CULTURE AS IDENTITY: LOCATING THE MIZO IN SELECT WORKS OF C.LALNUNCHANGA

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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MZU REGISTRATION NO. 35 OF 2009-10

PH.D REGN NO. & DATE: MZU/PH.D./1219 OF 24.7.2018

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND HUMANITIES

SEPTEMBER, 2021

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that "Culture as Identity: Locating the Mizo in Select Works of C.Lalnunchanga" written by Catherine Laldinpuii Fanai has been written under my supervision.

She has fulfilled all the required norms laid down within the Ph.D UGC Regulations 2020 of Mizoram University. The thesis is the result of her own investigation. Neither the thesis as a whole nor any part of it was ever submitted by any other University for research degree.

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DECLARATION

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I, Catherine Laldinpuii Fanai, hereby declare that the subject matter of this thesis is the record of work done by me, that the contents of this thesis did not form the basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the thesis has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other University/ Institute.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, all glory and praise be to God with whom all things are possible, for the innumerable blessings I have received especially during the course of my research, pandemic notwithstanding.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Margaret L. Pachuau, Professor, Department of English. Without her untiring effort and supervision, this thesis would never have been completed. Her guidance, wisdom and careful attention to details have made possible the completion of this thesis.

I would also like to express my gratitude to Pu C. Lalnunchanga for giving me the freedom to interpret his works and for always being open to queries regarding them.

I also take this opportunity to extend my gratitude to all the faculty members and staff, and fellow research scholars of the Department of English, Mizoram University, who extended their help, co-operation and valuable suggestions during the course of my research work.

Last but not the least, I would like to thank my family especially my parents, F.Lalthlamuana and Chalthanmawii for their unfailing encouragement, patience and support.

(CATHERINE LALDINPUII FANAI)

CONTENTS

Chapter I

Introduction: The Author and the Times.

C.Lalnunchanga is a resident of Bawngkawn South, Aizawl. Born in 1970, he is a prolific writer who has seven novels, twenty-four short stories, eight short plays, ten songs/poems and, over a hundred essays to his name. His skill as a writer has been acknowledged through a number of awards, most notable among them, the Mizo Academy of Letters (MAL), Book of the Year Award. He received this most prestigious and recognised award for creative writing in Mizoram twice, in 2006 for *Pasalṭhate*[1] *Ni Hnuhnung* (Last Days of the Braves)[2] (2006) and in 2015 for *Kawlkil Piah Lamtluang* (Path Beyond the Horizon) (2015). Three of his short stories were translated to English as part of the anthology of contemporary short stories, published by the Sahitya Akademi. Considered among the many notable writers of Mizoram today, C.Lalnunchanga or Taitea as he is fondly called by friends feels strongly that the pre-colonial Mizo has been dealt a short-hand not only by the colonial narratives but also by the Mizos themselves. Thus he sets out to restore this image through his works (Lalnunchanga, 2018). He says that this thought occurred to him as he saw a dramatic depiction of the arrival of the Welsh missionaries on the occasion of the Gospel Centenary Celebrations in 1994. He was deeply disturbed by the negative self-portrayal, of the Mizos as a savage and ignorant people. This spurred him to conduct his own research and it served as the inspiration for much of his work. In his *Thuhmahruai* (Foreword) to *Ka Mi Huaisen leh Ka Pasalṭha*[3] (My Brave and Courageous Men) (2015), he states that without literature a culture dies, and places the utmost importance to the knowledge of one's own culture and of one's ancestors (7). He concludes that the in-depth study he undertook for his historical novels reaffirms that contrary to the portrayal of the pre-colonial Mizo as savage, the

[1] *Pasalṭhate*: Plural of *Pasalṭha.*

[2] The titles of the selected works have been loosely translated by the scholar solely for the purpose of this study except for "Baby-i Hlim Zan" (Baby's Night of Happiness) and "Khamosh Hai Raath" (Silent is the Night), both translated by the respective translators. The titles of secondary texts in Mizo are also loose translations by the scholar solely for the purpose of this study. Translations of quotes in Mizo are also loose translations by the scholar solely for the purpose of this study except for those sourced from existing translated works which are denoted.

[3] *Pasalṭha*: To be brave, manly, heroic, valiant, stout-hearted, courageous, daring fearless, intrepid. A person who is brave and manly; a brave, a hero; a famous or notable warrior or hunter.

pre-colonial Mizo was a highly socially conscious individual, in-tune with his neighbours and with nature (Lalnunchanga, 2018).

In this attempt to recover that essence of the Mizo which was relegated to the sidelines or erased upon the Mizos embracing the white man and his ways, C.Lalnunchanga explores the past and endeavours to reconstruct it through his narratives. Though essential in restoring the Mizo of the pre-colonial past, this bid to restructure history does not encompass the struggles of the Mizo of contemporary times. Hence, this study will also explore his construct of the cultural and social impact of colonization on contemporary Mizo society and juxtapose it to the restored image of the Mizo thereby exploring possibilities of fresh meanings of the Mizo identity, navigating the various facets of culture which have themselves undergone immense changes in religion, value systems and class divisions.

The written history of the Mizos, much like all other nations colonized by the British Empire, has always been told from the perspective of the Western eye until very recently. The absence of a written script of the Mizo language before the advent of the missionaries meant that all research, including that of Mizo historians and scholars pertaining to the origins and history of the Mizos, administrative as well as anthropological, depended on the documents left behind by the British administrators and Welsh missionaries. The consequent image of the Mizo that emerged was that of the head-hunting savage who benefitted greatly from the benevolent influences of the colonizer, having been brought out of the "darkness of ignorance" to the "light of civilization".

Quoting H.C.Triandis, Susan E. Cross and Jonathan S. Gore write, "(*C*)*ulture* is a set of meanings, beliefs, and practices that guide the formation and maintenance of social institutions, the creation of social products, and the development of its members" (587). It is in this sense that culture as presented by C.Lalnunchanga in the selected works will be analysed.

The Historical Aspect:

The selected historical novels are set in the tumultuous times of the late 1800s, after the great bamboo famine or *ṭhingṭam* of 1880. It was a time of change. Internally, the chiefs had to safeguard their individual interests as well as the

interests of the people in the wake of the famine. Externally, the ever increasing contact with the white man and his professed territory would make an indelible change in how the Mizos perceived not only themselves but also their society as well as their sense of territory. Subject to the absence of a written Mizo script, accounts of historical incidents necessarily have to depend on existent and available written records of the time. These documents and accounts written as they were by British officials and missionaries were largely written from the white man's perspective. As such we have to depend on them to a great extent to understand the history of the Mizos and of how the territorial space of Mizoram came to be and come to an understanding of its role in "enabling comparatively small occupying forces to exert hegemonic control over large populations" (Ashcroft et. al., 2017a, 199). Whatever the origins of the Mizos may be, there is no doubt about the migratory nature of the people necessitated by the swidden cultivation they followed. The migration followed a westward movement wherein tribes from the east pushed those towards their west further north, south or west, where they eventually made their presence felt along the borders of the British Indian colony, in the Cachar District and Chittagong Hills Tract, as early as September 1824 (Verghese and Thanzawna,166) and necessitating an expedition in 1844. The expedition was led by Captain Blackwood against Lalsutthla or Lalsuktla as he was known by the British. The chief had raided a Manipuri colony at Kochabari in retaliation to injuries inflicted on his father, Lianhrima. His village of Sentlang was burnt to the ground along with all the stored grains in the village as well as in the *lo*[4]. Furthermore, Lalsutthla who surrendered on a promise of pardon was exiled, having been sentenced to transportation for life. As noted by Verghese and Thanzawna, this incident left a mark on the Mizos, posing a problem in future negotiations with the British (170). In 1861, the village of Rothangpuia which was close to Demagiri was burnt by the retaliatory expedition led by Major Raban (Lewin, 190). This event successfully subdued Rothangpuia or Rutton Poia as he was called by the British, and established his cooperation thus making it possible to establish the first British police post in Demagiri in 1862

[4]*Lo*: Swidden cultivation, *jhum* (sometimes referring also to the crops growing there), a clearing in the forest used for agricultural purposes especially for the growing of rice; a farm, a cultivated field. Land that is cultivated after clearing forests usually by burning.

(Verghese and Thanzawna,182). This relationship was further cemented by Lewin in 1866, in a rather dubious incident wherein he tried to instill a belief regarding the invincibility of the white man in the Mizo people (Lewin, 192-204)[5].

In 1869, an expedition against Vanlalpuia and Suakpuilala was led by Brig. Gen. Nuthall in retaliation to raids made by the Mizos in the newly established tea gardens in Nowerbund and Monierkhal in the Cachar district. These raids were made to protest the incursions into their traditional hunting grounds. A.S.Reid writes that no matter the justice of the situation, "such deeds … could not be passed over without further and more effectual steps being taken to punish the offenders and put a stop to future possible raids" (11). This expedition was a failure and lead to more raids by the Mizos, who were emboldened to more serious offences, in the eyes of the British. Although retaliatory expeditions such as these were made into Mizo territory both in the north and in the south by the British, they succeeded in deterring incursions and raids into British territory by the Mizos only for short periods of time. The interruption of commerce and peace along the border areas between the two became gradually difficult for the British to ignore leading to two major expeditions through which the erstwhile Lushai[6] Hills was brought under the British flag not so much for the commercial/economic gain it entailed but rather for keeping the peace in their territories to achieve such gains. The first of the large-scale expedition, the Lushai Hills Expedition took place in 1871-72. This expedition was launched in response to a number of raids during 1870-71 as also to rescue captives and recover articles taken during the raids. Most notable among the captives was the six year old Mary Winchester, whose name is now associated with the advent of the white man

[5] In March 1866, Lewin was appointed the Superintendent of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (Lewin, 185). In September of the same year he set out to meet the chief, Rothangpuia. To gain influence over the *Lushai* who made repeated raids into the Hill Tracts, he thought to build upon his predecessor's reputation for being invulnerable to gunshot. He played upon a gathering of chiefs at Rothangpuia's village, Houdini's trick of using a wax bullet to appear invincible to bullets. He replaced the real bullet with a wax bullet and having placed the real bullet in his mouth, he was able to produce the same after being "shot" at and thus succeeded in deceiving the gathering. The incident made it possible to contract an alliance with the chief, one which to his credit, Lewin kept to the best of his ability. So much so that he was called Thanliena/Thangliana by the people (192-204).

[6] *Lusei* or *Lushai*: It was the predominant tribe with its chiefs, the Sailos at the time of the arrival of the British and so was erroneously used to describe all the tribes. J.H. Lorraine writes it as the name which the English-speaking people apply to the whole tribe, whereas the tribesmen themselves apply *Lusei* i.e. "longheads" to only the upper classes, and speak of the lower classes as *Lutawi* i.e. "shortheads".

into Mizoram. The expedition was divided into two columns, the first, the Cachar or Left Column led by Brig. Gen. Bourchier, C.B. from the Cachar District and the second by Brig. Gen. Brownlow, C.B. from the Chittagong Frontier. Further, a Manipur contingent under two Majors, with Major Gen. Nuthall as Political Officer was to assist the Cachar Column. The Left Column marched towards Champhai, where the chiefs Lalburha son of Vanhnuailiana, and Pawibawia son of Lalphunga (brother of Vanhnuailiana) were established. Although the chiefs could not be apprehended, the expedition was declared a success in that they had conceded their defeat and had surrendered the spoils of war from the raids. The Right Column marched against the western Sailo[7] chiefs, the sons of Lalpuithanga – Lalsavunga and Bengkhuaia, from whose village Mary Winchester was rescued. T.H.Lewin writes of the success of the Right Column of the expedition in that Mary Winchester had been recovered, hundreds of captives were released, the two powerful tribes (the Sailos and the Haulawngs) had been "effectively subjugated" and twenty villages that had resisted were destroyed, their chiefs having submitted and entered into engagement for "future good behavior" (288). The land had been thoroughly surveyed during the expedition thus making the planning of future expeditions easier. This expedition brought about a promotion of commercial interaction through the establishment of markets at Tipai Mukh at the confluence of Barak (*Tuiruang*) and Tipai (*Tuivai*) rivers, Lushai Hat on the Sonai (*Tuirial*) river and Jhalnachara on the river Dhaleshwari (*Tlawng*) (Verghese and Thanzawna, 247). Following the policy of conciliation, the British did not exercise any direct interference or control over the Mizos. In the years that followed there was relative peace, with minor raids along the frontiers. However on 3rd February, 1888, Lieutenant J.F.Stewart and three others, two of whom were British, were killed by a group led by the chief, Hausata near Rangamati. It is said that he was out on a raid to fulfill the demand of his father-in-law for the heads of two *vai*[8] men so as to ensure the return of his wife who had returned to her father's house (Verghese and Thanzawna, 274). This incident became

[7]*Sailo*: The name of the *Lushai* ruling clan. There were Chiefs from other clans as well.
[8]*Vai*: A non-Mizo, referring to a person from the plains. A foreigner who is not European.

a precursor to more raids during the year in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. A punitive expedition was felt necessary to avenge the deaths of the British officers, and also to construct a road into Shendu (Pawih) country and establish an advanced post (which was set up at Lunglei) (Chambers, 93-94). This 1889 expedition was led by Colonel F.V.G.Tregear.

In 1889, a large-scale expedition was launched aiming to punish raiders from the Chin Hills of Burma and of the Lushai Hills in which forces from Assam, Bengal and Burma took part. This expedition was called the Chin-Lushai Expedition of 1889-90, the second of the large-scale expeditions against the Mizos. The object of the expedition was to,

> …firstly, punitively visit certain tribes that have raided and committed depredations in British territory, and have declined to make amends or to come to terms; secondly *to subjugate tribes as yet neutral*, but now, by force of circumstances brought within the sphere of British domination; thirdly, to explore and open out as much as can be done in the time, the, as yet only partly known, country between Burma and Chittagong; and lastly, if the necessity arises, to establish semi-permanent posts in the regions visited *so as to ensure complete pacification and recognition of British power*. (Robert Reid, 14; my emphasis).

Although this expedition led to the establishment of forts at Aizawl and Lunglei, both strategically located and important in maintaining the British hold over the Mizo chiefs and to the construction of roads into the heart of the land, it took much more effort both military and financial, to bring the Mizo chiefs under subjugation. To facilitate their objectives and for administrative purposes, the British had divided the Mizo territory into the north, i.e. the North Lushai Hills with its headquarters in Aizawl and the south, i.e. the South Lushai Hills with its headquarters in Lunglei. The northern and southern regions were unified, forming the Lushai Hills District in 1898. The introduction of “Land Settlement” by the first Superintendent, Lt. Col. John Shakespear brought about lasting changes in the Mizo way of life for, in this system, each chief was allotted a certain area within which he and his people could move around. Thus the inter-village rivalry and wars which

were often caused on "slight grounds" (Robert Reid, 3) were effectively put to an end.

Although the chiefs retained much of their administrative powers, they no longer had sole authority but rather had become mere extensions of the British administration through the C.I., the Circle Interpreter. For administrative purposes, the Lushai Hills was divided into Circles of 10 to 20 chiefs who elected representatives for their respective circles in the District Chief's "Durbar" or Conference. Since all information between the government and the chiefs came to be passed through the Circle Interpreter, he came to possess the same if not more influence than the village chief in some villages. This threat to the powers of the chiefs not only came from powerful external forces but also through the Mizo society, itself reeling under external influences.

The Cultural Aspect:

In his *Handbook of the Lushai Country* (1899), Captain O.A.Chambers states that the Lushais have no coherence of government or policy but that they speak one language and follow the same customs with slight differences (67). However, traditional oral narratives tell a different story. Even a reading of the colonial texts points to a community that was well organized and coherent. The Mizo community was an egalitarian one although there was a Chief or *Lal* who was head of the community and whom everyone looked up to. The chief led his people in times of war and was a father-figure to whom the people could turn to solve their problems and to guide them in troubled times. Although the chief was the "supreme administrative head whose word was law within the limits of his territory" (Verghese and Thanzawna, 38) a council of elders or *Upate*[9] helped him in administering the village. Verghese and Thanzawna write that the actual control wielded by the chief depended on his personal character. A strong chief would have the support of his elders whereas a weak chief would be compelled to agree with the decisions of his elders even if his views were contrary to theirs (41). Further, the people were free to migrate to other villages, albeit with the chief's permission. Thus, the powers of a

[9]*Upate*: Plural form of *Upa.* Puilura had five *Upa*.

chief were kept in check as a chief who ruled arbitrarily could potentially be left without subjects. This being said, the village and the land belonged to the chief who distributed the land for cultivation to the people and hence, was entitled to a portion of the harvest of each family. In addition, he received royalty from anything that the people got out of the bounty of the land – the right front leg of every wild animal killed in his land, salt springs, fishing expeditions and honey. Further, anyone who sought the protection of the chief was saved, even from imminent death. This was true even for murderers whose guilt was public knowledge. However, the person seeking protection would become dependent on the chief and become his *bawi*[10]and be compelled to become a part of and work in the chief's household. No one else could have a *bawi*. The chief's house held central place in the village. Close to it would be established the *zawlbuk* or the bachelors' house where all able bodied men of the village were required to sleep as security for the whole village. The rest of the villagers would construct their houses around these structures, with the houses of the elders closest to the center.

The men were mostly occupied with hunting thus providing meat not just for their own family but also for the entire village, and with raids on neighbouring areas. Within the village, they built and repaired the houses, cleared the land for cultivation and helped during harvest time (Chambers, 69). The women would take care of household chores, the cooking, provided clothing for the entire family and also "do the greatest part of the weeding and harvesting". They would grow the cotton, harvest it and spin it before weaving them into cloths. In essence, each Mizo household was "capable of existing on its own labours" (Shakespear, 17). Young women were always expected to be light-footed, helpful and cheerful in their duties. Though the bulk of the domestic work fell on the hands of the women, they were actually not subjugated in the sense of the word as we use it today. To borrow Ania Loomba's words, the society was women-friendly and they were treated with the courtesy deserving of the recognition of their work which was so "crucially tied to producing food and fodder" (251).

[10]*Bawi*: A bondsman, a vassal, a serf, a slave. Though translated as slave in J.H. Lorrain's *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*, it does not have the same connotations as in the West. Joy L.K.Pachuau and Willem Van Schendel have defined it as a person who has sought a chief's protection, and his/her descendents (439)

The *zawlbuk* was not only a security measure for the village but also served as a training ground for the boys and young men of the village. After the evening meal, the men were required to report to the *zawlbuk* from where they would set off for the houses of the maidens to woo them. For those who stayed behind, there were always a group of elders around the fireplace who would regale the youth with tales of hunts and of their experiences. This, James Dokhuma writes, was where the youth learnt of their history, of the deeds of the brave men of the past, the customs and laws and even about women. There was no topic that was unsuitable in the *zawlbuk*. This was also where war strategies were planned and all matters except that which were of utmost secrecy were discussed. The young boys learnt to wrestle and the youth practiced wrestling on the floor of the *zawlbuk* (187). Agriculture being the main livelihood, took central stage in the lives of the people. At the height of harvest time, the villages looked deserted with only children and old people left behind while all others took to the *lo* or *jhums*[11]. The *lo* of individual families lay close together for purposes of security as well as to help each other out with the labour. At times when the *lo* lay far from the village, a camp was set up at a central location so that the burden of setting up camp was shared by those whose *lo* were close by. This was done at the time of preparing the land for cultivation as well as at the time of harvest.

Even the major festivals were inextricably linked to the agricultural cycle. The *Chapchar Kut*[12]was the most important of the festivals. It was held after the clearing of the jungle in preparation of the *lo* for cultivation and while waiting for the cut vegetation to dry before burning it. The process of clearing the jungle was an arduous work hence the festivities were very much looked forward to by everyone and celebrated with much feasting and zeal. The *Mim Kut* was celebrated after the harvest of maize to commemorate the dead. In this festival, a portion of the maize harvest is placed at the grave of a dead relative. It is a solemn festival and not given to merry-making. The *Pawl Kut* is the oldest festival of the Mizos and second in importance to the *Chapchar Kut* and is held at the end of harvest, when food is plentiful. In addition to the feasts that held center stage in the festivals, *zu* or fermented rice beer, flowed in abundance so much so that the feasting would

[11] *Jhoom*/*Jhum*: Land that is cultivated after clearing forests usually by burning
[12] *Chapchar Kût*: Name of spring festival held between the cutting and the burning of the jhooms.

continue so long as there was *zu*. Shakespear noted that it is not very intoxicating but contains much nourishment (38). It was an important component of every ceremony and event of note, whether it is of celebration or of mourning. When *zu* was used in ceremonies, it was not open for all to drink but only for specific people depending on the ceremony. James Dokhuma writes that although *zu* was the main drink served to visitors and was easily available, the young men only drank in times of festivities and the maidens never touched it unless coerced to do so during festivities. Therefore, one would never see a drunken youth in a Mizo village. Even when the old men found themselves intoxicated, they would state to all that they were in no condition to make any decision (183).

The Mizo society was self-regulatory in that though it was permissive in almost every matter, including pre-marital sex, there was always a clause added to safeguard the reputation and good name of the individuals involved and avert disproportionate occurrences of such incidents. It was so, that no-one could take undue advantage over a situation or anyone and in turn be protected as well. In this way, it could be said that anyone could do as they wished so long as it did not encroach on others' freedom or sabotage anyone else's reputation. Another regulatory code of ethics that was a way of life for the Mizo was the concept of *Tlawmngaihna*[13] or the spirit of selfless service for others. Even from an outsider's point of view, it could be seen as a "moral code" that encouraged the Mizo to be "courteous, unselfish, courageous, and industrious, always ready to help others, even at a considerable inconvenience to oneself, and that he must try to surpass others in doing his ordinary daily tasks efficiently" (McCall, 94). Additionally, the achievements required by *Sakhua*[14]in the Mizo's personal pursuit for a restful after-life involved service to the community through his deeds. These achievements were rather a way of life that was intrinsic and inseparable from everyday life. *Sakhua* may be called the traditional religion of the Mizos though it was not so much a religion in the sense we understand today. *Sakhua* could not be performed without

[13] *Tlawmngaihna*: Selfless, unselfishness, of being self-sacrificing, being unselfish. The spirit of selfless service for others, of putting the welfare of others before oneself.
[14]*Sakhua*: Religion or religious rites and ceremonies. Religious, pious, or devout. It originally referred to an object of worship, a god or an ancestor who is worshipped or the spirit who presides over the house or household.

the *Sadâwt*[15]who was assisted by the *Tlahpawi*[16]. These were the only people who could slaughter an animal for sacrifice. For the rest of the public it was *thianglo*[17]or too sacred.

Zaliana writes in *Mizo Sakhua* (Mizo Religion) (2013) that it was believed that after death, all souls walked towards *Rih dil*[18] and then returned to their village for three months. Thereafter, the soul would once again walk towards *Rih dil* and thence, to *Hringlang tlang*[19]. From this mount, the soul would look back at the land of the living with longing. Further on however, the soul would inevitably come across the *Hawilopar*, literally meaning the "flower of not turning back". Upon plucking the flower, the soul would magically lose all desire to return to the land of the living. On walking further, the soul would come across the *Lungloh tui*[20], the water by which the soul would forget everything connected to the land of the living. On travelling further, the soul would reach a crossroad called *Zingvanzawl* a place which every soul had to cross so as to reach the village of the dead, *mitthi khua*[21]. At the place, a man named Pu Pawla would shoot at the souls with his large *sairawkherh* or slingshot, the pellets of which were said to be the size of eggs. Only the souls of those who had performed the *Thangchhuah*[22], babies, virgins and men who had slept with women were allowed to pass through unscathed. It was believed that the souls lived in the *mitthi khua* in much the same manner as in the land of the living. Beyond the *mitthi khua*, there was another place known as *pialral*[23] where the

[15]*Sadâwt*: A private exorcist or priest, especially as are employed by ruling chiefs. A person who performs the sacrifices and ceremonies concerned with *Sakhua*
[16]*Tlahpawi*: Assistant priest.
[17]*Thianglo*: To be unlawful, wrong, unlucky, inauspicious, ill-omened, tabooed, sacred, interdicted, forbidden, prohibited, ceremonially unclean. *Thianglo* originally carried with it the idea of misfortune or even death being likely to follow any act so designated.
[18]*Rih dil*: The name of a lake (dil) to the east of *Lushai* (located within the border of Myanmar), said to be passed by departed spirits on their way to *Mitthi khua.*
[19]*Hringlang tlang*: The name of a mythical mountain on the way to *Mitthi khua*, from which the spirits of the departed look back and view with longing the world of man which they have left behind.
[20]*Lungloh tui*: The name of a mythical spring on the way to *Mitthi khua* beyond *Hringlang Tlang* (of which the spirits of the departed drink and lose all their longings to return to earth).
[21]*Mitthi khua*: Literally means 'dead man's village", it is the abode of departed spirits.
[22]*Thangchhuah*: The title given to the man who had distinguished himself by killing a certain number of different animals in the chase or by giving a certain number of public feasts. The wife of such a man also shares his title, and they and their children are allowed to wear the *thangchhuah puan* (the name of a cloth worn as a mark of distinction by one who has the coveted title of *Thangchhuah*). The possession of this title is regarded by the *Lushai* as a passport to *Pialral* or Paradise
[23]*Pialral*: The *Lushai* Paradise – literally the further side of the *Pial* river.

souls need not work but could live on a ready harvest. For the Mizo, this was the ultimate state of bliss, to have an uninterrupted supply of food without having to work for it (15-17).

The *Thangchhuah* was a title which guaranteed a person's soul to direct entry into *pialral*. James Dokhuma writes that *Thangchhuah* could be achieved in two ways, *In lama Thangchhuah* i.e. by fulfilling certain criteria to prove excellence in the domestic sphere or *Ram lama Thangchhuah* i.e., by extraordinary feats in hunting. To achieve the *Ram lama Thangchhuah* one had to have shot a *sakhi* (deer), a *savawm* (bear), a *sele*[24](gayal), a *zukchal* (sambar stag), a *sanghal* (wild pig or boar) besides having killed a *rulngan*, a large poisonous snake and a *muvanlai* (hawk). Some would also include the flying lemur, the *vahluk* to the list. However, to fulfill these criterion, it wasn't enough to have killed these animals but it was also required that an *aih* [25] be performed over the animals. To achieve *In lama Thangchhuah,* one had to perform a number of sacrifices and ceremonies that involved the slaughter of *vawkpa sût nghâk*[26]a number of times besides providing feasts for the community with an abundance of *zu* (36-48).

The significance of *zu* and its prominence in all ceremonies and celebrations of the Mizo can be understood from the time, resources and the meticulous care it took to brew it. It may be said that it is from this point of view that it was also served to esteemed visitors to honour them and the drinking of it is considered to be a privilege which is not to be abused. *Zupui*[27] and *Zufang*[28] are the two indigenous rice beers and are called different names depending on the occasion in which they are

[24]*Sele*: Also called *Sial*. A wild gayal or mithan, also known as gaur.
[25]*Aih*: Modification of *ai*. To sacrifice a domestic animal and perform a ceremony over or for (a wild creature in hunting or a foe killed in fighting). This is done with a view to getting the spirit of the slain under the power of the slayer after death, and also to protect him from evil consequences during this life.
[26]*Vawkpa sût nghâk*: A hog which has been dedicated and set apart for a sacrifice to one's *Sakhua*. To sell such a pig is considered *thianglo* and likely to bring about death. The male pig (*vawkpa*) was usually not slaughtered without reason and was reserved for sacrifice during ceremonies. If he had more than one, the pig had to be the biggest of the males reared by the person performing the ceremony. It is called so because the slaughtered pig's head was to be hung on the *char-sut* i.e. the post at the back of the house. So, in essence, the male pig is waiting (*nghak*) to be hung on the post (*sût)*.
[27]*Zupui*: Also fermented rice and its liquor brewed in a large pot and used on important occasions and sacrifices.
[28]*Zufang*: Fermented rice and its liquor made in a smaller pot than ordinary beer or *zupui* and used during less important occasions.

served. Depending on the occasion, the preparation of *zu* also differed – the quantity to be prepared, the involvement of the community as also a separate concoction for children which was less intoxicating. Thus, it was not only an integral part of the Mizo *Sakhua* without which any sacrifice or ceremony could take place but also of the communal way of Mizo life.

It was this aspect of the Mizo life that the Christian missionaries took exception to, despite the alacrity of the acceptance and conversion to Christianity by the Mizo society. The continuance of its consumption came to signify the unwillingness to give up the old indigenous ways and the abstinence of it, the complete acceptance of Christianity. In addition to these practical facets, the indigenous religion held in high regard the world of spirits and believed in the involvement of spirits in much of human life. All illness and disease or misfortunes were believed to be caused by evil spirits or *Huai*[29]. Hence, sacrifices were often made to appease these spirits. The kind of sacrifice required was decided by the *Puithiam*, the priest or the sorcerer, and usually involved the slaughter of animals. That being said, it was believed that above these *huai* was the all-powerful creator *Pathian*[30]who blessed and protected humans but was not much concerned with their everyday life. *Pathian* was believed to live in the skies and could not be seen (Zaliana, 54). Perhaps it is because of this that Pu Lianzika, an old priest of the chief of Mualpheng village, was quoted by Zaliana saying that rather than the *Sakhua* being the worship of a known God, it was rather the search for a God they were unsure of (55). This being was worshipped separately with all due ceremony. Another being was believed to exist, the *Khuavang*, much like *Pathian*, and sometimes referred to in the same vein. It was considered to be more concerned with man and more involved with his daily life. It sometimes appeared to people, reportedly as "a man of huge stature" (Shakespear, 67) but it was believed that anyone who saw him would fall ill (61). As against the many *huai*, there were as many good spirits.

[29]*Huai*: An evil spirit, a demon, a devil, a nat.
[30]*Pathian*: The all powerful creator was called *Pathian* who blessed and protected humans but was not much concerned with their everyday life. God, the Giver and Preserver of Life. It also refers to people who are Godly, pious, religious, and devout. The missionaries continued its usage to refer to God the Father since it has the same connotations.

Perhaps, as it has often been said, it was because of this belief in an almighty being, *Pathian*, that the Mizos were open to the concept of a one supreme God and were ready to accept Christianity without much reserve. The Gospel had become widely accepted in Mizoram in as less a time as forty years, with the majority of the Mizo population professing to be Christians.

Christianity and its Impact:

Rev. Williams was the first missionary to set foot in Mizoram on 20th March, 1891. It was through his initiatives that the Lushai Hills became a Mission Field of the Welsh Presbyterian Church. However, missionary work began only with the arrival of Rev. J. Herbert Lorrain and Rev. Fred W. Savidge of the Arthington Aborigines Mission on 11th January, 1894 at Aizawl. It was Lorrain who reduced the Mizo language to writing and by 1897 they had translated the Gospels of St. Luke, St. John and the Acts of the Apostles (Verghese and Thanzawna, 320). They were joined by Rev. D. E. Jones, the first of the Welsh Mission missionaries, before their departure from Mizo territory. It is said that Rev. D. E. Jones learnt an average of 90 words a day (320). He was later joined by Rev. Edwin Rowlands in 1898. In 1903, Rev. Lorrain and Rev Savidge returned to Mizoram under the Baptist Mission to the southern parts of Mizoram, setting up their headquarters at Serkawn, near Lunglei. Rev. Lorrain's brother, Rev R.A.Lorrain and his wife started an independent Lakher Pioneer Mission at Serkawr. They were later joined by Mr. and Mrs. Lorrain Foxall. Miss E. M. Chapman and Miss M. Clark reached Lunglei in 1919 and worked for the women and children and started a school for girls (323). It was the influence of these early missionaries and their pioneering work that has effected such deep-seated changes in all spheres of the Mizo's life.

The most prominent and precursor of these changes is the establishment of the written script for the Mizo language, and the introduction of western education to the Mizo. These two factors were not only instrumental in widening the Mizo's horizon but also catapulted him to a world hitherto unknown to him. Even graver, was its impact on the structure of the Mizo society itself. A new "articulate Lushai" who came to form an oligarchy (as Major A.G.McCall observed) rose from the schools run by the missions (216-217). They were the educated and the salaried,

employed by the missions and the government and hence very much influential both materially and socially. It was this "articulate Lushai" who was instrumental in disseminating the message of the Bible and in propagating the ways of the white man. They were also responsible for the setting of new societal rules that were required to fill the void left in Mizo society in the wake of numerous and rapid administrative and religious transformations. In this way, the small European population that existed in Mizoram was able to hold a hegemonic control over the population through "*cultural denigration* – the conscious and unconscious oppression of the indigenous personality and culture by a supposedly superior racial or cultural model" (Ashcroft et.al., 2017a, 9).

Old traditions had to make way for the new. In order to show a complete submission to the tenets of Christianity, one had to outwardly renounce and reject the most visible symbols of the indigenous religion – the drinking of *zu* and the wearing of *Kelmi* charm[31].The belief in the *Kelmi* charm was such that Verghese and Thanzawna, writes that no one would relinquish the charm unless a person had serious intention of becoming a Christian, to publicly testify that he no longer had any faith in the effectiveness of the Mizo religion and, the giving up of drinking of *zu* signified the giving up of the practice of the religion (322). The Christian concept of salvation was vastly different from that of the Mizo concept of attaining admittance into *pialral*. In the Mizo concept, the individual's fate is bound one way or another, to his or her service to the community whereas as Major A. G. McCall notes, Christianity emphasized on individual salvation after death, thus encouraging a sense of the importance of the individual (264). What was traditionally a society that was inter-dependent and based on community was now beginning to develop individualistic tendencies.

Furthermore, the women who had been the silent backbone of the society now became even more sidelined in the emerging new society. The women had no doubt, borne the burden of shouldering the responsibilities for all chores considered

[31]*Kelmi* charm: The tuft of the tail of a goat which had been sacrificed. This tuft was worn around the neck of the person for whom the goat was sacrificed as a charm to ward off evil spirits. The owner never parts with it, and if misplaced, another goat is sacrificed in its place; else it was believed that a misfortune or illness would befall the owner. One parted with it only to prove that he was a Christian and ready to abandon the traditional religion.

domestic – housework, carrying of firewood and water sometimes from great distances and the majority of the work at the *lo*, leaving the men free to protect and guard the villages from enemies and wild animals and also to hunt and raid enemy villages. Despite the existence of derogatory remarks and incidences of violence against women, the indigenous social mores and structure had many provisions to protect the honour and to safeguard the women. In many ways, the women were treated at par with the men. They were protected from exploitation and defamation in much the same way as the men and accorded the same judicial treatment as the men folk. With the introduction of western education, the women began to be left behind as they continued to tend to the same duties as they traditionally did, whereas the men were no longer bound by their traditional roles and were duty free to pursue advancements in the new social set-up.

The missions soon became aware of this glitch and saw the need for women missionaries. Accordingly, Miss E. M. Chapman and Miss M. Clark in the south and, Mrs. D.E. Jones, Miss K. Huges and Miss G.R. Roberts in the north worked with the women and girls. Schools for girls were opened amidst opposition from the men who considered women incapable of understanding the teachings, hymns and prayers (Verghese and Thanzawna, 332) and claimed that the women would no longer have time for their duties if they were to attend school (323). However, the girls attending the school proved themselves to be good pupils even while fulfilling their duties in the house. Eventually, the women too became a part of the progress of the Mizo society brought on by the white man. The change in the role and the weakening of the influence of the chiefs on the community, the self-regulatory social set-up becoming redundant, the rise of the educated and salaried class, the change in aspirations of the public, the shift in the object of adulation of the society on individual achievements – all led to the rejection of all practices of old, some out-rightly and some, gradually. The institution of the *zawlbuk* slowly became obsolete with the changing social structure. Even the most revered of Mizo qualities, *Tlawmngaihna* began to lose much of its luster. The motivation for selfless service for others was no longer as strong as it was in the past. The social mechanisms that encouraged, challenged, supported, and rewarded such actions had steadily been abandoned with the steady acceptance and embracing of the white man's ways. With

just a few missionaries, much of the responsibility of spreading the Good News of the Bible lay on the shoulders of the newly converted Christians. In time, it also became their prerogative to shoulder the responsibility of the church's administration which the missionaries took great care to ensure would be self-supporting and self-administering. It came to be that the indigenous social power relations became distorted, the chiefs were becoming nominal heads with the newly educated people gradually forming an oligarchy by virtue of the advantage they had through their employment by the government or the Church. The western form of the sacred had been "appropriated and transformed as a means of local empowerment" (Ashcroft et.al., 2017a, 212).

Ngugi Wa Thiong'o writes that the act of interpreting the other culture in the colonial context has made us "captives of the foreign culture and alienating us from our own", "instead of clarifying real connections and each culture thereby illuminating the other" (389). So too for the Mizo, all things *sap*[32]or pertaining to the white man came to be highly regarded while the indigenous came to represent the inferior or backward. These, along with the administrative reforms imposed upon the Mizo put into motion the never-ending pursuit to bury the Mizo, the Other, and become centered in the manner of the white man who had proved himself superior. This pursuit became a startling reality in as short a time as thirty-eight years after the arrival of the missionaries.

In his book, *Lushai Chrysalis* (2015) Major A.G.McCall writes that when he reached Aizawl in 1932, the "young bloods" wore "bright blue double breaster jackets, light coloured trousers … wooly berets" and carried Oxford bags. As for the young women, though they wore the *puan*[33], the traditional hand-woven cloth, they wore blouses made of material that was probably "non-Lushai origin". As for the "old-time villagers, sometimes half naked", they were "visibly scorned by the sophisticated townee, padding along softly" (25). It was not lost to him that he was witnessing this in the midst of and in contrast to the wilderness he and his travel companions had journeyed through to reach Aizawl. He observed that clothes had

[32]*Sap*: the European, a sahib, a white man, a government or other official.
[33]*Puan*: Cloth, garment, clothing. It also refers to the traditional hand-woven cloth worn by women.

taken on a fresh significance, which he felt was psychological in nature – clothed in the likeness of the white man, the Mizo "feels himself no longer a savage" (29).

This description of the Mizo is widely different from earlier records.

In his 1912 *The Lushei Kuki Clans* (1983), Lt. Colonel J. Shakespear described the dress of the Mizo as simple and made of cotton grown locally and woven by the womenfolk. The garment consisted of,

> a single cloth about 7 feet long and 5 wide. It is worn as follows: – One corner is grasped in the left hand, and the cloth is passed over the left shoulder, behind the back, under the right arm across the chest and the end thrown over the left shoulder (8).

It is remarkable that within such a short span of twenty years such an indelible change had taken place. Even at that time, this outward expression of the internal changes in the society could hardly be ignored even by the *sap*, the white man.

As Stuart Hall puts it, culture had become a site of ongoing struggle (Procter, 11) for the Mizo. With international and interstate boundaries separating them, it became increasingly difficult to maintain a sense of the indigenous identity. At the same time; it became progressively more important not just to preserve but to nurture it in the face of the onslaught of stronger and more dominant cultural influences, at first of the British and later of mainstream India, even within the territorial boundaries of Mizoram. With this in view, the Young Mizo Association (from here on will be referred to as the YMA) was established on 15th June, 1935 as the Young Lushai Association (YLA). The missionaries had come to realize the need for an alternative to the regulating and educational function of the *zawlbuk*. The YMA was established with this view in mind, the motto of the organisation being "YMA *chu ṭanpui ngaite ṭanpuitu a ni"* i.e. "YMA is the help for the helpless[34]" with a view to preserve and nurture Mizo culture and Christianity. The organisation has grown and is at present the largest and single most influential group in Mizoram with a membership that encompasses all Mizos from the age of 14 no matter the place of residence. It has taken upon itself the task of ensuring the continuation of

[34] Loose translation by the scholar solely for the purpose of this study.

commendable characteristics of indigenous Mizo society such as *tlawmngaihna*, the traditional dances and clothes, the traditional funeral practice of comforting and assisting the family of the dead, and even burying of the dead. With the increase in anti-social activities previously foreign to Mizoram, the YMA has also taken up the role of vigilante, collaborating with government authorities. With the approval and support of the people in all its initiatives, the YMA has come to represent the Mizo community and stand for all that is Mizo.

With "Protection of Land and Tribe" as their *kumpuan*[35] for 13 years, the importance of the issue for the YMA is evident. Analogous to this is the sentiment of the public in general. With more than half the population as members of the YMA, it is apparent that the topics of "territory" and "identity" and their conservation and protection are close to the heart of the Mizo people.

Territoriality and the *Ram leh Hnam Humhalh* ("Protection of Land and Tribe") Debate:

Traditionally, the Mizo's concept of territory was not a permanent one. For the Mizo, territory was porous, i.e. it extended as much as he was able to traverse, as much as he was able to defend and utilize. Whatever territory that the Mizo defended bore the name of the chief although it was all utilized by the whole community. This is evident in the chief's management of the land and his reservation to the right of royalty to all that was produced and procured from the land.

The Mizo required a vast tract of land to support his swidden cultivation for which huge areas of forests were cleared. Sometimes, the *lo* lay so far from the villages as to require the people to make temporary settlements to stay for the duration of the sowing and harvesting periods. C. Lianthanga writes that the Mizos usually did not establish their village in the same location for more than ten years owing to their swidden cultivation for which the search for fertile land was never-ending (95). Other reasons for migration to new locations were that they were at war, or there was disease and death, or due to various superstitious or religious beliefs and lastly, due to famines (Dokhuma, 3-4).

[35] *Kumpuan*: Proclamation for the year *kum* (year) *puan* (proclaimation).

There were two ways in which the Mizos migrated or *ram zuan*[36]to new places. The first, James Dokhuma writes was when a move had to be made in a hurry for fear of an enemy. Then, the whole village moved at the same time, as in one body, for safety. When they would reach a place considered suitable by the chief and his elders, the whole village would settle down until everyone gradually found their places in the new village. However, in peaceful times, great care was taken to select a location and the process of migration could even take up to two years to complete (6). J.M.Llyod had rightly observed that the Mizo were very sensitive to the fact that certain places and areas were healthier than others and presumably had fewer evil spirits or *ramhuai*[37] (211). A group of selected men would scout the land that was marked to check its suitability to establish a village. They would take with them a rooster. If it crowed during the night, the place would be considered healthy enough to set up their village. It the cock failed to crow, the place would be considered unhealthy and a search for a new place would begin anew. Even if the cock crowed, the men would continue to scout the area for a good source of water and ascertain that the lay of the land would be able to accommodate the population comfortably. If the group was satisfied, then all the men from the village would set out and set up camp at the selected location i.e. *pachhuak*[38] to begin construction. At the site of the new village, the men would first collectively build the chief's house at the most central and convenient place with space enough for the *zawlbuk* to be constructed close to it. Then, the men would allot land for each family and they would proceed to build their own houses after which they would work together to build houses for families without male members (Dokhuma, 5-6). C. Lianthanga writes that last of all, they would construct the *zawlbuk* (96). On the other hand, James Dokhuma writes that the *zawlbuk* was constructed right after the chief's house was constructed (6). Whatever the case may be, the *zawlbuk* was built with great care given the importance it occupied in the society. Further, it was the place where all visitors would be accommodated and also serve as a meeting place on certain occasions so it

[36]*Ram zuan*: To prepare *jhoom*/*jhums* near to where a new village will be built the following season. To migrate.
[37]*Ramhuai*: Evil Spirit, demon, devil.
[38]*Pachhuak*: The event when all the able bodied men of the village set out to achieve a certain task.

was imperative that the structure be impressive. It was said that the *zawlbuk* was a reflection of the society in any village. After the planning of the new village was completed, the people would slowly move into the newly constructed houses. The chief and his family would sometimes, especially in peaceful times, be the last to leave the old village.

The decision to migrate to new locales was made by the chief and his elders without consultation with the people. The people in their turn had full faith in the decision of their chief and his elders that there was never any dissent or protest against such frequent and troublesome moves. They believed the moves were made with the best of intentions for the good of all (Dokhuma, 6). The chief would lay claim on the land surrounding the village for cultivation by the people. It was ascertained by the chief and his elders that the area selected was large enough for all the families in the village to each have their own *lo*. Even before *Vai len*[39] i.e. the advent of the white man, the land was carefully studied and only a section of it would be utilized for cultivation to ensure that the land could sustain the population for a long period of time. For this reason, *ram bawh*[40]would take place, i.e. the land would be surveyed for cultivation along a certain direction leaving the rest to lie untouched to preserve its fertility. Another important reason for *ram bawh* was the need for security. Given that the Mizos lived in hostile conditions, from warring neighbouring villages to raiders from the east, measures always had to be taken to ensure the safety of all. Therefore, even the *lo* had to be situated as close together as was possible.

Ram ṭheh[41]or the distribution of land was done with care and with as much even handedness as was possible. Before the actual distribution, the chief would have the village-crier or *tlangau* [42] announce the area open for cultivation so that individuals would have the opportunity to study the lay of the land. The chief would have first priority to choose his *lo* so his *bawi* and other dependents would have work and for their sustenance. The elders would be the next to select their choice of land.

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[39]*Vai len*: The term used to refer to the expeditions led by the white man into Mizo territory. The word, *Vai* is used because the soldiers were mostly *Vai*.
[40]*Ram bawh*: The particular area of forest which a number of families, or the whole village, is cultivating at the same time.
[41]*Ram ṭheh*: To throw open for cultivation land not ordinarily available i.e. the distribution of forest land for cultivation.
[42]*Tlangau*: The village crier whose duty it is to make known the orders of the chief. A town crier.

After them, the *ramhual*[43], i.e. the people who were considered and expected to have a better harvest than the rest, would be given the opportunity to choose their *lo*. These people were expected to contribute more rice than the others did towards the chief's coffers. In some cases, the people in the chief's good graces would next be given the chance to make their choice. Lastly, the *vantlang*[44] or the commoners would have their turn. James Dokhuma writes in *Hmanlai Mizo Kalphung* (Mizo Way of Life in the Olden Days) (1992) that since there were not too many families in the previous categories, in truth, there was always a vast tract of good fertile land left for the *vantlang* to choose from. Thus, competition was usually fierce. To ensure that all had equal opportunity, the *tlangau* would announce at the break of dawn that the selection of land was open to all. He writes that in some villages, the break of dawn was taken to be the signal for this. In either case, there would be people camping at the entrance to the village waiting to be the first to set out towards the *ram bawh* since the first to reach a place was considered the holder of that land. Sometimes competition was so close that the men would throw their *chempui*[45] and the one whose *chempui* landed first would become the holder of the land (7-10).

This process of distribution of arable land was repeated each year until it became time to seek a more fertile land and move on. Territory therefore was not constant but rather fluid, for it depended on the ability to stake claim over an area and defending it, and not the expansion of a permanent area under the jurisdiction of a chief. Even the raids that were carried out on other villages and on the plains people had no other motive than to either take revenge or plunder and take away valuables and headhunting was merely an incident in the raid and not the cause of it (Shakespear, 60). It was this notion of territory that was the cause of much conflict among the Mizos and also what brought the Mizo into contact with the white man in the first place. With the establishment of the British in Mizoram after the Chin-Lushai Expedition of 1889-90 and their endeavours to prevent hostilities between the villages, the way the Mizo saw and understood territory gradually underwent

[43]*Ramhual*: The principal men of a village. They were considered and expected to have a better harvest than the rest.
[44]*Vantlang*: Literally means common, average and used to refer to the general public or community.
[45]*Chempui*: A *dao*, a *Lushai* chopper used for wood-cutting and also as a weapon.

changes. Between the years 1898-99, Shakespear introduced the system of "Land Settlement" which Sir Robert Reid saw as the "greatest benefit" to the people and to subsequent administrations (61). This system was introduced upon Shakespear taking charge as the first Superintendent of the Lushai Hills District when the North and South Hills were amalgamated into one district. Under this system, each chief was given a certain area within which he and his people could move about. Within this area, the chief had to ensure that his people had enough space for cultivation. He was given the freedom to give "hamlets within his boundaries" to his sons but that the collection of house tax and carrying out of government orders would remain his responsibility (Verghese and Thanzawna, 315). Lt. Col. Shakespear was quoted as saying that "Every chief has his boundaries now and I should not subdivide the land further" (315) depicts how much had changed regarding authority over the land.

Thus, the hold of the chiefs on the land came to be bound by territorial areas with boundaries, which could no longer be navigated without consequences from an authority, which previously was not existent. However, this also meant that the chiefs also were no longer bound to their obligations towards the people as they traditionally were. Thus for some of them, there came about a change in the attitude and sense of responsibility towards their duties as chiefs of their people. Even much before the Mizo developed a sense of a permanent territory the boundaries of what would later become his *ram*[46] or land had become the source of differences. From the annexation of Cachar by the British in 1832, then under the Bengal province, to the formation of the Assam Province in 1874 under which the Lushai Hills was later included in 1898, to the formation of the state of Mizoram on 20th February, 1987 up to the present times, territorial boundaries have continued to be locations of differences and conflicts.

Territoriality was one of the key issues taken up by the early political leaders of Mizoram from the time the Mizo first became aware of the necessity of politically asserting themselves. This assertion was necessary in that the Lushai Hills was one of the Excluded Areas under the Government of India Act 1935 and so could not have any representatives in the Assam Legislative Assembly the laws of which could

[46]*Ram*: Literally means forest, jungle; country, kingdom, territory, realm, domain, land, estate, place, homeland.

not be enforced without the approval of the Governor, being a representative of the crown (Lalnithanga, 33). In their Memorandum submitted to the Advisory Sub-Committee[47] in 1947, the Mizo Union[48] insisted that the Lushai Hills be called Mizoram. They demanded "TERRITORIAL UNITY AND SOLIDARITY" (Chawngkunga, 309; as in the text) for the more than 46 tribes under the Mizo family spread over an area encompassing Manipur, Cachar, Tripura, Chittagong Hill Tracts and Burma contiguous to the Lushai Hills which was "carved out arbitrarily for administrative purposes" (306). Hence, they lay claim to all the land that was being populated by the Mizos and calling it Mizo – *ram* (land), the land of the Mizo. The memorandum also constituted a plan for the establishment of Village Councils to ensure a general system of administration to govern the villages. In addition to this, there was the issue of Mizoram's place at the advent of India's Independence – whether it would become a part of the Indian Territory or remain a British Crown Colony.

The Mizo Union leaders who wished that Mizoram would become a part of India had opposed the measures taken by the then superintendent, A.R.H. Macdonald, ICS who constituted the District Conference in January of 1946. Macdonald may have had the best of intentions for the people but it was felt that his influence would lead to Mizoram remaining a British Crown Colony. In addition, the representation of the people in the Conference was considered uneven with the chiefs and commoners both having 20 seats each as this could potentially lead to biases in decisions taken by the Conference in favour of the chiefs. On 25th April, 1952 the first Mizo Autonomous District Council formed under the 6th Schedule of Constitution of India was inaugurated by the then Chief Minister of Assam, Bisnuram Medhi. The formation of the Mizo Hills District in 1954 and its conferring

[47] Advisory Sub-Committee: Also known as the Bordoloi Sub-Committee. The Indian Constituent Assembly was formed in 1946 to constitute the Indian Constitution. An Advisory Sub-Committee for "Excluded Areas" and "Partially Excluded Areas" for north east region of India was formed for the constituent Assembly of Assam to study the "hopes and aspirations" of the hill people when the British Government decided to transfer power to the people of India (Verghese and Thanzawna, 355). The recommendations of the Committee were accepted in its entirety by the Constituent Assembly and under the 6th Schedule of the Constitution of India, all the Hill Districts of Assam were to be formed as Autonomous District Councils and ensured the representation of the tribal people in the State Legislative Assembly and in the Lok Sabha and provided for reservation of seats. This provision remained till Mizoram attained the status of Union Territory.

[48] Mizo Union: The first political party in Mizoram. It was established on 25th April, 1946.

the status of Union Territory on 21st January, 1972 and consequent statehood have ensured the representation of the Mizo people in the Indian Union. Thus, politically, the efforts of the Mizos towards asserting their identity as a people began by securing recognition as a people and through claiming a collective political territory, thus constructing their culture by transforming the "meanings of the colonial inheritance into the liberatory signs of a free people of the future" (Bhabha, 157).

Nevertheless, even after India's independence and the abolition of chieftainship in 1954, hegemonic forces have continued to influence and compel the different factors affecting Mizo identity, in the way they see themselves and the way others see them. The YMA *kumpuan*, "Protection of Land and Tribe" has therefore become instrumental in neutralising the hegemony of external forces not only through the customs and practices it nurtures in a way that is reminiscent of the *zawlbuk* of old. It is also proactive in its approach to oppose any anti-social influence that could disrupt the peace of the state and in safe-guarding what it considers the due rights of the Mizo people. This is true especially on issues of territory and indigeneity with regard to the Tuikuk (Brus) and Chakmas residing within the state and, along the borders with the state of Assam and neighbouring country of Bangladesh. In keeping with the theme of the *kumpuan*, the YMA has been instrumental in building a sense of solidarity with all the tribes across national and international boundaries that claim the same origin story, the *chhinlung chhuak*[49].

Identity:

Identity has thus become vital to the discussion of who are considered Mizo and what constitutes the construct of the Mizo today. Indeed, "… identity, even for indigenous groups, is never static, but is 'articulated' and fluid…" (Ashcroft et al, 2017b, 164). The different tribes or clans who were previously known by their individual tribe's name had come together under one identifying name, Mizo. B. Lalthangliana writes that any tribe joining the Mizo nomenclature retains their

[49]*Chhinlung Chhuak*: *Chhinlung* is the name of the mythical rock from beneath which the progenitors of most of the present human race are said to have issued. *Chhuak* means to come out of. So, *Chhinlung chhuak* refers to the people who have emerged from this mythical stone, and the term is used to refer to all the tribes who share this origin myth. Also, it is the cave from which all the Mizo tribes are believed to have emerged.

individuality but becomes a Mizo thus pointing out that the term does not belong to or signify any distinct individual tribe but rather, is one to which all can claim to be a part of (20). Before delving into the aspects of C.Lalnunchanga's Mizo, the term "Mizo" itself must be understood as to how it has become the term by which the people identify themselves. In the Memorandum submitted to the Advisory Sub-Committee of the Constituent Assembly in 1947, the Mizo Union clarified the misnomers of *Kuki*[50] and Lushai to refer to Mizos. *Kuki* was the term used to describe the hill people, the Mizos, by people from the neighbouring areas and, adopted by the British to describe the Mizos at first, while Lushai or *Lusei* referred only to a particular tribe. The word, Mizo literally means people (*mi*) of the hills (*zo*), a very appropriate description of a people who had always made their homes on the hill-tops and not surprisingly, the people used this term to describe themselves.

James Clifford writes that "(C)ommunities can and must reconfigure themselves, drawing selectively on remembered pasts" (182). Thus, the statement in the Mizo Union Memorandum was a step towards "reconfiguring" the Mizo people. It stated that the Mizo people had always been "closely knitted together by common tradition, custom, culture, mode of living, language and rites" (Chawngkunga, 306) carrying with them "their primitive customs, culture and mode of living in its purest origin, always calling and identifying themselves as *Mizo*" (307; my emphasis). It was also during this period of political awakening that the Young Lushai Association changed its name to the Young *Mizo* Association on 7th October, 1947. For the Mizos, having become "differently territorialized" (9) to use Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson's phrase, by the arbitrary division of the Mizo territory the "*ideas* of culturally and ethnically distinct places" becomes even more salient (10; emphasis as in text). Thus, it can be said that the Mizo identity was and still is being "self-fashioned" as Stephen Greenblatt termed it, out of the different tribes that are ethnically similar, i.e. they share a common ancestry, language, customs and traditions and not only by those who reside within the territorial area now known as Mizoram. The historical, being one of the constructs of ethnicity and identity, it may

[50]*Kuki*: Literally meaning "wild hill people" and used by the Bengalis to refer to the hill people living in north west Burma (now Myanmar) and north east India. The Bengalis found them culturally very backward. The British adopted the term to describe the Mizos at first (Verghese and Thanzawna, 45).

seem easy enough to resurrect the image of the historical Mizo from oral narratives and various colonial and ethnographic writings as well as the reports of the missionaries. Therefore, the "self-fashioning" of identity through literature as a "manifestation" of the author's behavior, the "expression of the codes by which that behavior is shaped" and the text as a "reflection" of those codes (Greenblatt, 2004, 250) can be observed in these selected historical works of C.Lalnunchanga. Indeed the signs of identity in his historical novels are unapologetically "invention and construction" (Ashcroft et. al, 2017a, 54), in the sense that he was writing with a purpose to re-construct the commendable characteristics of the historical Mizo.

The challenge lies in the construct of the Mizo identity in contemporary times, how to navigate the exigencies of hybridity. Although colonialism and its aftermath are topics that have been variously dealt with and understood to a certain extent, in context to how it has effectively changed the world view of the Mizo people, the new influences of neocolonialism on the contemporary Mizo are varied and devastatingly efficient in swaying the outlook of the younger generations. The Mizo today therefore is confronted with the problem of holding on to the essence of being Mizo, still bearing the burden so to say, of the remnants of colonialism. The problem lies in the fact that the Mizo today continues to see himself as *marginal*, always in the *periphery*, and continually struggling to gain admittance into the professed *center* established by its colonial past. This aspect of the modern-day Mizo is what C.Lalnunchanga delves into in his contemporary short stories. It is in these stories that he begins the process of inventing or rather, constructing the Mizo who is walking away from the periphery of his perceived colonial center towards the center of what he once understood to be the periphery. What Trinh T. Minh-ha writes about the margins being "our sites of survival" (196) and the center itself being marginal (197) becomes realized when the selected stories are taken as a whole. C.Lalnunchanga's historical characters are for that reason centered in their identity, taking pride in their Mizo-ness and knowing themselves to be no less than the white man. His contemporary characters too eventually discover their center in the Mizo identity and find their way back. However, the characters who remain adamant in seeking the center elsewhere find themselves perpetually in the margins and failing to survive.

On the same note, as Stuart Hall puts it, the Other is necessary to our own sense of identity even for the dominant powers, for "the Other is not *out there,* but *in here*" (2017, 342; emphasis as in text). In other words, the existence of the Other is crucial for the acquisition of a sense of self, as one can identify oneself partly through what they perceive they are not. On the other hand, the society, whose structure has undergone irrevocable changes, has come to exert a hegemonic presence on all aspects of life within the community. The equation has changed from the singular issue of the colonial center and marginality to include the discussion of the subaltern whose existence has had to be acknowledged. Now, the same concepts that were applied to the Mizos as a whole have found a place, though undesirable, within the community amongst their own selves – the binaries of rich/poor, male/female, educated/uneducated, salaried and unsalaried and so on. Caught between the communal nature of the tribal community and the individualistic western society, power has invariably been regulated by the *Kohhran*[51]or the church together with the YMA which have continued to maintain their influence on the society. Although the objectives of these groups aim toward the betterment and general good of all, it is inevitable that a struggle for dominance will sooner or later come into existence. Predictably, this leads to a divide in the society, the marginalization of sections of society and their suppression. While at the same time, the endeavors of the marginalized to be a part of the center becomes the cause of even more marginalization, hence in Simon During's words, giving rise to "new theoretical and political problems and intensities" (15). Michael Chapman quotes Benedict Anderson when writing about storytelling in literary history as an "attempt to capture, reorder, and even reinvent a sense of the self in society". He points out Anderson's insight that "the power holding individuals together in the community of the nation is at bottom narrative" and that the story is the most "intense and comprehensive expression of the culture, or the site where sensibility is both mirrored and actively shaped" (86). C.Lalnunchanga has done much of this in his stories and storytelling. Through his works, he explores the issues of historicity,

[51]*Kohhran*: A Christian, a member of the Christian church, a member of the Christian community. It is now used to refer to the church. Since the predominant denomination in Mizoram is Presbyterian, the term is usually taken to mean the Presbyterian Church of Mizoram

colonial hangover, marginality and power, to construct the identity of the Mizo who can successfully navigate the responsibility of their ethnic origins and meet the challenges of the contemporary world. His construct is conclusive of the importance of culture both of the past and of the present as the foundation of individual identity and hence, of the community at large.

As Kristen Holst Petersen and Anna Rutherford writes, "our 'fossil value' is constantly combating the other half" (141), the "fossil" referring to the "deep-seated antecedents" that everyone carries within themselves (139). They highlight the dangers of excessive focus on the past as it can lead to nationalism that feeds a sense of racial superiority as with the case of Nazi Germany (141). Although this fear may never be realized in the Mizo context, it does bring to the forefront the crucial matter of the folly in only taking pride in one's origins without actually participating in its preservation or conservation. It is this spirit of active participation towards the continuous construct of the contemporary Mizo that C.Lalnunchanga advocates in the selected works through his characters. As Michel Foucault states, "Nothing is fundamental. That is what is interesting in the analysis of society" (166).

The Selected Works:

The first text selected for the study, *Ka Mi Huaisen leh Ka Pasalṭha* (My Brave and Courageous Men) (2015) published in 2005, took eight long years to write. It is set in the fictitious village of Vangsen under the competent and capable chieftainship of Puilura and gives an account of the life of its residents and the daring feats of the village braves, Nghalṭhianga and his friends.

The story of the individuals is intertwined with that of the village of Vangsen. The prosperity and respect accorded to each individual is reflected upon the village. Despite the harshness of their lives and their close proximity to danger even in peaceful times, the generosity and dignity with which the people lived, is exemplary. The community rallied together in good times and much more so in hard times. This portrayal is befitting the main theme of the novel that all Mizos give their best for their land and culture so that they may proclaim without shame and with pride – "I am a Mizo" '*Mizo ka ni asin*" (C.Lalnunchanga, 2015, 7). The story is set during the

time of *thlangtlak*[52] i.e. the westward migration, which was necessitated by the nature of their swidden agricultural practice and hunting, and from which stemmed the rivalry and discord between neighbouring villages in the struggle to both extend and protect their territories. It is in due considerations to their bravery and courageous feats in these endeavours that the braves of Puilura's village of Vangsen earn their fame and the recognition of not just their village but of the entire region. This story is brought forward in the second selected text, the novel published in 2006, *Pasalṭhate Ni Hnuhnung* (Last Days of the Braves) (2007) where in Puilura and his people are now well established in their new village of Khiangzo, in their new found land of Zâwlsâng tlang. The story recounts the fearlessness of Puilura and his braves in the defense of this land against both rival chiefs and the advancing British troops.

In the match to decide the ownership of land, the depth of the spirit of *tlawmngaihna*, best explained as self-sacrifice of the braves, in what can be construed as fool-hardy, can only be understood in context to its alternative – a full blown war between the two villages. The traditional inter-village rivalry takes a back-seat with the advancing of the white man into Mizo territory. The ensuing conflicts between the two resulted in the establishment of British colonial power on Mizo soil that was to change the way of Mizo life forever. The valiant last ditched struggle of Puilura against the impositions of the British on the Mizo chiefs and their subjects can only be hailed as the actions of a man who cannot idly watch the evitable end of all that was familiar but most of all, one who refuses to be subdued by a foreign force in his own land. Puilura stood his ground against the British, firm in his belief that the Mizo chiefs were no less capable, brave nor lacking in prowess. K.N.Panikkar writes that both history and literature make social processes intelligible and literature in particular, through the medium of inter-personal relations and emotional experiences (2012, 5). C.Lalnunchanga achieves this feat through his narratives by bringing to life the insistence of the Mizo chiefs on the equality of their stance and the refusal to be sidelined during that time.

[52]*Thlangtlak*: Migrating westward; migration westward.

"Khamosh Hai Raath" (Silent is the Night) (2001) from the collection, *Vutduk Kara Meisi* (Sparks from Dying Ash) (2011) is a fictional account of a historical event that took place during Christmas of 1871. It foreshadows the advent of Christianity while narrating the shootout between the British troops and the braves from chief Lalhleia's village during the early years of the white man's entry into Mizoram. The serenity that the braves experience upon hearing the Christmas carol "Silent Night" without understanding the lyrics, prophesy the peace that Christianity will eventually bring to the land. However, the narrative mirrors the contrasts between the violence of the time and of the message of the song. Violence is perpetrated during the time known most for its message of peace and love perhaps hinting at a difference between the influence of the white man and of Christianity. The carol presented in the three languages echoes the major cultures that influence the culture and identity of the Mizo of today. Literature tries to capture the inner meaning of social transformation writes K.N.Panikkar, firstly as changes in society as experienced at the given moment in history and secondly, as the long term transformation which affects the fortunes of generations (2012, 8-9). This story does this, while at the same time, maintaining C.Lalnunchanga's ideal of the Mizo.

In contrast to these historical tales, the short stories, "*Lawmna Garden*" (Garden of Contentment), "*Baby-i Hlim Zan*" (Baby's Night of Happiness) and "*Krismas Thawnthu*" (A Christmas Story) have been selected from the collection, *Vutduk Kara Meisi* (Sparks from Dying Ash) (2011). These stories present a glimpse of contemporary Mizo society – a society that is influenced and driven by aspirations of a different kind and saddled with a complete set of problems that seem far removed from the lives of Puilura and his people but no less dangerous nor formidable. These stories are inspired by the research C.Lalnunchanga conducted for a project for MSACS (Mizoram State Aids Control Society) for an AIDS awareness campaign which gave him an insight into the lives of the call girls of Aizawl. Though seemingly in contrast, these short stories continue the thread of conviction in the Mizo way of life as portrayed in the historical novels.

In "*Lawmna Garden*" (Garden of Contentment) (2011), C.Lalnunchanga narrates the story of Sawmkimi, whose family had migrated to the capital city of Aizawl when she was only fourteen. The family's hopes for a better life are never

realized. Her feelings of inadequacy feed her desire to make a reality, her idealised picture of the "good life" to be lived in the city. Thus, four years after moving to the city, she enters into the world of prostitution and becomes a K.S.[53]. Through Sawmkimi, C.Lalnunchanga illustrates how easy it is to lose sight of the most important aspect of life, the sense of self by which a person identifies himself/herself. The harder she tried to find her place in the world, the further she got away from realising it. It is the literal re-centering of Sawmkimi through the act of walking away from the periphery/ the urban, into the center/ the rustic environs of the farm named Lawmna Garden (garden of contentment) that brings clarity and grounds her wandering soul – "The other must remain other in order to live again" (Toews, 198).

The story, "*Baby-i Hlim Zan*" (Baby's Night of Happiness) (2011) takes place in a span of twenty-four hours. Though short, it is nonjudgmental and concise in its portrayal of the duplicity of life in the city. The characters all present a different persona in public either to hide insecurities, to disguise inappropriate/unbecoming desires, to fulfill personal vendettas as also to feed/cater to addictions.

C.Lalnunchanga in telling the individual tales of these characters questions the realities of Western influences, which are widely accepted as positive, on a people whose culture and way of life bears no semblance to them. The narrative is also reflective of the profound changes in value system and highlights the apparent social hegemony along the lines of gender and of economic status. Women now seem to be pawns in the power struggle of men in a male dominated society where women are no longer treated with the courtesy and care shown to them in the past.

The rift caused by the hegemonic forces of socio-economic disparity becomes apparent in "*Krismas Thawnthu*" (A Christmas Story) (2011) which tells the story of how total strangers and unlikely companions come together in an impromptu gathering to experience the true meaning of Christmas, the spirit of brotherhood, peace, love and goodwill towards all. When a group of men, on community duty, come to disperse the group, the silent acceptance of their supposed guilt by the gathering in the face of insolent accusation is reflective of the "voiceless" other.

[53] K.S.: A prostitute, a call girl. An abbreviation of "*khawpui* service" which roughly translates as "city service".

Mineke Schipper writes that there is no neutral knowledge and that literary and theoretical texts are always subject to the narrator's perspective (46). This is very much discernable in the narratives of C.Lalnunchanga which are mostly told from the other's perspective while giving voice to an otherwise muted section of the society.

The subversive actions of Baby-i and Rinky in "*Baby-i Hlim Zan*" (Baby's Night of Happiness) (2011) by which they depict resistance to the hegemony in gender seem as an option, to be out of the reach of the "outcasts" of society in "*Krismas Thawnthu*" (A Christmas Story) (2011). The emergence of this stringent division of society on the basis of morality and socio-economic status makes for a compelling study and could be the basis for the renewed insistence on the preservation of culture and identity for as Harry Levin quotes a student[54], "Ethnic pride and ideology rise and expand as concrete ethnic life declines" (143).

C.Lalnunchanga's advocacy of a return to the traditional Mizo ideals is reflective of the statement made by Vijaya Guttal and Vikram Visaji that "(I)f imitation and internalization of the values of the dominant culture is one of the responses, to struggle to retain its identity by turning to its roots is another" (197). Indeed, the selected works of C.Lalnunchanga are clearly intended to inspire a return to one's roots. Even a cursory reading of the selected texts opens the mind's eye to vivid images of the daily lives of the pre-colonial Mizo – the rhythm and the pattern of life of the society, the palpable sense of fellowship among the individuals in the society as also the subtle order of hierarchy in the structure of the society. Not only that, the narration of the story of the individual characters and of the community in Puilura's village depict the Mizo beliefs, customs and world view without having to explain them separately. Rather, they are illustrated in such a way as to demonstrate how inherent and intrinsic they are to the lived experience of the Mizo. The depiction

[54] In "Literature and Cultural Identity", Harry Levin writes on how the traditional American concept of the melting pot has been called to question, and how ethnicity has paradoxically reasserted itself at a time when later generations of Americans have given up most of their ethnic inheritances. He also points out that the greatest writers, while fully recognising the importance of their native language and their ancestral culture, have proceeded from the unique to the universal. The student quoted was among those who attended a conference on "The Heritage and Identity of Ethnic Groups in New York" held at City College where, Levin writes, the participants were told that the "melting pot was essentially an Anglo-Saxon effort to rub out the past of others and turn Europe into a place where nobody speaks English" (143).

of life in contemporary times, in comparison, is clearly an illustration of the frustrations borne out of imitating and internalizing the white man's values – the failure of the contemporary characters to come together like the pre-colonial characters to create the feeling of brotherhood, the absence of a feeling of fellowship, and the primary focus on the individual needs and desires – all, a result of the displacement of the essence of being Mizo as illustrated in the pre-colonial society. In capturing the holistic influences of culture on the formation of character in the individual and hence the community, C.Lalnunchanga illustrates through these texts that the identity of the Mizo is indeed located in their culture.

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CHAPTER II

The Mizo as Portrayed in Selected Historical Novels

> If the past is to be called upon to legitimize the present, as it so frequently is, then the veracity of such a past has to be continuously vetted.
>
> Romila Thapar, xiv

This chapter will examine C.Lalnunchanga's interrogation of colonialism and his retrieval of history[55] through the portrayal of the pre-colonial Mizo and his society and his subsequent "revolts" against the British Raj during the early colonial period in juxtaposition with existing records and literature, while keeping in mind contemporary ideals and views on Mizo identity. Emphasis will also be given to the narrative technique that makes complete his vision of the Mizo who, he hopes, will inspire younger generations.

It is often said that reminiscences of the past have the tendency to be romanticised. Understandably, the distance that time imposes on memory will tend to influence the details of what is being remembered. It is even more evident in an oral culture, especially when memory or recollection is sometimes made to serve a certain purpose. The perspective and focus of the "remember-er" will evidently influence how a particular memory is brought back to life – through narrative or through the arts. This, however, does not necessarily mean that the "remember-er" is not unaware of other factual details of the past or even the existence of other perspectives. It becomes more of a choice, to focus on certain aspects thus foregrounding a specific perspective on the past. Just as Edward Said put it, "reading and writing texts are never neutral activities" because "there are interests, powers, passions, pleasures entailed no matter how aesthetic or entertaining the work" (1994, 385). Mineke Schipper also writes that there is no neutral knowledge and that there is always a narrator's perspective in literary texts as well as in theoretical texts (46). Such is the

[55]In *Postcolonial Literature: An Introduction* (2019), Pramod K. Nayar writes that history as a theme in postcolonial literature addresses themes under two main heads – "Interrogating colonialism" and "Retrieving history" (37).

case with C.Lalnunchanga's portrayal of who and what makes the Mizo in the selected historical narratives. For him, culture rather than genetics is what identifies man therefore, emphasis must be laid on the commendable past of the Mizo people so as to inculcate a sense of pride in our forefathers and culture, and the belief in the supremacy of the white man may be relegated to the colonial past (Lalnunchanga, 2018). By entering into a "fruitful dialogue with the past", he is able to revive the "fossils that are buried within oneself and are part of one's ancestors" (Petersen and Rutherford, 139). Be it his historical novels or short stories which have been set in contemporary times, C.Lalnunchanga structures an ideal of the identity of the Mizo and his society – one who lives in harmony with nature, is inclusive and hospitable to all but above all, is brave, sincere and diligent. This view of the pre-colonial Mizo is often contested as romanticized since it presents only the commendable aspects of life then. He is aware of this fact and does recognize the basis that necessitates some of the harsher actions of society, among which are the religious beliefs, the need to maintain order in the society and defend against enemies. As Margery Fee writes, "the ideal of 'authenticity' has proven to be, like so many others, relative and context-bound" (171). Through his narratives, C.Lalnunchanga confirms his conviction in this "romanticized" ideal laying emphasis on the positive cultural aspects of the pre-colonial Mizo culture since he recognizes the possibility of a positive influence of this image in inculcating pride in the younger generations on their ethnic heritage. In keeping with James Clifford's view that "(C)ommunities can and must reconfigure themselves, drawing selectively on remembered pasts"(182) he consciously emphasizes upon this ideal in his works.

As Ashcroft et.al. have put it, "creative writers have often offered the most perceptive and influential account of the post-colonial condition" (82). So too, C.Lalnunchanga's narratives contest the construct of the Mizo as "the other", an anthropological specimen so to say, the strange ways of whom stirred the interest of a more civilized and wiser, superior being. The exotic, lawless and often barbaric ways of the Mizo in the white man's narratives turn out to be necessitated because of the times they lived in, in his narratives. Hence, they become consequential in the selected historical texts in a way that centers them as the core to what makes a Mizo,

a Mizo rather than evidence of their barbarity, thus creating "histories not of us, but for us[56]" (Griffiths, 166).

The historical novels, *Ka Mi Huaisen leh Ka Pasalṭha* (My Brave and Courageous Men) (2015) set in 1876 and *Pasalṭhate Ni Hnuhnung* (Last Days of the Braves) (2007) set in the 1880s, tell the story of the chief Puilura and his people. The braves of Puilura's village are widely known for their bravery and courage in the defense of both their people and their land. They prove their mettle first against neighbouring villages and raiders from the east, and later against the British forces during the Second Lushai Hills Expedition, known locally as *Vai Len.* The expedition was conducted in 1888-89 by the British against the Mizo chiefs, following the raid made by the chief Hausata that killed Lieutenant J.F.Stewart and three others near Rangamati. (Verghese and Thanzawna, 272-274).

The attempt at decolonization through these historical narratives is unmistakable in C.Lalnunchanga's endeavour to reclaim history. He not only aspired, but succeeded in reconstructing the narrative of the pre-colonial Mizo and in illustrating the "exploitation, cruelty, and barbaric racism" of colonization which altered an entire race's history and destroyed a way of life (Nayar, 58), in this case, that of the Mizo people.

Resistance to Colonial Power

Discussing Adrienne Rich's collection of poems, *An Atlas of the Difficult World* (1991), Homi Bhabha commented that she is left unsatisfied with the "process of being subjected to, or the subject of, a particular history 'of one's own' – a *local* history" and that it is "by placing herself at the "intersections (and in the interstices) of these narratives" that she emphasizes "the importance of historical and cultural re-visioning" (xx). So too, C.Lalnunchanga's "historical and cultural re-visioning" of not only the pre-colonial life of the Mizo but also of the Lushai Expedition of 1888-89 and the Eastern Lushai Uprising of 1892 after it, that so successfully captures the reader's imagination of the Other-ed Mizo. The re-telling foregrounds the Mizo's perspective especially of the time when Mizoram came under British military

[56] Gareth Griffiths quotes Michael Taussig from *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man: A Study of Terror and Healing* (1986).

occupation which was an otherwise neglected point of view. As already stated, all existing written records of the battles between the Mizo and the British are military reports of the British officers to their superiors stationed either in Chittagong or Calcutta. C.Lalnunchanga's retelling of the historical events steers the reader's attention to the other side of the picture. The "Expeditions" become "Invasions" and the "Uprisings" against the British in the records become "Resistance" of the Mizo in the struggle to prevent their land from being occupied by strangers. He built on the historical facts while weaving an intricate narrative of the participation of Puilura and his *pasalṭhate* in the uneven struggle of the Mizo to safeguard their land against the British. Uneven, because the Mizo men fought with old guns[57] discarded by the Europeans while the British were equipped with the latest military inventions of the time. In all other respects, the Mizo and British were equal – in valour, strategy, physical strength and pride in their self-worth; the British in the belief of their superiority and the Mizo in the belief that they were equals and not inferior in any way to the British. C. Lalnunchanga takes great pains to assert and write into being, this point as well as the fact that contrary to colonial records, the annexation of Mizo land was not an easy walk-over for the British even with their advanced artillery. From J.M.Llyod's account, even years after the annexation of Mizoram the missionaries were often encountered with assertions of power by the chiefs despite being "reminded" of their being in the domain of the British Empire. He wrote, "It made no difference" (100). Therefore, it is fitting that Puilura made his stance clear even at the beginning of the white man's advent into Mizo territory – he would not argue if the white man tried to make a treaty but if they tried to subdue him and his people into paying taxes, they would be left with no other choice; meaning they would have to take up arms (Lalnunchanga, 2007, 180). Upon seeing the smoke clouds billowing above the villages burnt by the British as punishment for daring to cross them, Puilura declared that if they tried to burn their village too they would shoot at the white men (190).

The subjugation of the Mizo people thus did not come easy. The capitulation of the chiefs in the western regions as per military reports seemed an easy conquest

[57]Serkawn Lalmama writes that the first known gun to be brought into Mizoram was during the raid of the main Ralte village located between the Ṭiau and Rûn rivers (Lalzuithanga & Colney, 152).

but, most of them, while they conceded to the demands of the British – to pay taxes and to provide free labour – mostly did not keep their word. They might have been defeated, but they had not acquiesced to the demands of their conquerors making the Political Officer of the North Lushai Hills, McCabe[58] state in the fictive narrative that, they did not know the thoughts of the Mizos even though they thought they had convinced them (Lalnunchanga, 2007, 216). Puilura's declaration that his heart had not bowed down (207), that he had not surrendered in his heart was put into action when he and his men took part in the various offensives against the British, working together with the other chiefs in the surrounding areas like Lianphunga, Kalkhama, Nikhama, Lungliana, Thanruma, Lianhrima, Sailianpuia and Savuta to name a few. The fact that these chiefs were all historical figures serves to illustrate the extent of the resistance of the Mizo people against the advancing British forces. "*In thuhnuaia ka tluk chuan ka nunna hian awmzia a nei dâwn lo a ni*" ("if I bow before your authority, my life will have no meaning"; 207). Puilura's words must have rung true for many of the chiefs at that time, that their lives would have no meaning if they surrendered to the British. McCall's own words written in justification of the points in the document required to be signed by the chiefs appointed to the District Chief's Durbar[59] proved that these misgivings were not unfounded. The points were more or less conditions by which the chiefs "must serve in order to continue to rule" (247) and all the more offensive in that the points were very much negations of the very qualities that had stood the chiefs in good stead up till then (246-251).

Most interesting is C.Lalnunchanga's rendering of the military encounters between the Mizo *pasalṭha* and the British soldiers that took place historically – the ambush of Captain Browne[60] on his way to Changsil and the simultaneous attack at

[58]McCabe: Mr.R.B.McCabe, VCS, was appointed Political Officer after the death of Captain Herbert R. Browne, the first Political Officer of North Lushai Hills. He was called "Lalmantu" or "subduer of chiefs" by the Mizo.

[59]District Chief's Durbar: It was organised by the then Superintendent of the Lushai Hills in 1940. It was later changed to the Chief's Council. The Durbar was intended to improve the administration in the village and required the Chiefs to sign an agreement with stipulations. Although the Durbar offered representation to the Chiefs, the common people did not have the opportunity to participate in the administrative and political affairs of the Lushai Hills (Thanhranga, 31-32).

[60]In *Pasalṭhate Ni Hnuhnung* (Last Days of the Braves) (2007), Captain Browne is referred to as Hmaireka, the moniker used by the Mizo for him, meaning "man with a thin face". He was the first Political Officer of the North Lushai Hills.

Aijal post in 1890, the battle at Sesawng[61], the account of Shakespear's predicament at Chhiphir[62]. The coordination and the unity among the chiefs was such that B. Lalthangliana, a renowned Mizo historian called it the rekindling of "Mizo Nationalism"[63] (57). C. Lalnunchanga has not only succeeded in bringing history to life but also, through the British officers' fictionalised discussions on these historical encounters, he was able to illustrate the colonialist's expansionist intents and attitudes of superiority. Therefore, it was imperative that their empty promises were recognised by the astute chief, Puilura in *Pasalṭhate Ni Hnuhnung* (Last Days of the Braves) (2007). The conversations among the British during these incidents in the fiction exposed also the empty notions of the white man's burden. The fictionalised discussions echoed McCabe's own notes of that time as quoted by Verghese and Thanzawna, "We must hunt the enemy down … destroy his crops and granaries and force them by want and privation, to accept our terms" (299). Thus, McCabe utters in the story, "*(K)umkhuain Mingo an ngaihsân theih nân an thluak kan su dâwn a ni*" meaning, "we will brainwash them into holding the white man in high esteem forever" (Lalnunchanga, 2007, 236). Lieutenant Tytler too declared that he would wreck total destruction, that he would destroy their houses and property, their crops and stores, such that the Mizo would never try to revolt again (236). Their dialogues revealed and carried the weight of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's reconstruct of colonialism as an insidious interactive process where the native is "prevailed upon to internalize as self-knowledge, the knowledge concocted by the master" (Parry, 45). While discussing the strength of Puilura's influence even from prison, the British officers were seen to realise the integrity and resilience of the Mizo people. This, they would not admit out rightly, but they would rather keep silent about the

[61]In early 1892, a hundred men under the command of McCabe were surrounded and trapped in Sesawng for five days by the *pasalṭhate* of different villages. The battle carried on for a month.

[62] Shakespear had set out against the chief, Vansanga and captured the village of Chhipphir where he and his men were besieged and managed to survive only through the help of Lalluava who had supplied them with food during that time and had to be rescued by reinforcement troops coming in from the Chin state.

[63]According to B.Lalthangliana, the birth of Mizo Nationalism began with the establishment of the *Selesih Sangsarih Khua* (Selesih City of Seven Thousand Houses) which was believed to be established during 1740-1750 AD. It was formed from the allegiance of seven great chiefs and believed to be located in the present area of Khawbung and Zawlsei in the district of Champhai. The coming together of the chiefs for a common cause to fight off the British was to him the rebirth of Mizo Nationalism (56-57).

inappropriate behavior of Murray, one of their fellow officers towards the wife of the Fanai chief, Zakapa which led to a clash resulting in the death of several people[64]. For McCabe, it was important that there should not be any blemish to tarnish their good name in history; therefore he ensured the punishment of anyone who spoke about the incident. Instead, he spoke of ways to break the self-assurance of the Mizo so that they would never consider challenging their superiority in the future, calling them ignorant and savage (Lalnunchanga, 2007, 221).

> "*Nang tirhkah hian ka hnênah ngaihdân sawi tur i nei lo*" ("You, a servant ought not to voice your opinion"; 256).
>
> "*I ngaihdan kan mamawh lo*" ("We do not need your opinion"; 217).

Through C.Lalnunchanga's restructuring of these moments within the historical events, the silencing of the other could be seen in the treatment of Luchuara, a Thado[65] translator. The manner by which the British officers not only discarded but silenced any opinion by those they regarded as inferior, showed their sense of superiority and authority. This characteristic is unmistakable in their dealings with the translators and guides and even with the chiefs who had surrendered and pledged allegiance to them. Nowhere is the silencing of the other more evident in C.Lalnunchanga's rendering of history than in the incident where Lt. Platt shot the very persons who had guided him to safety dismissing them as "*Thil pawi lo*" (i.e. "nothing of importance"; 271). After their failed attempt to attack the village where Saingura was now the chief, Lt. Platt fled for his life, leaving his men behind and he found himself alone in an unfamiliar land. The two Mizo guides found him and lead him to safety. His reason for shooting them was that he did not want any 'savage' people to witness the white man at a disadvantage for they had not only witnessed his incompetence in the jungle but also his fear in the face of defeat. Any proof of their fallibility could undo their carefully constructed image of the white man as a superior being.

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[64]C.S.Murray was the Assistant Political Officer, designate Superintendent and Deputy Commissioner of South *Lushai* Hills. He was alleged to have misbehaved with a female member of the chief, Zakapa who had showed him hospitality. He was caught in a compromising position and had to flee for his life. As a result, a small punitive expedition was sent to punish Zakapa but it was unsuccessful (Verghese and Thanzawna, 301).

[65]The Thado tribe is one of the Mizo tribes and were previously known as the New Kukis by the British. They are believed to have migrated to their current locations in Manipur, Nagaland and Cachar District of Assam from the present Mizoram (Shakespear, 189-190).

"*Khamosh Hai Raath*" (Silent is the Night) (2011) the third historical work is another re-telling of an event in history. The short story is set during the first Lushai Hills Expedition, on Christmas Eve of 1871 on the outskirts of Vanbawng, Lalhleia's village. The British forces under the command of Brigadier General Bourchier had marched towards Champhai, where Lalburha son of Vanhnuailiana, and Pawibawia, son of Lalphunga (brother of Vanhnuailiana) were established. They were among the chiefs who had participated in the raids during 1870-71. The British had set out to rescue the captives (most notably, the six year old Mary Winchester) and to recover articles taken during the raids. Vanbawng was on the way to Lalburha's village and thought to be a good place to set up camp, which later turned out to be a mistake (Verghese and Thanzawna, 216). Although it had been decided by the people of Vanbawng to let the troops pass and not to open fire, a shot had been fired. This had compelled the chieftain, Lalhleia's grandmother (who was reigning as he was still too young), and the *Upate* (the elders) of the village to engage with the British troops who burnt the villages and the granaries storing the fruit of their year-long labour. On the day leading up to this particular incident, more than twenty granaries were burnt by the troops, an act which was incomprehensible in its heartlessness by the Mizo *pasalṭha.* The men of Vanbawng knew they could not hope for victory especially by *ralpuia thawh*[66] and made the camp "too hot for the troops" (216) by their guerrilla warfare, known as *rawlrâla bei*[67].

Central to the narrative of this story but not as overt, is the Christian motif of the message of Christmas with the repeated references to it being Christmas time. From the peace that the Mizo men felt upon hearing the then unfamiliar tune of the famous hymn, "Silent Night" for the first time, a simplistic conclusion can be drawn; that of the peace that conversion to Christianity would bring to the Mizo community. However, the narrative also brought to light the juxtaposition of the reality of the moment – the fighting and the killing as opposed to the message of peace and goodwill of Christmas. It also brought into sharp contrast the serenity that the hymn

[66]*Ralpuia thawh*: Open warfare where there are more members in the raiding party. It is carried out at night when people have gone to bed, with the intent to take over an enemy village and raid it. The *zawlbuk* is usually the first place to be attacked (Dokhuma, 236-237).
[67]*Rawlrâla chet*: To attack by ambushing; to carry on warfare by secretly ambushing and killing people in the jungle, *jhooms*, instead of openly attacking the village.

invoked in the middle of the gunfire, while likening the otherwise serenity of the Vanbawng outskirts to that of Bethlehem. It affected the Mizo men very much in spite of their ignorance of the significance of the hymn and the season. Verghese and Thanzawna denoted that the men from Vanbawng were reluctant to engage in hostilities, giving warnings to the advancing troops as much as they could (215). Their actions were truly Christian. Contrary to this, the British soldiers and their troops had failed to live up to the message of the hymn and to the significance of the day, (i.e. Christmas day) in spite of them being Christians or at the least, had been exposed to the tenets of Christianity. They had not only engaged in offensives but had burned down the most important means of sustenance for the people – rice. Their deliberate disregard for humanity on Christmas day and in spite of its importance in the Christian calendar, was un-Christian and in sharp contrast to the awe the hymn instinctually inspired in the "savage" Mizo. Hence, their actions were all the more horrendous and ironically barbaric. Through this episode, C.Lalnunchanga turned the tables on the white man for their conduct which was in opposition to the message of peace and brotherhood they would later preach to the very people whom they had subdued with much bloodshed and cold-hearted disregard for their welfare.

When Saingura had become chief after his father's death and was captured in the fight between the men of Khiangzo and the British, he was brought before A.W. Davies the new Superintendent of North Lushai Hills. Interestingly, a reversal of roles takes place and the white man was silenced. Although Saingura was bound and injured while the Superintendent spoke victoriously to him threatening to totally annihilate his village, his words had no meaning and hence had no impact on the Mizo chief. He *did not understand* him – "*a ṭawng chu Saingura chuan a hrethiam lo va*" ("Saingura could not understand what he said"; Lalnunchanga, 2007, 309). Essentially, the white man was silenced hence, his power was defused. C.Lalnunchanga pointed out that the white men did not look victorious nor did Saingura appear defeated (310).

Although Lieutenant Tytler was heard to praise the chief of Lungleng, Khamliana for being faithful and trustworthy to them, the British, he also added disparagingly that Khamliana had apparently been known to be a great chief before then (237). Khamliana had helped the British by visiting the chiefs who still had not

surrendered, and he was trying to persuade them to do so. The meeting between Puilura and Khamliana revealed a marked difference in stature. Though both were chiefs, one came across as assured in his sovereignty while the other, as a mere messenger with no authority of his own. One exuding confidence, while the other, fear of a power greater than his own. For Puilura, the treaty that Khamliana had agreed to was not a treaty but a means of domination (195). Thus, the chiefs whom the British lauded as loyal friends and on whom they showered praise and rewards, become only marginal characters who were obsequious to the British, catering to their every need even at the expense of their own people. This sentiment is echoed by James Dokhuma who questioned the belief in the wisdom or astuteness of those chiefs who had surrendered to the British earlier on. This, he believed is the reason for the corrosion of the Mizo as a people. He reasoned that it is always those who refuse to bow down to another who survives as a people (232).

In contrast, even though Puilura and the chiefs who would not submit to the British were imprisoned and "punished" for "revolting", they earned the begrudging respect of the British officers. Conversely, they were treated with respect although their insistence on their parity frustrated and angered the officers greatly. McCabe recognised Puilura's wisdom and bravery, and acknowledged the love and respect the old chief received from his people (Lalnunchanga, 2007, 216). Capt. Loch did not deny his admiration for Puilura's bravery saying that all brave men irrespective of race must be given due regard (235-236). In the course of the conversations between McCabe and Puilura, McCabe came to realise that the chief could not be threatened into submission and decided to tempt him into an agreement. The astute chief however saw through the wiles of McCabe when the latter told him that he would make him the greatest of all the chiefs. Insisting on their equal status, that both were rulers and that McCabe was not made to rule over him, Puilura scoffed at McCabe's proposal replying that he would then have him, McCabe, as his superior, that he would have to come to him for favours, like a gecko[68] (211). To emphasise the un-likeliness of him agreeing to the offer, Puilura declared that it would be akin to

[68]In Mizo culture it is said that birds take food to the gecko lizard for no apparent advantage on their side. In making the comparison to the gecko, Puilura essentially means that he would be reduced to making offerings to the British to appease them for no apparent reason which, for him would be as impossible as trying to swallow the branch of a tree.

attempting to swallow a tree branch. Only then McCabe realised that he would not be able to persuade the old chief in any way. The conversation between the two illustrates what Octavio Mannoni had argued in *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonisation* (1956) that colonisation is the result of psychic differences between those who show dependency and those who fear their own inferiority and seek out ways to prove themselves, that colonisation has always required the existence of the need for dependence and most importantly, that not all peoples can be colonised but only those who experience this need (Loomba, 144). Puilura can definitely be counted among those people Mannoni claimed cannot be colonised.

The systemic destruction of the foundation of life by the burning of standing crops and stored grains as well as the villages of the chiefs who opposed or resisted the advances of the British would inevitably result in the creation of this very dependence that without a doubt, paved the way for the colonisation of the land. There was much to lose and nothing to gain at that time, for the chiefs and the Mizo people at large, to enter into an agreement with the British. At the most, they would be rewarded for their cooperation and showered with favours occasionally. However, they would lose their world – their sovereignty, their way of life, their customs, even the most intrinsic part of their life – their mode of practicing agriculture. C. Lalnunchanga makes the stakes amply clear through his illustrations of the society and its ways in his narratives. These aspects are discussed subsequently for the fact that they form the core of the ethics, values and world view that a Mizo follows in the course of his life.

The Society: Politics, Ethics and Way of Life

Contrary to A.S.Reid's claim that "(P)rior to 1889, the interior of the tract of country known as Chin-Lushai Hills, was a *terra incognita*" (1; emphasis as in text) the territory had by then witnessed numerous change of hands and occupying tribes, "almost as numerous in dialect and designation as the villages in which they live" (2). The *Lusei* were the most prominent tribe settled in the area mentioned at the time. The inter-relations of the *Lusei* villages, which were all ruled by the same clan, the Sailo was mainly determined by the peripatetic life they led. Although they were

all blood relations, having the same ancestors, the struggle for land to sustain each of their peoples became the reason for the existence for inter-village rivalries and wars and coalitions between certain chiefs and enmity between others. This was the main reason for the enmity between the villages of Khiangzo and Tûmhnawk giving rise to a most important one-on-one combat between the best *pasalṭha* of the two villages.

Colonial reports and documentations have highlighted the war-like aspect of the Mizo especially that of the image of the head hunter and have particularly undermined the reasons for the outbreak of hostilities between rival villages, while making them seem petty and inconsequential. The careful thought and calculated planning behind the decisions and actions of the chiefs in relation to their individual villages and their people can be seen in the careful planning of Puilura's decisions. Sometimes, his decisions seemed foolhardy and cowardly even to his own sons but, he would always have a logical explanation which would eventually convince them to see things his way. An instance of his wisdom and ability to see far into the future can be seen in the manner in which he resolved the affair between his daughter Chuaileni and Nghalṭhianga, one of the most able of his *pasalṭhate*. It was considered an irredeemable breach of conduct for a commoner to have an affair with a member of the ruling clan and would most certainly result in the expulsion of the commoner and his/her whole family from the village. It could even result in the death of the lover/s in some extreme cases. Such being the way things were, Nghalṭhianga and his family were very much apprehensive for they knew that his good name and fame as a *pasalṭha* would not be enough to offer them refuge from the wrath of their chief, if he chose to take offence. Puilura's decision to make the pair marry and take care of a subsidiary village was remarkable considering that he helped to fulfill his daughter's wish of marrying the man she loved, while ensuring the goodwill and loyalty of the best of his *pasalṭha.*

Another example of the strategically thought out planning behind each of Puilura's decisions could be seen in his preference to stay out of the war between the chiefs of the east and the west. He knew that to maintain an outward appearance of neutrality would ensure future good relations on both sides for he knew that the fighting would not last long as they were all blood relations. As the story went, Puilura though related, was of the lineage of an illegitimate child of their forefather

and knew that all the other chiefs would unite against a common foe and that he could be the one left standing alone at the end (Lalnunchanga, 2015, 44). Not only this, as his senior-most elder, *Upa*[69]Tlangchuana realized, it was Puilura's plan to establish himself as supreme among the Sailo chiefs. He had planned to seize the moment when the chiefs from the east and the west would have exhausted their strength and resources in fighting each other, while he remained neutral and therefore unaffected (Lalnunchanga, 2007, 51). It was not just Puilura but also the other chiefs except for Sangburha, who exercised the same caution. Thus, the chiefs were presented as worthy of their position as chiefs and leaders, and good strategists in times of conflict. Their actions were guided by a conscious awareness of their position in society as leaders and hence, responsible for the people who depended upon their guidance but at the same time, also with the knowledge that their rule was not absolute in that their people were free to leave their village to seek a better life elsewhere. In war too, they proved to be able leaders. They trusted their *pasalṭha* to lead the men and strategize even when they themselves were present, knowing when to listen and rely on better experience than their own. When the men of Khiangzo were preparing for a head-hunting raid to avenge Puilura's death and for display at his grave, they were told by his son Saingura, who had become chief, to take action as they wished so long as they did not surrender (Lalnunchanga, 2007, 234). Even as a young man on his first raid in pursuit of the enemy, Saingura had never tried to assert himself because of his position as the chief's son. Rather he listened and acted in accordance with the instructions of the leaders of the expeditions. This sagacity in the chiefs stood them in good stead with their elders and the people at large.

The prudence of Puilura and Saingura in fiction is a testament to the judiciousness of those chiefs who were historically contemporaneous to them. They had led their people through the troubled times they lived in, both before and during the advent of the British into Mizo territory. Most importantly, they had done their best to avoid subjugation under the rule of any foreign power. They were anything but what McCall had claimed when justifying the terms of the document the chiefs

[69]*Upa*: The elderly, the term also refers to the chief's right-hand men, usually men of wisdom and commendable experience. Now, it is used to refer to the elders of the church elected by the people and considered to be men of God and capable of leading them (as in "*Krismas Thawnthu*").

were required to sign on appointment to the District Chiefs' Durbar. He had written that the Chiefs were by "tradition and inclination, deficient in any capacity for thinking of the future, or for serving their community that they themselves may continue to rule", adding that the government must actively educate them to the responsibilities of leadership and that any capacity for rule or leadership lay in the Chiefly classes (247).

C.Lalnunchanga writes that what made life most difficult for the Mizo, were as the song says,

Bo se bo se,
Bo se tih tâkah chuan;
Sakei bo se, râl bo se, hri nên pathum. (Lalnunchanga, 2007, 39)

This song is literally a wish for the disappearance of the tiger, enemies and sickness, highlighting the menace these posed to their livelihood.

The reality of the ever present danger of raids from neighbouring tribes and villages is brought to light at the very beginning of the story *Ka Mi Huaisen leh Ka Pasalṭha* (My Brave and Courageous Men) (2015). The braves of Puilura's village were in hot pursuit of the Sukte[70] raiders who had stealthily killed three persons in their village at the break of dawn. Incursions into other villages were often carried out to exact revenge as was the case in that occasion. Other times, it was as a way of giving warnings or in defense of their territories as at the beginning of *Pasalṭhate Ni Hnuhnung* (Last Days of the Braves) (2007). Most of these incidents were either a direct or an indirect consequence of their peripatetic way of life, which in many ways, bound them to a life of conflict with neighbouring villages and tribes. The fact that the Mizos had discovered an indigenous way to manufacture gun-powder at that time (Reid, 2) is a measure of its demand and requirement in the race for supremacy.

[70]Sukte or Sokte is a tribe from Northern Chin who often raided the Mizo villages situated towards the eastern parts of present Mizoram, known especially for their raids and war against the chiefs Vanhnuailiana and Lalburha of Champhai during 1869 -1872. According to Rev. Liangkhaia, when Vanhnuailiana had moved eastwards and settled in Champhai area, he had made a treaty with the Sukte chief Semthawnga that they would allow each other to pursue runaway servants in each other's territories. Vanhnuailiana later on refused Semthawnga to follow his servant in his territory, after which, Vanhnuailiana's house caught fire. This was attributed to the Sukte people as an act of revenge. Vanhnuailiana had then ordered a revenge attack which escalated into a full-fledged war between the two clans who were separated by the Ṭiau river (74-75).

The martial nature of their existence is necessitated by their peripatetic way of life, which really was a life of the survival of the fittest, as the able chief Puilura told his men,

> *A chak apiangte ram awp zauna hmuna awm kan ni a …tu chhiah faah mah kan la kun ngai lo* (Lalnunchanga, 2007, 47)

meaning,

> We live in a land where the strongest reigns over the largest territory … we have never stooped to pay tributes to anyone's son.

Puilura knew that conceding even an inch of land to rival chiefs would result in the total disintegration of his village and the end of his own chieftainship. Therefore, in order to protect and preserve what was his, he would take all possible measures to ensure the complete defeat of anyone who posed a threat to his authority. The ability to be ruthless when the occasion demanded was an indispensable characteristic that every person especially the chief, had to possess. As such, the capture of Vungzapauva, son of the Sukte chief of Vumzang village offered an opportunity that Puilura did not fail to seize. The ransom he demanded of the rival chief for the release of his son was the worth of twenty gayals, enough to empty the coffers of any chief during that time.

In the telling of the story of Puilura and his men, C.Lalnunchanga interweaves it with the story of the westward movement of the Mizo people and the ensuing rivalries and wars that it caused. The famous "Chhak leh Thlang Indo"[71] i.e. the war between the eastern and the western chiefs begins during the progress of *Ka*

[71]*Chhak leh Thlang Indo*: The famous war between the chiefs in the East (the demarcation being the river Tuirial) lead by Vanhnuailiana (descendants of Lalsavunga) and those of the West lead by Suakpuilala (descendants of Manga) both descendants of Lallula, said to begin in 1877 and coming to an end only at the onset of the Ṭhingtâm in the early 1880s. The war is said to have been long in the making. Both families had migrated westward, but an agreement was made that Lalsavunga would move back eastwards to push back the tribes that were troubling them from the east and would later move westward, while Suakpuilala would continue to move westwards. Thus, both would work together to expand their territory. Unfortunately, Lalsavunga died an early death and when his son Vanhnuailiana decided to make the move westward, they were opposed by Suakpuilala and his sons, building up hostilities which eventually culminated in the well-known war. There was another point of contention, the matter of a wife for the sons of the chiefs – Suakpuilala's son Kalkhama had married the intended bride of Liankhama, son of Vanhnuailiana while he had gone to get the bride-price. This was considered a serious act of disrespect by Vanhnuailiana and Liankhama (Rev. Liangkhaia, 76-77, Verghese and Thanzawna, 255-261).

It may be noted that in the story, Puilura is one of the lesser chiefs of the East on a path to greater prominence.

Mi Huaisen leh Ka Pasalṭha (My Brave and Courageous Men) (2015). As Puilura, one of the chiefs of the east explained their lineage and the reason for the outbreak of hostilities to his sons, brother and his elders – the *Upa*, the reader too becomes acquainted with the history of the people. Through his narration of the intricate relations and politics between the various chiefs of the east and the west and Puilura's reason for his reluctance to take sides in that particular war, C.Lalnunchanga brings the historical event to life. The reader gets a glimpse of the personal loss and toll which the war had wrought upon the residents of the hills through the murder of Chhingpuii[72] and the inconsolable grief of her parents. The sentiments of Puilura's wife, Chieftainess Lenbuangi echoed the pall over the hills at the death of this renowned beauty, seeing it as sacrilege of the ethics that had been upheld till then, that neither Chhingpuii's beauty nor her defenselessness had caused her killers to show any mercy. Perhaps the old chieftainess saw it as a sign of the wearing away of the principles and code of ethics that the Mizo had followed.

Pasalṭhate Ni Hnuhnung (Last Days of the Braves) (2007) too began with a conflict. Upon moving westward to Khiangzo from Vangsen, a part of Puilura's new territory was claimed by a neighbouring chief, Sangburha one of the chiefs of the west, the chief of Tûmhnawk. Puilura's people were raided by the people of Tûmhnawk as they were clearing the forest for cultivation. Three people were killed in the attack. A second raid was carried out in the same manner a few days later. This led to a counterattack from Puilura's village. Thus, there ensued raids and counter raids on each other's villages and the death of many, echoing incidents from the "*Chhak leh Thlang Indo*". Both chiefs knew the toll that a prolonged war would take on their resources and the lives of their people. Even for the victorious one, the war would weaken them before the other chiefs who were not involved in it. To avoid such a drawn-out war, they agreed to a contest to settle the issue – the victors getting to claim the land under dispute. Ten braves each from both villages were to fight one-on-one on a bridge with any weapon of their choice, excluding guns and slingshots, they could fight with as many opponents as they wished and the first

[72]Chhingpuii was a maiden widely known for her beauty. She was from Buangtheuva's village of Ruanzawl which had land disputes with the neighbouring village of Tachhip – part of the War between the chiefs of the east and the west. She along with others was killed on their way to the *jhum* by a raiding party from Tachhip (Kaplheia, 247-274).

person to fall from the bridge would be the loser; a form of warfare known as *leihlawn mal zawh*[73]. This incident is a fine example of the selfless sacrifice of the spirit of *tlawmngaihna*, a trait that the society endeavoured to inculcate in every member of the society. Bravery and courage were essential not only to the survival of the individual but for the community as a whole and *tlawmngaihna* was what kept the community together. It was the difference that made a man a good hunter, a good warrior and a *pasalṭha*; a brave who encompassed all that was thought to be commendable in the Mizo society. Nghalṭhianga and his friends were very much aware that they were risking their lives on agreeing to fight on the bridge. Nevertheless, this knowledge did not stop them from stepping forward for they knew they were making the sacrifice for the sake of the whole community. They knew the alternative would result in a loss of more lives and property. Due to this spirit of selfless sacrifice - *tlawmngaihna*, fear did not stop them from fulfilling what they considered their duty. That was the life of a *pasalṭha*.

> *Pasalṭhate chuan an tihtûr rêng an tihin, thil beisei neiin engmah an ti tûr a ni lo. Kan vânneihna nî a chhuak a, kan vânduaina nî pawh a lo la chhuak ang, hlau leh vui hmui kan pu tûr a ni lo* (Lalnunchanga, 2007, 97).

meaning,

> When *pasalṭhate* do what they must do, they must do it without any expectation of rewards. Some days luck is on our side, and some day our luck will run out, we must not fear nor complain then.

Although the *tlawmngaihna* shown by the braves was done without any expectation of rewards, the community customarily acknowledged and recognized outstanding services in the form of the *Nopui,* which was awarded during the *Khuangchawi* ceremony. The *Nopui* literally means "big-cup" (*No*-cup, *pui*-big/large). It was not the ordinary bamboo cup that was commonly used but the largest of the horns of the gayal also used as cups. The gayal's horns were used as cups mostly by the chief and the wealthy and in general, only the chief's household

[73]Rev. Liangkhaia writes that *leihlawn mal zawh* was a kind of warfare where a brave fought another from a rival village on a log laid across a pit dug out for the purpose. Whoever fell from the bridge or died first was declared the loser and his village would have to concede defeat (61).

would afford to use only horns as cups. The *Nopui* was usually twice as large as the ordinary bamboo one. Each year, the chiefs and elders would select a youth who had made the most outstanding contribution to the community to be honoured with taking the first sip from the *Nopui*. The person so honoured had to take the first sip of the *zu* before anyone else could begin to drink in celebration. Even the chief could not drink before the brave honoured with the *Nopui* (Dokhuma, 203-204).

As a result of the times they lived in, all able-bodied men in the village were expected to be able hunters and when necessary, be fearless warriors. All the men aspired to be a *pasalṭha* yet, it was a title that only a few could rightfully claim. For some like Hautuka, the expectations of his friends and fellow villagers became more of a burden rather than a source of pride. Even though he felt no fear of wild beasts, not even the dreaded tiger, he never could hold his courage in the face of a human adversary. This often made him jealous of his fellow braves, and sometimes led him to unreasonable and irreparable actions, as in the occasion when he tampered with the shield of the person who only had good intentions towards him, Rochêra. This action of his had led to the death of an honoured *pasalṭha,* Ramtinthanga. Not only this, Hausata had earlier abandoned his friends as they were attacked by Sukte raiders on their way home from the *lo*. On this occasion, one young man was killed, another was injured, and two maidens were taken captive. Had he stayed; the losses wouldn't have been so great. Only the timely action of Nghalṭhianga and Rohmingliana who were close by, had saved the maidens. Understandably, it was not in everyone's capacity to fulfill the call to risk one's life for others and for their land. Everyone understood this and hence, the pact was made to keep it a secret between the men who heard Hautuka's last confession of having sabotaged Rochêra's shield. Indeed, the pressure to be always brave and daring must have weighed heavily on some of the young men at that time.

Another threat to the Mizo besides the human enemy was the tiger. Ever so often, an aggressive tiger would prowl into the village, taking their livestock and sometimes, human lives too. Many times, the people of Puilura's village had to deal with this danger. Upon moving to their new village of Khiangzo, there was a

troublesome tiger. They named the tiger Hnubâl-liana[74] because its tracks were so big. The young men set traps at the outskirts of the village and were ready to give chase at a moment's notice. When this failed, the chief called for the whole village to take part in what is called "*Sapui Zim*[75]". In this instance, the whole village would come out with anything with which they could make noise. They would create such a din that the tiger would be forced to come out of its hiding and hopefully be shot by the *pasalṭha* who would lie in wait.

Hunting was another important aspect of the pre-colonial Mizo community. Its importance is highlighted by the fact that prowess in hunting was one of the two ways a person could fulfill the tenets of *Thangchhuah*, by having hunted down a stipulated number and selection of game. The reality of the quest for this honor can be seen in the men's preoccupation with hunting expeditions. In peaceful times and in between the time for clearing land for cultivation, sowing and reaping, the men would go out to hunt and it was considered a disgrace to return empty handed. Nghalṭhianga, the protagonist, and a group of his friends had gone out on a hunt under the leadership of Zakâpa, a *val upa*[76], while Puilura's village was still located at Vangsen. They had lost their way in their chase of a *sele* and wandered further west than they had planned. They had stumbled into Dinthanga's village of Arthial wherein they had spent a night. It was true that they had returned to their village empty handed but the night spent in the unfamiliar village had confirmed in the minds of other chiefs and villages that the braves from Puilura's village were a force to reckon with. They could not be defeated in the obligatory and friendly wrestling matches that tradition demanded between visitors and the host village youth in the *zawlbuk*. They had wrestled against Ṭialmunga, Sangchema and Chawngchhunga who were giants of men and widely known and feared for their inhumanly physical strength and brutality. Even then, the *pasalṭhate* of Puilura's village still considered

[74]*Hnubâl-liana*: Literally means, Big dirty tracks, 'a' suffixed at the end means that the tiger was male.

[75]*Sapui Zîm*: *Sapui* (tiger), *zîm* (to surround, encircle as an animal etc. when hunting etc.). *Sapui Zîm* is therefore the surrounding or encircling a tiger while hunting. The whole community would set out with various articles with which to make noise so that the sound would drive the animal in a certain direction, towards the armed *pasalṭhate* waiting for the kill.

[76]*Val Upa*: A man in his prime whose knowledge in hunting and warfare makes him eligible to lead the youth in communal activities like, building houses, hunting, raids. His words are respected and is trusted by the chief himself (Scholar's interpretation).

themselves as having failed for they had not brought home any hunt and did not speak of the event except in report to the chief of their wanderings.

On the other hand, Hautuka was given all possible honour for having killed an elephant on a hunt at around the same time. However, the manner in which he had shot the elephant was a contentious one. Hautuka had not stuck to the agreement that all on the hunt would open fire on the elephant at the same time. He had taken his opportunity when all the others had spent their gunpowder and had to re-load their guns, thus firing the shot that downed the animal which was already so wounded that it could hardly get back up on its feet. Technically, he had made the killing shot. His action was in sharp contrast to those of the *pasalṭha* who were always considerate towards their friends, often giving others who had not shot an important animal, the chance to make the killing shot. Thus, even off the battleground, it was difficult for some to follow the code that guided the *pasalṭha*, the spirit of selfless giving and putting others before themselves. In the search for renown and for the title of *Thangchhuah*, a sure entry into *pialral* (Paradise), the moral code was sometimes relegated to the sidelines. This, C. Lalnunchanga has shown through the character of Hautuka. That being said, the hunting expeditions were essentially training grounds for the men in warfare. They learnt patience and the art of timely action while they lay in wait for their prey. It was where the men learnt to come together to work as a team, to trust each other, and to recognize each other's capabilities and strengths. A time where they learnt to make do without the comforts, whatever little that was available to them in the shelter of their homes. Evidently, the role of the men was outside the house: protecting the territory and the people and to bring in a much-needed component of their diet, meat. This was depicted in the activities of the men in Vangsen as well as in Khiangzo. They brought a sense of security to the people who placed all their trust on their able warriors to protect and keep them safe, especially in times of war and in the presence of aggressive wild animals. The gravity with which the men took up their responsibility can be seen when they would carry their weapons even when wooing the village maidens during the time a destructive tiger was prowling around their village at Vangsen. Again, when Puilura's village was engaged in war over territory with Sangburha's village of

Tûmhnawk, the men never went anywhere without their guns and weapons. They were always ready to respond to emergencies of any kind.

Additionally, they played leading roles in all works in the community that required physical strength, such as the strenuous work of clearing the forest and preparing the land for cultivation, the last weeding of the season – *Lo Zawh*[77]and during harvest time. Their role also included building houses and weeding the *lo* for those in the village who were unable to do so, on their own, whatever the reasons may be. Having proven their prowess in warfare did not exempt Nghalṭhianga and his friends from the labour required for the *lo* cultivation, for each family produced enough for their own consumption and were looked upon highly, especially if they had surplus harvest. As for the women, the majority of the daily domestic work fell to their lot – carrying water for domestic use, pounding rice at the crack of dawn, cooking, cleaning, weaving cloth and making clothes for the whole family and the daily farm work. The young women of the village Romawii, Suakmeni and Ainâwni were never idle. They were never seen without doing something productive. Even while entertaining their wooers in the night, they were either spinning the loom, weaving their *puan*, or even cooking food for the swine that every family invariably reared. Their mothers, who were themselves always busy with some work or the other, were always there to remind their daughters not to waste their time. Even when a number of people were listening to Romawii and her friends Suakmeni and Ainâwni playing the *bengbung*[78], Romawii's mother scolded them saying that they would never finish weaving even a single *puan* during *âwl-lên*[79]if they continued that way. This prompted their audience to disperse and the maidens to get on with their weaving. Just as the men pursued hunting during the interval between the agricultural activities, the women too utilized the time to complete time-consuming activities which they could not take up during the agricultural seasons.

The code of ethics that bound the community though varying in the different villages under different chiefs was mostly uniform in all the *Lusei* villages. It held the people together and guided their actions. Though it may seem that these codes

[77]*Lo Zawh*: To finish weeding the *lo* or *jhum*.
[78]*Bengbung*: *Lushai* dulcimer made of wood.
[79]*Âwl-lên*: The slack time after the *jhum* is cut or after weeding or after harvest time.

were more stringent for the women, it wasn't necessarily so. The affair between Nghalṭhianga and Ainâwni is a case in point. Nghalṭhianga's reputation suffered even though he was widely known for his bravery and courage. The society disapproved of a man who boasted of his sexual conquests and considering him to be a bragger, whose words were not to be taken seriously especially if his boasts turned out to be false. When the pair was brought before the chief and his council of *Upa,* both of them had the opportunity to defend themselves and were given equal opportunity to do so. Ainâwni's sister passed a *puan* to her, which she could throw on Nghalṭhianga to refute his supposed claim and prove her own innocence. This act was considered to be the ultimate scorn for a man and it was a shame with which he had to live, all the days of his life. Thankfully for Nghalṭhianga, Ainâwni did not take this course for as it turned out, she was carrying his child, a *sawn*[80], an illegitimate child. This was the ultimate shame for a woman, to carry a child out of wedlock. Therefore, no one could fault Ainâwni's father for beating his daughter even though they greatly pitied and even feared for her life.

A reason for this was perhaps that, it was considered inappropriate to interfere in family matters even when it led to domestic violence. Although the elders and middle-aged men would raise their hands to stop the violence, most of them would turn a blind eye to such incidents. Once, while most of the men in the village were out on an elephant hunt, Tintula a man who was known for his bad temper and peculiar behavior savagely beat up his wife. No one dared to help her for they were all afraid of Tintula. When Nghalṭhianga attempted to talk sense to him, Tintula threatened to slash him with his machete declaring that no one should get involved as it was a matter between him and his wife and that if he wanted, he could chop off her head (Lalnunchanga, 2015, 62-63). It may be said that although there were instances of domestic violence, and reluctance from the community to get involved in any way, there were social mechanisms in place that helped to put a stop to it. The women were afraid not only of their fathers and husbands but also of their brothers as well especially when they had done something to tarnish the family name. Ainâwni's plight as she bore a child out of wedlock was known to the whole village, and of how

[80]*Sawn*: A love-child, an illegitimate offspring.

she suffered the anger of her father and her brothers as well. Chuaileni too had had the same fear of her father and brothers when her affair with Nghalṭhianga became public knowledge. Chuaileni could not be exempted from the same fate as the other women in the community even though she was a *lal fanu* (the daughter of the village chief). Even her agreement to marry Laldara was out of a fear of her father and brothers because, even then, she was in love with Nghalṭhianga a commoner, but was afraid to voice her desires, regretting that she was not as brave as Laltheri[81].

Ainâwni's plight and that of Tintula's wife show a probable high incidence of domestic violence although the woman is pitied, and some may even venture to protect her. However, it was a belief that others should not involve themselves in the private matters and goings-on of another man's house. So, most often, a woman would find herself without a defender though there might be many to witness her suffering. Even when a woman sought refuge in her father's house or anyone else's house where she expected to find protection, she could still remain helpless against her husband as in the case of Tintula's wife. Although women mostly got the shorter end of the straw in most relationships, there were also feisty women who knew what they wanted and were not afraid to speak up or fight for their cause especially when they were in the right. Ngulruaii or Ruaii, Hautuka's wife, refused to return to her husband (even though he begged her to do so), saying she could no longer trust him on account of his numerous extra-marital affairs. Not even his entreaties on the father-less state of their children could persuade her to return to his house. The return of both Romawii and Chuaileni from their husbands' to their own parents' house and the ready acceptance of their homecoming by their respective families also showed the support and protection their family ultimately extended towards the women.

Though the division of labour between the men and women made the women's position in the community as important as that of the men, their contribution was generally seen as inferior and of less consequence. The society, being patriarchal, was undoubtedly geared towards the advantage and interests of the

[81]Laltheri was the daughter of the chief Lalsavunga who fell in love with a commoner Chalthanga. He was put to death by her brothers for daring to love a *lal fanu.* Laltheri would not be consoled. She tore her regal clothes and wore rags, refusing to eat any nourishing food. Realising their mistake and her resolve, the descendants of Lalsavunga met to abolish the law barring the marriage between a commoner and a person from the chief's clan. She had brought about a change in the society through her bravery and steadfast resolve (Thanmawia, 2002, 42-44)

male members of the society. Even the respect for elders so carefully inculcated in the children seemed reserved for the men for even little boys would not consider running errands for their family members and least of all for women. So, when Nghalṭhianga as a boy, was running an errand for his mother, Hautuka poked fun at him calling him a *tuai*,[82]afraid of a woman's scolding (Lalnunchanga, 2015, 101). Having pointed these out, it must also be said that the women were also given due respect and consideration when they showed the same courage and fortitude as the men folk. The women too were no less brave or courageous than the men. It was always with the knowledge that their men may not return safely from their expeditions, that they saw them off. Instead of trying to keep them home, away from the dangers, they encouraged and held in high esteem the valor of men and sacrifice and participated with enthusiasm in the victory dance around the severed heads of fallen enemies that always followed a victorious raid. In the contest between the braves of Khiangzo and Tûmhnawk to settle the land dispute, the women and children all went to watch the gory fighting. Undoubtedly, they found it difficult to watch the bloodshed and the gruesome action, but they watched, to give support and encouragement to the men who were risking their lives for their sake.

Additionally, Mizo history is dotted with able chieftainesses who were wholeheartedly supported by their own sons and the *Upa* of their villages after their husband's deaths. C.Lalnunchanga's chieftainesses too showed themselves worthy of the ruling clan they belonged to by their bravery and courage. In the absence of her husband, the wife of chief Dinthanga of Vuakdûp, Lalkuri had held her own against the angry marauding braves of Khiangzo when they had come to raid their village in revenge. Her courage and royal stance at that time had not only saved her village from total destruction but had also calmed and reassured her people. In the face of her angry and victorious raider, Saingura, Lalkuri was brave enough to say,

> *Anih leh I thinlung ka tiduap zo lo a nih ahnu, kei pawh salah min kai ve a ni ang chu, chutichuan in pafain in hmaiah chil ka chhâk ang a, ânchhia ka lawh ang che u* (Lalnunchanga, 2007, 59).

meaning,

[82]*Tuai*: A homosexual, a man who dresses and works like a woman. Here it essentially means to be like a girl, deemed derogatory in a patriarchal society.

> Since I cannot soften your heart, take me as your slave too so that I can spit on you and your father's faces and curse you both.

Not only by her brave words but also by her defiance and unconquerable spirit, Lalkuri was more like the *pasalṭha* of her time. It was no surprise then that she had no patience for the boastful conversation in the camp of her brother-in-law, Sangburha during the contest between the *pasalṭha* of Khiangzo and Tûmhnawk, for she could see through their weaknesses and cowardice.

In *Lalnu*[83]Lenbuangi, C. Lalnunchanga echoes the heroic *Lalnu* Ropuiliani[84] who is mentioned with admiration in the novel. *Lalnu* Lenbuangi was always present in the background throughout the story. During most of Puilura's councils with his *Upate*, she was privy to most of the discussions and the decision making of her husband and his *Upate*. It can also be assumed that she had influence on her husband's decisions and actions in many ways. After the death of both Puilura and their son, Saingura, her fortitude and wisdom as a leader was evident in her response to Chuaukunga and a hundred other families leaving Khiangzo village. She knew that their glory days were coming to an end and that they were never going to be able to recover it. She recalled the times in which they were living, the last days of the brave – *pasalṭhate ni hnuhnung*. However, that didn't daunt her, "*Ka hmaah eng thilin nge min lo hmuak ka hre lo va, tlin ta lo napui chu a thih mah an thi alâwm*" ("I do not know what awaits me in the future, when they cannot hold on any longer people do die"; Lalnunchanga, 2007, 336). Though she thought of the white man as her equal, she could see that he would eventually take over their land. Nevertheless, she held on to the thought of the chiefs as once again established, free. Her words prove her to be

[83]*Lalnu*: Chieftainess, Queen, female sovereign.

[84]Lalnu Ropuiliani was the widow of the chief of Dênlung, Vândula. After her husband died in 1889, she took up the responsibility of the chieftainship. Just as her husband had refused cooperation during the *Lushai* Hills Expedition in 1971-72 and afterwards, she continued to disregard all orders and refused to submit to the British. Major. J. Shakespear writes that "Her influence is distinctly hostile to us" (Lalsangzuali Sailo, 101). As her husband did, Lalnu Ropuiliani resisted the expansion of the British into *Lusei* territory and refused to accept the white man's claim of superiority, when most *Lusei* chiefs had submitted to the stronger military power of the British. She was arrested with her youngest son Lalṭhuama on 8thAugust, 1893 after the second of the large-scale expeditions Chin-*Lushai* Expedition of 1889-90. Even while in prison, the British realised her adamant refusal to surrender and also, the extent of her influence on the other chiefs and shifted her and her son to Chittagong Jail. There she was treated as a State Prisoner and passed away on 5thJanuary, 1895.

as brave and as courageous as any of the *pasalṭha* standing with her at the end of the world as they knew it.

In his memoir *A Fly on the Wheel*, Lt. Col. T.H.Lewin noted that the Lushai cultivated the land "sufficiently for their wants, and, with less labour than a Bengali peasant undergoes in a month, they can raise enough food for a year" (287). It is true that the Mizo were self-sufficient before the advent of the white man, as is evident from the number of granaries present in each village even in colonial accounts. Yet to say that the labour was not intense was an understatement. The physical labour required for clearing a forest, waiting for the debris to dry and then burning it before tilling the land was immense. In addition, knowledge and a fine understanding of nature and her subtle changes with the seasons were also essential. As such, Puilura and his *Upa* Ramtinthanga were able to gauge and make an assessment of the changing seasons to predict rain in the near future by the presence of clouds in the distant horizon in a clear sky (Lalnunchanga, 2007, 38). The nature of agriculture carried out by the Mizo required much physical strength and so all able-bodied members of the community had to actively participate in the process especially for *ramtuk*[85]. It was thus that all the males of Puilura's village who were old enough to work in the *lo* would clear the forest for the new season's *lo*. The importance of the community can be seen in the fact that all those having *lo* in the same area camped together although each family had their own allotment. This of course was for security, but it was also to enable them to lend a helping hand to those who needed it. And though each family worked for their own subsistence, they were always willing to share their harvest with families less fortunate than them.

All other activities, personal as well as communal, revolved around the swidden cultivation – the clearing of forest land, the sowing, the weeding and the harvesting periods. The weaving, hunting, ceremonies and festivities that took place during the respite between these periods of agricultural activities were finely incorporated into the seasonal activities of the characters, thereby giving a glimpse into what life would have been like during those times. The Mizo's affinity with nature can be seen throughout the narratives. The very nature of their existence, their

[85] *Ramtuk*: New allotment of land for cultivation in the *jhum*.

peripatetic way of life, their culture and traditions depended on nature's cycle of life. The festivals, the rituals, the routine of daily life, all were dependent on nature. There are many instances in the narratives that illustrate the intricate inter-relationship of the peoples' lives and their surroundings. Their observation and closeness to nature enabled them to predict and prepare for the changes in weather and seasons as well. Nature thus, is not "Other-ed" in the Mizo world view but is rather the center from which all other aspects of their lives originated. The identification of the Mizo with nature and it's fore-grounding in the narrative then becomes significant in the overt hyper-separation [86] of nature by the colonizer, advancing into Mizo land. The destruction of nature for this purpose, to make way for roadways and camps and the indiscriminate shelling of the forests illustrates the manner by which the colonizer treats nature as "radically Other, and humans as emphatically separated from nature and animals" (Plumwood, 504). Not even the stored grains are spared in the colonizer's undertaking to establish their supremacy over the Other – both the Mizo and nature, which are marked out for "separate and inferior treatment" (504). The difference in attitude towards nature can be seen in the way the conquerors of the land treat her. Symbolical of their affinity and connection with nature the Mizos used the natural physical formations and cover strategically to their advantage while the colonizers brashly destroyed and cleared the vegetation.

Puilura's village changed location several times – from Vangsen, to Belkeh, to Lungkum in the Hmârkawrzâr mountains, to Khiangzo in the Zâwlsâng mountains[87]. There is no doubt that the marauding tribes to the east of them made it imperative to seek safety westwards. This was also necessary since their subsistence depended on the fertility of the land on which they cultivated their main food – rice. In the absence of fertilizers and modern technology, the land had to lay fallow for a number of years in order to recover its productiveness. Therefore, the land that lay before them belonged to the bravest and most daring (Lalnunchanga, 2007, 16).

[86]Val Plumwood writes that 'hyper-separation' is an emphatic form of separation that involves much more than just recognizing difference. It means defining the dominant identity emphatically against, or in opposition to, subordinated identity, by exclusion of their real or supposed qualities. Its function is to mark out the Other for separate and inferior treatment (504).

[87] Although these locations are fictitious, they can be assumed to be in the north-eastern region of present Mizoram when keeping in mind the locations of non-fictitious villages, rivers and mountains mentioned to be in the neighbouring areas.

Knowing that their greatness went hand-in-hand with the value of the land, they treated nature with respect instead of asserting their dominance over it. Râlzatawna's view that only the required area be burnt during the *ram hal*[88] and Puilura's insistence to his people that the *mei kawng*[89] be carefully made to prevent the fire getting out of hand, was reflective of an age-old ethic of the Mizo not to burn more land than necessary for cultivation. He knew that to burn more than necessary would be detrimental not just to the ecology but to their survival as well when he said, "*A ṭul chin bâk ram a kan hian a pawi thei êm asin"* ("It is most regrettable when more land than necessary is burnt"; 38). Nature and her timing kept time for the people predictably. They got up with the sun – the women started pounding rice to prepare for the morning meal with the rising sun. They went about their routine as the sun progressed along the sky and had their evening meal as the sun set in the horizon. The cock's crow then became their timekeeper after it became dark, informing the young men the time to leave for the *zawlbuk* from the maidens' homes. Their "'unscientific' knowledge" had helped them to survive for centuries (Nayar, 57), for the rhythm of their lives was conditional on the working season which was wholly based on the changes in season. The nature of their leisure too depended on the season, whether it be elephant hunting, fishing, weaving of *puan* and the various festivals and celebrations. C.Lalnunchanga's retrieval of indigenous knowledge of nature, which according to Pramod K.Nayar is one of the "modes of indigenous / native reconstructions" (56), can be observed in the portrayal of the people's interaction with their surroundings and the heed they paid to the signs they read in its subtle changes. Any rare natural occurrence was taken to have an auspicious meaning that would affect their lives one way or another. Since they had no scientific astrological knowledge, the meteor shower[90] was for the Mizo, the most telling foreboding of evil times ahead. It was as if the bottom of the sky had fallen. It was believed that "*Hunpui a inher dâwn chuan chhinchhiahna leh hrilhlâwkna a lo*

[88]*Ram hal*: It literally means burning of land; *ram* (land) *hal* (to burn). In *jhum* cultivation, the land is cleared of existing vegetation which is left to dry and then burnt to enrich the soil.
[89]*Mei kawng*: A boundary made by clearing vegetation along a certain direction or area to prevent fire from spreading beyond the intended area. Before the *ram hal* the people would ensure that a proper *mei kawng* was prepared to prevent unnecessary burning of forest cover.
[90]The meteor shower mentioned in the story is most likely the Andromedids meteor shower of 27th November,1885 which was widely visible worldwide.

thleng hmasa ngei ngei ṭhin" ("there is always an ominous sign and omen before a major event"; Lalnunchanga, 2007, 66). They feared it would bring misfortune in the shape of *Sa*[91] – an aggressive wild animal especially the tiger, or *râl* – the enemy or *hri* – disease. Therefore, the people of Puilura's village gathered in the village square summoned by the chief himself. Knowing their fears, he spoke reassuringly to them, appointing sentries to guard the entrances to the village throughout the night. The people themselves gathered all they could in order to make the most noise to drive away any *sa* or *râl*. The very next day was declared a day of rest from their daily work and the people led by the village priest made ugly effigies that were put up at strategic places around the village to deter any evil spirit from entering the village creating *hri dai*[92]. All these measures seem incongruous from a scientific point of view, and even they came to think less of it as they came to learn that other villages had seen the same phenomenon and that it was not exclusive to them. However, the turns of events as the narratives progress the series of turns of events all lend a certain amount of truth to the belief that such unusual natural events do have portent significance. The relations between the villages of Khiangzo and Tûmhnawk became even more intense culminating in the combat battle over the bridge at Mualsum; the advent and establishment of the British in Mizoram; the advent and establishment of the British in Mizoram; the eventual change in Mizo society that it brought about.

C.Lalnunchanga illustrates the affinity of the Mizo people with nature beautifully in his narrative. For Puilura, just gazing at the thick covers of the forests calmed his soul, giving him a sense of peace and well-being calling it "*ka lungkham ram*" ("the place I have always desired/dreamed of"; Lalnunchanga, 2007, 15). The close proximity in which the people lived with nature was evident in the number of times the people had to deal with the tiger, an animal so feared and revered that they did not even call it by its name but referred to it as *sapui*[93] or the "great animal". Always, it seemed that nature resonated in tune with the people's state of mind. Puilura expressed his misgivings about the white man while comparing their advance

[91]*Sa*: An animal, a beast; a wild animal, a wild beast. Also used to refer to the tiger instead of *sakei* (tiger) by men when out in the jungle, so that the tigers within earshot shall not know they are being mentioned. Also, flesh, meat, animal food.
[92]*Hridai*: A fence erected near a village to protect from pestilence, epidemics or prevalent sickness.
[93]*Sapui*: A tiger. *Sapui* is used by Mizos instead of *sakei* (tiger) when they are out in the jungle lest the dreaded king of beasts should overhear their conversation and know that he is being talked about.

into Mizo territory to the calm before the storm, a terrible tropical storm that was certain to bring with it, dark days. This misgiving did become a reality because after the military invasion came the more dangerous and lasting invasion, that of the way of life – of the mind, the culture and religion. The scenery too reflected the disquiet in Puilura's heart and the immense sense of nostalgia he felt as a result. The screech of the hawk flying in the noon sky seemed to be mourning their freedom that seemed to be dying with the setting sun. Even after dark, the wind too seemed to roam over the familiar landscape stirring up scents from the flowers of the *Ngiau*[94] and *Khiang*[95] trees that smelled of freedom (Lalnunchanga, 2007, 178). Nature reflected the turmoil in Puilura's heart, his prescience of the future which would see the end of life as they knew it, bringing such changes as they could not begin to imagine.

When at the end, the chieftainess Lenbuangi stood at the entrance of the village watching the families making their way out of the village; it was as if nature mourned with her. The dull winter sun and the stiff cold wind that created an atmosphere of nostalgia echoed the sadness that enveloped the village. The land towards the east held many memories for them while the west beckoned with its blue hills that spread beyond the horizon which had once been their aspiration for greater glory. That glory they envisioned now seemed unattainable. Ralzatawna remarked that the strength of their land had been broken, that even the world had turned its back on them contemplating on the impossibility of trying to stop time (Lalnunchanga, 2007, 337). It was a burden that was weight down by the knowledge that the days of the *pasalṭha* were over and that all the bloodshed was not enough to stop the white man taking over their land, against which they had fought so hard. Indeed, the reiteration of possession of land is an important aspect of the selected historical narratives as a "major actor in the process rather than as a passive backdrop to human history" (Rangarajan, 92).

The dissolution of the land and the people were so devastatingly widespread and complete that for the Mizo, the establishment of the white man in their land was more devastating than the dreaded *hri*. One of the three main fears of the Mizo, hri was one of the leading causes of death. At the beginning of *Pasalṭhate Ni Hnuhnung*

[94]*Ngiau:* Botanical name *Michelia Champaca,* commonly called the *Champ* or Titasopa.
[95]*Khiang*: Botanical name *Schima Khasiana,* commonly called the *Dieng-an.*

(Last Days of the Braves) (2007), C.Lalnunchanga writes of the great famine of 1880, the *ṭhingtâm*[96]. The resultant destruction of crops and stored grains had led to one of the greatest famines the Mizo people had ever known. This historical fact became a part of the characters' struggles and life stories. Puilura hoped to rebuild the lives of his people after the great famine, feeding on the abundance of its forests and the fertility of its virgin soil was part of the reason why Puilura found great solace in the Khiangzo range. Nghalṭhianga himself suffered a personal loss in the epidemic that followed the famine; he lost his son and his wife, Ainâwni whom he had belatedly married. They were among the many especially the very young and the aged, who had succumbed to the malnutrition brought on by the scarcity of food and the disease that followed. The devastation was not just physical, the emotional toil the event inflicted on the people can be empathized,

> *Pain an fate rilṭâm ṭap mittui nên an en a, an en hlum a ṭul chinah chuan pachang meuh pawh an rûm lo thei lo* (Lalnunchanga, 2007,11).

meaning,

> Fathers looked on with tears as their children cried in hunger, when it becomes necessary for them to look on as their children die of hunger, even grown men moan in anguish.

C.Lalnunchanga captures the rhythm of life in the villages in all its simplicity and vivid liveliness. The monotone records of the colonial reports and subsequent efforts to historically document events, traditions and customs, come to life in the daily routine of the people of Puilura's village. The changes in activities in and around the village, the kind of work required at the *lo* and the festivities, accompanied the change in seasons following the changing patterns of cultivation. James Dokhuma observed that all kinds of celebrations were invariably linked with the Mizo *Sakhua* (76) as the *Puithiam* always had a role to play on every occasion. Although celebrated in accordance with the agricultural seasons, the three main festivals have a spiritual aspect, the beliefs of which impact the well-being of the whole community. Therefore, in *Ka Mi Huaisen leh Ka Pasalṭha* (My Brave and

[96]*Ṭhingtâm*: The famine (*ṭam*) that follows the flowering and death of the *ṭhing* bamboo which occurs every 50 years. The famine occurs due to the proliferation of rats after the bamboo flowers.

Courageous Men) (2015) when Puilura's town crier announced the time *Chapchar Kut* was to be held, he also announced that the *Kawngpui Siam*[97] was to be held a few days before and that everyone was to be present in the village at that time. He also announced that those who wished to hunt meat and prepare *zu* for the feast were welcome to do so (92). This festival was celebrated after the land had been cleared and prepared for the sowing season while waiting for the *chap* (the debris from clearing the forest) to dry to enable it to burn properly during *lo hal*[98]. This required hard physical labour and therefore, the young men and women of the village were especially excited for the just announced festival, and Romawii's wooers gathered in her house, began to sing and practice in anticipation as to how they would dance at the festival then and there.

Thangchhuah was a status which everyone aspired to achieve, for it ensured that the title holder and his family would gain direct access into *pialral*, the Mizo equivalent of heaven, where there would be a ready supply of all the things that the Mizo struggled to acquire during his lifetime. For those who had no talent for hunting, *Thangchhuah* could still be achieved by giving a certain number of feasts for the public. These feasts were expensive affairs, requiring a certain number of specific animals to be slaughtered and offered as sacrifice for the feast as well. Of these feasts, *Khuangchawi*[99] was the greatest and lasted four days (Zaliana, 74). It entailed the slaughter of two domesticated bull *gayal*s, a cow *gayal* and a swine. Additionally, a *khuanghlâng*[100] or a raised platform that could be carried about had to

[97]*Kawngpui Siam*: An annual sacrifice to ensure the prosperity of the whole village. The sacrifice was usually made in the evening on the main path just outside the southern entrance to the village. The village priest and a few elders cook and consume the sacrifice on the spot except the parts offered to the spirit. Ashes are sprinkled on the road and smoothed down overnight. In the morning, the success or non-success of the sacrifice is gauged by the footprints which appear on it.

It is a ritual held about a week before the festival of *Chapchar Kut*, by which blessing is sought for the whole community (Zaliana, 93).

[98]*Lo hal*: The firing or burning of the *jhoom/jhum*. See also *Ram hal.*

[99]*Khuangchawi*: The name of a public feast given by chiefs and other well-to-do Lushais; title given to those who have given such a feast.

[100]*Khuanghlâng*: A raised platform that could be carried about. It had to be big enough to seat the whole family of the person, the *Thangchhuah Pa*, who was performing the *Khuangchawi*. This platform would be carried into the *lalmual* or the open space in front of the chief's house by the village elders or *Upa* who would carry it around the square. It was during this event that the *Thangchhuah Pa* and his family would throw into the crowd, valuable things like clothes, pots and sometimes even guns and gayal, for which they would throw firewood and a piece of rope respectively. The people would then scramble for the articles, getting to keep what they managed to pick up (Dokhuma, 47).

be constructed. It had to be big enough to seat the whole family the *Thangchhuah Pa*,[101] the person who was performing the *Khuangchawi*. This platform would be carried into and around the *lalmual* or the open space in front of the chief's house by the village elders or *Upa*. While being carried on the platform, the *Thangchhuah Pa* and his family would toss into the crowd, valuable things like clothes, pots and sometimes even guns and gayal, for which they would toss firewood and a piece of rope respectively. The people would then scramble for the articles, getting to keep what they managed to pick up (Dokhuma, 47). The feast also entailed a large quantity of *zu* which had to be prepared well beforehand, necessitating the involvement of others in the community besides the family members. This kind of ceremony involved such expenses and only the affluent could afford it and consequently, those who could afford to perform the ceremony were held in high esteem by the society.

The festivities and the ceremonies involved in the process of *Khuangchawi* and the public's enthusiastic participation is vividly illustrated in the narratives when it was performed by the chief himself and by his elder, Darchheuva in *Ka Mi Huaisen leh Ka Pasalṭha* (My Brave and Courageous Men) (2015). In preparation for the feasts, the village youth pounded the rice well in advance for the feast as well as for making *zu*. They also gathered the wood for the feast to dry as *sathingzâr*[102] well in advance to give time for the wood to dry. It was with eagerness that Romawii and her friends spoke of pounding more rice for the feasts. From the first day of the feast, the whole community did their part, thirteen men searched for and made a suitable pole on which the heads of the slaughtered animals would be displayed known as the *selûphan*. The young men and women too went out to gather more wood for the *sathingzâr*. The rest of the men repaired and strengthened the poles and foundation of the house to support the many people who would gather for the festivities that went along with the feast. It was this night that the youngsters were eagerly waiting

[101] *Thangchhuah Pa*: A man who has accomplished *Thangchhuah.*

[102] *Sathingzâr*: The firewood or the act of collecting firewood and placing them along the village path to dry them in preparation for a feast i.e. *sa* = meat, *thing* = wood, *zâr* = hangout. The word literally means "to hang out fire wood to dry to cook meat.

for, *Thingfar zan*[103] when there was abundance of *zu* and the dancing and singing continued to the wee hours of the morning. Although there was free flow of *zu* during the night, the youth took great care not to get too inebriated for it was considered a disgrace especially for an unmarried maiden to be drunk and even more disgraceful for a man to take advantage of her in that state. Therefore, it was very much understandable that Nghalṭhianga though unwillingly, accompanied Ainâwni home that night from the chief's house. Of course, this incident led to the breakdown of relations between Nghalṭhianga and Romawii especially after Ainâwni became pregnant. This was a turn of events that C. Lalnunchanga used to illustrate the rules and codes that guided the actions of the society and also what was regarded as inappropriate behavior during that time.

Another tradition that is intricately connected with the beliefs of the Mizo that is brought to life in the narratives is *Kawngpui Siam*. It was a ritual held about a week before the festival of *Chapchar Kut*, by which blessing was sought for the whole community for many successful hunts and for success in wars. As such Puilura instructed his *tlangau* (the town crier) to announce that everyone must be present in the village for the *Kawngpui Siam* ceremony and that all activities requiring absence from the village was to be done before or after the ceremony. Zaliana writes in *Mizo Sakhua* (Mizo Religion) (2013) that everyone must be present on the day of the ceremony since its purpose is to seek blessing for the entire village. Only the residents of the village could be present in the village at the time. For that reason, it was usually held after every family had finished preparing their *lo* for cultivation. Any resident of the village could take offence if the ceremony was held during their absence, even to the extent of migrating to another village. For the ceremony, the priest (the *Sadâwt*) accompanied by the older men in the village would walk towards the outskirts of the village where at a chosen site either a piglet or a chicken would be sacrificed. This sacrificed animal would change every alternate year. The animal would be eaten at the site and the ashes of the fire it was cooked in

[103]*Thingfarzan*: The night during a festival or ceremony specifically arranged for the unmarried youth. There was much *zu* and the singing lasted the whole night. The young men would sit in rows with their knees pulled up to their chests and the maidens would sit on their feet facing them. This was called "*inngai*". Any misbehavior or attempt to take advantage of the maidens was severely frowned upon and would result in the complete humiliation of the young man if any maiden complained against him.

would be spread evenly on the road within the circle of a certain species of vine so that the footprints of any animal stepping on it would be clearly visible. The men would then return to the village where they would knock on the chief's house and ask for admittance. Banter would follow between the men and those within the chief's household, with requests to enter and with playful refusals. This would offer great entertainment for the rest of the villagers. The next morning, the circle of ash would be examined and if it was found to have the tracks of a deer or a wild boar, it was taken as a good omen. However, if the tracks of a tiger were found in the ash, it was considered an ill-omen and the whole ceremony would be repeated (93-98). These rituals are illustrated with great detail in the historical narratives. The year that Puilura performed the *Khuangchawi* was a good year for his people as Pâbâwka pointed out that the *Kawngpui Siam* for that year had brought a lot of blessings as hunting parties had always returned with a good kill (Lalnunchanga, 2015, 67).

From the narratives, it can be seen that there was good camaraderie in the village and that there was a highly developed sense of humor. It can also be seen that mostly everyone was on good terms with the others in the village. Moreover, because it was such a tight knit community where everyone knew each other, there could be no secrecy in any matter, even personal ones. Inevitably word would spread quickly and there was a lot of teasing especially when there was an issue involving the relations between the young men and women of the village. Everything was open to public scrutiny and judgment. This open nature of associations is well illustrated in both the selected historical novels.

In *Ka Mi Huaisen leh Ka Pasalṭha* (My Brave and Courageous Men) (2015), even before the town crier could begin his announcement, he was teased mercilessly as was the custom to do so by the fun-loving people. The teasing was good naturedly ignored by him in turn. What was important and significant was that even children teased him. No one thought it was disrespectful of the children to tease the town crier as the grown-ups did and that the nature of their teasing was as colourful. This too, the town crier ignored in the same manner as that of the grown-ups. Again, the manner in which Nghalṭhianga came to have a case in the court of the chief can be attributed to the whole community. A group of children had spotted Nghalṭhianga with Ainâwni conversing at a stream where Ainâwni happened to be bathing. The

incident became the topic of conversation in the village with word spreading of Nghalṭhianga boasting about having been intimate with Ainâwni. Things came to such a head that a case was brought against Nghalṭhianga. Ainâwni's father, feeling that it was his responsibility to guard his daughter's good name as also his own, went to the chief accusing Nghalṭhianga of boasting about sleeping with his daughter. The hearing of the case in the chief's house became a source of embarrassment and a cloud over the head for both the young people and their families for a long time after. The whole village came out to hear the proceeding and never thought it inappropriate to interject with comments and bawdy jokes which everyone, but the concerned individuals found highly amusing. It can be said that any chance to tease or make a joke out of any situation was never passed without taking the opportunity.

Sometimes this camaraderie turned to inciting certain individuals into doing foolhardy acts to the amusement and entertainment of the whole community. An instance of such an incident is that of how the youth persuaded Tintula, one of the better known men of Khiangzo, to sit on the red-hot glowing embers of the main hearth in the *zawlbuk*. Though he was known for his bad temper and was feared by most, he was also reckless and easily persuaded into things when his strength, courage and bravery were challenged. The young men of the *zawlbuk* in which he slept knew this. Having heard of a man who had sat on the red-hot embers at the fireplace of the *zawlbuk*, they decided to goad Tintula into performing a similar feat. They very successfully stirred his inflated pride, offering a spectacle for the whole village and to the amusement of the chief himself.

The people of Puilura's village would rush to the village entrance at the first sound of hunters returning from a hunting trip with the maidens carrying *zu* to quench the thirst of their brothers and their loves. The return of a raiding or a hunting party or even the entry of travelers into the village would become known to the whole village within moments and they would crowd around the entrance of the village (the *kawt-chhuah*[104]*)* to welcome them and gather news of the surrounding areas. This sense of fellowship was not always the reason for humour and sometimes, the camaraderie became a veil for sentiments of jealousy, of challenge and of scorn.

[104]*Kawt-chhuah*: Entrance or exit to a village.

In *Ka Mi Huaisen leh Ka Pasaaltha* (My Brave and Courageous Men) (2015) Puilura's men had entered Arthial, the chief Dinthanga's village after wandering in the forest for days. The men had gone hunting under the leadership of one of the most respected of the *pasalṭha*, Zakâpa. They had become wary of the intentions of the chief and his group of *Upa* from the reception they were given. Male travelers were required to sleep in the *zawlbuk* even when they were guests of certain families. If they were young, they would customarily be challenged to a friendly match of wrestling which it was felt, would foster good relations between the people. The jokes and the teasing during this outwardly friendly wrestling match as they realized, came to have undertones of challenge and an intention to demoralize Puilura's men with the sheer physical strength of the men from Sangburha's village, Thingmuat, who were also guests at Arthial at that time. This was in a way, good strategy on the part of the people of Sangburha's village and Arthial for security reasons, a very important aspect of survival. Nevertheless, it veiled a threat, which came under the guise of a friendly match that was supposed to foster good relations.

Respect and courtesy towards the other are inculcated from childhood and especially, respect for elders was considered an important virtue. Even as children, there was rivalry between two of the best *pasalṭha* in Puilura's village. When Hautuka had tried to bully Nghalṭhianga who was not only younger but also smaller, Nghalṭhianga had fought back and would not back down even though he was being badly beaten. When the grown-ups saw them, their first response was to have Nghalṭhianga beaten up so that he would no longer have the audacity to challenge his elders saying "*Aia ûte thu chu hnial ngai a ni hlei nêm…*" ("One must never argue with one's elders"; Lalnunchanga, 2015, 102). However, the sense of righteous justice that prevailed in the village can also be seen when Zakâpa commented that one must not take sides when dealing with children (104). Tlangchuana, the eldest among Puilura's *Upa* often had views that not only hugely differed from the chief but most often opposed it. The manner in which the chief deflected his divergent opinions was telling of his respect for the old man who in his prime, had contributed to the community as much as any of the *pasalṭha* of that time. Even as the old man tested his patience, he always kept in mind that the old man had served his father well and had been the source of good counsel during his time.

Another interesting aspect of Mizo ethics was the manner in which the youth wooed and courted. It is illustrated well in the love interests of Nghalṭhianga. When they became old enough, the young men would visit the house of the maiden in whom they were interested, to court her, a courtship practice called *in rîm*[105]. The maiden on her part, even if she were interested in a particular man would treat all her suitors equally well since it was considered good conduct to not let her preference show. The men in turn were to conduct themselves in a manner that was inoffensive to the parents in the house, and vice versa. This was necessary in that a maiden's suitors would be so numerous at times that they would fill the house. In the *lo*, the youngsters could *in lâwm*[106] i.e. help one another in their respective *lo*s. This practice gave an opportunity to those who were romantically interested in each other to spend more time together. Though there were no chaperones in the *lo*, the youngsters' conduct was guided by the expectations and fear of the disapproval of the society. These accepted behaviors could be seen in Nghalṭhianga's relationship with Romawii as they were *in lawm* and helped each other in weeding their respective family's farmland. With Ainâwni who carried his *sawn*, the conduct highlighted was that which was disapproved of and which ended up being a source of constant shame for both parties involved. His affair with Chuaileni showed the perils of daring to court the chief's daughter. It can be seen through all of Nghalṭhianga's relationships that their actions could have far more reaching reactions than they could have anticipated and that since the youth were held accountable for their actions, they mostly took the responsibility of behaving in a proper manner. Keeping to the strictures of the society was also seen as a form of protection from any of the evils that could befall man. When a tiger was heard prowling in the dark around the camp during a hunting expedition, even though all the men were seasoned hunters they became uneasy. To put the others at ease, Hlaivawma told them that they had nothing to fear as none of them had had any extra-marital relationships. In this manner, the

[105]*Rîm*: To court, to pay court to, to go courting, to make love to; to visit or be in company of (a woman-not necessarily young); to inspect or make enquiries about (a girl) with a view to arranging a marriage.

[106]*Lâwm*: To take turns at helping one another in any kind of work or occupation; to do anything together by turns for mutual advantage or pleasure.

moral conduct of the community was kept in check, not so much through policing but by inculcating the desired behaviour in the members of the community.

In rîm was also instrumental in welcoming new families who had newly moved from another village. After Sengawta and Zathara moved to Puilura's village from Dinthanga's village, they had nothing much in their houses. Being new and among unfamiliar people, the visit from Nghalṭhianga and his friends must have been very much appreciated. Lawhlêngi's mother told them "… *kan hawi hai lutuk loh nân in lo leng fo dawn nia*" ("you must visit often so that we may not feel so out of place"; Lalnunchanga, 2007, 64). Although the visit was outwardly to *rîm* the daughter of the house Lawhlêngi, it is clear from Nghalṭhianga's inner thoughts that it was also an icebreaker of sorts. It was also an opportunity to gauge how much assistance the newcomers would require. Upon seeing the empty shelves and the house itself, Nghalṭhianga silently decided that he would give them a share of his next hunt.

Society was the school that every Mizo went to. The community was responsible for moulding the character of every child in the village. The children had their share of chores and responsibilities to which they were held responsible. Even from C.Lalnunchanga's narratives, it is clearly discernable that gender roles were inculcated into the activities of the children. Given the times in which they lived in, it is understandable that the training of the boys would be geared towards activities that involved the welfare of the community at large and that those of the girls would be geared towards activities within the family under the tutelage of their own mothers. The institution of the *zawlbuk* served as a training ground for the boys. The *zawlbuk* was not only a physical presence in the village occupying a prominent space, second only to the chief's house. It was a dormitory where all able bodied men in the community slept for reasons of security and emergencies at a time when a quick response was of utmost importance. The *zawlbuk* provided the chief with the youth as "soldiers, his police force and his skilled labour" (Llyod, 99). It was also a center of learning, a place where camaraderie was found, where bonds of friendship were built and nurtured. The boys would find their inspiration from the stories of the brave warriors and hunters told around the hearth of the *zawlbuk*. They learnt discipline, how to interact with others, how to woo the maidens and how to wrestle among other

things. And most importantly, they learnt the history, culture and traditions of their people through the stories told by the elders.

Puilura's village had three *zawlbuk* located at strategic places, the largest and most important of which was located close to the chief's house. Due to its location, the *zawlbuk* was central to the activities of the village. The blacksmith was at a close distance. The children would play and walk with their bamboo stilts in its courtyard while the old men would weave baskets and such. Even the young men would play shot-put, testing their strength in its grounds. For Zakâpa and Ramtinthanga the *zawlbuk* was the place where they could discuss their plan of action for raids or hunting expeditions that involved the whole village, where they could give their spirit boosting talks to encourage and inspire the men whom they led to feats of bravery. The importance of the *zawlbuk* could be seen when the braves of Puilura's village went on a retaliatory raid to Vuakdûp, Dinthanga's village. They surrounded the *zawlbuk* even before the chief's house. The successful capture of the dormitory resulted in the easy capitulation of the village. Nghalṭhianga and his friends spent their nights at the *zawlbuk* after spending time either at Romawii's house or Ainâwni's house. Even after the fiasco with Ainawni, Nghalṭhianga could not refuse to sleep in the *zawlbuk* although he was still burning with the shame of having to stand before the chief and the *Upa* of the village. He was also apprehensive of the inevitable teasing and coarse jokes that he would have to face from the other men. That however, was not enough for him to forgo his sense of responsibility in fulfilling his obligation to the society.

It can thus be seen that C.Lalnunchanga's representation of the historical Mizo society is unabashedly postcolonial, seeking to undo the colonial image of the Mizo as a savage and slow-witted people presented in the documents and reports of the officials. It is therefore not at all surprising that he would illustrate through his narratives, the commendable aspects of Mizo life which did not receive as much focus as it deserved in his opinion. Even though this is his professed intention, any one-sided representation cannot claim legitimacy. As Michel Foucault said, "There is in this hatred of the present or the immediate past a dangerous tendency to invoke a completely mythical past" (167). Therefore, we find numerous instances of the negative aspects of the society embedded in the narratives. The most noticeable of

these is the plight of those women whose behaviour the community has deemed unacceptable. Ainâwni's story was a case in point. "*Ainâwni'n sâwn a pai*" ("Ainâwni is carrying a child out of wedlock"; Lalnunchanga, 2015, 155). This was the ultimate shame that any maiden could ever go through. Her fault was that she willingly surrendered her purity thus bearing the child of the man she loved. Her punishment was to suffer the anger of not just her father but also that of her brothers. The fact that she was with child did not deter her family from physically taking out their anger on her for bringing shame to their family. The whole community witnessed and pitied her suffering but was incapable or rather was unwilling to raise a voice. The chief himself had to intervene saying, "*I fanu hi i duh tawh lo a nih chuan ka bâwih ah awm rawh se*" ("if you no longer want your daughter, I will take her into my house as a servant"; 157). Even after her child was born, she continued to suffer degradation and it was with happy tears of disbelief that she saw her family accept Nghalṭhianga's marriage proposal which incidentally was proffered because of his sense of guilt regarding their son.

The plight of the orphan, is another social issue that C. Lalnunchanga briefly touches upon. Through the pity expressed for the fatherless state of Nghalṭhianga's *sawn* and of Hautuka's sons after his separation from his wife, the reader gets a glimpse of the pitiful conditions of orphans. Hautuka saw his sons as "… *falak, ui chuang vaha an vah hne hne hi*" (Lalnunchanga, 2007, 84) meaning that his sons were like adopted children, comparing them to street dogs roaming about without owners. When trying to convince Nghalṭhianga into marrying Ainâwni, his father played on his sense of guilt by comparing his grandson to an orphan. It would have been pitiful to be an orphan during a time when being alive was itself a constant struggle.

The pressure of the expectations of the community on the young men can be seen in Hautuka's character. The high expectations to always be imbibed with *tlawmngaihna*, to be brave and considerate, sometimes put tremendous pressure to perform rather than inspire, be it hunting or in war, causing them into doing things they would not have considered doing otherwise.

Narrative Technique

C.Lalnunchanga's storytelling in the selected historical works is quite straightforward. Before narrating his stories, he provides the historical background – the narrative that is dominant and available from the colonial records. He then proceeds with his own rendering of that history through the story of Puilura and his men. His parallel telling of the two narratives foregrounds his subversion of the hegemonic colonial narratives lending a complexity to his narrative technique. His re-telling of available historical narratives, filling in the blanks so to say, "tells us *about* something" (Downes 50) for, "literature becomes a witness, and perhaps the only witness, to the crisis within history which precisely cannot be articulated, witnessed in the given categories of history it-self[107]" (Peterson, 984).The historical novels thus take on the role of the witness. Witness to the untold details silenced because of the voiceless-ness of the Mizo then.

Through the omniscient narrator, the reader becomes privy to the conversations behind closed doors. As witness, the reader gets acquainted with the various expeditions and operations the British had executed against the Mizo, in their own land through the conversations of the British officers. Though the narrator makes neither overt interjections nor comments that could otherwise sway the reader's interpretation of the situations, the reader gets a sense of the "something" that Margaret J. Downes writes of when writing about the role of the narrative. Although these conversations put the focus on the white man's perspective on these events, rather than consolidating it, they undermine the image of the white man as the "hero" of the story that they championed in their own narratives i.e. the reports and documents of the officers. In the selected texts, they are made to grudgingly admire the Mizo people and their culture but are overridden by their sense of pride, which would not permit them to attribute any laudable traits on a people they considered their inferior in every aspect. The sometimes subtle and sometimes overt subversion of the "other-ing" of the Mizo in the white man's metanarratives by juxtaposing the actions and world view of the two can be seen throughout the

[107] Nancy J. Peterson quotes Shoshana Felman and Dori laub from *Testimony: Crisis of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (1992) when writing of Louise Erdrich working towards a new historicity through her novels (984).

narrative. For the Mizo, burning of stored grains is sacrilege as it is the source of sustenance. For the white man, burning of the stored grains would disable the enemy and render him helpless and ready to surrender. While for the Mizo, they saw themselves as equals, neither being superior nor inferior; the white man saw themselves as superior to the Mizo, a self-authorization that according to them entitled them to mete out punishments, conquer and subjugate. This dichotomy sets a new binary from the Mizo world view where there is a reversal of roles. The Mizo, once the savage "other" now occupies the position of the center whereas the once centered white man is consigned to the periphery. Now the Mizo looks on the white man's actions as aberrations and not the norm nor the given.

In illustrating the vibrant cultural heritage of the Mizo through the lives of the characters, the presence of a free flow of cultural exchange, between different villages, clans and tribes can be seen in the episode of the marriage party of Laldara, the son of Lallura an important chief with many villages under him. Although similar in most ways, the small differences in their mannerisms, slight variations in dialect and ways of wearing their *puan* is evident in the way the people of Puilura's village imitate them when they leave after a stay of two months. The influence of other cultures is thus seen to have a positive effect on their own, enriching it by the introduction of new and novel ways of doing things. It was an exchange of equals. On the other hand, when Puilura was imprisoned in the garrison in Aizawl, even the smell of 'masala' and the sound of the bugle became symbols of their defeat. For Puilura it signified the imposition of the white man's culture on theirs' which made a huge difference in its reception, not to mention the impossibility of its being accepted and imbibed. To borrow Edward Said's phrase, domination had bred resistance (1994, 348). Thus, Puilura refused to eat the food served to him and he did not make use of the amenities provided to him. Instead he relied only on what his own people provided him. Indeed, as Stuart Hall postulated, culture had become a site of ongoing struggle (Procter, 1-2). For Puilura, his rejection of these foreign signifiers is a symbol of his refusal to give in to the forces he already knows he cannot defeat. Puilura's obstinate refusal to let go and accept an unfamiliar culture is not just a fear of the unknown, but the recognition of the importance of holding on to one's

heritage. Herein lies C.Lalnunchanga's main objective– to reveal the underlying role of culture in the survival of a people.

At the same time, C.Lalnunchanga also recognises that culture cannot remain static and that cultural identity is the "mean between selfhood and otherness" (Levin, 156). Just as the greatness of Puilura's village depended on the people living in it, and who in turn were influenced and had adopted the external stimuli from others, the survival of the Mizo will also depend on their ability to adapt external influences into their own culture for their own advantage. Therefore, the narrator's hindsight in *Khamosh Hai Raath* (Silent is the Night) (2011), of the serenity that Christianity had brought to the people of Mizoram can easily be seen echoed in the unexplainable peace the braves of Vanbawng felt on the night of their attack on the British forces. Its connotation to the influence of the white man and of Christianity in bringing an end to the tears and troubles caused by the inter-village wars is unmistakable. What Paul Dawson writes about the narrator's omniscient authority being simultaneously heightened and problematized by their distance from the events of the story (153) can be seen in C.Lalnunchanga's treatment of this scene. The obvious reference to the influence of the British and the Indian in shaping contemporary Mizo identity, can be seen in the three-fold presentation of "Silent Night" in English, Hindi and in Mizo. That all the three versions convey the same message and in the same melody can be interpreted in terms of the equal and important roles these three cultures have come to play in the multi-cultural and multi-lingual world of the then contemporary times. Consequently, it may also be interpreted that in choosing to end the story with the Mizo version of the hymn, C. Lalnunchanga has consciously reiterated the importance of keeping alive the Mizo cultural and moral ethos that he has so consciously cultivated through his illustrative narratives. As such, a foregrounding of the Mizo culture and traditions in the narratives can be seen throughout. C. Lalnunchanga does not bother to offer explanations nor elaborations on the archaic expressions and terms he uses, which are to a great extent unfamiliar even to the modern-day Mizo reader. He incorporates them into his narratives thus, highlighting the fact that it was very much a part of the everyday lives of the people, embedded in

the culture and traditions "legitimated by the simple fact that they do what they do"[108] (Kreiswirth, 643).

Echoing the traditional oral form of storytelling, the narrative is interspersed with songs –*hla*[109] and *hla chham*[110] or songs that are chanted rather than sung. The performative quality of these songs and chants, be it the *hlado*[111] or the *bawh hla*[112], enrich the narratives through their rhythm and become instrumental in the emotional expression of the moment. Be it for victory in the *hlado*, as in the return from successful raids or of the *bawh hla* which articulate the sorrow felt at the death of the chief Puilura and the beautiful Chhingpuii, these lyrical additions to the narrative add depth and dimension to the storytelling. These songs also have an added function in the narrative as they provide additional information and reinforce the validity of the culture and the religious beliefs of the Mizo.

Kan mi lungduh laichhuatah a zal,
A au ruai ruai lungloh tui dawnin,
Ai I maw ka zuapa (Lalnunchanga, 2007, 229)

This *bawh hla* at the death of Puilura essentially expresses the sorrow in seeing the body of the beloved chief laid on the floor and also is a nostalgic imagination of him drinking the water of *lungloh tui* and wondering if would work its magic on him. The thought of the beloved departed, forever forgetting his earthly

[108]Martin Kreiswirth quotes Jean-Francois Lyotard from *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* where he writes about narratives defining what has the right to be said and done in the culture in question as they are themselves a part of that culture. In this article, Kreiswirth writes about how all forms of narratives are human constructs that operate by certain conventions and thus, are required to be studied.

[109]*Hla*: Hymn, song, poetry, chant.

[110]*Hla chham*: *Hla* means song or chant; *chham* means to repeat, utter, recite, raise or chant. *Hla chham* therefore means to recite or chant a song or chant as an incantation, prayer, lament, hunter's chant of success, warrior's cry of victory.

[111]*Hlado*: It is a chant sung at the successful hunt of an important animal like the bear, *sele* or mithan and does not include animals smaller than the deer. It is chanted at the time the animal is killed, when the leaves on which the meat of the animal was cut is discarded, at every resting place on their journey home, at the entrance to the village and with much gusto at the celebration of the kill (Thanmawia, 1997, 156-157).

[112]*Bawh Hla*: It is chanted only for humans. When an enemy is slain, the victorious person would stand above his victim and chant this victory chant. If there was danger from other enemies, the victor would refrain from chanting. However, he would enthusiastically chant at the entrance to the village firing shots from his gun. It is again chanted at the *rallu lam* i.e. at the dance to celebrate the death of an enemy by dancing around the severed head of the slain. The *bawh hla* is also chanted upon the slain tiger which is considered above all other animals and hence is given the same treatment as humans. The killing of the tiger is avoided as much as possible and is done only when there is no other choice left. (Thanmawia, 1997, 157)

relations seem too much to bear for the mourner. In these four lines, the audience is familiarized with the journey of the soul of the departed according to traditional Mizo beliefs. The reference to *lungloh tui* invokes images of the soul on its journey to *mitthi khua* where upon the soul sees the *Hawilopar* which when plucked takes away the desire to return to the land of the living and drinks the water of *lungloh tui* to forget its past life. This aspect of orality in the narrative also lends an additional voice to the polyphony in the narration. The combined telling of history through the narrative and lyrics reflect the collective effort of telling a story in the oral tradition. This polyphony of voices sometimes tell differing aspects and variations of a story which all work cohesively towards making the story a complete whole. Lalmama in his *Thuhmahruai* (Foreword) to *Mizo Titi* (Mizo Conversations) *(Primary History*[113]*)* first published in 1957 acknowledged the presence of variations in Mizo stories. He attributed this to the oral nature of the stories stating that even the same stories told by siblings differ. He had therefore invited other versions of the same so he could incorporate them in the next edition of his book (Lalzuithanga and Colney, 141). Thus, through the presence of the polyphonic voices in his narratives, C.Lalnunchanga is able to work towards creating and constructing a complete vision of the story he felt was true to the Mizo ethos and culture, and hence, perhaps towards the creation of his ideal historical image of the Mizo.

As Stuart Hall has stated that culture is a critical site of social action and intervention, where power relations are both established and potentially unsettled (Procter, 1). So also, C.Lalnunchanga has sought to counter the balance of power in the relation between the white man and the Mizo in the past through his narratives and narration. Thus the narration favors the latter to reduce if not erase the existent hegemonic relationship – a "going back… a product of a *present* need, which reshapes" rather than simply invoking the past (Loomba, 191; emphasis as in text). That this re-setting of the hegemony is crucial to his search for the identity of the contemporary Mizo and can be seen through the interplay of the impact of colonialism and Christianity on the characters in his contemporary short stories.

[113] "Primary History" is part of the title.

Homi K. Bhabha writes, "identity is never a priori, nor a finished product; it is only ever the problematic process of access to the image of totality" (73).

Conclusion

"Writing does not merely inscribe the spoken message or represent the message event, it becomes a new event" (Ashcroft et.al, 184) and the events of the "uprising" of the 1880s have taken on a new significance. The fight to protect and preserve one's way of life against a more forceful and foreign power was the need of the hour. The "new event" erases in the mind's eye, the vision of the easy capitulation of the Mizo to the military might and the cajoling of the white man's efforts to win him over at any cost. This "writing back" may seem a delayed act. However, taking into consideration all the socio-economic impacts of the white man's influences and later on, that of mainland India on the ethos of the contemporary Mizo, going back to one's roots as it were is perhaps what is required at the moment. This going back also entails the remembering of forgotten pasts as well. C.Lalnunchanga in the selected historical texts thus focuses on the forgotten past of the struggle against colonial annexation not just to correct the "'faulty' reconstructive histories" (Indrani Chatterjee, 366) of the Mizo but also, to remember "a happy past" (367) of pre-colonial times. Indrani Chatterjee[114] believes this focus on the past to be "grounded in reproductive memory, associated with high levels of fidelity to information or behaviour learned by practice, by repetition" (367). McCall had disparagingly declared the "traditions and the stories of their grandfathers" (197) as the only strength the Mizos had to fall back on; indeed, they are now instrumental in dissembling the last vestiges of colonialism. The postcolonial perspective, Homi K. Bhabha writes "enables the authentication of histories of exploitation and the

[114] In *Forgotten Friends: Monks, Marriages, and Memories of Northeast India* (2013) Indrani Chatterjee realised that her "learned 'history' was seriously one-dimensional" and based on many kinds of forgetting, of the troubled and difficult times while only the positive aspects of the time would be remembered (367). In her interviews with informants as well as in the story of her own family, Indrani Chatterjee writes that in re-telling painful pasts, only the persons who had helped them survive and given them sanctuary were mentioned and not the persecutors. They were "actively focussed on forgetting the horrors they had witnessed and lived through, rather than on articulating it" in a reconstructive memory that creatively interprets information on the basis of previous knowledge before encoding it, thus making it potentially dangerous or 'faulty' memory according to many Western European clinical practitioners (365-367).

evolution of strategies of resistance" (9) both essential in neutralizing the control and authority over the written word which had till then been monopolized by colonial "control over the *means of communication*" (Ashcroft et.al., 78; emphasis as in text). "(L)anguage is power because words construct reality" (88). What better way than through the medium taught to them by the white man themselves, to appropriate the center from which they had been cast as "savages", "the other" who did not need to know more than necessary for their happiness and well-being for "to know more than this would make them unhappy" (Lewin, 287) – writing.

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Chapter III
Impact of Colonisation and Christianity

This chapter will attempt to explore the impact of colonialism and Christianity on Mizo society and its culture and thus, try to explain how despite the constructive modifications, the core of the social structure seem damaged in the contemporary stories of C.Lalnunchanga.

> To change or modify one link in the structure is to impose additional strain, or even to cause atrophy, elsewhere, thus throwing out the whole balance and resulting in a substitution of a feeling of insecurity for that sense of social security which should be the inheritance of age-long experience and trial (McCall, 119-20).

Anthony Gilchrist McCall's words have indeed rung true for the Mizo people. Since the beginning of the establishment of the white man on Mizo soil, the double impacts of colonisation and Christianity have been the catalysts for constant modifications in the Mizo society and as surely, have thrown it off balance. Consequently, the Mizo world view too has undergone much change. From taking pride in their indigeneity and the belief that they were at an equal footing with any other peoples, they had come to consider these very aspects to be the embodiment of the opposite. They have become the antithesis. The Mizo's resistance and opposition to the invading colonial power though heated and intense during the time, had eventually given way to be in awe of their superior military might and artillery and admittedly, knowledge. This impression was expedited by the fact that the colonial experience for the Mizo was in a way different from the general experience of other colonised people in the sense that there was no scope for economic gain by their exploitation as in other places, and it had much advantage in keeping the peace for the colonial machine to function smoothly elsewhere. This however did not mean that the Mizo people were spared from "the white man's burden". They neither escaped subjugation nor could they stop the complete overhauling of their lives to the "enlightened" path of the white man's ways according to which the lives they had hitherto lived was savage, backward and to be done away. In no less time than twenty years, the change in attitude towards the white man from an intruder to a role

model whom everyone aspired to emulate had become complete. In consolidating their "imperialists Sovereign Self", to use Benita Parry's words, the colonizing white man had induced the Mizo "to collude in its own subject(ed) formation as other and voiceless" (45)[115]. To put it simply, this change was a direct effect of the Mizo's witness of the white man's show of ruthless military power and their concerted effort to instil in the native people their superiority as a race. That this tactic was a success can be seen in *Pasalṭhate Ni Hnuhnung* (Last Days of the Braves) (2007) when Romawii's father Chuaukunga who like many during that time, had been convinced of the futility in fighting against the white man, had compared their force to that of a flood that could not be stopped (333). He also recognised that the white man's arrival was also a harbinger of wealth for the people (334). So swayed was he that he was able to persuade a hundred others into leaving Puilura's village which was then left without a chief, both Puilura and his son, Saingura having lost their lives in their fight against the white men. This suppression was in turn, tempered by the benevolent approach of the missionaries who began their work not long after the establishment of the white man in Mizo soil.

Much like Leslie Silko's remark, as quoted by Susan Perez Castillo, "(D)enial of ourselves and our own origins is one of the most devastating psychological weapons the Whites have ever found to use against us" (231), the wealth and the knowledge that the white man brought with him came at a price. The imbalance created in the society by the loss of its structure, indigenous knowledge and culture was immense and its after-effect far-reaching, as can be expected with such drastic and irrevocable changes occurring in such a short period of time. It is true that change is inevitable for progress and development. When it is catapulted into action by an external dominant influence and progresses faster than it would if it had happened naturally, the changes though beneficial also became a scourge. This we see reflected in the selected contemporary short stories of C.Lalnunchanga from the collection, *Vutduk Kara Meisi* (Sparks from Dying Ash) (2011) – "*Lawmna Garden*" (Garden of Contentment), "*Baby-i Hlim Zan*" (Baby's Night of Happiness) and "*Krismas Thawnthu*" (A Christmas Story).

[115] Benita Parry writes this in connection to Gayatri Spivak's "model of the silent subaltern" in "Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse" (44).

These selected stories may be considered biased and only representative of a certain aspect that throws a negative light on the society. Definitely, the introduction and establishment of modern infrastructural facilities and most importantly, the introduction of western education have brought the Mizo on par with the rest of the country. So, the vast difference between life in the pre-colonial and post-colonial times is very much discernable and can be contrasted one with the other on reading the selected texts as a continuum. What is of interest is the space between then and now which has not only witnessed the process of the visible changes that can be seen now but also, the process of the formation of the resultant void in the personal lives of the characters that had taken deep roots in the society in the contemporary stories. The effects and implications of these changes are most apparent in the "cultural terrain" (Xie, 9) and hence offer a relatively more dynamic platform for discussion.

This cultural transformation of the Mizo can be traced through the articulation of "the apparent coming and going of 'traditional' forms... (that) tend to assume that cultures are living bodies with organic structures"(Clifford, 181) – from the self assured pre-colonial to the contemporary Mizo seeking to define himself not just to the world but also within his own community as well. The most far-reaching effect of colonialism on the Mizo can be said to be the obliteration of that part of history where the Mizo people refused to recognise the white man and his ways as superior to theirs, refusing to be subdued or subjugated in their own land. In *Pasalṭhate Ni Hnuhnung* (Last Days of the Braves) (2007), Lt. Platt had witnessed the people's unflinching resolve to fight even to death while being held a prisoner in their village. Realising the futility of trying to forcefully win over the people of Khiangzo he persuaded the Political Officer, A.W.Davies to leave them alone. Instead, the refrain of the white officers towards the end of the novel was that the resolute resistance and refusal to surrender by the people of Khiangzo be erased from the memory of the Mizos (Lalnunchanga, 2007, 328) and that they must be made aware of the white man's superiority over them (317). Another issue important to them was the need to cover up and erase all traces of their own mistakes, merciless behavior and acts of cowardice. This was reason that Lt.Platt had shot dead the men who had saved him. He had declared that there could be no witness to any incident detrimental to the reputation of the white man. He felt no remorse as he brushed the

incident off as nothing important when asked the reason for the gunshots (Lalnunchanga, 2007, 271). The death of Puilura and Saingura while in their custody was covered up even from their own superiors as they knew it would be disapproved of but more so to save face from the disgrace of it having happened during their watch. Moreover, they knew the sort of repercussion that the news could bring about in a situation that was already tense locally and even in Britain's international relationships.

What had made the difference ultimately, was the new world of commerce introduced by colonisation as suggested by Lt. Platt. He had seen the commitment of the people in opposing their military occupation during his short stay as prisoner in Khiangzo. And, he had come to believe that it was only by carefully luring and sparing the people through commerce that they could hope to win them over, not by force (Lalnunchanga, 2007, 327). By then, most of the Mizo chiefs had been subdued, paving the way for the establishment of the British colony in Mizoram.

The Colonial Experience - Christianity:

Philip G. Altbach had observed that the colonial government had dictated a "(R)eliance on foreign models" and that indigenous educational patterns were destroyed either by design or "as the inadvertent result of policies which ignored local needs and traditions" (381-382). In Mizoram too, just as he further observed, there were inadequate educational facilities, immediately limiting educational opportunity which in a sense, hindered modernization (382). It was in filling this gap and opening opportunities to the people that the Church's efforts have contributed much to the modernisation of the Mizo, and established the construct of the superior colonial power that had in its magnanimity graciously brought enlightenment to their world. Essentially, the impact of colonisation and Christianity may be considered to be the same or of equal importance, where the colonial influence began with the subduement of the chiefs and was continued by the Christian missionaries through the inculcation of the white man's ways. Of the British policy towards the Mizo in the initial years of annexation, McCall writes that the government operated "chiefly without much positive policy, relying, rather, for its contribution on the efficacy of a static preservation of the customs of the people" while the missions undertook "a

full-scale assault" (198). The non involvement of the government in the mission work as well as the assistance proffered by individual officials meant that the missionaries were relatively free to carry on their work as they thought best. On their part, the missionaries kept away from issues concerning government administration. Thus, the tacit understanding to not impinge on the other's perceived delineated responsibility helped to create a unified front, as also the cooperation between the Welsh, Baptist and Lakher Pioneer missions, all contributed to the reverence of the *sap* as well as to the growth of the church in Mizoram. Although not the primary intention, the church thus abetted the colonial premise of the superiority of the white man over other races.

Therefore, in order to have a grasp of the impact of Christianity on the lives of the Mizo, it is necessary to be acquainted not just with a historical account of its advent and establishment in Mizoram. It is also necessary to understand why it's acceptance was so complete and how in so short a time it came to have such an influence over the society so much so that it has now become an integral part of the Mizo identity. One factor was the government's decision to allow only two denominations to set up missions in Mizoram at the initial stage, which contributed to the steady rise in the number of conversions as they worked in unison. Also, that the Baptist Mission in the southern regions was under the care of F.W.Savidge and J.H.Lorrain who had pioneered mission work in the northern regions a few years prior, greatly helped to foster good relations between the two missions especially.

As discussed in the introductory chapter, the Mizo had a well-developed belief system that was synchronous with their cultural practices and which both complemented the other. Their religiosity was much dependent on spirituality and was as much a part of their daily lives as opposed to the well-defined and structured system of Christianity that was separate from their daily lives. However, there were points of similarities between the two: the belief in a powerful omniscient being superior to all other beings, both in the living and in the spirit world, similar concepts of life after death, and the existence of a priesthood to perform religious ceremonies, and the singing and dancing associated with all ceremonies. Instead of introducing new terms, pre-existing terms expressing traditional practices and beliefs of the Mizo were adapted to the Christian ethics, making it easier to understand and accept the

new (Lloyd, 80). These traditional concepts and terms came to play an important part in the conversion of the people and "shaped their interpretation of some Christian concepts" (116). With the passing of time, traditional religious concepts and terms eventually came to represent the Christian rather than the traditional. J. M. Lloyd's comment on the establishment of churches at old traditional ceremonial sites now stands true for the Mizo Church, that it "indicated both the triumph of the Gospel and the spiritual continuity with the past" (116). For as pointed out by Lalsangkima Pachuau, Christianity did modernize the Mizo but it also became indigenized itself, conforming to the Mizo traditions (173-174). It is impossible to even try to put aside the constructive changes that the missionaries brought to the lives of the Mizo. However, there are always two sides to every story. These beneficial changes did eventually become the seeds of metamorphosis in the Mizo society, the results of which were not altogether favourable.

In converting to Christianity, the Mizo people had to denounce the more apparent practices of their old religion to prove their rejection of it, as well as their acceptance of the new religion. What became evident thereafter was the fact that the practices especially the drinking of *zu*, which had been an integral part of secular and religious Mizo culture – traditions and customs, now was frowned upon. The most prominent immediate effect of conversion could be seen in the way traditional ceremonies were held or the lack of them. Christianity had made the reason for the performance of these ceremonies redundant. This served a severe blow to the essence of being Mizo for, these ceremonies were chiefly responsible for fostering the strong sense of community that existed among the people as the performance of the ceremonies required the effort of the whole community to be a success even though it was an individual's sacrifice. The traditional practices established through time no longer held any influence while the tenets of the newly introduced religion were not yet fully known. Christianity being new to the Mizo, it followed naturally that for a long time it was the *sap* missionaries who decided on what was acceptable and what was not since "What Christianity is and what it is not… has to be introduced to the people" (Lalsangkima Pachuau, 135). The lived spirituality of the Mizo's daily lives was thus forced to undergo a change that Major A.G.McCall observed was "dynamic and sustained" and that the changes the missionaries wrought were "often

spectacular, necessarily involving attack after attack on tradition"(199). Having witnessed the traditional juxtaposed with the transforming lifestyle, to the modern, McCall declared, "(H)erein lies the whole secret of the modern problem of Lushai in her chrysalis stage", that it is "one thing to eradicate and another to build up securely" (199). The traditional had indeed been eradicated but the establishment of its replacement had been left much to the hands of a few natives, who were themselves still grasping at straws in the dark.

Looking at the development of the Church in Mizoram, there is no doubt that the *sap* missionaries held the important position of setting up the structure of the Church and the responsibility of introducing Christianity and its teachings to the Mizo people. It is also without doubt that without the early converts and their enthusiastic evangelisation, the process would not have been as swift and widespread nor enduring. It can be deduced thus because of two reasons. The first is the role played by the early Mizo converts in the spread of Christianity. It has been pointed out numerously that the large scale conversion of the Mizo people to Christianity was largely because of the contribution of the first converts owing to their enthusiasm and zeal as well as the Mission being understaffed[116]. The number of *sap* missionaries in Mizoram at any given time was significantly low as compared to the area they ministered. In 1945, five missionaries stationed in Mizoram were considered "almost at full strength" and at the same level as in 1931 (Llyod, 324). Although evangelisation was initially in the hands of the *sap* missionaries, the newly converted Mizo preachers were the ones out in the field. It can thus be inferred that the interpretation of the teachings of Christianity was thus mainly in the hands of the newly converted people themselves.

The other, is the preaching of Christianity in context to the Mizo world view. As previously mentioned, the missionaries had learned the need to "preach in the thought-forms of the people, and their messages interacted with and were eventually shaped in large measure by the ideas and world views of their audience (Lalsangkima

[116]Lalsangkima Pachuau writes that the paucity of missionary service seems to have encouraged and challenged new converts and that their contribution was vital to evangelization. He added that this fact was also acknowledged by Lloyd who had written that it was not the missionaries but the Lushai who did most of the evangelizing (2002, 76). Joy L.K.Pachuau also writes that by the second decade of the arrival of the *sap* missionaries, the Mizos themselves were engaging with Christianity both theologically and socio-culturally and even "exporting the faith" to other regions (2014, 168).

Pachuau, 99). It was indeed effective in carrying across the message of Christianity but it also created the possibility of misinterpretations of the scriptures. Anecdotes are aplenty on the strict rules the early Mizo Christians had to follow which are amusing as they are incredibly literal in their interpretation of the scriptures. One instance that J.M.Llyod wrote is about a Christian family that registered their seven-year-old son as non-Christian in the 1921 census stating the reason that he was too greedy as he could not wait to say grace before meals (212). In another, quoting Rev. Zairema, he wrote that the elders of one village took precautions against the sin of "lustfully looking at a woman … by making all the ladies to sit facing the side wall of the church" (105). Following the strictures of the traditional social & superstitious beliefs in their practice of Christianity, Sunday came to be observed in much the same way as *Kawngpui Siam.* Since no one was to travel on a day reserved for performing ceremonies as it was considered auspicious, it followed that one should not travel on a Sunday if he could not return on the same day (Lloyd, 83). The reverence for Sunday was further magnified by the belief that Christians could secure certain salvation by regular church attendance and a sincere confession of sins as pointed out by Verghese and Thanzawna (334).

By 1909, twenty-five years after the arrival of the first missionaries in 1894 when Savidge and Lorrain had set foot on Mizo soil, it was found that a well organised church leadership and organisation was required to effectively preach the Good News and also, to cater to the weekly tasks and responsibilities. On the insistence of Rev. D.E.Jones the first missionary under the Welsh Mission, the Mizo Church came to follow the traditions of the Presbyterian Church of Wales. The church hierarchy comprises of the local church or *Kohhran,* the Pastorate or *Bial*[117] and the Presbytery, each having their local authority, with the Synod being the apex authority (mizoramsynod.org). Members of the local Presbyterian Church or *Kohhran* elect elders or *Upa.* They are ordained for life by the Presbytery, emphasising the spiritual nature and importance of the office (Lloyd, 123). The Presbyteries consisted of the elected elders, pastors and evangelists. The Assembly and later, the Synod was at the helm with representatives from each Presbytery and

[117]*Bial*: Pastorate of the Presbyterian Church of Mizoram.

having the authority to ordain pastors or ministers. In this way the Synod had representatives from each *Kohhran*. It was a very democratic set up, encouraged by the missionaries and which stood the Mizo church in good stead when they eventually had to leave.

As the number of Christians steadily rose, these developments in the Church meant that there began a gradual shift in the Mizo society. The influence and hence, power of the Church over the society had essentially transferred the traditional seat of power from the chiefs to the leaders of the Church, the new elite. By 1923, "*...it became quite popular to be a Christian*" (Lloyd, 266; my emphasis). This statement is a reflection of the immense influence Christianity had come to have on the people. It can be argued that it is too strong a statement in the Mizo context to share Fanon's observation that the church. He opined that it did not "call the native to God's ways but to the ways of the white man, of the master, of the oppressor" (32) because the early Mizo Christians had definitely infused certain aspects of the Mizo world view and religion in their practice of Christianity. However, "The Church in the colonies is the white people's Church" (32) and this fact has certainly made a big impact and influenced the construct of the modern Mizo. The Church was able to hold sway over the public and on its opinion mainly because besides spiritual gain in the changed lives of the early Christians, people could also see the material benefits of being a convert. The Christians invariably learnt to read and write. Literacy created opportunities for employment in many sectors other than in agriculture. Thus, it created a salaried class, a section of society that was non-existent before. It was not only the attraction of being free from the back-breaking work of the traditional swidden farming but more so the world of opportunities that literacy and education opened for them that captivated them. In this sense, the "educated intelligentsia" definitely "played a decisive role" (Panikkar, 2003, 9-10).

The Colonial Experience – Education:

How the *Duhlian*[118] dialect, the most commonly spoken of the Mizo languages was transcribed is as well-told as the tale of how the Mizo script was lost

[118]*Duhlian:* A name given to the upper classes or clans in the Lushai Hills and to the dialect they speak – which is regarded as the purest form of the Lushai language.

to posterity. Two books were published on the Mizo language, "Progressive Colloquial Exercises in the Lushai Dialect" in 1874 by Col. T.H.Lewin and "Grammar of the Lushai Language" in 1884 by Brojo Nath Shaha, Assistant Surgeon, Chittagong Hill Tracts. However, it was Lorrain and Savidge who reduced the language to its written form. In 1895 the first book printed and produced in the Mizo language, "Child's Primer" was published. By 1897, the Gospels of St. Luke and St. John and the Acts of the Apostles were also translated along with several hymns (Llyod, 29-30). Most importantly, "Grammar and Dictionary of the Lushai Language" was painstakingly prepared by the duo and published by the Assam Government in 1898, just four years after their settling in the hills. Lorrain wrote that he was personally responsible for the dictionary section to which he added substantially throughout his life (Lorrain, Preface, vi). This work proved to be most helpful to the missionaries who came later and in the development of education among the Mizo people. Education of the Mizo which began so as to enable them to read the Good News of the Bible for themselves became the precursor and sustaining element in the Mizo's struggle for identity and voice in the world they were thrust into. For the Mizo, as in other colonised communities, education effected a "domination by consent" becoming the "foundation of colonialist power" through the new educated elite working for the colonialist white man, either in the administration or for the missionaries thereby consolidating "this power through legal and administrative apparatuses" (Ashcroft et al., 371). The *need* for literacy had been created, and by what Gramsci called the socialist propaganda[119], it has become a "compelling force" (Forgacs, 67-68) as can be seen in the contemporary stories "*Lawmna Garden*" (Garden of Contentment) (2011) and "*Baby-i Hlim Zan*" (Baby's Night of Happiness) (2011).

The growing trust in western medicine and its preference over traditional healing was another important factor that relegated traditional practices to the background. The public began to realise that the medicines handed out by the missionaries were more effective and less expensive since the traditional healing

[119] The socialist propaganda, Gramsci writes "directly arouses a sharp sense" of not being just an individual within the local community and the family, but of being a citizen of a wider world, "with whose other citizens one needs to exchange ideas, hopes and sufferings" (Forgacs, 68).

practices sometimes required sacrifices which incurred heavy expenses. Moreover, it helped to establish mutual confidence as "the Mizos were very sensitive to the kindness shown" (Lloyd, 31). The arrival of Dr. Peter Fraser and his wife in 1908 effectively consolidated the people's belief in modern western medicine. J.M.Lloyd pointed out that Dr.Fraser treated 24,000 people in the year 1909 when the whole population of northern Mizoram was 90,000 – a testimony to his dedication as well as the people's faith in his practice (125). Taking this opportunity, his combined passion as a doctor and as a missionary brought many into the fold. This meant another change in the social fabric of the Mizo society - the services of the traditional *Puithiam* and *Bawlpu*[120] were no longer in demand, resulting in the diminishing of their stature and influence, which had been highly regarded in the society till then.

The Colonial Experience – Administrative Changes:

While the missionaries worked within the fabric of the society effecting much change, the colonial administration also brought about immense changes into the society with their administrative policies. After the 1892 "Eastern Lushai Uprising"[121] when the majority of the chiefs resisting the British forces were subdued, following a policy of non-involvement, the administrative responsibilities remained in the hands of the chiefs with a "nominal" token of annexation as agreed in 1891 i.e. a payment of house tax, rice and free labour when required. Unbeknown to the people living in the land, the Lushai Hills District was formed under the Assam Government on 1st April, 1898 by amalgamating the North and South Lushai Hills as recommended by the "Chin Lushai Conference" held on 29th January, 1892. Previously these two districts were under different administrations, the former under Assam and the latter under Bengal.

For the first time in history, the Mizo people came to occupy a specific unified area, years before there was any political awakening as a unified group. Also for the first time, the Mizo as a people had to acknowledge another group of people as superior at least in terms of military might. New systems were introduced in the

[120] *Bawlpu*: A priest, an exorcist.

[121] Inverted commas have been used to highlight the fact that it was an *uprising* to the British officials who have recorded these incidents, but to the Mizo, it was an act of *resistance* to the intrusive show of power by invaders and an assertion of their own autonomy.

administration by which the indigenous social organisation was weakened and undermined – the introduction of the System of Land Settlement [122], Circle Administration[123], and the standardization of chieftainship wherein the eldest son[124] inherited the heir ship, subject to good behaviour and ability (Verghese and Thanzawna, 316). Lastly, since the chiefs were now acting as representatives of the Superintendent, the title of chief was no longer solely hereditary but subjected to be appointed or dismissed. This meant that there later came to be chiefs who were not descendents of chiefs but appointed as such. As in other places, the British had become king/chief-makers who remained subservient to them. Additionally, the appointment of interpreters who were important connections between the chiefs and the Superintendent further undermined the power of the chiefs, especially if the interpreter himself wished to do so. The public became aware that there was a higher authority than the chief. Sometimes, his decisions on certain litigations were contested, and discretion had to be used by the Superintendent to help maintain the authority of the chief. The stability of the chief's position was now no longer dictated by the fulfillment of his duties and responsibilities to the people, and of the people's trust and faith in him but rather, it rested solely on his fulfillment of the duties set for him by the colonial power. This invariably led to the misuse of his power over his own people; a rare occurrence in the past, for the strictures of the society had prevented such abuse of power.

It was as if the rug was being pulled from under the very feet of the Mizo. The very foundations of what made them, and what brought them together as a people were being drastically changed at a fast pace and well beyond their capacity to offer resistance. The new land system had ensured peace among the various chiefs regarding territory but also, had made redundant the most important responsibility of the men-folk as protectors; the chiefs most often than not became oppressor rather than protector and provider due to the changed circumstances. The conversion to

[122]Introduced in 1898-99 by Lt.Col.Shakespear, under this system, each chief was to be given a certain area of country within which he and his people were free to move about (Robert Reid, 61).

[123] Also introduced in 1901-2 by Lt. Col. Shakespear by which the Lushai Hills District was divided into 18 circles, 12 in Aijal Subdivision and 6 in Lungleh Subdivision. Interpreters were appointed as a channel between the Sub-divisional Officer and the chiefs (Verghese and Thanzawna, 314).

[124] Traditionally, in most tribes, the youngest son inherited the chieftainship while the elder sons moved out of the family home to establish satellite villages to their father's village thus increasing the size of their domain.

Christianity had effectively put a halt to the communal nature of their spirituality and rather fostered individualism, since salvation had become a personal affair as compared to its earlier dependence on one's service to his fellow beings[125]. The birth of a new educated gentry whose livelihood was independent of agriculture and whose influence was gaining recognition, gave impetus to the growing reverence among them for the white man and his ways. The zealous desire to obliterate all indigenous customs and traditions that were thought to be in opposition to the teachings of Christianity or that which did not fit into the world view of Christianity and the white man – including the banning of all traditional festivals and the slow and steady decay of the institution of the *zawlbuk*. This trend of equating the Mizo with the backward and all negative traits of the individual as well as the society, while attributing all positive aspects to the white man was, and still is an inevitable consequence of being a colonised people who were inculcated with the notion of the superiority of the white man, and convinced of their own inferiority. The Mizo had "other"-ed themselves, the result of the "superimposed forces of an alien nature" i.e. the influences of Christianity and the colonial policies (McCall, 120). What some had observed would happen had become a reality,

> "The British Government now intends to kill us without recourse to the knife. Missionaries are sent to put an end to our religion and to our mode of worship, so that we may all die. We shall be in terrible trouble if we accept this message (Lloyd, 60).

There is no doubt that the tacit understanding between the colonial administrators and the missionaries enabled, as well as enhanced the prominence and high esteem of the white man. However, on various matters, they had differing opinions which not only brought them at loggerheads but which also became major precursors of change in Mizo society. From the following analyses, it can be seen that the administrator's endeavours towards cultural preservation also tended to have capitalist interests. It was much like Ania Loomba's declaration that it is "in the interest of capitalism that certain older social structures *not* be totally transformed,

[125]McCall wrote that the individual salvation after death taught by Christianity encouraged a "sense of the importance of the individual, which has reacted upon the indigenous valuation of the importance of community needs" (264).

and certain older forms of exploitation based on racial and ethnic hierarchies continue to make available cheap labour" (137; emphasis as in text).

The Colonial Experience – Abolition of the *Zawlbuk*:

The discontinuation of the institute of the *zawlbuk* was a cataclysmic blow to the Mizo community. For ages, it had served as the center of education, of training and instructions in preparation for the life of responsible adulthood, as barracks for the village braves, a place for meetings and for planning strategies for raids. It had upheld the structure of the society, teaching the younger generations to respect and to have consideration towards their elders and to what they said. It was also where the stories of their histories, their didactic tales and stories of the escapades of their *pasalṭha* were told and re-told to be passed-on for posterity. With the changes brought on by the coming of the white man and the introduction to his ways, the importance of the *zawlbuk* and the central role it played in the society was greatly reduced. Eventually, some came to believe that it had become inessential to the working of the society. McCall observed that the movement to abandon the institution which had been spearheaded by the church leaders was another "pursuance of the prevalent tendency to … destroy and eliminate all that dates from a period prior to the Christian era" (211) as they considered it as a device to promote sentiments that was opposed to their Christian faith. This is testament to the increasing momentum of power, which the religious leaders had, to influence public opinion and also, the decline in stature of the chiefs.

The traditional role of the *zawlbuk* had become redundant with the conversion to Christianity and with it, there came a threat to his power and hence, damage to the structure of village life (Llyod, 99). Attending school meant that the younger boys no longer had time to fulfill the tasks set by their elders at the *zawlbuk*. Even the number of young men who would sleep in the *zawlbuk* gradually became less as there was no longer any fear of a surprise enemy attack due to the government policies and also, because they too were pursuing education in the bigger towns. J.M.Llyod's observation, "We wonder if he (i.e. Rev.W.H.Williams) realised that the primary schools which he helped to found would undermine – or perhaps replace – the ancient *zawlbuk*" show the missionaries awareness of their role in the demise of the

institution of the *zawlbuk* (278). Over and above all these, the power and hold the chief had over his people had become titular in nature and he could no longer compel the people to continue something that served no purpose and that which had no relevance to their personal growth or gain. The institution of the *zawlbuk* was officially declared abolished ten days after a public meeting held on 1st January, 1938 had favoured its abandonment and earlier attempts to revive it had failed[126].

The Colonial Experience – The *Bawi* Controversy:

The *Bawi* Controversy was another important milestone in the cultural history of the Mizo people. Writing on the controversy, Sajal Nag pointed out the necessity of debating the "ideology that constructs the evilness in indigenous social practices and then labels it as backward, tribal, and savage and then arrogates themselves the 'white man's burden' of reforming them" (373). This other-ing of the social practice of the *bawi* system was demonstrated by the misinterpretation of the word "*bawi*" by Dr. Frazer, the main proponent of the controversy. Although the word *bawi* was translated as "slave" in the *Dictionary of the Lushai Language* (1940) by J.H.Lorrain, (31) the word has different connotations from the Western world's understanding of it as pointed out by various government officials during that time. Sajal Nag pointed out that in the process of translation, the missionaries had always looked for an English equivalent of any Mizo word and that every Mizo custom and institution had to have a corresponding European institution which they could immediately visualise (370). This fallacy had led to the controversy. Dr. Peter Frazer had arrived at Aizawl in 1908. His dedication and zeal was evident in the work he had accomplished during his stay in Mizoram, a period that was less than four years. However, his laudable service was overshadowed by his active participation in what is now known as the *Bawi* Controversy which began in 1909 under his inspiration. Perhaps his

[126]N.E.Parry as Superintendent of the Lushai Hills District had issued an order in 1926 that every village with more than 25 houses were to maintain a *zawlbuk*. This was done to safeguard the power and position of the chief and prevent its further decline. For administrative purposes, it was in the interest of the government to preserve the chiefs' position and power. However, when McCall assumed charge, the *zawlbuk* was fast declining and resentment against it was still growing. In an attempt to save the institution, he convened a public meeting to "evolve a concrete policy" (Thlanga, 64) on the *zawlbuk* at Thakthing Veng on 1stJanuary, 1938. The meeting decided that the *zawlbuk* was "no longer relevant for Mizo society" (Thlanga, 67) and McCall had to issue an order to revoke Parry's order and declare the abolishment of the *zawlbuk*.

zealousness to better the lives of the people for whom he was working that made him hasty in his decision to champion the cause of the *bawi* who in his understanding were but slaves under the chiefs. Therefore, it can also be said that it was a case of "how all indigenous knowledge forms and social institutions were critiqued, condemned, and removed ruthlessly" to fit the model of a modern colony (Nag, xxxiii), the motherland of which had placed anti-slavery as critical to the formulation of its British identity (xxv). Not only did this incident bring the missionaries at loggerheads with the government officials but it was also instrumental in displacing the paramount position of the chief in traditional Mizo society.

The *bawi* was a dependent of the chief who came to reside in the chief's house in one of three ways. The first were the *Inpui Chhung Bawi* who were people who sought the chief's protection due to poverty, sickness or distress. The second, the *Chemsen Bawi* were murderers who sought sanctuary with the chief from would-be revenge takers, regardless of cost to their freedom and that of their progeny. The last were the *Tuk Lut Bawi* who were people who had surrendered in the face of defeat in battles. These *bawi* were allowed to live in separate houses and were given the liberty to buy their freedom at a price of a s*ele* or its equivalent in value. With the colonisation of the land, the last two categories of *bawi* had ceased to exist, there being no occasion for the creation of more especially at the time of the controversy. Therefore the stir created by the anti-slavery movement begun by Dr.Frazer can be said to be misplaced for it involved the category of *bawi* which had entered the chief's house for protection in exchange for their freedom, of their own free will because, at the time, they needed the shelter, food and protection which only the chief could provide. As noted by McCall "the controversy arose on the ground that the terms of association amounted to slavery", a term which brought to mind "loathsome visions" of human degradation in the hands of others (122). Whereas, the *Inpui Chhung Bawi* were bound by their surrender in exchange for the security they sought in the chief's house. It was more like the "fusion of two opposing ideas of dominance and subordination" that Gautam Bhadra wrote of, that everybody in the hierarchical order, from the peasant (*bawi*) to the king (chiefs) accepted the "chains of duty and moral obligation" (88). Both the chief and the *bawi* had duties towards the other. However, as noted by Rev. D.E.Jones, with the changing times the system

was becoming corrupt as the chiefs had less to do than their forefathers and as the villages were smaller in size (Lloyd, 154). On the other hand, it is also pointed out that the misuse of power depended more on the character of the chief rather than any flaw in the system (Nag, 372). The fact remained that the *bawi* system was essential since it ensured no one was left uncared for in the Mizo society, "a kind of welfare system" (Lloyd, 156) the absence of which actually caused more suffering for the *bawi*, whose situation was worse off than before especially in the immediate aftermath (Nag, 371).

Dr.Frazer's efforts had led to his early dismissal from Mizoram. His appeals to the Assam Government and to the Government of India as well as his efforts to raise money and publicise the issue in his native Wales resulted in a settlement[127] but not abolition as he had hoped. Sajal Nag writes that in 1926, the League of Nations launched the Slavery Convention which bound all signatory nations to end slavery in their territories. This brought the issue back to the spotlight once again. However, the Indian representative to the Convention, W.H.Vincent secured exception for the customary practices of the tribes of north-east of India and Burma. This fact was not explained to the common people who rejoiced at the news unaware of this clause of exclusion (341-343). The controversy was "permanently resolved" to use Sajal Nag's words, only with the abolition of chieftainship in 1954 (359). Yet even before then, the *bawi* controversy had succeeded in undermining the authority of the chiefs. Additionally, it made them wary of taking people under their protection even out of benevolence since it could get them embroiled in controversies they were reluctant to get involved in. A divide had been created in the society as a result of the slave "constructed" by the missionaries and whom they sought to rescue (369).

Lal ban or the abolition of chieftainship was another significant harbinger of change to the Mizo society. Conversely, it can also be said to reveal the cumulative grievances against the chiefs which had begun soon after the colonisation of

[127]A six-points settlement was effected which discontinued the use of the word *bawi*, made provisions for the payment of Rs 40 or a *Mithan/gayal* as settlement to be paid if a *bawi* of any category wished to leave or the chief could claim the same amount as *chawm man* (i.e. price for boarding and food) or if any dispute arose from the *bawi* issue. A *bawi* was considered free if he left the chief's house, which he could do whenever he wished even without paying the stipulated amount which he could pay in instalments. The chief could no longer make any other claim on the *bawi*. Moreover, the Rs 40 was considered enough payment for the entire family of a *bawi* (McCall, 129-30).

Mizoram. With the changes in the administrative set-up that directly affected the chiefs and their duties towards the people as well as the changes in the social front as a result of the influences of the missionaries and Christianity, there was bound to be a point of conflict. The chiefs had become complacent in their power without the responsibility that in the past had held them from exploiting their position. The public on the other hand had come to accept another leadership in the form of the church which was led by the newly converted and educated elite who were emancipated from the strictures of the old world. Further empowered by their economic independence from the chief and village life, the people found less and lesser reasons to remain under the growing unreasonable whims of the chiefs.

The Colonial Experience – *Lal Ban*, the Societal Fallout and Political Development:

The settlement after the *Bawi* Controversy had made the chiefs less hospitable to the less fortunate. It resulted in the loss of prestige and material wealth for the chiefs. As McCall pointed out, it was the *bawi* system that had enabled the chief to amass wealth from the large work force they made, making it possible for him to support a large number of the destitute in his village. As a consequence of the controversy, the sufferings of many became greater. He wrote of the *Bawi* Controversy that "(T)he legacy is the Lushai beggar, the outcasts for whom society has no provision"(130). Yet another new section of society had come into existence as a result of the issue. Additionally, the commoners' position worsened as they were "reduced to virtual serfdom" (Nag, 349) in fulfilling the stipulations set by the government not only for themselves but also for the chiefs. So, the burden of *phutluih kuli* (compulsory labour) befell the commoners, who were called upon to carry the luggage of the officials as well as the chiefs when they travelled, and build and make repairs at the chief's house without any pay. Often, in the bid to ingratiate themselves with the officials on tour, the chiefs would demand various things from the people without consideration or their consent, nor paying for them. Power without restraint and responsibility had changed the institution of chieftainship from a benevolent one offering security and succour to one that was exploitative, corrupt and a burden to the common man.

The resultant dissent paved the way for a political awakening of the Mizo people. It became clear that for a complete emancipation from the absolute power of the chiefs through the patronage of the Superintendent, the people's voice had to be heard. Within the hills, the chiefs always had the support and backing of the Superintendent who relied on them for administration at the village level, as a result no protestations against them were entertained. Rather, protestors were harshly dealt with and jailed[128]. This awakening was to see fruition only after World War II, when the exposure garnered during the World Wars as well as through contact and higher studies had inspired the educated Mizo towards a more participative and representative politics that they understood would greatly impact the future of the Mizo people for the better. Hence the first Mizo political party, the Mizo Union Party came into being in 1946. Its original name, the Mizo Common People's Union Party, is indicative of its objectives, the first being to "do away with the chieftainship", secondly to ensure better employment and lastly the "reunification of all Mizos under one administrative unit" (Verghese and Thanzawna, 354).

The Lushai Hills had been declared an Excluded Area [129] under the Government of India Act of 1935 and was therefore without representation in the Provincial Legislature of Assam. This meant that by default, its interests "had to have a second place" (Verghese and Thanzawna, 343) in the various areas of development and infrastructure. Most importantly, the common people had no say in their own welfare without political representation. The Mizo Union with the enthusiastic support of the public began the assertion of the Mizo identity with the aim of claiming their rightful place in the soon to be independent India, gaining representation in the Sub-Committee of the Constituent Assembly of Assam and

[128] Towards the end of 1926, six men from the Kulikawn locality submitted a formal complaint to N.E.Perry, the Superintendent of the Lushai Hills of that time, who they felt was indifferent to their plea (Lalnithanga, 6). They brought the matter to the Minister for Tribal Affairs of the Assam Government, Rev. Nichols Roy and a Legal Adviser in 1928. They were told that nothing could be done as long as Mizoram remained an Excluded Area. The men were imprisoned when the Superintendent heard of what they had done. Among them, Laldela who had drafted the petitions was exiled from Mizoram (Chhuanvawra, 15).

[129] Under the Act, the Lushai Hills was outside the direct control of the Provincial Legislature of Assam while responsibility for administration lay in the hands of the Governor of Assam as Agent to the Viceroy of India, the Crown Representative. The Superintendent administered the Lushai Hills as representative. "They considered that the 'savage tribes in the eastern borders' were not educated enough to think in terms of 'democracy' and 'politics'" (Verghese and Thanzawna, 345).

leading to the formation of the Mizo District Council on 25th April, 1952. In keeping with the desire of the people as well as the Indian Constitution, The Lushai Hills (Acquisition of Chief Rights) Act of 1954 was passed in the Assam Legislative Assembly, abolishing the chieftainship and, in its stead the institution of the Village Council was established. Finally, the seat of power had changed, from the hands of the chiefs to that of the common people, with the Church emerging as the most influential agency of the society. Within the Church too, there had been cultural awakenings. They had taken the form of revivals by which the practice of Christianity which had been predominantly guided by missionaries, was slowly being indigenised. The re-introduction of the traditional drum[130] (the *khuang*) and its usual accompaniment – dancing, made its way back into the practice of religion. The singing intrinsic to Mizo worship and culture once again took on the traditional form, expressing itself through song and through the Mizo world view. These new songs soon became more popular than the translations of Welsh and English hymns sung in the earlier days of conversion as they better expressed the Christian sentiments of the Mizos.

The Colonial Experience: Aftermath:

The change in Mizo society was thus perceptible in the century after the white man's arrival on Mizo soil - the "hierarchies of power" were being changed through "constructive dialogues" (Young, 2003, 114), politically and culturally. Although remnants of the colonial influence were still discernable in the Mizo society as well as psyche, there was a growing awareness and realization of the significance of their indigenous heritage as can be seen in C.Lalnunchanga's intent and effort to reclaim the past in the Mizo's terms or rather, words. His works undertake the task of breaking the chains of another hegemonic influence on the contemporary Mizo which continue to keep them confined to the margins even without a forced external coercion. In this concerted effort to find the balance between safeguarding the traditional and a place in the new world, the Mizo of

[130] Lalsangkima Pachuau quotes H.W. Carter and H.S. Luaia from *Mizoram Baptist Kohhran Chanchin*. 2nd ed. Serkawn: Literature Programme Committee, Baptist Church of Mizoram, 1981 (125).

C.Lalnunchanga's contemporary short stories find themselves still stuck at the crossroads of Fanon's black skin and white masks dilemma. This predicament is plainly illustrated in the characters of the contemporary stories and the life-choices they made, something that the historical characters did not have to deal with. In pre-colonial times, the people had been rooted and secure in their indigeneity. However for the post-colonial Mizo, this had been taken away and they had to find that stability amidst the various factors shaping their world. The daily life of the Mizo is now so intrinsically connected with that of the Christian life that it would be next to impossible to try to explain who the contemporary Mizo is without his or her place in Christianity. That is why it is important to trace the influences of the Church on the society from its inception to the present through the passing of time. Therefore, the contemporary characters had to first comprehend the dichotomy of the world they lived in. The importance and role of religion and of spirituality in the lives of the Mizo can be traced from the historical characters to the contemporary. When in the past, the actions of the people of Khiangzo were guided by their wish to gain acceptance into *pialral*, the actions of the residents of Aizawl were guided by their desire to fulfill their individual wishes which were mostly physical in nature. The internalised spirituality of the past had morphed to a certain extent in contemporary times, fuelled by the change in the concept of spirituality and religiosity. It was slowly becoming a mask to conceal anti-social behaviour and thereby gaining acceptance by, and into the community. The characters of the contemporary stories embody this changed social behaviour, highlighting the duplicity of their lives.

In "*Baby-i Hlim Zan*" (Baby's Night of Happiness) (2011) despite choosing to become a call girl, Rinky attended church services not just at the behest of her father but also out of her sense of propriety. From her attitude, it can be gathered that her attendance was made not out of a desire for personal spiritual or moral development but because it was something that had to be done to conform to the unwritten rules of the society. The church services produced in her neither a spiritual or moral change, nor a desire for either. It was as if it had become *dan*,[131] a part of

[131]J.H.Lorrain defines the word *dan* as custom, habit, practice (102). In an interview with One Vision Media Ministry, a popular spiritual speaker Salim Zothanpuia calls for change saying, "*dan anga inkhawm hi i ning ang u"* i.e. to discontinue attending church services out of habit, as a practice and

the custom which was followed as practice. Joy L. K. Pachuau also notes, "the Mizo notion of a healthy Christian spirituality necessarily includes participation in all church activities" (2014, 152). Rinky's church attendance was proof of her participation in the community. Thus, the church became a screen behind which she could continue not only her clandestine profession but also hide her heroin addiction. Similarly for the frequent visitor to the office, it became a litmus test of sorts for eligibility in his search for a life-partner. To prove his suitability he willingly divulged the information that he attended church even on weeknights, in an effort to win Rinky's stamp of approval. It was also the first information he sought from her – whether she attended church regularly or not. Significantly, in insisting that Rinky attend church, her father reinforced the sense of the importance of participating within the social ambit and of staying within the limits of socially acceptable behaviour. So, Rinky was seen typing out her superior's Sunday sermon while thinking of his extra-marital affair with her co-worker. One cannot help but notice the incongruity in his delivering a sermon on sexual promiscuity while having an affair, which was not only morally wrong but also against the tenets of Christianity.

The character Valchhuana can be said to embody all the undesirable aspects of outward religiosity. Despite looking the part of the perfect Christian his behaviour suggested otherwise. When the reader first encountered him, he was described as "(T)rim and properly dressed … like a well-seasoned member of the KṬP[132], a Christian youth wing… With his sneakers, neatly tucked in t-shirt and fine features he looked clean and meticulous'' (Ralte (Somte), 73). In the course of his conversation with Rochhunga, Valchhuana's thoughts revealed that he had a holier-than-thou attitude towards his accomplice even while accepting the bribes offered to him as gifts. Though acknowledging his own wrong doings such as, his developing "tolerance towards corruption" (74) and his clinical attitude towards casual sex, he still felt justified enough to self-righteously wish to "beat the vanity and ego" out of

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out of custom. He says this to underline the importance of renewing personal spirituality, emphasising the need for personal reflection and Bible study, along with the external expression of religiosity – active participation in church activities. This will, in his opinion, be the source of a renewal and sustenance of the Mizo people both spiritually and morally (minutes 48 -49).

[132]KṬP: *Kristian Ṭhalai Pawl* formed in 1954 is the youth wing of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church, organised to open opportunities for the youth to serve as well as to offer a platform to strengthen and nurture the youth for future leadership roles.

Rochhunga (74). Although disgusted at the apparent poor quality of work in the construction of a culvert for which Rochhunga had just received payment for his bills, Valchhuana had no qualms in receiving a portion of either money or "gifts" bought with it. Rather, he reminded Rochhunga of his role in ensuring the early release of the money, thereby claiming his share of it. His KṬP image was further tarnished by the fact that he had the phone number of a pimp ready which showed him to be no stranger in soliciting the company of call girls. For Valchhuana, his prim external appearance was a guise to detract others from recognising his baser desires which he knew, was not acceptable to the society. Perhaps his intolerance of Rinky and her companions while they were still students and studying outside the state was a sub-conscious suppression of his own baser desires. Rinky remembered that he was the main instigator who had advocated sending her and her friends home as they were seen in a discotheque drinking and dancing with boys from Assam and because they were known to have gone out with *vai* men a couple of times. Most interestingly, as opposed to the objectives of the KṬP, even after coming to know that the incident had been the turning point for the worse in Rinky's life, he had felt no remorse. Yet for Rinky, the incident had succeeded in alienating her from her own community in an unfamiliar place to such an extent that she felt it necessary to move to another city to pursue her studies, explaining the life-choices that had brought her to her current situation[133]. In "*Krismas Thawnthu*" (A Christmas Story) (2011) rather than attempting to correct and reform, the group on community duty assumed the role of the moral-police. Though self-appointed, the unforgiving stance of the group on duty would not grant second chances. Whereas in the selected historical narratives, the pre-Christian residents of Khiangzo had been more forgiving of offenders and they were almost always given chances to redeem themselves. Hautuka had on two occasions committed such grave mistakes and innocent lives were lost. Though he could have been left to live his life in ignominity, his potential was still recognised and he was given the chance to vindicate himself even then by Puilura and his *Upate*. Not only that, his attempt to redeem his cowardly act was

[133]Erik Erikson writes in *Identity: Youth and Crisis* that a young person who for reasons of personal or social marginality is close to choosing a negative identity, is diagnosed or treated as a criminal, constitutional misfit or a derelict, will put his energy into becoming exactly what the community expects him to be "and make a total job of it" (196).

appreciated and respected by his fellow *pasalṭha* who realised his desire to make amends for sabotaging Rochêra's shield which had caused Ramtinthanga's death. Even though they would have been justified if they had scorned and ridiculed Hautuka at his last breath, they not only kept his last confession a secret but also got rid of the evidence of his sabotage, redeeming his name in appreciation of his last act of bravery which to them, was greater in death. The collective approach was thus to preserve others' reputation and to offer a chance for redemption and reformation. In the past, a person's mistake though recognised and condemned did not necessarily mean he or she would be ostracised by the society. In the contemporary stories, the society represented by the group on community duty, is quicker to pass judgment and to act on perceived perpetrations on set social norms.

Where before, the conflict was between the Colonialist white man and the indigenous native, the tension was now between "two indigenous protagonists ... the elite, privileged by the dominant discourse" (Guha, xvi) and the subaltern situated at the margins by the same discourse. We see this illustrated not only in Rinky's personal story in "*Baby-i Hlim Zan*" (Baby's Night of Happiness) (2011) but also in "*Krismas Thawnthu*" (A Christmas Story) (2011). The white man's ways had "multiplied divisions and opposing groups ... fashioned classes" (Sartre, 10) that has resulted in the stratification of the Mizo society. In "*Krismas Thawnthu*" (A Christmas Story) (2011) when the group of men on community duty saw the motley group singing around the bonfire, the assumption they made was that the group was indulging in unlawful activities, specifically in terms of drinking *zu*. Their comments and actions revealed their disdain and impatience towards the people they perceived to be living outside what they consider socially acceptable norms. As the story progressed, it became apparent that their attitude was one of condemnation rather than the desire to reform anti-social behaviour. This dichotomy could also be seen in Mapuia, who was a character and the narrator of the story. Towards the beginning, he confessed that he had begun drinking at an early age and that he drank often. On the other hand, he attributed his distaste for frivolous and immodest women on his being the son of an *Upa*[134]. The same reason should have deterred him from drinking as he

[134]*Upa* here refers to the Church Elder who is elected by the members of the local Church.

would have been aware of the disapproval of the Church on such behaviour but that did not stop him from continuing to drink. As such, he confessed that Mapuii's actions even made him feel physically nauseous. However, his prejudice against her behaviour was overpowered by her unbiased behaviour towards their host family whose poverty and apparent lack of social standing had no effect in the manner in which she interacted with them. He even came to realise his love for her. The plight of the marginal subaltern is seen illustrated in the short insight into the life of one of the K.S. present among the group round the bonfire. It is worth mentioning that she had tears in her eyes as they sang the Christmas carols. She confided to the narrator with feeling that that moment was the happiest she had been all her life and that she remembered singing those carols only when she was still very young, at Sunday school. Her confession offered a brief glimpse into her life which in most probability did not give her many favourable chances to live as the society stipulated. This brief respite from her harsh life was abruptly and unapologetically brought to an end without the slightest hope for reprieve from the bleak reality of her world. Those on community duty had taken an accusative stance without the slightest interest in finding out the truth of the situation even though the group did not owe anyone any explanation for what they were doing. Perhaps even the most minimal effort to understand and empathise would have gone a long way towards the reformation of the motley characters by the bonfire. A chance perhaps was all that they needed to turn their lives around.

However, with things being the way they were, the marginalized group had by default taken on the burden of the role of "the other" in their own community. They had become the face for all that was undesirable and what was wrong with the society. Aware of the label they wore, they stuck to the outskirts of the town, literally always in the margins and as confirmation of their marginal status. Even the location where they had gathered in was about three kilometers away from the town, "the center" in which they made their appearance only in the cover of darkness; they had no place in it in the light of day. The "power relations" in the society had placed them outside the "norm" and the "naturalized" (Towes, 207). The dominant group of the center now exerted their power in much the same way as the colonialist had done. They only saw things from their perspective with the belief that their way of thinking

was the best for everyone without delving into the reasons and causes of things, and their relevance to current situations. There was no tolerance for the aberrant from the norms. Their behaviour echoed the white man's rejection of all things indigenous without trying to understand why it had been in place for years, while at the same time, projecting and promoting their own beliefs and ideals in its stead.

The Christian values and the rules of conduct as stipulated by the missionaries had become the norms/codes by which the society structured and maintained its order. It was the epitome on which morals and what was acceptable behaviour was based. And, for those who choose to toe that line, it offered a safe buffer to conceal their covert actions and a means for justification not just to themselves but also to the society just as Valchhuana, Rinky, Rochhunga and those on community duty did. Even as minor a character as Zoluta, a drunk and drug-dealer in "*Lawmna Garden*" (Garden of Contentment) (2011), who was always drunk and ready to take advantage of the women who frequented his house (which they used as a meeting place) and for rest, quoted the Bible to suit his purpose even though his motives were far from holy. When his wife began to berate Liansangi as she lay drunk on their chair, he insisted rather piously that those in need must be helped, as it was a basic tenet of The Bible[135]. A perceptible irreverence for religion was thus discernable in the characters of the contemporary stories. *Sakhuana*[136]or religiosity had become a facade unlike in the past when it was sanctified, reverently and conscientiously observed since their spiritual and physical needs were closely inter-related. *Sakhua* had acted as a guiding factor too, leading the people towards a life of morality. Belief in it meant that promiscuity, adultery, and disrespectful behaviour towards women were strongly condemned; that which discouraged criminality – an aspect of the Mizo society was notably mentioned by a number of the colonial administrators and missionaries even as late as in the 1920s[137]. It had

[135]The Bible says that there will always be poor people in the land and so God commands that his people be open handed towards those who are poor and needy (*Good News Bible*, Deut.15:11). The parable of *The Good Samaritan* and other Bible verses also advocate helping the less fortunate.

[136]*Sakhuana*: That which pertains to religion (*Sakhua*) or the religious.

[137]J.M.Llyod wrote in *History of the Church in Mizoram (*Harvest in the Hills) (1991) that there was no criminal class among the Mizos. He was surprised that the crime rate was low especially considering the social and political convulsions that have affected their area, and the fact that from being a very simple and primitive society they had been abruptly catapulted into the maelstrom of the twentieth century (52).

encouraged a deep-seated regard for the community especially the less fortunate thus fostering a feeling of brotherhood. The hustle of modern lives had come to focus on the self, making the personal take precedence over the communal unlike in the past, when a person did things out of a sense of duty and *tlawmngaihna* – that sense of selfless sacrifice. In the past, prestige was bestowed on an individual in recognition of service and contribution rendered to the society[138]. Therefore the approval of the community continued to be sought even after individualism had taken over the communal aspect of the society, though not for the same altruistic reasons. This can be observed through the emphasis given to the creation of a positive public image (to the stipulations of the white missionaries) manifested in the characters, which in turn became convenient cover for those unacceptable social behaviour which they pursued in secret. The characters took care to conform to the expectations of the society even if only in appearance to maintain their respectability in the society.

This societal change served to highlight the stratification of the society. In pre-colonial times, the community was more or less uniform. Everyone made a living in the same way, by labouring in the *lo*. With the exception of the chief and the blacksmith, all households had to produce their own requirements which were basically the same. There was socio-economic parity in the past. Authority in the village lay solely in the hands of the chief who was guided by the age-old practices and uncontested by the common people. Moreover, as mentioned before, he rarely misused this power. What had changed was that colonial intervention had economically liberated the common man while empowering the chiefs towards autocratic tendencies, which in turn became intolerable for the common man, and this eventually led to the abolition of this revered status. Social authority now rested on the body that was most influential and most widely followed – Christianity – along the lines in which the early converts were guided by the missionaries. The same intolerance towards any deviation from their set standard came to be adopted even long after the missionaries had left. *Zu* remained the main nemesis of the

[138]In "Cultural Models of the Self", Susan E. Cross and Jonathan S. Gore write that in the collectivist cultural context like the East Asian Societies, the person and the society are interdependent and mutually supportive, where the social units and collectives are given priority rather than the individual. They write that to "be a person – to know oneself and one's place in the world one must be a part of groups (eg. Families, work groups and communities) and must work through them, for such is the essence of being human" (588).

Church. As such, the Government of Mizoram had passed the Mizoram Liquor Total Prohibition Act or the MLTP Act[139] in 1995 which was in place for seventeen years. Even though the prohibition was lifted and the sale of alcohol was made legal in 2015 with the change in government, it was reinstated after three years when the Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition) Act 2019 came into effect. Before prohibition was lifted, "A Study of the Impact of Alcohol on the Mizo" was conducted under 'The Study Group' of MLTP Act 1995. The result of the study was included in the Group's Report. It was found that despite prohibition, alcohol related problems were still found in high incidences which the public felt was due largely to the ineffectual enforcement of the law. It also found that the positive attitudes towards the Act were predictable with increasing age-group and religious involvement. The study concluded that though a majority of their respondents felt that the Act was a failure, they did not wish that it be removed rather, they wished that it be changed (Varte et.al.75). From the study, it can be understood how ingrained the thought of consumption of liquor was associated with the notion of sin. This aspect was largely held from the belief that Mizos were not responsible drinkers. However, even a passing knowledge of the pre-colonial Mizo's attitude towards *zu* and its consumption shows otherwise. With the passing of these Acts, *zu* had come to represent the unlawful and the immoral since both the State and the Church were against it. Thus all the major characters of the contemporary stories indulged in what was considered the most visible scourge of the Mizo in the eyes of the Church, *zu* – symbolic of their belonging to *the* socially unacceptable group. And it was so. It offered not just an escape but also the sense of being in control with their refrain, "It's my life" (Lalnunchanga, 2011, 37). It had become a means of asserting

[139] MLTP Act: The Mizoram Liquor Total Prohibition Act, 1995 and the Mizoram Liquor Total Prohibition Rules, 1996 were enforced with effect from 20th February, 1997 with the publication of the Notification in the Mizoram Extra Ordinary Gazette vide Notification No. H. 12018/67/96-LJD, dated 9th February, 1996. The Act banned the import, transport, manufacture, possession, sale and consumption of alcohol. Total prohibition ended with the passing of The Mizoram Total Liquor (Prohibition and Control) (MLPC) Act 2014 (Act No. 8 of 2014) which came into force from 15th January, 2015 through the Notification No. J. 2501l/l/2014-EXC(i), dated 7th January, 2015 in The Mizoram Gazette. However, this act was superseded by the Notification No.H.12018/235/2014-LJD, dated the 28th May, 2019 on The Mizoram Gazette, by which prohibition was once again reinstated through The Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition) Act, 2019 (Act No. 8 of 2019) which came into force with effect from 28th May, 2019.

themselves in a world in which they could only hope to occupy an insignificant peripheral position. Yet from the characters' experiences, it was clear that *zu* only offered a temporary relief and a false sense of bravado to numb themselves to the reality of their lives, so as to embolden themselves for what they were about to do. Rather, it dragged them further into the very state, both physical and emotional which they were trying to escape from in the first place. Clearly, *zu* offered a means of rebellion and escape but, was not the solution.

In "*Lawmna Garden*" (Garden of Contentment) (2011), Sawmkimi began drinking to ease her sense of inferiority and continued to do so because of the sense of invincibility it gave her, as also for the thrill in getting intoxicated. Her friend Liansangi not only drank but also consumed anything that could intoxicate her. This was despite the fact that she always talked about saving money and buying things of worth. Liansangi was eventually arrested for drunken behaviour and committed to a home[140] for rehabilitation. The narrator in "*Krismas Thawnthu*" (A Christmas Story) (2011), Mapuia felt reassured by the bottle of whiskey which he had secretly stashed for the festivities on the night before Christmas. He had been drinking since he was twenty years old and had continued despite him being the son of a *Kohhran Upa* (an Elder of the Church). Since it was so difficult to get hold of the drink because of the Prohibition Act, especially the *sen chi* or foreign liquor, it was a matter of attentive consideration for him on the part of Mapuii to have gotten the half bottle of whiskey even if she had stolen it from her elder brother. Also, it had become a matter of pride for a person to be in possession of something so scare and difficult to obtain, not to mention expensive. Therefore, one can understand why Baby scoffed at Rochhunga's local brew – *rakzu*[141] and refused to drink it, making a big thing of the *sen chi* she had brought with her. Although Rinky preferred heroin, she too could have her fair share of the drink. The reverence for the white man and his ways could thus still be seen in the preference of the foreign liquor and of the rejection of the "local", *rakzu.* It had come to be one of the outward expressions of the existing divide in the society along economic and therefore, social lines. The society had become divided between

[140]A rehabilitation center. It is usually referred to as "home". There are a number of homes run by the government and by non-governmental organisations in Aizawl.
[141]*Rakzu*: Local liquor, different from *zu.*

the rich and the poor with a distinctive difference in the standards of living and preferences.

Materialism had taken the front seat in the people's aspirations. The migration of many from the rural areas to the city in the hope for a better life can be seen illustrated in Sawmkimi's family. Her father had left their farmland for a job on Muster Roll[142] which was significantly inadequate to support the family's needs in the city. So, Sawmkimi had always had a feeling of inferiority wherever she went, be it in the school or in the *khawhar in*[143]. Her impression of how the affluent lived was clearly based on what she saw on television and hence warped. Her idea of living the good life was bike rides and enjoying life, making her daily existence seem full of struggles and hardship in comparison. She was always intensely conscious of their poverty. So for her, it was quicker and easier to earn money as a call girl than to work as an assistant in a shop, earning only two thousand rupees a month. It required less effort to achieve her dreams. Like her, the people she met along the course of her "work" were driven by their poverty, seeking for an easy way out. For instance, the young mother accompanied by her husband and breastfeeding her baby, needed money for emergencies; the young woman who was recently released from a home, who had nowhere to go and was in desperate need of money; the pregnant woman who needed money to buy swaddling cloth for when her child would be born.

"*Krismas Thawnthu*" (A Christmas Story) (2011) perhaps illustrated most clearly the division and the difference brought on by economic disparity in the society. The poverty of Pu Zuala (the man in whose house the protagonists take shelter) and his family was incomprehensible to Mapuii who was accustomed to having whatever she wanted. Conversely, her easy breezy attitude and the ease with which she took out large sums of money from her purse was astonishment for the poverty stricken family. The contrast in their outlook towards money could not have been more conspicuous. From Pu Zuala's life, it became evident that even though poverty could befall any person because of various reasons, it was near impossible to

[142] Muster Roll: Usually referred to as M.R. and is used to describe a temporary government job which does not entail the benefits received by regularized employees.

[143]*Khawhar in* literally means the house of mourning. It is customary to gather in the house of the bereaved in condolence. The practice has been taken up by the YMA in a bid to preserve Mizo culture, making it a rule for its members to observe three nights of *khawhar lenpui* i. e. to gather in the house of mourning to offer condolences.

break free from the clutches of the degenerated life it inevitably brought about however involuntary it might be. Thus from the stories, we can gather that the division in the society became more pronounced and rigid as the rich became richer and the poor became poorer. In their bid to draw level with the more affluent, the poor became more susceptible to anti-social activities which furthered the society towards a more structured and stratified one along the lines of those seen to follow its rules and those who didn't. Money had become a major driving force as well as a divisive one in the society. This hegemony along economic lines in the social structure is apparent in the experiences of the marginalised characters. Where before, in the pre-Christian society, the community worked together to support and uplifts any individual or family that was facing hard times. When a family or a widow were unable to attend to their *lo* for any reason, be it death, sickness or because there were no able-bodied men in the family to do physical labour, the whole community would rally and do the needful, thus ensuring that no one fell too far behind the rest in their standard of living. After becoming "enlightened", Mizo Christians had not taken this charitable undertaking any further.

"*Krismas Thawnthu*" (A Christmas Story) (2011) also served to highlight another aspect of life that was nonexistent in the past – corruption. Mapuii's father was a government official. Nowhere in the story was it stated that he indulged in corruption but his daughter's proclamation of her being the daughter of a rich man and her being so free with the money she had with her, indicated a corrupt official. This unlawful profiteering can be seen in all the sections of the society. From the politicians, government officials, contractors and even to the drug addict on the street, there was no hesitation in taking advantage of a person or situation if it could be of any profit to them. Towards the end of the story, after the group at the bonfire had been chastised by those on community duty, they found another reason for aggression when they found Mapuia's half-drunk bottle of whiskey. It took an hour of negotiation to finally agree on a payment of one thousand rupees as fine for possession of liquor which was under prohibition. It is interesting to add that the group on duty had no legal rights to extort fines. The incident is also a reflection of the power the dominant group had over the gathering as also the silent acceptance of

this dominion by those on the margins of society even when they fully recognised the situation for what it was.

Rochhunga in "*Baby-i Hlim Zan*" (Baby's Night of Happiness) (2011) was the embodiment of corruption at all levels. He was a party-worker[144] who received a contract to build a culvert at his village and who freely admitted without shame that he had spent less than a third of the amount he billed for his contract work. The offhand attitude with which he dismissed the news of the collapse of the recently constructed culvert showed his disregard for the development and welfare of the community. He did not care, as long as he got his money. He was not only corrupt but also tempted others into doing the same. Besides promising a share of the dirty money, he also enticed Valchhuana with gifts even for his wife. Even more telling was his predetermined decision to spend his money on women. The fact that Valchhuana agreed with him even while inwardly condemning Rochhunga for his corrupt dealings showed how corrupt he himself was. They were no different. Both had no qualms about doing anything that would profit them personally whether it was monetary or merely for the sake of enjoyment. With the money in his possession, Rochhunga felt empowered and felt that he could do anything, and that he was not as out of place as he felt in the city.

Although there is no doubt as to the positive possibilities that money can create, this aspect of money the characters recognised as a liberating force, proved to be the degenerating factor of society by introducing duplicity, criminality and corruption as opposed to trustworthiness and of putting the self before the community. This corrosion could be seen in almost every facet of the society. The respect and consideration reserved for the elderly by the great chief Puilura and his people were no longer practiced by the characters in the contemporary stories. In "*Lawmna Garden*" (Garden of Contentment) (2011) Liansangi's mother realised the futility in trying to talk sense to her and offered no argument and chided her gently when she announced that she was going out for the night (even as she was leaving through the door). Liansangi's mother was described as an aging woman, and perhaps it was beyond her generation to understand the driving force of her

[144]Party-worker: Members/supporters of a political party who work actively for the success of the political party.

daughter's generation and their desire to live out their dreams, however skewed they might be. The manner in which she dealt with her daughter was vastly different from the way Romawii's mother who always ensured and guided her daughter to be engaged in some productive work. As illustrated in the selected historical narratives, young women in the past were always busy around the house when they were not out working in the *lo*. In contrast, the young women portrayed in the selected contemporary short stories hardly spent any time in their houses. They no longer cared that their mothers worked more than they did in the house. For Romawii and her friends who scampered in obedience to their mother's bidding, that would have been a source of shame both for herself and for her family. Unlike Liansangi, they would never have left their mother while she was busy, especially while cooking. In "*Baby-i Hlim Zan*" (Baby's Night of Happiness) (2011), Rinky on her part continued to obey her father's wishes. She attended church as he wished even when she wasn't interested. Yet, her obedience was just a façade. She had no qualms about lying to him when her own interests were at stake. She blithely made up a good reason to gain his permission to stay out during the night. It is pointed out that Rinky's father would always believe whatever she told him and that she too was sometimes surprised at how easy it was to convince him, but as she knew, he was an easy man to please and Rinky had learnt how to make him happy. The authority of both Rinky's father and Liansangi's mother as parents, had been reduced to just to a nominal one as compared to the absolute authority Romawii's father had on her, even to the extent of deciding who she would marry. Though Sawmkimi's father in "*Lawmna Garden*" (Garden of Contentment) (2011) seemed to have as less influence on his daughter's life as the parents in the other contemporary short stories and did not assert his authority as much, he did not fail to notice his daughter's erroneous behaviour. The other parents would have noticed their children's behaviour too. The difference was that he recognised, and took the initiative to put a stop to it before his daughter ventured too deeply along the wrong path and was beyond any help he could render. Perhaps it was that Liansangi and Rinky were already beyond any help and that their parents had recognised this fact and thus, had watched from the sidelines offering only weak chastisement. Not only had the years brought a change in the way the parents' exercised their parental authority over their children but there

was also a change in the way the children regarded or rather, disregarded their parents and their right to hold sway over them. This was possibly a repercussion of the parents' feelings of inadequacy to cope with a fast changing world which now belonged to their children's generation. This could have perhaps made them feel inept to have any say in their children's welfare except to try to equip them with the best tool they knew – education. Even in pre-colonial times, education was an important aspect of the lives of the children and the youth. They were trained and taught in all that were considered important and essential for living a fulfilling and responsible life as adults, both at home and in the *zawlbuk.* The tools of survival have greatly changed, requiring different sets of skills and knowledge, though aimed towards the same results i.e. moulding the youth for their roles as future leaders of the community.

Both Rinky of "*Baby-i Hlim Zan*" (Baby's Night of Happiness) (2011) and Mapuii of "*Krismas Thawnthu*" (A Christmas Story) (2011) had studied in the metro cities, *phai* [145] . Their experience though not typical of all students is also representative of a few of those who did not make the optimum use of the opportunity given to them. Some like Rinky could pursue further studies outside the state only with a lot of sacrifice by their parents, in order to be able to afford the expenses of education in another city. And, there were some like Mapuii in "*Krismas Thawnthu*" (A Christmas Story) (2011) who did not have to worry much about anything. Contrary to expectations, it is clear from their situations that their education and the expenses that it incurred had not placed them at an advantage, neither in getting employed nor in the quality of life they lived. Rather than taking advantage of the opportunity opened to them by gaining wholesome constructive experiences, they only became enamoured with a lifestyle that they could not afford. In "*Baby-i Hlim Zan*" (Baby's Night of Happiness) (2011), Rinky's naivety had led to an unfortunate incident which had conversely led her along a path that was self-destructive. Although she completed her studies, her personal life took a turn for the worse; attracted to the enjoyments of life in the city but without any extra money to spare, she would pair-up with anyone who could "treat" her. She became addicted to

[145]*Phai* refers to mainland India where it is common for students from Mizoram to pursue their higher studies especially for technical courses.

heroin while living-in with her boyfriend at the time, who came from a rich family. It was her addiction that had made it impossible for her to manage her expenses with her salary of a computer operator on Muster Roll. Thus, taking the easy way out, as she had always done in the past, she had resorted to becoming a call-girl. As for Mapuii in "*Krismas Thawnthu*" (A Christmas Story) (2011), she did not complete her studies. It failed to make her apologetic towards her parents, rather she remained confident in her ability to sway their decisions and opinions in order to suit her own, instead of doing what would be pleasing in their eyes. Even Sawmkimi in "*Lawmna Garden*" (Garden of Contentment) (2011) though she remained in Mizoram did not complete her studies. Rather than to struggle and fight her way towards the kind of life she wished for, she too took what she thought was the easy way out.

It became apparent that though education was easily available, it was not seriously pursued by the youth. It was as if they did not recognise it as a means of changing their lives for the better and had decided to be content with short term solutions to their problems. If their personal problems were solved for the moment, they were either oblivious to or chose to ignore the possible ramifications of their current actions on their future. Rather than becoming inspired to concrete advancement not only for their own sakes but also for their families, the education they received served only to waken in them the desire to be on the same footing with the rest of the world (as they saw in the media). They failed to recognize the struggle it entailed to achieve the same level of comfort and ease of life (as perceived by them). It made them even more dissatisfied with their own lives. Rinky was intensely aware and discontented that her salary as a Muster Roll employee was not even half of the office peon's salary even though she had better qualifications and skills. Valchhuana too had to work in a private school before he was able to get his government job as an accountant. Their having studied outside the state could not guarantee them a secure job. The investment made towards their education had not had the expected returns. Experience had taught them that nothing came easy. It was perhaps because of this that they were so ready and took whatever chance they had to have an advantage or the upper-hand in everything, be it in financial matters like Valchuana, blackmailing and stealing like Baby and Rinky, chasing stolen moments

like Mapuii and living life in their own terms like Liansangi. Therein began their troubles.

It was a decidedly different approach to the one taken by the *pasalṭha* Nghalṭhianga and his friends in *Pasalṭhate Ni Hnuhnung* (Last Days of the Braves) (2007) who would often go out of their way, sometimes even putting their own lives at risk to help those in need. In contrast, the contemporary world was one where each fought for their own survival. Accordingly, Liansangi and Sawmkimi who was learning the trade from her, would often physically distance themselves from the other women engaged in the same line of work as they did. They did this sometimes to avoid being arrested by the police, sometimes to set themselves apart from the rest to demonstrate their "class". What is most obvious is that they harbour no goodwill, nor a desire to help the others out. Rather, even between themselves they would remind each other of what the other owed. They stuck together primarily not because they were fond of each other or wished the other the best but because they could benefit from the other. Sawmkimi borrowed Liansangi's clothes while Liansangi profited from potential customers who were attracted to Sawmkimi.

The individualisation and fragmentation of the society had translated into the youth seeking the support and structure in the community that was no longer available. That these various problems faced by the young characters in the contemporary stories "emanate both from the structure of the society and from the process of social transformation" (Nongkynrih 381) can be seen in the distorted lives they led. Nongkynrih had based his study on both academic and public discourse. The former tried to understand the problems by highlighting various factors that impact the lives of the youth while the latter focused on two points, one that sympathised with the youth on some problems and the other that labeled them as the problem. From the hegemonic dominant perception in these stories, the youth *were the problem*. As such, they had to be dealt with accordingly – that the problem be removed without attempting to reform the cause.

In Valchhuana's response, or rather non-response to Rinky's narration of their past encounter, it can be understood that his attitude at that time was not one of empathy. As a student leader, instead of guiding his juniors towards an understanding of the true purpose of their stay at the city, he had persuaded the

welfare leaders to decide on a severe punishment for a perceived slight to the good name of the Mizo community. The decision had been made without any desire to reform and guide and without any thought to the family background of those involved. Moreover, from Rinky's experience, it was clear that no one had offered to help and lead her along the path she was expected to follow. She was ostracised by the other Mizos in the unfamiliar city and had had to suffer depression in silence, even to the extent of entertaining suicidal thoughts. She had eventually left for another city while lying to her family that she could not find admission at a good college there. Even as Valchhuana witnessed Rinky's degraded life and having heard from her of the part he had played in it, he felt no remorse in his heart. Neither did it prompt him to reflect on the turn which his own life had taken. Blinded by his own sense of self-righteousness, he justified his own inadequacies while remaining judgmental and unforgiving towards the faults of others. It was unlikely that he would change his ways even after seeing for himself the proof of the negative impact of the impudent decision he had made in the past. It was, like Liansangi said in "*Lawmna Garden*" (Garden of Contentment) (2011), a case of "(I)t's my life" (Lalnunchanga, 2011, 13). Society had become fragmented with the individualism that the rising importance of the individual self and the personal had initiated.

Without the stability offered by the traditional way of life that had upheld the people of Khiangzo, this fragmentation of society was an eventuality. It was no longer the responsibility of the individual nor was it essential to fulfill whatever duty the individual may have had towards the community. The hope which the Christian missionaries had of bringing salvation to the Mizo people had in some respects, created more people in need of salvation. By introducing what they believed was better than what the people already had and also by casting aside that which they believed would be obstacles, they had left the very people (they were trying to save) vulnerable to the contingencies of being thrust into an unfamiliar world. The native, the Mizo, had been declared insensible to ethics and came to represent not only the "absence of values, but also the negation of values" (Fanon, 32). The indigenous, as they were taught, could no longer provide the solid basis upon which they could

ground their identity since it now came to signify all that was *ṭhing*[146]i. e. backward, undeveloped and inferior. Colonialism had altered their cultural priorities[147]. They had become susceptible and open to influences other than those of the missionaries which were thought to be superior to the indigenous. The Mizo had come to identify more with the English and the European rather than on their own indigenous culture. The same could be said of the Mizo as Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o had written about Africa,

> Africa makes us look to Europe as the basis of everything, as the very center of the universe. We can see it in the way we are brought up to regard the English language as the basis of definition of our own identity. Instead of seeing English as just another language with a lot of books and literature available in it, we see it as a way of defining our own being. We become captives of this language, developing certain attitudes of positive identification with English (or French). We also develop attitudes of distancing ourselves from our own languages, our own cultures (390).

This cultural domination has continued to influence the Mizo. This conviction in the inferiority of all things Mizo has found a perfect spot in the hegemonic structure of the neo-colonial world fuelled by globalisation. The notion of English as the language spoken by "the higher class of natives" (Macaulay, 374), drove parents to send their children outside the state for education as Rinky's and Mapuii's parents did, without hesitation and without regard to the quality of education they would receive. Contrary to the expectation behind acquiring exposure to other cultures as a sign of modernity and progress, it served to precipitate the neo-colonial influence. And, with the advance in technology in recent years, this exposure has enlarged its domain to our own backyards. The role of the media especially that of the audio-visual in forming the mind-set and aspirations of the youth can be seen in Sawmkimi's dream which for her was the ultimate – to go on bike rides and enjoy herself with young men, preferably clean and neat to behold, tall, young, slightly effeminate and one who could even be scolded by women as in the Korean films she

[146]*Ṭhing*: To be stale, cold, not eaten at the same time as cooked. To be old, to have the appearance of being unwashed. Therefore it has connotations with the backward, undeveloped and undesirable.
[147]Ashis Nandy wrote that colonialism not only colonizes the bodies but also the mind, and releases forces within the colonized societies to alter their cultural priorities once for all (xi).

watched. Her idea of the ideal man is very much formed by what she saw in the media. It was either the men in the Korean films or the super masculine kind like the Arnold Schwarzeneggers or the David Beckhams of the western world. For her the Mizo men were just the opposite, especially those she interacted with were shabby, short, hairy and smelly. She had good reasons to have formed this impression as she was bound to encounter such men in her line of work. Even those youngsters she could excuse for owning the latest bikes were most often the ones who let her down. They were the most likely to dupe her, either not paying the full amount or even failing to pay what they owed her for her services. It was perhaps easier for her to imagine an "ideal man" albeit one that was highly influenced by what she saw in films. Her "ideal man" was but an illusion since he remained in her imagination. This was further proved in the figure of Muanthanga, who was the opposite of her ideal but who gave her a sense of security.

All these unfulfilled expectations and the resultant frustrations ignited in the youth a sense of discontent and repressed emotions underlying their actions. The restlessness simmering beneath the surface would often manifest itself in aggression and the desire for violence. Sawmkimi found that she could not control her aggressiveness once she gave in to the desire to physically assert herself. She had beaten up the drug-addict to such an extent that she was afraid that she had actually killed her. She herself feared this latent propensity for violence and shuddered each time she was reminded of it. Valchhuana too, despite his calm exterior was intense in his dislike of Rochhunga. His dislike was inherently extreme and aggressive. If given the chance, Valchhuana would have liked to beat Rochhunga senseless as he was repulsed by his very manner and appearance. Even the courtesy towards women seemed to have taken a backseat. When Mapuii, angered by the callous and high-handed behaviour of the men on community duty, answered them angrily, one of the men grabbed her by the shoulders and raised his hand to slap her. Even though the group by the bonfire was unquestioning of the authority of the other group, both Mapuii and Mapuia who did not possess the same other-ed feeling of the marginalised group, could not contain their anger because of their sense of righteousness. The tension between the two groups was palpable even though they did not resort to violence. Still, the group on duty could assert their dominance, being

representatives of the community, by exacting monetary fine on the others. The passive-aggressive behaviour of Baby towards Rochhunga can be seen as a venting of her pent up anger towards men in general. The pleasure she got from the momentary power she had over Rochhunga, in making him do all sorts of things is evident in her declaration that no one had made her laugh as much. Possibly, her ultimate revenge was that she did not reveal her HIV positive status to him.

The degenerate state of the society can be seen symbolised by the prevalence of the dreaded disease AIDS. The constant presence of the threat of contracting the disease was a reality for the women on the streets and a constant risk for them as well as the men who associated with them. In "*Lawmna Garden*" (Garden of Contentment) (2011), the memory of one of the call girls, Temâmi's distress at having possibly contracted HIV from a customer, haunted Sawmkimi rendering her to be as careful as she could possibly be. Yet, it was not always possible. At the end of the story when Sawmkimi received a marriage proposal from Muanthanga, she was in doubt as to whether she was free of the disease herself. In "*Baby-i Hlim Zan*" (Baby's Night of Happiness) (2011), Baby blithely admitted to her HIV positive status and did not seem to care that she might transmit the disease to her clients. C.Lalnunchanga does not specify in the story as to why Baby does so but mentions in an interview that it was likely that some of the HIV positive people he came across during his background research had the intention of spreading the disease as a form of retaliation[148] and revenge. Contracting other sexually transmitted diseases was insignificant to them. Liansangi did not even bat an eyelid when Sawmkimi told her with trepidation of her suspicion of having contracted an STD, but offhandedly told her to take some medicine she readily had under her pillow. This proved that for her, contracting a sexually transmitted disease was a common occurrence and hence did not scare her much.

What was unheard of in the past was now common incidence – people dying unknown and lonely deaths and unmentionable dreadful diseases that spread as a

[148] In an interview held on 28th July, 2020, C.Lalnunchanga recounted his experiences with several K.S. while on a background research for a proposed collaboration with MSACS as mentioned before. It was not just the K.S. but others as well that gave him the impression (though there was no admission of the fact) that some of them were spreading the disease on purpose as a means of getting even with the world.

result of the immorality that had crept into the society. It was a world that Puilura and his people would not have ever imagined could exist. Theirs was a world where even the dead were not left behind in battle to suffer the ignominy of being left to the mercy of their enemies, where the young women held on to their chastity and the young men took great care not to bring shame nor disrepute either to the women they were associated with, nor to themselves. In *Ka Mi Huaisen leh Ka Pasalṭha* (My Brave and Courageous Men) (2015), Nghalṭhianga had defended Ainâwni in the chief's court despite the fact that her family had wrongly accused him of having boasted of his relationship with her. He had sacrificed his good name and reputation instead. This was the kind of chivalry that was upheld and lauded in the past. The contrast in behaviour of the men in the two time periods is striking and obvious.

The "Women's Question"[149]:

The lives of the women even in the past were never easy. Their duty as the caregivers in the house had meant that they had no personal time for themselves. The supply of water, of firewood, preparation of food as well as weaving of cloth for clothes for everyone in the family was in their hands. This was in addition to their participation in the cultivation of crops in the *lo*. Even as they entertained their visitors in the night, a regular activity of the men especially the youth were never idle. They were expected to be engaged in productive activities, just as they were expected to always be courteous and hospitable and never showing particular favourites among their suitors. Though not the norm, the experiences of Chembaki, Tintula's wife and a minor character, and Ainawni, a secondary character were also testaments to the degradation and physical abuse, which the women were sometimes subjected to, and hence, it was a reflection of the inferior status of women in the society, in general. Even as Chembaki was mercilessly being beaten by her husband and threatened with her life, no one dared to raise a voice against her husband, as they were unwilling to take a stand between husband and wife. She could not find security even in her own father's house. Ainawni was another character in the

[149] The phrase used by Partha Chatterjee in his article, "The Nation and Its Women" to express the paradoxical situation of the Indian woman who remained subordinate in the cultural space even though she is considered an equal to the men in the professional arena.

historical novels to suffer this ignominy. Her carrying a child out of wedlock and hence bringing shame upon her family was the reason she was beaten not just by her father but by her brothers too, to such an extent that their neighbours feared for her life and even the chief, Puilura had to intervene on her behalf. The change in her, both mentally and physically was unmistakable – from a confident and healthy young woman, she became a shadow of herself, thin, gaunt and intensely aware of her fallen state. Ngulruaii was divorced by Hautuka in the most degrading manner possible in the Mizo custom, *ma*[150], wherein a wife was divorced when her husband no longer wished to stay married to her, especially when there was another woman involved. When Hautuka begged her to return to him, she refused even though she felt a longing to return because of the memory of the humiliation she endured due to his numerous affairs. These women's subaltern experiences were but inevitable in a society where even young boys could consider it a slight to their male pride when they are given chores by women, even by their own mothers.

Although in contrast, the women in the short stories were liberated from the traditional duties in the house, they remained other-ed, the subaltern in the society. Having the freedom and time to themselves, they worked all kinds of jobs and were no longer tied to the hearth and home since the well-being of the family was no longer reliant on the women's constant presence or productivity. The fact remained that even though the women were seemingly liberated, it remained quite difficult to change the attitude of the society (especially the men) towards them. Baby's ex-husband was one such character. For him, women were like possessions who could be discarded at a whim as they lost their value and to be done away with as such. She was just seventeen years old when she was raped by him but, they had gotten married. She was replaced by a younger girl as soon as she gave birth to their son. The memory of her experience still brought tears to her eyes even after many years had passed. It had left her with a hatred for all men and incapable of being in a meaningful relationship. Further, her hatred had fed her desire for revenge that predisposed her to take as much advantage of the momentary power she had had over her clients just as she had done with Rochhunga. She and her fellow K.S. took great

[150]*Ma*: To divorce (one's wife).

pleasure in outwitting the men who came to them. However, even this fleeting sense of power was not a common occurrence. Most often, the women had to negotiate their price and pay for extra expenses and sometimes, they were tricked by their clients and ended up not being paid for their services. Rinky's experience also highlighted the general male attitude towards the woman. It was the male student leaders who had taken it upon themselves to castigate the girls for having gone to a pub with male friends, who were not Mizo. They had made it their duty to "protect" the good name of the Mizo people and "safeguard" the reputation and honour of the Mizo girls. They felt that their judgment was justified. However, Valchhuana later proved through his own actions and remorseless behaviour that the decision had been made then, without any real concern for the morals or reputation of the girls involved. It had just been an outlet for the expression of the sense of superiority and power they claimed over those who were junior to them, and who were of "the weaker sex", who even later in life he would continue to denigrate. His infidelity to his wife was a reflection of his disregard for her. He did not even try to explain nor attempt to make an excuse to her as to why he would not return home that night. His nonchalance and indifference to Rinky's disclosure of their shared past and to his role in the downward spiral of her life, was but a confirmation of his opinion of women as of no consequence. Their well-being was of no concern to him so long as he could retain his position of dominion in relation to them.

The tendency of the men to use brute force on women, even by the so-called guardians of the society is reason enough to claim the relevance of emancipation of women even in these modern times. In "*Lawmna Garden*" (Garden of Contentment) (2011), Sawmkimi and her fellow K.S. in their dealings with their clients often had to defend themselves from being physically overpowered by the men. Not only did they need to acquire street savvy but they also had to be physically strong. Sawmkimi's physical strength saved her a number of times from being taken advantage of as she was always able to overcome any such attempts: when her first client, Edenthara tried to force himself on Sawmkimi, she kicked him so hard that he fell back a few paces. At another occasion she was able to forcefully free herself from the clutches of a potential client as she could not stand his smell. It was thus not uncommon for a man, even by drunks, to use physical force to demonstrate their perceived superiority

over the womenfolk. This sense of superiority was not necessarily always manifested through physical strength. It could be as subtle as when Lalmuana told Sawmkimi that he could *forgive* her because he loved her. He said this after telling her that he wanted to marry her even though he knew about her life as a K.S. Then, he declared that she *needed* someone to take care of her (Lalnunchanga, 2011, 43). So, even when it seemed that a woman had found a man she could rely on, it was on his terms, and she would be accepted not for who she was but because the man had *decided* to accept her. His words throw light on the order of power that existed between the genders and how the woman continues to be forced to take on the role of the subaltern, and that too, within the hierarchical confines of the society.

The Mizo "women's question" was much like Partha Chatterjee's argument, that the unimportance of the "women's question" was because of nationalism's success in situating it in an "'inner' domain of sovereignty" i.e. national culture which he wrote was "constituted in the light of the discovery of 'tradition'" (242). Various social changes had taken place through the decades, such as the embracing of a new religion, the introduction of western education, the *Bawi* Controversy and the abolition of chieftainship that essentially placed all the Mizo people on an equal footing. Much progress had been made during that time too, both financial and infrastructural. It is true that women have had equal opportunities as the men and have been emancipated from much of their traditional roles, much more than in other parts of the country. The influence of the Church and the missionaries has been most instrumental in uplifting the position of women. The opportunity to equal education gave the girls the chance to prove themselves as capable as the boys in academics even as they continued to fulfill their obligations at home[151], thus opening various opportunities for them. They have made their mark in all spheres of life as the education of women later came to be encouraged to enable her to fulfill the "new social responsibilities" which in turn "bound them to a new, and yet entirely legitimate, subordination" (Partha Chatterjee, 256). Thus, despite their active participation and contribution to society, it is also true that the women remain the subaltern in the Mizo world view. However successful or respected a woman

[151] The missionaries had to take special care that the girls who attended school were more useful in their homes and villages than they were earlier (Verghese and Thanzawna, 323).

becomes in her career, she remains tied to the social strictures that inevitably place her at a disadvantage because of her gender. Thus, for the Mizo woman "the battle for the new idea of womanhood ... was waged in the home" (259). The struggle continues even today, against a tradition that upholds age old adages that compare the worth of a woman's words to that of crab meat[152], and ones which compare a woman's wisdom to the span of a *tuikhur*[153] and refers to the worthless state of her existence in sayings such as the one that compares her to a broken fence[154] that can be easily replaced and also, sayings which highlight her insignificance in the religious rites and beliefs[155]. The fact that these sayings are still being occasionally used to disparage a woman, her actions and her words, is evidence of the two-fold silencing and of the subordination of women and the dual struggle which she has had to undertake to find her voice within and along with a society that is still in the process of re-writing its own existence.

When comparing the historical and the contemporary within the milieu of postcolonialism, the change in how the women perceive themselves becomes apparent. The women in the historical novels are represented as secure and self-assured even though their lives seemed more repressed. They were content with what they had and aspired for nothing more perhaps because the life they lived was the only one they knew. In contrast, the women in the short stories though enjoying more liberty and were better equipped for an emancipated life are more confused and lost, an evident effect of their doubly marginalised lives – the consequence of the combined effect of colonialism which gave rise to the fragmentation of society and individualization in the community. However, this advocacy for a return to the traditional is not adequate to resolve the problem of the position of women and for that matter, other marginalised groups *within* the cultural structure of the Mizo

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[152] The saying referred to here is, "*Hmeichhe thu thu ni suh, chakai sa sa ni suh*" which means that a woman's words are not to be considered words i.e. of consequence just as crab meat is not considered real meat.

[153]*Tuikhur*: A small natural pool usually formed at the hill side, a water hole, from which water for domestic use is drawn. The referred saying "*Hmeichhe fin in tuikhur ral a kai lo*" thus infers that a woman's wisdom or knowledge does not extend even the width of a *tuikhur*.

[154] The saying referred to here, "*Hmeichia leh Pal chhia chu thlak theih a ni*" implies that just as a broken or worn down fence can be easily replaced, a woman too may be replaced just as easily.

[155] The saying referred to here, "*Hmeichhia leh chakai in Sakhua an nei lo*" implies that a woman has no religious significance just as a crab which has no religious significance in the practice of traditional Mizo religion or *Sakhua*.

tradition. The postcolonialism that takes precedence now is the one that "seeks to change the basis of the state itself" and actively transform the "restrictive, centralizing hegemony of the cultural nationalism" required for the struggle against colonialism (Young, 2003, 113). The "women's question" to use Partha Chatterjee's words, thus serves to highlight the fundamental issues in the construct and the formulation of the Mizo identity which is reflected in the selected works. It suggests that in order to achieve an identity that is encompassing for all Mizo irrespective of gender, economic and social status, it does not suffice to only re-write the "other-ed" self in relation to the dual concepts of the colonial and the neo-colonial, but also to resolve the problem of the self that is confined within the inherent hegemonic structures of the society itself. Sartre had suggested, that Europeans must face the reality of colonialism, that "(I)t was nothing but an ideology of lies, a perfect justification for pillage; its honeyed words, its affectation of sensibility were only alibis for our aggressions" (Sartre, 21). The Mizo also needs to introspect, having now come to realise the spuriousness of the ideologies they had internalised and on which they had "re-built" their identity and culture. And now, the task as has been the purpose of this study of these works of C.Lalnunchanga is not just in the reclamation of the pre-colonial past but also, of the globalised, neo-colonial world of the present, and what better way than through literature which tries to "capture the inner meaning of social transformation" (Panikkar, 2012, 8).

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Chapter IV
Self and Identity: Community Transformed

> *The personal self is very much embedded within multiple social contexts.*
>
> Susan Harter[156]

> *Every identity is placed, positioned, in a culture, a language, a history … It insists on specificity, on conjecture. But it is not necessarily armour-plated against other identities. It is not tied to fixed, permanent, unalterable oppositions. It is not wholly defined by exclusion.*
>
> Stuart Hall [157]

The notions of self and identity have come to majorly engage the re-construct of post colonial communities that have been thrust into a world that is being homogenized by globalization. The recovery of the essence of the past is a key element and must be pursued to provide stability to the process of the re-construction. However, daily living in the contemporary world has its own set of challenges and issues which cannot be resolved by only recapturing the past. Having illustrated the differences between life in pre-colonial and in contemporary times, as also the changes taking place in the time in-between the spaces, it may be strongly suggested that it is also essential to reconcile the past with the present so as to develop a wholesome sense of self and hence, identity. The relevance of practices and customs had changed with time through the influences of forces both external and internal, which had effectively changed the face of the society. Therefore, "(N)ew norms were needed, which would be more appropriate to the external conditions of the modern world and yet not a mere imitation of the West" (Partha Chatterjee, 250). A major contributing factor to the wholeness of the pre-colonial

[156]Susan Harter bases her article on this premise and that liabilities or barriers of authenticity arise because the construction of a personal self is so highly dependent on social interaction (81).
[157] Quoted by James Procter from the essay, "Minimal Selves" by Stuart Hall (121).

characters of the selected texts was the presence of a sense of community that existed for the benefit of all whereas, it is found to be conspicuously missing in the lives of the characters in the selected contemporary stories. This inter-connectedness between the individual and the community will thus be explored in this chapter, building on the reflection of the sense of the individual self upon the community and vice-versa. It will dwell on the construct of self and identity of the individual characters based on their responses to the various aspects of culture as represented in the selected texts. It will lay emphasis on how these individual selves and identities collectively construct and illustrate the complexities of the Mizo identity in contemporary times much like the "complex and contradictory consciousness" that according to Gautam Bhadra is made up by the merging and coalescing of the two elements in the mentality of subalternity – collaboration and resistance (95).

Prof. Lalsangkima Pachuau claims that the manner in which Christianity is practiced by the Mizos is *Mizo* and that there is nothing *sap* or westernized about it[158]. Although C.Lalnunchanga's works do not reflect this sentiment, there is sufficient indication that religion has always been a fundamental aspect of Mizo identity in his works. Therefore, this analysis will begin by demonstrating how Christianity became indigenized to the Mizo way of life, to suit the Mizo world view and how the change in the dynamics of society (as discussed in the previous chapter) came to alter the individual's response and relationship with the community as a whole. Thereafter the chapter will dwell briefly on the *Rambuai*[159] period which remains to a very large extent, an important aspect in the relationship of the Mizos with the rest of India. It still affects the daily responses and attitudes of the Mizo towards the *vai* and hence cannot be excluded in any discussion on the construct or formation of Mizo identity. Through it all, the change in the sense of community as well as the change in the individual's sense of responsibility towards the community will be traced as a result of the changes in the community structure to depict that "the

[158] Paper titled " Mizo Ethnonationality in Context: Ethnicity, Politics, and Religion in the Shaping of Mizo Identity" presented on 25th November, 2020 during the International Webinar on "Ethnicity in South Asia: Special Reference to Mizo Identity, Culture and Literature" held during 25th -27th November, 2020 organized by IQAC and Departments of Political Science, History and English, Government T.Romana College, Aizawl.

[159] *Rambuai*: Literally means, "land in trouble", and is used to refer to the period of MNF secessionist movement from 1966 to 1986. The period is usually referred to as "*Buai*" or "*Buailai*" meaning "The Troubles, The Disturbances, the Mizoram War of Independence".

construction of identity … *is* finally a construction" that involves establishing opposites and 'other' whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and re-interpretation of their differences from 'us' (Said, 332; emphasis as in text) since "(I)dentities have to be created, as they are not inborn" (Thapar, 38) and its creation is neither accidental nor "altogether innocent of intention" (57). So, we see in the narratives that "the signs of identity and of difference" are matters of "invention and construction" (Ashcroft et al, 2017, 54). The chapter thus explores the transformation of the community through the cultural implications of social change, the development of politics and its ramifications, and how through the narrative and narratology the selected texts posit hybridity as a means to re-imagine the community along the lines of Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*.

Community Transformed: Cultural Implications of Social Change

A chronological reading of the selected texts evidences the changes in the community as discussed in the previous chapter. The selected texts discussed so far deal with the pre-colonial and the contemporary Mizo. "*Khamosh Hai Raath*" (Silent is the Night) (2011) on the other hand bridges and links the two, or rather, it situates the Mizo in the time of colonial expansion while also foreshadowing the changes that it would effect on the people. It was not only the colonial experience but also the *other*-ed experience of the Mizo within the Indian nation that would usher changes into the society. First, the colonial *sap* brought a transformation to the Mizo community through the introduction of an alien administrative set-up and through Christianity which has forever changed the culture and outlook of the people. Secondly, the relationship of the Mizo with India which is continuing to induce changes in the society through the government administration and policies as well as through cultural influences, and which has also caused the Mizo to be "the Other" in his own country. These aspects of governance (both colonial and national) and the resultant cultural changes have effectively transformed the society, hence the community and therefore, the individual proving that the presence of "the Other" which Edward Said says is recreated by each age and society (332), is essential to the construct of the self.

Basil Jones, the Inspector of Schools in-charge of the primary and middle schools in Mizoram during 1942-53, wrote in his report (in 1951) that new forces, apart from the Christian message were finding their way into Mizoram (Lloyd, 324). The fact was that the Mizo people had already been exposed to other cultures even before the advent of the white man. They had already been trading with and, raiding the neighbouring regions to the north and the south of their territory which had actually brought the white man into conflict with them. The earlier contacts had not affected their way of life much; as they made no difference in the way they lived and hence did not create any deep impact. The Mizo people at that time were in command of their own affairs. To them, there was no other way better than theirs, to even consider discarding or thinking it to be inferior or backward. There was no insecurity in their indigeneity or their identity, and hence, they were not enticed by anything to make changes. They were neither lead nor compelled as they were not a subjugated people. Rather, there was no supreme leader or ruler of the unified Mizos but it was a close cooperation of various chiefs of villages scattered throughout the region occupied by them. The change that did come with the establishment of colonial power was brought upon them, and at a fast-pace and they did not know how much change it was going to generate. "*Khamosh Hai Raath*" (Silent is the Night) (2011) foreshadows the influences that would bring such changes even as the Mizo people were still unaware of them. What the braves of Vanbawng were aware of at that time, was that there was no use in attempting to make peace. Past experiences of encounters with the *sap* had taught them that the white man would stop at nothing to prove their superiority, militarily or otherwise. All they knew was that the enemy, even though better equipped, should be made aware that they were "encountering undaunted braves" for whom it would be embarrassing to do nothing and remain "silent as a helpless dog watching the floodwaters" (Rualzakhumi Ralte, 59). For these braves, the white man was not to be trusted, "(T)hey are white, just as white as the eagle's shit off the rough cliffs" (56). White as a signifier had not yet acquired the colonial connotations in the Mizo world view. Such a comparison shows what little regard the Mizo had for the white man at that time. White had not yet been designated superior.

Yet, the men of Vanbawng had a sense of premonition that, the night had certain significance. Writing with the knowledge of hindsight, C.Lalnunchanga points out that the men were probably the first Mizos to listen to a Christmas carol. And therefore, the first to experience the calm that Christianity would bring into the lives of subsequent generations. Though the winter night's calm was disturbed by the bursts of gunshots, the implication of it being Christmas night was palpable to even the braves who were yet to understand the true meaning of Christmas. Despite the violence perpetrated that night and the days leading to it, there was a sense of peace that even Mother Nature echoed as the outsiders began to sing "Silent Night".

The sense that something important beyond their comprehension was building up[160] (Lalnunchanga, 2011, 130) made the men uneasy. They knew the immediate repercussions of the current confrontation and were familiar with the resultant casualty and the impending famine. What they had heard their grandparents speak of and what they were witnessing for themselves, had enkindled a deep sense of foreboding. This was what disconcerted them. Their experience of the white man had proved to them that there was and would not be any restraint from totally obliterating anyone who opposed or stood in their way of achieving their goals. Their old village, Sentlang which had boasted a thousand houses had been razed to the ground and reduced to ashes in retaliation to their role in the raids against the villages along the Manipur borders. The incident was etched in the memory of the elders who still spoke about it, and it was the reason the old Chieftainess Lalhlupuii, grandmother of their chief Lalhleia was against shooting the white man as they marched through their territory. They saw too the granaries that had been stacked full the day before, but which had been reduced to ashes the next. For the Mizo, it was sacrilege to knowingly destroy food given the difficulty of cultivation in the hills. In *Pasaḷthate Ni Hnuhnung* (Last Days of the Braves) (2007), the victorious Khiangzo braves had refrained from burning the crops or destroying the implements for the livelihood of the people of Vuakdûp. Their leader, Zakâpa had declared that rice was the source of their life and that they must not burn it as it does not draw blessings (Lalnunchanga, 2007, 62). They had defeated their rival village resoundingly and

[160] The translated text has it as "… there is something about to be revealed" (Rualzakhumi Ralte, 61).

could have easily prevented their ever recovering and becoming a threat again but, they had drawn the line there. The braves of Vanbawng knew that such consideration for life would not be shown to them. It was as if they were conscious of the dawn of the end of life as they knew it.

Upon hearing the carol being sung by the British officers and their men, one of the braves, Thangkunga had declared "I am sure we will be enlightened over this matter" (Rualzakhumi Ralte, 62). Sure enough, the first missionaries began their mission in Mizoram twenty-three years later. Although the men present at the outskirts of Vanbawng would never know the meaning of the hymn nor the importance of that particular day, they had no inkling that Christmas day would become the most revered and celebrated day for the Mizo people. In spite of this, it is important to know that the men were still able to grasp the unifying character of Christianity – with "the inexpressible unknown peace in their hearts … all feelings of human division vanished … whether *vai*, white man or Mizo they were all part of the same humanity" (Rualzakhumi Ralte, 62-63). Without ever having even been introduced to the concept of Christianity, the men were already feeling its impact. Even the unfamiliar language in which the carol was sung could not diminish the intensity of their emotions – a foretelling of the peace that Christianity would bring to the land. Significantly, in the narrative, the first and second stanza of the carol are written down in English and the third and last stanza, first in Hindi, then in English and lastly, in Mizo. From the narrator's contrasts and references to the pre-Christian and Christian knowledge, it can be inferred that the author intended for the three versions of "Silent Night" to convey that a transformation of the Mizo sensibility would take place through these cultures. The western influence, first and foremost would cause initial changes while maintaining a sustained influence through the years. The Indian influence would gradually grow with the inclusion of Mizoram in independent India – the *Rambuai* period would also affect the Mizo's perception of the *vai* – the Indian from the mainland, and his relation with them. All these took place even as the Mizo was himself changing and evolving to the demands of the times, still seeking to discover his place in the world which was being snatched as it were from under his feet, and more importantly, his sense of self and identity that was still evolving as a result.

In today's world, it may seem foolhardy to focus on the ethnic and to promote it because the world is moving towards the specific and towards intolerance for others different from them. However, it has become an even more important aspect of reclamation by indigenous societies who were at a point in time subjugated by the colonial machine for whom it is important to create an "enlightened culture of remembrance" (DW Documentary). The importance of ethnicity therefore cannot be denied in the reconstruction of the Mizo identity which had undergone a self-defeating change under the hegemonic influence of the colonial as well as that of independent India in the manner in which the Mizo are perceived by other people and even in the way they themselves perceive themselves. "White" *had* come into significance.

From the beginning, it is notable that the colonial power recognised the distinctness of the Mizo people and made modifications to their existing policies and the manner in which they dealt with other colonies. They understood that the colonial machine as it functioned in other places would not be applicable to the Mizo people. Of course, the decision was made partly because of economic reasons, but, it was also because of an understanding of the people and their sentiments. And, perhaps it is because of this foresight that the white man did not encounter as much difficulty in persuading the Mizo people – changes were made with due consideration to the indigenous society, culture and practices thus making it easier for them to accept these changes. This in turn opened up avenues for the incorporation of the new into the old, thus indigenizing foreign ideas and world views in order to suit the changing world in which they were living. This process of indigenization is most observable in both the acceptance and practice of Christianity. The "large-scale conversion" was a result of the extensive indigenization of the Christianity originally introduced by the missionaries and an "active engagement with it, sometimes involuntarily, but nonetheless within Mizo frames that enabled identification with it" (Joy L.K.Pachuau, 2014, 164).

The lived aspect of the spiritual beliefs of the Mizo as has already been discussed in the previous chapters, demonstrated the intrinsic relationship between the daily and the spiritual life of the people. It was only natural for the people to incorporate their newly embraced religion into the routine of their daily lives by

attaching the significances of old practices to the new ones thereby, forging the foundations upon which a new facet of the Mizo would be construct. The early Christians had strictly adhered to the teachings of the missionaries, believing that the ways of the white man was the path to the aspect of salvation that had been preached in their newly embraced religion. Conversely, all things traditional and indigenous were believed to lead them astray from that path. The new faith J.M.Lloyd wrote, penetrated into the "depths of the unconscious" enabling the Mizo to "make the traumatic change in thought and conduct necessitated by the Christian challenge and to make it permanently" (115). Thus the significations of the traditional and indigenous beliefs gradually shifted to signify and represent the new religion; Christianity. Naturally, there was opposition to this new religion. There came recognition of the changes it brought to the structure of the society as well as the traditional way of life. The strictures imposed on a people against what had been natural to them for ages could have but one result, a break from the restrictions and a resurgence of the indigenous and the traditional. Lloyd had further observed that "the identity of the race and the continuity of racial consciousness remained strong and was possibly *heightened*" (115-116; my emphasis). For the Mizo, this came about with the revivals of the early 19th century which were at first highly influenced by the Welsh revival movements of the late 18th century and the early 19th century (Lalsangkima, 2002, 111) but which later came to have a life of its own, and which subsequently impacted the manner in which Christianity came to be practiced by the Mizo. The emergence of the *Puma Zai*[161] soon after represented the "resurgence of traditional cultural identity-consciousness" of the Mizo people (117) as a means of "venting their psychological affliction and in part a process of their psychological adjustment to the new socio-political order" (119). P. Thirumalet.al. write that the early Christians had to "seek a break from their past in order to affirm their radically

[161] *Puma Zai* literally means "Songs of *Puma*" and was a new "song-type of simple and catchy rhythm" that emerged in 1907. Each chant or verse consisted of two lines and the first line ends with the word *Puma*. It was believed to have originated in Ratu village. The song underwent various changes, eventually dropping the word *Puma*. The movement it engendered came to be associated with singing, dancing and feasting. It came to be associated with "heathenism" and as anti-Christian. However, now the opinion that it was a reactive movement to the changed reality as a psychological response to their rapidly changing world as a means of resistance as well as assertion of their traditions is widely accepted by academicians (Joy L.K.Pachuau, Lalsangkima Pachuau & P. Thirumal et. al.,).

new Christian identities" and that the celebration of the *Puma Zai* festivals "seemed an unconditional affirmation of their past" and an "attempt to re-install the living past which was linked to a damaged present" (95). That is to say that they had come to a realisation of the confusion or rather, the identity crisis that had come to be manifest and that it could possibly be resolved by a revival of the indigenous which had been discarded as the past. Through its outright denunciation of the white man's ways reflected in the recently acquired mannerisms of the newly converted Christians and through its persistent promotion of the traditional, the *Puma Zai* sought to reverse the "code-switching"[162] (84) thus bringing in a "new cultural entity" and reviving in the Mizo, "cultural selfhood" (Lalsangkima, 2002, 121). It also promoted community participation by arousing the community to dance to its rhythm, hence, coming to be called the community dance songs, the *Tlanglam Zai*[163] (118). Joy L.K.Pachuau writes that it was not so much the lyrics of the *Puma Zai* that mattered since they were more or less frivolous exchanges. It was the subversive nature of the movement, for the singing was accompanied by drinking, feasting, and dancing in which the entire village would end up in a state of drunken revelry. According to her, the movement "brought disorder and confusion to the order that Western Christianity sought to inculcate, also causing apostasy" (2019, 306).

Though not religious in nature, the *Puma Zai* movement came to highly influence the subsequent Christian revivals or *Harhna*[164] towards the indigenization of worship which culminated in the re-introduction of the *khuang*, the traditional drum during worship, which had been cast aside as symbolic of the pagan indigenous beliefs. This particular revival, the third revival movement which began in 1919, also saw the emergence or popularization of expressing Christian sentiments through traditional "indigenous tunes" (Lalsangkima, 2002, 126). The mass conversion to

[162] The authors used this term to "map the transformation of the tonal script-less Lushai language into the post-Lushai language possessing a script and the changes that accompanied the standardization of the Lushai language" (P. Thirumal et.al, 101).

[163]*Tlanglam Zai:* The name given to the anti-Christian song, also known as *Puma Zai* (see sl.no. 78) when it became popular and was celebrated with communal dancing in 1908. J.H.Lorrain has entered it in his dictionary as the name of an anti-Christian song (also known as *Tlanglam Zai*) the avowed purpose of which was to oust the Christian hymns. It became unbelievably popular throughout the Lushai country during 1908, and was sung everywhere with feasting and communal dancing such as had never been witnessed in the Hills before. It soon, however, passed into oblivion, leaving the Christian hymns more popular than ever.

[164]*Harhna* : Revival, awakening. Refers mostly to Christian revivals.

Christianity thereafter proved the success of the revival of the indigenous and further promoted the revival movements and helped to consolidate the indigenous influences on the church and her dealings. The indigenized singing, to the beat of the *khuang*, together with the dancing associated with the movements, fostered "mutual internalization" by forcing Christianity "to embrace the people's values, world view, and ethos" thereby forming a "new and distinctive church" (142), a church that embodied the ethos of both the Christian and the indigenous – the Mizo. Even so, there remains to this day, a group of traditionalists within the Christian domain, collectively known as *Pawl chhuak*[165] which literally means "to leave or to dissociate from a group". Here, the group which they have left is the Church. They maintain that the Mizo are a people chosen by God since they were sought out by the missionaries, and that is the reason as to why they believe it suffices to worship God in traditional ways instead of following or rather, imitating the ways of the white man. They also maintain that the Mizo people should take pride in the traditional ways of worshipping since God had made them in a manner, just as he had wanted. Hence, the slogan "*I pianna ram ah kir leh rawh*", meaning to return to the land of one's birth [166] . Thus the movement to radically indigenize Christianity and consequently, to identify the Mizo with the Christian continues even today with vigor, although the voices have significantly lessened.

Joy L. K. Pachuau writes that it is from "within the Church framework that notions of respectability, honour, propriety, and morality are determined" (2014, 147). This indigenization and internalization of Christianity into the world view and ethics of the Mizo has continued to shape and form the ideals and aspirations of the community and therefore, in the shaping of an individual's concept of self and identity.

Community Transformed: Politics and its Ramifications

P. Thirumal et. al have pointed out that this blending of the new with the old, of the identification of the Mizo with Christianity had helped to develop a "notion of

[165]*Pawl chhuak:* It literally means "to leave or to dissociate from a group". Those not part of the mainstream churches, referring to cults or ex-communicated churches/people (Joy L.K.Pachuau, 2014, 243).

[166] Information garnered in conversation with a member of *pawl chhuak.*

political community" which they say, in post-colonial times has catapulted the Mizos to experience themselves as fragments that "disincline an organic relationship with mainland statist Hindu India" though acknowledging their dependency on the goods produced in mainland India (104). The way the Mizo saw himself, as an individual and as a people, had undergone a drastic change with the arrival and establishment of colonial power in Mizo *ram* (land) For the first time, the Mizo as a people were united against a common opponent laying aside the inter-village rivalries and raids which had till then been a major aspect of life. And, there arose a growing awareness of the necessity to hold on to and perpetuate their indigeneity and traditions as a result of the hegemonic onslaught of colonial and later, nationalist policies and cultural influences, that insisted "to produce an authentic past inclusive of a Christian present" (104). The apparent seclusion of the North East Region of India, geographically and culturally, as well as this adamant identification with Christianity as against the Hindu State of India in addition to the slow economic growth in the region fed the separatist/secessionist movement of the Mizo Nationalist Front[167] (MNF) in Mizoram as it did similar movements in the region.

The two decades of unrest, *Rambuai* from 1966 to the signing of the Peace Accord in 1986 took a toll not only on the Mizo's relation with mainland India but also on how the people perceived and identified themselves thereafter. The historical aspect and the trauma associated with the troubled time are in themselves sources of a plethora of topics for study. For this particular study it is the impact of politics and its ramifications on the relations both of the Mizo people with mainland India, and between the Mizos themselves that impacted the culture and traditions of the Mizos, thus affecting the notions of self and identity, that is of interest. The emergence of "*Rambuai* Literature[168]", a term that has come to popularly stand for the literature of and about the period, has sustained an earnest effort to bring to light the historical truth of the atrocities suffered by the common people. The heinous acts perpetrated by the armed forces have been widely shared and have indeed been deeply etched in

[167] The MNF was formed in 1961 largely in response to *mautam,* the famine brought on by the flowering of the bamboo plant and subsequently resorted to arms at the inadequate aid and perceived negligence of the Indian Government in its response to the famine.

[168] The term "*Rambuai* Literature" coined by C. Lalawmpuia Vanchiau became popular with the publication of his book of the same name that dealt variously with literature (songs, poems, stories and drama) pertaining to the troubled period.

the psyche of the people. The deep seated fear and dread of the Indian *vai* soldier can be understood to an extent from the fear that still lingered in the women, one of whom still feared and despised them and another who still shed tears even at the thought of them (Vanchiau, 2014, xix). Notably, it has also opened dialogue on the perpetrations of the volunteers of the MNF themselves on their fellow Mizos as well. It has not only brought together records of such accounts but it has also highlighted its importance in the search for historical truth. In *Tapchhak Theory* (Theory From the Hearth) (2011), Lalawmpuia Vanchiau quotes Zikpuii Pa (K.C.Lalvunga) that literature can be bitter and is not always only about the good things (2011, 23). He opines that they must be included otherwise our literature will be incomplete (2011, 22). *Rambuai Lai leh Kei* (The Troubled Times and I) (2010) published by the Mizoram Upa Pawl (MUP)[169] had also sought to present the truth through its collection of the experiences of various individuals during the *Rambuai.* They hoped it would be a source of correct information on the causes of the movement, the incidents that took place during the movement as well as the suffering of the people due to the nationalist movement (Thanseia, xiii) and serve as a record of the hardships faced by the Mizo as a people. All this in order that the youth would know true patriotism and be able to live their lives in service of their land while being guided by the fear of the Lord (Kapṭhuama, x).

This desire for true patriotism and fear of the Lord as advocated could only stem from lessons learnt through tough experiences. They also are an indication of the ideals guiding the world view of the Mizos. The emphasis on the word "true" moreover reflects the realisation that these ideals could also lead people astray with disastrous results. The *Rambuai* had depicted the extent to which human values could degenerate, upturning the values and traditions that had till then held the people together. It had therefore given rise to the quest for true values. This desire to right the wrongs invariably lead to a stricter adherence to the Christian values advocated by the religious leaders whose role in the signing of the Peace Accord is widely acknowledged and immensely appreciated by the common people. The fear of history repeating itself is perhaps the reason as to why Christian values are held in

[169] Mizoram Upa Pawl (MUP) loosely translated as Mizoram Senior Citizen's Association was established in 1957.

such high esteem and it pervades every aspect of life for the Mizo, in the hope that the virtues garnered would instill restraint and moderation.

The time lapse of thirty odd years since the signing of the Peace Accord and the uneasy silence on the topic of *Rambuai* that followed has distanced today's post-*Rambuai* youth to an important portion of their history. A history that has significantly influenced the world view of their grandparents' generation which has till now inclined subsequent generations to perceive things in a certain way – the distrust and stereotyping of *vai* people that has affected the Mizo's relations with people from mainland India[170]; the ready acceptance of the prominent role of the Church and related activities in the daily lives of the people; it strengthened the feeling of being a separate entity from the mainland thus thwarting the desire to identify as Indian and a tendency instead to associate with western thoughts and mannerisms; the indigenous way of life was drastically altered due to the unrest and curfews which disrupted all traditional activities especially those normally taken up after dark. The biased attitude towards the *vai* can be observed in C.Lalnunchanga's delicate mention of it in "*Krismas Thawnthu*" (A Christmas Story) (2011). First, the *Dumka*[171]camp was located further than the house in which the protagonists took shelter, which was already three kilometers away from the town. Secondly, the five *Dumka*s who joined the group around the bonfire were the last in the area to join, and like the others in the group, when the men on community duty made their appearance they had withdrawn like as if they were guilty of having committed something wrong. Lastly, in reference to common instances of the bullying of minorities he specifically writes that one of the men on duty had a voice that was good enough to intimidate a *vai* ice-cream vendor.

Politics also has brought another aspect of identity for the Mizo, which is that of territoriality. This transformation in the community as a consequence of the political development in the state is impossible to ignore: beginning with the change

[170]In a written interview with *Thu leh Hla* (Prose and Poetry), a well known advocate of ethnicity and founder of *Hnam* (Tribe) *Chhantu* (Protector) *Pawl* (Group), R.Ramhmangaiha had stated that when talking about *vai* and Mizo, the image that comes to mind is that of the *vai* during the troubled period who had burned down houses, the one who can never gain a good image in the eyes of the Mizo. He had said this in connection with an altercation he had had with the then Governor of Mizoram, A.R.Kohli, during a handicrafts exhibition on Republic Day. He had felt that the then Governor had been disrespectful and disparaging towards the Mizo artisans (43).

[171]*Dumka*: Refers to the people originating from the Dumka district in the state of Jharkhand.

from chiefdoms, to being annexed under a colonial power, to becoming one of the federal states of India. The struggle for political recognition in independent India began with the successful move for the establishment of the Mizo Autonomous District Council on 25th April, 1952, and in 1954, the formation of the Mizo Hills District. The Union Territory of Mizoram came to being on 21st January, 1972. The recognition of the Mizo as a people and the recognition of their claim on a collective political territory has to a large extent, been a result of their assertion on a collective identity that continues to evolve with the changing demands of the times while attempting to keep the past alive. The cultural ramifications of the dynamics of colonialism: territorialization through the annexation of Mizo land, deterritorialization through the changed lives and reterritorialization through the changed world view as well as the Mizo's own post-colonial endeavours to reclaim their indigeneity, especially the *Rambuai* period have left an indelible mark on the contemporary Mizo's relationship with place.

The evolvement of the Mizo's concept of territory has definitely been influenced and formed by the political developments in the state. Without a doubt, the changing policies and laws have affected the way in which people regard land. In the past, because of their peripatetic way of life, their relationship with place was much like that of nomads as noted by Eric Cheyfitz. For them, place was "sacred and ancestral", intimate from working the land but do not affiliate to it in terms of property or ownership (Young, 2003, 52). For the Mizo, territory was not permanent, rather it was porous and was subject to change as it extended as much as he was able to traverse and defend and utilize. This relation to land is much discernable in the historical narratives. However, reflecting the change from shifting cultivation to permanent farming as required by the government, the reverence accorded to place gradually shifted to one of property and ownership. Place had become a permanent fixture in the people's lives. With the conversion to Christianity, it even came to be considered as bestowed and designated to the people. From an abstract spatial element, the permanency that place came to represent through the establishment of borders and boundaries has largely influenced the construct of the "imagined community" of the Mizo people. The existence of borders has served to center the Mizo within the territorial space of Mizo-*ram* distinct from "the Other" beyond the

boundaries. As stated by Stuart Hall, "the Other" is necessary to our own sense of identity (2017, 342), that is to say the existence of the Other is crucial for the acquisition of a sense of self, as one can identify oneself partly through what they perceive they are not. As pointed out by Trinh T. Minh-ha, "without the margin, there is no center, no heart" (196). Therefore politics has played an important role in the development and construct of the Mizo identity – at first by "other-ing" the Mizo through the colonial narratives and by creating boundaries to contain them and then, in the postcolonial context when the Mizos "center" themselves with the same boundaries created to keep them at bay by effectively "other-ing" those beyond the boundaries.

Knowledge of these historical truths helps to create a deeper understanding of the selected works. It is an element as important as the plot of the story itself and, more importantly, on the changes they effect in the culture and world views during the course of time as reflected through these literary works. The nuances of the differences in the ways of life as presented in the historical novels and in the contemporary stories thus come to prominence and hence, the differences on how the Mizos identified, individually and as a community since "representations are closely bound up with identity-formation" (Nayar, 64). The times influenced the collective behaviour of the community which in turn, had a direct influence on the individual and his decisions as is well illustrated in the selected works. The changes in the community can be seen reflected in the representation of the male characters in the selected works since the society is patriarchal and hence is represented by the masculine. There is a decided difference in the presentation of men in the selected works set in pre-colonial times and those in contemporary times. A comparison of the image of the ideal man in the two timelines is a case in point. The epitome of manhood in the past, the *pasalṭha* was a man of the woods who had no qualms in taking the life of another person if the need arose, a rugged figure who was as brave as he was physically strong, a man who was always on the move, who was never idle and whose *tlawmngaihna* would never allow him to be unfair nor depend or rely on others for anything. Nghalthianga and his friends though clad only in home-spun cloths and with their hair put up in a bun, proved themselves to be the men which the times required. Their *tlawmngaihna,* strength and bravery were sources of comfort

and gave a much needed sense of security to the community. For obvious reasons, this model figure is no longer practicable in today's world. In keeping with the changed times, the ideal man is now one who is well kempt, well educated, has a good job, can afford to own a car or a bike, and most importantly, he must be a man of the Church – he must regularly attend church and participate actively in church activities, especially those involving the youth. Valchhuana in "*Baby-i Hlim Zan*" (Baby's Night of Happiness) (2011) had the look of an ideal man; he looked like the perfect Christian youth and possessed the coveted government job. He was well on his way to buying a brand new bike. Rinky's suitor in "*Baby-i Hlim Zanî*" (Baby's Night of Happiness) (2011) too was convinced he would gain favour with Rinky by his confession of attending church daily, also including the night services. In "*Lawmna Garden*" (Garden of Contentment) (2011), Sawmkimi has two pictures of the ideal man in her mind. One is someone, who much like the Korean stars she saw on television is clean, tall and understanding. The other is much like the super macho heroes of action movies like Arnold Schwarzenegger or a sport star like David Beckham.

A perceptible change can be seen even in the way men are represented in the two time-frames of the selected works. In the pre-colonial setting, the reliance of the community on the men-folk as also the central part played by them in every sphere of life can be easily discerned. Whereas in the contemporary setting, the men no longer take center-stage nor do they hold the community together anymore. Rather, they are portrayed as mostly loafing around, sitting in front of the television or drinking or are out to have fun. They no longer possess the sense of responsibility and pride in providing for their family nor are they productive for the society. The one thing that remained unchanged was that they had maintained their hegemonic hold on the society due to its patriarchal structure. However, the men of old did not have to assert themselves nor their authority since it was naturally bestowed upon them because of their service and worth to the community; in contemporary times, the men had to assert and lay claim to this authority. This gave rise to the chaotic dysfunction of the community that is clearly presented in the contemporary stories. That is to say, the patriarchal social structure continued to bestow authority on the men even when they did not earn it, like the many men Liansangi, Sawmkimi, Baby-i and Rinky

encounter in the course of their chosen profession. In turn, the men too assumed this authority as a given and laid unabashed claim to it, irrespective of their contribution towards the betterment of their family or the community and especially in relation to women. Even Muanthanga, a man as close to ideal, felt he could "forgive" Sawmkimi for her unsavory past even though the only authority he could claim over her (if he could claim any) was the fact that he had proposed marriage to her – a proposal which she had not yet responded to. The men no longer naturally occupied the "center" in the society. Rather, they had to proactively lay claim to it since hegemony is not simply given but is a "site of continuous struggle" and has to be "*won*, worked for, reproduced, sustained" (Procter, 88).

Of the various factors contributing to this displacement of self in the men-folk, the influence and impact of the coming of the white man – *Vai Len* and *Rambuai* are most prominent. In effecting changes to the social structure and the mind-set of the people, they have also fostered the realisation for the need to preserve traditions as also ethnicity and to maintain their authenticity and integrity. This has also impacted the relationship of the Mizos within the community as well as with other communities. Furthermore, the aspiration for preservation, can be said to have given rise to the dichotomy that exists in today's society. The aspiration comes into conflict with the desires born of living in a world that is different from the one that brought the said values to being. In *"Baby-i Hlim Zan"* (Baby's Night of Happiness) (2011), Valchhuana as a young man had "defended" the purity of Rinky. In doing so, he also was "saving" the Mizo community from "dilution" – a Mizo girl should not be seen on an outing with men from other communities, much less marry him. Such a display of self-preservative chauvinism could not solve the problem at hand, as is soundly demonstrated in the stories. The move to "conserve" and "protect" the society had only succeeded in breaking it apart from the inside. For Rinky, her having to face the inquisition, so to say, of the self-appointed guardians of the society only succeeded in alienating her from her own society which should have provided a safe haven for her instead of the rigid judgmental treatment which she received. It had started her on the journey of self-destruction, which is a reflection of what was happening to the society itself. In "*Krismas Thawnthu*" (A Christmas Story) (2011), the arrogant and aggressive mannerisms of the group on community duty in their

ardour to cleanse the society of evils, only succeeded in pushing the ragged and marginalised group further to the periphery of society. They had not given them a chance for redemption nor hope in overcoming their delinquency but rather by their actions, had ensured that they remained unchanging. K.C.Vannghaka writes that "such voluntary organizations always used force and mob-rule upon the wrong-doers who committed crimes, while their duty was to give guidance to transform the wrong-doers regardless of whether they are robbers or K.S. (194)[172]. Therefore, by their actions, they had furthered the divide in the society instead of bringing healing into it. Clearly the road to recovery of the community and thus, of the self is not through a self-regulated isolation borne out of a fear of the other since the destructive and disastrous results of such actions can be observed through the lives of the characters.

Conversely, if the disintegration of the self is reflected in the community, healing within the community would also result in an individual with a wholesome self. The selected works also point to the community as the way to salvage and reclaim the self. One may even claim that the historical novels are an unabashed celebration of communality that created the close knit society. The confidence, the assurance and pride in their ethnicity all stemmed from the characters' involvement and investment in the community and its activities. All sense of identity and worth originated from the community. It was the driving source of *tlawmngaihna* and the force that bound the members of the community together. Not only did it facilitate a higher chance of survival for the individual members in the community but also of the community as a whole. This was also true not just in terms of the succor from immediate danger posed by enemy tribes or villages and wild animals and natural calamities but also in terms of the survival of the people as a group with a distinct ethnicity, culture and tradition. Just as the people banded together in pre colonial times to ensure the safety of the individuals, so too the instinct to group together by people experiencing similar situations and social statures in contemporary times. The safety that is sought is of course first and foremost physical safety, but it also allows

[172] As told to K.C.Vannghaka in an interview, on 5.2.2005, with Dr.H. Lallungmuana, Member of Parliament, 12th Lok Sabha and author of "Hmangaih Zoramthangi", in his study on *The Influence of Christianity in Mizo Fiction* (2015).

them to gain the confidence, the courage and savvy they lack as individuals but which collectively becomes strong enough, to empower them to withstand the hegemonic forces that work towards suppressing them. These characters are depicted to demonstrate that birds of a feather flock together. They recognized in the other, a partner. They looked out for each other, guiding and sharing information necessary to survive the various situations they encountered. Though fragmented, they did form a community of their own. Liansangi advises and lends Sawmkimi her clothes, Sawmkimi goes to her when in need of advice; Baby and Rinky stay together for safety and, Valchhuana teamed up with Rochhunga to make money on the side.

As in the *lo*, the streets of Aizawl were fraught with dangers but of a different kind. Though the streets had neither wild animals nor enemies that posed an immediate threat to their lives, there was a danger of a long drawn-out certain death – both of the soul and of the body. Such dangers were caused not only by drugs and degenerate living but also by the desire for power and to fulfill materialistic and physical desires without regard for the possible consequences neither on themselves nor on others. For Sawmkimi, what drew her to her profession was the ease of earning money as a K.S. which for her, far outweighed the discomfort and possible dangers. Rinky too had entered the profession for the "easy" money, to support her drug habit since her salary as a Muster Roll employee could not cover the expenses. Valchhuana's self-righteousness and carefully built image of piety could not overcome his desire for money or for women. Rochhunga had no qualms doing things underhandedly and rather freely owned up to the sub-standard quality of his work in constructing a culvert on the road to his own home-town. He would not let anything stand in his way of experiencing the power he believed he got from having money, that, it gave him the license to do whatever he wished. However, the folly of selfishly pursuing the fulfillment of one's desires without regard for anything else can be gathered from the fate of the characters. Sawmkimi lived in the fear of having contracted AIDS and an ignoble death where her body would remain unidentified. Even when she had the chance to start afresh, her fears remained to cast shadows of doubt over her opportunity. For her and Rinky, the open ending of their stories leaves it uncertain whether they would ever leave their degenerate lives behind and start afresh as they had envisioned themselves doing so. Yet, from Liansangi's story, it

may seem likely that they would remain as they were. Liansangi had declared that she would save the money she had earned in order to buy a scooty but, her aspiration never materialized. Rather, due to the life that she had led she was drawn deeper into poverty and degeneracy. Her fate had been bound to be similar to that of Laldêli, the drug addict she had previously so derided and whose body had been found and was subsequently announced in the news as 'unidentified'. Valchhuana was exposed for the fraud that he was – he had displayed no remorse nor did he express his regret at having played a hand in Rinky's moral decline. Rochhunga was blackmailed. He not only lost a huge amount of his money but was also threatened that a video of him in compromising and degrading situations would be made public. The urban streets prove to pose as much danger as the jungles.

In the past, the individual and the community were inter-dependent as a necessary response to an immediate need. The individual found safety in numbers and support from the community while the community depended on the contribution and *tlawmngaihna* of individual members to continue functioning as it did. In the past, hope for survival of the individual lay in the strength garnered from the community. What seemed daunting and impossible for a single member to achieve was surmounted and accomplished by the power of the collective. *Khuangchawi*, the mandatory feast on the path to attain the pinnacle of human achievement, the *Thangchhuah* that would ensure certain entry into *pialral* could not be a success without the participation of the whole community. Even though one could afford the expenses involved in hosting a feast, it would have been impossible at that time for a single household to prepare a feast for the whole village. There was wine to be brewed, rice to de-husk, firewood to be gathered and dried months in advance, animals to be slaughtered and prepared (to be served) and even the host's house to be strengthened with additional pillars for support in order to be able to hold the weight of many people dancing in the house. This philosophy of life was interrupted by the influence of the western way of life and of Christianity. The Mizos were become influenced to keep in the fore, a regard for the welfare of the individual rather than the communal. Undoubtedly beneficial to the development of the individual, education and employment outside the traditional norms also brought immense development to the community at large. However, this came about only after it had

affected an irreparable damage to the traditional structure and functioning of the indigenous society. That being said, the development they brought also brought about a restructuring of the society as well. This gap, between the lost traditional and the new and developing norm is observable in the dissociative nature of the society in the contemporary stories. The contemporary characters remain mostly unaware of this tussle between being Mizo and living in a world that was widely different from the one from which they have inherited their values and world views. Obviously, their lives are a reflection of this struggle. The contradictions in the situations in which the characters find themselves in are suggestive of this. For Baby, Rinky, Liansangi, Sawmkimi and the other young women like them, their lives as prostitutes was supposed to be temporary, a quick way of earning fast money to better their lives. In *"Lawmna Garden*" (Garden of Contentment) (2011), Liansangi had planned to buy a two-wheeler but never got around to buying one, Sawmkimi had hoped to realise her dream of being taken on bike rides by handsome young men but was disappointed by the kind of men she got to meet. She eventually came to realise that the kind of life and the kind of man closest to her heart's desire were actually very different from what she had imagined. The other women they met too had their own share of struggles. One pregnant woman needed money to buy swaddling cloth for her child, while another needed it (in case of emergency) for her new born child even though her husband was present and was even caring for their child while his wife went about her "work". The incongruity of the situation, the means and the purpose of earning the money are so antithetical and opens it to scrutiny and with plenty of room for contemplation.

As irredeemable as the characters in the contemporary stories may have seemed, C.Lalnunchanga has illustrated that there is a way if people came together, were more open and made an effort to understand others and know their stories. *"Krismas Thawnthu"* (A Christmas Story) (2011) illustrates this point very well. Mapuii and Mapuia had been stranded on their way to Lunglei on Christmas Eve and had to take shelter with an underprivileged family in their run-down house. Due to Mapuii's open minded acceptance of the family despite their obvious poverty and probable existence in the margins of social acceptability, the reader is able to get a grasp of how a family could have fallen to such despair – the father and head of the

family admitted to his miscalculations and also the difficulty in trying to rebuild their lives. In listening to the K.S. who had tears in her eyes, Mapuia was able to learn that it was first time since she was a little girl that the young woman had sung Christmas carols. This sad fact revealed the kind of childhood which she had had and it was telling of the lack of guidance in her younger years that eventually led her to make choices that led her to her current path of life. Most importantly, Mapuia was able to reconsider his opinion of Mapuii in the course of the night because of her non-judgmental attitude towards others as also her coming to the defense of the powerless. He could have a change of heart only because he got to know Mapuii's real character. More so, he could admit to his wrong impression and accept that he had formulated his judgment of Mapuii, based on her outward appearance and behaviour without trying to really understand her. On the other hand, the men on community duty were unable to break free from the pre-conceived notions that made them assume that the group they were confronting were up to no good. Rather than trying to understand the situations that had brought the individuals to that point in their lives, by their actions they had only succeeded in further alienating and marginalizing the group, thus failing to find a solution to end their delinquency. It is apparent from this story that the path to recovery and healing for members of the community is through the understanding and the support that they receive from those around them.

In both the pre-colonial and in the contemporary stories, it is the community's involvedness and concern for the individual that paves the way to self-realisation, self-acceptance and healing. Sawmkimi's father and Rinky's father recognized that their daughters both needed help but were unable to fully render help because of the lack of communication. However, they both took action as best as they could. Rinky's father would strongly insist that she attended church even though he would readily believe her flimsy excuses to stay out the whole night in such a manner that even she would often be surprised. There could have been a host of reason for him doing so, but what remains is the fact that he did not allow his daughter to lose touch with the community, here represented by the church. Sawmkimi's father went a step further, and sent her away from the city. The physical distance and the calming influence of the countryside as also the proposal from Muanthanga allowed her to

gain a different perspective of life – that it was not so much about aspiring to live in comfort and trying to fulfill all of one's desires but rather, coming to a realisation of the importance of accepting oneself as and for who we are. These acts of reaching out are important in sowing the beginnings of self-healing, at least for Sawmkimi. Rohmingliana had also proved to be a true friend to Nghalṭhianga in the historical narratives, when he tried to cheer him up and counseled him not to be so depressed about his having to stand before the chief to defend himself against the accusation of having taken advantage of Ainâwni by her father. The community had rallied and defended Ainâwni to the extent that even the chief Puilura had intervened in her defense against her father's anger, at her carrying a child out of wedlock. The individual's well being was closely related to the community. Even in death, the young braves of Puilura's village saved Hausata from ignominy in recognition of his service to the community in the past and his attempt to atone for the grave wrong he had done to Ramtinthanga which had caused his death.

Thus the influence of political change and its ramifications can be observed in the presence of invisible "shadow lines[173]" that demarcate the limits that constrain social behavior, socially accepted norms and importantly, also the reservations and apprehensions in the interaction with the other-ed societies especially the *vai*. The change in the perception regarding the enforcement of the social codes and ethics had also differed. Where before no coercion or enforcement was required but there existed a sense of responsibility that was ingrained in the people to perform one's best for the good of all, it was now necessary to ensure that laws made to benefit the entire community were being followed. Not only was there a need for policing but a need to monitor the police. The postcolonial struggle had come to encompass the subaltern who had come into existence as a result of the changes in the power structure of the society. Interestingly, it is perceptible in C.Lalnunchanga's narratives as pointed out earlier that it is the involvement and the effort of the community that will help to balance out this growing hegemony and distance between the leading members of the society both in the government and the church, and those who had become marginalized and were surviving within the margins of society.

[173] The phrase is being used to highlight the arbitrary nature of borders and maps, along the same line of thought as in Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* (1988).

Community Transformed: Hybridity through Narrative and Narratology

Quoting Stuart Hall, Ania Loomba suggests that cultural identity is one which "recognizes that identity is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. Thus, colonized people cannot simply turn back to the idea of a collective pre-colonial culture, and a past 'which is waiting to be found, and which when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity'" (178). This can be seen in the narrative of the selected texts. Having himself given illustrations of the negative aspects of the pre-colonial society, it is apparent that the construct of the past is influenced by the gaps the author sees in the present. Through his narratives and through their telling, C.Lalnunchanga can be seen to be creating an imagined community of the Mizo – one that can navigate the responsibility of living up to the heritage of the past and conserving it, while fulfilling the demands of the changed circumstances of living in the present. The dual demands of the past and the present no doubt impact and shape the community and its continuation into the future while giving rise to a necessary duality and a certain degree of hybridity.

As is often stated, the past cannot be fully regained and neither can the present be ignored in the effort to restore the past that was once forgotten. Numerous scholars have reiterated the folly of concentrating on the past in an attempt to not only revive it but to reinstate it in the daily functioning of the community. Pramod K. Nayar writes that one risk in re-articulating the past through reclamation and deliberate memorization is "reactionary nativism" i.e. nativism's quest for originary moments and cultures that relegates all cultures other than the one being currently glorified to secondary status. Such discourses he writes, "invoke images of a culture's lost cultures, the myth of the golden age, and (eventually) racial superiority" (196). However, C.Lalnunchanga can be seen attempting to do this through his narratology in both the historical and contemporary narratives even though it is apparent that he does so, despite being aware of this knowledge and with hindsight, as can be garnered from the heavy sense of nostalgia at the end of *Pasalṭhate Ni Hnuhnung* (Last Days of the Braves) (2007). Under the heavy pall of defeat and grief, *Lalnu* Lenbuangi along with the remaining braves of Puilura's village watch the exodus of the people making their way out of the village in the hope of a better future. Though intensely aware of the futility of their cause,

Rohmingthanga declares that it is a more honourable path to follow. He preferred the freedom of living the indigenous way rather than to live comfortably by catering to the whims of the white man, which he equated with the life of a slave. He declared that though the white man had wrecked havoc with their traditional way of life, the foundations of their culture and traditions remain unchanged (336). Echoing his sentiments, Ralzatawna can see that the world of the brave is passing and that there is nothing they can do to stop neither time nor their glory days and opines that in a world full of struggles and hardship man can hope to achieve contentment only through his heart and no longer by his valorous deeds (337). They knew the world was changing, and there was nothing they could do to stop or even slow down the process. They also knew that their honour and freedom would remain intact despite the impending defeat if they remained true to their culture and traditions and not allow themselves to be swayed into abandoning it by the lure of comfort and security. It is upon this strong base of self-knowledge that the individual self can confidently absorb and internalize external influences that could be advantageously utilized in adapting to the new norms that time brings with it. The stability offered by such rootedness would empower one to withstand the trials of living a life far removed from the world view of one's origins. And, perhaps, this is why C.Lalnunchanga advocates the restoration of the past.

In the contemporary stories, C.Lalnunchanga is terribly aware of the loss of traditional values and culture as a consequence of development and modernity. The narratives reflect the alienation of the individual in relation to their estrangement from the community. However, the various causes of the estrangements of the characters are not altogether lost on the author. He explores them variously as discussed in the previous chapter. Some were direct consequences of the rapid changes brought into the society through the influences of the white man and later, through the nationalist undertakings of the Indian nation. There were also influences of the traditional culture that effectively served to estrange the individual, especially women. Even so, his advocacy of the return to indigenous ethics and traditions is unmistakable from the preferences of the major characters in the historical novels. They chose to defend their indigenous ways rather than succumb to the military might of the *sap* even though they knew it would be a losing battle. Their conviction

reaffirms C.Lalnunchanga's own belief in that one will be able to withstand the demands and pressure of life only if one is firmly rooted in one's history and ethnic heritage. The historical novels illustrate and reiterate the honorable and courageous aspects of indigenous Mizo life, defending it to be just as worthy as the colonial power of the *sap* despite acknowledging the deplorable aspects of the society in scattered incidents in the novels. It is essential to have knowledge and an understanding of the origins that necessitated these negative aspects which in hindsight and through the Christian eye are very much grievous and unacceptable. More importantly, there must be an acceptance of the faults along with the applaudable facets of the traditions and culture, since it is crucial for progression into the future.

Mapuii in *"Krismas Thawnthu"* (A Christmas Story) (2011), was aware of Mapuia's opinion of her as an over-indulged woman of loose character and of his disgust at her apparent faults but it did not deter her from expressing her attraction and affection for him. It also did not deter her from shying away from demonstrating her genuine concern and lack of regard to class and economic divisions in her interaction with others. This acceptance of the flaws in her character and the lack of inhibition in expressing her true self was what had endeared her to the unfortunate family and to Mapuia. It had eventually opened up the way to a future that she had always hoped for. It was the same for Sawmkimi in *"Lawmna Garden"* (Garden of Contentment) (2011). Her acceptance of the futility of trying to find fulfillment in what she believed was "*the* life" was the beginning of her journey to self-discovery. When she made the journey to her village and took the long walk through the tranquil path towards the garden of contentment, "*Lawmna Garden*" she was able to realize in retrospect that all her troubles had begun with her denying her roots and trying to fit into a life which she had thought was better. Therefore Sawmkimi was able to consider Muanthanga's offer of a new beginning, something that would not have been possible without the retrospection which her homeward journey had rendered. It had opened up to her the chance to a life of contentment which till then had eluded her. Even though it would seem to be retrogressive in comparison to the life that she had dreamed of in the city, she wished for it to be a possibility.

Self-knowledge through retrospection, a keen knowledge and an acceptance of the past are thus endorsed as the pathway to finding solutions to contemporary living. And, this is mirrored in the narratives. Though the characters may wander far, both literally and figuratively, they eventually come full circle and find their way back to their roots, their beginnings – a fine illustration of what Astrid Erll elucidates when she wrote that fictional narrative "actively shapes cultural memory", that literary narratives are able to exert considerable influence on and even reconfigure the narratives underlying existent collective memories with their ideologically loaded forms (91). In the selected works of C.Lalnunchanga, this ideological reconfiguration can be seen in his re-writing of pre-colonial history as also in his postcolonial stance on the troubled times when the British were beginning to establish their colonial power in Mizo *ram* [land]. The hypodiegetic element of traditional oral narration is visibly utilized in the narratives in order to convey the historical, political and sociological background of the stories and of the characters. In *Ka Mi Huaisen leh Ka Pasalṭha* (My Brave and Courageous Men) (2015) and *Pasalṭhate Ni Hnuhnung* (Last Days of the Braves) (2007), not only is this orality visualized but also echoed in the telling of the story. The imagery of the elderly surrounded by youngsters beside the *zawlbuk* hearth relating to them their history, folktales and stories of the valorous deeds of past and present *pasalṭha* evokes the setting of story-telling sessions that would have been the highlight of many evenings in the olden days. So does the imagery of the old men in conversation, in reminiscence of the days of their prime as they sat in the sun weaving bamboo baskets. The chief himself, Puilura was an accomplished orator, a storehouse of knowledge of their histories, social codes and norms. His meetings with his elders and sons would generally include a lesson on the history, norms and politics of the people as can be seen in his telling of the origin of the political situation involving the war between the chiefs of the east and the west.

The narrative of Puilura and his people can thus be seen to echo C.Lalnunchanga's narration of their story. The embedded stories are reflective of the digressions which are so central to an oral narration which furthers the audience's understanding of the story being told. Further, the historical anecdotes and minute details on the customs and norms of the day though seemingly inconsequential to the

narrative, greatly serve to add a note of authenticity to the narrative. In following the story of the individual characters, the narrative remains true to the repetitive cycle of life, with agriculture as the foremost activity of the people. The repetition of the sequences of activities both individual and communal is but a natural echo of the orality of their lived lives – the festivals centered on the agricultural processes of sowing, weeding and harvesting. The details provided by these digressions on the laws and the codes followed by the society as also the situations in which the characters found themselves in, serve to make the experiences of the characters more real. The thrill and enjoyment of the youth while dancing on *thingfar zan*, their anticipation and enthusiasm on the days leading to the *Thangchhuah* ceremonies offer a glimpse into the lives of the young people during that time as also the enormity of the time, expenses and the investment required to perform such a ceremony. The narrative also illustrates the contemporaneity of their lives – only that which the earth would churn out in its own time was taken as the norm, they could not take the peaceful times for granted nor could they take for granted the abundance of their produce from their *lo*. Thus, through the narratives, the reader is able to garner the reason for the total involvedness of the community in any matter that took place within their villages. So, when the matter between the protagonists of *Ka Mi Huaisen leh Ka Pasalṭha* (My Brave and Courageous Men) (2015), Nghalṭhianga and Ainâwni was brought before the chief, the scene depicted the people (who had come to witness the proceedings) as enjoying themselves as if they were attending an entertaining event. Even though the event was light-hearted and entertaining, it was interspersed with information on how such matters were usually settled. There was a decided lack of restraint from sharing bawdy jokes or giving them unsolicited information on how to make things work as a couple. No matter how embarrassing the situation was for the individuals involved, the whole village would turn out for the occasion. When narrating an incident, much like in the oral tradition, the narrative digresses to give background information on a particular character or incident that would provide the additional information that was required in order to understand the situation for a more effective comic, tragic or suspenseful response. In *Ka Mi Huaisen leh Ka Pasalṭha* (My Brave and Courageous Men) (2015), in relating the domestic violence incident where Tintula had been subdued by

Nghalṭhianga despite him being younger, even as everyone around him was afraid to intervene. The digression, was a necessary device that threw light on Tintula's character – quick tempered, violent, one-track minded and egotistical. Knowledge of these gave a better understanding of Nghalṭhianga's courage and *tlawmngaihna* in coming to the resue of Tintula's wife, Chembaki.

The rhythm of the cycle of life echoed by the oral tradition of narration is also illustrated in the narratives themselves, especially within the historical stories. So, references to "that time of the year" are significant and it is a reflection of the repetition of the activities of the community or of the auspicious events and celebrations that were unfailingly held annually and which had special significance for that particular time during the course of a year – all stemming from the agricultural cycle of tilling the land, sowing, weeding and harvesting. This trait of the oral narration can be observed in the structure of the contemporary stories too. Rather, it becomes more perceptible in them. The characters wander away from home but eventually find their way back to where they had begun, a sort of homeward journey towards self-realisation. And it is this structuring of the narratives that C.Lalnunchanga employs to metaphorically as well as literally form his ideal of the Mizo. The characters do not simply make the journey to return to a pristine authentic culture; rather it is the experiences and lessons they had learnt along the way that had stood them in good stead. It had helped them to make an informed decision, leading them to the path back to their origins.

Although *"Lawmna Garden*" (Garden of Contentment) (2011), has an open-ending, it unmistakably ends with a note of hope that Sawmkimi would return to the garden since the feelings of security and tranquility she felt there had evoked childhood memories, of happier and more innocent times. The emotions evoked by the ending of Sawmkimi's story was that her life had come full circle, her wandering which had begun in the village from where the family had moved to the city would it seemed, also end there. The unease and emptiness which had filled her life had revealed to her, the futility of trying to fulfill a dream that was hollow from the beginning. She had come to realise that denying one's origins in the pursuit of happiness and self gratification could not and would not appease the void left behind by such a denial. Therefore to recover her sense of self, she inevitably had to make

the journey homeward, a symbolic reflection of the inward journey of self realisation that was necessary to save herself from total self-destruction. Unlike her, Liansangi did not have the chance for self-reflection and continued with her wayward behaviour, ending up in a correction center. Like her, the many who were with them on the streets who remained in this state of limbo, unwilling to change or acknowledge the need for self-reflection or self-realisation found themselves in a quandary. They were afraid to go home, they had nowhere to turn to, the many places they had utilized before had become inaccessible to them and some even died a stranger's death with no one to acknowledge them as their relative. The end of straying far from one's origins both literally and metaphorically was to lose one's way, leading to self-destruction. On the other hand, acknowledgement and acceptance of one's origins was to gain an understanding and a realisation of one's own self.

We see this same train of thought in *"Krismas Thawnthu"* (A Christmas Story) (2011), where Mapuii fails to catch Mapuia's attention and affection with her feminine wiles. It is when she is her authentic self, treating everyone equally without regard to social status or background of the person and even coming to the defense of those weaker than her, that Mapuii does finally succeed in securing Mapuia's love, when she least expected it. Not only does this narrative follow the cyclic structure but it also adds a new dimension, which is that of the influence of Christianity on the people. By choosing to be authentic, Mapuii had proved to be a true Christian through her actions. Interestingly, the impression the reader has of her at the beginning, like Mapuia was that of a spoilt rich girl. However her graciousness and her charity and willingness to accept people just the way they were, demonstrated that she was more Christian than the men who were on community duty and were supposedly safe-guarding the morals of society. They on the other hand, were blind-sided by their sense of self-righteousness and behaved in a most un-Christian manner by condemning the small gathering rather than trying to help them in a way that would motivate them to mend their ways.

So, an analysis of the narrative structure suggests that in order to survive in this world, it is necessary to have an acceptance and a return to one's origins or roots. To embrace one's authentic self without presenting a facade and also, an enduring

lived Christian faith that must also be expressed in deeds and not only in words. In other words, a healthy combination of knowledge from the past and the present is indispensable in navigating the lived reality of contemporary life. This suggestion can be determined in the structure of the narrative which follows the cyclic looping of the traditional oral narration, thereby implying the continuity of the cycle of life and that eventually one is compelled to face the past and accept it for what it is.

Community Transformed: Community Imagined

The community has been scrutinized previously by making comparisons in its representation between the historical and the contemporary narratives. The social and cultural changes that have been witnessed by the Mizo can be seen reflected in the community imagined by C.Lalnunchanga in his narratives. His characters imagined therefore, serve to further the construct of the imagined community especially in the historical narratives – Puilura, the ideal chief; Nghalṭhianga, the ideal brave, a *pasalṭha*; *Lalnu* Lenbuangi for stoically upholding her husband's legacy. These characters stood out for their commendable characteristics, neither for personal gain nor wholly for social recognition. It was always the welfare of the community that inspired the characters, the spirit of *tlawmngaihna* – the selfless sacrifice of putting others before oneself. There is this knowledge always in the background that the construct of the self, the individual is tightly interconnected with that of the community and that the self exists because of the community and vice-versa. Therefore the construct of the individual characters is also reflective of this aspect of identity. The individual can claim an existence or identity only in relation to the community and others. Rather than building upon the differences, there is identification with the others i.e. the community. Rather than it being divisive, it serves to bind the individuals together. C.Lalnunchanga's conscious construct of the individual characters can thus be examined in relation to the community and their individual contribution to its well-being so as to uncover the commendable aspects of community according to his narratives and therefore of culture that he holds integral to the construct of the Mizo. Much like Stephen Greenblatt's view that "the heart of initial experience of selfhood lay in the stories, not in the unequivocal, unmediated possession of an identity' (2007, 8), the characters in selected works come to embody

the aspects of identity that the author aimed to construct. The evocation of the pre-colonial Mizo world view and ethics especially during the tumultuous times of the British expansion into land occupied by the Mizos is thus imperative to the construct of a Mizo who will be able to overcome the debilitating after effects of colonialism's onslaught on the self esteem of the people as a whole. A Mizo fiercely aware of his capabilities, knowledge and indigeneity and also taking pride in those qualities, is an image that can provide the necessary impetus to the contemporary Mizo towards embracing that portion of the past which had hitherto been Other-ed and reduced to insignificance. This pre-colonial Mizo construct is therefore a carefully constructed one.

In his last conversation with his son Saingura, Puilura in *Pasalṭhate Ni Hnuhnung* (Last Days of the Braves) (2007) urged and entreated him to defend their freedom, even at the cost of bloodshed. They had been at war with the British for quite some time by then. War, he said was fought from the heart for there was no price too high to pay for their freedom. It was "*Kan hnam lungphum*" ("the foundation of our tribe"; 213). Freedom was essential to their being, their culture, that which they had bought with their blood and therefore he must show that he would not bow before the white man's forced enslavement forever (212- 213). These men were like those envisaged by Ashis Nandy when he rejected the "model of the gullible, hopeless victim of colonialism" but one that consciously fought "his own battle for survival in his own way" (xv). This sentiment, echoed in the selected works serves as the basis for C.Lalnunchanga's construct of the Mizo identity. The nuances of culture represented through the activities of Puilura's people at Vangsen and later, at Khiangzo build upon this construct, adding details and authenticity to the presentation. This insistence on being a free people – on sovereignty, is essential to the claim on an identity that is unique and solely Mizo. In the speeches of the aged chief, there is a consciousness and a decided insistence on the dignity and worth in being Mizo. He had come to this realisation after becoming deeply bothered by his response to the summons of the *Bawrhsap*[174] to Aizawl. He could not accept that he, a chief, had obediently followed the orders of someone else (Lalnunchanga, 2007,

[174]*Bawrhsap*: The Boro Saheb, the Superintendent, the Sub-Divisional Officer.

198). His witness of the compulsory labour enforced on the people from the villages of the chiefs who had begun paying taxes to the British, made him resolve to never concede to anyone nor subjugate himself and his people before anyone. For him, it was more glorious to die fighting for one's freedom than to survive by surrendering to another and the honour he felt could never be surpassed even if the British came with threefold the force, glory and strength they possessed at that time (199).

Walter Mignolo writes that construction of ethnic (*ethos*, we) identities is not limited to power but that "(O)n the contrary, acts of opposition and resistance and the will to survive require a strong sense of individual and communal identity" (369). This we see illustrated in Puilura's assertion of being on an equal footing with the British colonial power and his refusal to acknowledge their claim of superiority over the Mizo tribes is commendable, given his acknowledgment of their superior number and artillery. For him their way of life, their knowledge of nature, their political and administrative systems were in no way inferior to that of the colonial power. Puilura's ignorance of the *Kumpinu*[175] and what it stood for and the fact that it did not change his views after being told that it was the empire over which the sun never set, is an assertion by C.Lalnunchanga on the Mizo being as capable of being in the center as the white man, the *sap*. Puilura refused to *be* the *Other* in his own land and laid claim on the center that was rightfully his. He could not be persuaded to change his mind, even under pressure and coercion by the *sap* officers. This gives occasion for doubt as to whether he really was unaware of the *Kumpinu* since it is highly unlikely that a chief as capable and astute as Puilura would remain ignorant about the biggest threat at the moment to his sovereignty. Therefore, it can be assumed that it is a calculated and strategic narrative device highlighting the dependence of perspective to attribute importance to any person or thing or place. A devise to center the Mizo who has been Other-ed, silenced and relegated to the margins by the colonial narratives, and which has been cleverly illustrated through the words which the author chose to put into the *sap* officers' mouths.

One of the elemental foundations of this self-assurance and confidence a people can have on their own worth is a firm knowledge and belief on the stories

[175]*Kumpinu*: *Lushai* name for Queen Victoria.

they tell. It can be rightly said that Puilura's knowledge of their origins and history of his family had played a major factor in inculcating this deep seated pride in his ethnicity and culture as also in his role as its guardian. This knowledge also equips him with the political astuteness which is necessary to survive the volatile relations between the villages ruled by chiefs who have descended from the same tribe or clan. In *Ka Mi Huaisen leh Ka Pasalṭha* (My Brave and Courageous Men) (2015), Puilura knew when to remain neutral in the war between the chiefs of the east and the west. Being the descendent of an illegitimate son, Puilura knew that he could be left the odd man out when relations between the warring chiefs were mended. He knew they could very well unite and turn against him when the situation changed since they were closer related by blood to each other than they were to him. It was also the memory of the *pasalṭha* who had sacrificed everything to protect and safe-guard the people and their way of life that had strengthened his resolve to never surrender or acknowledge another as more powerful without a struggle, for he was too well aware that the freedom they enjoyed was earned through much blood and loss. The loss of many of the best braves in his village in the fight for land with the neighbouring village of Tûmhnawk still remained fresh in his memory. Their courage and bravery in sacrificing their lives for the safety of others could never be forgotten nor erased from the story of their people. Another commendable trait of Puilura's which is often focused upon is his reverence for the aged and for his inherent courtesy in dealing with others, be it other chiefs, his own people or visitors. There is always a calm, collected air about him. He was able to retain control over his emotions even under extreme pressure and blatant attempts at provoking and subjugating him by the *sap* officers and he remained composed and unruffled by their taunts. At the end, it was they who lost control over their emotions even as he remained composed. He was not only composed but he was also considerate in his dealings with others especially the elderly. His interactions with the elder, *Upa* Tlangchhuana is commendable. The old man would often voice opinions opposing the chief's, sometimes provoking the younger men in the village to anger. The chief however, would always listen patiently and consider the old man's suggestions even if they were not in tandem with his own views. Even in the matter of his daughter's marriage, although he need not ask her opinion, he truly cared about his daughter to be considerate enough to ask

her how she felt about marrying Laldara, who had spent more than a month in wooing her. It was only when she could not make up her mind that he made the decision for her to marry Laldara. These characteristics of Puilura – his pride in his indigeneity, his refusal to acknowledge any race or tribe as superior but rather as an equal, his knowledge of the past and his utilization of it (to survive the challenges of the present) as also his consideration of others and their opinions – are all traits that are commendable building blocks for the construct of the Mizo through the narratives. His stoic refusal to give in to the demands of the colonialists not only strengthened the resolve of his people to continue to resist the expansion of the white man's power but also inspires the later generations reading his story to have the same conviction and sense of self-worth in their indigeneity and ethnicity.

In Nghalṭhianga, other aspects of the Mizo construct are observable, the most prominent being his *tlawmngaihna* which gave him extraordinary courage and bravery when the occasion demanded. His concern and consideration for others often made him disregard his own comfort, safety and good name. Often, it drove him to do things which others would not dare. When no one dared to stop Tintula from his rampage even though everyone feared for his wife's life as they were afraid of what he could do, Nghalṭhianga was able to disarm the violent man by his calm and unflinching demeanor. When he and Ainâwni were brought before the chief's court, he could not stand to see her so terrified. He knew that her family would not spare her if they knew she had put their family's good name at risk. He was able to diffuse the situation, neither lying nor divulging the truth with his quick thinking and way with words. In his first retaliatory expedition, he could not wait and had to do something to end the stalemate with the notorious Vungzapauva who was taking shelter on the upper branch of a huge tree. Putting aside his own safety, he climbed the tall tree, scaling its branches and thwarting Vungzapauva's attacks with such confidence that the Sukte warrior was persuaded by him to surrender. It was a feat that amazed everyone and brought him renown in the region. His *tlawmngaihna* could not allow him to rest while all the youth had gone to the *lo* despite the injuries he sustained from the fight on the log-bridge which had secured the disputed land as belonging to Puilura's village. Nghalṭhianga's chivalry and considerate behavior towards women is another quality espoused by C.Lalnunchanga. Despite his

popularity with the women and his name being linked with the most beautiful damsels in the village, he would never refer to them in a boastful or joking manner. Rather, he took care to protect their good name even to the extent of putting his own in jeopardy. He had silently suffered the ignominy of having a case brought against him in the chief's court after he had stood up in defense of Ainâwni, rather than revealing the truth which would have brought her disgrace and the ire of her own family upon her. He had eventually married her, though not out of love but out of pity after the birth of their child even though the *sawn man*[176]had already been paid since she had continued to be abused by her family for bearing a child out of wedlock. He was honest with Chuaileni his wife, about his continued love for Romawii. At the same time, he also assured her that he would never take Romawii as his mistress because he had endured too many slights from her and her family to overlook. He remained true to his words when he had a chance meeting with Romawii on his way into the woods on a hunt. Even though it was clear to him that his feelings had remained unchanged, he remained true to his wife when Romawii confessed her continued regard and love for him although she too spoke to him as a sister would to a brother.

Like the other *pasalṭha*, his faithfulness commended him – he was faithful to those around him and to the cause of fighting against the *sap* invaders. He stuck to it even though the odds were against him and in spite of the fact that Puilura and his successor, Saingura had passed away in the course of the struggle. He told his fearful wife that he could not help but follow in the steps of those who had gone before having fulfilled their duty in the stand against the white man so as to never bow before him, adding that it was the last days of the brave (Lalnunchanga, 2007, 332). Like Puilura and the other *pasalṭha*, he believed that the Mizo should never bow before any other and in the face of the changes brought by the white man and his soldiers and guns; he must step into the dark unknown to continue the fight. There was a strong will to fight for their convictions and beliefs in the face of all odds, even a certainty of defeat. To him, it was more honorable to do so than to surrender or admit defeat. In Nghalṭhianga, the epitome of the ideal man can be found. He was a

[176]*Sawn man*: The price a man has to pay for fathering an illegitimate child when he has no intention of marrying the mother.

pasalṭha, a skilled man of the woods, known for his hunting prowess and for being a formidable warrior. Yet, he was also a man who could wield words most effectively. He was faithful, kind, considerate and self-giving, a living example of virtue of *tlawmngaihna.* His good fortune with women was but another fulfillment of the requirement to enter into the village of the dead, *Mitthi khua*. In this aspect, it is made amply clear that it was never Nghalṭhianga who initiated the romances and that he had remained true at heart to Romawii till the end. He could not be labeled a womanizer since the women he was involved with were always devoted and besotted by him. Rather, he was known to treat women with respect. Even as a young boy, he was ridiculed by the other boys for running errands for his mother at a time when it was not out of place for even little boys to slight the words of a woman, even if she were their own mother. He was the only one to stand up against the wild and unpredictable Tintula to come to the defense of his wife, Chembaki who was being beaten and dragged around the streets without mercy by telling him that a man must not raise a knife to threaten women. It was not just his words but the manner in which he treated women and how he behaved towards them that truly proved his chivalry.

The portrayal of the women in the historical novels is another construct of the imagined. There is ample evidence in the novels to illustrate the appalling status of women in pre-colonial times. Their own sons and children, would not think twice about obeying a male member of the community even if he was only a few years older than them, while they hesitated to obey their own mother's requests. The disgrace a young woman would undergo for bearing a child out of wedlock can be seen in Ainâwni's plight whereas Nghalṭhianga only had to pay the *sawn man* to be relieved of all his responsibilities. As divorcees, women had to bear the brunt of the separation, having to return to their parent's house in disgrace, most often having to take the responsibility of caring for their children rather than the men. The amount of time they invested in the care of the house and of their family members even as unmarried maidens can also be seen in Ainâwni's and Romawii's lives before they were married. However, despite the apparent disadvantages of being a woman, the women characters are mostly well developed and rounded. They are endowed with strength of character, both in body and spirit. They had to be tough to survive. In

matters of the heart, the women were most forward in revealing their emotions even though society dictated that it was improper to do so. Even when a maiden had particular interests in a man, and even if they were each other's *lawm* and helping each other in their *lo* it was improper for her to give special consideration to him when in front of others. Romawii and Nghalṭhianga were each other's *lawm* and she knew she had his heart and loyalty. Most understandably after Nghalṭhianga's relation with Ainâwni came to light, she turned away from him (being a much sought after maiden herself). Yet, even after he rescued her from the clutches of the Sukte raiders she did not do the expected. She married another man from another village. It is true that her father had made the decision but the fact is that she returned, having left her husband. Although she loved Nghalṭhianga, the reason she had not married him as she confessed towards the end of the story was that she knew him to be a true *pasalṭha* and that he would not hesitate to give up his life for others if and when the need arose. Also aware of Nghalṭhianga's innate good nature and his feelings for her, she did not hesitate to request him to protect her father who had on numerous occasions slighted and opposed him and was the person who had opposed their marriage the most. In her own way Romawii had rebelled against this decision of his, by her becoming twice divorced and returning to her father's house with a child to support. She and Ainâwni had been the belles of the village and they had indeed captured the attention of the most sought after young men in the village. They were appropriately demure and hardworking. Ainâwni had gone a step further. She, like Chuaileni, was so caught up in her feelings that she had had no qualms about getting intimate with him but did not have the courage to own her actions. And she did pay the price for it, suffering dishonor in the society and the ire of her family. She lost the beauty which she took much pride in and became a gaunt and pale shadow of herself and did not survive the epidemic that ravaged the land before Puilura's people moved to Khiangzo. Chuaileni had also made the same mistake as Ainâwni but she had had the courage to admit her fault and spoke up in defense of Nghalṭhianga to protect him. This act of courage proved to be her advantage. Her father, the chief recognized how true her love was and allowed the unthinkable – the marriage between a descendent of the chief's clan and a commoner.

Lalnu Lenbuangi and *Lalnu* Lalkuri showed how women could be able leaders even in a world that was overtly patriarchal. With their love for their people and concern for their well-being they proved themselves as brave and courageous as the best of the *pasalṭha* of the time. When Puilura's people raided Dinthanga's village Vuakdûp, under the leadership of Saingura, it was the village chieftainess *Lalnu* Lalkuri who prevented them from gutting the village. Her husband Dinthanga was not at home at that time and Saingura spoke, past her to the *Upa*, the elders of the village. Seeing the cowardice of the elders, she took up the task of negotiations, speaking with the certainty of her place as a chieftainess and as a descendent of the chief's clan. Without losing face and with her pride intact, she was able to successfully negotiate the safety of her people and the village. She always spoke her mind, was more observant and perceptive, and more aware of the political situation than her husband. During the battle on the *thingtuluang lei*[177]she demonstrated her perceptiveness in assessing the *pasalṭha* who were to fight. She correctly predicted Saingura's win over the giant of a man, Ṭialmunga. She also warned her husband, Dinthanga and his brother, Sangburha against breaking the agreement and to refrain from instigating a mob fight among the spectators if they were to lose the contest. She had correctly assessed that though Puilura had less men present at the time and could be easily outnumbered, he would surely be supported by the sons of the chiefs Suakpuilala and Vanhnuailiana. *Lalnu* Lenbuangi was as perceptive and aware of the political developments of the time and it was evident that her husband relied on her good counsel many a times. Although not overtly, she was always present at the meeting of the chief with his *Upa* and his *pasalṭha* and privy to the decisions made therein. She understood her husband's stand against the *sap* officers and the importance of not giving in to their demands even if it meant that he had to remain in prison despite his old age and ill-health. There was no trying to persuade him to stop or to give up. Instead, she remained by his side during the day when she was allowed and slept in a make-shift shelter in the outskirts of Aizawl where her husband was kept captive. She remained faithful to her husband's cause till the end, even after his and their son's death. She knew, like the remaining *pasalṭha* beside her that it was a

[177]*Thingtuluang lei*: A fallen tree or long log used as bridge.

losing battle to continue to fight the *sap* but she could not and would not easily give up without a fight, even if it meant certain death for them.

This same courage and bravery can be seen in the womenfolk of Puilura's village. They would send their men to war or for hunting expeditions with the depressing knowledge that they might not return alive and upon their successful return, they would dance the celebratory *rallu lam*[178]around the severed head of the vanquished enemy with their children. They shared each other's happiness and especially their grief. They devoted their time for their family. There was no time for them to spare, working from before sunrise and up to the time the last of their visitors left, they were always busy, diligent and productive. They were the backbone of the society, silently working and taking care of the daily needs in order that the men could go on hunting expeditions to supplement their diet, and also on raids and wars. The long absences of the capable men from the villages for such reasons, is testament to the capabilities of the women during that time. They were knowledgeable and skilled in almost all the activities that were required to make the objects and tools for daily living. Indeed this construct of the image of women is not much different from their traditional role. The society being patriarchal and women remaining the primary care-giver in the house, there are certain things that are bound to remain the same. However, the women are also imagined in the narratives as aware of their self-worth. Ngulruaii, a daughter of a widow was divorced by her husband, Hautuka. After having volunteered for the battle on the *thingtuluang lei*, Hautuka was beset with a sense of nostalgia and he went to her requesting for reconciliation. However, Ruaii was not easily persuaded. She plainly told him that she was not willing to go through the hardships she had endured while they were married and symbolically struggled free from his grasp as he tried to physically restrain her. In her, is clearly the Mizo woman imagined and constructed as strong – mentally and physically, who could not be forced into doing something against her will since she knew her own mind.

Thus, the construct of the Mizo woman imagined in the historical narratives of C.Lalnunchanga is that of a strong, determined woman who must follow her heart but also must have the courage to bear any consequences of the choices she made in

[178]*Rallu lam*: To hold a dance in celebration of a head taken in a raid.

that regard. She must remain aware of her reality and keep abreast of current affairs to remain relevant and remain perceptive of everything around her. Most of all, she must be aware of her self-worth and not let anything nor anyone persuade her to think otherwise. She must also have the courage and strength to break free from all that was keeping her from realizing this fact.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in *We should all be Feminists* (2014) had discussed how important it was not only to raise our daughters differently but also to raise our sons differently (25) because "(W)e have evolved. But our ideas of gender have not evolved very much" (18). In this regard, the people of Puilura's village are found to be "evolved" in this matter even though there is no mistaking the dominance of patriarchy in the representation of the community and neither did the men fail to recognize their superiority over the women. Saingura had pointedly chosen to address the *upa* and not the chieftainess in the absence of the chief when Ṭumhnawk was raided by Puilura's men. When she spoke up in defense of her people, he was not averse to speaking to her in the same manner as he would to a man, speaking on behalf of the people. In doing so, he had shown her the courtesy of treating her on an equal footing with men and, it was not because she was a woman but it was because of her passionate and dignified appeal that made Saingura decide against burning the whole village down. Aware of their advantage both socially and physically, the men prove themselves to be true *pasalṭha*. They were mostly receptive to the women's assertion of their choices and will, and did not impose upon them against their will. They were chivalrous and mostly courteous in their dealings with women as illustrated through Nghalṭhianga. They were men who did not think twice about putting their lives at risk for the safety of the women and children. C.Lalnunchanga does make mention of the ill treatment of women in the hands of the men characters and he showcases the disadvantages of being a woman. However, as the narrative is a construct, it is apparent that it focuses on the author's ideal of the community as imagined by him. And, that is a community where the men recognize and accept the worth of women as equal to their's and are "man" enough to show and vocalize it. Through the actions of Nghalṭhianga and his companions, the narrative illustrates that it is not necessary for a man to prove his superiority to a woman by using physical force. The show and use of excessive aggressiveness is proven

unnecessary in the battle on the *thingtuluang lei*. There is a marked difference in attitude and behavior between the *pasalṭha* of Ṭumhnawk and Khiangzo. The quiet steadiness of the Khiangzo braves proved more formidable than the exhibitionist masculinity of the Ṭumhnawk braves who were indeed more fearsome to behold. In short, it can be gathered that a real man need not prove himself to be labeled or recognized as a man. Like the men of Puilura's village, without their having to claim to be anything, real men must be solaces for the defenseless, a source of comfort and security for those around them and be sensitive towards the needs of their women.

It can thus be said that C.Lalnunchanga's narratives have illustrated and enabled "new meanings to be created and projected" through the "dialogic encounters" to borrow Robert J. C. Young's phrases (2003, 74), during the narration of the stories of the individual characters and also in the different time-lines. In establishing the stability of the historical characters and having explored the disorder in the contemporary characters who eventually find a way out of their predicaments, the narratives do come to reflect the idealized characteristics that would make it possible for an individual to identify with, so as to come to an enlightened sense of self. This sense of self garnered from the dual influences of the past and of the contemporary provides the solution to the various predicaments of the characters in contemporary times. In endowing these characteristics which would benefit the contemporary characters to the historical ones, C.Lalnunchanga underlies the importance of the past in the construct of hybridity, and hence in the construct of the individual as well as the community. It is as Romila Thapar said, "(I)n contemporary times we not only reconstruct the past but we also use it to give legitimacy to the way in which we order our own society" (3). Pramod K.Nayar denotes that when "valorizing hybridity", Homi Bhabha had ignored this part of the problem of constructing new identities that,

> stems from the marginalization of the exile within the adopted/dominant culture of the West … When the adopted culture fails to see beyond the ethnic identity of the diasporic/ exilic individual then this individual has no choice but to retrieve her/his indigenous identity. The tension is between a legal *national* citizenship and a desire for *cultural* citizenship within the community.

> Instead of multiple identities, such a context forces one to re-assert 'roots' and ethnicity. Bhabha ignores the fact that identity is not merely an individual assertion – it is socially sanctioned and validated (205).

Therefore, a firm knowledge and acceptance of the past is invaluable to the contemporary Mizo who carries on seeking a definition of the self and identification in a world that follows a different world view, even while continuing to remain Other-ed and still occupying the periphery of mainstream Indian culture. On his death-bed, Puilura had stressed upon his son that he must not have a narrow world view and think of only himself and that his last words were meant for all the people in the tribe – not to let themselves be a conquered people and to defend their righteousness:

> *Khawthlir zim takin nangmah chauh i in ngaihtuah bing thei dâwn lo va. He thu hi kan chite zawng zawng tâna chhiah ka ni* (Lalnunchanga, 2017, 213).

The stress being on the community and not on the individual.

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Chapter V
Conclusion: Redemption in Culture

The selected works have been analysed from C.Lalnunchanga's re-presentation of history and from the impact history has had (and continues to have) on contemporary Mizo culture and world-view. The issues of self and identity that arise from these analyses have been further examined in juxtaposition to the two time frames of pre-colonial and contemporary times. The affirmative projection of the laudable aspects of the Mizo world view and the communal nature of the society as a possible means to bridge the disjuncture in contemporary life can be clearly perceived, thus establishing that C.Lalnunchanga locates the identity of the Mizo in their culture.

It was established in Chapter II of this study entitled, "The Mizo as Portrayed in Selected Historical Novels" that the history of the Mizos has been effectively re-written in the selected historical narratives, in the course of illustrating the culture and world view of the pre-colonial Mizo in his indigenous environment. Also, this re-writing has not only challenged but has overturned the established colonial narrative (as presented in Chapter I entitled, "Introduction: The Author and the Times") thereby effectively re-centering the Mizo who had been other-ed and silenced by colonial narratives. The establishment of the postcolonial status of the Mizo was necessary firstly to re-occupy the center; secondly, to gain insight into and an understanding of the hegemonic forces that had become ingrained in contemporary society; thirdly, to divest remnants of colonial influences still discernable in the society. The necessity of historicizing the postcolonial perspective of events therefore becomes apparent to undo the image of the Mizo as the quintessential "orient" that perfectly fitted the profile of the noble savage. All colonial narratives had sought to reinforce this portrayal. The notion of the white man's burden suited both the colonial administration and the missionaries. Imbued respectively with imperialistic zeal and evangelical fervour, it served to further their interest, independently and though unintentional, jointly in some instances. The conflict created by this double impact on Mizo society could be seen in the culture illustrated in the contemporary narratives that had become disjunct from the

indigenous and traditional. The Mizo had also become other-ed, marginalized and a subaltern within his own community. This was especially true for those unable to fall in line with the dominant culture that has become structured according to the dictates of the colonial power as a consequence of the hegemonic colonial influence.

The disparity between the indigenous world view and the acquired world view had given rise to a state of confusion where the characters in the contemporary narratives had become stuck in a diasporic-like limbo. They had been trained in the latter and so they had the desire to identify with it but were ingrained with the former. This had not only brought into being a degree of disconnectedness to the Mizo as a people in the contemporary world but had also affected the same within the community as discussed in Chapter III, entitled "Impact of Colonisation and Christianity". The polarization of the influences of the indigenous and other cultures had become a reality in Mizo society. The notion that this duality must be in conflict and cannot be reconciled and integrated had brought into being divisions within the community along factors that were previously nonexistent. An understanding of the origins of such sentiments as explored in Chapter III, promote insight into the conflict of duality in Mizo society. This understanding can in turn, foster an acceptance of the fact that the two influences are lived reality and can neither be ignored nor easily discontinued from practice. Such an acceptance of the duality of the culture being lived posits the practicality of a hybridity of the two. Thus, C.Lalnunchanga's advocacy of a return to the past as a means to overcome the struggles of the dissociative present was explored in Chapter IV entitled, "Self and Identity: Community Transformed". The possibility of bridging the schism between the polarized indigenous and external cultural influences can be seen in the subtle indications within the selected narratives, of the solution lying in the community. The selected works of C.Lalnunchanga, have made the readers/ audience look at and experience "the world from below rather than from above" (Young, 2003, 114). These works convey that for the Mizo, the post-colonial objective in respect to the white colonialists lay in "decolonizing the mind" to borrow Ngugi wa Thiong'o's words. In respect to the Indian nation and even more so, within contemporary Mizo society, the post-colonial purpose is to highlight the existence of the subalterned Mizo who was brought into being by the political, economic and social hegemony

that was borne out of the colonial past and that which continues to pervade post-colonial Mizoram. In this sense, the selected works are reflective of the "creative development of post-colonial societies" that Ashcroft et.al. have said is often determined by the influence of "this pre-colonial, indigenous culture and the degree to which it is still active" (2017, 115). It can thus be seen in the selected works that the pre-colonial, indigenous culture is still very much a viable factor of Mizo life and world view and that its spirit is being kept alive in works such as those selected for this study.

The disjoint and dissociative consequences of hegemonic cultural influences (both of the British and of the Indian nation) on contemporary Mizo society serve to highlight and foreground the cohesive and communal nature of the pre-colonial Mizo community. This realisation is made possible by decolonizing and ridding the mind like N.C.Peroff writes, of the "contaminating images and understanding of the indigene or the native imposed by colonialism" (Moran, 354). Instead of conforming to the ideology of binarism by continuing to reinforce the image of the other-ed and "orient" Mizo, the emphasis could transpose to the healing proffered by the all-encompassing communal nature of the Mizo world view. The issue would no longer be about black skins in white masks, a state of being which Ania Loomba termed as "not a hybridity but 'a violated authenticity'" (175) i.e. of one distinct culture exhibiting dominance over another. Instead, the focus would fall on the integration[179] of the two cultures, previously polarized by ideologies that fed on the segregation it engendered since one culture espoused individualism while the other advocated the communal.

As pointed out by Peggy A. Thoits and Lauren K. Virshup, "Selves cannot exist without society and society cannot exist without selves" (109), the community is affected by the individual's definition and understanding of his/her self and vice-versa. In writing on the cultural contexts of the formation of self, Susan E. Cross and Jonathan S. Gore share the opinion that two main cultural contexts exist, viz. the Eastern and the Western, which emphasize different aspects. The Eastern cultural

[179] According to J.W.Berry quoted by Cross and Gore, integration is one of the processes of acculturation (an adaptive process of migrants in a multicultural society) which involves the incorporation of two cultures into one's identity (601).

context emphasizes on the "collectivist cultural contexts" where "the person and society are interdependent and mutually supportive" and the community rather than the individual, is accorded priority. In contrast, the Western European cultural traditions view the individual as autonomous and separate from society and the situation. In this case, the "self is the center of the person's psychological universe" and is the lens through which other aspects of the world is perceived (588). Based on this, they opine that "(T)he cultural shaping of the self begins with a society's core philosophical and religious heritage and traditions" and that it takes place at four levels. The first level of shaping the self is the "sociohistorical ideas and values" the individual receives from the society. In the second level, these ideas and values in turn shape social customs, practices, and institutions. In the third level, these practices and institutions provide settings and situations in which the individual acts and behaves. Ultimately, these experiences in everyday settings "sculpt a self and shape individual psychological tendencies (589). The close interconnection and interdependence between the individual and the communal is evident in the representation of the Mizo community in the selected works: the community is composed of individuals who identify with the group. As illustrated by the characters in the selected texts, the wholesome purpose and fulfillment experienced by the individual are directly proportional to their active partaking of the activities of the community. The communal thus takes precedence over the individual in the illustrated Mizo society.

C.Lalnunchanga's advocacy of a return to the traditional and the indigenous where the community takes precedence is very much similar to the trajectory of Francis Fukuyama's exploration of the formation of identity in relation to identity politics. He wrote that the social nature and emotional inclinations of human beings drive them to want to conform to the norms around them and feel an "intense insecurity and alienation" when its stability is replaced by a "cacophony of competing value systems". He writes that this crisis of identity leads in the opposite direction from expressive individualism, to the search for a common identity that will rebind the individual to a social group and reestablish a clear moral horizon (56). Dorothy Holland's concept of selves also has a similar bent as she writes that "where culture is emphasized, constant, stable, interpretations of the world and values – of

interdependence … deriving from the core of the culture – become embodied in mind/body and inform culturally specific behaviour" (171).

The earlier observations as already pointed out, are clearly illustrated in the selected narratives. The significance of the written narrative, must therefore be acknowledged as expressions of the times, both of the past and the present, and possibly, as foreshadow-ers of the future. Even though C.Lalnunchanga does not make such a claim, the analysis of the selected historical narratives may be considered as part of the writing down of the Mizo past which Joy L.K.Pachuau attributes to the "emergence of a single story" and to "a definitive connection with the idea of being a 'people'" for the Mizos (2014, 109-110). As such, culture as intrinsic to Mizo identity both for the individual as well as for the group as endorsed by C.Lalnunchanga has proved to hold sway. His re-writing of history has accomplished some measure of the task of the recovery of the Mizo through fiction which "can contribute to something akin to a collective recovery" even when fiction acknowledges "the depth of nothingness" (Erikson, 25). In his historical narratives, C.Lalnunchanga is thus making use of fiction to propound culture as the basis of Mizo identity in the same way as Abdul R. JanMohamed writes of the colonialists, that "the fiction *forms* the ideology by articulating and justifying the position and aims of the colonialist" (102; emphasis as in the text). The fact that it is possible to analyse the selected works (the settings of which are separated by time and space) as a continuum illustrates the prominent role played by history on the formation and development of identity and its influence on culture as well. It was therefore imperative to awaken the past, not merely in terms of the past per se but the past from the post-colonial perspective. In this sense, history has continuously constituted and re-constituted Mizo identity through a dynamic relationship (Joy L.K.Pachuau, 2014, 135). As a result of this intervention by history, cultural identity for the Mizo "is a matter of 'becoming" as Stuart Hall writes "as well as of 'being'" belonging to the future as much as to the past and like everything historical, they undergo constant transformation, subject to the "continuous 'play' of history, culture and power" (Hall, 2017, 435).

Having established the historical aspect of culture as an irrefutable foundation of the development of identity in contemporary times, it is also irrefutable that Mizo

culture has been irrevocably changed by the colonial influence since "the historical fact of colonialism inevitably leads to a hybridization of culture" (Ashcroft et.al., 2017, 128). The analysis of the selected works has established that similar to the experience of other post-colonial cultures, hybridity is now the lived reality of the Mizo people: there is continued influence of the pre-colonial and indigenous culture on contemporary culture which is simultaneously being exposed to other influences. The colonial, being the most prominent of these influences, not only "'culturally' controlled" but exerted hegemonic control over the post-colonial societies politically, economically and militarily (Ashcroft et.al., 2017, 199). As a consequence, not with-standing the portrayal of a number of negative aspects of Mizo culture, the selected works reflect a decided rejection of the colonial construct of the Mizo because "(D)ifference disliked is identity confirmed" (Johnson, 323) and "(A)ll identity terms depend on marking their limits-defining what they are in relation to what they are not" (Hall, 2019, 122). While exploring the changes wrought on the indigenous culture, C.Lalnunchanga does consciously promote the indigenous by his negation of the white man's actions and its effects on subsequent generations even though he does acknowledge the favourable outcomes of embracing Christianity. This conscious selectiveness implies that the power to construct a narrative which is reflective of their viewpoint now lay in the hands of the native. As a consequence, the past becomes capable of influencing the formation of future identities. Thus, even in C.Lalnunchanga's construct of Mizo identity through the exploration of culture, "the signs of identity and of difference are always a matter of invention and construction" (Ashcroft et.al., 2017, 54) and neither is identity "created accidentally nor is it altogether innocent of intention" (Thapar, 57). Thus, the "complementarity" of the past and the future both in the individual and in society links the actuality of a living past with that of a promising future (Erikson, 310). It therefore becomes apparent from the analysis of the selected works that "the native is not subjugated, nor does his culture disintegrate, simply because a European characterizes both as savage" (JanMohamed, 81) even though it may cause a disjuncture within the society itself, as it has done so for the Mizos. This disjuncture as has been established has become even more prominent in the multicultural society of the globalised, neocolonial world. However the multicultural society does have a positive aspect

because diversity is "critical to resilience" (Fukuyama, 127) and "though identities can be used to divide, it can also be the remedy by initiating integration" (183). The blending or hybridity of cultures can make "difference into sameness, and sameness into difference, but in a way that makes the same no longer the same, the different no longer simply different" (Young, 2017, 158). Although, the actuality of hybridity as existing in Mizo culture as examined in the third chapter illustrated the disjuncture it could engender, C.Lalnunchanga's propounding of the Mizo world view as a means of overcoming this disjuncture in the fourth chapter illustrated that hybridity does offer a strategy for survival.

The past therefore, is not the sole foundation upon which the Mizo can hope to ride into the future. The Mizo identity would not be "grounded in mere 'recovery' of the past" which will "secure our sense of ourselves into eternity" but also be influenced by "the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past" (Hall, 2017, 435). The modernizing effects of the colonial experience will forever be a part of Mizo culture, especially that of Christianity. Hybridization of cultures was not new to the Mizos. The ease with which influences from others are incorporated harmoniously into the fabric of the society is illustrated at length in *Ka Mi Huaisen leh Ka Pasalṭha* (My Brave and Courageous Men) (2015) by the after-effects of the two-months stay by the chief, Laldara and his people when they had come to woo Chuaileni, Puilura's daughter. The indigenization of Christianity as discussed in Chapter III is but a natural approach of the Mizo towards a foreign influence. It is also proof that the Mizo have been selective of the cultures they imbibed, and to what degree. This can be said with certainty since it is a historical fact that the Mizo were in direct contact with other peoples and cultures around them much before coming in contact with the white man. However, it is also true that there had never been a foreign influence as pervasive and dominant as that of the white man and his power as colonizer. Colonialism had propelled the forces of globalization which according to Stuart Hall "involves both homogenization *and* the creation of new differences/ fractures; it involves, as he puts it repeatedly, going 'local and global at the same moment'" (Procter, 111).

Hybridization was therefore essential to the survival of the Mizo as a people and as also discussed in Chapter III entitled, “Self and Identity: Community Transformed” the Mizo did not only lose aspects of their culture but were also successful in indigenizing aspects of the white man’s culture which on the onset seemed powerful enough to fully replace the indigenous. The indigenization of Christianity shows that historically, hybridization can ease the successful incorporation of a hegemonizing culture into that of a subaltern-ed “other” as evidenced by the acknowledgement of the existence of the “Mizo Christian”. This label, so to say, describes what it is “to be a Mizo under the sign of modernity, to be a Christian under the sign of the local” (Bhattacharya & Pachuau, 15). Just as the Christian missionaries had appropriated Mizo cultural symbols and meanings, the early Christians too had superimposed Mizo sensibilities on Christian traditions. Joy L.K. Pachuau attributes this to the “active collective engagement with the Western form, rather than its blanket adoption, that eventually led to people’s identification with Christianity”, seeing it as a social process which created a “distinctive Christianity, unique to its specific context, which impinged on the identity of the people” (2019, 298). Along the same line of thought that “cultural shaping of the self begins with a society’s core philosophical and religious heritage and traditions” (Cross & Gore, 589), the conclusion arrived at in Chapter IV entitled “Self and Identity: Community Transformed” would indeed facilitate the integration of cultures which would have a firm base on the traditional and indigenous. It was put forth that the community, entrenched in Mizo culture and world view would form the foundation upon which extraneous influences on the established culture would be incorporated. This would ensure that the indigenous and the traditional would remain the mainstay of the process of hybridization. In the end, it would prove to be beneficial rather than detrimental to the development of the Mizo society and culture, the dynamic nature of which has been established many times over. That being said, the dangers posed by the negative impact of communalism and a narrowed focus on indigenization that is extreme to the extent that it is exclusive of all other cultures and peoples has been seen through the course of human history. The horrors and violence of ethnic cleansing in various parts of the world in recent times are a testimony to the atrocities that such narrow extremism can provoke. The implication

of such an interpretation of identity and the detrimental impact it has had on inter-cultural relations both locally and internationally is apparent in the stereotyping of people based on their country of origin, ethnicity, religion and race. Whether consciously applied or not, the politics of identity has proven capable of being pervasive and divisive for indigenous cultures grappling with post-colonial and neo-colonial issues.

The very core of the Mizo's reconnection with the past, indigenous cultures and traditions is thus developing under such threats which may cause it to deviate from the intention to integrate, and towards pursuing a narrow, exclusivity. Although current political developments in the local, national and international stages have indeed nudged the Mizo consciousness to focus inwards from time to time, the inherent inclusive nature of Mizo culture has nevertheless ensured an enduring openness to other peoples and other cultures to date. It is in this light that the objective of "*Ram leh Hnam Humhalh*" by the Young Mizo Association i.e. the preservation of both land and culture, gains importance. As discussed above, the interdependence of the individual and the society in creating a stable sense of self and identity is much dependent on a knowledge and understanding of the past and its consequences on the present. The bid for preservation can be fulfilled thus since "true permanence is never static, it is an eternal process of becoming, susceptible to dialogue with otherness" (Petersen & Rutherford, 142). Not only will it ensure that Mizo culture will continue to survive as desired by the people themselves but will also create a concrete foundation of Mizo identity that will endure the multicultural, neocolonial realities of surviving in the global village that the world has become[180]. The post-colonial Mizo can thus continue to revel in their renewed connection and relationship to their indigeneity and thereby consolidate the presence of the Mizo for posterity. It is in this sense that the selected works of C.Lalnunchanga may be considered as part of this undertaking to perpetuate the culture and world view of the Mizo. The selected works also gain prominence in the light of the statement that

[180]Francis Fukuyama writes that it is because of the existence of a well-developed national identity before modernization took place that countries like Japan, Korea and China are able to grow so much. They did not have to settle internal questions of identity and hence, were able to build on traditions of statehood and common national purpose once conflicts (civil war, occupation and division) were stabilized. He attributes the lack or weakness of this national identity for the failure of the Arab Spring and in African countries to establish stable governments (125-126).

production of literatures in local languages are precious cultural resources and that their translations “opens up a potentially huge readership” and “becomes, through translation, a vehicle of cultural communication, and perhaps a mode of cultural survival” (Ashcroft et.al., 2017, 205).

It can thus be concluded that from the analysis of the selected works, C.Lalnunchanga sought to foreground indigenous pre-colonial Mizo culture from a post-colonial perspective. At the same time, the selected works also advocated the prospective contribution of the past towards healing the disjuncture he saw in contemporary society. The past thereby paving the way towards a more cohesive society that is based on a culture that is inclusive and has a firm base on the indigenous, giving rise to a stable sense of identity. In effect, it is culture that has ensured the survival of the Mizo as a people against many odds and it is in culture that their future also lies assured. It is in this culture that C.Lalnunchanga locates the identity of the Mizo.

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Summary of *Ka Mi Huaisen leh Ka Pasalṭha* [*My Brave and Courageous Men*]

The story is set in the year 1876. The novella begins with the braves of Vangsen in hot pursuit of Sukte raiders from the east who had stealthily killed three persons at the break of dawn. The two tribes, the *Lusei* and the Sukte had been at war since the time of the chief Vanhnuailiana. The braves of Vangsen went in two groups, both led by able men. The group led by Ramtinthanga had taken a route that would make them overtake the fleeing Sukte raiders while the other group led by Zakâpa followed the raiders. They were able to ambush the raiders on the banks of a river and killed ten of them but seven escaped. They were able to catch up with the escaped raiders the next day. At the end, only the Sukte leader, Vungzapauva was left. He had climbed up a huge tree hanging out over the edge of a very high cliff and just out of the range of gunshots. One of the Vangsen braves had fallen to his death. Nghalṭhianga, a youth out on his first martial offensive had climbed and managed to subdue the Vungzapauva into surrendering. His bravery and courage came to be widely known since Vungzapauva was notorious for his cruelty and ruthlessness. Saingura, the chief's younger son also proved his mettle in this encounter. As a result of this victory, the chief of Vangsen, Puilura gained influence and wealth from the ransom Vungzapauva's father paid for the release of his son – the worth of twenty *sial* or gayals.

Attacks from the tribes in the east had forced the *Lusei* to migrate westward. This had led to hostilities among the *Lusei* chiefs themselves even though they were all related to one another. Since Vangsen lay towards the east, Puilura knew he had to move his people westwards to ensure their safety. At the same time he did not wish to get himself embroiled in the imminent conflict between the chiefs from the east and those from the west. Puilura explained his reluctance to get involved in the hostilities to his brother, Dopawnga and two sons. His elder son, Lalngheta already had a separate hamlet of his own. Puilura's grandfather Vankalluaia was the illegitimate son of the chief, Rohnaa, one of the seven chiefs of the famous Selesih city of seven thousand houses and was never acknowledged by his father during his lifetime. When Chief Rohnaa's son, Lallula set out to set up his own village, he took his step-brother Vankalluaia along and eventually established a village for him to

rule on his own. Thus, Puilura was aware that if he took sides in the current state of hostilities, he could end up isolated because they being blood relatives would eventually reconcile and if a situation arose, he could become the odd man out. At that time, Puilura was on good terms with the descendents of Vanhnuailiana, the chiefs from the east. The issue arose when the two factions, both descendents of Lallula had agreed to expand their territory. One group (descendents of Suakpuilala) would continue to migrate westward while the other (descendents of Vanhnuailiana) would retrace their steps and move eastward to guard against the raiding tribes residing further east from them. When the latter group decided to migrate westward, the former objected, leading to the state of affairs. The death of Chhingpuii which was a well known historical incident took place towards the end of the narrative.

There was a sense of brotherhood among the people of Vangsen. There was cooperation and cohesion as could be seen in the preparation for the festival of *Chapchar Kut* and the series of feasts, *khuangchawi* to be performed by Puilura and an elder, Darchheuva. The youth gathered firewood and prepared the *zu*, the rice beer to be served at the feasts and looked forward to the dancing that the feasts would entail. The feasts as also the events and preparations leading up to the feasts illustrate the customs and beliefs of the people.

On the first night of the feasts, the honour of being offered the *nopui* was given to Hautuka when everyone expected Nghalṭhianga to be the one honoured. These two had been rivals since childhood, though Hautuka was older. Hautuka had also proven his bravery by slaying two tigers and had recently made the killing shot of an elephant. Even though he had acted selfishly and against the agreement of those who went on the hunt, he still carried the prestige of having killed the elephant.

Ten braves including Nghalṭhianga had set out for a hunt just before the *Kawngpui Siam* ceremony. They had wandered further than they had anticipated while pursuing a male bison and had ventured into the village of Arthial under the chief, Dinthanga at the time his brother, the chief of Thingmuat Sangburha, was paying him a visit with his braves. That night in the *zawlbuk* there was a wrestling match between the braves from the two villages being hosted at Arthial. In brute strength, the men from Thingmuat had the upper hand. However, the men from Vangsen proved to be formidable opponents because of their tenacious

determination. At the end the elders present there had to call the match off for fear that the friendly match would get out of hand. The event had served to establish the courage and determination of both Nghalṭhianga and Ramtinthanga but the group had returned without having shot any game. This fact was made even worse since Hautuka and his friends had returned with wild gayal, having also gone out on a hunt.

The rivalry between Nghalṭhianga and Hautuka also extended to their love lives. They both wooed the same maiden, Romawii. Though she was initially inclined towards Nghalṭhianga, his affair with Ainâwni eventually made her favour Hautuka. Ainâwni's father had accused Nghalṭhianga of defaming his daughter and brought the matter before the chief. It was shameful for a man to make a claim of having slept with a woman without really having done so but it was considered laudable if he was successful in doing so. The inquiry was a very public affair and remained a source of shame for Nghalṭhianga for a long time. Nghalṭhianga could have easily told the truth and saved face. However, he was able to save both their reputations and Ainâwni from the derision and anger of her family at that time. However, it became known later that she was indeed carrying Nghalthianga's child and they were summoned before the chief again. This time, the chief recognized Nghalṭhianga's chivalry even though he himself felt deep shame.

The chief's daughter, Chuaileni had had a suitor, Laldara, a chief from the south. He was accompanied by a retinue that included all sorts of people, from the chief's adviser, to wresters, to singers and storytellers. They stayed in Vangsen for two months and their influence was felt even after they had gone home. Chuaileni had agreed to marry Laldara even though she was secretly in love with Nghalṭhianga since she knew that marriage between them would never be possible.

Romawii had completely turned her attention to Hautuka and they even went to the *lo* or the jhums together. One evening, they and their friends were ambushed by Sukte raiders, led by Vungzapauva who had been waiting for a chance to take revenge on the people of Vangsen. Hautuka had fled and abandoned his friends. His own friend, Hlawnpianga lost his life while another, Saizinga, was severely wounded. The raiders had taken hostage the two women in their company, Romawii and Suakmeni. Nghalṭhianga and Rohmingliana hurriedly set out in pursuit. They

were able to kill Vungzapauva and all but one of his men. They were able to rescue Romawii who informed them that Suakmeni had been left behind to perish as she had broken a leg. They later learned that she had been found by others who had set out in pursuit of the raiders from their village. Hautuka could not be found anywhere as Suakmeni and Saizinga related to everyone what had happened in detail. That same night, Nghalṭhianga and Rohmingliana escorted Romawii into the village, carrying the guns and the severed heads of their enemies. A mournful gloom had overpowered the people since the news of the attack but it was turned to joyous celebration upon their return.

Summary of *Pasalṭhate Ni Hnuhnung* [*Last Days of the Braves*]

The novel is divided into two parts. Both parts are introduced with a historical overview of the times. This provides the historical background to the narrative and helps to situate the story of Puilura and his people in context to actual events in history.

The first part tells of life in Puilura's village now situated at Khiangzo. The great famine of 1880 and the pandemic that followed had taken its toll. Many had lost their lives, including Ainâwni whom Nghalṭhianga had belatedly married, and their son. Puilura had led his people westward to that place in the hopes of new beginnings. Trouble soon arose because the area which Puilura's people had prepared for cultivation was also claimed by a neighboring chief, Sangburha of Ṭumhnawk. Sangburha made the first move. He was one of the four chiefs of Lalturha's descendents and had their support. He and his brother Dopawnga of Vuakdûp were the leaders among the four. Retaliatory raids were made by both sides until Puilura's men raided Vuakdûp. It was only the bravery of the chieftainess, Lalkuri which secured the safety of their village and the people. The chief Dopawnga was on a visit to his brother's village at the time. Instead of burning it down, they looted the village and returned with seven families, who having heard of Puilura's equal treatment of his people, wished to move to Khiangzo. Among them were the two men who had helped Puilura's braves when they had lost their way and had to spend a night at Arthial. After the raid of Vuakdûp, Sangburha and his allies called for a truce and suggested that the braves from both sides engage in a traditional warfare called *Leihlawn mal zawh* (See glossary no. 50). Ten men were selected from both sides for the fight.

Hautuka was among the men selected to represent Khiangzo. Even years later, he had still borne the shame of having deserted his friends when they were attacked by the Sukte raiders. He had had the chance to redeem his name when Khiangzo was harassed by a tiger which had killed many animals. As they pursued it, the tiger had pinned a brave, Rochêra to the ground biting him on his shoulder. It was Hautuka who had come to the rescue, shooting the tiger at point-blank range. Though he could never gather courage when faced with another man, he would not even

flinch when charged by any animal however ferocious it may be. The incident had served to form a strong bond of friendship between the two men. Hautuka became increasingly disturbed as the time set for the encounter drew near. He even took offence to Rochêra's considerate enquiry as to whether he wished to withdraw from having to represent the village. Blinded by rage, he had sabotaged his good friend's shield which had been offered to him for use at the event because of its strength. He also became nostalgic and tried his best to woo back the mother of his children whom he had divorced but was unsuccessful. It was with this heavy heart that Hautuka went to fight for his chief and people.

The encounter took place at Mualsum a valley shaped like a bowl where spectators could watch the fight from the hill sides. Besides the people of both villages who had come to cheer for their braves, there were many others who came from far off places. The most well-known chiefs of the time and their braves whose deeds were known all across the land also came to witness the encounter. The fights were bloody and riveting, enthralling the spectators by the turn of events in each fight. Although Puilura's men had courage and determination, they found it difficult to overcome the sheer strength of some of their opponents. What caught the people's attention was the manner in which Ramtinthanga's shield had come loose. It had caused his defeat and a painful death. Thinking that Rochêra's shield would be stronger than his own, he had borrowed it at the last minute. Hautuka felt immensely remorseful and responsible of the death. This gave him courage and determined to face his fear and fight. He was pitched against a giant of a man, Chawngchhunga under whose brute strength, he fell to his death. The men who went to retrieve his body found him still conscious. He confessed his guilt to them saying that otherwise his spirit would not rest in peace nor would he be able to face Ramtinthanga's spirit in the after world. The men found new respect for him and decided to keep his confession a secret. Afterwards, the sabotaged shield could not be found anywhere. The fight had cost the lives of the best braves from both sides. At the end, only Nghalṭhianga from Puilura's village remained to fight two opponents. Although he won both fights, and so won the dispute, he had sustained very serious injuries.

At that time, both Romawii and Chuaileni had returned to their fathers' homes as divorced women. Romawii had been married off before the famine. Both

were determined not to return to their husbands. It so happened that Chuaileni and Nghalṭhianga were seen in a compromising situation when she had gone to visit him after the fight. She being the daughter of the chief, everyone feared for Nghalṭhianga despite the service he had rendered to the chief. However, the sagacious chief Puilura got the two married and settled them in a village of their own, though still under his authority. In this way, he was able to secure his daughter's happiness and at the same time, the loyalty and allegiance of the best of his braves. Saingura also ruled over a separate village of his own.

The second part of the novel covers the time during the Lushai Expedition of 1889-90 through the participation and experiences of Puilura and his people. The British had already subdued the chiefs involved in the raids that had led to the expedition. It bothered Puilura that the white men were strengthening the forts they had established and that they were reinforcing the troops at Aizawl and at Changsil, the trading post. The general opinion was that the white man would soon leave. However, an agreement could not be reached between the officer in charge and the concerned chiefs, the descendents of Manga. Puilura received a report that the opposing sides had agreed to meet at Aizawl and could reach an agreement only after a long drawn out negotiation amidst high tension. The chiefs had agreed to pay taxes and to provide labour as and when required by the white men and they would be under the authority of the *Kumpinu,* Queen Victoria. Not much after, these chiefs soon got together and sought the help of chiefs from other families to oust the white men. Puilura was also solicited at the time and though he did not officially send his men to help, he gave permission to the thirty men from his village who wished to participate in the offensive. The coalition was successful in ambushing Captain H.R.Browne, the Political Officer at that time and laid siege to Aizawl for 25 days. However, Lt.Cole, the second in charge had managed to send for help. The white men were thus able to retrieve the situation with the superior number of men and artillery. In retaliation, the British had burnt down the villages of the chiefs involved. The new Political Officer, McCabe sent emissaries, Chief Khamliana and Chhipchawrawna to the various chiefs who had not yet conceded, including Puilura. The chief would be required to pay taxes and provide labour as and when required by

the British. To Puilura, the message they brought was not an agreement but that of domination and he could not agree to such an offer.

It was troubled times. Though Puilura performed the *Khuangchawi* as in other years, the celebrations could not be as festive or joyful. Puilura's elders were in disagreement, some wished to concede to the British while some did not want to give in without a fight. Puilura was immensely troubled and it began to take a toll on his health. He knew that it was only a matter of time before all the chiefs were subdued by the British. However, he did not want to easily give in and was personally resolved not to give in without a fight. At the same time, he knew that such recourse would bring untold suffering and troubles to his people. Although he had the support of his braves, he knew that the consequences would follow and it weighed heavily on his heart. One evening, when the braves and the young men of the village were out on hunting expeditions, the British troops led by Lt, Tytler entered Khiangzo, completely catching the people by surprise and took Puilura captive.

Puilura was brought before the British officers who tried to intimidate him into ceding to their terms of agreement. However, the spirit of the old chief was not easily crushed. Even McCabe known as Lalmantu-Capturer of the Chiefs could not threaten the chief into submitting. Puilura told them that even though he was imprisoned like a slave, he would never bow down to them in his heart. When his son, Saingura came to visit him, Puilura urged him not to surrender and to remember that the will or resolve is most important in a battle. There no price too high to pay for freedom which to him was their mainstay, bought by blood and defended also by blood when the times required. Puilura stressed to his son that he should not seek revenge but that he should protect his rights.

The British officers stationed in the North Lushai Hills at that time were Political Officer McCabe, Captain G.H.Loch the Commanding Officer of the Military Police, Captain Williamson, Captain Mc Gill, Lt. Tytler and Lt. Cole. McCabe had gathered them to discuss the possibility of a threat from the eastern chiefs. The others found no reason to doubt the chiefs since they all paid the taxes levied on them and flew the British flags in their villages. McCabe knew that they had not succeeded to completely vanquish the chiefs and that they would rise against them at the first opportunity. Discussing past expeditions, the officers acknowledged

the courage of the Mizo braves and the powerful influence the chiefs had on their people, the distinct culture and the ingenuity of the people who had managed to concoct their own gunpowder. They resolved that anything that showed them in a bad light should never be allowed to reach the people's ears, and at the same time instill awe for themselves in the people.

All attempts at trying to persuade Puilura to give in failed and he breathed his last in the small hut in which he was kept imprisoned. Puilura's death brought to life the latent resentment and indignation the people felt at the hands of the British. Saingura, the elders and the braves knew that Puilura's death had opened the floodgates. It was decided that a raiding party led by Zakâpa, a respected brave, would set out for the plains to seek trophies to be hung on the chief's grave. The raid was a success and they brought home many slaves, severed heads of slain enemies, guns and other things. Saingura, the new chief promised to fight the white man till his last breath.

During that time, the British officers anticipated trouble from the chiefs from the east since they had not responded to McCabe's demand for a hundred porters even after the time they promised to do so, had passed. They also refused to grant permission for the entry of two missionaries knowing that they would not be able to control them. Besides, they did not wish them to witness any unpleasantness the military might be required to carry out.

While the braves of Khiangzo had gone on the raid, Lalburha's men were engaged in gunfire with the soldiers at Sesawng. The soldiers had retreated to the top of the hill where the chief's house was situated and were surrounded by the Mizo braves. Saingura and his men also took part in this offensive and were joined by Zakâpa and the men who had gone on the raid, without even a day's rest. After a month long siege, the British finally gained the upper hand since they were equipped with better artillery. The Mizo braves on the other hand, were running out of ammunition and had to return to tend to their crops. The soldiers continued to occupy the village of Sesawng while establishing it as a base from which they could launch an offensive on the eastern chiefs. At this time, Shakespear was also besieged at Chhipphir by the descendents of Rolura and had to be rescued by Carey from the Chin Hills.

Lt. Platt was sent with a hundred and fifty men to Puilura's village where Saingura was now the chief. Saingura and his men were well prepared, all the women, children and aged were sent to his uncle Dopawnga's village for safety. Among his elders, Chuaukunga had tried to dissuade the chief from engaging with approaching soldiers until Saingura lost patience with him. Chuaukunga had been against fighting the British even during Puilura's time and often times had caused dissension. In the battle that ensued, Lt. Platt and his men were badly defeated and he had to flee for his life. As he wandered about lost in the jungles, he was met by the two interpreters who had accompanied him and his troops. However, soon after they led him to safety, he shot them both dead as he did not want any witnesses of him at his worst.

A.W.Davies replaced McCabe as the next Political Officer. He sent Lt. Platt against Puilura's men again with the order to annihilate if he could not get them to surrender. Platt sent two men to negotiate with Saingura but they were treated condescendingly and sent back with a message that he would meet with the officer the next day with all fines he was required to pay. Saingura and his men set out earlier than agreed to with the intention to surprise the soldiers but were met half-way. In the fight that followed, both sides lost men. Despite using cannons which scattered Saingura's men, Platt and his men found themselves trapped in the village where they had sought safety. The braves had the upper-hand until Captain Loch arrived with more men and ammunition, firing cannon balls into the forest where the braves hid. There were many casualties and only a few remained at the site of the battle while the rest went back to their village carrying the remains of their comrades. That night, as Saingura and his men rested in their camp, they were suddenly attacked by the soldiers. In the confusion, Saingura and Nghalṭhianga made their escape down along a small stream with bullets flying past them as they ran. Soon after Nghalṭhianga realized that Saingura was no longer with him, he tripped and fell on his face and blacked out. When he regained consciousness, he found he had been taken care of by four others and that Saingura had been taken prisoner. Soon after, they saw Lt. Platt followed by two soldiers. After the gunfight that followed, only Nghalṭhianga and Lt. Platt remained. Although Nghalṭhianga was no match for Lt. Platt in the fistfight that took place thereafter, as with his other opponents,

Nghalṭhianga's determined courage soon intimidated the other man, who was captured and taken prisoner.

Saingura and the other men who were taken prisoners were kept tied up in a makeshift shelter, under guard. A.W.Davies had unsuccessfully tried to persuade him to surrender. The next day he was brought before the officers who again tried to intimidate Saingura to surrender. Though he was weak with his injuries, he refused to sit on the floor as he was not offered a seat. Despite his appearance, he did not look defeated and continued to assert his sovereignty. That night was especially cold but Saingura refused to request anything from their captors. He eventually succumbed to his injuries that night but assured by the fact that on his part he had done everything he could to defend his honour.

Just as he passed away, Saingura's men arrived with their prisoner Lt. Platt with a proposal to exchange prisoners. When Davies found Saingura had died he was determined that the Mizo braves should not come to know of the death of their chief. He knew Lt. Platt would not be spared. He kept stalling when the time for exchange of prisoners came, until the Mizo braves became suspicious of the safety of their chief. They tied up Lt. Platt to a post midway from the entrance of the village which the soldiers had fortified and from the edge of the forest cover. Davies was caught off-guard as he had planned to attack Saingura's village while all the braves were away. The soldier who was sent to release Platt was shot dead. Davies reluctantly had to request a negotiation but would not venture outside the fortified gates. Nghalṭhianga and Ralzatawna, a respected elder stepped forward to negotiate. Afraid to tell the truth, Davies lied that Saingura had been taken to prison in the plains but that the four men who were captured with him would be set free immediately. In the meantime, he would work for the release of Saingura in return for Platt's release. The truth came to light after the exchange was made. An intense gunfight broke out between the angry braves and the soldiers who were led by Davies who was also angered by the shame he felt at having been bested by those he considered inferior to himself. The outdated firearms of the Mizos were no match for the cannons and guns of the British forces and were forced to retreat. They were able to hold their position at the narrow approach to their village where they had once defeated Platt and his troops. There, neither side could make headway. The stalemate was put to an end

only when the soldiers retreated after Lt. Platt was able to persuade Davies to leave the Mizo braves alone as, having witnessed their resolve while a prisoner, he knew they would never give in. He told Davies that it would be more prudent to wait till the people themselves became divided and this would open a way for more peaceful negotiations.

One day, after the soldiers had withdrawn, as the chieftainessLenbuangi (Puilura's wife) received word that Chuaukunga was moving to another place with a number of families whom he had managed to persuade to follow him. Accompanied by Ralzatawna and Nghalṭhianga, the chieftainess stood at the entrance of their village and watched the group making their way out with an aching heart, knowing that the days of the brave and courageous was coming to an end.

Summary of "*Lawmna Garden*" [Garden of Contentment]

Sawmkimi is a nineteen year old whose family had moved to Aizawl from the village when her father secured a Muster Roll job. She feels inferior to other girls of her age as she cannot afford the same things they have. She begins drinking in high school, enjoying the feeling of release from this sense of inferiority as she gets drunk. She drops out of high school and works as a shop assistant where she does not earn as much money as she would have liked. So she begins her life as a call girl under the tutelage of Liansangi, a woman many years her senior. Initially, Sawmkimi does not care about how much she gets paid as long as she gets to go on bike rides with handsome men. For her, unlike the men she encounters, the ideal man is either macho like Arnold Schwarzenegger and David Beckham, or metrosexual like the caring men from Korean dramas. Often, she and Liansangi are duped by clients who seem to have a lot of money and get away without paying them for their services.

Sawmkimi would often drink with Liansangi and their clients. However, she refrains from taking any form of drugs as she fears the effects she can see in the other girls around her. Her biggest fear is to be unidentified in death. She has seen a number of the girls she met on the streets who could not be identified in death, since they had used false names and had not maintained contact with their own families. Another fear she has is that of contracting AIDS, a disease that many of her companions have contracted. Even her mentor Liansangi is confirmed to be HIV positive at the end of the story. She also finds that she has a propensity for violence which frightens her very much. She once beat up a woman with whom Liansangi had had a fight, till she lost consciousness. Although they were able to revive the woman, Sawmkimi learns through the news that she had been found dead in somebody's house. The incident haunts her and makes her resolute to never take drugs in any form.

Although she and Liansangi often earned a lot of money, they are never able to save it. They spent it as easily as they earned it. Sawmkimi cannot save enough money to start the business she has planned. Even the others around her seem to never have enough. She comes to realize that life is not as easy as she thought it would be. There was once a pregnant woman who had joined them as she needed

money for swaddling cloth for her unborn child. There was even a nursing mother whose husband cared for the baby while she "worked" because they did not have enough money for emergencies. Sawmkimi finds it difficult to reconcile to the degeneracy she witnessed, it was difficult to comprehend.

After a year of living life this way, Sawmkimi's father sends her to their village to attend the funeral of a relative. While there, he also requested her to visit an old friend and his family. Even though it had been more than four years since she last visited the place, Sawmkimi felt comfortable as she saw many familiar faces among those gathered to comfort the family of the deceased. She realizes that she doesn't attend such gatherings in Aizawl as she has always felt out of place. The next day she sets out to visit her father's friend whose house was some distance from the village. On her way there, as she walks along the path in the woods, she thinks about how she has lived the past year and feels such shame that it bears down heavily upon her. However, as she reaches her destination, "*Lawmna Garden*" – Garden of Contentment, she feels a sense of great calm. Muanthanga is the only person at home and offers to make tea for her. As they sit and talk, he confesses that he has been in love with her for quite some time and that her being sent to attend the funeral had been planned by both their fathers as they wished for the two of them to be married. Muanthanga tells Sawmkimi that he knows all about how she has been living the past year and that he forgives her, and still wishes to marry her. Sawmkimi is shocked at Muanthanga's confession and becomes self-conscious of the tattoo on her arm and tries to hide it. She can see that unlike her, Muanthanga is contented with his life. Though he too had not passed high school, he had worked diligently and honestly without yearning for things that others had. Rather, he finds joy and fulfillment in nature and in his faith in God.

On her way back home, Sawmkimi is torn between her desire to accept Muanthanga's proposal and her sense of shame. She longs for the contentment she knows she will find with Muanthanga and is even happy at the thought of it. However, her joy is shortlived as is troubled by her past and the possibility of her testing HIV positive. She resolves to have herself tested as soon as possible but is beset with a deep sense of apprehension.

Summary of "*Baby-i Hlim Zan*" [Baby's Night of Happiness]

Rochhunga was from the rural area. He was the Unit President of the ruling political party of his village and a contractor. He had come to Aizawl to collect his bill amounting to three lakhs. Despite his bravado from having the money in his possession and him wearing new clothes, he still stood out as someone from the village. He had no intention of going home even though he had finished taking care of his business and had even bought gifts for his wife and daughters. He did not care about the quality of his work so long as he got his money and was unfazed by the news of the collapse of one of the culverts he had recently finished constructing. He had planned to spend that night in the company of call girls with Valchhuana, the government servant who had helped him in the early disbursal of the money. He had even bought Valchhuana a pair of shoes and a top for his wife. Rinky was a computer operator employed on Muster Roll and dissatisfied with the fact that her pay was less than the office peon's and those she knew were less competent and less qualified than her. She was secretly addicted to heroin and the money she had left after submitting half her pay to her parents was not enough to support her habit. Although there were a number of men vying for her, she was not interested in a relationship even though she knew she should get married before her addiction became known. To support her habit she was secretly a call girl.

Baby and Rinky were partners. Baby was a divorcee and had a young son. She had been raped at the age of seventeen and had been married to the same man who had raped her. He was an officer and had replaced her with a younger girl soon after she gave birth to their son. Baby was still hurt by what had happened and even telling Rinky about it could still bring tears to her eyes. She had recently been tested positive for HIV and she felt she should secure her future. She reasoned that the officials they catered to were corrupt and so, they should try to benefit from their corruption. Therefore, she had bought a new smart phone with a good camera so she could blackmail her next client to extort money. Valchhuana had been working in the office for a year. Before getting his job, he had worked in a private school and had vehemently condemned corrupt officials. Now that he earned ten to twenty- thousand on the side, he was more understanding of such corruption. His demeanor and dress

was that of a youth leader in the church. Though inwardly disgusted by Rochhunga, he remained accommodating of the other man because he wanted a share of the three lakhs. He also wanted to take part in Rochhunga's plan to spend the money that night and contacted the pimp to arrange for girls for the night.

The girls the pimp arranged for Valchhuana and Rochhunga were Baby and Rinky. As they met, Rinky recognized Valchhuana as the student leader in the city where she had gone to attend college. He had strongly advocated sending her and two other girls home for having gone to the discotheque with boys from another state. Since it was her first time, Rinky was not sent home but she had left the city for another where she was in a live-in relationship with a person addicted to heroin. It was from him that she had developed the habit. As she related the incident to Valchhuana as they were paired together, he did not show any sign that his action at that time had weight on his conscience during the intervening time, nor any sign of regret towards Rinky. Baby and Rochhunga had gone to another room. She had recognized that Rochhunga was the one who had possession of the money. With the intention to video record him, she made sure that he was drunk and proceeded to make him perform all sorts of antics. The following morning, Rochhunga woke up to find two lakhs missing from his bag. He received a phone call from Baby who warned him against reporting the missing money. She told him that she would share on facebook the two compromising videos of him in the smart phone she had left under the pillow. Upon watching the videos, the men realized that it would be impossible to get the money back and acknowledged their defeat.

Summary of "*Khamosh Hai Raath*" [Silent is the Night]

The braves of Vanbawng, Lalhleia's village were gathered at the entrance of the village as the sun was setting on a cold December evening. Their chief Lalhleia was just a small boy then and the administration of the village lay in the hands of his grandmother, Lalhlupuii and the chief's elders of the village. The Chieftainess and her husband Chief Ngura had ruled over Sentlang, a village of a thousand households. They had raided the village of the Thado Chieftainess Mangchini, killing most of the residents. The British had burnt down their village as a punitive measure. The horrifying memory still lingered in the memory of the villagers. Chief Ngura's son, Chief Vanpuilala had died of poisoning by the Sukte tribe in 1869. The year prior to the events of this story, the descendents of Chief Rolura from the south and the descendents of the Chief Lalsavunga from the north had joined forces and raided the villages that surrounded the tea gardens. They had captured a number of guns, killed many and among the prisoners they captured was a white child. The northern chiefs involved in the incident were Lalburha, Thanhranga, Pawibawia, Liankhama and Lalhleia. The southern chiefs were Bengkhuaia and Sangvunga. The British had set out in heavier numbers than other times. One column set out from the Chittagong towards the southern chiefs to rescue the captive child, Mary Winchester. Another column set out from Silchar to recover the confiscated guns and the slaves from the plains. Vanbawng was on the way to Chief Lalburha's village. Although they were informed that the British had not come for them, they had opened fire at soldiers and fighting had ensued.

In peaceful times, the braves of Vanbawng would have been out on elephant hunts or hunting near the village for smaller game. However, there had been a gunfight the previous day and the soldiers had burnt the granaries that were used to store the harvest of the previous year. The fifty odd braves had gathered to set out to harass the soldiers camped in a disused jhum near their village. They had planned to surround the soldiers in the dark and fire volleys into the camp at intervals to keep the soldiers from getting a good night's rest. If they found the enemy in a position for an easy attack, they would proceed to attack; if not, they would move back to their village at dawn. After the first volley of shots was fired, the jungle fell silent again.

Though the circumstances were vastly different, the silence that followed the gunshots was likened to that of the silence on the outskirts of Bethlehem after the choir of angels announced the birth of the infant some two thousand years before.

Yet unknown to the braves from Vanbawng, it was Christmas time. Therefore, they were surprised by the sudden burst of singing from the soldiers' camp. The mixture of Gorkhali and white men's voices singing "Silent Night" rang clear in the silence. A strange calm came over the place where just moments before shots had been fired. The men experienced a peace that was inexpressible. Feelings of hatred melted away and a feeling of brotherhood overcame them. One of the braves had a premonition that something that had never been experienced before was about to happen in their land. Neither the lyrics nor the tune was familiar to the men and neither were they aware that they were the first Mizos to ever listen to a carol being sung.

The author comments that if the carol as sung then, could be listened to now from the perspective of a believer i.e. a Christian, one would wonder at the sound of it coming so sincerely from amidst the smoke from gunpowder. It would evoke scenes of people from various places, all gathered around the fire. The story ends with the three verses of the carol written in three different languages, first in Hindi, then English and finally in Mizo.

Summary of "*Krismas Thawnthu*" [A Christmas Story]

Mapuia, the narrator and his family were preparing for the Christmas Eve celebrations. His father, a teacher, had told them that they were to spend it together in the house. Mapuia's mother was a vendor in the market and he, the eldest was a driver employed by the government. He had two younger sisters. They were not so hard off and so they had prepared a good amount of food to share in the event that friends of his younger sisters would drop by for the night. But, Mapuia had secretly stashed two bottles of whiskey in his room. Since he was twenty, he had felt that his Christmas celebrations were incomplete if he did not drink to his heart's content. It was already three in the afternoon when he received a phone call from his superior from work who unmindfully requested Mapuia to pick him up from Lunglei, a day's drive from Aizawl. Although he was reluctant, his father felt indebted to Mapuia's superior for helping them with a loan, urged him to go. Just as he was about to leave, his superior's daughter Mapuii called him telling him to pick her up as she was going with him to Lunglei. He was aware that she had a crush on him and was apprehensive about her tagging along. In fact, they had slept together, once. After that, Mapuia had felt revulsion for her as he came to perceive her as frivolous and promiscuous and tried to justify his turn of feelings as due to his being the son of a church elder. Although aware of his feelings towards her, Mapuii's behavior towards him did not change. She had even sneaked out a bottle of her brother's whiskey for him, of which he drank two glasses. As they made their way towards Lunglei, one continued to make overtures towards the other, while the other tried his best to hide his revulsion.

Unluckily, their vehicle broke down at the outskirts of a town just before ten at night. There were only two houses nearby and a labourer's camp further away. They went to the nearest house for help. There were five adults and three children living in the run-down house made of bamboo and young tree trunks. Their poverty was evident. There was no electric connection so the family relied on a homemade candle place on a lopsided table for light. That and the light from the fire which they were gathered around for warmth lit their small home. Since their vehicle could not be repaired, Mapuia and Mapuii decided to spend the night with the family. Mapuii's

idea of how to spend the night before Christmas was incomprehensible to the family who did not have proper sweaters or shoes. The younger man in the house was sent to the town with two thousand rupees to buy chicken and other eatables for the night and the next day. Then, Mapuii gave the head of the family, Pu Zuala three thousand rupees as a Christmas present and suggested that they sing carols. As the family did not own either guitar or a *khuang*, the traditional drum, Mapuii started beating on a broken bamboo stool and began to sing and, the family enthusiastically joined in. Hearing them, a youth from the next house brought his guitar which was missing some strings. Mapuii tuned it and began to sing songs in solfa. Other neighbours joined them and the group moved outside, building a bonfire. The group was soon joined by passersby – a couple riding on a bike, three K.S. in a taxi with the driver and a truck driver and his handy-man. Mapuia felt in his heart that the spirit of Christmas was keeping those gathered around the fire company. There was a sense of joy as they sang and he felt that all of them were truly celebrating the new born child in Bethlehem. There was no room for frivolity and worldly thoughts. One of the K.S. was so touched by the atmosphere; she declared that she had never experienced such bliss before.

Just then, ten men on community duty arrived shining their torches at the faces of those gathered. The men's behaviour was condescending and accusative towards the members of the group who began to withdraw, making them seem guilty of a grave deed. Mapuia could not stand it any longer and explained the situation to the men. Though most of them understood, there were two who continued to prowl around and they eventually found the half drunken bottle of whiskey Mapuia had left in the vehicle. This led to a scuffle where one of the men raised his hand as if to hit Mapuii. They were able to come to an agreement after an hour and an imposition of a thousand rupees fine. After the men had left, the group tried to sing again but could not recapture the spirit and the passersby went on their way after they had eaten the fried chicken. As the remainder sat round the fire waiting for daybreak they conversed as though they were truly friends. They came to learn that the family had fallen on hard times due to bad luck but mainly due to the miscalculations of the father, PuZuala and also because the family had become stuck in a situation from which it was difficult to get out of. The story ended with a confession of love from

Mapuia for Mapuii. He had come to this realisation after witnessing her generous and undiscriminating behaviour towards those less fortunate both economically and socially.

Glossary

Note: All terms and word meanings are sourced from the following texts as marked or otherwise denoted.

* Lorrain, James Herbert. *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*. 1940. The Asiatic Society, 1983.

♣ Dokhuma, James. *Hmanlai Mizo Kalphung* [Mizo Way of Life in the Olden Days]. J.D.Press,1992.

♠ Zaliana, C. *Mizo Sakhua (Kumpinu Rorel Hma)* [Mizo Religion Before Colonisation]. (Revised & Enlarged). 1983. Tribal Research Institute, 2013.

♥ Lianthanga, C. *Hmanlai Mizo Nun* [Mizo Life in Olden Days]. Mizoram Publication Board, 1999.

♦ Pachuau, Joy L.K. and Willem Van Schendel. *The Camera as Witness: A Social History of Mizoram, Northeast India.* Cambridge University Press, 2016.

• Pachuau, Joy L.K. *Being Mizo: Identity and Belonging in Northeast India*. Oxford University Press, 2014.

** Thirumal P, Laldinpuii and C.Lalrozami. *Modern Mizoram: History, Culture, Poetics*. Routledge, 2019.

1. *Aih*: Modification of *ai*. To sacrifice a domestic animal and perform a ceremony over or for (a wild creature in hunting or a foe killed in fighting). This is done with a view to getting the spirit of the slain into the power of the slayer after death, and also to protect him from evil consequences during this life. To kill a domestic animal and perform a ceremony of rejoicing over (such things as a good rice harvest, a bumper crop, a popular song etc.)*

2. *Âwl-lên*: The slack time after the *jhoom* (see sl. no. 28) is cut or when the weeding is over or after harvest. The names of the three annual slack times are respectively: *chapchâr âwllên, pawhchhiat âwllên, favang âwllên.**

3. *Bawh hla*: The warrior's chant or cry, the chant or cry raised by warriors when returning from a successful raid. It is chanted only when an enemy is killed. The victorious person would stand above his victim and chant this victory chant. If there was danger from other enemies, the victor would refrain from chanting. However, he would enthusiastically chant at the entrance to the village firing shots from his gun. It is again chanted at the *rallu lam* i.e. at the dance to celebrate the death of an enemy by dancing around the severed head of the slain. The *bawh hla* is also chanted upon the slain tiger which is considered above all other animals and hence is given the same treatment as humans. The killing of the tiger is avoided as much as possible and is done only when there is no other choice left. (Dr.R.L.Thanmawia, 157).

4. *Bawi*: A bondsman, a vassal, a serf, a slave.* Though translated as slave in J.H. Lorrain's *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*, it does not have the same connotations as in the West. Joy L.K.Pachuau and Willem Van Schendel have defined it as a person who has sought a chief's protection, and his/her descendents (439).♦

5. *Bawlpu*: A priest, an exorcist.*

6. *Bawrhsap*: The Boro Saheb, the Superintendent, the Sub-Divisional Officer*. Superintendent of the Lushai Hills (Mizoram).♦

7. *Bengbung*: Dulcimer made of wood.*

8. *Bial*: Pastorate of the Presbyterian Church of Mizoram.

9. *Chapchar Kût*: Name of spring festival held between the cutting and the burning of the jhooms.*

10. *Chempui*: A *dao*, a chopper used for wood-cutting, etc. and also as a weapon. *

11. *Chemsen Bawi*: A person who became a *bawi* (see sl. No. 4) by seeking sanctuary with the chief for committing murder, regardless of cost to his freedom and that of his progeny.

12. *Chhinlung chhuak*: *Chhinlung* is the name of the mythical rock from beneath which the progenitors of most of the present human race are said to have issued.* *Chhuak* means to come out of.* So, *Chhinlung chhuak* refers to the people who have emerged from this mythical stone, and the term is used to refer to all the tribes who share this origin myth. Also, it is the cave from which all the Mizo tribes are believed to have emerged.

13. *Dan:* Law, rule, code, custom, habit, practice.*

14. *Duhlian*: A name given to the upper classes or clans in the *Lushai* (see sl. No. 55) Hills and to the dialect they speak – which is regarded as the purest form of the *Lushai* language.*

15. *Dumka*: Refers to the people originating from the Dumka district in the state of Jharkhand.

16. *Fahrah*: An orphan, a child bereft of either father or mother or of both parents.*

17. *Harhna* : Revival,• awakening. Refers mostly to Christian revivals.

18. *Hawilopar*: Literally meaning the "flower of not turning back". It is the name of a mythical flower which grows on the road to *Mitthi khua* (see sl.no.59) beyond *Hringlang Tlang* (see sl.no. 25). The spirits of the dead pluck and wear these blossoms on their hair and ears, and after that have no desire to turn and look back upon the earth which they have left behind.*

19. *Hla chham*: *Hla* means song or chant (see sl.no.20); *chham* means to repeat, utter, recite, raise or chant.* *Hla chham* therefore means to recite or chant a song or chant as an incantation, prayer, lament, hunter's chant of success, warrior's cry of victory.

20. *Hla*: Hymn, song, poetry, chant.*

21. *Hlado*: The hunter's cry or chant which is raised directly after a wild animal has been killed in the chase. It is also chanted along the way home, and at the entrance of the village.* It is a chant sung at the successful hunt of a major animal like the bear, *sele* or mithan and does not include animals smaller than the deer. It is chanted at the time the animal is killed, when the leaves on which the meat of the animal is discarded, at every resting place on their journey home, at the entrance to the village and with much gusto at the celebration of the kill (Dr.R.L.Thanmawia, 156-157).

22. *Home:* A rehabilitation centre. It is usually referred to as "home". There are a number of homes run by the government and by non-governmental organisations in Aizawl.

23. *Hridai*: A stockade or fence erected near a village to protect it from a pestilence, epidemic or prevalent sickness.*

24. *Hri*: The evil spirit which is believed to cause sickness and especially epidemics; disease, sickness, epidemics.*

25. *Hringlang tlang*: The name of a mythical mountain on the way to *Mitthi khua* (see sl.no.59), from which the spirits of the departed look back and view with longing the world of man which they have left behind.*

26. *Huai*: An evil spirit, a demon, a devil, a nat.

27. *Inpui Chhung Bawi*: A person who became a *bawi* (see sl. No. 4) by seeking the chief's protection due to poverty.*

28. *Jhoom*/*Jhum*: Land that is cultivated after clearing forests usually by burning*.

29. K.S.: A prostitute, a call girl. An abbreviation of *khawpui* (city) *service* which roughly translates as "city service".

30. *Kawngpui Siam*: An annual sacrifice to ensure the prosperity of the whole village. The sacrifice was usually made in the evening on the main path just outside the southern entrance to the village. The village priest and a few elders

cook and consume the sacrifice on the spot except the parts offered to the spirit. Ashes are sprinkled on the road and smoothed down overnight. In the morning, the success or non-success of the sacrifice is gauged by the footprints which appear on it. It is a ritual held about a week before the festival of *Chapchar Kut* (see sl. No. 9), by which blessing is sought for the whole community.♠

31. *Kawt-chhuah*: Entrance or exit to a village.*

32. *Kelmi*: The tuft of the tail of a goat which had been sacrificed. This tuft was worn around the neck of the person for whom the goat was sacrificed as a charm to ward off evil spirits. The owner never parts with it, and if misplaced, another goat is sacrificed in its place; else it was believed that a misfortune or illness would befall the owner. One parted with it only to prove that he was a Christian and ready to abandon the traditional religion.* Also from Verghese and Thanzawna (322).

33. *Khawhar in*: literally means the house of mourning.* It is customary to gather in the house of the bereaved as condolence and to offer comfort. The practice has been taken up by the YMA in a bid to preserve Mizo culture, setting three nights for *khawhar lenpui* i. e. to gather in the house of mourning to offer condolences.

34. *Khiang*: Botanical name *Schima Wallichii.* (www.mizenvis.nic.in/Database/Biodiversity_1444.aspx)

35. *Khuang*: The traditional Mizo drum.

36. *Khuangchawi*: The name of a public feast given by chiefs and other well-to-do Lushais; title given to those who have given such a feast. The greatest of the feasts required to achieve the coveted status of *Thangchhuah* (see sl.no. 113). *

37. *Khuanghlâng*: A raised platform that could be carried about. It had to be big enough to seat the whole family of the person, the *Thangchhuah Pa* (see sl.no. 112), who was performing the *Khuangchawi* (see sl.no. 36). This platform would be carried into the *lalmual* or the open space in front of the chief's house by the village elders or *Upa* who would carry it around the square. It was during this

event that the *Thangchhuah Pa* and his family would throw into the crowd, valuable things like clothes, pots and sometimes even guns and gayal, for which they would throw firewood and a piece of rope respectively. The people would then scramble for the articles, getting to keep what they managed to pick up (Dokhuma, 47).

38. *Kohhran Upa*: Church Elder who is elected by the members of the local Church.

39. *Kohhran*: A Christian, a member of the Christian church, a member of the Christian community. It is now used to refer to the church. Since the predominant denomination in Mizoram is Presbyterian, the term is usually taken to refer to the Presbyterian Church of Mizoram.

40. KṬP: *Kristian* (Christian) *Ṭhalai* (Youth) *Pawl* (Group), formed in 1954 is the youth wing of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church, organised to open opportunities for the youth to serve as well as to offer a platform to strengthen and nurture the youth for future leadership roles.

41. *Kuki*: Literally meaning "wild hill people" and used by the Bengalis to refer to the hill people living in north west Burma (now Myanmar) and north east India. The Bengalis found them culturally very backward. The British adopted the term to describe the Mizos at first (Verghese and Thanzawna, 45).

42. *Kumpinu*: *Lushai* (see sl. No. 55) name for Queen Victoria*. East India Company, British Indian Government. ♦

43. *Kumpuan*: Proclamation for the year *kum* (year) *puan* (proclaimation).

44. *Lal* : A chief, chieftain, chieftainess, a sovereign, a monarch, a king or queen. The word means "lord"*.

45. *Lal ban*: The abolition of chieftainship*.

46. *Lalfanu*: Chief's daughter*.

47. *Lalmual*: The village square; the wide open space in front of the chief's house*.

48. *Lalnu*: Queen, Chieftainess *.

49. *Lâwm*: To assist a person in any kind of work or occupation in exchange for similar assistance received or to be received.*

50. *Leihlawn mal zawh*: *Leihlawn* (bridge) *mal* (alone) *zawh* (to cross). A kind of warfare where a brave fought another from a rival village on a log laid across a pit dug out for the purpose. Whoever fell from the bridge or died first was declared the loser and his village would have to concede defeat (Liangkhaia, 61).

51. *Lo hal*: The firing or burning of the *jhoom/jhum* (see sl. No. 28) *. See also *Ram hal* at sl.no. 84.

52. *Lo Zawh*: To finish weeding the *lo* (see sl. No. 53) or *jhoom/jhum* (see sl. No. 28).

53. *Lo*: Swidden cultivation, *jhum* (sometimes referring also to the crops growing there), a clearing in the forest used for agricultural purposes especially for the growing of rice; a farm, a cultivated field. land that is cultivated after clearing forests usually by burning*.

54. *Lungloh Tui*: The name of a mythical spring on the way to *Mitthikhua* (see sl.no. 59) beyond *Hringlang Tlang* (see sl.no. 25) of which the spirits of the departed drink and lose all their longing to return to earth.

55. *Lusei* or *Lushai*: It was the predominant tribe with its chiefs, the Sailos at the time of the arrival of the British and so was erroneously used to describe all the tribes. J.H. Lorrain writes it as the name which the English-speaking people apply to the whole tribe, whereas the tribesmen themselves apply *Lusei* i.e. “longheads” to only the upper classes, and speak of the lower classes as *Lutawi* i.e. “shortheads”*.

56. *Ma*: To divorce (one’s wife)*.

57. *Mei kawng*: Fire break. *Mei* (fire) *kawng* (road, path). A boundary made by clearing vegetation along a certain direction or area to prevent fire from

spreading beyond the intended area. Before the *ram hal* (see sl.no. 84) the people would ensure that a proper fire break was prepared to prevent unnecessary burning of forest cover.

58. *Mithun*: Gayal, Sele.

59. *Mitthi khua*: Literally means 'dead man's village", it is the abode of departed spirits*.

60. Mizo Union: The first political party in Mizoram. It was established on 25th April, 1946.

61. MLTP Act: The Mizoram Liquor Total Prohibition Act, 1995 and the Mizoram Liquor Total Prohibition Rules, 1996 were enforced with effect from 20th February, 1997 with the publication of the Notification in the Mizoram Extra Ordinary Gazette vide Notification No. H. 12018/67/96-LJD, dated 9th February, 1996. The Act banned the import, transport, manufacture, possession, sale and consumption of alcohol. Total prohibition ended with the passing of The Mizoram Total Liquor (Prohibition and Control) (MLPC) Act 2014 (Act No. 8 of 2014) which came into force from 15th January, 2015 through the Notification No. J. 2501l/l/2014-EXC(i), dated 7th January, 2015 in The Mizoram Gazette. However, this act was superseded by the Notification No.H.12018/235/2014-LJD, dated the 28th May, 2019 on The Mizoram Gazette, by which prohibition was once again reinstated through The Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition) Act, 2019 (Act No. 8 of 2019) came into force with effect from 28th May, 2019.

62. MNF: Mizo National Front, formed in 1961 largely in response to *mautam*. The famine brought on by the flowering of the bamboo plant and subsequently resorted to arms at the inadequate aid and perceived negligence of the Indian Government in its response to the famine.

63. MR: Short for Muster Roll and is used to describe a temporary government job which does not entail the usual benefits received by regularized employees.

64. MUP: Mizoram Upa Pawl is the Mizoram Senior Citizen's Association established in 1957.

65. *Ngiau*: Botanical name *Michelia Champaca.*

66. *Nopui:* The word literally means "big-cup" (*No*-cup, *pui*-big/large). It was an honour awarded during the *Khuangchawi* ceremony. Although *tlawmngaihna* (See sl. No. 123) shown by the braves was done without any expectation of reward, the community customarily acknowledged and recognized outstanding services in the form of the *Nopui.* It was not the ordinary bamboo cup that was commonly used but the largest of the horns of the gayal which were also used as cups. The horns were used as cups mostly by the chief and the wealthy and in general, only the chief's household could afford to use only horns as cups. The *Nopui* was usually twice as large as the ordinary one. Each year, the chiefs and elders would select a youth who had made the most outstanding contribution to the community to be honoured with taking the first sip from the *Nopui*. The person so honoured had to take the first sip of the *zu* (See sl.no. 137) before anyone else could begin to drink. Even the chief could not drink before him.♣

67. *Pachhuak*: The event when all the able bodied men of the village set out to achieve a certain task.

68. Party-worker: Members/supporters of a political party who actively works for the success of the political party.

69. *Pasalṭha*: Refers to a man who is brave and manly; a brave, a hero; a famous or notable warrior or hunter, a man who has proven his prowess as a hunter and warrior and respected for his knowledge in these fields. To be brave, manly, heroic, valiant, stout-hearted, courageous, daring fearless, intrepid. A person who is brave and manly; a brave, a hero; a famous or notable warrior or hunter.*

70. *Pasalṭhate*: Plural of *Pasalṭha* (See sl.no. 69).

71. *Pathian*: The all powerful creator was called *Pathian* who blessed and protected humans but was not much concerned with their everyday life. God, the Giver

and Preserver of Life. In pre-colonial times, it also referred to people who are Godly, pious, religious, and devout.* The missionaries continued its usage to refer to God the Father since it has the same connotations.

72. *Pawl chhuak:* It literally means "to leave or to dissociate from a group". Those not part of the mainstream churches, referring to cults or ex-communicated churches/people. •

73. *Phai:* It literally means the plains. It refers to mainland India where it is common for students from Mizoram to pursue their higher studies especially for technical courses.

74. *Phutluih kuli*: Forced labour. Forced porterage, labour by impressments. ♦

75. *Pialral*: Lushai Paradise, literally means the further side of Pial river.*

76. *Puan*: Cloth, garment, clothing.* It also refers to the traditional hand-woven cloth worn as a sarong by women.

77. *Puithiam*: The priest or the sorcerer.*

78. *Puma Zai:* Literally means "Songs of *Puma*" and was a new "song-type of simple and catchy rhythm" that emerged in 1907. Each chant or verse consisted of two lines and the first line ends with the word *Puma*. It was believed to have originated in Ratu village. The song underwent various changes, eventually dropping the word *Puma*. The movement it engendered came to be associated with singing, dancing and feasting. It came to be associated with "heathenism" and as anti-Christian. However, now the opinion, that it was a reactive movement to the changed reality as a psychological response to their rapidly changing world as a means of resistance as well as assertion of their traditions is widely accepted by academicians.**

79. *Rakzu*: Local liquor, different from *zu* (See sl.no. 137).

80. *Rallu lam*: To hold a dance in celebration of a head taken in a raid.*

81. *Râl*: An enemy, the enemy, a foe, the foe (in warfare), a raider, raiders.*

82. *Ralpuia thawh*: Open warfare where there are more members in the raiding party. It is carried out at night when people have gone to bed, with the intent to take over an enemy village and raid it. The *zawlbuk* (See sl.no. 135) is the first place to be attacked (Dokhuma, 236-237).

83. *Ram bawh*: The particular area of forest which a number of families, or the whole village, is cultivating at the same time*.

84. *Ram hal*: It literally means burning of land; *ram* (land), *hal* (to burn). In *jhum* (See sl.no. 28) cultivation, the land is cleared of existing vegetation which is left to dry and then burnt to enrich the soil. See also *Lo hal* at sl.no. 51.

85. *Ram ṭheh*: To throw open for cultivation land not ordinarily available* i.e. the distribution of forest land for cultivation.

86. *Ram zuan*: To prepare *jhoom*/*jhums* (See sl.no. 28) near to where a new village will be built the following season*. To migrate.

87. *Ram*: Literally means forest, jungle; country, kingdom, territory, realm, domain, land, estate, place, homeland*.

88. *Rambuai* Literature: The term "*Rambuai* Literature" coined by C. Lalawmpuia Vanchiau became popular with the publication of his book in 2014, of the same name that dealt variously with literature (songs, poems, stories and drama) pertaining to the troubled period.

89. *Rambuai*: Literally means, "land in turmoil", and is used to refer to the period of MNF secessionist movement from 1966 to 1986 (see sl.no. 62). It is most commonly referred to as *buai* or *buai-lai* i.e. The Troubles, The Disturbance, the Mizoram War of Independence (1966-1986). ♦

90. *Ramhuai*: Evil Spirit, demon, devil.*

91. *Ramhual*: The principal men of a village.* They were considered and expected to have a better harvest than the rest.

92. *Ramtuk*: New allotment of land to various members of the community for cultivation in the *jhum* (Dokhuma, 8; Lianthanga, 91).

93. *Rawlrâla chet*: To attack by ambushing; to carry on warfare by secretly ambushing and killing people in the jungle, *jhooms*, etc, instead of openly attacking the village.*

94. *Rih dil*: The name of a lake (*dil*) to the east of *Lushai* (located within the border of Myanmar), said to be passed by departed spirits on their way to *Mitthi khua* (see sl. No. 59).

95. *Rîm*: To court, to pay court to, to go courting, to make love to; to visit or be in company of (a woman-not necessarily young); to inspect or make enquiries about (a girl) with a view to arranging a marriage.*

96. *Sa*: An animal, a beast; a wild animal, a wild beast. Also used to refer to the tiger instead of *sakei* (tiger) by men when out in the jungle, so that the tigers within earshot shall not know they are being mentioned. Also, flesh, meat, animal food.*

97. *Sadâwt*: A private exorcist or priest, especially as are employed by ruling chiefs.* A person who performs the sacrifices and ceremonies concerned with *Sakhua* (see sl.no. 100).

98. *Sailo*: The name of the *Lushai* (See sl.no. 55) ruling clan.* There were Chiefs from other clans as well.

99. *Sairawkherh*: A pellet-bow, a bow.* A slingshot.

100. *Sakhua*: Religion, religious rites and ceremonies. Religious, pious, devout. It originally referred to an object of worship, a god or an ancestor who is worshipped or a house spirit.

101. *Sakhuana*: Pertaining to religion.

102. *Sap*: The European♦, the white man, government or other official, a sahib. *

103. *Sapui Zîm*: *Sapui* (tiger) (See sl.no. 104), *zîm* (to surround, encircle as an animal etc. when hunting etc.*). *Sapui Zîm* is therefore the surrounding or encircling a tiger while hunting. The whole community would set out with various articles with which to make noise so that the sound would drive the animal in a certain direction, towards the armed *pasalṭhate* (See sl.no. 70) waiting for the kill.

104. *Sapui*: A tiger. *Sapui* is used by Mizos instead of *sakei* (tiger) when they are out in the jungle lest the dreaded king of beasts should overhear their conversation and know that he is being spoken about. See also sl.no. 96.

105. *Sathingzâr*: To place fire-wood along the side of a village-path to dry in preparation for use at a forthcoming sacrificial feast at least three months prior by the village youth and maidens (Liangkhaia, 22); firewood so placed. *Sa* (meat) *thing* (wood) *zâr* (hangout). The word literally means "to hang out fire wood to dry to cook meat".

106. *Sawn man*: Literally means the price of an illegitimate child: *sawn* (illegitimate child) *man* (price). The price a man has to pay for fathering an illegitimate child and has no intention of marrying the mother. It meant that the man acknowledged the child as his own.♣

107. *Sawn*: A love-child, an illegitimate offspring.*

108. *Sele*: Also called *Sial*. A wild gayal or mithan, also known as gaur.

109. *Selûphan*: A sacrificial post upon which the skull of a domesticated gayal is exposed.*

110. *Sen chi*: Foreign liquor.

111. *Sukte*: The name of a tribe to the north-east of Lushai.* Sukte or Sokte is a tribe from Northern Chin who often raided the Mizo villages situated towards the eastern parts of present Mizoram, known especially for their raids and war against the chiefs Vanhnuailiana and Lalburha of Champhai during 1869 -1872. According to Rev. Liangkhaia, when Vanhnuailiana had moved eastwards and settled in Champhai area, he had made a treaty with the Sukte chief Semthawnga

that they would allow each other to pursue runaway servants in each other's territories. Vanhnuailiana later on refused Semthawnga to follow his servant in his territory, after which, Vanhnuailiana's house caught fire. This was attributed to the Sukte people as an act of revenge. Vanhnuailiana had then ordered a revenge attack which escalated into a full-fledged war between the two clans who were separated by the Ṭiau river (74-75).

112. *Thangchhuah Pa*: A man who has accomplished *Thangchhuah* (see sl.no 113).

113. *Thangchhuah*: The title given to the man who had distinguished himself by killing a certain number of different animals in the chase or by giving a certain number of public feasts. The wife of such a man also shares his title, and they and their children are allowed to wear the *thangchhuah puan* (the name of a cloth worn as a mark of distinction by one who has acquired the coveted title of *Thangchhuah*). The possession of this title is regarded by the *Lushai* as a passport to *Pialral* or Paradise (See sl.no. 75).*

114. *Thianglo*: To be unlawful, wrong, unlucky, inauspicious, ill-omened, tabooed, sacred, interdicted, forbidden, prohibited, and ceremonially unclean. *Thianglo* originally carried with it the idea of misfortune or even death being likely to follow any act so designated.*

115. *Ṭhing*: To be stale, cold, not eaten at the same time as cooked. To be old, to have the appearance of being unwashed. Therefore it has connotations with the backward, undeveloped and undesirable.*

116. *Thingfar zan*: The night during a festival or ceremony specifically arranged for the unmarried youth. There would was much *zu* (Beer or any fermented liquor) the singing lasted the whole night. The young men would sit in rows with their knees pulled up to their chests and the maidens would sit on their feet facing them. This was called "*inngai*". Any misbehavior or attempt to take advantage of the maidens was severely frowned upon and would result in the complete humiliation of the young man if any maiden complained against him.♥

117. *Ṭhingtâm*: The famine (*ṭam*) that follows the flowering and death of the *ṭhing* bamboo which occurs every 50 years. The famine occurs due to the proliferation of rats after the bamboo flowers.*

118. *Thingtuluang lei*: A fallen tree or long log used as bridge.

119. *Thlangtlak*: Migrating westward; migration westward.*

120. *Tlahpawi:* Assistant priest (Zaliana, 13).

121. *Tlangau*: The village crier whose duty it is to make known the orders of the chief. A town crier.*

122. *Tlanglam Zai:* The name given to the anti-Christian song, also known as *Puma Zai* (see sl.no. 78) when it became popular and was celebrated with communal dancing in 1908. J.H.Lorrain has entered it in his dictionary as the name of an anti-Christian song (also known as *Tlanglam Zai*) the avowed purpose of which was to oust the Christian hymns. It became unbelievably popular throughout the Lushai country during 1908, and was sung everywhere with feasting and communal dancing such as had never been witnessed in the Hills before. It soon, however, passed into oblivion, leaving the Christian hymns more popular than ever.*

123. *Tlawmngaihna*: Selfless, unselfishness, of being self-sacrificing, being unselfish. The spirit of selfless service for others, of putting the welfare of others before oneself.

124. *Tuai*: A homosexual, a man who dresses and works like a woman *

125. *Tuikhur*: A small natural pool usually formed at the hill side, a water hole, from which water for domestic use is drawn.*

126. *Tuk Lut Bawi*: A person who became a *bawi* (See sl.no. 4) by surrendering in the face of defeat in battle. They were allowed to live in separate houses. Their families could either buy their freedom or were given the liberty to buy their freedom at a price of a *mithun* or its equivalent in value.♣

127. *Upa*: The elderly. The term also refers to the chief's right-hand men, usually men of wisdom and of commendable experience. Now, it is used to refer to the men of the church elected by the people and considered to be men of God and capable of leading them.

128. *Upate*: Plural of *Upa* (See sl.no. 127).

129. *Vai Len*: Arrival of the *vai* (See sl.no. 130), *vai* upsurge.•Although this term refers to the expeditions by the white man into Mizo territory, the word, *Vai* is used because the soldiers were mostly *Vai*.

130. *Vai*: A non-Mizo, referring to a person from the plains.• A foreigner who is not European.

131. *Val Upa*: A man in his prime whose knowledge in hunting and warfare makes him eligible to lead the youth in communal activities like, building houses, hunting, raids. His words were respected and he was trusted by the chief himself (Scholar's interpretation).

132. *Vantlang*: Literally means common, average and used to refer to the general public or community.*

133. *Vawkpa sût nghâk*: A hog which has been dedicated and set apart for a sacrifice to one's *sakhua* (see sl.no. 100). To sell such a pig is considered *thianglo* (see sl.no. 114) and likely to bring about death. The male pig (*vawkpa*) was usually not slaughtered without reason and was reserved for sacrifice during ceremonies. If the person performing the ceremony had more than one pig, it had to be the biggest of the males being reared. It is called so because the slaughtered pig's head was to be hung on the *char- sût* i.e. the post at the back of the house. So, in essence, the male pig is waiting (*nghak*) to be hung on the post (*sût)* (Zaliana, 22).

134. YMA: The Young Mizo Association was established on 15th June, 1935 as the Young Lushai Association (YLA) as an alternative to the regulating and educational function of the *zawlbuk* (See sl.no. 135) and with a view to preserve

and nurture Mizo culture and Christianity. Its motto is "*YMA chu ṭanpui ngaite ṭanpuitu a ni"* i.e. "YMA is the help for the helpless". It is at present the largest and single most influential group in Mizoram with a membership of all Mizos from the age of 14, no matter where they reside. It has taken upon itself the task of ensuring the continuation of commendable characteristics of indigenous Mizo society such as *tlawmngaihna* (See sl.no. 123), the traditional dances and clothes, the traditional funeral practice of comforting and assisting the family of the dead, and even burying of the dead. With the increase in anti-social activities that were previously foreign to Mizoram, the YMA has also taken up the role of vigilante, collaborating with government authorities. With the approval and support of the people in all its initiatives, the YMA has come to represent the Mizo community and stand for all that is Mizo (centralyma.org/).

135. *Zawlbuk*: The bachelor's barracks where all the young men of the village sleep for security reasons.

136. *Zingvanzawl*: The cross-road where seven roads meet on the way to *Mitthi khua* (See sl.no. 59). Here, Pu Pawla would shoot at all the souls who passed by with his slingshot and pebbles the size of eggs.♠

137. *Zu*: Beer or any fermented liquor,* alcohol.

138. *Zufang*: Fermented rice and its liquor made in a smaller pot than ordinary beer or *zupui* (See sl.no 139) and used on less important occasions.*

139. *Zupui*: Fermented rice and its liquor brewed in a large pot and used on important occasions and sacrifices.

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Note: Loose translations of the titles of texts in Mizo are by the scholar solely for the purpose of this study.

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DEGREE : Doctor of Philosophy

DEPARTMENT : English

TITLE OF THESIS : Culture as Identity: Locating the Mizo in Select Works of C.Lalnunchanga

DATE OF ADMISSION : 24.7.2018

APPROVAL OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL:

1. **DRC** : 19.3.2019
2. **BOS** : 26.3.2019
3. **SCHOOL BOARD** : 8.5.2019
4. **MZU REGISTRATION NO.** : 35 of 2009-10
5. **Ph.D REGISTRATION NO. & DATE** : MZU/Ph.D./1219 of 24.7.2018
6. **EXTENSION (IF ANY)** : NA

Head of Department

ABSTRACT

Culture as Identity: Locating the Mizo in Select Works of C.Lalnunchanga

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English of Mizoram University, Aizawl.

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September, 2021

C.Lalnunchanga (b.1970) is one of the most well-known contemporary Mizo writers and a twice recipient of the prestigious Mizo Academy of Letters Award for "Book of the Year", in 2006 for *Pasalṭhate Ni Hnuhnung* [Last Days of the Braves] [1] (2006) and in 2015 for *Kawlkil Piah Lamtluang* [Path Beyond the Horizon] (2015). He has written seven novels, twenty-four short stories, eight short plays, ten songs/poems and, over a hundred essays. Three of his short stories were translated to English as part of an anthology of contemporary short stories, published by the Sahitya Akademi. He is mainly interested in the recovery of that essence of the Mizo which was relegated to the sidelines or erased upon the Mizos embracing the white man and his ways. Deeply disturbed by the negative self-portrayal of the Mizos as a savage and ignorant people in a dramatic depiction of the arrival of the Welsh missionaries on the occasion of the Gospel Centenary Celebrations in 1994, he feels strongly that the pre-colonial Mizo has been dealt a short-hand not only by the colonial narratives but also by the Mizos themselves (Interview). In his *Thuhmahruai* [Foreword] to *Ka Mi Huaisen leh Ka Pasalṭha* [*My Brave and Courageous Men*] (2005) he states that without literature, a culture dies and places the utmost importance to the knowledge of one's own culture and of one's ancestors (7). He concludes that the in-depth study he undertook for his historical novels reaffirms that contrary to the portrayal of the pre-colonial Mizo as savage, the pre-colonial Mizo was a highly socially conscious individual, in-tune with his neighbours and with nature (Interview). Thus, C.Lalnunchanga explores the past and endeavours to reconstruct it through his historical narratives that is reflective of the statement made by Vijaya Guttal and Vikram Visaji that "(I)f imitation and internalization of the values of the dominant culture is one of the responses, to struggle to retain its identity by turning to its roots is another" (197). In capturing the holistic influences of culture on the formation of character in the individual and hence the community, C.Lalnunchanga illustrates through the selected texts that the identity of the Mizo is indeed located in their culture.

[1] The titles of the selected works have been loosely translated by the scholar solely for the purpose of this study, except for "Baby-i Hlim Zan" [Baby's Night of Happiness] and "Khamosh Hai Raath" [Silent is the Night], both translated by the respective translators.

This study focuses on the aspects of culture that influences the creation and the construct of Mizo identity through six works of C.Lalnunchanga which have been selected as it is felt they best represent the author's perception of Mizo identity and culture, both of the past and of contemporary times : the novels *Ka Mi Huaisen leh Ka Pasalṭha* [My Brave and Courageous Men] (2005) and *Pasalṭhate Ni Hnuhnung* [Last Days of the Braves] (2006) and four short stories from the collection, *Vutduk Kara Meisi* [Sparks from Dying Ash] (2011) – "Lawmna Garden" [Garden of Contentment], "Baby-i Hlim Zan" [Baby's Night of Happiness], "Khamosh Hai Raath" [Silent is the Night] and "Krismas Thawnthu" [A Christmas Story].

Culture as presented by C.Lalnunchanga in the selected works was analysed in the sense of H.C.Triandis' definition, "(*C*)*ulture* is a set of meanings, beliefs, and practices that guide the formation and maintenance of social institutions, the creation of social products, and the development of its members" (quoted in Cross and Gore, 587).

The selected works were analysed from the points of view of C.Lalnunchanga's re-presentation of history and from the impact history has had (and continues to have) on contemporary Mizo culture and world view. The issues of self and identity that arise from these analyses have been further examined in juxtaposition to the two time frames of pre-colonial and contemporary times. The affirmative projection of the laudable aspects of the Mizo world view and the communal nature of the society as a possible means to bridge the disjuncture in contemporary life can be clearly perceived. The selected works have made the readers/ audience look at and experience "the world from below rather than from above" (Young, 2003, 114). These works convey that for the Mizo, the post-colonial objective in respect to the white colonialists lay in "decolonizing the mind" to borrow Ngugi wa Thiong'o's words. In respect to the Indian nation and even more so, within contemporary Mizo society, the post-colonial purpose is to highlight the existence of the subaltern Mizo who was brought into being by the political, economic and social hegemony that was borne out of the colonial past and that which continues to pervade post-colonial Mizoram. In this sense, the selected works are reflective of the "creative development of post-colonial societies" that Ashcroft et.al. have said is often determined by the influence of "this pre-colonial, indigenous

culture and the degree to which it is still active" (2017a, 115). It can thus be seen in the selected works that the pre-colonial, indigenous culture is still very much a viable factor of Mizo life and world view and that its spirit is being kept alive in works such as those selected for this study.

The disjoint and dissociative consequences of hegemonic cultural influences (both of the British and of the Indian nation) on contemporary Mizo society serve to highlight and foreground the cohesive and communal nature of the pre-colonial Mizo community. This realisation is made possible by decolonizing and ridding the mind like N.C.Peroff writes, of the "contaminating images and understanding of the indigene or the native imposed by colonialism" (Moran, 354). Instead of conforming to the ideology of binarism by continuing to reinforce the image of the other-ed and "orient" Mizo, the emphasis could transpose to the healing proffered by the all-encompassing communal nature of the Mizo world view. The issue would no longer be about black skins in white masks, a state of being which Ania Loomba termed as "not a hybridity but 'a violated authenticity'" (175) i.e. of one distinct culture exhibiting dominance over another. Instead, the focus would fall on the integration[2] of the two cultures, previously polarized by ideologies that fed on the segregation it engendered since one culture espoused individualism while the other advocated the communal.

The earlier observations as already pointed out, are clearly illustrated in the selected narratives. The significance of the written narrative must therefore be acknowledged as expressions of the times, both of the past and the present, and possibly, as foreshadow-ers of the future. Therefore, even though C.Lalnunchanga does not make such a claim, the selected historical narratives may be considered as part of the writing down of the Mizo past which Joy L.K.Pachuau attributes to the "emergence of a single story" and to "a definitive connection with the idea of being a 'people'" for the Mizos (2014, 109-110). As such, culture as intrinsic to Mizo identity both for the individual as well as for the group as endorsed by C.Lalnunchanga has proven to hold sway. His re-writing of history has accomplished

[2] According to J.W.Berry quoted by Cross and Gore, integration is one of the processes of acculturation (an adaptive process of migrants in a multicultural society) which involves the incorporation of two cultures into one's identity (601).

some measure of the task of the recovery of the Mizo through fiction which "can contribute to something akin to a collective recovery" even when fiction acknowledges "the depth of nothingness" (Erikson, 25). In his historical narratives, C.Lalnunchanga is thus making use of fiction to propound culture as the basis of Mizo identity in the same way as Abdul R. JanMohamed writes of the colonialists, that "the fiction *forms* the ideology by articulating and justifying the position and aims of the colonialist" (italics as in the text, 102). The fact that it is possible to analyse the selected works (the settings of which are separated by time and space) as a continuum illustrates the prominent role played by history on the formation and development of identity and its influence on culture as well. It was therefore imperative to awaken the past, not just the past but the past from the postcolonial perspective. In this sense, history has continuously constituted and re-constituted Mizo identity through a dynamic relationship (Joy L.K.Pachuau, 2014, 135). As a result of this intervention by history, cultural identity for the Mizo "is a matter of 'becoming" as Stuart Hall writes "as well as of 'being'", belonging to the future as much as to the past and like everything historical, they undergo constant transformation, subject to the "continuous 'play' of history, culture and power" (Hall, 2017a, 435).

Having established the historical aspect of culture as an irrefutable foundation of the development of identity in contemporary times, it is also irrefutable that Mizo culture has been irrevocably changed by the colonial influence since "the historical fact of colonialism inevitably leads to a hybridization of culture" (Ashcroft et.al., 2017a, 128). The analysis of the selected works has established that similar to the experience of other postcolonial cultures, hybridity is now the lived reality of the Mizo people: there is continued influence of the pre-colonial and indigenous culture on contemporary culture which is simultaneously being exposed to other influences. The colonial, being the most prominent of these influences, not only "'culturally' controlled" but exerted hegemonic control over the post-colonial societies politically, economically and militarily (Ashcroft et.al., 2017a, 199). As a consequence, not with-standing the portrayal of a number of negative aspects of Mizo culture, the selected works reflect a decided rejection of the colonial construct of the Mizo because "(D)ifference disliked is identity confirmed" (Johnson, 323) and "(A)ll

identity terms depend on marking their limits - defining what they are in relation to what they are not" (Hall, 2019, 122). While exploring the changes wrought on the indigenous culture, C.Lalnunchanga does consciously promote the indigenous by his negation of the white man's actions and its effects on subsequent generations even though he does acknowledge the favourable outcomes of embracing Christianity. This conscious selectiveness implies that the power to construct a narrative which is reflective of their viewpoint now lay in the hands of the native[3]. As a consequence, the past becomes capable of influencing the formation of future identities. Thus, even in C.Lalnunchanga's construct of Mizo identity through the exploration of culture, "the signs of identity and of difference are always a matter of invention and construction" (Ashcroft et.al., 2017a, 54) and neither is identity "created accidentally nor is it altogether innocent of intention" (Thapar, 57). Thus, the "complementarity" of the past and the future both in the individual and in society links the actuality of a living past with that of a promising future (Erikson, 310). It therefore becomes apparent from the analysis of the selected works that "the native is not subjugated, nor does his culture disintegrate, simply because a European characterizes both as savage" (JanMohamed, 81) even though it may cause a disjuncture within the society itself, as it has done so for the Mizos. This disjuncture as has been established has become even more prominent in the multicultural society of the globalised, neocolonial world. However the multicultural society does have a positive aspect because diversity is "critical to resilience" (Fukuyama, 127) and "though identities can be used to divide, it can also be the remedy by initiating integration" (183). The blending or hybridity of cultures can make "difference into sameness, and sameness into difference, but in a way that makes the same no longer the same, the different no longer simply different" (Young, 2017, 158). Although, the actuality of hybridity as existing in Mizo culture as examined in the third chapter illustrated the disjuncture it could engender, C.Lalnunchanga's propounding of the Mizo world view as a means of overcoming this disjuncture in the fourth chapter illustrated that hybridity does offer a strategy for survival.

[3] Abdul R. JanMohamed writes that the domain of literary and cultural syncretism belongs increasingly to the Third Word writers and not to the colonialist and neocolonialist writers (104).

The past therefore, is not the sole foundation upon which the Mizo can hope to ride into the future. The Mizo identity would not be "grounded in mere 'recovery' of the past" which will "secure our sense of ourselves into eternity" but also be influenced by "the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past" (Hall, 2017a, 435). The modernizing effects of the colonial experience will forever be a part of Mizo culture, especially that of Christianity. Hybridization of cultures was not new to the Mizos. The ease with which influences from others are incorporated harmoniously into the fabric of the society is illustrated at length in *Ka Mi Huaisen leh Ka Pasalṭha* [My Brave and Courageous Men] (2015) by the after-effects of the two-months stay by the chief, Laldara and his people when they had come to woo Chuaileni, Puilura's daughter. The indigenization of Christianity as discussed in chapter three is but a natural approach of the Mizo towards a foreign influence. It is also proof that the Mizo have been selective of the cultures they imbibed, and to what degree. This can be said with certainty since it is a historical fact that the Mizo were in direct contact with other peoples and cultures around them much before coming in contact with the white man. However, it is also true that there had never been a foreign influence as pervasive and dominant as that of the white man and his power as colonizer. Colonialism had propelled the forces of globalization which according to Stuart Hall "involves both homogenization *and* the creation of new differences/ fractures; it involves, as he puts it repeatedly, going 'local and global at the same moment'" (italics as in the text, Procter, 111).

Hybridization was therefore essential to the survival of the Mizo as a people and as also discussed in chapter three, the Mizo did not only lose aspects of their culture but were also successful in indigenizing aspects of the white man's culture which on the onset seemed powerful enough to fully replace the indigenous. The indigenization of Christianity shows that historically, hybridization can ease the successful incorporation of a hegemonizing culture into that of a subaltern-ed "other" as evidenced by the acknowledgement of the existence of the "Mizo Christian". This label, so to say, describes what it is "to be a Mizo under the sign of modernity, to be a Christian under the sign of the local" (Bhattacharya and Pachuau, 15). Just as the Christian missionaries had appropriated Mizo cultural symbols and meanings, the

early Christians too had superimposed Mizo sensibilities on Christian traditions. Bhattacharya and Pachuau attribute this to the "active collective engagement with the Western form, rather than its blanket adoption, that eventually led to people's identification with Christianity", seeing it as a social process which created a "distinctive Christianity, unique to its specific context, which impinged on the identity of the people" (298). Along the same line of thought that "cultural shaping of the self begins with a society's core philosophical and religious heritage and traditions" (Cross and Gore, 589), the conclusion arrived at in chapter four would indeed facilitate the integration of cultures which would have a firm base on the traditional and indigenous. It was put forth that the community, entrenched in Mizo culture and world view would form the foundation upon which extraneous influences on the established culture would be incorporated. This would ensure that the indigenous and the traditional would remain the mainstay of the process of hybridization. In the end, it would prove to be beneficial rather than detrimental to the development of the Mizo society and culture, the dynamic nature of which has been established many times over.

That being said, the dangers posed by the negative impact of communalism and a narrowed focus on the indigenous that is extreme to the extent that it is exclusive of all other cultures and peoples has been seen through the course of human history. The horrors and violence of ethnic cleansing in various parts of the world in recent times are a testimony to the atrocities that such narrow extremism can provoke. The implication of such an interpretation of identity and the detrimental impact it has had on inter-cultural relations both locally and internationally is apparent in the stereotyping of people based on their country of origin, ethnicity, religion and race. Whether consciously applied or not, the politics of identity has proven capable of being pervasive and divisive for indigenous cultures grappling with post-colonial and neo-colonial issues.

The very core of the Mizo's reconnection with the past, indigenous cultures and traditions is thus developing under such threats which may cause it to deviate from the intention to integrate, and towards pursuing a narrow, exclusivity. Although current political developments in the local, national and international stages have indeed nudged the Mizo consciousness to focus inwards from time to time, the

inherent inclusive nature of Mizo culture has nevertheless ensured an enduring openness to other peoples and other cultures to date. It is in this light that the objective of "*Ram leh Hnam Humhalh*" by the Young Mizo Association i.e. the preservation of both land and culture, gains importance. As discussed earlier, the interdependence of the individual and the society in creating a stable sense of self and identity is much dependent on a knowledge and understanding of the past and its consequences on the present. The bid for preservation can be fulfilled thus since "true permanence is never static, it is an eternal process of becoming, susceptible to dialogue with otherness" (Petersen & Rutherford, 142). Not only will it ensure that Mizo culture will continue to survive as desired by the people themselves but will also create a concrete foundation of Mizo identity that will endure the multicultural, neocolonial realities of surviving in the global village that the world has become[4]. The post-colonial Mizo can thus continue to revel in their renewed connection and relationship to their indigeniety and thereby, consolidate the presence of the Mizo for posterity. It is in this sense that the selected works of C.Lalnunchanga may be considered as part of this undertaking to perpetuate the culture and world view of the Mizo. The selected works gain prominence in the light of the statement that production of literatures in local languages are precious cultural resources and that their translations "opens up a potentially huge readership" and "becomes, through translation, a vehicle of cultural communication, and perhaps a mode of cultural survival" (Ashcroft et.al., 2017a, 205).

It can thus be concluded that from the analysis of the selected works, C.Lalnunchanga sought to foreground indigenous pre-colonial Mizo culture from a post-colonial perspective. At the same time, the selected works also advocated the prospective contribution of the past towards healing the disjuncture he saw in contemporary society. The past thereby paves the way towards a more cohesive contemporary society that is based on a culture that is inclusive and has a firm base

[4]Francis Fukuyama writes that it is because of the existence of a well-developed national identity before modernization took place that countries like Japan, Korea and China are able to develop so much, economically and in infrastructure. They did not have to settle internal questions of identity and hence, were able to build on traditions of statehood and common national purpose once conflicts (civil war, occupation and division) were stabilized. He attributes the lack or weakness of this national identity for the failure of the Arab Spring and in African countries to establish stable governments (125-126).

on the indigenous, giving rise to a stable sense of identity. In effect, it is culture that has ensured the survival of the Mizo as a people against many odds and it is in culture that their future also lies assured. It is in this culture that C.Lalnunchanga locates the identity of the Mizo.

Chapter I: Introduction: The Author and the Times.

The first chapter introduces the author, C.Lalnunchanga, explaining the reason for his interest in the re-writing of pre-colonial Mizo history i.e., to correct the misrepresentation of the Mizo as savage and uncivilized, in need of the white man's guidance. The chapter provides a brief overview of the historical and cultural context of the selected works. It relates the colonial narratives of the expeditions by the British forces to conquer the Mizo chiefs and the subsequent administrative changes after the annexation of the land. The immediate impact on Mizo culture as also the changes in world view as a consequence are briefly presented so as to contextualize current issues embedded in the contemporary narratives. The chapter introduces the discussion on "The Historical Aspect" and "The Cultural Aspect" of colonialism, "Christianity and its Impact" which majorly affected the social structure of the Mizos, "Territoriality and the *Ram leh Hnam Humhalh* [Protection of Land and Tribe] Debate" which traces the growth and development of political awareness and lastly, how all these affected and continues to influence the formation of the Mizo "Identity".

Chapter II: The Mizo as Portrayed in Selected Historical Novels.

The second chapter analyses Mizo history from the perspective of the indigenous culture and world view of the pre-colonial Mizo in his environment as illustrated in the historical narratives. It foregrounds the "Resistance to Colonial Power" and sheds light on how the re-writing not only challenged but has overturned the established colonial narrative thereby effectively re-centering the Mizo who had been other-ed and silenced by colonial narratives. This establishment of the postcolonial status of the Mizo was necessary firstly to re-occupy the center; secondly, to gain insight into and an understanding of the hegemonic forces that had become ingrained in contemporary society as can be seen in the segment "The Society: Politics, Ethics and Way of Life"; thirdly, to divest remnants of colonial

influences still discernable in the society. The necessity of historicizing the postcolonial perspective of events becomes apparent; to undo the image of the Mizo as the quintessential "orient" that perfectly fitted the profile of the noble savage. All colonial narratives had sought to reinforce this portrayal. The notion of the white man's burden suited both the colonial administration and the missionaries. Imbued respectively with imperialistic zeal and evangelical fervour, it served to further their interest, independently and though unintentional, jointly in some instances. The section on the "Narrative Technique" analyzes how through the narration of the selected texts, C.Lalnunchanga reinforces the Mizo perspective of history, juxtaposing the established colonial narrative with his own interpretation of the same events. So then, "(W)riting does not merely inscribe the spoken message or represent the message event, it becomes a new event" (Ashcroft et.al., 2017a, 184).

Chapter III: Impact of Colonisation and Christianity

The third chapter analyses how the disparity between the indigenous world view and the acquired world view had given rise to a state of confusion where the characters in the contemporary narratives had become stuck in a diasporic-like limbo. The conflict created by the double impact of administrative changes and Christianity on Mizo society could be seen in the culture illustrated in the contemporary narratives that had become disjunct from the indigenous and the traditional. The Mizo had also become other-ed, marginalized and a subaltern within his own community. This was especially true for those unable to fall in line with the dominant culture that has become structured according to the dictates of the colonial power as a consequence of the hegemonic colonial influence. The Mizo had been trained in the colonial and so had the desire to identify with it but were ingrained with the indigenous. This brought into being a degree of disconnectedness to the Mizo as a people, much like a diasporic community, in context to the larger contemporary world. At the same time, this disconnectedness also arose within the community and brought the subaltern into existence in Mizo society. The polarizing effects of the multiple influences of the indigenous and other cultures had become a reality in Mizo society. The notion that this duality must be in conflict and cannot be reconciled and integrated had brought divisions within the community along factors that were previously nonexistent. An understanding of the origins of such sentiments

as explored in the chapter provides insight into the conflict of duality in Mizo society through the colonial experience of Christianity, education, administrative changes, and major changes to the fabric of society like the abolition of the *Zawlbuk*, the *Bawi* Controversy, the societal fallout and political development of the abolition of chieftainship i.e. *Lal Ban*, and the position of women in the "Women's Question"[5].

Chapter IV: Self and Identity: Community Transformed

Chapter four explores C.Lalnunchanga's advocacy of a return to the past as a means to overcome the struggles of the dissociative present. It explores the possibility of bridging the schism between the polarized indigenous and external cultural influences as can be seen in the subtle indications within the selected narratives. It also explores the prospect of the solution lying within the community through an acceptance of the duality of the culture being lived, positing the practicality of a hybridization of the two, since Christianity had also had to imbue aspects of the rituals of traditional Mizo beliefs. The chapter thus explores the transformation of the community through the cultural implications of social change, the development of politics and its ramifications, and how through the narrative and narratology the selected texts posit hybridity as a means to re-imagine the community along the lines of Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*.

Chapter V: Conclusion: Redemption in Culture

The concluding chapter recapitulates the discussions and postulations of the previous chapters – re-writing the colonial past, highlighting the disjunct in post-colonial Mizo society and advocating an acceptance of the hybridized culture being lived. The conclusion was drawn that through the analysis of the selected texts, C.Lalnunchanga had illustrated that the identity of the Mizo (both individual and communal) was expressed through their culture and that therefore, Mizo identity is located in their culture.

[5] The phrase used by Partha Chatterjee in his article, "The Nation and Its Women" to express the paradoxical situation of the Indian woman who remained subordinate in the cultural space even though she is considered an equal to the men in the professional arena.

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