gods and goddesses, deities and spirits whom they thought are involved in the human affairs. This polytheistic element of Bru religion is affirmed and expressed by one of the Bru writers as follows:

*The Bru believed in a number of gods and goddesses. Most of the deities have their consorts or wives and children. Some of them were regarded to be mild and benevolent while others were recognised to be hot-tempered and malevolent. These deities are worshipped for peace, prosperity and cure of sickness.*<sup>167</sup>

Lalramthanga mention that the Bru worship more than 1,33,00,000 deities whom they term as *Terisot Kupti* devote.<sup>168</sup>

#### **3.1.6 Benevolent Deities:**

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<sup>165</sup> Jagadish Gan Choudhury, p.69

<sup>166</sup> Jagadish Gan Choudhury, pp.70,71

<sup>167</sup> Zolawma, Bachelor of Divinity Thesis, in T. Vanlaltlani, *Tribal Religion: Mizo and Bru*, Mizo Theological Association with grant in aid of ETE-WCC, Aizawl, p.147

<sup>168</sup> C.Lalramthanga, *Bru Sakhua*, unpublished manuscript, in T. Vanlaltlani, *A Study of Religious Identity among the Bru of Mizoram*, Ashish Amos of Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, Delhi, 2007, p.47.

The Bru have several deities with different names classifying them as benevolent and malevolent. They believe that some of these deities have blood relationships including wives, husbands and children. Here, Jagadish mentions *Sibrai* (a male god), *Taocing Chaungma* (wife of *Sibrai*), *Devalakshmi* (a daughter of *Sibrai*), *Devatarini* (daughter of *Sibrai*) among the benevolent deities.<sup>169</sup> Matai Katar where Matai means deity or god and *Katar* means high or supreme<sup>170</sup> to whom the Bru give most significant reverence is one of the most popular terms for that supreme deity. Besides there are, *Lokhi Mainouhma* also known as the goddess of the paddy-rice, *Tuibuma* the goddess of water, *Longdurai* a male deity and his wife and his son *Sawngkhawtawrini* and *Kalajibawn* who are being worshipped and contacted through sacrificial offerings of one pig and two chickens to get blessings. The Bru worship and perform sacrificial rites to Iswar since they consider him as the creator of the world.

### **3.1.7 Malevolent Deities:**

Traditional Bru believed in the existence of malevolent deities whom they thought have the power to harm, to muddle and to disturb human beings. The two collective nouns among the evil deities are *Buraha* and *Mtai*.<sup>171</sup> *Buraha* means a male god who presides over forest and causes illness in animals and hides them.<sup>172</sup> When asked in general the Bru believe that these deities harm human beings, make them sick, abnormal and even make them handicapped. *Buraha* rules over one hundred and twenty demons and is capable to cause pain and sickness of human beings. Hence they make sacrifices and offerings of animals like goat, pig, fowl, sugar banana, betel etc. because on being pleased the powerful spirit *Buraha* cures the patient.<sup>173</sup> Seven Sisters who caused fever and all kinds of sickness to human beings, two brothers causing sickness and misfortunes to human beings, female water deity *Gonga Mahthi Rajama* who has power over the water, *sawni or sawnithagu* a male deity believed to be a punisher of the evildoers and many other deities whom the Bru thought as malevolent deities

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<sup>169</sup> Jagadish Gan Choudhury, p.72

<sup>170</sup> Zolawma, 'The Mission of Baptist Church of Mizoram to the Bru Tribe in Mizoram', unpublished B.D.Thesis, Serampore College, W.B., 1976, p.19

<sup>171</sup> T.Vanlaltlani, p.153

<sup>172</sup> Jagadish Gan Choudhury, p.71

<sup>173</sup> TRI, Aizawl, p.30

causing harm to them. The Bru seems to have adopted some of the Hindu gods and goddess such as *Durga, Ganesh, Kali, Hari, Krishna, Iswara, Mahadev and Rama*.<sup>174</sup>

### **3.2 Important Persons and their Functionaries:**

Several persons played an essential role in serving the Bru community where some are directly connected by their performance of sacrifices, whereas some are not. Their skills and performance are not all same; some are expert in medication for healing; meanwhile, some are expert in destroying or harming others.

Some of the critical and unique persons who serve the Bru community are designated as *Auchai, Dwari, Bawidaw, Gyaing Kmain* and *Kumayuh*. Sacrifices and the sacrificial prescriptions are offered only when they are available.

#### **3.2.1 Auchai:**

*Auchai* is a traditional priest whose primary role and function is the performance of sacrificial rites whenever the Bru community members call and employ for the required sacrificial service *a person can obtain Auchai* in several ways. One can take practical training from the senior *Auchai* and become qualified to do *Auchai* service, or he may become an *Auchai* with the practical knowledge learned by being the child of the *Auchai*.<sup>175</sup> The Bru also believe that one can become an *Auchai* if one is given a supernatural call and commission which they are not allowed to refuse or ignore it. The leading roles of the *Auchai* are as follows:

- 1) The Bru families can ask the *Auchai* to offer sacrifices with several purposes to get blessings or to be cured from their sickness, to offer thanksgiving sacrifice and also receive good health.
- 2) The *Auchai* offers sacrifice for purifying water when the village community prepares a fresh village stream for use of drinking water for the sake of the community health.

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<sup>174</sup> F.Lalchhuanmawia, *History of Christianity among the Bru Community in Mizoram (1949-2007)*, MTH thesis, Serampore College, W.B., p.23

<sup>175</sup> T.Vanlaltlani, p.156



- 3) When a person dies, the *Auchai* has to perform rituals before and after taking the corpse from the house to the cremation place as the Bu practise cremation. He also has rituals to perform during and after the cremation, especially at the time of *Ruhpaih*.<sup>176</sup>
- 4) When there is several type of infectious disease in the village, the *Auchai* has to perform certain rituals for the safety of the village community which is known as *Bon Kha Mi*.<sup>177</sup>
- 5) As mention earlier, the *Auchai*, if consult, has to prepare and train someone who want to become an *Auchai* and wanted to do the service. In such cases, he has to give the individual all the needed practical and theoretical training and knowledge.
- 6) Although not compulsory, the *Auchai* is often invited to attend and witness marriage celebrations.

One of the *Auchai* Boihrai said –

*When my Bru friends get sick, they come to me and I serve for them in this way. First, I call the spirits and ask who causes the sickness, and the responsible spirit says, 'I am the one who is causing sickness... they have to offer such and such animals to me for sacrifice.' Then I convey the message to my clients and they offer the required sacrifice and get cured.*<sup>178</sup>

And as a result, if they wanted to get cure from their sickness, they could do nothing but obeying what their consultants say and have to accomplish their prescriptions.

T.Vanlaltlani mention that several terms are used for referring to the traditional priest *Auchai* such as *Aukai*, *Awkai*, *Okchai*, *Ojhai*, *Ouchai*, *Akchai* etc.<sup>179</sup> Perhaps

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<sup>176</sup> *Ruhpaih* is a ceremony conducted by the *Auchai* in signifying the final separation of the living and the dead. After cremation the remaining bones are taken home, packed and placed carefully to signify that dead is still included in the family until it is thrown into the river or any other selected place by the *Auchai* (*Ruhpaih* Ceremony) .

<sup>177</sup> Benny Lalmawia, Correspondence Letter on 22.06.1998, in T.Vanlaltlani, *Tribal Religion: Mizo And Bru*, Mizo Theological Association, Aizawl, 2009, p. 157

<sup>178</sup> T.Vanlaltlani, p.188

<sup>179</sup> T.Vanlaltlani, p.174

there are some slightly spelling differ used by different author. R.K. Acharyya mention that the *Ojhaj* fights the evil spirit and the sick person is sacrifice domestic animals, birds, fruits to satisfy the particular evil spirit. However, nowadays, the old superstitions and belief are giving way to modern medicine but the *Ojhaj* and his rituals skill carry way by the Reang in the interior.<sup>180</sup>

### **3.2.2 Dwari:**

*Dwari* is the term used for the particular person who are capable in searching and finding out the lost objects, animals and persons, the main reasons of their loss, or the causes of illness to the human beings, the required sacrifice to be offered, such as pig, goat, chicken, cereals, rice, etc. and the place where the sacrifice should be offered.<sup>181</sup> Perhaps the performance of sacrifice is not done by the *Dwari* unless a person is both *Auchai* and *Dwari* . After finding out the required sacrifice, *Dwari* refers the matter to the *Auchai*, then only sacrifice is performed.

### **3.2.3 Bawidaw:**

*Bawidaw* is the term used to refer person who is expert in healing the sick by using his herbal medicines. Since the Bru believe that sickness is caused by the malevolent deities who are offended and displeased, they must be approached and appeased to get healing. The *Baidaw* can call such spirits by chanting the *Gyaing*, the ‘charms’ or ‘phrases’ through which he can get supernatural blessing and power, and enters into communication with them to bring the healing upon the sick.<sup>182</sup>

### **3.2.4 Gyaing Kmain:**

*Gyaing Kmain* is the term referring to the magician or diviner whose work is to heal by chasing out the spirit accused of being the cause of illness. Some Bru mention that *Gyaing Kmain* is another name of *Baidaw* as the role and function of the

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<sup>180</sup> R.K.Acharyya, p.78

<sup>181</sup> T.Vanlaltlani, p.159

<sup>182</sup> T.Vanlaltlani, p.160

*Gyaing Kmain* are, more or less, similar to that of the *Bawidaw*.<sup>183</sup> However, unlike *Baidaw*, *Gyaing Kmain* does not use herbal medicines for curing; instead, the chanting of *Gyaing* is popularly used by the *Gyaing Kmain* to chase out spirits which cause illness and thus help heal the sick.

### **3.2.5 Kumayuh:**

Kumayuh is the term used for the traditional Bru midwife who attends the Bru women in childbirth, i.e. it needs a woman's service unlike the particular person mentioned above. The *Kumayuh* can perform the sacrificial rites of naming the newborn child and also conducts the ceremonial purification of the mother.<sup>184</sup>

Although the Bru religion cannot be described and defined in one word or just a sentence, it may be regarded as self-supporting because their trouble and struggle, and the needs of their daily life can all be solved through their unique persons whom they thought could manage their problems by accepting and charging fees from the people.

A sacrifice plays the most prominent role in the life of the Bru. Hence they have many sacrifices which they offered to the deities and spirits for different purposes in different occasions. They perform sacrificial rites during pregnancy and childbirth, family sacrifices, sacrifice of propitiation and recovery, sacrifice for public welfare,<sup>185</sup> etc. Besides, under each sacrifice are different forms of sacrifice offered according to their situation.

The Bru themselves admit that sacrifices are not the essence of religion and that one need not worship so many gods and goddesses. They stress importance more on *bhakti* which means devotion than on *bali*, which means sacrifice. Sacrifices are made not only to appease a malignant deity for the cure of disease but also as a matter of gratefulness to God for giving them crops.<sup>186</sup>

### **3.3 Religion of Bru in Mizoram :**

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<sup>183</sup> Zonunmawia, *Bru Hnam*, Synod Publication Board, p.2

<sup>184</sup> T. Vanlaltlani, p.164

<sup>185</sup> T. Vanlaltlani, pp 182-189.

<sup>186</sup> Dr Jagadish Gan Choudhury, p.77

By the rising of major religions of the world, especially of the Western Christianity entering to different countries have somehow threatened the tribal culture. The culture, society and beliefs of the colonised nations were more or less influenced by Western Imperialism, Christian faith, philosophical thought and ideology. For instance, among various factors that made the tribal socio-cultural change inevitable in the hill areas of Northeast India, Christianity was the primary agency in the formation of a new cultural synthesis.<sup>187</sup>

According to the TRI, Aizawl recorded that the Bru are principally animists and their ceremonial and ritual practices are more or less the same with one of the Hindu practices. Some missionaries and a reliable source mentioned that the Bru are not Hindu because their religious belief, their sacrifice conducted by their particular person and their mode of worship differs entirely from that of the Hindu.<sup>188</sup>

The Bru in Mizoram have now been affected by the proselytising activities of the Mizo Christians particularly the Synod Presbyterian Church in Aizawl and Mamit Districts and the Zoram Baptist Church in Lunglei District. Perhaps, Jagadish mention that Christianity entered Tripura first during the reign of Amar Manikya (1577-85).<sup>189</sup> According to survey taken by the Tripura Baptist Christian Union in 1981, there are as many as 20,024 Baptist Christians among different tribes and castes out of which 4,813 are Bru.

Within the state of Mizoram, several denominations like Mizoram Presbyterian Church in the year 1949, Zoram Baptist in the year 1939, United Pentecostal Church in the 1930's and Salvation (no clear report) have serious mission among the Bru. After their entry into Mizoram, about 70 per cent of the Bru have converted into Christian which undoubtedly raised the strength of Christian population in the State.<sup>190</sup> Perhaps

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<sup>187</sup> Frederick S. Downs, '*Christianity and Cultural Change in North East India*' in *Christian Faith and Multi-form Culture in India*, (ed.) Somen Das, Bangalore: UNC 1987, p.90

<sup>188</sup> Personal Interview with Vanramropuia on 15.10.2019 and telephonic interview with C. Lalnunluanga, Missionary under Synod Board Mission from 1985 till date

<sup>189</sup> Jagadish Gan Choudhury, p.78

<sup>190</sup> J.V. Lianhmingthanga, *Impact of Rieng Settlement In Mizoram*, in Seminar & Important Papers, Tribal Research Institute, Art & Culture Department, 2008, p.273.

one sad thing which in general could be witness is that evangelists and missionaries coming from different denominations are planting their denominational churches in the mission fields, which in return has a negative impacts in their social life and are denominationally divided.

### **3.4 Works of the Missionaries:**

Missionaries from different denomination namely the Presbyterian Church, the United Pentecostal Church, the Zoram Baptist Church, the Salvation Amy etc. are trying to plant the lights of the Gospel in the Bru society and brought out from their animism believes.

#### **3.4.1 Presbyterian Mission:**

The Presbyterian Assembly (which is now known as the Synod) at Champhai in the year 1948 passed the resolution to work among the Bru to preached the holy God's word.<sup>191</sup> The Synod Mission Board sends three volunteer missionaries – Thangzawna, Lalhleia and Ronghinglova, but Ronghinglova could not make it to the interview. Therefore appointment letter was given only to the other two of them with a salary of Rs. 15/- (fixed) per month. Mr.Thangzawna started the work in West Sihphir village near the present-day Pukzing village which was located at the South-West of Mizoram. Mr Lalhleia began to work in Lokicherra which is now known as Zawlnuam and later, Mr.bn Ronghinglova started to work in Kawrtethawveng. All these three villages where they worked were situated at the western side of Mizoram. Perhaps, after three years of working, Lalhleia work as a Pastor in the Independent Church of India which was later changed into Bible Believing Church and Ronghinglova left the mission work.<sup>192</sup>

Through the hard works of the missionaries, more conversion of the Bru into Christian was made where the church felt their mission as a successful one. But perhaps, according to Lalaua, in reality, the Bru became Christian only because of the social, political and economic development it brought.<sup>193</sup> Likewise, T.Vanlaltlani also

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<sup>191</sup> Thangzawna, *Bru Hnam Zinga Rawngbawlina*, Synod Press, Aizawl, 1988, p.55

<sup>192</sup> Thangzawna, p.64

<sup>193</sup> R.Lalauva, *Mizo Synod Ramthar Thlawhma*, Maratha Press, Aizawl, 1984, p.13

mentioned that after the mission work was started, missionaries and their salaried employees of the native people and the significant socio-economic supposition began to invade upon the traditional value system maintained by the Bru.<sup>194</sup>

Tensions emerged among the Mizo Christianity and the Bru, mentioning like ‘Brus whom even God cannot change’ or ‘Even God does not know how to deal with the Bru people’ came up<sup>195</sup>. This, in turn, creates hostility between the Bru and the Mizo along with their Christianity where they even though they are looked down by the Mizo. In general, the Bru Christians are mostly the ones who have been settling inside Mizoram, and others who have migrated from the outside, converting into Christians are seen rarely.

#### ***3.4.2 United Pentecostal Church Mission:***

The United Pentecostal Church started evangelism among the Bru tribe in 1985. However there are two incidents which troubled the mission work among the Bru, one was the division of United Pentecostal Church in Mizoram into two viz., United Pentecostal Church (North-East India) and United Pentecostal Church (Mizoram) in 1995. The other was the ethnic tension between the Mizo and the Bru, which leads to migration of many of the Bru to their neighbouring Tripura State in 1997. This, however, resulted to the almost closed down of the United Pentecostal Church in the Bru areas where there are only countable Christian who attended the Church services.

#### ***3.4.3 Zoram Baptist Mission:***

The Baptist Church of Mizoram during the Presbyterian Meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> March 1939 resolved to start evangelism among Brus and Chakmas. Accordingly, they started their mission among the Bru-Takam (Chakma) in the year 1948. The Baptist Church’s Mission in its early period has been taken in three ways that is preaching the Good News, Schools and Medical<sup>196</sup>. While the outreach mission concentrates its work

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<sup>194</sup> T.Vanlaltlani, p.203.

<sup>195</sup> R.Lalauva, p.13

<sup>196</sup> Saiaithanga, *Mizo Kohhran Chanchin*, The Mizo Theological Literature Committee, Aizawl, 1993, p.144

outside Mizoram, the home mission focuses on Bru, Chakma and the Non-Mizo.<sup>197</sup> In January 1950 the first Church was planted at Tuihual Village. Perhaps, though the church was planted it was not to their expectation since the Bru Christians were less in number and hence used to organise worship services at the missionary quarters. Besides, they employed a lot of teachers whose efficacious shows a great work towards education among the Bru. They not only hired teachers and Pastors but Nurses as well. The nurses played an essential role in enriching their work with their healing mission which, in return, alter their sacrifices.

On addition, the Baptist even extends their mission outside Mizoram, particularly towards Tripura in 1968. Tirhkoh Thagzawna mentioned that the work and the purpose of the Baptist is much vigorous as compared with the Presbyterian Mission. This could be due to that they are lead and guided by the white people, as the Bru admire and appreciate the works of the white people.

#### **3.4.4 Salvation Army Mission:**

From its foundation, the Salvation Army gave more importance to social works as they believe this as their primary ways of doing their mission and spreading the words of God. There is no clear report as to when and how the Salvation Army entered and work among the Bru. This being the case, they started orphanages and open blind school. At the same time, the mission and evangelism was not neglected and they tried to their best to spread the gospel, even spreading to their neighbouring states.<sup>198</sup>

Despite the missionaries hard working, the sad thing some scholars<sup>199</sup> who have been observing in these areas mentioned that evangelists and missionaries coming from different denominations are planting their denominational churches in the mission fields, for example, missionaries from the Baptist Church planted Baptist Church and the Presbyterian ministers planted Presbyterian Church. The Bru inhabited area became the battlefield of different denominations of Mizo Christians for

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<sup>197</sup> P.C. Muanthanga, *Indigenous Mission of the Baptist Church of Mizoram*, in Churches of Indigenous Origin in Northeast India, ISPCCK, Delhi, 2000, p.163.

<sup>198</sup> Ngurliana, *Chhandamna Sipai Pawl Chanchin*, Gosen Press, Aizawl, 1991, p.70

<sup>199</sup> F.Lalchhuanmawia, *History of Christianity among the Bru Community in Mizoram (1949-2007)*, an Master of Theology thesis, Tamil Nadu Theological Seminary, Madurai, 2009, p.46

establishing their respective denominational Church. Zolawma, observing the missionary tendency of various denominations, commented that the Bru Christians did not know how to go about amid the multiple Mizo Christian denominations doing mission work to evangelise them through numerous means.<sup>200</sup> For example, while the Presbyterian Church Mission emphasised infant baptism, the Baptist Church propagated adult baptism. While other denominations did not support the Bru from drinking their traditional rice beer and replaced it with a tea, on the contrary, Seventh Day Adventist prohibits all this drinking tea and prevents them from eating pork. In this way, the Christian converts are denominationally divided and this has negative effect in their social life as well. The results are also that this brought about disunity in the society among the members of the Christian community. Perhaps, some of the missionaries when asked in general mentioned that they every so often create festival for the Bru Christians which is likely to be similar with their Buisu festival, where they too gather, eat together, and sing the hymns but without any of their rice beer and things which are not encourage for the Christians.<sup>201</sup>

### **3.5 Impacts of Christianity on the Bru Society:**

As T.Luikam mentioned, ‘the advent of Christianity brings with it a new life. Christianity brought civilisation...and we should feel proud that we have come to the present civilisation.’<sup>202</sup> Perhaps one must always remember that every transition brings with it positives value and negative consequences.

The emergence of the new religion brought about various changes in the traditional structures relating with the religion-cultural and socio-economic of the Bru system. Certain superstitious beliefs, the witchcraft, certain sacrifices etc. have been abandoned. N. Minz said that Christianity came as a liberator from spiritual and social demons.<sup>203</sup> Whereas a result, the function of different rites practised by the Bru namely,

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<sup>200</sup> Zolawma, BD Thesis, in T. Vanlaltlani, p.185.

<sup>201</sup> Telephone interview with C. Lalnunluanga, a missionary under Synod Board Mission from 1985 till date.

<sup>202</sup> T. Luikam, *A Short History of the Manipur Baptist Convention Golden Jubilee*, North East Christian Association, Ukhrul, 1948, p.7

<sup>203</sup> N. Minz, ‘*Christ and Tribal Culture*’ in M.M. Thomas and R.W. Taylor, eds., *Tribal Awakening*, Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, Bangalore, 1965, p.206



birth rites, death rites, and marriage rites were abandoned after they became Christians.<sup>204</sup>

The gospel also changed the position of women in the family. Similar with Mizo traditions, in the Bru culture, if a husband died, the properties of the family is inherited by the wife of the deceased husband if she is alive. In the olden days, the inherited property goes to his bother or the closest kin known as *sandai*.

Before the arrival of Christianity, and the introduction of the administrative system by the Mizoram Government, the socio-political spheres of the Brus were confined to the villages under *Chudri* or *Karbari* who were known as the Village headman. Consecutively, all political, judicial, economic and social activities in the village were centralised by them. Perhaps, after the entry of the missionaries along with the Christianity, they were very much involved in the village politics, judicial and in the social activities. As a result, the missionaries were very influential in the Christian villages.<sup>205</sup>

Their main traditional celebrations of festival *Buisu* festival has ceased among the Bru Christians and are likely believed to be celebrated only by the non-Christian nowadays. They are now bind to the Mizo churches with the denominations they prefer accordingly. Most of the Bru attending the Mizo churches have their Mizo nomenclature written in the Church record book. Since the Bru did not have their alphabet, translating the Bible and the Christian songbook in their dialect is an arduous task. Hence they have to exert with the Mizo Bible and sing hymns in Mizo dialect. Mostly the Bru women are seen with the Mizo *puan* rather than their traditional *puan* when attending the church. On the contrary, the rest of the non-Christian Bru responded to the religious change by retaining their indigenous socio-cultural and religious celebrations and performances. Perhaps, for some among the Bru, it seems that Christianity is meant only for the rich people during those days, as the Mizo

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<sup>204</sup> Tirhkoh Thangzawna, p.48

<sup>205</sup> Thangzawna, p.64

especially the missionaries scoff at their traditional dress and try to change the Bru traditional dress into westernised Mizo dress.<sup>206</sup>

Instead of analysing and examining the culture of the people and asking what would be the best method to start working among the people i.e. the Bru, the Christian missions would use transplantation model in almost every of their mission fields. K.Thanzauva clearly explains this transplantation model:

*This model represents the traditional missionaries' attitude which regarded western culture as the only culture and refused to accept non-western cultures. Here the European form of Christianity is perceived as the only true Christianity which should be followed by all Christians all over the world. Everything non-Christian was considered as the product of deprived human beings under the control of Satan.*<sup>207</sup>

As mentioned, almost all the Bru settling in Mizoram now admit Christianity. Before, the Bru society was a communitarian, which confined to their respective villages. However, after the coming of Gospel, it brought them together as one community and they have to experience a collective solidarity removing the solitude of different villages. In the earlier days, the Bru were afraid of each other, the southern Bru were fearful of the northern Bru, as they still practised the used of black magic, witchcraft etc. Now, that after embracing Christianity and terminating their old belief system, they are now free to move wherever they want and hence broken the dividing wall of fear. It also helps them to unite in stronger community.

### ***3.5.1 Languages and Education:***

The Bru had their dialect Kau Bru but they had no alphabet on their own. Generally asking, the Bru in Mizoram could speak the Mizo language smoothly. The Bru who had difficulty in the Mizo dialect are mostly the older generations who find it hard to bear in the learning process. They have to use Mizo Hymnbooks, Mizo Bible in the church, and preaching sermon in Mizo.

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<sup>206</sup> Benny Lalmawia.' The impact of Christian Missions on the Bru Society in Mamit District of Mizoram from 1949 to 2009,' Mth Thesis, Aizawl Theological College, Aizawl, 2012, p.56

<sup>207</sup> K.Thanzauva, *A Theological Basis for Social Transformation*, D.Th Thesis, Melbourne College of Divinity, 1993, p.231

Education occupied one of the most prominent places concerning the role of Christianity as an agency of acculturation, and as well help the Bru to adjust themselves to the new situation. The Church spread its tentacles by opening schools in the remotest areas where Bru are living and also by sponsoring students for higher studies in Aizawl. Strangely, most of the BNU and BNLFF leaders are the off-springs of these Church-sponsored Schools. Encouraged by the facilities, recognition and sympathies given by the Church more Bru migrated to Mizoram.

Education provided the Bru way into the Christian scripture and other form of Christian literature. The Bru were taught how to read and write in the Church's building or missionary quarters. Perhaps, many of the students who had completed their Middle School Leaving Certificate (MSLC) could not continue their education due to their sort of financial support. But they became the pillar of the church and the essential instrument for the fulfilment of the Church's activities.<sup>208</sup>

Education also led negative aspect in the Bru society. Since the medium of instruction of school in Mizoram is either Mizo or English. Especially under the different Mission Board followed the pattern of Mizo Board of School education.<sup>209</sup> This led to the discordant shift in term of language. The Bru student who attended school became highly esteem in Mizo languages. Perhaps nowadays they not only used in school but also in the family and society as well. Some of them even became abstinence for using Kau Bru. Even though many missions started giving education to the children, starting and opening many schools, they have not started education among the Bru adult. Since most of them are illiterate, they have many problems in reading Bible, singing, reading newspapers etc., so these also create tension between the older generations and the younger generations of the Bru.

On addition, most importantly, Christian's instructions were also taught to the students by the missionaries in the Bru village. Since the starting of the educational mission among the illiterates in 1990 only, education among the Bru were entrusted to

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<sup>208</sup> Zairema, '*Hmuntha Ramthar*', Synod Ramthar, SMB, Aizawl, 1988,p.11

<sup>209</sup> Tirhkoh Thangzawna, p. 68

the missionaries for a long time. They indulge in the mind of the student that superstitions were nothing but only the primitive ways of life.

It is observed that the Bru are very backward in respect of education, though Mizoram has achieved a very high literacy rate of approximately 88.80 per cent, which is higher than the overall literacy rate of India, that is, 64.80 per cent, according to 2001 census of India. From a memorandum submitted by the Bru Students' Association on 15<sup>th</sup> February 1996 to the Chief Election Commissioner of India, we come to be acquainted that the Bru community of Mizoram is very backward in the field of education. The excerpt of the Memorandum is as follows:

“.....As you are aware that Mizoram is the second rank in the literacy percentage of India. Whereas in the case of Bru in Mizoram, we have only three (3) graduates out of seventy thousands (70,000) and above Bru living in Mizoram till today.”<sup>210</sup>

### ***3.5.2 Identity Consciousness:***

On the contrary, the education indirectly bought about the social consciousness and enabled them to analyse their present condition. The newly educated Bru students from Mission schools and elsewhere began to realise that their community was being oppressed and alienated<sup>211</sup>. Now, the Bru started to claim their ethnic identity and political rights in Mizoram. Democratic Party politics raised these ethnic feeling. They even demand for Autonomous District Council (ADC) under the sixth schedule of Indian constitution for their community in their living area. As a result, the Bru National Union (BNU) made their demand clear on 9<sup>th</sup> March 1995 for Autonomous District Council and a memorandum was submitted to Lalthanhawla, the then Chief Minister of Mizoram.<sup>212</sup> This identity consciousness unavoidably made a wide gap between the Mizo and the Bru.

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<sup>210</sup> A memorandum submitted to Chief Election Commission of India, New Delhi by the Bru Students Association, Mizoram on 15.2.1996. p.1

<sup>211</sup> Vanlalnunmawia Zawngte, 'Mizo-Bru Conflict: A theological Response,' Mizoam Theological Journal V/5 (January-March), 2004, p.22

<sup>212</sup> Bru Memorandum, No.5, 1995

Here, taking into accounts of Patricia Mukhim writing that, by going through Dunn's definition and also correctly understanding Brass and Hobsbawm's analogy then all the independent tribes or ethnic groups of North-East India are little nations that have been submerged because they were not at the time politically cohesive to argue their case, nor were strong enough militarily to fight back.<sup>213</sup> Patricia further mentioned that ethnic communities who live in regions that are vulnerable to influx from across the borders naturally live in constant fear of being submerged. Here the picture of North-East India is a bundle of contradictions consisting of smaller ethnic communities or minorities living within bigger states, such as the '...Thangkhuks, Maos, Purnai, Zeliang etc. living in Manipur, the Hmars, Chakmas, Reangs (Bru), Lakhers of Mizoram...' etc. Each of these groups perceives a sense of neglect by the majority ruling elite within their states.<sup>214</sup>

### **3.6 Hindu Influence:**

After becoming literate, the Bru are now able to mingle more with other religions, they realised more and more of their unique identity, which is poles apart and distinct from Christianity and others. They started doubting the Mizo in general, by receiving deeper political and economic awareness and accused the Mizo Christian led Government in particular, as having aggressive and chauvinistic anti-minority policy towards them, depriving and denying them of their constitutional rights and justice.<sup>215</sup> It was at this crucial point that the politicisation of Bru religious identity was taken up by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), which began to attack Mizoram State Chief Minister and Mizo Christian mission. Further, the RSS annual report of the year 1997-98, at their All India Delegates Conference held at Karnataka, referred to Bru and Mizo issue stating, 'The situation demands that the entire Hindu society should rise in protest to force the Centre to act and knock secular sense into the head of the Government of Mizoram.'<sup>216</sup> Accordingly, T.Vanlalrani in her book stated that

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<sup>213</sup> Patricia Mukhim, 'Negotiating Ethnic Identity in a Democracy,' in B.B. Kumar, *Problems of Ethnicity in the North-East India*, Astha Bharati, Delhi, 2006, p. 100.

<sup>214</sup> Patricia Mukhim, p.103.

<sup>215</sup> BSA Memorandum on 15<sup>th</sup>.Feb.1996, p.1

<sup>216</sup> Ventakesh Kesari, 'RSS Attacks Missionaries for Aiding Mizo Rebels,' *The Asian Age*, 1998, pp.1 & 2.

the RSS also mentioned in this annual report that the Mizo destroy the Bru temples and exile them from the Mizoram state.<sup>217</sup>

By way of religious practices, those Bru living in Mizoram who have not joined the Christian's faith followed the 'Sanatana'. Here, it must be understood by the reader unused to Bru cultural and religious practices that the 'Sanatana' is more or less a form of nature worship (animism) with lots of witchcrafts and beliefs in evil spirits. Mandirs or temples are rarely erected. The essential core of the Hinduism traditions is properly referred to as *Sanatana Dharma*, which roughly translated as 'eternal religion', and the words 'Hindu' and 'Hinduism' are foreign, not indigenous to India itself.<sup>218</sup> However, because 'Sanatana' has, at later times been influenced by Hinduism, Lord Shiva and a few Hindu deities are recognised but not worshipped as a faithful follower of Hinduism; and a stone-rock which is oblong of usual-shape, if found by a pious person, may be placed in a convenient place and worshipped as Lord Shiva's "Lingam". A crude shelter that may casually be taken to be a mandir may be erected over this Lingam. However, due to present-day influence of Christianity and Mizo way of living, the Bru of Mizoram are not likely to have maintained even this crude structure, not to mention the possibility of their existence as many as 29 mandirs/temples to be destroyed at any given time.<sup>219</sup>

The Bru community every day are found to interact with the Mizo Christians and Bengali Hindu for various matters and reasons. And hence, are not free from being affected by significant religious changes which have been taking place continually in the world around them.

Religious change through the effect of Christianity and Hinduism has made an intense pressure upon the Bru. Perhaps some of the Bru never give up their beliefs in the existence of many deities and spirits nor would they like to stop offering sacrifices to such objects of their worship as per required. Their totemic belief and its connection with different clans' identities incited the longing for integrating all the groups of their

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<sup>217</sup> T.Vanlaltlani, pp 257 – 272.

<sup>218</sup> Steven J Rosen, '*Introduction to the World's Major Religions Hinduism*', Vol.6, Green Wood, London, 2006, p.4.

<sup>219</sup> L.T Hrangchal, '*The Bru Crisis in a Nutshell*', for Mizoram Police, 2002, p. 56

community to claim for their ethnic identity under the umbrella of their generic name Bru. Besides, the Bru responded the religious change caused by Christianity and Hinduism by retaining their socio-cultural and religious festivals and performance like dance, songs and culture of drinking their home-made ice beer. This reaction and abhorrent response to the religious change, is on the contrary, a specific actions for the Bru if they want to keep hold of and preserve their own religious identity, which is kernel and core of their primitive traditions, culture and social customs.

At present, some of the Bru inhabiting Mizoram are now conscious of their socio-political problems and are putting an effort to look for new society where they could live together without any division. As a result, the Bru, to fight for their liberation have to be aware and conscious of their desires and needs. They are quoting of Paul Freire about the oppression he mentioned, 'Who can better understand the necessity of liberation? They will not gain this liberation by chance but through the praxis of their quest for it, through their recognition of the necessity to fight for it'.<sup>220</sup> All their action, their form of realisation and recognition for the need of their liberation, may be said that, is all the indirect result of Christianity.

### **Conclusion:**

From the above discussions, one would recognise that Christianity had played a dynamic role in the transformation of the Bru socio-cultural and socio-religious life. Perhaps, the coming of the gospel or Christianity is like the beginning of the dawn and the new era for the Bru society as a whole which have greatly impacts of both positive as well as negative effects on their society. Their primitive religious culture including elements of animism, polytheism, totems, witchcraft, and even the practice of black magic etc. are all replaced by the gospel where one gets baptised and commit himself from the polytheistic believes to monotheistic.

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<sup>220</sup> Paulo Friere, 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Herder and Herder, New York, 1972, p.32

The positives impact of their embracing new religion like Christianity is the change of belief and faith, where almost all the Bru inhabiting Mizoram have embraced Christianity, which is followed by the unity and a collective solidarity among the Bru community, which are absent in their history. As the practice of black magic, witchcraft etc. are still prevailing in the olden days, the Bru were afraid of each other and thus were confined only to their respective village. Perhaps, with the acceptance of Christianity and terminating their old belief system, they are now able to move freely from place to place breaking the wall of fear caused by the cursed and the black magic. Regarding their social life, with the embracing of Christianity, undeniably the Bru community has undergone various notably changes in its psychology, cultures, social habits, their world view, economic which indirectly leads to their social consciousness and identity consciousness. Besides, the missionaries' workers among the Bru villages not only spread the gospel but also provided health and sanitation, physical well-being to the common masses and education to the younger generations etc. They are upgrading the minor Bru community to a large extent.

While Christianity brought about various positives impacts on the Bru community, it as well as multiple adverse effects too. It breakdown their prevailing Bru traditional system like *Chaudhuri* system (not in all cases, but staying close contact with the Mizo community) which has been replaced by the Village Council, it also breakdown the Bru endogamous structure and extensive intermarriages among the tribal's which became Christianize. It later indirectly created identity crisis that led to national movement which continuously lead to the demanding of Autonomous District Council. Besides, the missionaries' workers from different denominations are opting for their denominations among the newly converted Bru Christians which created tensions and variance among themselves. It also open road for the Hinduism among the non-Christian Bru, having to doubt the Government of Mizoram regarding their identity and rights issue and Christianity in general. The Bru as a whole cannot accept Christianity too, the non-Christian Bru continue to remain and preserves their old traditional believes system.

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## **Chapter IV**

### **Conclusion**

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Mizoram has an enormous problem with immigrants especially with those of the illegal immigrants; this could be the reason that it is bounded by two international borders, with Burma in the east and south (404 km) and Bangladesh in the west (306 km). According to the People of India, Vol XXXIII there is 18 communities, fourteen scheduled caste, nine scheduled tribes and two other communities in Mizoram. It is stated that these (illegal) immigrants have entered Mizoram for two significant factors i.e. Political and Economic reasons. As a result the immigrants may be termed as political refugees and economic migrants.

An introduction of money economy in Mizoram after British period had brought about many non-Mizo having to do with Government jobs, Christian Mission work, trade and commerce, and other private business. The era had come when both Europeans and Indians are to be found in Mizoram. This kind of entry of non-indigenous people, including recent immigrants of Chakma and even the Bru resulted in rapid increase of population in Mizoram leading to acculturation of the region.

The Bru and the Mizo have been living together in the same State under the same umbrella of today's Mizoram State political administration for an extended interval. Besides, they both share a collective experience where both belong to the Mongoloid race; claim their historical origin in China, and speak different dialects of the Tibeto-Burman language of the great Sino-Tibetan linguistic family. These both communities, the Bru and the Mizo, have migrated from China to India during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and also have some similar myths and folk-tales telling of their respective journeys and experiences. And as a result, this necessitates an unavoidable interaction between the two communities in different aspect of human life. This chapter summarizes the main findings of the research and draws a few conclusions from the study of the negotiation of the Bru inhabiting in Mizoram.

The first chapter deals with the origin and earlier history of the Bru, their accounts of migration, and their settlement in Mizoram. Besides, this chapter deals with more explanation on the statement of the problem, the methods being used for the research, the main objectives and significance for taking up the study. In the light of the discussion in chapter one, it appears to be that the Bru are immigrants who have been migrating from Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh and Tripura during the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

The Bru migration to Mizoram occurs in a different pattern at different interval of time, starting from the 20<sup>th</sup> Century till today. The original place of the Bru is said to be *Maian Tlang* which is a small hilly area near Rangamati of Bangladesh. The Bru originally came from Shan State (in Myanmar) a few centuries ago and then moved to Arakan Hills. From there, they moved to *Maian Tlang*, a hilly place in defunct East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and thence migrated to Tripura during the 14<sup>th</sup> century. It

is difficult to point out precisely the original home of the Bru, as they themselves also admit that there is no authentic record of their history and migration.

The reasons for the Bru entry into Mizoram could not be caused by only one factor or traumatic events of one period but an endless movement till today. The main reasons for the Bru migration from Chittagong hill tracts is believed to be the construction of Hydro-Electricity Dam at Karnifuli River which has brought a vast area of land underwater. The Bru being small in number could manage settlement along the western border of Mizoram and Tripura. Additionally, the Bru migration from Tripura to Mizoram is revealed to be due to the ill-treatment of the then Raja of Tripura and the revolt led by the Ratanmani against the oppressive rule of Maharaja Bir Bikram and his feudal chiefs where many of them are forced to flee in adjoining areas of Mizoram.

The increase of the Bru population in Mizoram has led several changes and transformation breaking an isolation of the Bru living area and also attacking the Bru endogamous community identity severely and even their traditional socio-cultural practices which are studied in the next chapter.

The second chapter consist of the social and cultural negotiations of the Bru in the post-colonial Mizoram with particular reference to their social, cultural and linguistic changes. It is clear that, with the unending generation, the Bru can no longer live within the scope of their own tradition. They have undergone a severe change and have negotiated their identity to a far extent into the significant community i.e. the Mizo.

As Zolberg and Woon mentioned, ‘... since the negotiations take place in the host country, power relations are generally asymmetric in favor of the host majority, which naturally has the upper hand. In the cultural realm, host values and traditions are firmly implanted and benefit from institutional support, while the immigrant minorities, who may differ initially concerning a variety of cultural elements deemed significant by the hosts- notably, religion and language – are at best in a liminal situation about formal and informal membership in the host society, as well as institutional recognition’.

Being the smaller and minority communities, the Bru could not have much impact in terms of socio-cultural, religions etc. towards the major communities. Hence, in many cases, it is quite natural for the Bru transformation of their social and traditional ways of life. The Bru society is experiencing a change in the means and mode of production and livelihood. It would be more comprehensive to state that there are few changes in the structure of the receiving society except that the Bru are always in favour of labourer by the Mizo comparing with the Mizos.

The Bru in their earlier days are endogamous in structure and prefer marriage within their own clan or sub-clan, as to prevent themselves from diluting the strength of their own small clan. But after their migration and with their settlement in Mizoram, there have been a lot of inter-marriages among the Bru and the Mizo, broadening the marriage market for Mizo boys and girls. In many cases of inter-tribal marriages, the offspring of the couple also follow suit. Here, most common incident like '*Saphun*' one among the oldest traditions of the Mizo played a prominent role in the life of the Bru, especially those indulging with the inter-marriages. Though '*Saphun*' (a Mizo traditional system where one could change its clan by completing the necessary protocol) is commonly seen to be practised by the Bru where they converted their clan into Mizo, it is not however officially accepted by the Government of Mizoram because the '*Saphun*' could only be practised by the Mizo or *Zo hnam* and the other tribes are not bound within<sup>221</sup>. Furthermore, it is stated that a traditional system which have not been followed for the past 50 years have already perish itself and is not allowed to be simply revive after it. Thus, the effect of inter-tribal marriage causes diminishing process in terms of numerical strength of population on the Bru side while the process of population increase is there on the Mizo side.

Almost half of the Bru staying in Mizoram followed the ways of Mizo living, and society system. Their fashion, their dress code etc. are not much differing from that of the Mizo. The Bru Christians, have been using the Mizo Bible and hymns books, since they do not have alphabet on their own. The Bru women are usually seen wearing *Mizo puan* rather than their own culture *puan* on Sunday for attending Church

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<sup>221</sup> Mizo Archive, <https://www.google.com/amp/s/mizoarchive.wordpress.com/2016/11/03/saphun-chungchang-bawk/amp/>

services. On addition, mostly the Bru are recorded by their Mizo names on Sunday's school, as they compose their own Mizo name after entering Mizoram.

It is also found that, the Bru Christian Church elders' are also considered as migrate elder and are also accepted as an ordinary Church elder in some denominations of Mizoram like those of the Presbyterian Churches etc. One among a rare occurrence is that some of the Bru who are brought up in Mizoram considering Mizoram as their native land are even taken as a member of the most prominent non-Governmental organisation i.e. Young Mizo Association.

On the contrary, it is found that some of the Bru inhabiting in Mizoram is still trying to retain their traditional socio-cultural lives whenever possible. The pattern of the Bru house building and their household materials were more or less the same as their primitive culture. Being not significantly affected by the mundane world, the Bru lives a modest and straightforward lifestyle. Though there is an intense pressure and effect of the host communities in their daily living, some of the Bru in spite of being swallowed up by the dominant communities can give a very active interactions and reactions.

The third chapter deals with the dynamics of religions of the Bru community in the post-colonial Mizoram . From the discussions in the chapter, one would be acquainted with that Christianity plays the significant role for the transformation of the Bru socio-religious life. Unavoidably, the entering of Christianity in the Bru communities is like the beginning of the dawn and the new era for the Bru society which have considered both positive and negative impacts on the Bru society. Overall, about 70 per cent of the Bru of Mizoram is believed to be converted into Christian after their entry to Mizoram.

### **Positive impacts:**

The Bru communities' primitive culture including elements of animism, totemism, witchcraft, practice of black magic etc. are all replaced by Christianity where they are now able to break the wall of fear caused by magic and the cursed they caused among themselves. After the entry of gospel, they are able to move freely from

villages to villages, as in their earlier history we saw that the Bru of the North are afraid of the West, likewise the Bru of the West are so scared of the North since the practice of witchcraft and black magic are still prevailing. Hence the change of belief and faith is one of the most outstanding impacts for the Bru of their embracing new religion, which consequently led to the unity and solidarity among the Bru communities.

Regarding their social life, with the embracing of Christianity, undeniably the Bru community has undergone various notably changes in its psychology, cultures, social habits, their world view, economic which indirectly leads to their social consciousness and identity consciousness. Besides, the missionaries' workers among the Bru villages not only spread the gospel but also provided health and sanitation, physical well-being to the common masses and education to the younger generations etc. Moreover, the gospel also changed the position of the Bru women. Similar with Mizo traditions, in the Bru culture if a husband died, the properties of the family is inherited by the wife of the deceased husband if she is alive. In the olden days the properties goes to his bother or to the closest kin known as *sandai*.

### **Negative Impacts:**

Whilst Christianity brought about various positives impacts on the Bru community, it as well as multiple negative impacts too. It breakdown their prevailing Bru traditional system like *Chaudhuri* system (not in all cases, but staying close contact with the Mizo community) which has been replaced by the Village Council, it also breakdown the Bru endogamous structure and open intermarriages among the tribals which became Christianize. It later indirectly created identity crisis that led to national movement which continuously lead to the demanding of Autonomous District Council. Besides, the missionaries' workers from different denominations are opting for their own denominations among the newly converted Bru Christians which created tensions and variance among themselves. It also open road for the Hinduism among the non-Christian Bru, having to doubt the Government of Mizoram regarding their identity and rights issue and Christianity in general. The Bru as a whole cannot accept

Christianity too, the non-Christian Bru continue to remain and preserves their old traditional believes system.

Chaudhuriship is an essential institution among the Bru community. The *Chaudhuri*, being the head of the village, played a vital role for the social, economic and political life of the people and all authorities are bestowed upon him. Perhaps, with the entry and spread of Christianity and education in the Bru society, the privileges enjoyed by the Chaudhuri have deteriorated to a great extent.

Conceivably, there are still few known Hindu religious followers despite the fact that majority of them have been influenced by Christianity. At Tumpanglui, a small villages in Mamit District, the Chaudhuriship continued to be in practice. Both the religious beliefs of Hindu and Christian prevail in these villages. Possibly, the chieftainship of the Chaudhuri is not admitted by the Christian of these areas and failed to accustom his authority. Besides Christianity, several places in Mamit District like Tuipuibari, Kolalian, Damparengpui and some other villages have various Hindu populations too.

The interactions between the Bru and Mizo have a significant impact on the Bru community as a whole. The Mizo Christianity often made pressure on the State Government to pass Liquor Prohibition Act (year). This is the repercussion of the religious change in Mizoram caused by Christianity, which accused the tribal custom of drinking as anti-Christianity. Likewise, their traditional *Buisu* festival mainly known as the drinking festival was prohibited among the Bru Christian. After all, the Christian churches do not justify the use of liquor from religious and ethical point of view. Here it is important to note that some of the Bru argued that Christianity disregarded and looked down upon the practise of drinking home-made rice beer o any other liquor. They also claimed that the missionaries scorn their traditional dress and that they are trying to change into westernised Mizo dress which is a bit way too expensive for them. Ending here with B.B. Kumar phrase ‘...by adopting western dress, Christianity, and the English language, they are getting westernized; though it is the westernization without western technology.’

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1. B.O.S : 02.04.2019
2. SCHOOL BOARD : 10.04.2019

3. REGISTRATION NO.& DATE : MZU/M.Phil./500 of 10.04.2019
4. DUE DATE OF SUBMISSION : January 2020

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